

## REVIEW OF STAFF ENGAGEMENT 2020/21

### Report by Maria Jennings

For further information contact Anna Grove on 07973 686533 (Tel) or Paul Moody on 07738 199036

Email: [anna.grove@food.gov.uk](mailto:anna.grove@food.gov.uk) or [paul.moody@food.gov.uk](mailto:paul.moody@food.gov.uk)

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The objective of this paper is to provide an update on the FSA's Civil Service People Survey Results for 2020 and an overview of the actions taken which led to these results. It also outlines the key areas of focus for 2021 for the Business Committee's consideration.
- 1.2 The Business Committee is asked to review the considerable progress we have made in 2020, take account of the difficult circumstances the organisation faced and confirm support for the overall approach for 2021.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 2020 was a year unlike any other – as well as being the agency's twentieth anniversary, the way we conduct our business and engage with colleagues was fundamentally altered by the COVID 19 pandemic. This paper provides an overview of what has been achieved regarding staff engagement in the past year, and what is planned for the coming year.

### 3. 2020 Engagement Summarised (see Annex A)

- 3.1 People Survey results: The results of the Civil Service People Survey 2020 were our strongest set of results yet, showing consistent improvement across all but one area.
- 3.2 Our most improved engagement score was in the Pay and Benefits space, where our engagement rose by 16 points from 2019 (see Annex B). This is attributable to the successful business case presented to Cabinet Office/HMT, resulting in the implementation of a two-year pay offer accepted by all recognised trade unions, totalling a 7.83% increase in the paybill.
- 3.3 We streamlined our reward and recognition scheme making it easier to nominate colleagues, and reduced administration led to more frequent and timely payment. The total benefits package has been further enhanced by the introduction of a new non-pay related employee benefits package in December 2020.
- 3.4 Staff survey results regarding bullying and harassment dropped from 13% of staff reporting that they have been bullied or harassed at work in the last 12

months to 12% however, this will remain a key organisational focus during 2021.

- 3.5 The only exception to the upward trend was Learning and Development (L&D) which dropped by 2 points this year. To redress this, we have already implemented a programme focussing on staff wellbeing to help mitigate any adverse impacts that workloads and stress levels may be having on wellbeing and accessing development. Promoting L&D will be an organisational level focus for 2021.
- 3.6 **COVID support and Staff Welfare (see Annex C)**  
The COVID 19 pandemic has placed unprecedented demands on all CS departments. Fortunately, because we introduced the Our Ways of Working programme (OWOW) in 2016 and had an established approach to supporting flexible working, the FSA was in a very strong position to adapt and transition all our non-frontline roles to being home-enabled almost immediately. This supported our people to continue to deliver from the safety of their homes whilst balancing the demands of caring for any dependants.
- 3.7 Staff who were considered extremely clinically vulnerable were enabled to shield to minimise the risk to their health and we have provided flexibility and paid special leave for those with family caring responsibility during periods of lockdown. We have emphasised a focus on welfare during check-ins, and a staff mood-checker was introduced in April and deployed in phases throughout 2020.
- 3.8 Considerable effort was put into ensuring Leadership visibility throughout the pandemic, the success of which was evidenced by a 7 point increase in our scores for Leadership & Change.
- 3.9 **Inclusion in the FSA**  
Significant work has been done to improve inclusivity in the FSA during 2020. We have successfully introduced a reverse mentoring scheme pairing SCS colleagues with mentors from under-represented groups, which launched September 2020.
- 3.10 We collaborated with the staff networks in October 2020 to develop proposals for an internal development scheme for under-represented groups, which has been approved and will be launched during 2021.
- 3.11 All internal job opportunities are now advertised on Digital Workplace and we have reviewed and implemented changes to recruitment processes including updated scoring methodology and training of diverse panel members to reduce the risk of bias in recruitment processes from September 2020 onwards.
- 3.12 The staff networks are actively involved in Staff Engagement Exercises for Senior Recruitment, and our Management Fundamentals Framework has been expanded to include aspiring managers. This focus on inclusion has resulted in an uplift of 3 points to 83% against the Civil Service People Survey question 'I

think that my organisation respects individual differences (for example cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas etc).

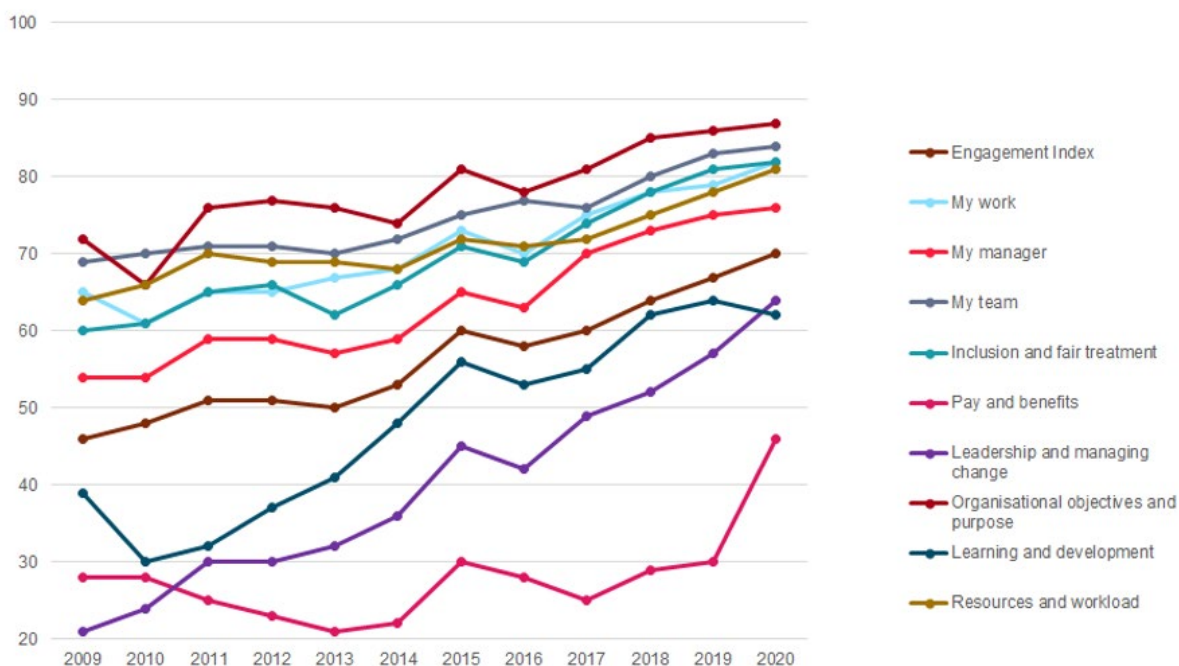
#### **4. Organisational Focus for 2021 (see Annex D)**

- 4.1 Driven by our People Survey results for 2020, we will focus on driving performance through learning and development, building a culture of inclusion where opportunities are accessible to all. Following a review of our organisational culture, our ASPIRE Values and our strategic capabilities plan throughout Feb/March 2021, the next steps for the agency's culture will be defined in alignment with the eight guiding principles in our People Strategy.
- 4.2 We will make L&D an organisational focus during 2021, and work is already underway to:
  - publicise all that is on offer
  - surface any barriers to accessing L&D across the business
  - improve the accessibility and navigation of the curriculum
  - streamline and digitise the L&D request process to reduce administration; and
  - roll out our internal E-learning platform.
- 4.3 We will launch our internal development programme for people from under-represented groups (FSA Accelerate) piloted at SEO level, developed in collaboration with our diversity networks. We will introduce a new online talent and performance management system, ensuring that career conversations are being offered to all staff and enabling us to produce clear data on performance and career conversations, informing an evidence-based approach to our talent interventions and organisational level succession planning.
- 4.4 Building on the success of our Management Fundamentals Framework and informed by the refresh of our strategic capabilities plan, we will develop a Leadership Development Framework to ensure that our leaders are equipped to continue leading and inspiring the organisation through the next stage of our evolution. All these actions will drive performance through learning, embracing the intersectionality of L&D, talent and inclusion to ensure that the FSA learning offer is accessible to and understood by all, enabling colleagues from all walks of life to access the right development for their personal development requirements and career aspirations.
- 4.5 We will also take steps to directly address bullying and harassment with the FSA, starting with a deep dive into the 2020 People Survey results to identify any hotspots and recurrent issues. These will inform targeted, bespoke advice, tools and interventions for the relevant business areas to help reduce the levels of bullying and harassment experienced by FSA staff.
- 4.6 Finally, we will build on the successes of our flexible working approach which enabled us to continue to deliver so effectively despite the widespread disruption of 2020 by reviewing and enhancing our flexible working offer for

staff to ensure that OWOW still meet the needs of both the business and our people in a post-COVID 19 world. It is important to support the cross-government approach to hybrid working and remain at the cutting edge of this field across government.

**ANNEX**

**Annex A: People Survey Trend Data 2009-2020**



**Annex B: 2020 People Survey Results vs 2019 People Survey Results**

Drivers of engagement – key themes	FSA % Positive 2019	FSA % Positive 2020
My work	79	82
Org purpose	86	87
My manager	75	76
My team	83	84
L&D	64	62
Inclusion & fair treatment	81	82

<b>Resources &amp; workload</b>	78	81
<b>Pay &amp; benefits</b>	30	46
<b>Leadership &amp; change</b>	57	64

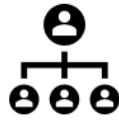
### **Annex C: Supporting our People through COVID 19**

- ✓ All non-frontline staff successfully transitioned to home enabled, updated working practices and enhanced offering regarding equipment and allowances introduced in March 2020
- ✓ COVID secure workplaces, booking systems and swift shielding for an expanded clinically vulnerable group
- ✓ Weekly leadership calls and frequent all staff engagement/ operational staff calls
- ✓ FSA Foundation induction events transitioned online, remotely onboarding 110 new staff April 2020 – Jan 2021
- ✓ Civil Service Pulse Survey to check staff wellbeing in May 2020
- ✓ Worked closely with Trade Unions to support staff, particularly in Field Operations (minimum fortnightly since March 2020)
- ✓ Paid special leave for staff with childcare responsibilities during lockdown
- ✓ Introduced regular Mood Checker surveys (April - December 2020) with almost 1400 responses
- ✓ Social engagement and peer support provided to colleagues via networks
- ✓ HR drop-in surgeries for staff and managers
- ✓ Dedicated online COVID 19 information hub and enquiry mailbox

Annex D: Forward look for 2021/22



Launch of  
FSA  
Accelerate



New online  
performance  
and talent  
management  
system



Revised  
People and  
Inclusion  
Strategies  
2021-24



Holistic and  
inclusive  
approach to  
FSA culture  
aligned to our  
ASPIRE  
values and 8  
guiding  
principles



Enhancing  
our flexible  
working offer  
(OWOW)



Leadership  
Development  
framework