

## Applying behavioural insight to the work of the FSA

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### Summary

This paper is for information and discussion. It sets out background, activity and future direction of activity applying behavioural insight to the work of the FSA. The Committee is invited to discuss options to best support and inform FSA's future work.

### Background

Applying behavioural science to help deliver public policy has become increasingly popular across UK Government. Centred around making public services more cost-effective; improving outcomes and assisting better choices, Departments have looked to apply this branch of the social sciences to help deliver its priorities.

Founded on psychological and behavioural economic research, this in turn has prompted the development of a number of cross Government frameworks to help practitioners apply theory to practice. They include the Government Social Research (GSR) MINDSPACE framework, the Behavioural Insight Team (BIT) EAST framework and the framework specifically for businesses grouped under the mnemonic ORGANISER (co-funded by FSA). Alongside this, building on the latest advances in decision sciences research, value-based models of decision-making that blend work from judgment and decision-making research in psychology, as well as neuroeconomics and behavioural economics are currently being implemented. They have been used as a basis for identifying key incentive schemes that could be utilised to improve compliance behaviours and a food safety culture in food businesses.

### Current activity

Within the FSA, applying behavioural insight to improve our impact in influencing consumers and businesses behaviours is identified as a key strategic objective in the FSA 2015-2020 Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup>. In the last two years we have been building internal capability and worked with other government departments and external organisations, including academic institutions, to access relevant expertise and knowledge on how best to apply behavioural science in our engagement with consumers to ensure food is safe and what say it is, and as regulator with food businesses who are responsible for complying with food safety regulation.

The outcome so far has been a range of activities including facilitated training sessions, workshops, new networks with key stakeholders (national and international), a fellowship (recently appointed) plus various initial research projects and partnership working centred on the early identified priorities (see Annex A for more details).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-fsa>

## **Future direction**

With a shift in FSA priorities with EU Exit, Regulating our Future and doing the day job well, work is now underway to review progress and scope wider, emerging priorities. We are particularly interested in how we can use behavioural insight to frame policy questions as well as optimise potential interventions.

As FSA is committed to openness and transparency across its work, we are also keen to investigate new ways to publish our work beyond the FSA website, so disseminating our research better and contributing to the wider evidence base more effectively.

We're also keen to keep abreast of emerging research and frameworks to ensure our work is drawing on the best and most current practice, as such a rapidly evolving field. For example, we are engaging with relevant organisations like the Danish iNudgeyou group and how they are applying behavioural insight; we are also working with a consortium of researchers through the ESRC Nexus network investigating the application of practice theories to policy issues to positively influence behaviour. How we best integrate new practice in our work is also a point we are considering.

## **Discussion**

The FSA is keen to engage the ACSS in its ongoing programme of work to help assure best practice and outcomes. To do so, would like to set up a Committee working group to provide advice on initial ideas like options to archive, relevant literature and frameworks, and as the workstream progresses, to advise on the strategic direction of work following planned workshops to identify new and pressing behaviour change priorities across the food chain.

Advice may be in the form of short ad hoc reports and/ or as 'critical friends', which will be agreed as work gets underway.

The Committee is invited to discuss:

- Whether it thinks a Committee working group would be a good model to provide the advice required by FSA;
- Scope to provide initial advice on options to archive and literature and frameworks (first 6 months - tbc);
- Scope to provide strategic direction post workshops;
- Whether there are other areas ACSS feels it could usefully contribute at this stage to help assure best practice and outcomes as FSA moves into its next phase of work.

**Helen Atkinson**

**FSA Social Science Team**

## Annex 1. FSA research

Title	Summary
<b>Ongoing</b>	
<b>Projects</b>	
<p>RCT (with BEIS) to increase compliance rates amongst newly registered food businesses using a revised letter and checklist informed by behavioural insights (underway)</p>	<p>Work is underway trialling ways to increase compliance rates amongst newly registered food businesses.</p> <p>A revised letter and checklist was sent to 500 randomised newly registered FBO's (the intervention group) and regular local authority correspondence to another randomised 500 FBO's (the control group) in order to measure the impact of the revised letter.</p> <p>The intervention was designed and delivered in close collaboration with local authority food safety officers and around 40 local authorities in England and Wales participated. FBOs, cross-government behavioural experts and the Trial Advice Panel also contributed.</p> <p>The trial found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The letter did <i>not</i> have a significant statistical effect on the FBO's first Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) score (null effect)</li> <li>• Qualitative interviews found recall of the letter &amp; checklist is low amongst FBO's, despite claims in pre &amp; post trial interviews that the contents of the letter and checklist were of wanted and valued.</li> </ul> <p>Work is due to report shortly.</p>
<p>Reducing animal welfare non-compliance in</p>	<p>This qualitative animal welfare social science research aims to understand reasons for animal</p>

<p>slaughterhouses (underway)</p>	<p>welfare non-compliance in slaughterhouses, recommend how best this non-compliance can be reduced, and design behavioural interventions to help FSA do this.</p> <p>The research has been commissioned and is underway. It involves target behaviour identification (literature review, quantitative compliance data, expert interviews), fieldwork (site visits to slaughterhouses, interviews with staff), and application of behavioural insights (TDF: Theoretical Domains Framework).</p>
<p>Barriers to and Enablers of the Reporting of Intelligence Regarding Food Crime (underway)</p>	<p>Work is being commissioned to explore factors that encourage or impede the reporting of intelligence regarding criminal activity to the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) by individuals and organisations. The aims of this research are to identify enablers and barriers which support or impede the reporting of criminal intelligence (phase 1), and to potentially devise and trial potential means of overcoming these barriers to increase the volume and improve the quality of intelligence about food crime received by NFCU (phase 2).</p> <p>Work is in commissioning and due to start shortly.</p>
<p>Risk assessment and risk communication (MSc intern and Post doc) (underway and in scoping)</p>	<p>Two complementary projects are currently under way that are designed to examine risk assessment methods, and the implementation of uncertainty analyses (EFSA 2018) which outline the basis on which risk is communicated to policy makers and the public.</p> <p>The projects entail examining the degree of convergence in judgments based on a variety of risk</p>

	<p>assessment tools (using a naïve sample) across 11 different risk assessment methods (e.g., risk assessment, comparative risk assessment, ratio, health adjusted life years, multi-criteria decision analysis). Alongside this, the empirical work also examines the level of transparency regarding the translation of risk judgments for the purposes of risk communication to the public following the guidance stipulate by EFSA (European Food Standards Authority).</p> <p>Objective: The empirical findings are designed to determine the optimal procedures for inter and intra reliability of judgments of risk made by risk assessors, on which decision-makers and the public can make informed decisions about food safety matters.</p>
<p>Motivators and Incentive Drivers in the Meat Industry (in scoping)</p>	<p>The FSA is considering commissioning research to examine the core underlying economic and behavioural drivers of the UK meat industry and its complex supply and value chain, involving production, processing, retail, management and governance; and coordinate this with existing frameworks for understanding food safety culture in general. The aim is to develop complements from Economics and Behavioural economics as a way to improve food safety culture in FBOs, using the meat industry as a test case.</p>
<p><b>Partnership working</b></p>	
<p>Change points toolkit, Nexus at home research team (University of Manchester and University of Sheffield), ESRC Nexus</p>	<p>FSA is working collaboratively with the Universities of Manchester and Sheffield to understand issues relating to the Domestic Nexus. Details of past work (parts 1 and 2) are provided below. Current work/ part 3 relates to:</p>

Network (part 3)	<p>Part 3. ESRC IAA: Change Points for the Nexus at Home: A toolkit for developing policy for water-energy-food consumption in UK homes</p> <p>Change Points for the Nexus at Home will co-produce a toolkit to transform policy approaches to behaviour change to improve the sustainability of household water-energy-food (WEF) practices in the UK.</p>
<b>Complete</b>	
<b>Projects</b>	
<p>A randomised control trial to test interventions designed to increase food hygiene rating display rates in food businesses (June 2015)<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>To increase the proportion of food businesses who display their food hygiene rating stickers, the FSA designed two interventions aimed at encouraging more food businesses to display them. This project presents findings from a randomised control trial (RCT) of these interventions to establish their impact on sticker display rates.</p> <p>Work is now complete and published.</p> <p>Result - Both interventions were found to have a positive impact on display rates. The face to face intervention was found to have the greatest impact, and was more effective at increasing display than both the letter, and control conditions.</p>
<p>Food handlers and Norovirus Transmission (June 2017)<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>This study aimed to help stop the 'winter vomiting bug' norovirus from spreading, by understanding and improving food handler behaviours.</p> <p>Data analysis and behavioural theories were used to rank behaviours which risk spreading Norovirus in relation to the control strategies, according to the</p>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/foodsafetyss/fs409001>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2017/16303/new-research-on-preventing-the-spread-of-norovirus>

	<p>strength of evidence that food handlers were expressing these behaviours.</p> <p>Work is now complete and published.</p> <p>Result - Strongest evidence was found for: inadequate hand washing; not washing hands before gloving; using bare hands when preparing food; not regularly changing gloves; food handlers instead of trained staff cleaning areas where people vomited; not washing uniform correctly; and returning to work too early after being ill. Several behavioural interventions were recommended based on these findings.</p>
<b>Partnership working</b>	
BIT / Harvard Business School collaboration	<p>Harvard students conducted “immersive fieldwork” in UK government departments to consider a behavioural policy issue and propose interventions.</p> <p>In 2016, the FSA policy issue was reduction of listeriosis in healthcare settings and in 2017, how to reduce bacteria levels at chicken processors.</p> <p>Proposals have not yet been progressed to interventions.</p>
Domestic Nexus, Nexus at home research team (University of Manchester and University of Sheffield), ESRC Nexus Network (parts 1 and 2)	<p>FSA worked collaboratively with the Universities of Manchester and Sheffield to understand issues relating to the Domestic Nexus. Parts 1 and 2 are complete (details below) and part 3 is underway (above).</p> <p>Part 1. Networking grant: The domestic nexus: interrogating the interlinked practices of water, energy and food consumption.</p>

	<p>This 'Domestic Nexus' project examined the dynamics of consumption at the domestic scale.</p> <p><a href="http://www.thenexusnetwork.org/research/networking-grants/">http://www.thenexusnetwork.org/research/networking-grants/</a></p> <p>Part 2. Partnership grant: Engaging policy understanding of kitchen practices and how they can change them</p> <p>This project engaged with policy partners to apply new social science understandings of what goes on in home kitchens to inform interventions aimed at changing demand for water, energy and food, including through understanding their inter-dependencies and trade-offs.</p> <p><a href="http://www.thenexusnetwork.org/projects/partnership-grants/">http://www.thenexusnetwork.org/projects/partnership-grants/</a></p>
UCL training workshop	Training was delivered to FSA by University College London
iNudgeyou training	Training was delivered to FSA by the Danish Applied Behavioural Science Group