

# Appendix G: Consumer topic guide

RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) has been jointly commissioned by the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland to undertake an independent evaluation of the food withdrawals and recalls system. As part of this, we are interested in how aware consumers (like yourselves) are of the recalls system.

My name is [Emma Sutton / Katy Field/ Sofia Reva], and I am an evaluator from the RSM team. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group.

The purpose of today's discussion is to understand your views on the food recalls process. Areas which we will explore in our focus group discussion will include:

- exploring awareness of food recalls
- identifying any existing experience of the food recall process
- ideas for how it could be improved.

It should take around one hour for our discussion. Your comments will be treated confidentially and reported anonymously. Data will be stored securely by RSM in a GDPR compliant format and will not be attributed to you in the evaluation report or debriefs to the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland. During our conversation, we would like to video record the focus group on MS Teams to capture the key themes emerging, are you happy for us to do so?

- [If yes] Thank you – I will hit record
- [If no] Thank you – we will not make any video recordings from our conversation but will take detailed notes during our discussion. All information provided by you will be treated confidentially and securely. When information is no longer required, official RSM procedures will be followed to dispose of your information.

## Introductions

1. To start, please could you briefly summarise:

- your name
- your age
- (18-24) (25-29) (30-34) (35-39) (40- 44) (45-49) (50-54) (55-59) (60-64) (65-69) (70-74) (75-79) (80-84) (85+)
- whether you have children/dependents living at home?

2. If you were having a dinner party for your favourite celebrity, what would be on the menu?

3. Do either you or someone you know in your immediate family have any food hypersensitivities including allergies and intolerances?

a. If so, could you please tell us what they are?

4. Can you tell me whether you have heard of the Food Standards Agency or Food Standards Scotland?

a. If so, what is your understanding of their role?

b. How well informed do you feel about their work?

- how confident do you feel that FSA/FSS ensure that food is safe and what it says it is?

5. Can you tell me whether you use social media, if so, please can you tell me which social media sites you use?

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Tiktok
- Other

a. Can you please give me a rough idea of how often you access these sites?

Shopping habits

6. Can you please tell me how you usually do your food shopping?

- Online
- Weekly instore shop (Big retailers i.e. Tesco Extra or Asda)
- Corner shops
- Express shops (mini stores i.e. Tesco Express)
- or a combination of the above

7. Can you please tell me whether you are part of any supermarket loyalty schemes, if so, which ones?

Only ask if they indicate they use social media platforms.

8. Have you previously bought/purchased food products from Facebook or Instagram? Such as birthday cakes, cookies, or takeaways.

a. If yes - Could you, please tell me about your experience?

b. If no – Would you consider purchasing food products from either Facebook or Instagram in the future?

Product recall process

9. Have you experienced a product recall for a product purchased through a retailer/ supermarket, i.e. have you ever had to return or destroy (N.B. Suggestion) a food product?

If so, could you please tell us about your experience?

a. If yes – How did you first find out about the product recall? (Prompt: Instore, via social media, printed media) Was the information clear? How did it make you feel?

b. If yes (instore) – Did you see a product recall notice in store? Where was the notice displayed and was it prominent enough? Did it contain sufficient information?

c. If yes – would there have been any additional support that you would have liked (N.B. Suggestion) during this process?

d. If yes – Has your trust in the UK food system changed because of your experience? (Prompt: changes to shopping habits)

e. If yes – Could you, please explain why?

f. If yes - Are there any improvements you could suggest, based on your experience?

10. Have you ever seen a product recall in a store, but not personally been affected? Could you tell me about them? What are your thoughts/feelings when you have seen such notices?

11. We would like to show you some examples of previous and current product recall notices.

Of these two examples:

- which one contains the most relevant information?
- which one would you be more likely to read?
- is there any information missing on the notices?



If no - We'll now go on to introduce each of the two scenarios, one at a time.

**Scenario 1: A batch of sliced bread has been recalled due to concerns about the potential presence of small pieces of glass. You purchased a loaf of the sliced bread from your local supermarket and have now found out the product has been recalled.**

- a. How do you think you would find out that the product has been recalled?
- b. What do you think you would do during this product recall? Do you have any friends or family who have experienced a recall?
- c. Where do you think you would go for guidance during this incident?
- d. If you were to experience an in-store product recall in the future would your trust in the UK food system change because of your experience?

**Scenario 2: During Covid-19 a home baker decided to start selling home-cooked products. The baker started selling an array of sweet goods and opted to sell them through Facebook Marketplace. You or someone you live with have a severe nut allergy. After purchasing from the baker on Facebook Marketplace, you found out that the product has no allergy labelling on it.**

- a. What action would you take?
- b. Who would you report the incident to?
- c. Where do you think you would go for guidance during this incident?
- d. How do you think you would find out that the product has been recalled?
- e. Have you ever seen a product recall notice online? Could you tell me about them? What are your thoughts/ feelings when you have seen such notices?
- f. What do you think you would do during this incident? Do you have any friends or family who have experienced a recall?
- g. If you were to experience this online product recall in the future would your trust in the UK food system change because of your experience?

## Future

12. If you were to purchase a product that was then recalled, in what format would you most like to receive this information? (prompt: news sources, in store notices, social media, email, letter)
  - a. Do you have any other ideas about the best way to let you know you needed to return a product? (Prompt: pop-up boxes on shopping sites, features of online platforms)
13. How might social media be used to inform you about a product recall in future?
14. Are you registered to receive text alerts from the Food Standards Agency or Food Standards Scotland about either allergens or food product recalls?
  - a. If yes – Which updates are you signed up to receive? How helpful do you find these alerts?
  - a. If no – Would this service be something you would be interested in? Why do you say that?

## Final comments and close

15. Is there anything else you would like to add? (prompt: other improvements that could be made, or how to notify customers of a product recall)  
If you have any further questions, want to sign up for text alerts, or have concerns about the food recall process, please visit either [Food Standards Agency news/alerts sign in](#) and [Food Standards Scotland: Subscribe](#) or email [socialscience@food.gov.uk](mailto:socialscience@food.gov.uk).