

**Advisory Committee for Social Science  
Final minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> meeting: 15 May 2018**

**Location:** Rooms 605 and 606, Clive House, 70 Petty France, Westminster, London, SW1H 9EX

**Attendees:** See Annex 1

**Materials:** Agenda, slide pack and Paper 1.1, Paper 1.2 and Paper 1.3

**12:15pm Item 1: Welcome**

Welcome, housekeeping

**12:20pm Item 2: Introductions from the Chair and members**

Welcome, apologies

**12:40pm Item 3: Welcome from CSA and Directors with an overview of FSA key priorities**

**1:00pm Meet and greet lunch**

**2:00pm Item 4: Induction Q+A**

Presentation by Shola Radford, Q+A by Shola Radford and Helen Atkinson

**2:30pm Item 5: Work plan: Introduction**

Presentation by Helen Atkinson

**2:45pm Item 5a: Applying behavioural insight to the work of the FSA**

Presentation of paper by Helen Atkinson

Paper 1.1

**3:15pm Item 5b: Risk Communication**

Presentation of paper by Michelle Patel

Paper 1.2

**3:45pm Break**

**4pm Item 5c: Food and You review**

Presentation of paper by Michelle Patel

Paper 1.3

## **Item 1: Welcome**

1. Vanna Aldin, Head of Analytics, welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

## **Item 2: Introductions from the Chair and members**

2. The Committee were introduced to the Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) and Directors. Committee Chair, Professor Susan Michie, introduced herself, explaining her background in Health Psychology and her current roles at University College London, as well as highlighting the diversity of the group with a variety of experience. Deputy Chair, Julie Hill, and remaining Committee members introduced themselves and their backgrounds briefly. Apologies were sent from Professor George Gaskell and Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford.

## **Item 3: Welcome from CSA and Directors with an overview of FSA key priorities**

3. The CSA gave an overview of FSA priorities including: EU Exit, Regulating our Future (RoF), and doing the day job well.

4. Subsequent discussion focussed on how the ACSS will interact with other Scientific Advisory Committees. FSA noted several means, including: working groups which include members from other Committees, and that the Science Council<sup>1</sup> Chair is exploring interaction between Committees.

5. Members asked the CSA about measures of success for the ACSS. The CSA responded that the Committee should be a critical friend, offering challenge where needed.

6. The Chair noted that there will be many areas where the Committee can bring added value to the work of the Agency, with the challenge being to identify which areas to focus on.

## **Item 4: Induction Q+A**

7. Shola Radford talked through key points of the ACSS member induction pack, covering engagement with the FSA Board, FSA officials and the Secretariat, as well as time commitments, remuneration and operating to the principles of openness and transparency.

8. Discussion centred around the Register of Specialists – described as an internal list of external social science experts for FSA peer review and ad hoc advice, and how this can support the Committee. FSA suggested the list could be updated and encouraged the Committee to suggest names of specialists to be included on the register.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate the Register of Specialists to the Committee (with approval by data security team). Committee to put forward names of specialists to be invited to join the Register.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://science-council.food.gov.uk/>

### **Item 5: Work plan: Introduction**

9. Helen Atkinson presented the upcoming workplan, including the three main areas which were discussed in detail later in the meeting, including: applying behavioural science to the work of the FSA, risk communication, and a Food and You review. It was made clear to the Committee that the work plan was in its final draft stage and was based on conversations surrounding the top priorities of the FSA and taking account of recommendations from the social science review<sup>2</sup>.

10. There was a short discussion about the best way to share knowledge on work areas, and it was agreed that this be discussed at the following meeting.

11. Discussion focused on how FSA uses horizon scanning and how it feeds into policy. FSA explained that all Scientific Advisory Committees do this annually to contribute to horizon scanning in the FSA as a whole, but the FSA is trying to use a more systematic approach to horizon scanning and foresight, working with other Government departments (e.g. Defra) to plug gaps. An example of horizon scanning feeding into policy is in the Regulating our Future programme; and looking at new data and technologies. However, the process still needs refining.

12. The Chair suggested that as well as 'Terms of Reference' and 'Activities', the work plan should also include objectives and deliverables, so that when the work is completed there is a clear line between the objective, activity, and what is delivered. FSA agreed, and suggested that each working group within the Committee starts out by agreeing the objectives, working with a named person in the FSA. Using a common template to set out the objectives, as well as a reporting system (such as a digital platform) was discussed.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to develop a template for members comment, update the workplan format and explore options for a digital work space

### **Item 5a: Applying behavioural insight to the work of the FSA**

13. Helen Atkinson presented Paper 1.1. It was explained that this work is important to ensure that the FSA engage in best practice for behavioural insights and to help deliver FSA's strategic objectives.

14. The FSA has been applying Behavioural Science in discrete projects over the last two years and has been building internal capability. Looking ahead, new work is scheduled informed by a series of workshops with policy and operational colleagues using the BASIC framework from the Danish iNudgeYou Unit. Advice will be sought from the Committee on prioritising work areas that emerge from these workshops. Advice will also be sought on the best way to publish and disseminate research, implementation/ evaluation of interventions, as well as on developing a repository of existing research and evidence.

15. Discussion centred on clarifying the aims of the workshops, where FSA officials explained that they are to help build the profile of behavioural science across the FSA, identify key policy issues and to help colleagues reframe questions using

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/review-of-social-science>

behavioural insights. It was agreed that the Committee will advise on prioritising the policy issues; it was suggested a Committee member attends the workshops to better understand the framework and outputs from them.

16. Discussion then focused on collating a resource for methods, frameworks and key findings surrounding behavioural science, specifically for the food sector, for the FSA to utilise and share with other government departments, where relevant. Suggestions for curating this including a systematic review, liaising with other experts in the field, and a review of the OECD paper.

17. The Committee agreed on developing a working group to provide advice on behavioural science in the FSA. This working group will provide advice on the review, use of frameworks, and collate ideas on other ways they can help, i.e. strategic direction/ prioritisation.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate BASIC framework slide pack.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate the questions which will be going to the behavioural science workshops, with ACSS member to sit in.

**ACTION:** FSA to update Paper 1.1 to keep up with the fast-paced movement of this work within the FSA and translate into official Terms of Reference for the working group to agree.

**ACTION:** FSA to provide a summary of the OECD paper, if resource allows.

### **Item 5b: Risk communication**

18. Michelle Patel summarised Paper 1.2. It was explained that a part of the social science review highlighted the need for transformation in risk communication. The overall sense is to create a framework on the best way to communicate risk for FSA colleagues, and the Committee were asked to provide advice to on how to develop this and who to network with building on recommendations from the Science Council.

19. Discussion moved onto examples of times where the FSA's risk communication has been successful and where it had not, attempting to define what success in this workstream might look like.

20. Discussion then moved on to the relevant stakeholder groups the FSA should be communicating to, particularly around the idea of whether the media is or is not a stakeholder. It was also mentioned that it is equally important to look at how the FSA communicates, not just who with.

21. Following this, discussion focused on the difference in communication of risk and uncertainty, between the risk assessor and risk manager, and how communicating confidence and uncertainty doesn't always translate well to the non-scientific community. It was suggested that the working group should include communicating uncertainty as part of its advice noting how risk communication has been well-researched, but a look at uncertainty would allow the Committee to add something new to the body of research. The EFSA paper on risk communication was

discussed, with the idea of the Committee feeding in to the paper raised but not confirmed.

22. In closing, the Committee agreed to establish a working group to deliver consider these issues while drawing links to other Committee work.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate details of the EFSA consultation for the ACSS to review

### **Item 5c: Food and You review**

23. Michelle Patel summarised Paper 1.3 on behalf of Ely Mirzahosseinkhan providing a brief overview of Food and You, including its history and the current status of the survey. It was noted that the survey has been through an independent review previously (following Wave 3), and the Executive Management Team at the FSA want to review it again following the current Wave (Wave 5, in field) to ensure that it is value for money, identify any gaps and provide recommendations for Wave 6. This is something the FSA are keen for the Committee to be involved in.

24. Discussion surrounding the external use of Food and You, i.e. who uses it, how often has it been cited in publications and download data. It was suggested that a useful exercise might be to map the core constructs underpinning Food and You and evaluate if its questions are tapping into those core constructs to ensure robustness.

25. Further discussion surrounded the actions the FSA has taken to report back to stakeholders and it was suggested that it may be beneficial to undertake a gap analysis of opportunities to use Food and You outside the FSA. It was noted that Food and You needs to be looked at in terms of how it can be even better, whether in terms of methodology or impact.

26. Members noted that it was also important to look at how the data is being used, either longitudinally or in terms of cross-sectional use. Subsequent discussion surrounded the idea of what the job of Food and You is, to which the FSA responded by explaining the objectives of the survey. It was also mentioned that Food and You has allowed for the development of the Index of Recommended Practice, a key use of the survey.

27. The Committee noted topics within Food and You that could be elaborated on in line with behaviour change theories such as the Theory of Planned behaviour. It was noted that the Committee would be able to help in several ways with strengthening the benefits or changing the way Food and You measures topics by breaking down constructs and questions and would again set up a working group to do so.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate the independent Food and You evaluation to members.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate uses of Food and You to members.

28. Following discussions of the top three Committee work areas the Chair invited volunteers to form three corresponding working groups. Volunteers included:

- Applying behavioural insight to the work of the FSA:
  - Ms Julie Hill (Chair)
  - Dr Seda Erdem
  - Professor Susan Michie
  - Mr John McTernan
  - Professor Spencer Henson
  - Professor George Gaskell
- Risk Communication:
  - Professor Julie Barnett (Chair)
  - Ms Julie Hill
  - Professor George Gaskell
  - Mr John McTernan
  - Dr Seda Erdem
  - Professor Spencer Henson
  - Professor Dan Rigby
- Food and You review:
  - Professor George Gaskell (Chair)
  - Ms Julie Hill
  - Professor Dan Rigby
  - Dr Seda Erdem
  - Mr John McTernan
  - Professor Susan Michie

#### **Item 6: AOB**

29. Committee members discussed how they can communicate with each other. Suggestions included a variety of digital platforms (VC, TC, skype, monthly mailout etc) and the option for a digital work space.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to send contact details of relevant FSA staff to members when working groups are formally finalised.

#### **Item 7: Questions from observers**

30. Comments were made about how the Committee could think about what has not worked in relation to behavioural science, rather than what has as a way of starting the conversations. Other comments included the use of ONS datasets, particularly in relation to behavioural science, with the Committee responding with the idea of drawing upon additional expertise to identify useful datasets.

#### **Item 8: Close**

31. Thanks were provided by the FSA.

32. In closing, the Chair thanked the FSA and the rest of the Committee for a constructive first meeting.

## **Annex 1. Attendees**

### **Advisory Committee for Social Science**

- Professor Susan Michie (Chair) s.michie@ucl.ac.uk
- Ms Julie Hill (Deputy Chair) julie@juliehill.org.uk
- Dr Seda Erdem seda.erdem@stir.ac.uk
- Mr John McTernan jmternan@ps-b.com
- Professor Dan Rigby dan.rigby@manchester.ac.uk
- Professor Julie Barnett j.c.barnett@bath.ac.uk
- Professor Spencer Henson (via VC) shenson@uoguelph.ca

### **Food Standards Agency**

- Guy Poppy (Chief Scientific Advisor)
- Michelle Patel (Head of Social Science Transformation)
- Vanna Aldin (Head of Analytics)
- Helen Atkinson (ACSS Secretary)
- Shola Radford (ACSS Secretariat)