

Eleventh meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (July 2023) Minutes

Eleventh Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science

5th July 2023 Minutes

Location: Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Time: 11:00 - 16:00

Attendees: ACSS

- Ms Julie Hill, (JH), Chair
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB), Deputy Chair
- Dr Charlotte Hardman (CH)
- Dr Naomi Maynard (NM)
- Professor Dan Rigby (DR)
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HLM)

Attendees: Food Standards Agency

- Rebecca Gillespie (RG)
- Abbie Collins (AC)
- Charlotte Parnell (CP)
- Harriet Pickles (HP)
- Helen Heard (HH)
- Joanna Disson (JD)
- Kerry Gillespie (KG)
- Kathleen Mooney (KM)
- Laura Broomfield (LB)
- Lucy King (LK)
- Michelle Patel (MP)
- Nat Gladstone (NG)
- Susan Jebb (SJ)

- Willem Roelofs (WR)

Other Attendees

- Matt Ensor (ME), DEFRA
- John O'Brien (JO), Science Council

Apologies

- Professor Fiona Gillison (FG)
- Professor George Gaskell (GG)
- Dr Seda Erdem (SE)
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH)

Agenda: See Annex A

Papers:

- 11.1: Secretariat update (Item 4)
- 11.2: Kitchen Life 2 Working Group update (Item 5)
- 11.3: Economics Working Group update (Item 5)
- 11.4: Wider Consumer Interests Working Group update (Item 5)
- 11.5: Assurance Working Group update (Item 5)
- 11.6: Analytics Unit update (Item 9)
- 11.7a: [SAC Review: Independent Report and Recommendations](#) (Item 10)
- 11.7b: [FSA Response to the SAC Review](#) (Item 10)

Summary of the meeting

The 11th Open Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) included updates from: the Secretariat, on staffing changes and reflections on the recent ACSS networking event; Working Group chairs, on recent activity of current groups; the Head of Social Science, on the recent independent Government Social Research (GSR) review of FSA's Social Science Team; and the Heads of Analytics Unit and Social Science, on recent activity and priorities going forward.

Additionally:

- Update from Professor Susan Jebb, Chair of the FSA.
- Nat Gladstone provided an overview of the Science Advisory Committees (SAC) review and the outcomes of this for the ACSS.

- John O'Brien, the interim chair of the Science Council (SC), gave an update on recent activity.
- Members discussed potential future work for the ACSS.

Summary of actions

- Action 11.1: NG to clarify if it was possible for a member to sit on both the SC and the ACSS.
- Action 11.2: The ACSS secretariat will continue to liaise with DEFRA's Social Science Expert Group (SSEG) on directions for collaborative work, with secondary analysis of FY2 data currently under consideration. The ACSS secretariat will update members on the progress of this accordingly.
- Action 11.3: The ACSS secretariat will reach out to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) for further details of their activity in the area of ultra processed food, given increasing focus from the FSA into this area.
- Action 11.4: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with internal colleagues to establish the need for more focused work in the Wider Consumer Interests area.
- Action 11.5: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with SC and internal colleagues to establish the need for work exploring trade-offs that consumers might make during times of crisis.
- Action 11.6: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with internal colleagues to establish need for work on regulated products and consumer views.
- Action 11.7: The ACSS secretariat will explore dates for an Autumn meeting to discuss ACSS future activity.

Welcome and introductions

JH welcomed everyone to the 11th ACSS meeting and noted that the meeting is being recorded.

Declarations of interest

None.

Actions from the last meeting and Chair's update

JH stated that there was one outstanding action from the last meeting (**Action 10.1** – *ACSS secretariat to work with JD/WR to explore what interdisciplinary working in the unit should look like*) and noted that secretariat are continuing to scope the ask with JD/WR.

JH updated on three significant areas of work for the ACSS that would be returned to throughout the course of the meeting:

- Science Advisory Committee Review
- ACSS networking event
- Collaboration with DEFRA's Social Science Expert Group (SSEG)

Update from Professor Susan Jebb – Chair, Food Standards Agency

SJ thanked the committee for its work, noting the role the ACSS plays in supporting both the commissioning and interpretation of social science work taking place within the FSA. SJ noted the success of the recent ACSS networking event, highlighting the importance of networking and engaging with external stakeholders. SJ then advised that the FSA is continuing to be reactive to emergent issues alongside routine work and current priorities for the FSA.

Secretariat update

RG discussed staffing changes and member recruitment as per paper 11.1. RG also discussed the GoScience SoSAC, a new cross-government community of secretariats of science, advisory councils and committees across government, the aims of which are to facilitate information sharing and good practice.

Working Group Updates

JB updated on recent activity of the Kitchen Life 2 Working Group (paper 11.2) and flagged that (due to the Kitchen Life 2 project coming to a close), the KL2 Working Group will soon come to its natural endpoint. Future work will revolve around the reflection and assessment of the impact, value and efficacy of the working group's activity on the KL2 project as a whole.

ND updated members on recent activity of the Economics Working Group (paper 11.3) and HLM on recent activity of the Assurance Group (paper 11.5).

HH updated members on recent activity of the Wider Consumer Interest Working Group (Paper 11.4). Having completed much of its substantive activity, the group will continue on an ad hoc basis, providing additional support to project leads as and when needed.

GSR Review

JD provided the group with an overview of the recent independent GSR Review of FSA's Social Science Team. JD discussed the approach of the review, why it was undertaken, and the main findings of the report including what the team does well and what the team could do better.

KSN Event Reflections

RG shared with the group the objectives and purpose of the recent ACSS knowledge-sharing and networking event that was held in London's Broadway House on 23rd May 2023. The main purpose was to raise awareness of FSA's work and develop new and strengthened connections with professional social researchers with expertise aligned to the FSA's Analytics Unit workstreams. RG thanked everyone who participated in the event and noted that it was well attended with over 50 attendees from different institutions and was felt to have met its objectives.

RG outlined the success metrics from the day and follow up work being carried out by the secretariat. Attendee feedback has been good with constructive feedback (around more formalised networking opportunities) to build on if the FSA holds further events.

NM flagged a potential barrier to attendance of the event was the location of the event for attendees who would have high travel costs which were not reimbursed. JH suggested that future events could be in different locations to attract a different pool of people, which HLM noted would also help raise awareness of the ACSS within the devolved nations and could help with recruitment.

SAC Review

NG outlined key recommendations from the SAC review and the FSA response (papers 11.7a/b). NG posed two questions to the group moving forward:

- How best can we link up the social science posts the SC plan on recruiting, to the ACSS?
- What are your views on moving to a 'fixed honorarium'?

RG asked whether it was possible for a member to sit on both the SC and the ACSS.

Action 11.1: NG to clarify if it was possible for a member to sit on both the SC and the ACSS.

Members then discussed the honorarium fee. Whilst it was recognised that this would reduce administrative burden and also offer some certainty of budgeting for both parties, it was felt that a flat honorarium fee would not reflect the degree of contribution that each member can make at different times, removing flexibility both for the member and the FSA. NG flagged that FSA will continue to explore this, and explore how other departments reimburse their SACs.

Analytics Unit update

As per Paper 11.6, WR highlighted some staffing changes, with MP confirmed as Deputy Director of SERD. WR looked ahead to the future activity of the AU, with the 2024/2025 spending review approaching. WR also noted the three-year corporate plan. JD then reminded the group of the three pillars of the FSA's strategy and elaborated on AU's ambitions for each area of the FSA's vision.

JH asked for details of the SALIENT project. HP noted that SALIENT is still in planning stages and feedback from the ACSS would be very welcome in due course..

Science Council update

JO noted that Sandy Thomas stepped down as Chair of the SC from 30th June. JO is Interim Chair. SC will be participating in the next round of recruitment starting around August 2023, which will include the appointment of new Chair. JO discussed the recent tailored review of the SC. JO raised other key points for SC, including how to improve communication to highlight the role of the SC within the FSA and externally.

JH and JO agreed to keep in regular contact to stay updated on the work in progress of both ACSS and SC.

MP picked up on the networking point and reflected on the success of the ACSS event. MP raised that FSA are now thinking about doing a broader themed cross-disciplinary event, which is in early planning stages.

Forward look

JH introduced the forward look of the ACSS, discussing what the committee could be involved in going forward. Points and discussion were as follows:

- JH/Secretariat team recently attended the SSEG plenary and presented on **secondary analysis of FY2** as a possible direction for collaborative work. SSEG members were interested in the topics of sustainability and household food insecurity. There was interest in the ACSS to explore this further.

Action 11.2: The ACSS secretariat will continue to liaise with DEFRA's SSEG on directions for collaborative work, with secondary analysis of FY2 data currently under consideration. The ACSS secretariat will update members on the progress of this accordingly.

- RG suggested it may be useful to explore the existing work SACN (DHSC's SAC on nutrition) is doing on **ultra processed foods**, given increasing focus from FSA into this, and see where social science/ the ACSS could add value.

Action 11.3: The ACSS secretariat will reach out to SACN for further details of their activity in the area of ultra processed food, and explore internal need for social science work in this area.

- HLM suggested that more focused work in the **WCI area** might be of value (with the WCI working group previously having a wider remit)

Action 11.4: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with internal colleagues to explore what can be usefully done in the WCI area.

- JO suggested a piece of work exploring **trade-offs** that consumers might make during times of crisis, and potential to join up with SC.

Action 11.5: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with SC and internal colleagues to establish the need for work exploring trade-offs that consumers might make during times of crisis.

- As per points raised by SJ, RG suggested that regulated products and consumer views could be an area of focus for ACSS.

Action 11.6: The ACSS secretariat will liaise with internal colleagues to establish need for work on regulated products and consumer views.

- JH and JO flagged further discussions needed to explore ways of linking up social science expertise across the two advisory committees.

AOB

JH noted the possibility of resuming the 'forward look' discussion at a bespoke session in the autumn.

Action 11.7: The ACSS secretariat will explore dates for an Autumn meeting to discuss ACSS future activity.

Close

JH thanked everyone for their attendance. The group will meet again for the next plenary in 6 months' time.

Annex A: Agenda of 11th ACSS Plenary Meeting

Eleventh Open Meeting of the ACSS: Agenda

Wednesday 5th July

Welcome and introduction

Declaration of interests

Actions from the last meeting and Chairs update

Update from FSA Chair

Secretariat update

Working group updates

- Kitchen Life 2

- Economics Support
- Wider Consumer Interests
- Assurance

GSR Review

KSN Event Reflections

Analytics Unit update

SAC Review

Science Council Update

Forward look

AOB

Close