

**UPDATE ON OUTBREAK OF E.COLI O157 IN SOUTH WALES AND
SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Executive summary

1. This paper updates the Board on recent developments subsequent to the outbreak of *E.coli* O157 in South Wales.
2. The Board is invited to:
 - **note** the information contained in this update

FSA WALES

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Background

1. An outbreak of *E.coli* O157, which resulted in over 150 cases, including one fatality, and affected 42 schools, occurred in South Wales in the period September to December 2005. In all, 28 children and five adults were treated in hospital. The outbreak was declared over on 20 December 2005.
2. The Outbreak Control Team is currently finalising its outbreak report. As the Agency was a member of the Outbreak Control Team in this instance, relevant information on the Agency's activity has been provided. The report will be available in due course.

Investigations

3. A wide-ranging investigation is underway. South Wales Police are leading the investigation, with a number of officers working full-time on the case. FSA Wales continues to participate in regular police investigation management meetings along with local authorities and the National Public Health Service for Wales. The local authorities concerned are working closely together in support of the Police inquiry, and in relation to a joint local authority enforcement strategy.

Chief Medical Officer's Review

4. The Acting Chief Medical Officer for Wales commissioned a review of the outbreak to determine whether any urgent measures needed to be put in place to protect public health. The review report was published on 6 January 2006. Action is already underway in relation to many of the recommendations addressed to the Agency. The Agency has formally responded to the Chief Medical Officer's review. In addition, the Chief Executive reported, at the Board's open meeting in February, on issues raised in relation to butchers' licensing and compliance with the new food hygiene regulations.

Public Inquiry

5. As the Board is aware, the National Assembly for Wales has asked Professor Hugh Pennington to Chair an Inquiry, under the Inquiries Act 2005, into the *E.coli* outbreak. The terms of reference recommended by the Assembly Committee on the Inquiry into the outbreak are:

“to examine the circumstances that led to the *E.coli* outbreak in South Wales, its handling and implications and any recommendations for the future.”

6. A Secretary to the Inquiry has been appointed and arrangements are underway, although a timetable for the Inquiry is not yet available. The Agency has asked for its response to the Chief Medical Officer's review to be given to the Inquiry secretariat. FSA Wales will liaise closely with the Inquiry team over the input required from the Agency and will keep the Board informed of developments.

FSA Incident review

7. In November 2005, the Agency reviewed its internal handling of the outbreak against its protocol for the management of incidents. The Chair wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services of the Welsh Assembly Government, informing him of the findings of that review and the actions the Agency is taking in respect of lessons learned. A copy of the Chair's letter is at Annex 1.