

Food Standards Scotland – Public Health Scotland Partnership Agreement

1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 This paper invites the Board to agree the proposals for a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with Public Health Scotland (PHS) and to note how we intend to deliver agreed priorities.
- 1.2 The SPA essentially sets out high a level commitment to seek and develop opportunities for joint working and capacity building through the sharing of resources, skills and expertise where there is a clear public health benefit. Specifically, it includes governance proposals for delivery of an action plan which brings together our joint commitments with regard to dietary health improvement and responsibilities to optimise the use of data and evidence needed to target interventions for reducing food borne disease.
- 1.3 The Board is asked to:
 - **Agree** the SPA and proposed governance arrangements ; and
 - **Note** the more detailed proposals for delivery of the SPA which will be set out in an Action plan (to be agreed by officials).

2 Strategic aims

- 2.1 This work supports FSS Strategic Outcome 1 – Food is Safe and Authentic; 2 – Consumers Have Healthier Diets and 5 – FSS is trusted and influential.

3 Background

- 3.1 PHS was set up as a special health board, with a broad remit in relation to public health protection and health improvement in 2020. PHS (and its predecessors Health Protection Scotland (HPS), and NHS Health Scotland) has been a key partner for FSS in relation to the delivery of our strategic aims to improve Scotland’s diet and reduce foodborne disease. Previously, our partnership was defined in only broad terms through a Memorandum of Understanding which was developed between FSS and HPS in 2016. Up until now, explicit articulation of our shared aims, an action plan for delivery of those aims and joint governance for their delivery has not been set out and formally agreed.
- 3.2 In 2021 it was proposed that senior level interaction on both nutrition and health protection issues should be brigaded. This was to provide overarching governance for all aspects of our relationship - notwithstanding the specific FSS programme board arrangements that are already in place for nutrition.
- 3.3 Our shared priorities, as set out in the draft SPA, include:

- *recognition that improved data sharing protocols are vital in the mitigation of food borne illness.* This will allow us to better target our interventions for addressing the risks of food borne disease.
- *commitment to review our approach to incidents and resilience.* This includes the need to review how we communicate risk.
- *recognition that we need to provide leadership to enable and support local and national bodies working together to improve health and wellbeing in communities.*
- *a proposal to develop our approach to sharing data, intelligence and evidence.* This will help enable collaborative research activities aimed at addressing shared public health goals.

3.4 In order to deliver on these priorities a draft action plan is being developed to ensure that delivery of the SPA is met with tangible and measurable progress. The plan (which has been broadly agreed at official level) can be summarised as follows:

On diet and nutrition (alongside Scottish Government where appropriate):

- The joint development of a new Eating Out, Eating Well Framework;
- Working together to explore other levers to improve the food environment;
- Joint working on mandatory calorie labelling out of home and wider policy on restricting promotions on foods high, fat, salt and/or sugar (HFSS);
- Development of practical and evidence based actions to support those on lower incomes to eat more healthily; and
- Development of updated nutrition criteria to support Scottish Grocers Healthy Living programme (SGF HLP).

On health protection and foodborne disease:

- To explore how best we can share data and intelligence to identify where there are gaps in our evidence base and scope to undertake collaborative research to improve understanding of trends in foodborne infections;
- Improve process around permissions/ethical approval for handling patient data collected through clinical surveillance and epidemiological questionnaires to facilitate collaborative working and data analysis;
- Strengthen procedures for managing outbreaks of foodborne illness in Scotland through the development of joint guidance document in line with organisational statutory duties;

- Work together to improve the integration and co-ordination of 'One Health' strategy in Scotland through enhancements in surveillance and Public Health Laboratory Services; and
- Building on lessons learned from the COVID pandemic, explore how the implementation of Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) services in Scotland can improve the sharing of genomic and meta data to support the investigation of outbreaks and transmission pathways for foodborne pathogens.

3.5 In addition it was agreed that we would work together to agree on improvements to risk communications during incidents and any other circumstances where appropriate to improve delivery of consistent and helpful public health messaging on health protection and nutrition.

Statement of Performance Function commitments

3.6 The approach set out in the SPA is considered to be wholly in line with our Performance Function Commitments i.e. our commitment to work with:

Other public bodies and the third sector in partnership, to secure a healthier Scottish diet by coordinating promotion of consistent healthy eating messages as a key mechanism to influence diets and improve our future health outcomes;

Other food safety and nutrition research funders in Scotland, the rest of the UK and Europe to ensure co-ordination of efforts and focus; and

Other Government departments in Scotland and across the UK with a shared interest in our remit, to ensure we improve food and feed safety, labelling and the nutritional quality of food and drink products across the UK.

4 Discussion

4.1 The SPA (Annex A) is a high level articulation of respective strategic commitments, desired outcomes and shared priorities in the area of public health. The proposals formalise what was already in place on an informal basis, with a view to making sure that our shared priorities are matched at an operational level, and that any issues around delivery can be addressed.

4.2 Key to delivery of those priorities are agreed actions, and these will be set out in an Action Plan (summarised in section 3.4). The formal action plan itself will be agreed at official level, once resourcing and FSS prioritisation issues have been fully taken into account.

4.3 In terms of nutrition related priorities, FSS already has a Nutrition Programme in place, drawing in partners including PHS, as appropriate. This SPA and its governance are not intended to replicate that programme in any way. Instead these arrangements should complement that work by providing a means for organisations to both share wider public

health intelligence and wider strategy, as well as to providing a means of addressing any PHS/FSS specific issues arising from the programme as appropriate.

- 4.4 The Board is therefore asked to agree this SPA with PHS which will complement FSS's Nutrition Programme and strengthen our existing working arrangements on incident management and foodborne illness; providing a single "relationship management" form of governance for all our shared interests. This would provide clarity in terms of governance for those interests and a means of resolution should impediments to delivering agreed actions emerge.
- 4.5 The SPA comes at no additional cost to either FSA or PHS however specific actions within the plan will require staff time and programme spend which may be impacted following the FSS prioritisation work and available resources. Administrative support will also be required (ensuring parties have sight of papers in advance of meetings, minute taking, action log etc).
- 4.6 The SPA does not commit either organisation to spend on commissioning science and evidence. However science and evidence is critical to the delivery of the agreed actions and priorities under it, and that evidence will be used to assess our progress towards our strategic goals (rather than being used to assess the efficacy of this SPA per se). This includes ongoing monitoring of foodborne disease, incidents, and general surveillance as well as dietary outcomes. We will share data where possible to support the delivery of the SPA.
- 4.7 No consultation with external stakeholders on the SPA is planned, however specific actions set out in the action plan will be consulted on as appropriate in the usual way. The SPA will be published on the FSS website.

5 Options appraisal

- 5.1 No formal options appraisal has taken place. The alternative to a formal SPA and agreed governance arrangements are informal arrangements which will not provide a high level of assurance that actions and issues are being delivered or escalated as appropriate.

6 Identification of risks and issues

- 6.1 We do not consider that there are any substantive risks associated with the proposals set out here. They are intended to bring focus and impetus in the area of foodborne disease management and dietary health.
- 6.2 If we do not agree this SPA there is a risk of inefficient use of resources and the possibility that we will lose focus of agreed aims.
- 6.3 A degree of formality will require appropriate administrative support and the proposed governance will require active management and "buy in" from senior teams. These documents are intended to be live and to maintain momentum in areas where progress is

being made, and to address impediments to delivery of shared priorities and actions elsewhere.

7 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 7.1 Assessments have not been carried out as they were not considered necessary. The SPA itself articulates shared rather than new strategic aims and priorities.

8 Conclusion/Recommendations

8.1 The Strategic Partnership Agreement sets out a high level commitment to exploring opportunities for joint working, capacity building and skills development with the sharing of resources, skills and expertise where this will achieve collaborative gain. It includes governance proposals and supports delivery of an action plan (which will be finalised by officials in both FSS and PHS).

8.2 The Board is asked to:

- Agree the Strategic Partnership Agreement and proposed governance arrangements for it; and
- Note the draft summarised content of the Action plan, which will be finalised at official level.

Please direct queries to:

Jennifer.Howie@fss.scot

UK and International Relations Team

November 2022

Annex A

Strategic Partnership Agreement

Public Health Scotland

and

Food Standards Scotland

Date: xx

Version: 1

[To include version history and key personnel]

1. Introduction

This Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) is a commitment between Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and Public Health Scotland (PHS) to work together to identify, plan and deliver shared aims in public health and food safety/ consumer protection to create a Scotland where everyone thrives.

Our vision is for a sustainable food environment which is safe, protects consumers and enables everyone to have a healthy weight and diet.

To deliver this vision and to help tackle Scotland's persistent health and wellbeing inequalities we will work together to:

- improve our diets
- improve the food environment
- refine our food borne resilience/incidents response
- reduce foodborne illness

To support and achieve this objective, PHS and FSS will collaborate to:

- Identify potential barriers to creating a sustainable, safe and healthy food environment;
- Take forward collective actions to mitigate against those barriers as set out in Annex A *[detail to be agreed by officials – not attached]*;
- Ensure robust governance of this agenda through the structures set out in this document.

2. Who we are

Public Health Scotland is Scotland's lead national agency for prolonging, improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of all of Scotland's people. Public Health Scotland's [Strategic Plan](#) 2020–23 has a vision of 'A Scotland where everybody thrives', and outlines how it will contribute to Scotland's [Public Health Priorities](#) and [National Performance Framework](#). Its strategic priorities [for the next three years] are:

- COVID-19
- Mental wellbeing
- Community and place
- Poverty and children

Food Standards Scotland is the public sector food body for Scotland. Its remit covers all aspects of the food chain in Scotland that can impact public health, aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and promote healthy eating. FSS' strategic vision is to be Scotland's leading authority on food safety, standards and healthy eating; using data and evidence to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improves public health.

[FSS' 2021-2026 Strategy](#) outlines our focus on the issues that matter most to people in Scotland, including renewed emphasis on improving the Scottish diet and associated negative health consequences.

3. Partnership Governance/Accountability

The Chief Executive Officers of FSS and PHS jointly affirm their commitment to develop effective working relationships so as to ensure that the best possible service is delivered. Officials of each organisation will continue to maintain regular contact in order to discuss business of mutual interest. Good communication in both directions will be essential to effective working within and between both organisations.

We will explore opportunities for joint working, capacity building and skills development across both organisations (and with partners), with the sharing of resources, skills and expertise where this will achieve collaborative gain.

To support the ongoing review and development of this strategic partnership agreement and to hold each other to account for delivering what we have committed, the following approaches will be applied:

- Governance meetings every 2 months between Chief Executives to take place in accordance with ToRs [in Annex B – not attached, officials to agree]. These meetings will:
 - support delivery of the Action plan
 - assist in providing governance for PHS/FSS input to wider matters on Public Health
- Named officers in the action plan will meet at a frequency appropriate to the actions but as a minimum will meet bimonthly in order to update on relevant actions as set out [in Annex A] in order to inform Governance meetings by exception.
- Feedback and review of SPA by lead officers to identify any changes required.

- Commitment to any action plans arising under this agreement and ongoing improvement in joint work streams.

➤ 4. Shared National Strategic Context

As public bodies we contribute to delivering Scotland's **National Performance Framework** (NPF), which supports cross-sector collaboration focused on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all people to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. We also have important contributions to the National Public Health Priorities, which underpin the NPF. In particular we have a shared role in creating a sustainable food environment which is safe, protects consumers and enables everyone to have a healthy weight and diet.

5. Joint Priority Areas for Action

The joint priority areas for action are set out in the Action Plan

This includes –

- a focus on dietary health
- recognition that improved data sharing protocols are vital in the mitigation of food borne illness
- Commitment to review our approach to incidents and resilience
- recognition that we need to provide leadership to enable and support local and national bodies working together to improve health and wellbeing in communities
- a proposal to develop our approach to sharing data, intelligence and evidence

- A commitment to working together on joint communications

6. Review

This document and the Action Plan will be formally reviewed at least every 2 years and signed off by Chief Executives. Strategic leads for PHS and FSS will lead on the co-ordination of updates.

➤ Contact Details :

| Public Health Scotland | | Food Standards Scotland | |
|---|-----------------|--|--|
| First Point of Contact: | Richmond Davies | First Point of Contact | Jennifer Howie 07990788501 Jennifer.howie@fss.scot |
| Address: Public Health Scotland Meridian Court 5 Cadogan Square Glasgow G2 6QE | | Address: Food Standards Scotland 3rd Floor Pilgrim House Old Ford Road Aberdeen, AB11 5RL | |

➤ Strategic Partnership Agreement *<insert date and year of Strategic Partnership Agreement>*

We agree and accept this Strategic Partnership Agreement between:

Public Health Scotland, **Meridian Court, 5 Cadogan Square, Glasgow, G2 6QE** and:

Food Standards Scotland, Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road, Aberdeen, AB11 5RL.

| Public Health Scotland | |
|------------------------|--|
| Name: | |
| Position: | |

| | | | |
|------------|--|-------|--|
| Signature: | | Date: | |
|------------|--|-------|--|

| Food Standards Scotland | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------|--|
| Name: | Geoff Ogle | | |
| Position: | Chief Executive | | |
| Signature: | | Date: | |