



Terms of Reference – Applying behavioural science to the work of the FSA

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Summary

The purpose of this working group is to help assure best practice and outcomes in the application of behavioural science to the work of the FSA.

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.

Within the FSA, applying behavioural science to improve our impact in influencing consumers' and business's behaviours is identified as a key strategic objective in the FSA 2015-2020 Strategic Plan². 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:

(i) consumers to ensure food is safe and is what it says it is, and

¹ Terms capture initial agreed remit which is likely to evolve as work progress. This progression will be documented in meeting minutes and individual objective workplans

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-fsa>



(ii) regulators of food businesses who are responsible for complying with food safety regulation³.

Work is now underway to review the progress we've made and scope out new work in line with emerging priorities. To inform this, we are currently planning a series of workshops with policy and operational colleagues guided by the BASIC framework developed by the Danish iNudgeYou Unit⁴. Through these workshops we are keen to demonstrate how FSA can use behavioural science to frame policy questions as well as optimise potential interventions - and develop a longlist of issues that may benefit from a behavioural science approach. We'll then prioritise these issues to decide which to take forward into design/ intervention and evaluation stage alongside other ideas from wider initiatives.

We're also keen to develop a wider repository of knowledge that could inform the behavioural interventions we design in the future, building on best practice and learning from existing work. Starting with frameworks and interventions trialled in public health and the food arena, it may be appropriate to commission a systematic review, which could be periodically updated, covering frameworks, methods and key findings from relevant published and grey literature, engaging wider experts in the field and integrating case studies from a recent OECD review⁵. FSA may also look to review this report alongside its workshops as background, and to aid ACSS prioritisation work.

As FSA is committed to openness and transparency across its work, we are also keen to investigate new/ better ways to record the outputs from our behavioural science research, so that we can quickly search what has/ hasn't been effective using what intervention strategies and in what context (population and setting) in an agile way. We may investigate appetite to share this type of resource amongst Other Government Departments (OGDs) with the aim of creating a centralised hub for interventions and effectiveness evidence, facilitating cross learning and insights across Departmental remits.

Objectives

The FSA would like to engage the ACSS in its planned work to help assure best practice and outcomes. Specifically, 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.

³ For full list of activities, see: <https://acss.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/behavioural-insight.pdf>

⁴ See: <https://inudgeyou.com/en/>

⁵ See: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/behavioural-insights-and-public-policy-9789264270480-en.htm>



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.

Activities

1. To achieve these objectives, a working group will be established to deliver the above objectives. - specific protocols and timings will be captured in separate workplans for individual objectives.
2. The working group will carry out this work by (as a minimum):
 - a. Advising on how to (i) document what FSA currently does with regards to publication of its behavioural science research; (ii) scope recording options within and external to Government; and (iii) identify gaps or areas for improvement in current systems and best options to amend to meet FSAs needs.
 - b. Providing a steer on a literature review (materials and approach).
 - c. Identifying best route to prioritise issues identified at the planned FSA workshops.
 - d. Providing recommendations on which policy issues to take forward to the next phase of work, applying the process identified at point c.

Outputs/ deliverables

1. A short executive summary on best approaches to record outputs;
2. Recommendations for a review; and
3. Recommendations on prioritised issues to take forward, with supporting documentation on the decision-making process.

