

Title of policy/ practice/ strategy/ legislation etc.	Food Standards Scotland Strategy 2026-2031	
Minister	Minister for Public Health and Women's Health	
Lead official	Garry McEwan	
Officials involved in the EQIA	Christine Hill Natalie Greenland	Head of Private Office Head of Corporate Support
Directorate: Division: Team	Food Standards Scotland Corporate Services	
Is this a new policy or a revision to an existing policy?	No – new strategy	

Executive Summary

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has developed its 2026–2031 Strategy to protect public health, improve dietary health, and safeguard consumer interests in relation to food. This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) evaluates the potential impacts of the strategy on individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and identifies opportunities to promote equality.

The assessment concludes that the strategy is not directly or indirectly discriminatory. However, it highlights areas where targeted actions can advance equality of opportunity, particularly in relation to age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, race, and religion or belief. The EQIA also underscores the importance of inclusive communication and engagement to ensure equitable outcomes.

Key Findings

1. Positive Impacts Identified

- Policies developed under this strategy will consider evidence on risks of foodborne illness and diet across different population groups.
- Opportunities exist to advance equality through tailored communication and engagement strategies.

2. No Negative or Discriminatory Impacts

- The strategy applies universally and does not create barriers for any protected group.
- No unlawful discrimination was identified.

3. Evidence Gaps

- Limited data is available on disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, and religion or belief in relation to food safety and dietary health.
- Need for more granular data on food practices among ethnic groups and intersectionality between characteristics.

4. External Factors

- EU Exit and COVID-19 have influenced food regulation and consumer behavior, requiring adaptive policy responses.

Analysis

Age: Older adults face higher risks of foodborne illness; younger adults exhibit riskier food hygiene behaviors and poorer diets.

Sex: Men are more likely to adopt unsafe food practices; women generally have healthier diets.

Pregnancy and Maternity: Increased vulnerability to foodborne illness (e.g., Listeria) and specific nutritional needs.

Cultural and dietary practices influence food safety and nutrition; language and cultural competence are critical for effective communication.

Disability: Limited evidence, but potential vulnerabilities exist, especially for those with learning disabilities or long-term health conditions.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Inclusive Communication** - Implement the Accessible and Inclusive Communications Plan (2024–26) across all strategy outputs and ensure culturally competent messaging and address digital exclusion.
2. **Targeted Engagement** - Collaborate with organisations representing protected groups during policy development.
3. **Data Improvement** - Consider research to fill evidence gaps in disability, ethnicity, and intersectionality, and utilise the FSS Consumer Tracker and Scottish Health Survey data for ongoing monitoring.

- 4. Policy Development** - Embed Consumer Duty principles (fairness, transparency, avoidance of harm) in all communications and interventions. Consider tailored interventions for high-risk groups (e.g., older adults, pregnant women, low-income households).
- 5. Monitoring and Review** - Establish a framework to track equality outcomes as new policies and interventions are implemented. Report progress annually to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The FSS Strategy 2026–2031 provides a strong foundation for promoting equality and protecting public health. By considering the above recommendations, FSS can enhance inclusivity, address evidence gaps, and ensure that all communities benefit equitably from its work.

Authorisation of EQIA

This Equality Impact Assessment has informed us of the development of this policy.

Opportunities to promote equality in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have been considered, including:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Removing or minimising any barriers and/or disadvantages;
- Taking steps which assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs;
- Encouraging participation (e.g. in public life) and
- Fostering good relations, tackling prejudice, and promoting understanding.

The Equality Impact Assessment has also assessed the Marriage and Civil Partnership protected characteristic and the policy does not apply in respect of this.

Declaration

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for Food Standards Scotland's Strategy for 2026-31 and give my authorisation for the results of this assessment to be published on the Scottish Government's website and the FSS Website.

Name: Garry McEwan

Position: Head of Corporate Services

Authorisation date: 26/01/2026