

12th Regulating Our Future Newsletter

Welcome to the 12th Regulating Our Future Newsletter. In this issue, we are focusing on the progress we have made on our National Inspection Strategies, the next steps for the roll out of the digital registration service and our recent Food Standards Delivery engagement events.

Heather Hancock
FSA Chairman

Developing National Inspection Strategies

The work on National Inspection Strategies (NIS) has been developing well over the last few months. We published the [report of the pathfinder trials](#) and we consulted on the draft standards that provide some of the governance to this area of work.

We are at an exciting stage of this initiative, with primary authorities and their partner food businesses working together to develop an NIS. The proposals are being reviewed so that we can take the next steps to 'go live' with two NIS for multi-site retailers. The proposals are different, which will help us explore the strengths in the different approaches. These will be the first NIS that cover food hygiene, so we will be looking at these as extended trials/pathfinders, so that we can learn what works and be clear where we need to make changes.

We know there is a clear link between NIS and the operation of FHRS. The proposals we have received take account of FHRS, but we still need to talk with stakeholders to agree how the two things work together. We will be carrying out engagement to ensure that NIS works without reducing the credibility of FHRS.

Register a Food Business digital service progress

The FSA's Register a Food Business digital service, which went live in September 2018, is continuing to connect local authorities to the service.

This service captures registration data from food business operators and will provide guidance to support food businesses and help them understand their responsibilities for producing food that is safe and is what it says it is.

The service is being tested with the early adopting local authorities and we are receiving invaluable feedback to inform future service development and rollout.

The service has been developed with the food business operator in mind and we will be undertaking research to ensure we continue to meet their needs.

One of the early adopter local authorities fed-back on the positive user-experience of a food business operator in their area, confirming that the form had been much easier to complete than anticipated.

As part of our ongoing 'proof of concept' work we have listened to LAs and identified there is a need for more flexible approaches for LAs to connect to the service. We are actively exploring how this might work in practice. We are aiming over the coming months, to open up discussions with LA partners in order to maximise uptake of the new service and provide them with an opportunity to help shape its development.

We will continue to engage with local authorities and their management information providers to support the rollout, collaborating with other government departments, business hubs and start up groups to promote the new service more widely.

We are also taking opportunities to raise awareness of the new service amongst the LA digital community. Our Director of Openness, Digital and Data, Julie Pierce explained '[The data ambitions of the Food Standards Agency](#)' in a recent interview with UK Authority.

The FSA welcomes approaches from any Local Authority interested in coming on board. Approaches in the first instance should be directed to: Futuredelivery@food.gov.uk

Food Standards Delivery engagement events

Our Board discussed the [food standards review](#) and the [local authority \(LA\) survey findings](#) at their meeting on 5 December. The Board agreed that a comprehensive redesign was required, which would provide better assurance, more agility, and help LAs to show that they meet their statutory obligations.

To ensure that the new-approach to food standards delivery is being developed with input from the local authority community, those working in frontline delivery were given the opportunity to give their views on how to reform and improve the delivery of food regulation. From the 1 February – 1 March 2019 the FSA held nine engagement events from across England (on a regional basis), Wales and Northern Ireland. These provided LAs with the opportunity to help influence and develop options being considered for the future delivery model. The events were well attended with 190 officers participating. The events fostered some lively conversations, with common themes emerging. Insights will be collated and shared with all attendees via the Smarter Communications platform. A live briefing document is also being created to capture answers to some of the questions that arose.

Feedback from these events has been positive, with many attendees valuing the update on the work being undertaken by the FSA, and the opportunity to provide their views and contribute to the development process. Many participants expressed a desire to meet again, to explore solutions to some of the concerns raised, and we intend to hold another engagement event in six months-time, or earlier if needed.