

# A framework for delivering social science in FSS and priorities for research

## 1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 This paper describes our approach for strengthening the use of social science in FSS, and is for **consideration** by the Board.
- 1.2 The Board is asked to:
  - **Note** the progress with the development of a dedicated social science function, since its inception in FSS in February 2021;
  - **Note** our proposed framework for delivering social science as detailed in Annex A;
  - The Board are asked to confirm, that given the financial pressures and challenges, they **are content** with the present areas of action outlined in paragraph 5.2; **and are content** with our proposed future priorities for social research in paragraph 5.4.

## 2 Strategic aims

- 2.1 The social science function and framework described in this paper underpins all five of the organisation's strategic outcomes for 2021-26 and comprises activities under Goal 3: A research and data science capability which enables us to detect risks, monitor public health trends and consumer behaviours, and translate evidence into action.

## 3 Background

- 3.1 FSS has a statutory duty to represent consumer interests in relation to food, and social science has a key role to play in ensuring our work is able to fully reflect the issues that matter most to the people of Scotland, and what influences views and actions at different parts of the food chain. [Our strategy for 2021-26](#) makes a commitment to strengthen our use of social sciences so that we can better understand how our changing food environment affects attitudes and behaviours and build the evidence base needed to ensure the interests of consumers and stakeholders in Scotland are fully represented in UK policy development.
- 3.2 The FSS Social Science Framework supports [the FSS's Science, Evidence and Information \(SEI\) Strategy](#) which was approved by the FSS Board in April 2017, and updated following publication of our organisational strategy for 2021-26. This paper follows an [update presented to the Board by FSS's head of science in December 2022](#) which outlined our initial progress in developing a new social science capability, and our intention to enhance the quality and breadth of our work in this area.

- 3.3 FSS set up a dedicated social science function in February 2021 with the aim of delivering high-quality, robust, evidence-based social research to guide, inform and support decision-making and policy development across the organisation. The social science team is part of the Analytical Functions Branch in the Science Division. Social science is led by a small team of 0.6 FTE social researcher at C1 grade , (who is currently appointed to FSS on secondment from Scottish Government's Marine Analytical Unit) with support from a full time B3 analyst.

## 4 Development of a new social science framework

- 4.1 An initial scoping exercise undertaken by the team during 2021/22 identified that, whilst social research was already being commissioned across a number of FSS business areas, access to advice on methodologies and data analysis was limited. There was also a lack of co-ordination and governance over the development and commissioning of new projects, which was hampering our ability to design research around cross cutting evidence needs and optimise the outputs. The findings of this review informed the development of our Social Science Framework (**Annex A**), which describes a structured process for the collection and interpretation of data and insights on human behaviours and attitudes relating to food. It outlines of how we aim to deliver social science in FSS and support the organisation in applying best practice for gathering and analysing evidence and governance procedures which ensure our research activities are scientifically robust.
- 4.2 The progress we have made to date in implementing our framework, and our future priorities for action, are provided in **Annex B**.

## 5 Research Priorities

- 5.1 During the prioritisation exercise, the Board took the view that science and evidence is a **critical enabler** to both the delivery of FSS organisational outcomes and our core purpose as an organisation e.g. a Regulator. One of the key roles of our dedicated social science function therefore is to provide an advisory service for teams across the organisation on the identification of appropriate research methods and instruments (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups) and support for the peer review of research outputs. As a small team, effective partnership and collaboration is essential to this role, and we have invested in building relationships which enables us to maintain an up to date awareness of research activities which are relevant to our work, and provide us with access to additional expertise where required. As part of Scottish Government's social research profession we are able to engage with other specialists which supports our development and helps to ensure our work is cognisant of wider policy interests in Scotland. We have also developed a strong partnership with the Food Standards Agency's (FSA's) social science team with whom we regularly co-design and jointly fund evidence gathering to support shared interests. This has proven to be particularly important in ensuring Scotland is reflected in social research programmes commissioned to support UK risk analysis and policy development, and in generating data which can be compared nationally. Through our collaboration with the FSA we have also had the opportunity to join the International Social Science Liaison Group (a network of social

scientists from food regulators around the world) which provides a forum for sharing experience and ideas relating to current and emerging issues.

- 5.2 In order to optimise value from our in-house expertise, our research activities are split into two key areas: (1) consumer attitudes and behaviours relating to food; and, (2) food business operator (FBO) and local authority (LA) perspectives on regulatory compliance. By providing strategic oversight for projects commissioned under each of the themes included in FSS's Food and Health Research Programme (FHRP), the team is also well placed to co-ordinate social research that cuts across the interests of different business areas.
- 5.3 Over the past 2 years we have provided input to the design of questionnaires developed for our Food in Scotland consumer tracker and pulse surveys, as well as advice on social research projects to support FSS's Public Health Nutrition Strategy. In addition, we have successfully brought together expertise from different parts of the organisation to identify evidence needs and co-design research to support a wide range of policy interests including food safety, allergen labelling, regulated products and food insecurity. **Annex C** provides a list of social research projects that have been commissioned over the past two years to supplement the data sets collected in our tracker surveys.
- 5.4 Over the next two years, we intend to build on this portfolio of projects through a new social research programme which will focus on the four priority areas of work listed below which support wider organisational priorities:
- a) **A new approach for tracking consumer attitudes and behaviours.** During 2023/24, we are piloting a Scottish module within the FSA's flagship [Food and You2 \(FY2\) survey](#). This survey is currently conducted biannually across England, Wales and NI using a primarily online methodology and collects data on self-reported knowledge, attitudes and behaviours across a range of topics such as food safety in the home, food shopping, eating out, food security, and emerging issues about food. FY2 is a rigorous, quality assured survey which uses a random probability sampling approach and cognitively tested questionnaires; generating data that is recognised as an [Official Statistic](#). FSS participation in FY2 provides us with the opportunity to collect a more extensive and robust data set than we are able to gather through our existing Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker. A further benefit is that it will generate Scottish data sets which are comparable to those produced for England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the reporting of consumer trends in our joint FSS/FSA Annual Report. Our pilot will run until Spring 2024, at which point we will review the findings and recommend whether FSS should commit to a permanent FY2 module to augment our established systems for collecting consumer data. This review complements parallel work being taken forward by FSS's Communications and Marketing Division to shift the focus of our Food in Scotland tracker onto monitoring public awareness and perceptions of FSS and high level consumer interests relating to food. Pending the outcome of these reviews, it is our hope to have an improved suite of tools for collecting consumer data across all of our strategic outcomes; with the Scottish FY2 module providing the baseline on attitudes and behaviours, Food in Scotland enabling us to track and measure our impact, and the commissioning of ad-hoc Pulse Surveys and focus groups to generate new insights on emerging issues.

- b) **Social research to support FSS proposals on the re-design of Scotland's Local Authority (LA) Food Enforcement framework.** The social science team has been working closely with FSS's enforcement delivery division to identify social research priorities under our Scottish Authority Food Enforcement Re-Build (SAFER) programme of work. An evaluation of the Food Law Rating Scheme (FLRS) is currently being commissioned to assess how it has impacted on LAs, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme from the perspectives of environmental health professionals, and assess what lessons can be learned to support future improvements to enforcement delivery under the SAFER programme. Additional work is also being explored to address evidence gaps in a range of areas relevant to the programme including barriers to food law compliance, novel intervention approaches and the factors which contribute to a resilient food law delivery workforce.
- c) **Understanding consumer attitudes to food labelling** In light of recent developments in food policy aimed at improving the transparency of food chain information, evidence generated through incidents and our tracker surveys on the use of food safety advice and wider interests of consumers in relation to food, we are scoping a new programme of social research which is aimed at improving our understanding of consumer attitudes to food labelling. This will consider how consumers currently use food labels when purchasing, storing and preparing food, and how different forms of food information (particularly relating to food safety, nutrition and allergens) can be made more accessible to better inform and influence consumers, including those with a restricted ability to read or understand food labels.
- d) **Consumer attitudes and concerns regarding emerging food technologies** Technological innovation in food production is gathering pace, and alongside the scientific assessments we undertake as part of our risk analysis process, it is important that we are able to take account of public attitudes and behaviours when considering regulatory approaches and other interventions for ensuring food safety and standards. This work will employ the research methods developed in the projects we conducted earlier this year on precision breeding/new genomic techniques; covering topics such as alternative proteins and cultivated meat.

5.5 With regard to wider social research needs on behaviour change relating to dietary health, it is important to note that extensive programmes of work are already being funded through Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme (SRP)<sup>1</sup>, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)<sup>2</sup>, and Wellcome Trust<sup>3</sup>. We will continue to support our Public Health Nutrition team in assessing the outputs of these programmes to ensure our

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<sup>1</sup> The Rowett Institute is receiving funding under the SRP to undertake three projects in this area: Pathways to healthy and sustainable diets: Identifying facilitators, barriers and unintended consequences of switching to a more plant-based diet; Understanding public attitudes and preferences for healthy and sustainable diets; Drivers and barriers for adopting healthy and sustainable food swaps in young adults

<sup>2</sup> [Food Insecurity in people living with Obesity \(FIO Food\) | The Rowett Institute | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Building for health centred, net zero aligned Food Systems Transformation - A Living Good Food Nation Lab - Grants Awarded | Wellcome](#)  
[Maximising potential of plant-based convenience foods in real-life sustainable diets. - Grants Awarded | Wellcome](#)

advice takes account of the latest evidence and that we are able to identify gaps with specific relevance to Scotland that can be addressed through our FHRP.

## 6 Risks and issues

- 6.1 Limited resourcing presents the key risk to our ability to fully implement the social science framework and deliver the programme of research described by this paper, which are currently reliant on a team comprising only 1.6 FTE equivalents. Growing demand for new evidence to support the SAFER programme, contributions to the FSS/FSA Joint Annual report, and emerging risk analysis needs is already placing pressure on our nascent social science function, and it will be necessary to manage expectations with regard to our capacity and capability. In order to mitigate this risk, we are continuing to explore opportunities for research collaboration and partnerships which enable us to access additional expertise in this area. It will also be necessary to keep our workplan under review and re-prioritise depending on available resources.

## 7 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 7.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Fairer Scotland Duty requirements do not apply to the information presented in this paper, although the Board will wish to be aware that both are undertaken routinely during the development of research requirements and the commissioning of individual projects.

## 8 Conclusion/Recommendations

- 8.1 The Board is asked to:

- **Note** the progress with the development of a dedicated social science function, since its inception in FSS in February 2021
- **Note** our proposed framework for delivering social science as detailed in Annex A;
- Given the financial pressures and challenges, confirm the Board **are content** with the proposed two areas in paragraph 5.2; **and are content** with our proposed future priorities for social research in paragraph 5.4.

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## ANNEX A

# FSS Social Science Framework

## Introduction

Food Standards Scotland's Strategy to 2026 sets out a vision for *a safe, healthy and sustainable food environment that benefits and protects the health and well-being of everyone in Scotland*.

A key priority for the science and evidence needed to deliver our strategy is '**understanding behaviours**' to ensure that FSS work aligns with the needs of consumers and food business and can drive positive change.

***“We will strengthen our use of social sciences to understand how the changing food environment affects attitudes and behaviours and ensure UK policies take full account of consumer interests in Scotland”***

The framework outlined in this document will make a key contribution to addressing this priority. It sets out our overall approach for strengthening and embedding social science research in FSS so that we are able to improve our understanding of attitudes and behaviours of actors in the food environment and better protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. In doing so, social science will support all of FSS's strategic outcomes:

- Food is safe and authentic
- Consumers have healthier diets
- Responsible food businesses are enabled to thrive
- Consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food
- FSS is trusted and influential

**Our Vision** is to develop a structured approach to the prioritisation and development of our social science programme to deliver a high-quality, robust, evidence base which will guide, inform, support, and ultimately improve decision-making and policy development across FSS.

## Why does FSS need a dedicated social science function?

### Understanding the impacts of a changing food environment

Food Standards Scotland's Strategy to 2026 recognises how significantly our food environment is changing and the increasingly diverse interests of consumers and businesses in relation to food and its impacts on public health. Behaviours and concerns around food are being influenced by a wide range of different social, economic and environmental factors, the most important of which are described below.

**Shocks to our food system** resulting from the UK's departure from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have impacted our supply chains and trading arrangements, and a strong social science base is essential in enabling us to understand how these changes are affecting consumers, businesses and enforcement authorities in Scotland, so that we are able to provide clear information on the impacts and guidance which supports them in navigating change.

**Economic pressures, leading to a cost of living crisis and reductions in public sector spending** have impacted on the affordability of safe and healthy food, and the resources available to the public sector for regulating our supply chains. Social science has become increasingly important in enabling us to understand concerns over food insecurity in Scotland and how the financial climate is impacting on our diet, the way our food is produced and what interventions are needed to ensure consumer interests continue to be protected.

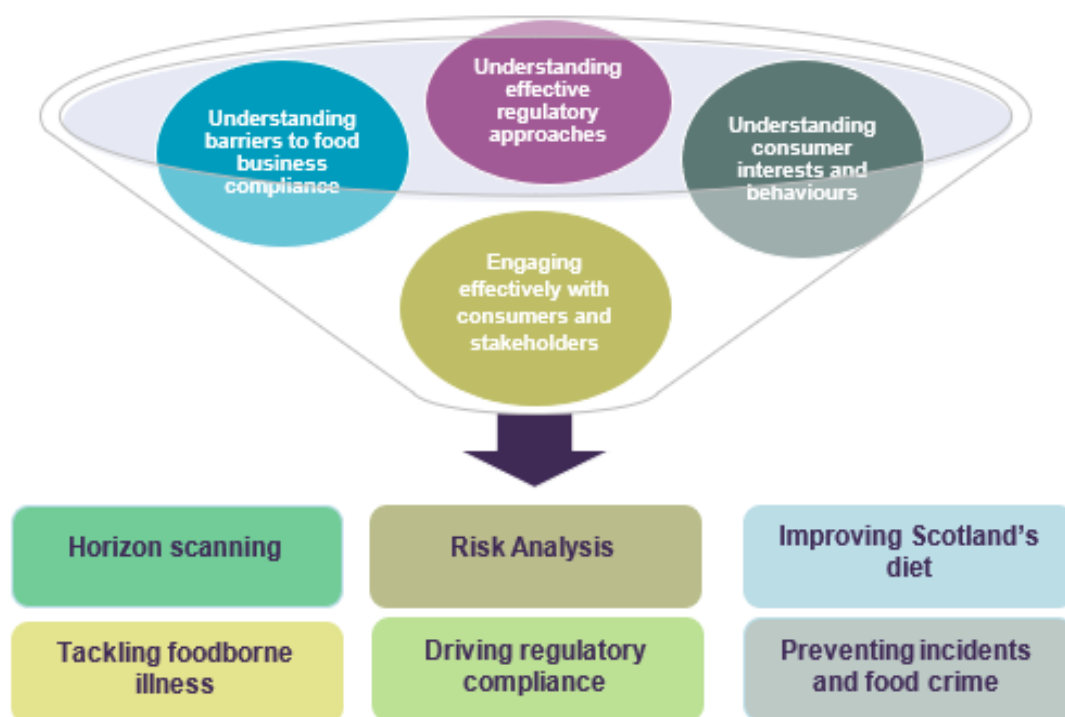
**Advancing technologies** are changing the way our food is produced and sold; and it is important that we are able to support consumers in understanding new production methods and processes and their potential risks and benefits. Social science has a key role to play in our ability to communicate science effectively and providing information in a way that best enables consumers to make informed choices about their food purchases.

**Climate change** presents future challenges to the security, nutritional quality and safety of our food supply chains, and maintaining a strong social science evidence base allows us to keep track of the impacts on consumers and their concerns around the global food system.

## Delivering our strategic priorities

Today’s food system is increasingly complex - involving multiple actors including producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and consumers – all of whom experience different challenges around the availability, cost and quality of food and its impact on well-being. The behaviours of these actors are influenced by a range of external factors including financial pressures, land availability, social trends, changes to policy and regulation, the emergence of new technologies and the effects of a changing climate. These in turn impact on outcomes such as population health, economics, equity, societal cohesion and the environment.<sup>4</sup>

In order to deliver effectively as Scotland’s food body and act in the best interests of consumers, it is critical that FSS understands the motivators and behaviours of all actors in the food chain and is able to connect with the people of Scotland to influence change, promoting a positive food culture, safe food practices and a healthier diet. The evidence needed to underpin this understanding and improve outcomes for consumers and food businesses in Scotland relies on our ability to apply social science methodologies and insights across a range of our strategic objectives (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. How social science supports the delivery of FSS strategy**

<sup>4</sup> Hasnain, S., Ingram, J. and Zurek, M. 2020. Mapping the UK Food System – a report for the UKRI Transforming UK Food Systems Programme. Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford. ISBN 978-1-874370-81-9



## What is social science?

Social science is not *ONE* thing. It consists of a myriad of approaches to understanding human behaviour, comprising a variety of methods of investigation focussing on different aspects of human behaviour – sometimes producing outputs that disagree with each other. Social science expertise is crucial to understand which are the best or most appropriate approaches and methods for a given topic, and therefore, likely to deliver the most robust and reliable evidence.

*“Social science is, in its broadest sense, the study of society and the manner in which people behave and influence the world around us.*

*Social science tells us about the world beyond our immediate experience, and can help explain how our own society works - from the causes of unemployment or what helps economic growth, to how and why people vote, or what makes people happy. It provides vital information for governments and policymakers, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and others.”<sup>5</sup>*

There are a wide range of social science subjects, although arguably, there are six ‘core’ disciplines that each offer a distinctive framework, subject focus and, methodology. Other social science subjects draw substantially on one or more of these ‘core’ subjects:<sup>5</sup>:

- **Economics** studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. It focuses on the behaviour and interactions of economic actors and how economies work.
- **Psychology** studies the human mind and behaviour to try to understand how individuals and groups experience the world through various emotions, ideas, cognitive processes and conscious states.
- **Sociology** focuses on groups of people, rather than individuals, and attempts to understand the way people relate to each other and function as a society or social subgroup.
- **Social anthropology** is the study of ‘culture’ and how human societies and social structures are organised and understood.
- **Political studies** focuses on democracy, power and the relationship between people and policy.
- **Human geography** studies the world, it’s people and communities in relation to ‘place’.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: adapted from [What is social science? - Economic and Social Research Council \(ukri.org\)](https://www.ukri.org/what-is-social-science/)

## How we will deliver social science in FSS

This section outlines *how* we aim to deliver high-quality, robust, evidence-based social research to guide, inform and support decision-making and policy development across FSS. This comprises support and advice relating to the collection and analysis of evidence, and oversight for research methods which provides assurance over the quality of that evidence.

### Support and advice on social research

FSS’s social science function offers specialist expertise in research methods for understanding human behaviour and gathering and analysing social science evidence. Following the launch of FSS’s strategy for 2021-26, a scoping review of social science activity in FSS was carried out which identified that, whilst programmes of work were underway to collect consumer insights across a number of business areas, there was a need to develop a more structured approach for addressing our social science evidence needs. Figure 2 lays out the various steps in the research process at which social science expertise can add value to the work of FSS by ensuring the methodologies and tools employed are best suited to our evidence needs and that outputs are robust and quality assured.



**Figure 2. Stages in the research process where social science can add value.**

FSS commissions consumer research and other social science projects directly and through collaboration with partners including the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Scottish Government (SG) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Our social science function supports the development of FSS’s evidence base through on-going engagement across other areas of FSS business including:

- **Communications and marketing** to provide advice on the design of tracker surveys;
- **Regulatory policy** to commission and review evidence on ‘Other Legitimate Factors’ which are relevant to our risk analysis process;
- **Foodborne illness reduction** to commission and review evidence on food safety behaviours and support the development of interventions for influencing these behaviours;
- **Public Health Nutrition** to support our evidence base on the relationship between the food environment and food behaviours and how this impacts on achieving a healthy diet;
- **Enforcement, food crime and audit functions** to advise on the collection of information and insights from Local Authorities and businesses which will help to inform improvements to food law delivery and compliance.

Traditional social research methods include qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection which vary in appropriateness depending on the subject matter and purpose. **The three components of our social science ‘toolkit’ are shown in Figure 3 below.** It is important that this is regularly reviewed to ensure we are applying the most relevant and up-to-date methodologies, tools and data that are available.

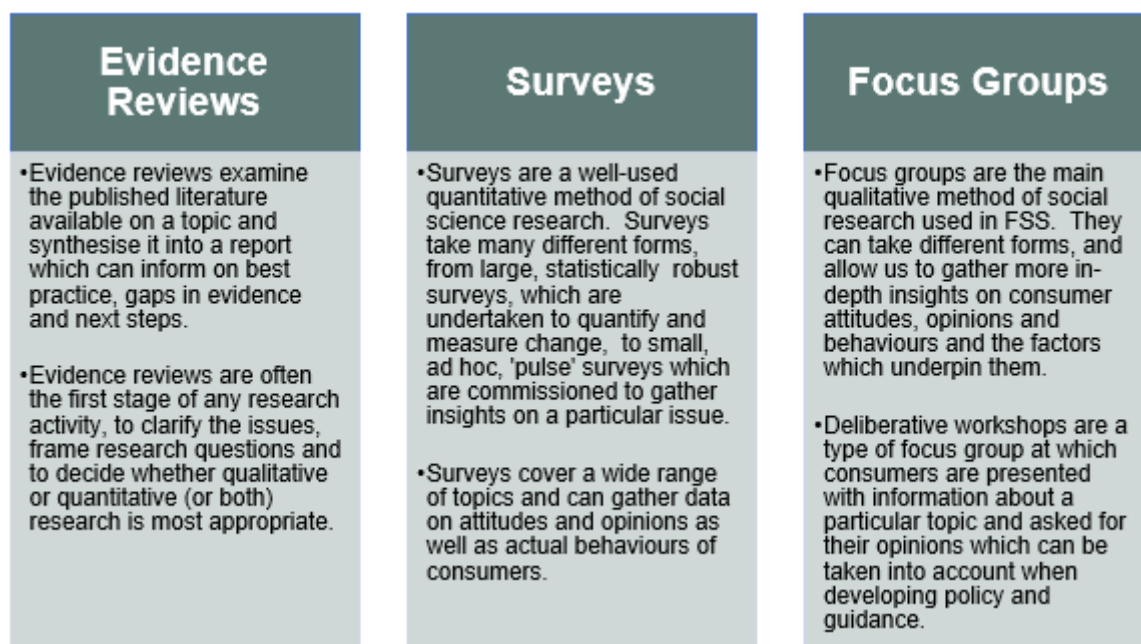


Figure 3. Our social science ‘toolkit’.

## Best practice and governance

### *Identifying the best methods for understanding behaviours*

There are many different theories and frameworks for understanding human behaviour within the social sciences and it is important to ensure that the model being applied is suitable in the

context of the particular area of interest. For example, the COM-B model<sup>6</sup> is widely used by government to identify what needs to change in order for a behaviour change intervention to be effective, and can be used to help us assess the impact of interventions on behaviours around food safety and diet.

### ***Providing advice on policy evaluation***

Measuring the impact of activities carried out across FSS is essential to our success and continuous improvement. We will develop and embed the use of evaluation methodologies and tools to enable us to assess the impact of our work to improve food safety and healthy eating in Scotland.

### ***Ensuring research transparency, accountability and ethics***

It is critical that social research is transparent and accountable and is carried out to the highest ethical standards, taking account of the [Government Social Research Strategy](#), and seeking advice where appropriate through engagement with appropriate experts. A Social Science Research checklist will be developed to ensure data protection and ethics are considered for all social science projects commissioned by FSS.

### ***Assuring the quality of outputs***

Having high-quality, robust, evidence-based social research is essential to guide, inform and support decision-making and policy development across FSS. As members of the Government Social Research profession our social scientists will work across FSS and with external partners including the FSA and SG to ensure the application of quality assurance principles across our programme, including processes for peer review and evaluation.

### ***Taking account of equalities***

It is best practice for all public bodies to consider the impacts of their policies and interventions on specific groups of people-particularly those with protected characteristics. Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments and Fairer Duty Scotland Impact Assessments enables us to meet our legal obligations under the **Equality Act 2010** when delivering the FSS strategy. Social science expertise can support different FSS business areas in understanding differences in awareness, attitudes and behaviours between different equalities groups of consumers to ensure policies are appropriately targeted and that we employ communications approaches that are likely to have the best impact.

### ***Disseminating Outputs***

A publication and dissemination strategy will be developed for all social research projects delivered in FSS. Outputs from our research programmes will be disseminated through ad hoc presentations within FSS, to our partners and stakeholders, and at conferences. We will

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<sup>6</sup> Communication + Opportunity + Motivation = Behaviour from Michie, S, Atkins, L. & West, R. 2014 The Behaviour Change Wheel: A Guide to Designing Interventions, Silverback Publishing ISBN: 978-1-912141-00-5

continue to explore additional avenues to disseminate findings from research outputs in order to ensure that social science research has a high visibility within the organisation and externally to maximise impact.

**Developing Capacity**

Having the skills, competencies and resources are crucial to ensuring effective social science. Our social science function aims to build capacity through training, development and partnerships which support those across FSS in understanding how social science should be applied in their areas of work and will enable the organisation to access the data and expertise we need to maintain an on-going awareness of human behaviours in the context of a changing food system.

**Who we will work with**

Collaboration and partnerships are essential to supporting and underpinning FSS’s social science research programme (Figure 4). We will build links across all FSS’s business areas, delivering our work through collaborations with external partners such as SG, FSA and international food regulators. As our programme develops, we intend to build on this through the strengthening of networks with academics and external experts as a source of advice and peer review to support us with the delivery of a high quality social science research programme.



**Figure 4. Key partnerships and collaborations and how they will support the delivery of an effective social science function in FSS.**

## Annex B – Progress to date and future priorities

FUNCTION	ACTIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE	FUTURE PRIORITIES
<b>Support and Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide on-going social science advice to support the delivery of FSS priorities.</li> <li>• Build capacity to apply social science methodologies and tools across FSS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertook an initial scoping exercise in 2021 to map the extent and range of existing social science activities in FSS and potential gaps in our evidence base.</li> <li>• Developed analytical capacity within the team through relevant training on relevant models, tools and software packages to support project design and data analysis.</li> <li>• Provided advice to support consumer messaging and the design of the Food in Scotland Tracker survey.</li> <li>• Explored different models of understanding behaviour that might be of use within FSS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with relevant FSS teams and FSA to refine methods for tracking consumer knowledge and interests on food safety and diet in Scotland.</li> <li>• Continue to engage with different FSS business areas to understand social science needs in the context of the organisation’s prioritisation exercise and develop social science capability.</li> <li>• Continue to develop an understanding of how the COM-B model can be used to support FSS in influencing behaviour change.</li> </ul>
<b>Commissioning Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work across FSS business areas to understand evidence needs.</li> <li>• Design research programmes which deliver social science outputs that address FSS priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Published a report on the <a href="#">Interests, Needs and Concerns around Food of Scottish consumers</a>. The findings from this research were published in the first FSA/FSS joint annual report.</li> <li>• Delivered an evidence base on the levels of knowledge and attitudes to new breeding technologies.</li> <li>• Published research undertaken in collaboration with FSA on <a href="#">Food behaviours in the UK student population</a>.</li> <li>• Commissioned research aimed at understanding levels of knowledge on terminology relating to food allergy and hypersensitivity and the impact of legislative changes on allergen labelling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a suite of social research projects to support FSS’s programme of work to transform Local Authority delivery of food law (SAFER).</li> <li>• Develop research aimed at understanding consumer knowledge, interests and views on food labelling.</li> <li>• Continue to develop consumer evidence base on new technologies in food.</li> <li>• Augment FSS’s consumer research programme by commissioning a sample of consumers in Scotland in the FSA Food and You2 Wave 8 survey.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Best Practice and Governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop governance procedures which ensure that social science research carried out within FSS is robust, reliable, and transparent.</li> <li>• Ensure research is carried out to the highest ethical standards, and that equalities are appropriately considered across all of FSS’s work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained membership of the Government Social Research profession which stipulates quality principles for conducting social research.</li> <li>• Established ad-hoc Project Groups to provide policy expertise and oversight for social science research projects</li> <li>• Worked in partnership with FSA Social Science teams and their Advisory Committee for Social Science to procure advice on quality assurance and support for peer review.</li> <li>• Ran workshops for disseminating the findings of completed research projects to interested parties in FSS, SG and FSA.</li> <li>• Developed frameworks and tools (utilising existing frameworks/tools) to ensure good research practice in relation to ethics, data protection, equality, quality assurance, publication and engagement, and measuring impact and evaluation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build networks with external experts to strengthen access to peer review services across a range of social science areas.</li> <li>• Work with FSS Communications and Marketing team to develop a dedicated space on the FSS website to improve access to social research reports and raise awareness of our research needs.</li> <li>• Continue to develop frameworks and tools to ensure good research practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaboration and Partnerships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with business areas across FSS to develop an understanding of the role of social science in the delivery of our objectives and the approaches which are appropriate to apply in different policy areas.</li> <li>• Build effective external networks to support the delivery of social science in FSS, with partners such as academics, SG and FSA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated and/or participated in relevant FSS cross office groups to promote an understanding of social science evidence needs relating to priorities on risk analysis (‘Other Legitimate Factors), Public Health Nutrition, Regulatory Strategy.</li> <li>• Meet regularly with FSA and SG social science teams to identify areas for collaboration and share best practice.</li> <li>• Fostered relationships with government social scientists in other countries through participation in International Social Science Liaison Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with SG and UKRI to influence wider social science research programmes relating to food and public health.</li> <li>• Engage with Universities and research providers to establish a network of external experts to support and advise on the development of FSS’s social science programme.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX C

### Social Research Projects Commissioned by FSS since the launch of our 2021-26 strategy

**Parental views on diet and behaviours in Scotland** Questionnaire issued by Ipsos Scotland on attitudes to healthy eating, sustainability, and the impact of COVID-19 on diet as part of their annual omnibus survey to explore the attitudes and views of parents in Scotland. Published March 2022. [751723\\_SCT0422731150-001\\_Parental\\_Views\\_P2\\_\(1\).pdf \(foodstandards.gov.scot\)](#)

**Out of Home Calorie Labelling and Children's Menu Research with those Experiencing Socioeconomic Disadvantage** Qualitative research which sought to explore views on calorie labelling when eating out of home (OOH) and the development of a code of practice for children's menus. Published April 2022. [Out of Home Calorie Labelling and Children's Menu Research with those Experiencing Socioeconomic Disadvantage | Food Standards Scotland](#)

**Consumer Interests in Food (with FSA):** Joint mixed methods research to provide a detailed snapshot of consumer views and priorities in relation to food – UK report published May 2022: [UK Public's Interests, Needs and Concerns Around Food | Food Standards Agency](#). Findings from the joint research were used in the FSA/FSS Joint Annual Report 2022: [Executive summary | Food Standards Agency](#). A separate report for Scotland was also published in June 2022: [Interests, needs and concerns around food: the public's view in Scotland | Food Standards Scotland](#)

**Review of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme:** A mixed methods study to support the Regulatory Strategy and scope out potential for the development of a Consumer Information Scheme. The project concluded in April 2023 with a presentation of evidence to the Regulatory Strategy Programme Board and is available for internal use.

**Exploring Food Insecurity and Food Safety Behaviours in University Students (with FSA):** Joint mixed methods research examining the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of university students relating to food – Published January 2023: [Food behaviours in the UK student population: executive summary | Food Standards Agency](#)

**Survey of public attitudes towards precision breeding (with FSA):** Joint survey research of residents in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland examining consumer attitudes towards precision breeding. Published on FSA website October 2022: [Survey of public attitudes towards precision breeding | Food Standards Agency](#). Findings from the joint survey were also used in an FSA publication in March 2023: [Consumer perceptions of precision breeding: Executive summary | Food Standards Agency](#)

**Evaluation of Pre-packed for Direct Sales Legislation (PPDS) – Experiences of Food Business Operators (FBOs) and Local Authorities (LAs) (with FSA):** Joint mixed methods research examining the impact of the PPDS legislation on FBOs and LAs across the UK. Published on the FSA Website June 2023: [Introduction - PPDS evaluation | Food Standards Agency](#)

**Consumer attitudes towards the diet and food environment in Scotland** A quantitative survey which asked more than 1,500 adults a series of questions on food and diet including impacts of the cost of living crisis, consumer attitudes towards eating out of the home and sustainable food purchases. Published June 2023. [Consumer attitudes towards the diet and food environment in Scotland research report | Food Standards Scotland](#)

**Evaluation of Pre-packed for Direct Sales Legislation (PPDS) – Experience of Consumers with food allergies and intolerances:** FSS qualitative research examining the impact and experiences of PPDS legislation on consumers with food allergies and intolerances in Scotland. *Publication forthcoming*

**Consumer views on New Breeding Technologies (NBTs) in food products:** Qualitative research with consumers in Scotland to examine awareness and attitudes to NBTs in food products, including attitudes to terminology, understanding of the risks and benefits and opinions about the future regulation of NBTs in foods. *Publication forthcoming.*