

**FSA SCIENCE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP TO SUPPORT FSA FUTURE EVIDENCE
NEEDS ON FOOD HYPERSENSITIVITY
Terms of Reference**

Background

The FSA is reviewing its strategy on food hypersensitivity, to ensure it has access to the best available science and evidence and to support the delivery of appropriate and effective actions to ensure food safety and consumer choice. The FSA has an established policy team and science-led research programme on food allergy and intolerance.

The FSA Board has set the direction for the Executive to develop “a comprehensive strategic framework [for food hypersensitivity] for discussion with the Board in autumn 2019. This will include a review of the evidence base and the development of appropriate outcome measures through which to judge progress.”

In May 2019¹, the Science Council was asked by the Board to:

- I. Consider and advise on future research priorities and direction in respect to food hypersensitivity.
- II. Conduct a review of the science and evidence base for addressing food hypersensitivity, and the part the FSA and others should play in enhancing knowledge.

The remit of the Science Council is to work with the FSA to:

- Help to ensure that science has impact through advising on how the FSA can deploy the best evidence and advice to identify key issues and to support the FSA’s decision making now, and in the future.
- Help the FSA to identify and access wider, external expertise and evidence relevant to FSA’s objectives.
- Advise the FSA on how it should address issues of strategic importance to the FSA that are not covered by an existing Scientific Advisory Committee, or which relate to general principles.
- Provide advice and challenge on how the FSA identifies, gathers and uses scientific evidence and advice.

At the Science Council Meeting on 27 June 2019², the Council agreed that it is within their remit to support FSA activity on food hypersensitivity and proposed that they should form a new ‘Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity’ (WG5), chaired by Dr Paul Turner. Dr Turner has existing involvement in the FSA’s work on food hypersensitivity (his interests and how they will be managed are set out in the Annex to these ToR).

Approach

The Working Group will undertake three work packages to review the FSA’s food hypersensitivity priorities.

¹ <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/fsa-board-meeting-may-2019>

² <https://science-council.food.gov.uk/science-council-meetings>

1. Provide oversight and assurance of an internal FSA review into the evidence base for food hypersensitivity and how this informs FSA policy. (WG5.WP1)

- i. An internal review is already being initiated by the FSA into the evidence base for food hypersensitivity and how this informs FSA policy.
- ii. As part of its activities in 2017/18, the Science Council recommended the FSA “develop a framework to be used for assurance of FSA’s access and use of science”. This is in development by the Science, Evidence and Research Directorate (SERD).
- iii. The Science Council is able to support SERD in providing scientific oversight and assurance of this review.

2. Horizon scanning of the food hypersensitivity environment to inform future FSA research and policy direction. (WG5.WP2)

- iv. The Science Council Working Group on Horizon Scanning (WG3) reported its recommendations on what the FSA should do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risks (and opportunities)³. The FSA is at this time responding these recommendations⁴.
- v. It is proposed that Working Group 5 can oversee a horizon scanning exercise delivered by SERD, supported by the FSA’s Allergy & Intolerance Team and the FSA’s independent Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS), with the aim to deliver a report on the food hypersensitivity environment and potential novel emerging risks and opportunities, to inform FSA’s strategy and resilience.
- vi. Emphasis will not be on the identification of new allergens (which should be identified through existing FSA structures), but on areas where new industry/consumer trends might result in different patterns of consumption or different uses e.g. changing influence of high protein supplements or food banks.

3. A pilot to evaluate best practice across different areas of FSA research interest, in terms of how science influences policy/decision making. (WG5.WP3)

- vii. This would seek to evaluate areas of best practice across different FSA teams in terms of how scientific peer-review is accessed and used, and subsequently informs both policy and future research. We will look to develop recommendations to assist the lateral transfer of best practice across the FSA, without getting directly involved in operational activities.
- viii. In the first instance, it is envisaged that this would include structured interviews and case study presentation from FSA staff working in the Allergy & Intolerance area, which can then feed into the internal review mentioned above. However, depending on progress, this could then be expanded to include different FSA teams that undertake significant research programmes (e.g. Microbiological and Chemical Risk Assessment Teams) to evaluate existing processes.
- ix. Specific lines of enquiry are likely to include:
 - a) How does FSA use external evidence, including peer-review and external experts?

³ <https://science-council.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsascwg3finalreport.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-19-06-07-final-report-from-science-council-working-group-on-food-system-risks-and-horizon-scanning.pdf>

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- b) How does FSA survey the research landscape within a specific area (with focus on non-FSA commissioned activities) and identify other potential partners / the need to commission its own research?
- c) How can internal communications within FSA about research programmes be optimised for maximum impact and efficiency?

Outline of timeline

	2019	2020				2021
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1...
WP1						
• SC reviews Terms of Reference for internal review into food hypersensitivity	8 Nov					
• Review of food hypersensitivity strategy	TBD*	TBD				
• Oversight (with SERD) of Internal review			TBD	TBD	TBD	
WP2						
• food hypersensitivity Horizon Scanning Workshop	Preparation of event/materials		Apr/May			
• Reporting outcomes to Board			June			
WP3						
Phase 1: Best practice in use of science in food hypersensitivity demonstration						
• Planning of structured interview	Oct-Dec					
• Interviews with members of food hypersensitivity teams		Feb-Mar				
• Write up Phase 1 and Gateway assessment of food hypersensitivity demonstration				Jul		
Phase 2: Best practice in use of science expanded to wider FSA						
• Interview members of selected teams					Oct-Dec	
• Write up Phase 2 and report to Board						Jan-Mar

- TBD – To be determined.

Membership

Steering Group	Secretariat	FSA Input
Paul Turner (WG Chair)	Paul Nunn	Guy Poppy

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John O'Brien	Chun-Han Chan	Michelle Patel
Mark Rolfe	FSA food hypersensitivity Science contact	

FSA Inputs

Procurement and finance input to commissioning of the any desk work needed to provide support materials for the food hypersensitivity horizon scanning workshop. We will need some pre-read material for the workshop and, if we follow the WG3 approach, a list of agreed questions to ask the invited stakeholders to address. Funding can be drawn from the Strategic Evidence Fund for this preparatory work

Other inputs as required by the WG, but likely to include:

- Draw on leads/contacts in other government departments (including Go-Science and Defra network) and additional expertise from the FSA register of specialists.
- As a first and ongoing task - considering what other inputs the Working Group needs in terms of expertise/insight/commentary as well as of written material.

SAC Inputs

We envisage working with the Advisory Committee on Social Science (ACSS) to consider the social aspect of future horizons in food hypersensitivity (work package 2).

Outputs

Council outputs will need short executive summary with clear recommendations; ideally power point style with infographics. To include:

- A short summary of the Working Groups' view of the FSA internal review with key points set out therein.
- Report of horizon scanning workshop on key issues, implications and actions for FSA arising from global developments impacting on food hypersensitivity.
- Council advice on FSA best practice to improve its overall capability to maximise its use of science in delivering policy.

Annex 1: Science Council Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity Chair's Declared Interests

As a Clinical Senior Lecturer and Clinician Scientist in Paediatric Allergy & Immunology at Imperial College London, the Chair of the proposed Science Council Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity, Dr Paul Turner, has a record of research and advisory interaction with the FSA in relation to food hypersensitivity.

In line with the FSA's approach to managing the interests of its external scientific advisers⁵, Dr Turner has provided further details of his current and past (up to 5 years previous) research and advisory interactions with the FSA. A full record of Dr Turner's most recently published [Register of Interests is available on our website.](#)

Dr Turner's declared interests are not considered prohibitive to his Working Group involvement by the Executive, and will continue to be managed in an open and transparent fashion, throughout the course of the Working Group's activity, with mitigating adjustments made as deemed necessary.

1	Research bid - Using NHS data to monitor trends in severe, food-induced allergic reactions (FS101222). Open tender call on using NHS data for monitoring trends in allergic reactions to which Imperial College London placed a successful bid. Dr Turner is the project lead, directly contributing an estimated 6.5% of total staff effort. The FSA and Imperial College London are currently finalising particulars and contracts, and the project will likely start Sept/Oct 2019, aiming to complete Dec 2021.
2	2012-2017 MRC fellowship (TRACE) (FS241037). Part of the study team working on the TRACE study. Dr Turner was not funded directly by the project but via an MRC Fellowship to use samples collected from TRACE study participants, to better understand mechanisms of anaphylaxis. Dr Turner was involved in the supervision of a PhD student at the London site. His role included protocol input, trial management and clinical supervision of day to day work in undertaking food challenges with patients.
3	2015-2017 External Advisor to the Committee on Toxicity. Dr Turner provided advice to COT with respect to the systematic review into food hypersensitivity commissioned by the FSA at that time.
4	2014-2015 Appraiser/peer reviewer. Previous agreement with Dr Turner to provide services as an appraiser/peer reviewer for Apr 2014 to Sept 2015. This amounted to one meeting with Darren Holland of the FSA and significant e-mail correspondence.

⁵ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-19-03-10-annex-fsas-approach-to-managing-interests-of-external-scientific-advisers_.pdf