

WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WFAC) CHAIR AND DIRECTOR WALES REPORT

Report by Nathan Barnhouse, Director of the FSA in Wales and Peter Price, Board Member for Wales and Chair of WFAC.

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1. Summary

1.1 This paper is a joint report from the WFAC Chair and the Director of the FSA in Wales. It outlines key activities of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Wales in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and in ensuring that we have in place suitable arrangements post EU Exit. The Director will highlight key activities from FSA in Wales and the Chair will report on the operations of the Committee. Other activities of interest undertaken in Wales are detailed in the Annex. The report covers the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 August 2021.

1.2 The Board is asked to:

- **Note:** the outlined work programmes and how the FSA in Wales is working in the pandemic impacted and post EU landscape.
- **Comment:** on the alignment of these work programmes with the FSA's strategic direction and nature of the FSA's three country approach.
- **Note:** the activities of the WFAC and its input into Board considerations; and
- **Consider and comment** on the upcoming priorities for the FSA in Wales.

2. Introduction

2.1 In Wales, the FSA is responsible for devolved legislation and policy relating to food and feed safety, standards, food composition and labelling.

2.2 The FSA in Wales works in the interest of Wales and the Welsh Ministers working closely with colleagues across the FSA and Welsh Government to ensure an integrated approach as part of the FSA's three-country model.

2.3 The way the FSA in Wales functions is unique, and this strengthens its role as an independent, non-Ministerial government department. The FSA in Wales draws upon its understanding of Welsh Government policy objectives, gained from close working with the Welsh Government and other partners in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as part of its

contribution to the wider work of the FSA. It also means that we draw from the extensive FSA scientific, risk management and research capability when providing robust advice to the Welsh Ministers.

- 2.4 Alongside work on Wales specific areas, the FSA in Wales is fully integrated into wider FSA priorities and programmes of work, including key change programmes such as Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) and the Operational Transformation Programme (OTP).
- 2.5 Our work is undertaken in line with the UK common frameworks ensuring the views of stakeholders in Wales are represented at a UK level in the development of policy and legislation. As part of the three-country model, we work closely with colleagues across England and Northern Ireland to ensure an integration of approach, to deliver FSA policies both effectively and efficiently.

3. COVID-19 response

- 3.1 We adapted swiftly to a new way of working at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As with other government departments, the pandemic meant the immediate closure of our office in Cardiff and moving all our operations to remote working. Due to the success of the Our Ways of Working programme, this move was seamless and enabled FSA staff in Wales to respond quickly to needs across several policy remits. We have maintained regular engagement with Local Authorities (LAs) in Wales and with the Welsh Government to facilitate the effective and efficient exchange of information and intelligence regarding the impact of the pandemic on the ongoing delivery of official food controls. Since the start of the pandemic, the FSA in Wales has also participated in Public Health Wales' weekly strategic coordination support group, as well as being part of the FSA's pandemic response coordination.
- 3.2 The pandemic response in Wales has demonstrated the benefits of close partnership and collaboration, and we recognise and applaud the work of public protection colleagues in LAs who have been on the front line. We have facilitated regular discussions between ourselves, LAs, Welsh Government and other key stakeholders during the pandemic so that we could most effectively share the latest intelligence. We provided detailed advice and guidance to food businesses in Wales on how to work safely during the COVID-19 restrictive period and on how to reopen. This was supplemented by advice to consumers and by specific advice on food safety for community cooking and for food banks.
- 3.3 We collaborated with Welsh Government and LAs through the COVID-19 Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW) Recovery Working Group, the Environmental Health Wales Food Hygiene Expert Panel, and the Trading Standards Wales Food Standards and Labelling Expert Panel on the development of the recovery plan. Through this collaboration we developed a recovery plan for official food controls that reflects the position in Wales, whilst being consistent with the plans in England and Northern Ireland. We will ensure

delivery against the plan is reviewed so that it remains fit for purpose and to provide assurance to the FSA Board and to the Welsh Ministers.

4. Post-EU Exit Arrangements

- 4.1 We successfully delivered our objectives in preparation for the end of the transition period. Working with Welsh Government we have ensured that all domestic and UK food and feed legislation required as a result of UK's exit from the EU has been made. In the development of this legislation, we consulted Welsh stakeholders to ensure that their views informed our decisions.
- 4.2 We have secured additional resources for the FSA in Wales to deliver the additional functions acquired from EU institutions after the end of the Transition Period. Working closely with the Welsh Government, we developed a revised resource requirement that saw our budget increase by an additional £1.5m on a recurring basis from 2021-22. We are currently recruiting to ensure that we have the capability to deliver the additional functions in Wales.
- 4.3 The FSA in Wales will ensure all aspects of Welsh legislative, operational changes and country specific issues are considered and planned for the continuing post-EU transition and to embed the FSA's Common Frameworks. We will have capacity to provide input into broader FSA advice on future trade negotiations, and to continue to support LAs in the delivery of additional import/export requirements. Importantly, we will have capacity to provide Wales specific economic input to risk assessments and regulatory appraisals.
- 4.4 We have worked closely with LAs in the lead up to, and following, the UK's exit from the EU. We made grants available to LAs to enable them to prepare for EU exit, and we have provided training for public protection officers on imported food and its sampling. We provided resources for the inspection of fishing vessels, for food and feed enforcement authorities on imports and guidance documents for LAs on exports or movement of goods to the EU and Northern Ireland. We have continued to liaise with LAs impacted by increased import checks as border control post plans are finalised in Wales.
- 4.5 The FSA in Wales is engaged with two of the Common Frameworks, both of which have now received provisional approval from the Joint Ministerial Committee. We are to report to the Parliaments at regular intervals, and Senedd Cymru has scrutinised both frameworks relevant to Wales. Four nation working is ongoing to achieve final Ministerial agreement, with final frameworks expected by the end of 2021.

5. Working with Welsh Government

- 5.1 We have a good working relationship with Welsh Government. Joint liaison meetings are held quarterly and there is regular contact between the two departments. The new FSA Chair and Chair of WFAC have already had

introductory meetings with the Deputy Minister for Health and Wellbeing and with the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd. We work to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, although we are not a named body, and we have a proactive approach to the Welsh Language through our Welsh Language Scheme. The Welsh Ministers place a strong emphasis on collaborative working with stakeholders in Wales, which we have embedded in our approach. Funding for the FSA in Wales is made available from the Welsh Government in accordance with Section 39 of the Food Standards Act 1999 and agreed by the Senedd Cymru.

- 5.2 A Concordat was agreed in 2016 setting out a framework for co-operation between the FSA and the Welsh Government. The Concordat states the principles that guide relations between the FSA and Welsh Government to ensure effective communication and co-ordination. Much has changed in the devolution landscape since the Concordat was agreed in 2016 and so, with the Welsh Government, we have commenced the process to review and update it. The FSA in Wales is also active across Wales' public health forums. The Director of the FSA in Wales attends the Chief Medical Officer for Wales' Health Protection Advisory Group, as well as other forums that have the function of enhancing collaboration across public health protection.
- 5.3 We will work with Welsh Government on their forthcoming review of the FSA's operations in Wales, as announced by the Deputy Minister Lynne Neagle MS on 21 June. In announcing this review, the Minister acknowledged the expanded role of the FSA, following the UK's transition out of the EU and the significant role to be taken by the FSA to support LAs in their recovery from COVID-19. An independent consultancy is in the process of being appointed to undertake the review, the scope of which will include future funding arrangements, the remit of the organisation and the ability of the FSA to meet existing and future challenges. The outcome of the review will also inform the revision of the Concordat between the two Departments. In preparation for our involvement in the review, a senior level coordinating team has been set up within the FSA.
- 5.4 We will identify how we can assist with the Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2021-26¹, which was published on 15 June. There are some clear areas of shared interest in the Programme for Government. We have offered support to the Welsh Government on the commitments to develop a Wales Community Food Strategy to encourage the supply of locally sourced food in Wales and on the commitment to develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare.
- 5.5 All activities of the FSA in Wales are aligned to the national well-being indicators² in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015³. The FSA Board agreed in 2017 that the FSA should work in a complementary way

¹ [Programme for government 2021 to 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

² [National wellbeing indicators | GOV.WALES](#)

³ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

in accordance with the sustainable development principles and to align areas of its remit, where possible, to support the improved economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, despite the FSA not being a named body in the Act.

6. Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW)

- 6.1 On 9 July 2019, the then Minister for Health and Social Services announced the intention to establish a Wales Food Law Enforcement Liaison Committee, which was subsequently established in October 2019. The Welsh Government, through the funding offer, has requested that the FSA in Wales provide the secretariat support for this group. In December 2019, members of the Committee agreed to change the name of the group to the Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW), reflecting Committee's ambition to enhance collaborative working between all partners in Wales across all aspects of the food and feed agenda.
- 6.2 The FSA in Wales recognises the importance and value of SSAFW in ensuring a collaborative approach to the work of the Welsh Government, FSA and LAs. SSAFW provides a forum for the Welsh Government, FSA, and Local Government in Wales to work together, with other key partners, to inform the development and delivery of food law policy and practice in Wales. Its creation has provided the opportunity for more dynamic partnership working by capitalising on knowledge, skills, and expertise from a range of partners. It has helped shape priorities and ensures that there are strengthened and enduring relationships between the Welsh Government, FSA, LAs, industry, consumers, and other partners. We are actively engaging SSAFW in some of the key priority programmes for the FSA including ABC, OTP, and Food Hypersensitivity.
- 6.3 The onset of the pandemic coincided with a pivotal year for the development and growth of SSAFW, but this did not prevent the key partners from working collaboratively in the spirit that SSAFW was established. A subgroup of SSAFW was established in May 2020 (the COVID-19 Response working group), to share intelligence and feedback between the Welsh Government, FSA and LAs. Through this group we were able to provide LAs with advice and guidance on the delivery of official food controls during the pandemic. The subgroup provided intelligence that was of benefit to the whole FSA, and that informed elements of the initial stages of the FSA response to the pandemic, including the need to disseminate guidance to business and consumers. The subgroup was subsequently replaced, in April 2021, by the COVID-19 Recovery subgroup. This has met on a regular basis and plays an important role in informing the recovery roadmap in Wales.

The Board Member for Wales and Chair of WFAC observes SSAFW meetings. This arrangement is reciprocated with the Chair of SSAFW invited to observe themed meetings of WFAC. This arrangement provides for the direct sharing of intelligence. SSAFW's forward look work programme includes collaborative working on national policy objectives.

7. Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC)

7.1 This section of the report is from Peter Price, the Board Member for Wales and Chair of the WFAC. It reports on the activities of the WFAC for the period September 2020 to September 2021.

7.2 Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, WFAC meetings have taken place virtually, through Microsoft Teams. The **themed meetings** have consisted of presentations from both internal and external presenters, followed by a panel style discussion with members and presenters. Each **theme**, selected by WFAC Chair, often in consultation with the Board Chair, has provided the Committee with the opportunity to consider issues from a Wales-specific perspective, enabling detailed discussions and offering well considered advice. To ensure transparency, minutes of themed meetings have been published on the website.

7.3 The WFAC is keen to be alert to emerging issues and has, over the last year, considered the following **themes**:

- **The Future Food System in Wales: The Future Food System in Wales:** This theme looked specifically at the structure and characteristics of the food retail, wholesale, and production sectors in Wales. It was commissioned to aid understanding of the dynamics of the food systems in Wales and England and the opportunities and risks within each. Stakeholder perspectives, with an analysis of available evidence on the food industry, was provided by a representative of the Food and Drink Industry in Wales. A presentation from Welsh Government also explored the key food policy issues for the food industry in Wales, including EU transition and the Agriculture Bill. The meeting was highly informative and provided an opportunity for the WFAC to build on its consumer insight and knowledge by gathering information from the different stakeholders
- **Changes in the Welsh Food Landscape – EU Exit, Covid-19, and other causes:** This theme was commissioned to highlight the changes in food landscape, with particular interest in the red-meat sector. A representative from Hybu Cig Cymru provided the WFAC with a breadth of information on that industry's perception of changes in the Welsh food landscape, with a particular focus on the development, promotion, and marketing of Welsh red meat (lamb, beef, and pork). The challenges of the changes were explored throughout. A representative from Welsh Government also provided a high-level overview of the impact of the EU border on the UK food supply chain. The WFAC was given an overview of the relevant new regulations covering imports of food and feed into the UK.
- **Achieving Business Compliance Programme (ABC):** WFAC received an overview of this FSA strategic programme. Members were updated on progress within the different workstreams. A further presentation was provided covering: Enhanced registration/ Register a Food Business;

Food Standards Delivery Model; Competency Framework; Food Safety Culture; and Primary Authority National Inspection Strategies. The importance of a continued collaborative approach with other government departments, LAs and other key stakeholders remained a key focal point.

- **Overview of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS):** This theme was commissioned as WFAC had expressed an interest in understanding the origin of the scheme and areas for future developments. A series of presentations covered an overview of FHRS, the digital world, statistics, and the impact of COVID-19 on the FHRS. The importance of continued consumer research, including research in Wales and stakeholder engagement to inform the development of the programme was highlighted.

7.4 WFAC has also held **business meetings** virtually to consider papers ahead of each Board meeting. This has allowed members to consider the published Board papers and provide a devolved perspective, enabling the Chair to feedback Committee comments during Board meetings.

7.5 We have undertaken a successful recruitment campaign for the WFAC. A public appointment exercise was approved by the then Minister for Health and Social Services in late 2020 to appoint four new members to WFAC. The appointments followed on from the departure of long-standing Committee members, Norma Barry, Ronnie Alexander, and David Peace. The public appointment exercise was initially scheduled to run in early 2020, however due to the pandemic, under exceptional circumstances extensions were granted. The recruitment campaign commenced in October 2020 and Christopher Brereton OBE, Helen Taylor, Dr John Williams, and Georgia Taylor were appointed from 1 April 2021 for a period of three years each. They will contribute to a wide range of expertise among the WFAC membership, including members with backgrounds in farming and agriculture; the food industry and food related science; education and nutrition policy; food safety and enforcement; consumer interests and legal practice. This wide-ranging experience, as well as members' associated networks and insights, has been extremely useful for WFAC discussions. Full details of the current membership of the WFAC are at:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/welsh-food-advisory-committee>

8. FSA in Wales Forward Look

8.1 In the next six to twelve months there are a number of key priorities in Wales that we will be considering:

- **Recovering the delivery of food and feed controls.** We will work with Welsh Government and LAs on the coordinated recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we will ensure the lessons learned from the pandemic response are considered as part of a collaborative approach to the work to update the food hygiene delivery model.
- **Post EU-Exit.** We will deliver on the additional functions acquired from EU institutions after the end of the Transition Period.
- **Working with Welsh Government.** We will work with Welsh Government on their forthcoming review of the FSA's operations in Wales. We will identify how we can align our work programmes, as appropriate, to support the Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2021-26 and support their commitments to develop a Wales Community Food Strategy and to develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare. We will continue to work in a way which supports the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- **Engagement with the Members of the Senedd.** We will look to build on our engagement with members of the Senedd through the remainder of the year.

9. Conclusions

9.1 This paper provides an overview of how we have worked over the last year, in relation to COVID-19, arrangements post-EU Exit and wider FSA priorities. We have taken significant steps to assist government, LAs, and industry, all the while working to our top priority to ensure that consumers can be confident that food is safe and what it says it is, even in these unprecedented times.

9.2 As many of these work areas and priorities become business as usual, we are now forward planning to ensure that we have the right capability and are prepared for future activities, some of which are outlined above.

9.3 In relation to WFAC, we have explored a number of extremely engaging themes and will be working to meet again in person and are now arranging for the WFAC October meeting to be held in person.

9.4 The Board is asked to:

- **Note:** the outlined work programmes and how the FSA in Wales is working in the pandemic impacted and post EU landscape.
- **Comment:** on the alignment of these work programmes with the FSA's strategic direction and nature of the FSA's three country approach.
- **Note:** the activities of the WFAC and its input into Board considerations; and
- **Consider and comment** on the upcoming priorities for the FSA in Wales.

Annex - Key Achievements of the FSA in Wales October 2020 - September 2021

In addition to the activities outlined in the paper, this Annex provides an overview of further achievements of the FSA in Wales in the period October 2020 – September 2021 against FSA priorities.



Legislation - In Wales, the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee scrutinised the Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene Common Framework on 1 February 2021. Both written and oral evidence was provided by the FSA. The FSA in Wales facilitated a successful stakeholder event to update key stakeholders in Wales on the Food Compositional Standards and Labelling Framework.

Local Authority (LA) Delivery – We provide support to LAs in Wales.

- We have participated and contributed to relevant workstreams within the FSA. We have contributed to the three-country review of the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales), (the Code), the Food Law Practice Guidance (Wales) (Practice Guidance) and implementation of the Competency Framework.
- The Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) was laid before the Senedd on 28 July 2021. The Code, Practice Guidance and Competency Framework was published on 29 July 2021.
- Work is underway with colleagues in England and Northern Ireland to undertake a three-country review of the Feed Law Codes of Practice and the Feed Law Practice Guidance.
- The Less Than Thoroughly Cooked Beef Burger guidance is being reviewed.
- We are developing a programme of training in line with the FSA Competency Framework. We ensure we are represented at all Local Authority National and All Wales Food Hygiene Expert Panels, Food Standards and Labelling Expert Panels.
- We have worked closely with an LA in Wales to develop a comprehensive allergen and food hypersensitivity training presentation in multiple languages. This is now an all-Wales resource.

Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) Programme – The FSA in Wales has supported the ABC programme by facilitating discussions and reaching out to key stakeholders in Wales including local authorities. We have ensured Wales' participation in the development of the food standards Official Controls delivery model and are working with colleagues in England and Northern Ireland on the review of the food hygiene delivery model, ensuring the Welsh position is reflected and agreed. We have ensured that Welsh stakeholders are included in, and input into, the developments of the programme. Discussions have been held with SSAFW and the WFAC on progress with ABC and next steps. We are identifying further stakeholders to be engaged with in Wales, including Directors of Public Protection in Wales, Welsh Local Government Association, and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.



Food Fraud and Crime – We have worked collaboratively with FSA colleagues in the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) on the delivery of a three-country model that addresses food crime. Support is provided to the NFCU to monitor, identify, and respond to new food crime risks. We input into the NFCU threat assessment and control plan and participate in weekly meetings to ensure effective two-way information sharing. There have been 37 intelligence reports disseminated from the NFCU to Welsh stakeholders. We continue to provide ongoing support to LA investigations alongside continuing to engage with LA's regarding shellfish and re-classification.

Delivery of sampling official controls and surveillance – We lead on the development and administration of a coordinated sampling programme on food standards. Last year, sampling focused on undeclared allergens in meals served by takeaway establishments, fish and meat speciation and compositional samples. 159 samples were taken by five LAs and direct funding of the Official Control Laboratories providing a service in Wales resulted in a further 90 samples.

Incident Management - Since September 2020, the FSA in Wales has led on 91 Welsh incidents and five Welsh-led food alerts have been issued in addition to providing input on several non-routine and national incidents. We have provided input into national and non-routine incidents and been actively involved in the incident prevention workstream. We continue to collate Root Cause Analysis data on a national level. We work across four nations to provide a robust incident response.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) We continue to ensure the effective implementation and operation of the statutory FHRS in Wales working collaboratively with LAs and Welsh Government. The FHRS in Wales continues to have a positive impact. The proportion of food businesses achieving broad compliance, that is a food hygiene rating of 3, 4 or 5, currently stands at 97% and the number of those businesses achieving the highest rating of 5 is just over 70%.

- The latest three-year review of the operation of the FHRS was laid before the Senedd in February 2021, including a report on the operation of the appeals system in Wales.
- A review of the statutory guidance was completed and will be published in September 2021.
- We are to build on the success of the FHRS and a project aimed at requiring the statutory provision of food hygiene ratings by businesses online is underway.
- Digital tools to support the voluntary use of food hygiene ratings online are being developed, alongside a review of the current exemption for childminders.
- We are monitoring developments with the ABC programme to ensure due regard is given to FHRS and the statutory nature of the scheme in Wales.
- We are supporting training to LA officers in Wales to ensure a consistent approach by officers responsible for rating.

Feed Official Controls - Resources for the delivery of official feed controls by LAs in Wales remain ringfenced and managed by the FSA in Wales ensuring a co-ordinated risk-based approach across Wales. A feed inspection, sampling and training programme for LA officers is developed annually in liaison with the Regional Lead Officers. We are liaising with the regional lead officers to ensure animal feed interventions are recovered in line with the Feed Law Code of Practice following the LA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food Supplements – This area is led by the FSA in Wales for the whole of the FSA. A targeted approach focusing on areas that pose the greatest risk to consumers is adopted and co-ordinated via the supplements working group as chaired by the FSA in Wales. The group has recently commissioned a deep dive into two substances (Caffeine and Turmeric) and will now be initiating policy working groups under the main group. We are responsible for providing risk management advice for all food supplements incidents and responding to all stakeholder and media enquires related to food supplements across the FSA.

Regulated Products - We have recently secured Ministerial agreement under arrangements put in place under section 83 of Government of Wales Act 2006 for the FSA to undertake all administrative functions to process applications for regulated products in Wales on behalf of Welsh Ministers. We are working on an update to this agreement to ensure that FSA can undertake risk management functions as part of the regulated products approval process. Throughout the application process Welsh interests are taken into consideration. We are on track for all agreed regulated products pipeline applications to be progressed in line with frameworks, legislation, and within the agreed timelines. We hope to have the first tranche of applications approved in legislation by January 2022.

Food Hypersensitivity – The FSA in Wales has contributed to all workstreams within the food hypersensitivity (food allergen) programme ensuring messaging represents Welsh interests. Work has focused on the implementation of forthcoming prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) regulations. A 'quick guide' to PPDS was developed and circulated, supporting small/micro businesses and LAs in Wales by

ensuring they have the required information. To further support the wider FSA PPDS work, we provided Wales policy resource for planned engagement with businesses through presentations and panels at industry events and meetings. Work has been tailored to provide sector specific content for those that will be particularly affected or where there are lower levels of awareness. We delivered two webinars, one for LAs and one for businesses on PPDS.

Shellfish – We have worked with LAs on the reclassification of shellfish beds in the Menai Straits East. We have delivered an enhanced sampling plan to provide sufficient testing results to support a classification review. Samples from all six harvesting areas taken since 10 May will be considered as the FSA in Wales carries out its annual review of classification. Reviews are undertaken on all harvesting sites on an annual basis, in September, based on the results from that year. The results of the review were published on 1 September 2021. We are continuing to work closely with Welsh Government and with Natural Resources Wales, in support of wider work that will be needed to address the underlying water quality issues.



Funding - We have managed to secure additional funding from the Welsh Government after a bid for additional resources to undertake the additional duties which now fall to the FSA following the UK's departure from the EU. FSA in Wales' funding provision from Welsh Government from 2021-22 has increased from £3.610m to £5.110m. The 40% increase in budget will allow for a period of growth to fulfil statutory functions and to meet the additional functions and responsibilities required following EU exit.

Internal Capacity and Capability - Following Welsh Government's approval for additional resources the recruitment programme has ensured increased capacity and capability. We are continuing to build upon the success of our bronze Corporate Health Standard Award and have developed an action plan working towards the next level. Staff are supported throughout their professional qualifications and development and are encouraged to participate in the civil service academy in Wales and the Crossing Threshold management development programme.

Diversity and Inclusion – We have been awarded for our approach to diversity and inclusion. We actively encourage staff participation in all FSA support networks. In the last year we have been working with Chwarae Teg (the leading gender equality charity in Wales), to highlight the work of the FSA on gender equality. As part of their FairPlay Employer scheme, for our commitment to gender equality, we have been

awarded the Gold level. The FSA in Wales is the first employer in Wales to have been awarded a Gold level and we are actively developing an action plan with the aspiration of a Platinum Award. Further, the FSA in Wales has also been shortlisted for the Employer of the Year award as part of Chwarae Teg's Womenspire Awards. <https://chwaraeteg.com/>

Iechyd Da – We benefit from an active and enthusiastic Health and Well Being group. The group adapted swiftly to support staff working at home as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak ensuring that staff needs, and wellbeing were prioritised. The group supports staff by ensuring increased online opportunities are made available to engage and interact with others in the absence of office working. Iechyd Da has arranged and facilitated numerous health and wellbeing events including webinars on adapting to remote working and balancing work and caring responsibilities whilst also aligning with other wellbeing groups across the FSA to amplify national campaigns and events.

People Survey Action Group – The FSA in Wales' employee engagement score in 2020 at 76% was an increase of 3% over the previous year and 10% above the Civil Service benchmark. We have an active People Survey Action Group which has been established to ensure that issues arising from the annual People Survey are addressed. The work of the group is contributing to increased employee engagement scores for the FSA in Wales. Scores for the FSA in Wales in 2020 were higher in all primary categories than the benchmark for the Civil Service.

Welsh Language – We ensure that the requirements of the Welsh Language Act, outlined in the FSA's Welsh Language Scheme are adhered to. We have developed a Welsh Language Skills Strategy to ensure that language requirements are taken account of in recruitment exercises for the FSA in Wales. The WLU (Welsh Language Unit) play a vital role in ensuring that Welsh speaking consumers are provided with FSA advice in their choice of language. A significant amount of translation work has been undertaken over the period of this report including work on the publication of the Code of Practice and associated documents, PPDS, allergy and use-by dates publicity campaigns, the COVID-19 Here to Help Campaign, NFCU's Food fraud resilience self-assessment tool and COVID-19 and EU Transition Period guidance for LAs and businesses. We have updated all relevant Welsh language content on the FSA's main website continues to update food.gov. We presented the FSA's Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) and performed to a high standard in a survey conducted by the WLC, which included mystery customer type calls and correspondence.

Communications and Engagement – We provide a successful school engagement programme to primary school in Wales delivering food safety workshops. In light of COVID-19 the programme has been flexed and is now capable of being delivered live both remotely and face to face. We are engaged across all counties in Wales with a network which enables to engage with up to 23,000 year 5 and 6 students each year, representing 76% of the annual birth rate in Wales.

Following the Senedd Cymru elections earlier this year, the FSA in Wales has developed a plan to engage with Members of the Senedd through the remainder of the year.

A communications priority has been the delivery of activity supporting the forthcoming PPDS coming into force in October, focussing on stakeholder messaging through partners or gatekeepers in Wales, (including food industry centres, Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and Business Wales) on the publication of sector specific industry guidance; highlighting the [Agency PPDS web hub](#) and encouraging food businesses to join an Agency webinar on the introduction of this legislation and how they can prepare for compliance.

Active communication campaigns over the period of the report have included the [#SpeakupforAllergies](#) campaign, and the [Here to Help](#) campaign. On all campaigns we work across all three countries.

Audit and Assurance - Audit activity has been halted due to the disruption in local authority delivery because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team is on target to complete the annual review of the Farm Assured Welsh Livestock scheme against FSA Criteria for Earned Recognition and principles of the Memorandum of Understanding by 31 March 2022. The review of 2020-2021 LA annual return has been completed; the team are now looking at the support needed to ensure they can achieve the milestones within the recovery plan.