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Performance and Resources Report Q1 2020/21

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Food Standards Agency – FSA 20/09/10

Business Committee
23 September 2020

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Foreword

Colin Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer / COVID-19 Incident Director and
Chris Hitchen, Director of Finance & Performance



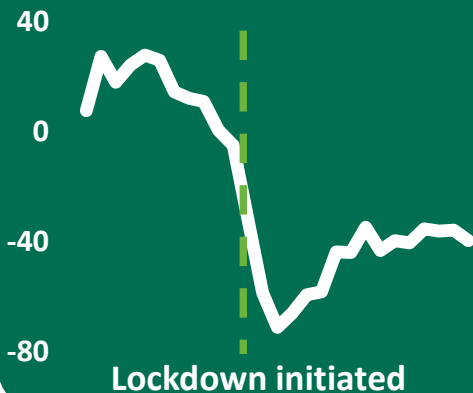
The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event, greater in scale, than any other incident the Food Standards Agency has dealt with. The FSA's objectives throughout have been to ensure food safety, preserving the high level of consumer protection in the UK whilst supporting industry in maintaining the nation's food supply. We have sought to ensure an effective yet flexible response whilst supporting our own key workers, putting their safety and wellbeing first throughout the outbreak, keeping consumer interests in mind at all times. We developed contingency plans early, have engaged widely with stakeholders and there has been a keen interest in the guidance and advice developed by the Agency. We have also sought to seize opportunities to operate differently, adopting smarter ways of working where possible. Our goal has been to lead the food regulatory landscape as it adapts to the "new normal", rather than reacting to changes as they happen. The FSA has drawn on the extensive expertise and support of our scientific advisory committees to determine that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through consumption or handling of food, or handling of packaging, is very low. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to amplify central government guidance to the public on steps to minimise transmission of the virus.

We have seen significant movements in demand between food service and retail with a continuing increase in requirement for home delivery of foods via internet shopping. The UK food system, including both industry and local authorities, has responded well to the crisis putting food safety at the forefront and our regular engagements through a variety of methods have helped to determine where possible food chain disruption might affect UK food safety, allowing us to develop temporary and proportionate easements to help the situation. The FSA has worked with businesses, local and port health authorities and consumer groups seeking to have the most up-to-date, accurate and useful information available. We have developed a business and industry portal bringing together in one place all our advice and guidance for food businesses looking to operate during the pandemic. In addition, we have provided regular updates to local authorities providing advice and support on the prioritisation of food and feed law official controls.

Throughout the pandemic FSA staff have continued to work successfully either from home or at approved premises ensuring that all meat plants under our jurisdiction remained capable of operating. The health and wellbeing of our staff is of the utmost importance and we have continually provided updates on the pandemic and guidance as to how to keep themselves and others safe. As essential Key Workers, they are critical to national service delivery ensuring that the UK food supply keeps flowing. The incident has put significant demands upon FSA personnel at a time when many of us have our own personal concerns. However, throughout the pandemic, staff absence has remained minimal and morale has been good. Put simply, our staff have been superb, as have those working across the whole food system. Going forward, we remain prepared with available capability and capacity to address a future resurgence of COVID-19 should that occur even if it is concurrent with the end of the EU exit transition phase when the Northern Ireland protocol comes into effect.

Public Health England (PHE) Campylobacter Cases

Campylobacter weekly case % difference to 5 year median (2020)



Lockdown led to a sharp drop in weekly Campylobacter cases to **71%** below the previous 5 year median. As lockdown measures have eased, cases have increased, but to a level that still represents a **40%** reduction to the previous 5 year median (**881** weekly cases vs **995** before lockdown)

Food Incidents

The FSA successfully managed:



Food incidents



Food alerts

Alongside managing the COVID-19 incident

Risk of COVID-19 Exposure in Food



Overall Risk = **Very Low**

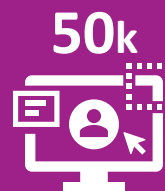
The FSA considered the probability that UK consumers would receive infectious exposures of COVID-19 via food consumption, handling food contact materials or packaging as

Negligible as assessed by pathway A (food of animal origin) and **Very Low** (“very rare but cannot be excluded”) as assessed by pathway B (contamination of food)

Social Media Response


The FSA were aware of the potential for disinformation to circulate online in connection with COVID-19, for example, the FSA observed a trend asking whether it was necessary to wash fruit and vegetables in bleach, disinfectant or detergent in order to inactivate the virus.

In response, the FSA launched a series of social media posts to firmly state that consumers should not wash food with bleach, disinfectant or detergent which performed well across all channels receiving:



Accounts who viewed this post which also had an average interaction per 1,000 followers of **5%**, significantly higher than our average interaction rate

Eating Out

 **31%** % of respondents in July who suggest they would not return to restaurants for the foreseeable future, up from **25%** in June. Older people were more likely than young people to say they would not be returning to eat out for the foreseeable future

Eating Food Past Use-by Dates



% of respondents in April indicated that they had eaten food that had gone past its sell by date. This reduced to a range of **17-39%** in May and June

Consumers and The Food System: COVID-19

The qualitative research showed that more generally, COVID-19 had changed how consumers buy, cook and eat food



Participants were eager for clear visual safety cues in shops, particularly clear social distancing



Trust in food businesses have mostly strengthened under COVID-19, driven primarily by a perceived robust 'return to normal' after early disruptions like product shortages



Many experienced positive changes to household food behaviours such as increased home-cooking and food sharing and increased attention to diet

Food Availability / Affordability

 **31%** % of respondents in April concerned about food availability. This reduced to **20%** between May and July reflecting a decrease in concern as lockdown eased

Food Insecurity



The average % of respondents between April and July during lockdown who had cut down meal sizes or skipped meals entirely due to not having enough money

The FSA's objectives throughout have been to ensure food safety, preserving the high level of consumer protection in the UK whilst supporting industry in maintaining the nation's food supply

Meat premises audits were re-prioritised

Using a risk based approach audits of meat Food Business Operators (FBOs) continued to be carried out only for those in the lowest two categories of compliance with 2 audits needed in Q1. This allowed staff to be redeployed and support FBOs operating

Local authority activity re-prioritisation

Guidance on re-prioritising was produced for the local authority community with over 600 views since its launch in March. The guidance was regularly reviewed and updated with 12 iterations in Q1

Public consultations have been paused

Statutory consultations, report publications and reviews have been paused to not add to the burden on stakeholders while COVID-19 is the priority

Mobilisation of staff

92 Colleagues worked directly in the incident response team on a variety of activities. In addition 30 qualified staff were redeployed to Field Operations from elsewhere in FSA. Across the organisation all activity was re-prioritised with COVID-19 support as the top priority for enabling functions



93%

of staff available to continue working at approved premises or from home



2%

of available working days lost due to COVID-19



100%

of office-based staff have IT to enable home-working from day 1



20%

of staff keen to be one of the first to return to office as soon as we are able



204,119

page views received for our guidance for consumers



50,064

users downloaded the business reopening checklist representing a **25% download rate**



86%

of users marked our guidance for food businesses as useful



93%

of staff felt informed and up to date about the FSA's work



79% of staff feel somewhat / very effective working from home compared to office



70% of staff Work-life balance improved or not changed

44% of staff would consider changing contracts to multi location or home-based



Incident response team handled over **10,000** pieces of email traffic



Enquires dealt with by our incident response team



Situation Reports produced to identify issues of significant concern



100%

Meat Premises - FSA contingency plans successfully deployed staff to meet all production demands



7

Positive tests for COVID-19 were found during testing

Value of the food sector



£121bn

Agri-food sector contributions in 2018 as shown by the latest data with exports valued at **£22.5bn**



Predicted growth in online grocery shopping in 2020

Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs)



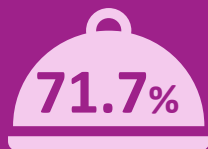
The average proportion of SMEs in manufacturing, hospitality, wholesale and retail in the food sector to the UK economy. **They are important in the food chain supply to maintain competitiveness**

Economic Outlook since COVID-19



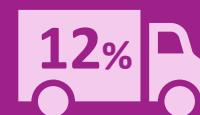
↓ **19.1%**

Fall in GDP in 3 months to May



Fall ↓

This fall in output in the accommodation and food service sectors representing a **2.3%** decline to the whole UK economy



Fall ↓

In food and drink exports (**£700m**) in Q1 compared to the same time period in 2019

Business Confidence

68%

of businesses reported a decline in business conditions in Q1, representing a significant decrease in business confidence for the food and drink sector

Employment since COVID-19



In working hours in the accommodation and food service activities sector, **by far, the largest % of businesses that had reduced working hours**



Of employees in the accommodation and food service sector were furloughed, **the largest proportion of any workforce**

Incident Response Mobilisation



92 Colleagues who worked throughout in incident response on a variety of activities including investigation groups



of which **48** were volunteers from across the agency



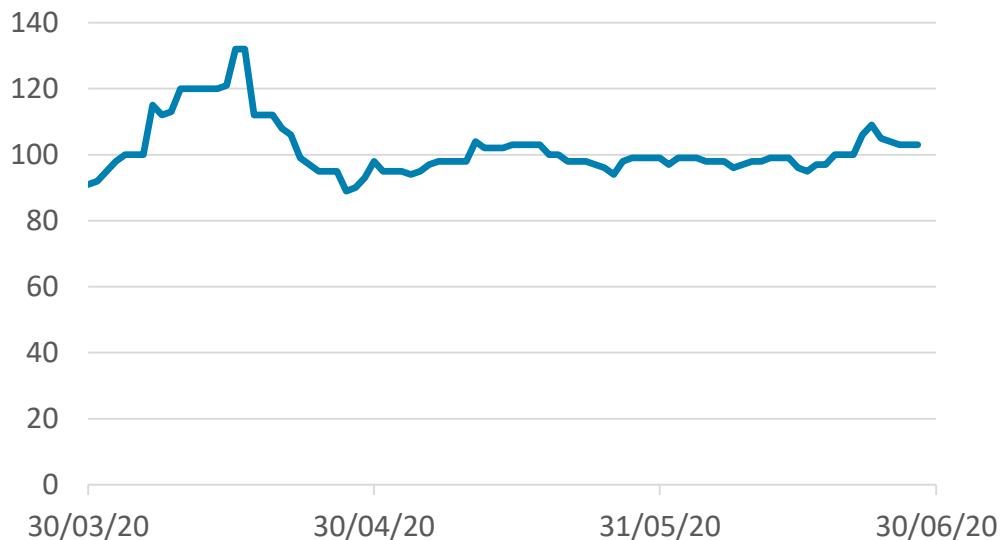
Including **7** group leaders and support managers



In addition **30** qualified inspection and veterinary staff were seconded to Field Operations to ensure delivery continued

Field Staff Absence Figures

The number of Field Staff Absent for COVID-19 related reasons of 920 Total employed and contracted field staff



Despite a peak of **132** daily COVID-19 related absences during the early part of our COVID-19 response, Field Operations delivery continued

Slaughterhouse and game premises throughput



in throughput
of animals in
Q1 2020 against
Q1 2019

2% decrease ↓

250


FBOs operated and
recorded throughput
activity in Q1 2020
against 268 in Q1 2019
7% Decrease ↓



6%
in inspection
hours in Q1
2020 compared
to Q1 2019
Decrease ↓


100%

of meat approved premises wanting to operate during Q1 were able to as FSA contingency plans for staff deployment provided staff to meet requirements



Animal welfare
standards were
maintained



Using a risk based approach, audits of FBOs continued only for those categorised as 'improvement necessary' and 'urgent improvement necessary' with 2 audits needed in Q1. This allowed staff to be redeployed to support operating FBOs

What?

Ensure people understand that you cannot get COVID-19 from food, and what to do to keep food safe

How?

Created content to boost consumer confidence and address emerging issues on food safety

Made use of horizon scanning activity, using social media listening and desk research to identify new issues. Delivered communication activity in a timely way, for example, on use-by dates and freezing products and amplified this through partners

Addressed disinformation such as calls to wash food with bleach and supplements to prevent COVID-19

Impact



204,119

Page views received for an FSA guidance for consumers on GOV.UK in Q1. **34,000** alone in the first 3 days of publication



133

Interactions



2,900

Clicks



104

Shares

Received from an FSA Facebook post on 'our risk assessment and food' which included a reach of over **127,000 impressions**



142

Interactions



418

Clicks



24

Shares

Received from a FSA LinkedIn post on 'food checks before donating as an individual or business' which included a reach of over **11,374 impressions**

Making COVID-19 Food Guidance Available to Businesses

What?

Help businesses find the information they need to make adjustments to keep running without compromising food safety

How?

Created a guidance portal to focus on hygiene and regulatory requirements during the reopening phase and a checklist for businesses

Worked with Defra and industry bodies to promote #FoodHeroes, a social media campaign to highlight the efforts of keyworkers across the food industry

Held daily stakeholder calls with the meat industry, and weekly calls with other industry stakeholders

Impact



231,906

Page views received for the FSA guidance for food businesses on GOV.UK in Q1. **37,000** alone in the first 3 days of publication.

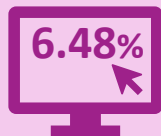


of 667 users marked the page as useful in the first month



256,359

Views for the FSA's 'reopening and adapting your food business during COVID-19' portal



This represents 6.48% of overall site traffic and is **137,000** more than the next most popular non-COVID-19 content



The portal has a returning visitor rate of **29.29%** (**12.8%** higher than the food.gov.uk average)



199,582

Views for the FSA's business reopening checklist



50,064

Users who downloaded the checklist representing a **25% download rate**

Engagement With Industry During COVID-19 to Support Food Production / Supply

Meetings in place for two-way communication during the FSA's COVID-19 response and key outcomes from the meetings

Daily FMG COVID-19



Opportunity to discuss emerging risks and issues within Field Operations and react accordingly

Food Resilience Intelligence Forum



Opportunity for the wider industry to raise any concerns around food safety and supply

83%



of the Meat Industry representative groups invited to the Strategic and Technical meetings attended regularly

Account Manager Calls with FBOs



To provide assurance and share information in respect of risks/issues and control measures, discuss priorities and explore opportunities

Daily Strategic & Technical Meetings with Industry & Key Stakeholders



Opportunity to discuss emerging risks and issues with industry representatives, provide assurance and share information

Food & Drink Federation Round Table



Trade Association forum for information exchange on COVID-19 matters involving food

Food Chain Emergency Liaison Group



Main focus for timely information exchange on food supply and security across the food industry

Task & Finish Group - Easements



Implementation and monitoring of stage 2 and stage 3 easements to support service delivery

What?

Ensure staff feel engaged and that senior leadership is sufficiently visible, particularly for frontline staff working in meat premises. Celebrate the role of staff in meat premises (our field operations team) in maintaining food supplies

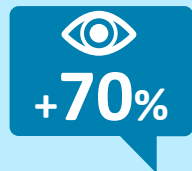
How?

- Created a COVID-19 hub to bring together content, advice and blogging platform for senior managers
- Increased the frequency of all-staff calls, with specific events for field operations colleagues to provide reassurance on issues such as PPE and social distancing
- Launched #HiddenHeroes campaign to profile and celebrate the contributions of field operations colleagues who continued to work in meat premises and abattoirs throughout lockdown

Impact



Of staff felt informed and up to date about the FSA's work.
+23% from People Survey Oct 2019.



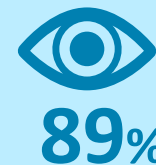
Increase in the number of unique views of blogs from senior leaders (benchmarked against similar content)



Average attendance during Chief Executive All Staff Calls (**65** during field operations calls) to support our staff with wellbeing needs and provide essential updates



of staff felt they had the opportunity to provide feedback to senior management.
+37% from People Survey Oct 2019



of staff who felt senior management were sufficiently visible.
+25% from People Survey Oct 2019

Incident Response and Local Authority Hub Performance

Incident Response Activity



Handled over **10,000** pieces of email traffic



Enquiries dealt with by our Continuous Business Improvement (CBI) team and LA Hub

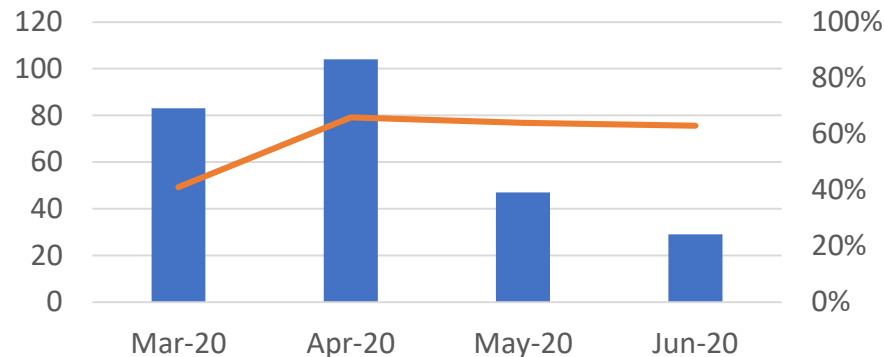


Situation Reports produced. They provide COVID-19 status updates identifying issues of significant concern that require FSA intervention



Open rates of regular communications and clickthrough rates to LAs increased by 3.9% to 22.65% and 9.17% to 18.62% respectively

Number of enquiries received to the Local Authority hub



■ Number of enquiries — % of responses in 0-5 working days



Average % of responses provided in 0-5 working days during Q1

Local Authority Guidance



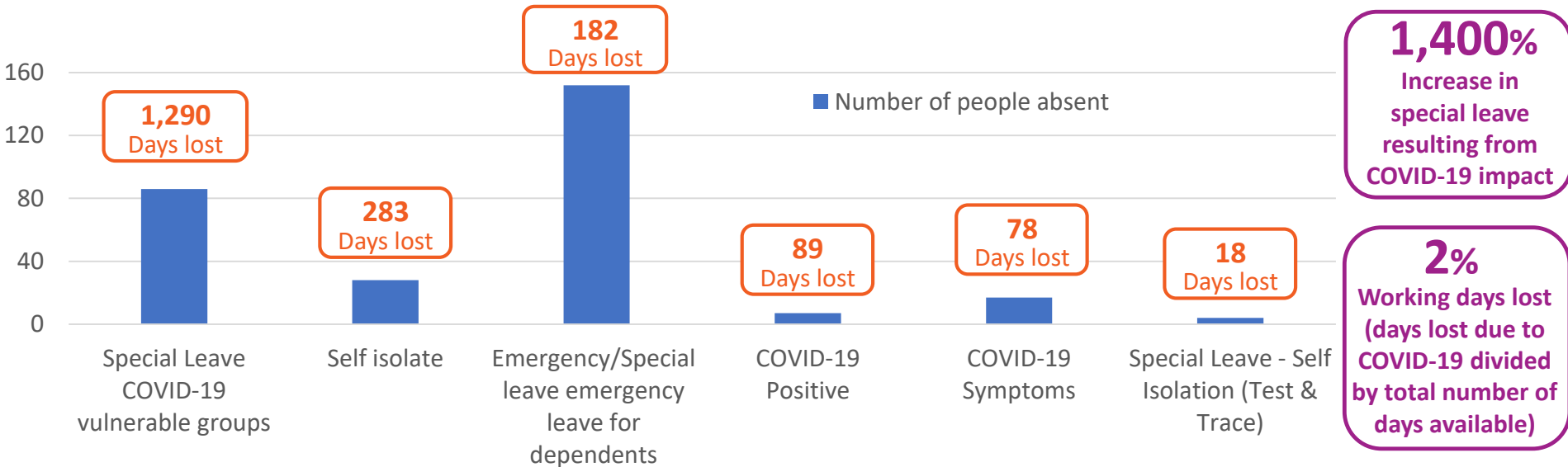
Iterations of LA Guidance produced for the local authority community in line with Government Guidance



Views received on this guidance since its launch in March

COVID-19 Related Special Leave from 1 April to 30 June 2020

The FSA revised the special leave policy for staff requiring emergency leave to enable staff to do the right thing



FSA Staff Networks – Key Highlights from COVID-19 Response

Meeting our staff's wellbeing needs



Weekly virtual coffee mornings to provide a safe space to talk, listen, share stories and help each other



Regular COVID-19 newsletters published, providing key and the latest information



Virtual learning guidance published to enable staff to continue learning and developing



Increased and implemented working from home allowance to all home-working staff



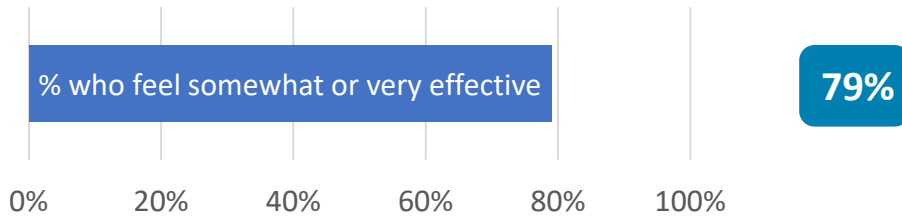
Provided additional IT equipment / furniture to staff to enable full-time homeworking

Alternative route to recruitment

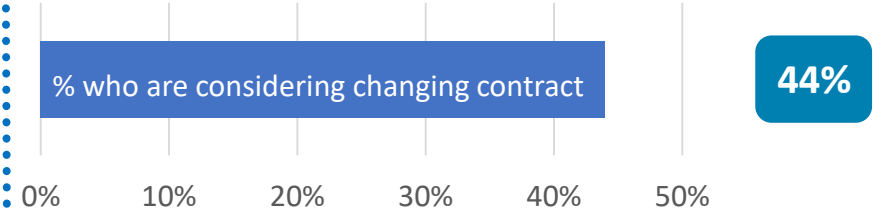


Return to Office Surveys – Key Findings

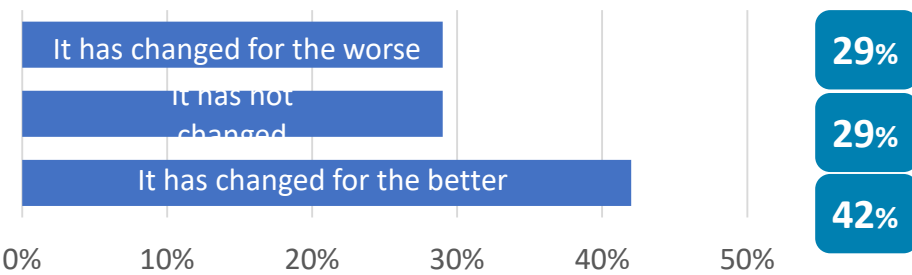
How effective do you feel you are working from home, in comparison to when you were working in an office?



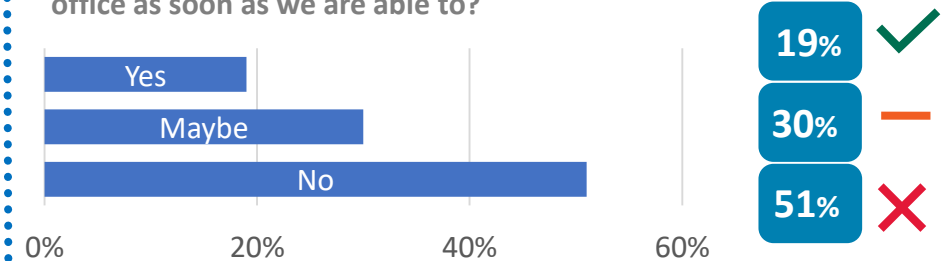
Based on your experience of working from home so far, or you considering changing your contract to either multi location or home-based?



Has your work-life balance changed since working from home?



Would you like to be considered as one of the first to return to office as soon as we are able to?



Affordability – How The FSA Is Performing Against HM Treasury Limits 2020/21

	20/21 Full Year Forecast £m	20/21 Limits £m	Fav/(Adv) Availability £m	Fav/(Adv) Variance %	Under / (Over) spend
FSA Total (RDEL & CDEL exc AME)	121.3	126.8	5.5	4%	●
Westminster (including EU Exit)					
Net Admin Expenditure	49.2	49.7	0.5	1%	●
Net Programme Expenditure	51.2	53.2	2.0	4%	●
Capital (CDEL)	8.4	8.9	0.5	6%	●
Wales					
RDEL & CDEL	3.4	3.7	0.3	8%	●
Northern Ireland					
RDEL & CDEL	9.1	11.3	2.2	19%	●

Breakdown Of Corporate Priorities

	2020/21 Full Year Forecast £m	2020/21 Budget £m	Under /(Over) Spend Availability £m
FSA Total (RDEL & CDEL) (of which):	121.3	126.8	5.5
Risk Assessment and other Science	10.1	10.9	0.8
Risk Management and other Policy	6.3	7.0	0.7
LA Support & Delivery of official controls	6.0	6.0	0.0
National Food Crime Unit (NFCU)	4.3	4.8	0.5
Operations excl. NFCU & COVID-19	22.0	24.3	2.3
Doing the day job well	47.7	51.6	3.9
Capital	2.7	3.2	0.5
Key Priorities (see next slide for breakdown):	22.2	19.0	(3.2)

Breakdown Of Key Areas Of Spend

	2020/21 Full Year Forecast £m	2020/21 Budget £m	Under / (Over) Spend Availability £m
Key Priorities (of which):	22.2	19.0	(3.2)
COVID-19 (see next slide)	3.6	0.0	(3.6)
EU Transition excl. NFCU	10.0	10.2	0.2
Achieving Business Compliance	2.5	2.4	(0.1)
Operational Transformation	1.1	1.2	0.1
Food Hypersensitivity	2.7	2.9	0.2
Surveillance (inc. Sampling)	2.3	2.3	0.0

COVID-19 Costs and Savings

2020/21 Full Year
Forecast £m

COVID-19 Costs (of which):

Reduced Income - Non-idle Time

3.6

Additional E&J Costs

0.6

Surveillance Sampling in response to COVID

0.6

Field Operations Increased Overtime (including SCS overtime)

0.6

Additional Field Operations Consumables / Services & Other Costs

0.5

Staffing costs

0.5

Briefing Cell & Outward secondment Costs

0.3

COVID-19 Horizon Scanning – research support

0.3

0.2

2020/21 Full Year
Forecast £m

COVID-19 Savings (of which):

Travel & Subsistence

(2.1)

Training & Meeting Room

(1.9)

Hire

(0.2)