

Value of FHRs Local Authority research: Chapter 1 Introduction

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 on potential changes to the regulatory approach. To this purpose, the FSA commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct qualitative research to explore the views of LAs about the FHRs.

The overarching research objective for the LA strand was to assess the perceived value of the FHRs for LAs. The key research questions for strand of the research were:

- What aspects of the FHRs do LAs find valuable?
- Is the burden of re-assessment at the request of the business an issue? Do LAs feel that certain businesses reapply for re-assessment more than others?
- What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of voluntary and mandatory display of FHRs ratings according to LAs?
- How would LAs feel about reduced inspection for inherently high risk Food Business Operators (FBOs) who have a consistently good track record of compliance?
- Are there any aspects of the FHRs scheme that could be improved?

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

1.2 Methodology

To answer these research questions, four online workshops were conducted to explore LA representatives' views on the FHRs. Three of these online workshops involved representatives from England. One of the online workshops involved only representatives from Wales. In-depth interviews were also conducted with two LA representatives from Northern Ireland.

Overall, thirty-three LA representatives from England took part, and fifteen representatives from Wales. Two LA representatives from Northern Ireland took part through in-depth interviews. Each workshop was divided into smaller groups to enable all participants to contribute. In England, nine Environmental Health Officers, six Senior Environmental Health Officers, and one Principal Environmental Health Officer took part in the workshops. The remaining participants from England included a range of job roles, including Food Safety Officer, and other specialist and public protection officers. A range of roles were represented in Wales. This included Principal Environmental Health Officers, Senior Environmental Health Officers and Environmental Health Officers. The two LA representatives from Northern Ireland included one Principal Environmental Health Officer and one Environmental Health Officer.

Table 1 – Summary of LA representative workshop participants

Location	Workshop date	Number of participants
England	Thursday 3 March 2022	9
England	Monday 7 March 2022	7
England	Tuesday 8 March 2022	17
Wales	Tuesday 15 March 2022	15

Two LA representatives from Northern Ireland were also included in the research, through individual in depth interviews, which were conducted in March 2022.