



Food Regulation Statement of Intent:

Strengthening the Central/Local Government Partnership



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Statement of Intent

The Food Standards Agency, LACORS, Local Government Association, Welsh Local Government Association, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, recognise the importance of food safety and standards to the health and well-being of local communities served by councils. There is a significant and growing public interest in health, nutrition, lifestyle and well-being, and local authorities are well placed to take a lead on harnessing and building on that interest. Together we also recognise the need to raise the public and political profile of food issues and related health matters, so that it forms an integral part of public protection, regulatory services, community health, and community wellbeing. To achieve these aims and to improve food safety and health in the UK, we need to work together in closer partnership.

This agreement builds on a willingness from all parties to work together to develop strategic objectives which all partners believe will deliver national food policies whilst providing the best outcomes for local people and communities. It is hoped that through signing up to this statement of intent the partnership can be further strengthened and the commitments made can be developed into a central/local government joint strategic plan.

This joint statement of intent sets out the high level commitments which we all believe are necessary to provide a framework for creating joint strategic objectives for food regulation and food related health matters.

We are committed to:

- Developing an effective and coherent partnership between FSA and local councils, based on the principle of making the best use of their respective strengths, and applying collective resources in the best way to tackle national, regional and local priorities for food related issues.
- Contributing effectively to current and future initiatives to improve the consistency and coordination of central and devolved government requirements which impact on regulatory services, in the context of priorities, minimum standards, monitoring and intervention.
- Improving two way communications between FSA and councils to ensure that the councils and their representative organisations are involved in both the development of policy and in the planning and delivery of the operational activities which carry them into effect. Also that councils and their representative organisations undertake to involve the FSA as appropriate in local government plans and strategies which may impact on the Agencies' areas of responsibility.

How this will be delivered

A number of undertakings will be carried out in order to develop this joint approach.

- The FSA across all UK countries and the FSA regional officers in England work with local councils, as well as colleagues in FSA to develop, implement, and facilitate effective local partnership working between FSA, local authority and other stakeholders.
- The FSA and local government organisations will work together to engage councillors and senior officers with the aim of securing their support for the joint strategic objectives for food safety and standards.
- In examining, reviewing, and adapting, the Local Authority Framework Agreement, the enforcement policy, legal framework, codes of practice and auditing arrangements, the FSA will engage with LACORS, local authority officers and councillors at an early stage and include them throughout the lifetime of the reviews. (including information to enable local councils to argue for resources where appropriate).
- The FSA and local government organisations will liaise on all major campaigns to maximise the impact for both central and local initiatives.
- The FSA will provide support in terms of advice, materials where appropriate, and in some cases elements of direct funding for appropriate initiatives.

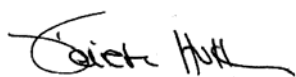
There are a number of issues which need to be recognised to ensure that the terms of this statement of intent are clear.

- Local government has a number of important statutory duties in food law and they need to be fulfilled having proper regard to both the Agency's expectations and priorities and local communities needs and priorities.
- External drivers are dynamic and can change the priorities and activities of either partner at any time. All parties need to recognise the drivers and priorities within both the FSA and local government (particularly central/local shared priorities). Also partners must be aware that new and emerging political and legislative developments can influence policy and/or enforcement and both partners are limited by the resources they have access to.
- The Devolved Administrations may have individual policies to support local health agendas and may have differing implementation strategies. This agreement recognises the diversity which exists within the four countries of the UK while continuing to apply the principles and objectives of this statement.

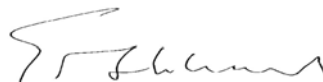
Endorsement of Statement of Intent

We endorse this Statement of Intent for 'Strengthening the Central/Local Government Partnership'. We believe that it provides a sound framework for a joint programme of work between local authorities and FSA towards achieving a record of food safety and health protection in the UK that leads the world.

Signatures



Dame Deirdre Hutton,
Chair Food Standards Agency



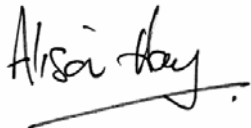
Cllr Geoffrey Theobald OBE,
Chairman LACORS



Lord Bruce Lockhart,
Chairman LGA



Cllr Derek Vaughan
WLGA Leader



Cllr Alison Hay
COLSA Spokes Person for Environment and
Regeneration
COSLA



Cllr Sean McPeake
President
NILGA

March 2007