

Summary of discussions at the FSA Advisory Committee on Social Science 4 December 2018

Professor George Gaskell presented an update from the working group on [Food and You](#), our flagship consumer survey. The group are drafting a report and recommendations for the survey which are due to be put to the FSA Board in March 2019. The report considers the strategic objectives and aims behind the survey, as well as recommendations on themes, survey processes and analysis.

Professor Julie Barnett gave an update on the working group on risk communication. The group has completed a commentary and gap analysis on the principles for communicating risk and uncertainty that were developed by the [FSA Science Council](#). This will feed into the Board's discussion on 5 December on the proposed risk analysis frameworks for the FSA post-EU Exit.

ACSS vice-chair Julie Hill presented an update from the working group on the application of behavioural science. She reported that the group had agreed their terms of reference and a work plan to help them achieve their objectives. An FSA fellow has also begun work on a review which will consider over 2000 frameworks, their usefulness and how best to transfer best practice to the work of the FSA. It was noted by the committee that the challenge with behavioural science was for public authorities to borrow commercial techniques and use them to benefit the public and protect the vulnerable by being more transparent.

Briefing the committee on future priorities for social science within the FSA, Head of Social Science Transformation Michelle Patel highlighted the work being done to ensure robust risk analysis guidelines were in place in preparation for EU Exit and that work would continue to build on this in 2019-20. She explained that the work already started on risk communication had contributed to this, and that the Board were keen for the ACSS to input into discussions around how we build and balance our evidence packages and to seek assurance from the ACSS that social science was being applied consistently and effectively. The Board is due to consider [recommendations in a paper](#) on the future direction of social science at the FSA during their next meeting on Wednesday 5 December.

Steve Wearne, FSA Director of Science, and Rick Mumford, Head of Science, also attended the meeting to update the committee on priorities in FSA science, evidence and research. They stressed the increased importance of and reliance on science and evidence in FSA decision-making. This was underlined by the creation of a separate science directorate and significant increase in resources prior to EU-Exit.

The papers discussed at the open meeting are available to read on the [Advisory Committee on Social Science website](#). The next meeting of the ACSS will be in March 2019.