

Chief Executives Report

1. Covid-19

1.1 COVID 19 continues to impact on how we work but the positive developments in terms of COVID suppression means we are turning our minds again to office re-opening. FSS has continued to support Scottish Government (SG) teams including Resilience, Food and Drink, and Scottish Ministers, and working with Defra, Food Standards Agency (FSA) and food retailers in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the new lockdown rules.

1.2 Ministers agreed to testing for our frontline staff and this is updated in a separate paper to the Board today.

2. Meetings in Brief

2.1 Geoff and Julie attended a meeting late March with WHICH? Where they shared some consumer research they had undertaken. The main findings were the importance of safety and protection of consumers through maintaining the standards. Issues around sustainability and the importance of animal welfare all came up too, and it was really good to see how much of what is important to consumers is included in our new strategy.

3. EU Exit

Senior Appointments

3.1 Ian McWatt has concluded recruitment of his C2 Heads of Division as follows:
Lorna Murray appointed as Head of Local Authority Delivery
Ron McNaughton appointed as Head of the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit
Sandy McDougall appointed as Head of Operational Delivery
Jacqui McElhiney appointed as Head of Science
Garry Mourian appointed as Head of Food Safety and Standards Policy

3.2 In view of the range of complex challenges facing local authority delivery over the next strategy period, and to ensure Lorna has sufficient bandwidth to manage a large portfolio, including Imports & Exports and Feed Delivery, Ian decided to retain incidents management within the SFCIU and not transfer to LA Delivery Division as originally intended through the restructure programme.

3.3 On Julie Hesketh-Laird's side Garry McEwan was successfully recruited as Head of Governance and Infrastructure and joined on 15 April and Kate Bullock the Head of Communications and Marketing appointment joins us on 5th July. A warm welcome to all of them.

4. Publication of our first British Sign Language (BSL) plan

4.1 Our first British Sign Language (BSL) plan was published at the end of February following the hard work of the BSL Steering Group. This sets out how we intend to support the Scottish Government's BSL [National Plan 2017-2023](#) by aiming to improve the accessibility of our information, advice and services for BSL users. This includes enhancing the accessibility of the information on our website and raising awareness of BSL among staff.



4.2 The plan is available [on our website](#).

5. Nutrition Update

A series of seven sector specific [Healthier catering guides | Food Standards Scotland](#) have been published to support food businesses to make small, simple changes to the food and drinks they serve to make it healthier. There is also a guide specifically for improving children's menus. The aim is to help OOH businesses take steps to buy, prepare, promote and serve healthier food as part of their reopening and recovery. The sector specific guides will provide a good foundation for businesses to begin to make the improvements needed to support a healthier food environment. When made on scale, these steps could make a positive contribution to the diet of the nation.

5.1 The guides will also promote the use of MenuCal, the freely available tool that enables businesses calculate the calories in their food offerings for menu labelling purposes and helps them manage their legislative requirements for allergens.

6. Vitamin D Campaign

6.1 The Vitamin D campaign finished on 24 March and by the end of the campaign, the blog had been viewed 28,380 times and was the second most viewed page on the site during the campaign period (11 January to 24 March). Across social media, posts were seen 113,277 times on Twitter, 54,528 on Facebook and 4,211 times on Instagram.

6.2 The post campaign research found that those who had seen the campaign were more likely to consider taking a supplement than those who hadn't. 54% of those who said they had seen the campaign took action as a result, with "discussing with friends and/or family" the top action.

6.3 We will use the campaign findings to review how the campaign could be improved for re-running later this year.

7. Accessibility Toolbar

7.1 We have added an accessibility toolbar to our website. Recite Me is cloud-based software that lets visitors to our website view and use it in the way that works best for them. It is particularly helpful for people who have a disability, including those with common conditions such sight loss and dyslexia. To open it, click 'Accessibility Tool' that appears right at the top of every page.

Visit our website for more details on how to use the Recite Me toolbar.

8. Operations Delivery

8.1 In relation to recruitment of vets for FSS a number of changes were agreed to provide further flexibility:

A Trainee Official Veterinarian role has been created, which will allow FSS to recruit vets that are members of RCVS, but have not undergone the Official Veterinarian training course yet, and also the creation of a Veterinary Authorised Officer role (i.e. vet Meat Hygiene Inspector), allowing us to recruit vets into mainly MHI roles.

9. Pulse Survey

9.1 In early May a Pulse Survey was distributed to engage with office and homebased staff to gather thoughts and experiences; details are included in another paper to the Board.

10. Internal values launch

10.1 In March we launched FSS's first set of unique internal values. The C&M team developed a robust internal communications plan to support the initial roll out and how these will be championed when we return to the office and going forward.

10.2 The values shape our behaviour culture and the internal communications emphasised their importance to all staff through presentations from our ELT to Head Office and Field staff and the development of a dedicated staff intranet area with all the information colleagues need to familiarise.

10.3 As the values guide how we do things and treat others, the initial promotional plans included an all staff competition to give visibility to the roll-out of the values, connected to our 'innovative' value, a package of work related reminder items such as pens, notepads and laptop stickers with the values on them being sent to everyone, and the launch of our 'SPOT' (see and praise our team) award recognition programme. Presentations were made at both Head Office and Field Staff meetings.

10.4 Feedback so far has been positive and we will continue to monitor the engagement with the 'team FSS internal values' throughout the year.

11. On-farm incident prevention campaign

11.1 On 24 March 2021 Food Standards Scotland (FSS) launched a new multi-media on-farm incident prevention campaign urging farmers to be aware of lead sources on their land which could cause poisoning amongst their livestock.

11.2 The number of lead poisoning incidents reported to FSS in 2020 (10) amounted to more than those in 2018 and 2019 combined. Food Standards Scotland has produced an information leaflet for farmers and the campaign in print, and social media attracted a number of significant endorsements from organisations including the NFU, Quality Meat Scotland and Scottish Government, as well as a quote from Scotland's Chief Veterinary Officer, Sheila Voas.

12. FSS/FSA Annual Report on Food Standards

12.1 On 3 March 2021, Scottish Ministers commissioned FSS to work collaboratively with the FSA to produce an annual report on the state of UK food safety and standards. The new report is being developed in response to the increased interest in UK food regulation from domestic consumers, industry and international trading partners since EU Exit, as evidenced by the significant part food standards played in the recent debates on the Agriculture Act 2020 and proposed Trade Bill, and the establishment of the statutory Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC).

12.2 Further to initial discussions between FSS and FSA officials, it is proposed the report will provide a retrospective view of how food standards have changed in the UK year on year, addressing consumers interests and concerns. It is likely the focus of the first report will be changes to UK food standards since the end of the EU Exit Transition Period on 1 January 2021. As such it would present an overview addressing any divergence of approach between the four countries following consideration through the relevant UK frameworks and policy and risk analysis processes.

12.3 A joint FSA/FSS working group has been established to progress development of the report and resolve outstanding scope questions, and how we work together to line up our respective Executive and Board governance and clearance arrangements.

12.4 The first report is expected to be published in spring 2022 at the earliest.

For queries contact:
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