

Paper 3.4

Behavioural Science Update (April 2019)

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress for the working group *Behavioural Science*. It summarises background, key activities and future action. This paper is for information and discussion.

Background

The FSA is developing its Behavioural Science expertise in accordance with the FSA Strategic Plan 2015-20. The ACSS Behavioural Science Working Group was formed to help support this.

Working Group

The Behavioural Science Working Group was asked to:

1. Provide advice on best approaches to record outputs from the FSA's behavioural science research, so we can quickly search what has/ hasn't worked, by what approach/ in what context in an agile way, with the option to share with OGDs.
2. Provide advice on relevant, current frameworks and interventions that will be examined in a review. The review would also include published and grey literature, which could be periodically updated and would help inform FSA future programme of research.
3. Work with FSA to prioritise the issues that are forthcoming from planned workshops, plus any wider initiatives, helping to identify which would benefit most from a behavioural science approach, to take forward to design/ intervention and evaluation stage.

Members

The Working Group is comprised of the following members:

- Ms Julie Hill (Chair)
- Dr Seda Erdem
- Professor Susan Michie
- Mr John McTernan

- Professor Spencer Henson
- Professor George Gaskell

Key Activities

The ACSS Behavioural Science Working Group were asked to provide advice on relevant, current frameworks of behaviour change, examined in a review. The scoping review has been completed and is now undergoing a survey implementation to collect data to assess the usefulness of the identified frameworks within the policy stages. For the purposes of efficiency, the frameworks are being refined to a smaller list to identify the frameworks that can be employed across different policy scenarios. The surveys will be sent to the cross-government behavioural insights network, in addition to experts of behaviour change. The responses will help to clarify what users and experts both value in a framework.

The Working Group were also asked to review ideas for behavioural interventions that were generated at internal FSA workshops led by the Social Science Team with a wide range of colleagues from across the Agency during 2018/19. For the purposes of efficiency, members of the FSA Social Science Team prepared an initial priority list from the long list of ideas generated, prioritized by relevance to FSA core objectives, added value to the organisation and likelihood of impact.

As a result of this exercise, 3 key areas for possible behavioural intervention were identified:

1. Food Business registration and engagement
 - Registration
 - Input of compliance information that is accurate
 - Requesting appropriate advice from FSA
2. People with allergies
 - Consumers check allergy information when ordering
 - Food Businesses take more responsibility for identifying and informing allergic customers
3. Caloriewise
 - Display of calories in food for sale in Northern Ireland

The other remaining ideas generated at the workshop were considered by the Working Group to be either insufficiently high priority given the FSA's objectives, too broad to be taken on, or being dealt with by existing processes so that they were little added value. The Working Group did, however, agree that this list would be reviewed again at the next meeting.

Following the WG meeting, the Social Science Team issued a research specification by limited competitive tender to help further scope these three behavioural interventions. The contract was awarded to Kantar Public and, working in close collaboration with FSA Social Science Team and relevant colleagues for each of the three policy areas, will report by the end of March. Outputs will include a series of detailed proposals for future behavioural interventions to run in 2019/20, including hypothesis with clear links to our priorities, any additional research or engagement needed prior to the intervention and the rationale for this, plus recommended evaluation approach and timelines. A verbal update will be provided at the next ACSS Working Group meeting.

Future action

If the ACSS Working Group are willing, we propose they continue to advise on the behavioural science work to be taken forward by the Social Science Team in 2019/20 to provide robust critique as these and other possible behavioural interventions are developed and tested. In addition, provide feedback on other behavioural science activities within the Social Science Team such as the on-going review of behavioural frameworks.

Discussion

This paper is for information and general discussion.

Julie Hill, ACSS WG Chair

Joanna Disson & Magda Osman, FSA