

# The value of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and potential changes to regulatory approach: Consumer research

Maes o ddi-ddordeb ymchwil: [Research projects](#)

Statws y prosiect: Wedi'i gwblhau

Awduron: Ipsos UK

Cynhaliwyd gan: Ipsos UK and Food Standards Agency

Dyddiad cyhoeddi: 10 Mawrth 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46756/sci.fsa.fhj530>

## Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Executive Summary

Results available: Results available

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### Background and objectives

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As part of its work on the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme, the FSA wanted to understand in more detail how LAs (LAs), businesses and consumers feel about the current Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). In addition, the FSA wanted to capture consumer views on potential changes to the regulatory approach. To this purpose, the FSA commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct qualitative research to explore consumers' views to:

1. Assess the value of the FHRS scheme according to consumers.
2. Assess consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach.

### Method and sample

This research report provides findings from four reconvened online discussion groups conducted with consumers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The research with consumers consisted of two parts, reflecting the research objectives:

- Objective 1: Assessing the value of the FHRS.
- Objective 2: Assessing consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach.

During the first online workshop, participants discussed their attitudes towards the FHRs. The workshop groups were reconvened one week after the first session. The reconvened workshops focused on exploring consumer views on wider potential changes in regulatory approaches for food hygiene and safety. Here, participants discussed six scenarios that set out possible areas of change to the approach to regulating food hygiene and safety in future. They were asked to consider the impact of these potential changes, including any benefits or concerns.

## **Key findings**

### **Objective 1: Assessing the value of the FHRs**

#### **Awareness of the FHRs**

Awareness of the FHRs varied considerably across participants:

- those who knew more about the FHRs associated the scheme with checking food safety and hygiene ratings before deciding where to buy food. These participants were more concerned about food safety and hygiene and the risks of becoming ill. Participants with higher levels of awareness consistently discussed ratings being based on inspections that covered issues including cleanliness, storage, and how kitchens are managed.
- other participants were less aware of the FHRs. They also associated the scheme with the ratings stickers displayed by food businesses but did not tend to use the ratings when making decisions. They had limited understanding of how the ratings were decided, or what the ratings meant beyond the best and worst scores.

#### **Perceived value of the FHRs for consumers**

Across all groups, the extent to which participants used and valued the FHRs varied. While participants generally acknowledged the value of the FHRs and FHRs ratings, and many used the scheme, other considerations were also mentioned by participants when choosing where to buy food from.

- participants considered FHRs rating stickers as a source of trustworthy, independent information about the food hygiene standards in a business. Those who were more concerned about food safety and hygiene, mentioned using the scheme to check ratings and avoid lower-rated businesses as a way of reducing the risks when purchasing food from restaurants and takeaways. Across groups, participants also valued the general reassurance offered by the scheme that food safety and hygiene standards were being regularly assessed in food businesses.
- on the other hand, participants often described the FHRs ratings as making little difference to their decisions about buying food from different kinds of businesses – including takeaways, supermarkets, cafes, and restaurants – even if they were familiar with the scheme. Other considerations, including participants' personal experience of a food business and the availability of choice in their area, were of greater importance.
- participants also discussed the value offered by regular inspections. They reflected on ratings that were based on inspections that happened several years ago and expressed concern about these ratings potentially not reflecting current food safety practices.

#### **Consumer awareness and expectations of businesses included in the FHRs scheme**

- participants generally agreed that if a business sells, handles, or prepares food, they would expect it to be part of the scheme. This included restaurants, cafes, takeaways, and food retailers. When probed, participants expected the FHRs to also apply to institutions like

schools, care homes, and hospitals.

- there was more uncertainty about whether supermarkets were included in the scheme. Participants with a greater awareness of the FHRS were more likely to expect supermarkets to be included in the scheme. However, they generally said they would not check a supermarket's rating before purchasing from a store.
- participants liked the simplicity of having all food businesses included in the scheme. Regulating all food businesses on the same basis was also seen as an important way to make the scheme easy for consumers to use.
- however, there were mixed opinions about businesses considered to be 'low risk' by participants, and whether they should be included in the scheme. Many participants suggested that businesses selling pre-packaged food that do not require chilling (e.g. chemist selling sweets) did not need to be covered by the scope of the FHRS.

### **Consumer attitudes to the mandatory display of ratings**

- across the discussions, participants consistently agreed that displaying FHRS ratings should be mandatory across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They felt this was important for several reasons, including maintaining food safety standards, transparency, and fairness for people living in different places.
- however, there was mixed awareness of whether FHRS ratings had to be displayed by food businesses. In Wales and Northern Ireland, participants generally assumed that ratings had to be displayed. However, participants across all three nations were generally not aware that scores are voluntary to display in England. This was often viewed by participants as limiting the potential value and effectiveness of the scheme.
- participants assumed that establishments with a low score would be unlikely to display their score if it were not mandatory to do so. There was concern that consumers may be at risk from eating food from food businesses with a low rating without being aware that the business was not complying with standards as well as they should be.

### **Frequency of inspections**

- participants generally expected that food businesses would be inspected regularly – with expectations ranging from a few times a year to every two years. They associated food businesses with a risk to consumers and to public health, and wanted reassurance that inspections were happening frequently enough to identify any issues.
- some participants across all groups felt that the inspection frequency should be the same for all businesses because of the potential risks to consumers. They believed that every business selling food to the public should be treated the same, noting that this approach was simpler and clearer.
- however, other participants felt there should be some variation in inspection frequency, and this view was again held across all three nations. They suggested basing this on business type and previous compliance and saw this as a way of prioritising resources.

### **Objective 2: Assessing consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach**

Participants were asked about six potential changes to the regulatory approach. These were introduced through scenarios, setting out the potential change and what it might mean for specific businesses. Full details of the scenarios can be found in Chapter 4.

#### **The potential use of an independent audit for assurance:**

- participants were open to the idea of using third-party independent audits and internal audits. Participants thought this had the potential to free up resources to focus on higher risk or less compliant businesses. However, they wanted the FSA to oversee this to ensure inspectors carrying out independent audits were appropriately skilled and trained.
- participants reflected on similar approaches from other sectors, for example social care and medical services, and expressed concern about third-party staff potentially not having the same high standards as the FSA.

#### **Changes to the method of inspection, including making use of remote assessments:**

- participants were strongly against remote inspections as an alternative to physical inspections, particularly for businesses that prepare fresh food. They raised concerns about the limitations of video checks and worried this would allow businesses to hide problems. Participants were also worried about inspectors not being able to rely on their senses during remote inspections to identify any potential problems.
- some participants recognised the potential of remote inspections to provide significant cost and time savings. However, this was not seen as sufficient justification for not visiting businesses, including those that are compliant.

#### **Removing some lower risk businesses from the inspection regime:**

- although they had previously discussed very low risk businesses being removed from the FHRS, participants were concerned about removing businesses like corner shops. Most participants were worried that businesses might see this as 'permission' for food hygiene standards to fall. They also assumed smaller businesses lacked the resources to implement internal checks similar to those used by larger retailers.
- some were open to this potential change, but this was not a common view. These participants felt corner shops, which they perceived as being lower risk food businesses, could be removed from the scheme, providing the FSA with the opportunity to focus resources on higher risk businesses (e.g. cafes, takeaways, restaurants).

#### **Reducing inspection for inherently high risk businesses with a consistently good track record of compliance:**

- many participants supported using a reduced inspection regime as an incentive to recognise compliant businesses and encourage them to maintain high standards. There was also more openness to the idea of using remote inspections in this context, allowing physical inspections to be reduced, but not replaced.
- however, some participants queried how often inspections and remote inspections should happen. This was linked to overall views about wanting inspections to happen more often.
- participants felt that any change in management or high turnover of staff should see a business removed from this approach, to ensure standards are being monitored.

#### **Using other FSA approved assurance schemes to reduce frequency of interventions:**

- participants recognised the benefits around reduced inspection costs and freeing up resources. They were reassured that the business would still be subject to regular inspections and emphasised the need for these alternative assurance schemes to operate to the same standards and be overseen by the FSA.
- however, some were concerned this could lead to a lack of clarity about accountability for issues between different stakeholders such as Red Tractor, the FSA, and LAs. Participants also mentioned the importance of ensuring that consumers were aware of the alternative schemes, through awareness campaigns.

**Supermarkets and other large or multi-site businesses assessed as a whole business, rather than as individual stores:**

- views were mixed on this potential change. Some participants felt this would reduce costs and enable a focus on other higher risk businesses. However, other participants raised concerns about poor performing premises benefitting from an overall rating that did not reflect their practices.
- participants recognised that larger businesses had internal teams responsible for food hygiene practices and that for these types of businesses there is a reputational risk and interest to ensure standards are kept. They discussed the effectiveness of internal audits compared with external visits, and highlighted difficulties in assessing a large chain without visiting all sites.
- participants also worried about fairness for smaller businesses if larger competitors had a different inspection regime.

# **Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Chapter 1 Introduction and methodology**

## **1.1. Background**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As part of its work on the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme, the FSA wanted to understand in more detail how Local Authorities (LAs), businesses and consumers feel about the current Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). In addition, the FSA wanted to capture consumer views about potential changes to the regulatory approach. To this purpose, the FSA commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct qualitative research to explore consumers' views.

There were two research objectives for the consumer strand of this research:

1. Assess the value of the FHRS according to consumers.
2. Assess consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach.

This report sets out the main findings from the consumer strand of the research. Alongside the evidence from the business and Local Authority research, the findings will help inform the work of the ABC programme in the future.

## **1.2. Methodology and sampling**

Fieldwork was conducted between 9th February and 22nd February 2022, with participants from various locations across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The research with consumers consisted of two parts, reflecting the research objectives:

### **Part 1: Assessing the value of the FHRS**

Four online workshops were conducted to explore consumers' attitudes towards the FHRS: Two workshops took place with participants located in England, and one each with participants located in Wales and Northern Ireland, reflecting the demographics of the UK population by nation. Each session ran for two hours.

## Part 2: Assessing consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach

The workshop groups were reconvened one week after the first session. In this second workshop, consumer views of hypothetical changes to current aspects of food regulation were explored. As such, this second workshop focused on possible changes to the wider regulatory approach to food hygiene and safety, not exclusively the FHRS.

Location of participants	Initial workshop	Reconvened workshop
England	9 February 2022	16 February 2022
England	18 participants	18 participants
Wales	10 February 2022	17 February 2022
Wales	15 participants	14 participants
England	14 February 2022	22 February 2022
England	16 participants	16 participants
Northern Ireland	15 February 2022	22 February 2022
Northern Ireland	16 participants	16 participants
Total number of participants	65 participants	64 participants

Across the workshops, 64 participants took part in the research. To capture a broad range of views, each group brought together a mix of consumers across the following demographics:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Working Status
- Socio-economic grade (SEG)

Across each workshop, one group had limited/ no awareness of the FHRS prior to the workshops. The remaining groups in each workshop included those who had said they knew a lot or knew a little about the FHRS. Annex 1 includes more information and details on the sampling approach and the makeup of the workshops.

The design and structure of the workshop sessions were informed by the key research objectives. The first session explored participants' spontaneous understanding of and expectations around the FHRS, before explaining to participants how the FHRS works in more detail, and how this applies to different kinds of businesses. The reconvened session focused on consumers' attitudes to potential changes to the food hygiene and safety regulatory approach as a whole. This second

session began by gathering any further thoughts participants had on the FHRs from the first workshop. Participants were then shown six scenarios outlining possible changes to how food hygiene standards could be assessed more broadly.

## **Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Chapter 2 Consumer awareness and use of the current Food Hygiene Rating Scheme**

### **2.1 Spontaneous views and consumer expectations of the FHRs**

Familiarity with the FHRs varied considerably amongst consumers. In some cases, participants knew more about the FHRs, often because they relied on checking food safety and hygiene ratings before deciding on where to buy food from. Others had worked in food businesses in the past and were familiar with food safety and hygiene practices, and regular inspections from LAs.

**“I’ve worked in accommodation and hospitality, and we’ve had ratings. It’s not only about how dirty or clean your kitchen is, but it’s about the paperwork, how the kitchen is run, etc.”**

(Wales, Aware of FHRs)

There were also participants who were less aware of the FHRs, but correctly associated the scheme with the ratings stickers displayed by food businesses. They had little understanding of how the ratings were decided, or what the ratings meant beyond the best and worst scores.

**“I don’t know much other than 0 is bad and 5 is good.”**

(Northern Ireland, Mixed awareness of FHRs)

Across the discussions, most participants associated the FHRs with food hygiene. There was an expectation that FHRs scores were awarded following an inspection. Participants who were not familiar with the detail of the scheme made assumptions that the ratings would involve checking food hygiene in food businesses. Those who were more familiar with the scheme discussed how inspections covered issues like cleanliness, storage and how kitchens are managed.

**“I’ve just heard they go into restaurants and have a look around and see how they prepare their food and the cleanliness and give a rating accordingly.”**

(England, Limited awareness of FHRs)

There was some confusion about who was responsible for the scheme and who carried out the inspections. While some participants knew about the role LAs play, others believed the FSA was responsible for the scheme overall and assumed the FSA carried out the inspections directly. In some cases, participants did not know how the scheme is managed. Others thought it was the responsibility of the business.

Participants’ initial discussions about businesses that are part of the FHRs focused on restaurants, cafes, pubs, and takeaways because they prepare and serve food directly to consumers. When probed, participants across all groups and with mixed levels of awareness of the FHRs, expected that the FHRs applies to institutions like schools, care homes and hospitals. However, the scheme was most closely associated with eating out and takeaways.

Participants across groups were also uncertain about whether supermarkets were included in the scheme. In the initial spontaneous discussions, supermarkets and other retailers that sell fresh and chilled foods were often mentioned across groups. Those with a greater awareness of the FHRs were more likely to expect that supermarkets would be included in the scope of the FHRs. However, this was generally mentioned following probing rather than spontaneously. Furthermore, even when participants thought that supermarkets may be included in the FHRs, they generally said that they would not check a supermarket's rating before purchasing from that store. Participants were unsure about whether the FHRs applied if only pre-packed foods were being sold.

**“I don't know [about supermarkets], I wouldn't have thought so. I thought it was just for restaurants and places where they are serving food and cooking for the public.”**

(England, Limited awareness of FHRs)

Although levels of understanding varied, overall there was a broad awareness of the FHRs among participants. They had seen the ratings displayed by food businesses when eating out or buying takeaways, and generally knew that establishments with good food safety and hygiene practices would be awarded a higher score.

**“I'm familiar with what they used to call the scores on the doors. Up to a 5-star rating is considered very hygienic. And lesser the number, the lesser the hygiene rating.”**

(England, Limited awareness of FHRs)

## 2.2 Current use of the FHRs

Reflecting the different levels of familiarity with the FHRs, the extent to which participants used the ratings in their decision-making as consumers also varied. There were participants who said that they relied on the scheme to choose where to buy food, particularly for eating out or takeaways. As might be expected, those who used the scheme tended to be those who were more concerned about food safety and hygiene and the risks of becoming ill.

**“I know about it. If it's a low rating I won't go in. I'll only go if it's 4 or 5.”**

(Wales, Limited awareness of FHRs)

**“I wouldn't eat anywhere less than a 4. Or order from anywhere less than a 4.”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)

On the other hand, many participants said that FHRs ratings made little difference to their decisions about buying food from different kinds of businesses – including takeaways, supermarkets, cafes and restaurants – even if they were familiar with the scheme. They described other considerations as being more important in shaping their behaviour. In some cases, participants said that they would simply ignore the current FHRs rating if they had a favourable opinion of the business and had enjoyed their food in the past and not had any problems. Others explained that they had limited choice locally if they wanted to buy a particular type of food, particularly from a takeaway. For them, being able to buy the type of food they wanted was more important than the FHRs rating.

**“There are two Chinese takeaways in Ballycastle, and one has a score of 1 and the other I'm not sure. But the one with a score of 1 is the nicest one and it wouldn't stop me going.”**

(Northern Ireland, Aware of FHRs)

**“In my area there are loads of chicken and chips shops. I don't actually look at the score I just know which chip shop I like, so I just go there. I felt fine after eating but I just didn't look.”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)



## 2.3 Perceived Value of the FHRS for consumers

Participants were most familiar with FHRS ratings through the stickers displayed by food businesses. For many, the scheme was important because it offered them trustworthy, independent information about the food hygiene standards of businesses. Participants who were concerned about these issues often said that they checked ratings. They saw this as a way for them to reduce the risks of buying food, particularly from restaurants and takeaways, by avoiding lower rated businesses, and clearly valued the consumer-facing aspect of the FHRS.

However, participants also considered other factors when deciding whether to buy food from a business. In some cases, and particularly among participants in England, familiarity seemed to be more important than the rating received. They felt that unless they had problems, they would continue to use food businesses even if they had lower ratings. They often said they did not know what the ratings were for takeaways and restaurants they used regularly.

**“I didn't check it. It's only when these things are brought up to you, you start thinking about it.”**

(England, Limited awareness of FHRS)

In general, participants in Northern Ireland and Wales were more likely to be aware of the FHRS and the role of the FSA. However, some participants who were aware of, and who valued the scheme, explained that a poor rating would not prevent them from using a business.

**“I trust them [the inspectors] because there is no reason not to. I don't know how much that trust is worth because it doesn't always stop me from eating at a 1-star. But I say there is no reason not to trust them.”**

(Wales, Aware of FHRS)

**“It's indicative of the quality if the place has a 5, but you judge it more by the look of it when you walk in. It might have a 4 or 5 and still look manky. And will affect your judgement more than the number.”**

(Northern Ireland, Aware of FHRS)

Participants in all three countries also discussed how the FHRS rating becomes more important to them if they are visiting somewhere that is unfamiliar and choosing where to eat or order takeaway. Not knowing about the local businesses meant that they were more willing to use the FHRS rating to differentiate, particularly between similar businesses.

**“If you're in a new place and you're looking for a restaurant, you may look at a few, look at the menus, and think there's something you're interested in. If you've got one that's a 5 and one that's a 3, you'll be more inclined to lean towards the 5.”**

(England, Aware of FHRS)

**“If I were going somewhere out of town, I would probably check it out, if I were going somewhere I was not familiar with.”**

(Northern Ireland, Limited awareness of FHRS)

Participants also valued the general reassurance that food safety and hygiene were being reviewed in food businesses. This was grounded in their assumption that inspections were happening regularly – with expectations ranging from a few times a year to every two years – and that these inspections were independent and applied consistent rules across businesses. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

A few participants said they had seen ratings based on inspections that happened several years before. They felt these ratings might not reflect current food safety practices, and for some, this

called into question how useful the ratings were.

**“I think I noticed that one place I went to, it had a 5 rating, but it was from 2019. It makes you wonder how they inspect these things because a lot could change in 2 or 3 years.”**  
(England, Aware of FHRS)

Other participants also mentioned the value of FHRS scores when ordering food online from unfamiliar businesses. Without being able to visit the business themselves to make their own assessment of whether it was likely to be safe to purchase food from that business, FHRS ratings being included on online platforms was seen as important.

**“A lot of takeaways you can go in and hopefully the kitchens you can actually see. If you’re ordering online and they don’t have a certificate or anything you just don’t know what their facilities are like.”**  
(England, Aware of FHRS)

## **2.4 Consumer awareness and expectations of businesses included in the FHRS**

Participants were shown several examples of businesses and asked which they thought were currently part of the FHRS. They were later asked which businesses they thought should be part of the scheme.

Participants generally agreed that if a business sells, handles, or prepares food, they would expect them to be part of the scheme. This included restaurants, cafes, takeaways, and food retailers. Businesses that prepare fresh food were considered particularly important to include, as were those providing meals to vulnerable people, such as in schools, hospitals, or care homes. While many participants thought that all businesses handling any kind of fresh or chilled food should be included in the scheme, there was more debate about businesses they considered very low risk.

Some participants argued that businesses that only sold pre-packaged food that did not require chilling, did not necessarily need to be part of the scheme. The example shown to them during the discussion that tended to prompt this debate was a chemist selling sweets. Many participants did not think that these businesses needed to be included in the scheme.

**“I don’t know if a chemist selling sweets would because it’s low risk, and they’re not preparing sweets. It’s not food preparation you see in other examples.”**  
(Wales, Aware of FHRS)

Participants perceived businesses that only sell pre-packed foods as low risk and felt that this was a good example of a business that could be outside of the scope of the FHRS. In some cases, this was extended to include other retailers selling snacks or sweets, and pubs that did not serve fresh meals. However, the simplicity of having all food businesses included in the scheme remained an important feature of the scheme, even after considering those dealing with lower risk food.

Some participants across all three nations also discussed food manufacturing businesses, on the basis that they assumed they were part of the scheme. This seemed to be linked to the large-scale operations associated with these business and the need for stringent regulations because of the associated risks to large numbers of consumers.

## **2.5 Consumer attitudes to mandatory display of ratings**

Across the discussions, there was mixed awareness of whether FHRs ratings had to be displayed by a business. In Wales and Northern Ireland, participants generally assumed that ratings had to be displayed, and a few mentioned that this was now a legal requirement. However, participants in all three nations were generally not aware that scores are voluntary to display in England.

The idea that displaying ratings was voluntary in England was surprising and often very concerning for participants in England. They felt that the voluntary display of ratings limited the value and effectiveness of the scheme. Participants assumed that establishments with a low score would be unlikely to display their score if it were not mandatory to do so. There were a few examples of businesses that had a lower rating, but this had not been known until stories appeared in the local press or via social media. Participants felt that consumers may be at risk from eating food from food businesses with a low rating without being aware that they were not complying with standards as well as they should be.

**“I don’t get why they’d go through all that and it’s somewhere that could potentially harm someone with food poisoning and they’re legally not obliged to display that in their premises. I find that quite shocking.”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)

Linked to this, businesses in England that chose to display their rating were seen to be taking the scheme seriously and demonstrating their commitment to good practices.

**“Especially as it’s voluntary in England, it gives an indication if they have their rating up that they’re also taking it seriously as well. And they’re concerned to have good practices and have proven that they have.”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)

Across the discussions, participants consistently agreed that displaying FHRs ratings should be mandatory across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They felt this was important for lots of reasons, including food safety, transparency, and fairness between people living in different places.

## **Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Chapter 3 Perceptions on the proportionality and fairness of the current Food Hygiene Rating Scheme**

### **3.1 Assumptions around frequency of inspections**

Participants generally expected that food businesses would be inspected at least annually, with many assuming that there would be visits every few months. They associated food businesses with a risk to consumers and to public health, and wanted reassurance that inspections were happening frequently enough to identify any issues.

**“I have always thought it was every six months. I don’t know why.”**

(Wales, Aware of FHRs)

**“I would like to think a lot more often than 6 months to a year. Like maybe every 6 weeks.”**

(Northern Ireland, Limited awareness of FHRs)

However, in groups with an awareness of the FHRS, participants across all three nations thought that inspections were likely to be less frequent. They suggested that visits happen around every two years and drew on examples of food businesses in their local area that had ratings going back at least two years to before the COVID-19 pandemic. They also discussed the limited availability of resources for more regular inspections.

**“Every 2 years is reasonable enough. As I said, I don’t know how long. It could be 2 years or 4 years. I think 4 years is too long. 2 years is just fine. I don’t know.”**

(England, Aware of FHRS)

## 3.2 Factors informing inspection frequency

Participants across nations and with varying levels of awareness of the FHRS generally held the view that the inspection frequency should be the same for all businesses because of the potential risks to consumers. They felt that every business selling food to the public should be treated the same, noting that this approach was simpler and clearer.

**“I just think everybody has to be measured the same way as they’re making a level playing field regardless of what you’re selling.”**

(Northern Ireland, Limited awareness of FHRS)

By contrast, some participants suggested there should be some variation in inspection frequency, and this view was again held across all three nations. While it was difficult for participants to comment in detail on how this should be determined, they suggested certain types of businesses which should be inspected more or less frequently. They based this broadly on two main criteria: firstly, the risks they associated with different types of food businesses, and secondly, how compliant the business had been previously.

When considering inspection frequency, participants viewed preparing and serving fresh food as being riskier. This viewpoint also covered businesses who were selling certain kinds of fresh food considered higher risk, like meat and seafood. Participants who thought inspection frequency should vary, felt that more attention should be given to inspecting these businesses because of the perceived greater risks for consumers.

**“The risks of serving hot food are going to be higher than a pub selling bar snacks and pre-packaged foods. You think there would need to be more rigorous in relation to those establishments.”**

(Northern Ireland, Limited awareness of FHRS)

**“If you’re just selling cakes, then should you be inspected as much as someone selling seafood or someone preparing meals that could cause severe illness?”**

(Wales, Aware of FHRS)

Similarly, some participants assumed that businesses where problems had been found previously, would be visited more often. They felt there should be a follow-up visit to check whether issues had been addressed. Taking compliance into account when deciding how often to inspect businesses was seen as a good approach in principle. Participants felt this helped ensure that businesses perceived as potentially presenting a higher risk to the public were more closely monitored.

**“The ones that aren’t up to standard [should be inspected more]. If the score is high, I assume they don’t come as often.”**

(England, Limited awareness of FHRS)

A few participants spontaneously raised the internal audit schemes they assumed large restaurant chains and retailers had in place to monitor food safety and hygiene. Views were mixed with some believing these might reduce the need for independent inspections, while others raised concerns about the potential risks of removing external assessments. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

### 3.3 Interacting with businesses awaiting inspection

Participants generally assumed that businesses that were awaiting inspection were new and had yet to receive a rating. A few participants thought this could include businesses who had a previous inspection and needed to be visited again to check compliance, but this was less common.

**“Are they new businesses still waiting on that first inspection? Just because it’s a waiting inspection, it doesn’t mean it’s a bad thing. After that first one they will have a number.”**  
(England, Aware of FHRS)

There were different views about whether participants would buy food from a new business that had yet to be inspected and receive a rating. In some cases, participants felt these businesses were likely to be maintaining good standards because they would be expecting an inspection soon after they opened. They assumed there would be some checks before a business started trading or pointed to the fact that businesses would be breaking the law if they did not maintain appropriate food hygiene standards.

By contrast, other participants said they would not visit a new business that had yet to receive an inspection. They were concerned that their food safety and hygiene practices were unknown and had not been checked independently. These participants assumed this would happen quickly and felt it would be better to wait the short time for the inspection rather than taking the risk.

**“I think that should be in place before you open, that should be a prerequisite. I would probably avoid it until the rating was there.”**  
(Wales, Limited awareness of FHRS)

### 3.4 Views on how scores are awarded

Participants did not have detailed spontaneous views about the specifics of how ratings are awarded in practice. They expected that food hygiene standards were assessed through regular physical inspections and considered this appropriate. They discussed inspectors using checklists or criteria to assess and score a business’s compliance. Drawing on their awareness of the scheme or their assumptions about how it operated, participants across groups mentioned a range of issues they thought would be covered. This included checking cleanliness, storage, handling, preparing food safely to avoid cross-contamination, and having appropriate systems and paperwork in place.

**“I think it’s how the food is stored in the fridges, the freezers, as well as how it’s prepared in the kitchen. I know environmental health has to go in and check for rats or animals. You have to tick things off to see the fridges are clean. It’s a big checklist, I presume.”**  
(England, Aware of FHRS)

**“Food preparation sites. Refrigeration of either cooked or uncooked products.”**  
(Northern Ireland, Aware of FHRS)

Even those who were relatively familiar with the scheme did not know enough to suggest specific changes or alternative approaches. As such, more detailed consumer views around how ratings

should be awarded were covered in the second workshop, where participants were asked to discuss issues such as the use of remote assessments, using businesses' own data for assessment, and independent third-party audits in the context of the wider regulatory approach to assessing food hygiene standards. Findings from these discussions are included in Chapter 4.

### 3.5 Should it be the same for all businesses?

Reflecting the expectations discussed in Chapter 2, participants had different views on whether all businesses within the scope of the FHRs should be assessed in the same way, or whether there should be differences. This was based on different ways of thinking about the FHRs.

Those who wanted a consistent approach started from a consumer safety perspective. Participants discussed that if a business is providing food to consumers, it should be assessed based on a uniform set of standards. They felt that the type of business or the different foods being sold did not matter and the scheme should treat all businesses the same, to ensure fairness and consistency. They linked this to having consistent ratings that applied across different types of business.

**“I think regardless of where the business is, whether you’re self-employed working from home or a restaurant, there should be a consistent scheme so that every business gets rated in the same way.”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)

By contrast, participants across all three nations and with varied levels of awareness of the FHRs considered the risks associated with different types of businesses, both in terms of the food they handled and prepared, and the people they provided food to. Some also considered how compliant businesses had been previously. For these participants, the priority was ensuring resources can be focused on businesses where the risk to consumers is highest. While they still felt consistency was important, they were more open to some differences in the way food hygiene standards are regulated across business types.

**“[There should be more focus] on those with low scores or those at higher risk, like restaurants and takeaways, and producing food in care homes because those are vulnerable people. If something goes wrong, they’re at more risk, aren’t they?”**

(England, Aware of FHRs)

### 3.6 Prompted views of the current FHRs

Following the spontaneous discussions about the FHRs, participants were given more details about the scheme overall. In general, the scheme was in line with their expectations, and reflected the importance of ensuring food hygiene standards are maintained and any problems identified and addressed.

Their key concerns about the FHRs and awarding ratings were around whether inspections happened frequently enough. Participants also felt a consistent approach should be taken and assumed this happened given that businesses are all awarded equivalent ratings. In some cases, participants were surprised that food quality was not included as part of the FHRs, given its importance to consumers. These participants had previously assumed this was considered. Other participants argued that it would not be possible to include quality because it cannot be assessed in the same consistent way as compliance with food hygiene standards can.

Participants' other questions about the scheme focused on understanding the meaning of specific FHRs ratings and the implications of lower scores for businesses. They also expected more clarity on the different roles played by the FSA and LAs in running the scheme.

# Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Chapter 4 Consumer attitudes towards possible areas of change to the approach to regulating food hygiene and safety

The reconvened workshops were focused on exploring consumer views on wider potential changes to regulatory approaches for food hygiene and safety. The workshops were reconvened with break-out groups organised based on participant-reported levels of awareness of the FHRs. Participants discussed six scenarios that set out possible areas of change to the approach to regulating food hygiene and safety in future. They were asked to consider the impact of these potential changes, including any benefits or concerns. Their views of each scenario are set out below.

## 4.1 The potential use of an independent audit for assurance

The following scenario was presented to participants:

A restaurant is due to receive their next visit from a government food hygiene inspector. The restaurant has had a good track record of complying with food hygiene standards over many years.

Instead of visiting the restaurant, the inspector is reviewing the findings from an independent audit carried out by a third party, as well as the business' internal audits.

This allows the inspector to assess the risks and assess their hygiene standards and award an FHRs score potentially without visiting in person.

Participants felt that this potential change would have a limited impact on businesses, as they were still being inspected even if not by a government inspector. Participants recognised that this type of approach also had some benefits for the FSA and LAs as it would free up resources to focus on businesses that were higher risk or had a worse track record of compliance. In some cases, participants were open to the idea of food hygiene inspectors making use of third-party independent audits and the businesses' internal audits when assessing hygiene standards and awarding the FHRs rating. However, they felt the FSA should continue to provide oversight and ensure those carrying out the visits were qualified to do so.

**“You want to know their opinions are the same as those people from the FSA. If you felt confident that someone could operate in the same way as a previous inspector, I don't see a difference.”**

(England)

There was a sense that participants were sceptical about the reasons for taking this type of approach. They were concerned that the current approach to inspections would change, including responsibility for food hygiene inspections, and expressed concern about the impact this may have on food hygiene standards.

**“It's a bit weird sending in third parties. Why aren't they keeping it all under one roof, having all these companies doing their work and reporting back?”**

(Wales)

**“The FSA would lose some control if it’s a third party on behalf of a local authority. That’s another step away from the FSA themselves.”**

(England)

**“It would reduce the workload for the FSA, but in doing so it would reduce the integrity of the standards they are trying to enforce.”**

(Northern Ireland)

Their more specific concerns focused on who the third-party organisation might be, and whether those doing the audit would have the right skills and training to ensure food hygiene and safety standards were being met. They cited examples of using agency or third-party organisations in other sectors (e.g. social care, medical services and other government agencies) where they felt there were negative consequences in terms of the quality of the staff and their work. Participants were worried that staff working for third-party organisations would not have the motivation to do the role to the same standards as the FSA.

**“Why would the FSA take somebody else’s word for it? I don’t think that’s right. If they are the ones giving the standard, they should be the ones who see that it is.”**

(Northern Ireland)

Participants had different views on the cost of this type of approach. Some felt it could help reduce costs, but more felt that it could be an unnecessary set of additional costs to the FSA. Some of these opinions were influenced by their personal experiences of using contractors and third-party organisations in their own professions.

## **4.2 Changes to the method of inspection**

The following scenario was presented to participants:

A local takeaway has so far had their food hygiene assessed and resultant FHRs score awarded via face-to-face inspections. As part of the FSA modernising the way they work and keeping up with technology developments, the business will now be evaluated through remote assessments.

These remote assessments can take a variety of forms, for example, a phone call, a video call, or exchange of information online. If the inspector has any concerns, they can still arrange an on-site visit.

Participants were strongly against remote inspections as an alternative to physical inspections, particularly when thinking about preparing fresh food. They felt that it was not possible to offer a comprehensive, accurate assessment of food hygiene without visiting a business.

Participants discussed how this could provide businesses with the opportunity to ‘cheat’ the system by hiding things. They were particularly concerned about the limitations of a video screen, and the ability for business owners to hide the true reality of their premises. Participants did not understand how this would enable standards to be maintained over the long term, even in compliant businesses.

**“I’m not happy with this at all. Someone with a video can tilt the camera and not do a full scan of the work area.”**

(Wales)

**“That’s a definite red flag for me, a non-starter. Out of the question, totally.”**

(Northern Ireland)



Participants were also concerned about other issues related to food hygiene that a virtual inspection would not be able to assess. They highlighted issues such as smell and touch, and worried about inspectors not being able to use all their senses to assess the business.

**“There’s just so many levels to it that can’t be seen in 2D or a phone call. There’s checking food in the fridge, there’s pulling fridges out, checking cookers, everything, that foods prepared, bacteria levels. You just can’t do that remotely.”**

(Northern Ireland)

**“Looking at a piece of meat, it could look okay but it could smell rancid.”**

(England)

Some participants recognised the potential of remote inspections to provide significant cost and time savings. However, this was not seen as sufficient justification for not visiting businesses, including those that are compliant.

**“It’s cost effective. But for hygiene, it would be failing a lot of restaurants and they’d just deteriorate.”**

(England)

## 4.3 Removing some lower risk businesses

The following scenario was presented to participants:

A corner shop that sells pre-packed sandwiches has been part of previous food hygiene standards regulations. Over the years, the business received regular inspections.

The government food hygiene inspector notifies the business that because they only sell pre-packed foods, they will no longer be part of the inspection scheme and will not receive any further inspections.

Although participants had previously discussed the possibility of very low risk businesses being removed from the FHRs, they were concerned about removing corner shops. Participants were worried about the potential risks of no longer requiring inspections for lower risk businesses, i.e. those that only sell pre-packed foods. They felt the lack of scrutiny in these businesses could be interpreted as ‘permission’ from the FSA for standards to fall. They were unable to identify how this benefited consumers or protected them from food hygiene risks.

**“I don’t see any benefit for the customer.”**

(Northern Ireland)

Participants argued that while these corner shops may not prepare food like a restaurant or takeaway, they do have fridges with sandwiches and other convenience foods that need to be stored at the right temperature. They were concerned that without appropriate oversight from inspectors, businesses may drop standards by not storing food as per the recommended guidance.

**“Milk is pre-packaged in plastic bottles. You need to make sure it’s refrigerated, or it’ll go off. Freezer food is pre-packaged, but they need to be kept in certain temperatures. Maybe not to the same strong degree of regulation because it’s not fresh, but you still to make sure it’s handled properly.”**

(Wales)

**“Reducing frequency is one thing but removing them altogether is a step too far.”**

(England)

Another concern participants raised was use-by dates. Many described examples of purchasing out of date food from corner shops. Some felt this happened more commonly in smaller shops that did not have the resources and processes in place to implement internal checks and systems similar to those used by larger retailers. Participants also emphasised the risk that businesses may not prioritise cleanliness and tidiness if they were no longer subject to inspections.

**“I don’t like that idea. There could be broken packages on the shelf, food coming out, seeds that someone’s allergic to when they pick up that package. I think they still should be inspected.”**

(Wales)

Some participants across all three nations were open to this potential change, although this was not a common view. These participants felt that corner shops were lower risk when compared to takeaways, cafes, and restaurants, for example. They saw no longer inspecting them as an opportunity to focus more time and resources on higher risk businesses.

## **4.4 Reducing inspection for inherently high risk businesses with a consistently good track record of compliance**

The following scenario was presented to participants:

Since its opening 10 years ago, a café that sells cooked breakfasts and sandwiches has been consistently compliant with high food hygiene standards and has therefore been awarded an FHRS score of 5.

A food hygiene inspector has been visiting them every two years to reassess these standards.

As part of the modernisation process, the FSA is considering visiting the business every four years and conducting remote assessments two years after each on-site inspection.

Participants were supportive of the general principle of recognising businesses that have maintained high standards. They thought it was good to encourage businesses with an incentive to maintain consistent high levels of compliance and saw reduced inspections as a way of achieving this. There was also more openness to the idea of using remote inspections in this context, allowing the frequency of physical inspections to be reduced, but not completely replaced. There was no clear pattern by nation in these views.

**“If they’ve operated for 10 years with no issues, and have a score of 5, I don’t see why that would be a problem.”**

(England)

**“If you've had a few years 5 stars, I know not everything is always predictable, but I think they could probably have a couple of years and the audits in between.”**

(Wales)

**“I think an onsite inspection would be needed for that even if it is every 2 years. You just don’t know. Standards do slip and they can slip quickly.”**

(Northern Ireland)

However, within some groups, participants queried the specifics of how often inspections and remote inspections should happen. Some argued that both types of inspection should happen on a more frequent basis than suggested. This was linked to their overall views on the frequency of inspections, with many wanting them to happen more often.

**“Yes, but it’s also about how many remote ones. It might not show the reality. I think every 6 months is good for the remote ones.”**

(England)

**“So, 18 months and 18 months, maybe? But not 2 and 2. They’ve got raw meat turning into cooked meat.”**

(Wales)

**“I think on this one because they’ve had a score of 5 for 10 years, I’d be happy if they did these visits yearly. A yearly in person inspection then a yearly remote inspection. I think a lot can go wrong in 2 years.”**

(England)

Participants across all three nations could also see the benefits of freeing up inspection resources for lower rated businesses. As such, they could see the value for the FSA and LAs and for businesses. However, participants did not feel there were benefits for consumers from this approach.

Across most groups, participants mentioned that they felt a change in management should see a business removed from this approach. They felt that this should mean they are subjected to a new in-person inspection. Some participants even felt that significant levels of staff turnover below management level should prompt an in-person visit.

Participants also felt that the effectiveness of the current food hygiene rating scheme related to the need for businesses to always be prepared for an unannounced inspection, and therefore they keep standards high. Some worried that by altering this approach, it could encourage businesses to not take this as seriously and allow standards to drop.

**“Some businesses keep up to standard because they know an inspector is due. It's their reputation to work for. Every four years may be too long. I feel that that date of knowing an inspector is coming, it's what's keeping them up to 5, they could easily slip.”**

(Wales)

## **4.5 Using other FSA approved assurance schemes**

The following scenario was presented to participants:

A farm shop is part of Red Tractor – an FSA approved assurance scheme.

Because they are part of this scheme, they receive fewer inspections from a government food hygiene inspector due to them receiving regular audits from Red Tractor.

Participants across all three nations did not think using an FSA approved assurance scheme for inspections would make a difference to how businesses manage food hygiene and safety requirements, and consequently, the risks this may pose to consumers. They were reassured that the business would still be inspected regularly, even if by a different organisation, and noted the need for awareness campaigns with information about this process to reassure the public that standards are kept to FSA requirements. Participants were supportive about this hypothetical change in principle, if the alternative assurance schemes were operating to the same standards and were overseen and approved by the FSA. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring those carrying out the audits had training equivalent to the current inspectors.

**“If it’s approved by the FSA and there’s regular audits, maybe the FSA should be focusing on other stores where it’s more important for regular visits.”**

(England)

**“I think it’s fine because if Red Tractor is independent from these places and approved by the food hygiene people, it seems good for me.”**

(Wales)

Participants assumed reduced costs for inspections and freeing up resources were the main benefits. In some cases, participants noted that if assurance schemes focused on specific types of businesses, inspectors from the third-party auditors could bring their own knowledge and experience into the audit process. This was seen as a potential benefit, leading to improved standards.

**“The fact they’re more specialised in that field, there are certain things they will look out for more.”**

(England)

**“If they were regulated by a company who knows their stuff, it might be more reassuring. The FSA looks more generally, so it might be beneficial.”**

(Northern Ireland)

The main challenge participants identified, was ensuring the approach was consistent with food hygiene and safety regulations more generally, often discussing this in relation to the FHRS. Others queried whether these businesses would really be assessed using the same criteria as those who continued to be inspected through government schemes. They wanted any rating stickers associated with the assurance scheme to include details around the FSA’s role.

Some participants were concerned that using assurance schemes could lead to a lack of clarity about accountability when things go wrong, between different stakeholders such as Red Tractor, the FSA, and local councils.

Participants also discussed awareness of these alternative assurance schemes. While many were aware of Red Tractor, others were not and had questions about what it involved. During the discussions, participants emphasised the importance of highlighting these organisations to consumers, so that they were aware of them and what they do, and why they were taking the lead instead of the FSA.

**“It’s about education and awareness of these separate bodies. If they’re planning on using them more frequently than the inspections they carry out themselves then they need to promote that and spin it into a real positive and celebrate the standards that they uphold. We’ve all heard of the green rating that the FSA operate already. We just need reassurance that they would be working to the same standard as the FSA.”**

(Wales)

## **4.6 Supermarkets and other large or multi-site businesses assessed as a whole business, rather than as individual stores**

The following scenario was presented to participants:

A large supermarket chain will be regulated at a business level for its food hygiene standards across all their stores in different locations. Food hygiene inspectors may still visit a range of different sites, but they will not visit every store.

Instead, inspectors will rely on these visits and the supermarket’s internal audits to assess compliance across their stores. This could also impact how their FHRS score is awarded.

Participants across all three nations were divided about whether it was acceptable for large businesses to be regulated in this way. Participants felt there could be benefits, particularly if there was a need to free up food hygiene inspectors and focus resources on higher risk businesses. In some cases, participants opposed this idea, noting that this approach could allow poorly performing stores to get away with poor hygiene standards. Others questioned whether all supermarkets, each with different stores, could be treated the same, due to having different management staff, varying in size, or having different products on sale.

Those who were more supportive of this potential change, noted that these larger businesses have their own internal teams responsible for health and safety practices. They also emphasised the business need to ensure standards are upheld as an incentive to avoid any negative impact on the business' reputation and customer base. Consequently, they felt the businesses could be trusted to maintain appropriate standards without a government inspector visiting all premises, emphasising the similarities between these businesses. They thought larger businesses would welcome this kind of approach given how much work they already do to maintain standards. They also expected it would reduce costs for the FSA and LAs, enabling them to focus on other higher risk businesses.

**“It is the most practical approach in terms of their allocation of resources. Visiting each store in person is not really reasonable to expect them to do. This is the best compromise.”**

(Wales)

**“It enables inspectors to come to higher risk places that probably don't have the resources to put into internal audits or training. I don't think it's a good use of an inspector's time to wander around a supermarket.”**

(England)

Those participants who expressed concerns about this approach discussed the potential impact on consumers. They thought this would provide opportunities for those with lower standards to get away with it, if they were not a store that was subject to a visit.

**“You could look at it as an opportunity to abuse that system. If you know your particular branch isn't going to be subject to an inspection, then you could perhaps get away with one or two things that you wouldn't if you knew the inspector was coming down to check your store in particular.”**

(Wales)

Some participants were also unclear what this would mean for the ratings for individual stores. They worried this could be misleading for consumers if only an overall rating was given.

**“But one thing, a group score wouldn't work. If you had 20 Tesco's within an area for example, and 5 are bad and 15 are good, the 15 will bring the 5 up. I wouldn't want to be in a shop with a hygiene of 1, but a score of 4 because of the ones down the road.”**

(Northern Ireland)

Views of this approach were strongly linked to how much participants trusted supermarkets. Those who were more sceptical explained this could provide supermarkets with an opportunity to manipulate their ratings. Others were concerned about how reliable and trustworthy internal audits can be, particularly in comparison to external inspections.

**“Supermarket A will look at their own records, make their own assessments, and the FSA will go in and look at a single branch and go this and this is wrong, let the rest of your branches know, but really somebody should be checking each store to make sure they're all up to a certain standard.”**

(England)

Participants also highlighted difficulties in assessing stores across a large chain without visiting all of them. Despite noting that the stores would be part of the same large business, they emphasised the importance of staff implementing guidance and working to the same standards across all stores.

**“Each store is going to be different. You can have two in close proximity with each other, one is really good, one is not so good, and they come to the better one. If all food places got to have food hygiene, they should visit different sites of the same supermarkets. That they might not visit every store, that’s quite alarming.”**

(Wales)

A few participants also mentioned how smaller businesses from the same industry might feel unfairly treated, if their larger competitors do not face independent inspections in the same way.

There were different ideas for how this type of approach might work in practice. Some suggested an inspection of a relatively small number of stores and taking an average that applied across the business. Others thought it would be more appropriate to take the lowest rating from those stores visited as an incentive for businesses to increase their standards. They also wanted the FSA and LAs to continue to have a role, with some mentioning unannounced inspections to stores that were assessed via audit.

## **Value of FHRS Consumer Research: Chapter 5 Conclusions**

### **Objective 1: Assessing the value of the FHRS for consumers**

The FHRS was seen as valuable by many consumers, although awareness and use varied. FHRS ratings were seen as a source of trustworthy information about food hygiene standards, providing consumers with reassurance about food safety. Familiarity with a food business and amount of local choice were more important for some when choosing where to eat.

Those who knew more about the FHRS relied on checking food safety and hygiene ratings as an important consideration when deciding where to buy food. They were more likely to know that inspections could cover issues like cleanliness, storage, and kitchen management.

Those who were less aware of the FHRS associated the scheme with ratings stickers displayed by food businesses – but did not tend to rely on these when choosing where to buy food. These participants had a limited understanding of how ratings were decided, or what exactly ratings meant.

There was general agreement that businesses that sell, handle, or prepare food should be part of the scheme. Participants emphasised the importance of managing consumer risk and saw the FHRS as an important way of doing so. Including all food businesses on the same basis was generally seen as an important way to make the scheme simpler for consumers to use. However, there were mixed views about very low risk food businesses (for example, that only sold pre-packaged food) being included in the scope of the FHRS.

Participants consistently agreed that displaying FHRS ratings should be mandatory, associating this with fairness and transparency. However, there was limited awareness across the three nations that display of ratings is not mandatory in England.

Participants assumed that food businesses were inspected regularly, with expectations ranging from a few times a year to every few years. There were mixed opinions about whether inspection frequency should be the same for all businesses. Many participants thought that inspection frequency should be the same for all businesses. However, some participants suggested varying inspection frequency based on business type and previous compliance and saw this as a way of prioritising resources.

## **Objective 2: Assessing consumer views of possible areas of change in regulatory approach**

Participants were asked about six potential changes to the regulatory approach. They had some concerns about changing the FHRs given the value they placed on inspections and ratings. However, they were open to some potential changes where these were not seen to increase risks to consumers.

- participants were open to the idea of using third-party independent audits and internal audits. However, they wanted the FSA to oversee this to ensure inspectors carrying out independent audits were appropriately skilled and trained.
- participants were strongly against the use of remote inspections as an alternative to physical inspections, particularly for businesses that prepare fresh food because they thought this approach would allow businesses to hide problems.
- although they had previously discussed very low risk businesses being removed from the FHRs, participants were concerned about removing businesses like corner shops. Most participants were concerned that businesses might see this as 'permission' for food hygiene standards to fall.
- many participants supported using reduced inspections as an incentive to recognise compliant businesses and encourage them to maintain high standards. There was also more openness to the idea of using remote inspections in this context, allowing physical inspections to be reduced, but not replaced.
- participants recognised the benefits of using FSA approved assurance schemes to reduce frequency of inspections, particularly in lowering inspection costs and freeing up resources. They emphasised the need for these alternative assurance schemes to operate to the same standards and be overseen by the FSA.
- views were mixed on assessing supermarkets and other large or multi-site businesses as a whole business, rather than as individual stores. Some participants felt this would reduce costs and enable a focus on other higher risk businesses. Others raised concerns about poor performing premises benefitting from an overall rating that did not reflect their practices.

## **Value of FHRs Consumer Research: Annex 1 Sampling**

### **Workshop one (England)**

<b>Quota</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Achieved sample</b>	<b>Target quota (15 to 18 participants)</b>
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Age	18 to 30	5	4
Age	31 to 50	7	4
Age	51 to 64	3	4
Age	65+	3	4
Gender	Male	9	8
Gender	Female	9	8
Gender	Other/Prefer not to say	-	No quota
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	14	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	0	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
SEG	AB, C1	4, 4	Min 8
SEG	C2, DE	4, 2	Min 8
Awareness of the FSA	Aware of FSA	8	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	Limited awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	No awareness	6	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	Aware	9	A good mix, broadly reflecting national survey
Awareness and use of FHRS	Limited awareness	5	A good mix, broadly reflecting national survey



Awareness and use of FHRS	No awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national survey
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## Workshop two (Wales)

Quota	Categories	Achieved sample	Target quota (15 to 18 participants)
Age	18 to 30	3	4
Age	31 to 50	5	4
Age	51 to 64	2	4
Age	65+	4	4
Gender	Male	7	8
Gender	Female	7	8
Gender	Other/Prefer not to say	-	No quota
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	9	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	9	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
SEG	AB, C1	3, 6	Min 8
SEG	C2, DE	5, 4	Min 8
Awareness of the FSA	Aware of FSA	6	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	Limited awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys

Quota	Categories	Achieved sample	Target quota (15 to 18 participants)
Awareness of the FSA	No awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	Aware	9	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	Limited awareness	5	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	No awareness	0	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys

## Workshop three (England)

Quota	Categories	Achieved sample	Target quota (15 to 18 participants)
Age	18 to 30	3	4
Age	31 to 50	7	4
Age	51 to 64	3	4
Age	65+	3	4
Gender	Male	7	8
Gender	Female	9	8
Gender	Other/Prefer not to say	-	No quota
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	7	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.

Quota	Categories	Achieved sample	Target quota (15 to 18 participants)
Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	9	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
SEG	AB, C1	2, 7	Min 8
SEG	C2, DE	6, 1	Min 8
Awareness of the FSA	Aware of FSA	8	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	Limited awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	No awareness	4	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRs	Aware	6	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRs	Limited awareness	8	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRs	No awareness	2	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys

## Workshop four (Northern Ireland)

Quota	Categories	Achieved sample	Target quota (15 to 18 participants)
Age	18 to 30	4	4
Age	31 to 50	5	4
Age	51 to 64	5	4

<b>Quota</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Achieved sample</b>	<b>Target quota (15 to 18 participants)</b>
Age	65+	2	4
Gender	Male	8	8
Gender	Female	8	8
Gender	Other/Prefer not to say	-	No quota
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	16	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
Ethnicity	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	0	Quotas to reflect the makeup of the region based on the population profile.
SEG	AB, C1	5, 4	Min 8
SEG	C2, DE	6, 1	Min 8
Awareness of the FSA	Aware of FSA	8	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	Limited awareness	6	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness of the FSA	No awareness	2	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	Aware	8	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	Limited awareness	7	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys
Awareness and use of FHRS	No awareness	1	A good mix, broadly reflecting national surveys