

FSA LA Sampling Policy research

LA Food Lead interviews

Discussion Guide – FINAL (Appendix A)

Revised 28th February 2020

30-45 mins

Objectives

- To explore how LAs consider and develop their sampling policies and programmes, in particular:
 - The factors that influence the scope of their sampling framework;
 - How they use and respond to the sampling results;
 - What corrective action they take in response to unsatisfactory samples and whether these actions effectively correct the issues identified;
 - How they create methodologies for assessing the effectiveness of a sampling programme.

Introduction and warm up

5 mins

- Moderator to introduce self
- Explain moderator role: impartial, independent, run tasks and keep to time
- Explain recording, confidentiality and anonymity in verbal and written comms with FSA and confirmation of receipt of participant information sheet
- Session length
- Nature of research:
 - We would like to understand how you develop your sampling policies and programmes and what role the FSA could play to support you better in this.
- Need to be as open and honest as possible – no right or wrong answers

Context

5 mins

Purpose: to understand where sampling sits in the context of their role, and priorities and challenges that may affect design and implementation of sampling policies

- Respondent introductions: Name, what organisation they work for, what their role is, background, how long they've done it for.
 - Where does **sampling** sit in your role – what are you responsible for?
 - Spontaneous, then probe – design of policy? Design of programme? Carrying out sampling? Sitting on regional groups?
- What are the **main priorities** for your organisation at the moment? How about for your department/ team?
 - Where does sampling sit in this? How does it measure up to other priorities – in your eyes? In the eyes of the organisation overall?

- How, has this **changed** over time?
- Do you sit on/ get involved in any regional or national food safety groups?
 - If yes – do these deal with sampling?

Developing Sampling Policies

5 mins

Purpose: to gain an overview of how their sampling policy was developed and is refreshed, and factors that are taken into account.

Moderator: I want to find out about your current sampling policy. I don't need to know the detail of what it covers, but we are interested in the process of developing this policy. We'll talk about the programme for sampling (i.e. implementing the policy) a little later.

- Do you have policies in place for food safety/ hygiene sampling and for food standards sampling?
 - If both – is it a joint policy, or separate ones?
- **When** was your sampling policy **first developed**?
 - How was it developed initially (if aware)? *Moderator to note whether they used a template, followed a regional approach or started from scratch*
- **When** was it last **refreshed**?
 - What **prompts** a refresh?
- How often do you **refer** to the policy? What for?
- Is their sampling policy **linked to wider LA priorities / objectives**?
- Is there an **awareness of the need** for sampling within the LA?
- Does your sampling policy specify **KPIs**, and how to **monitor and report** on these?

Developing Sampling Programmes

15 mins

- What's the **process** for developing your sampling plan/programme?
 - **When** do you develop your plan/programme? How often is it reviewed?
 - What **influences** your sampling plan/programme? *Note any references to their sampling policy, budget, staffing, local factors (e.g. higher risk businesses; investigations) and EU/ national/ regional sampling programmes*
 - Do you focus on **numbers** or **types** of samples, or both? Why?
 - To what extent do **local, regional and national sampling programmes/ surveys** affect what goes into your sampling plan?
 - **Which** surveys? **Why** these ones?

- What **influence** do you feel you have (if any) on the focus of local, regional and national sampling programmes/ surveys?
 - What **guidance, information and intelligence** (if any) influence your sampling plan for the year?
 - **Where** do you get this from – which organisations? What is helpful?
 - What is the balance between **proactive & reactive** sampling?
 - Do you allow budget and time for reactive sampling?
 - Who signs off the sampling plan/programme?
 - How do you make sure staff have the **right skills** and competencies to carry out sampling? Any gaps around staff skills/ training?
- What limits your sampling performance? (probe: budget, staffing, staff time, skills/ competence, organisational priorities)
- How about the budget for your sampling programme...
 - How much do their sampling activities **cost**? In budget, staffing, staff time, effort?
 - How is the budget for your food sampling programme determined? (e.g. do you have to make a business case?)
 - (If you're happy to share) What is your current budget, and how has this changed over time?
 - If you had a larger budget, how would you use it? (taking more samples?)
- Have they used the **UK Food Surveillance System**?
 - If yes – what **value** does this have for your organisation? If not, why not?
- Do they undertake sampling from **online food businesses**? Why / why not?
 - If yes, how is this achieved?
- Overall, how much does the sampling programme **reflect what is in the sampling policy**?
 - What are the **barriers** to implementing your sampling policy? To carrying out effective sampling?
- How much has the sampling programme **changed** compared to previous years? What has driven these changes?

Use of sampling results

5 mins

- What do you **do** with the sampling results?
- What happens when samples are **unsatisfactory**? What **corrective action** is taken?

- Have you taken any prosecutions in the last 12 months based on unsatisfactory results?
- Are results **shared/ published**? Who with (e.g. elected members, other LAs or other stakeholders?). If so, how is this done?
- How does your LA **evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness** of your sampling activity?

Summing up and close

10 mins

- Overall, **how effective** do you think your sampling programme is?
 - To what extent would you say it is an effective and efficient use of LA resources?
- What evidence is there that the use of sampling leads to **better / worse outcomes** for consumers and for the industry?
- How could the sampling process be **improved** to make the system more efficient and effective?
 - If not mentioned, probe: competency requirements tied to sample taking? national sampling projects? Online test purchases?
- Can you point to any examples of **innovation** and **best practice**?
- **What could the FSA do to make it easier** for you to develop and implement sampling policies and programmes?
- Do you have **any other thoughts or comments** on the topics we've discussed?
- Are you **willing to share** your policies, procedures or evaluations of your sampling approach with the FSA? If so, who is the best person to approach for this?
- Thank and close