

Local Authority Recovery Plan Assurance Assessment: Key Findings

Results available: Results available

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Between April and July 2022 the FSA LA audit teams delivered a programme of assessments of local authorities performance against the requirements of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan (the Recovery Plan). A representative group of 11 Local authorities from England, Wales and Northern Ireland were selected for assurance checks, which were undertaken both remotely and in person.

The key findings of the assurance assessments within the participating LAs were:

- LAs subject to assessment all started from different positions in implementing the Recovery Plan in terms of the impact that COVID-19 had on their service, the challenges faced during the recovery period and the resources they had available
- LAs in England were able to benefit from the additional COVID-19 funding made available by central government, which allowed them to retain front line staff and employ additional contractors
- LAs within Wales were heavily affected by having key staff members seconded to the COVID-19 response and the fact that COVID-19 restrictions that were kept in place for longer than other parts of the UK
- District Councils (DCs) in NI had fully implemented the guidance, met and exceeded the milestones in the Recovery Plan at the time of the assessment
- during the pandemic LAs demonstrated some excellent examples of collaborative working with other council teams and external public health teams, enforcement agencies and emergency services. This enabled them to share intelligence on local food businesses which was used to plan interventions
- LAs were able to demonstrate good progress implementing Phase 1 of the Recovery Plan prioritising new food businesses for a first inspection and planning their intervention programme taking a risk-based approach
- the majority of LAs were able to show good progress towards meeting the Phase 2 milestones
- most LAs had adopted a risk-based approach to the delivery of their services using their Management Information Systems to help them deliver the Recovery Plan
- LAs ensured that the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme continued to be delivered within all 3 countries
- the Plan was generally well received and understood by LAs across the 3 countries. LAs made some suggestions for improvements to the Recovery Plan, which have been shared with policy teams within the FSA

- some areas for improvement were identified, including a greater focus by LAs on the re-introduction of risk based internal monitoring to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of delivery of official controls and the re-introduction of appropriate food sampling programmes