

Minutes

Ninth Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science 20th July 2022 minutes

Location: Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Time: 10:00 - 13:00

Attendees: ACSS

- Professor Susan Michie, (SM), Chair
- Ms Julie Hill (JH), Deputy Chair
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB)
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH)
- Professor Dan Rigby (DR)
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HLM)
- Professor George Gaskell (GG)

Attendees: Food Standards Agency

- Michelle Patel (MP)
- Jo Disson (JD)
- Rebecca Gillespie (RG)
- Tim Johnston (TJ)
- Ely Mirzahosseinkhan (EM)
- Anya Mohideen (AM)
- Abbie Collins (AC)
- Alice Rayner (AR)
- Niki Rust (NR)
- Nick Daniel (ND)
- Zena Lopez (ZL)

Other Attendees

- Professor Sandy Thomas (ST)

Apologies

- Dr Seda Erdem (SE)

Papers:

- 9.1: Secretariat Update (item 5)
- 9.2: FSA Analytics Unit Update (item 6)
- 9.3: Assurance Working Group update (item 8)
- 9.4: Kitchen Life 2 Working Group update (item 8)
- 9.5: Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour Working Group update (item 8)
- 9.6: Wider Consumer Interests Working Group update (item 8)
- 9.7: Economics Working Group update (item 8)
- 9.8: Equity and inequality in FSA research, and proposed future work exploring household food insecurity (items 9 and 10)

Summary of actions

Action 9.1: To circulate the presentation around the measures of household food insecurity which was created when redeveloping Food and You 2.

Owner: Michelle Patel

Delivery date: August 2022

Action 9.2: To check with FSA Comms team about food safety in a heatwave messaging.

Owner: Michelle Patel

Delivery date: July 2022

Outcome: The FSA comms team issued specific [messaging](#) during the heatwave, which MP subsequently circulated to attendees.

Summary of meeting:

The 9th Open Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) included updates from: the Secretariat, on recruitment and the SAC review; Working Group chairs, on recent activity of current groups; and the Heads of Analytics Unit and Social Science, on key programmes of work.

Additionally:

- Professor Susan Michie announced that she is stepping down as ACSS Chair. Following the recent recruitment process, the current Deputy Chair, Julie Hill, will take over the role of Chair from October 2022.
- Professor Sandy Thomas, Science Council Chair gave an update on recent Science Council activity.
- Zena Lopez, Head of FSA Strategy Development explained the FSA's focus on household food insecurity, with Joanna Disson subsequently outlining the future work plan in this area and facilitating a discussion amongst the ACSS members.

Welcome and introductions

SM welcomed everyone to the 9th ACSS meeting and noted that the meeting is being recorded. SM welcomed AC, the new placement student from Warwick University who joins the secretariat team following Maya King's return to university. SM thanked Maya for her previous work.

Declaration on interest

JH (Deputy Chair) declared her role as Chair of WRAP and the overlap with the Climate Change Consumer Behaviour Working Group.

Actions from the last meeting

Two outstanding actions:

1. Action 8.2: To redraft the Economics Working Group objectives, ensuring there is a clear scope, start and end date. The scope and timeframes are yet to be confirmed, and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group on the 26th July.
2. Action 8.3 ACSS secretariat to review how the FSA utilises ACSS expertise including timeframes and inputs from each Working Group, and principles for using the ad hoc request function. Findings will be reviewed by the

Assurance Working Group in the first instance. A paper addressing this action is currently under FSA review.

Chairs update

SM announced that this will be her last ACSS plenary meeting, as she will be stepping down from October. Following the recent recruitment process, the current Deputy Chair, Julie Hill, will take on the role of Chair from October. SM reflected on the last four years of being Chair of the ACSS, praising the progress of the Committee in terms of outputs and impacts, and the breadth of topics that are being explored within the Analytics Unit. SM noted the recently set up Gateway Sessions (in which the Assurance Group review proposals for upcoming research) and the effective working relationships fostered between FSA staff, the secretariat teams and committee members. SM noted that she is leaving the Committee in an excellent place, and thanked members and the secretariat for their contributions. JH thanked SM for leading the Committee on a successful journey. MP thanked SM for the excellent advice and strong leadership. SM announced her new role as Chair of the WHO Technical Advisory Group on Behavioural Insights and Sciences for Health.

Secretariat update (Paper 9.1)

RG updated on

1. **Recruitment:** ACSS had a successful recruitment campaign with 20 applicants. Four new appointments have been offered and JH has accepted the Chair position. The secretariat is exploring recruiting additional members from NI and Wales during the SAC recruitment period in September 2022.
2. **SAC review:** Following Cabinet Office publication of [Guidance on the undertaking of Reviews of Public Bodies](#) earlier this year, all SACs will undergo a self-assessment, led by the admin hub with SACs created since the last triennial review in 2016 (inc. the ACSS and Science Council) requiring a deep review by an independent assessor. Deep reviews are planned to be completed by February 2023. Members may be asked to feed into the deep review, likely by an interview.

Analytics Unit update (Paper 9. 2)

JD, acting head of Social Science and TJ, acting Head of Analytics presented on current projects and publications. Key points included:

1. Social Science has submitted a Treasury bid under the Evaluation Accelerator Fund for healthy and sustainable diet intervention behavioural trials. This is a cross-government bid with DEFRA and Health Education and Communities.
2. William Roelofs (currently Head of Northern Ireland Evidence & Analysis at Defra) will be starting in early August as **Head of the Analytics Unit**. William will be taking over as Head of Analytics before the next plenary meeting.

Update from Science Council chair

1. ST provided a brief overview of ongoing Science Council (SC) work and recent meetings attended including:
 1. The FSA board meeting, March 2022, where the need for clarity on the science assurance role that SC play was raised.
 2. A meeting with Government Chief Scientific Adviser (January, 2022), Patrick Vallance, where the potential of SACs having associate members and setting up a climate change subgroup chaired by Maggie Gill, Chair of the Scottish Science Advisory Council, was discussed.
2. SC has had a successful recruitment period with 3 new members. These new members are skilled in modelling, agriculture technology, food technology and veterinary science. Sarah O'Brian has left after her second term.
3. [The Food safety and Net Zero Carbon interim report](#) was published in July and highlighted the main changes that are currently happening around the primary production of food. JH spoke about the positive working relationship between the SC's [Working Group 6 on Food Safety and Net Zero Carbon](#) and ACSS's [Climate Change Consumer Behaviour Working Group](#).

ACSS Working Group Updates

Assurance Working Group (Paper 9.3): HLM updated on recent activity of the group, including:

- Working with UCL to create a research tool kit for in-house and externally-procured research. The output is expected in August.

- Taking part in the first quarterly ‘Social Science Gateway Session’ to review proposed Social Science research in the FSA.
- **Kitchen Life 2 Working Group (Paper 9.4):** JB updated on the recent activity of the group, including their recent meeting where the members discussed:
 - How to disseminate the project outputs effectively
 - Opportunities for secondary analysis
 - Suitable research questions for two MSc students from Leeds University.

The final Kitchen Life 2 report is expected in Autumn 2023.

Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour Working Group (Paper 9.5):

JH provided an update on the recent activity of the group, including the recent publication of [The impact of climate change on consumer food behaviours: Identification of potential trends and impacts](#), outlining findings from two expert workshops. The report flagged a reduction in food waste as a potential impact on food safety if consumers are motivated to eat food past its use by date. Kitchen Life 2 may explore this topic in secondary analysis. JH clarified that the report did not target businesses specifically, however an industry expert on packaging was present at the initial workshop. JH agreed with ST that engaging businesses would be a valuable next step. The Working Group will pause their activity until new ACSS members have joined in October 2022.

Wider Consumer Interests Working Group (Paper 9. 8):

SH spoke about the FSA expanding its remit beyond food safety. The terms of reference and scope of the Working Group have been developed and agreed, and the group fed into the June 2022 social science report [UK Public’s Interests, Needs and Concerns Around Food](#). The group are meeting on the 21st of July to discuss and reflect on the recent steer from the Board in terms of a priority focus on Household Food Insecurity under this programme of work and possible support needed on the FSAs Consumer Insight Survey.

Economics Support Working Group (Paper 9.7):

SH reported that the group have agreed Terms of Reference and reviewed the economic work plan for the next financial year. The group will meet later this month to discuss future activities.

SM handed over to JH to chair the rest of the meeting.

FSA research exploring household food insecurity (Paper 9.8)

- ZL, Head of strategy Development set out the rationale behind FSA expanding the evidence base exploring household food insecurity (HHFI). Whilst the FSA is not a lead in this policy area, we can play a role as an evidence generator and convenor and collaborator, as per the roles set out in the [FSA five-year strategy](#) (2022 -2027).
- **Discussion around future work plan exploring household food insecurity (Paper 9.8)**

JD outlined the completed, current and in train projects exploring HHFI within the Analytics Unit. JD presented the future work plan that was recently presented to the board (Annex B) which is focused on HHFI. JD flagged that the plan would have to be prioritised and not all will be delivered by the social science team. JD sought feedback from members on three main questions:

What are your views on the steer from the board?

Members felt that HHFI is a key consumer interest and an important area for the FSA to be exploring.

Are there other areas/elements of work that could be considered?

1. GG flagged that the Food and You2 data shows that ethnic minorities have lower trust in the food chain and a greater level of HHFI, and that it would be helpful to explore further with qualitative ethnographic research to better understand the issue (e.g. where food is purchased, dietary requirements, impact of cost of living crisis)
2. HLM spoke about the importance of working through these ideas in more detail as the next step and prioritising the work. HLM flagged that this will be an iterative process and it is key to understand the landscape in a lot of detail prior to starting a systematic review.
3. Whilst the group acknowledged the important role the FSA can play in term of generating evidence for other stakeholders, it was felt that prioritisation should consider the areas that the FSA can have a direct impact. For example:

SH spoke about the importance of research on the relationships between accessing food banks and access to a healthy diet. SH flagged the need for work around the different models of food banks and how these impact access to a

healthy diet and culturally appropriate food. SH also spoke about the lack of research on ethnic minorities and HHFI.

SH spoke about how the UK only has an official relative measure of poverty and not one based on the minimum standard of living. SH suggested that the FSA explored issues such as how much a healthy diet costs and the percentage of income that people should spend on food.

DR spoke about the difference between the way Food and You 2 and DWPs Family Resources Survey measure food insecurity. MP flagged previous internal work carried out by FSA exploring different measures of HHFI. JD flagged that a) we are discussing a piece of work with academic experts to further explore measurement of HHFI and b) FSA are part of a cross governmental group discussing measurement of HHFI.

JH stressed the importance of having sufficient insight into the landscape of others working in this field to prioritise the future work plan. JD flagged stakeholder engagement as a first step in increasing our knowledge of the landscape.

How can ACSS best support the work programme outline?

1. The HHFI plan of work will sit under the Wider Consumer Interests programme and therefore be guided by the WCI Working Group.
2. All projects will go through the new Gateway Process and will be reviewed by the Assurance Working Group.

Action 9.1: To share the previous internal work carried out by FSA exploring different measures of HHFI

Owner: Michelle Patel

Delivery date: August 2022

AOB

1. JH thanked SM for her hard work as Chair for the last four years, and the wider committee for their contributions over the same period.
2. GG queried whether the FSA had put out any comms messaging around food safety in a heatwave. MP to speak to FSA Comms team about this.

Action 9.2: To check with FSA Comms team about food safety in a heatwave messaging.

Owner: Michelle Patel

Delivery date: July 2022

Outcome: The FSA comms team issued specific [messaging](#) during the heatwave, which MP subsequently circulated to attendees.

Annex A: Future work plan

The future work plan exploring HHFI was presented to the board at the June 2022 meeting. Below are the current proposals, on which we are engaging with internal stakeholders to refine and develop, with an aim to deliver over the next 2 years.

1. A systematic review of HHFI in the UK identifying existing evidence gaps
2. Synthesis and interpretation of currently available data
3. Stakeholder mapping exercise and subsequent stakeholder workshop
4. Mapping of HHFI at LA level
5. Explore NHS datasets to assess the impacts of HHFI on food borne disease, nutrition, and health
6. New primary research on additional questions,
7. Actively report on food prices, joining up our reporting to produce a dashboard with OGD partners.
8. Explore development of risk analysis and impact assessment capabilities