

Value of FHRs Local Authority research: Chapter 8 Conclusions

LA representatives from across all three nations were positive about the current FHRs and its role in increasing consistency for regulating food hygiene standards in food businesses.

Assessing food hygiene standards consistently was seen a crucial feature of the FHRs, and fundamental to the value of the scheme. While this consistency was considered a strength in Wales and Northern Ireland, LA representatives from England highlighted some differences in how the scheme is managed.

Overall, LAs did not point to specific types of business that they particularly valued being in the scheme. Instead, they emphasised the importance of providing consistent information about food hygiene standards to the public, supporting consumer confidence and choice. Some LA representatives in England discussed whether lower risk retailers could be exempt from the scheme.

LA representatives described challenges associated with re-assessments including the role of online aggregators (like Deliveroo, Just Eat and Uber Eats) as a driver for re-assessments; They explained how the introduction of fees for re-assessments has led to an increased demand for quicker re-assessment visits from businesses who are now paying for them and described problems with businesses re-registering to avoid low ratings and charges.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, mandatory display was strongly supported by LA representatives and seen as fundamental to the effectiveness of the FHRs. There was also support for introducing mandatory display among LA representatives in England. However, LA representatives in England had some concerns about the practicalities of enforcing mandatory display.

LA representatives from Wales were strongly opposed to any changes to inspection frequency based on compliance. Similarly, LA representatives from Northern Ireland had reservations about reducing inspection frequency based on compliance for higher risk businesses. In England, views on reducing inspection frequency based on compliance were more mixed, reflecting LA representatives' experiences of having to prioritise resources over recent years.

Whilst LA representatives from Wales were unanimous in their support for the existing scheme, LA representatives from England and Northern Ireland each suggested some changes. LAs from England discussed improving the scheme through the introduction of mandatory display of FHRs ratings, and reviewing the types of low risk businesses included in the scheme. LA representatives from Northern Ireland felt that the scheme generally worked well but that some changes could be explored, including the meaning of the different FHRs ratings.