

# FSA People Plan 2023 to 2026

## Our people plan: Foreword

Our people plan explains what is important to get right for you, our people, to enable us to deliver our strategy.

PDF

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### Foreword

Our people plan sets out how we will improve as an employer and the benefits this will bring us, the businesses we regulate and the public whose health we protect. It is our map for attracting the best people to our teams, helping colleagues grow and develop in their work, and for ensuring we become known for our great culture.

Our plan reflects your experiences. It explains what is important to get right for you, our people, to enable us to deliver our strategy. It shows what colleagues should expect from the FSA as their employer and what we expect of each other in turn.

The FSA's role has grown since the UK left the EU. Our 2022-2027 strategy reaffirmed our mission, food you can trust: food that is safe, food that is what it says it is, and food that is healthier and more sustainable. It also described our guiding principles for how the FSA will deliver its part in that mission.

Since January 2021, the FSA has new responsibilities. For example, we now authorise novel foods and feed. We decide the frequency and type of checks on food and feed at the border. We operate in a UK single market where devolved ministers have more say than they did before. The UK now takes its own seat in multilateral discussions on food and feed standards. In the meantime, the food industry is seizing opportunities to innovate with data and science. And risks to our food keep changing.

This all means that the FSA needs the right skills, knowledge and culture to deliver all the things it did before, and lots that is new, in the years ahead. It's our people who make this happen. We need:

- a fantastic employee experience, supported by the right culture and values
- the right capabilities and skills
- our people to feel enabled by our HR policies, rewards, and estates.

This People Plan shows how we will do that over the next three years.

I'm very grateful to those of you who have given your feedback as this plan was developed. Hundreds of you have shared your thoughts through the culture enquiry, the people survey, our values refresh, through staff networks, through team meetings and Field Operations Regional Engagement and Development days. Thank you.

The FSA has incredible people in it. This People Plan will help us be even better at what we do..

**Emily Miles, Chief Executive**



People are at the heart of the FSA's ability to protect consumers' interests in relation to food. That is why, as a board, we are proud to champion the FSA's People Plan, which demonstrates the organisation's ongoing commitment to doing the very best by its dedicated and talented workforce.

We want the FSA to be an employer of choice, and a standout department within government for employee satisfaction, inclusivity, positive workplace culture and personal development. As demands on the FSA increase, so too does the importance of being able to attract and retain people with the right capability and skillset to deliver against its strategy.

The People Plan offers a robust and transparent framework for ensuring that the FSA continues to deliver for its staff as well as for consumers.

**Hayley Campbell-Gibbons, FSA Board Member**



## **Our people vision**

**We want the FSA to be a purposeful and dynamic place where all our people are supported in their jobs with the freedom to grow and develop to deliver our mission of food you can trust.**

Our strategy set out our mission to deliver food you can trust and the breadth of important work we need to do to deliver this in our five roles. We know that our resources are limited, so we need to make the most of them. To succeed in our ambitions, we need to equip all our people to deliver so we can do our best work.

We will be the kind of organisation where people feel able to develop their expertise and are trusted to achieve the objectives for which they are accountable. The FSA will be a place where people feel equipped and supported to do the best they can in their work, whether that is having good kit and time for learning, or supportive and thriving relationships with one another regardless of location. Wherever people are in the organisation, they will feel cared for and enabled to do their best to deliver food you can trust.

We also want to lead the way in creating an inclusive culture. In line with the wider civil service strategy, we will be the kind of organisation that celebrates diversity and inclusivity where everyone's contribution is valued because through diversity we better represent and can better serve the public.

## **Our culture and values**

Developed by our people, our ASPIRE values were introduced in January 2018. Now, we are launching an updated version following feedback from you and our leaders.

Our values articulate how we want to show up at work and what we expect of one another. They are the thread that runs through our whole organisation, helping us shape a culture of which we all want to be a part, and attract talented people to join us.

Our 2021 culture enquiry showed us that we have much to celebrate in our deep expertise, our pride in what we do for public health and the support we offer one another. Our refreshed version of ASPIRE reaffirms our commitment to inclusion, and our desire to shift our focus from resilience and surviving to readiness and thriving. Our values are:

**Accountable:** We take ownership of our actions and focus on getting things done to assure food you can trust.

**Supportive:** We have strong, caring relationships with each other and work well within and across teams in the FSA.

**Professional:** We build trust by competently and confidently delivering to the highest professional standards, inspiring others through the work we do.

**Inclusive:** We enable and value everyone's contribution and embrace people's wide-ranging characteristics, skills and experience.

**Ready:** We are forward-thinking and open to change, making sure we are prepared to respond to events and seize opportunities, whilst protecting wellbeing as best we can.

**Evolving:** We are empowered to make thoughtful changes to improve what we do for the taxpayer, making sure we continuously reflect on our performance and keep on top of our learning.

Our updated ASPIRE values preserve what is so important to us and clarify how we all agree we should behave to ensure our culture continues to flourish.

**Ruth Nolan, Director of People and Resources**



## Our people plan: our commitments - what we will deliver

To deliver our people vision, our people plan is built around employee experience, capability and becoming an enabling organisation.

We are well on the way to becoming the organisation we want to be but there is more we need to do and our people plan articulates how we will get there.

Our people work in different locations and environments, both because of our frontline operations and our award winning Our Ways of Working (OWOW) offering. This makes it ever more important to unite through our shared mission, strategy and values, whilst enabling flexibility to reflect frontline and non-frontline requirements.

Our people plan is rooted in feedback from colleagues, especially from the civil service people survey, our culture enquiry, and our work around prioritisation. To deliver our people vision, our people plan is built around the following three key themes:

- an excellent employee experience
- maximising capability
- being an enabling organisation

The first year focuses on strengthening our foundations, particularly around aspects such as line management, prioritisation, wellbeing, recognition & reward and culture which are critical keystones to support you in delivering our priorities and strategy. We will clarify expectations

about when and why we come together in person to achieve the optimum balance between flexibility and connection so people feel supported by and engaged with one another regardless of role or location.

Years two and three will focus on building upon these foundations by introducing new initiatives and striving for even higher standards to help us progress us on our journey to becoming the purposeful and dynamic organisation necessary for the future.

“The new people plan is really exciting. The three themes are going to ensure that the FSA remains an excellent employer, empower employees, and ensure that we all have the capabilities and skills we need to make this a great organisation. I can't wait to see how the plan is put into action!”

**Lowri Williams, Senior Communications Manager Wales**

## **Our people plan: An excellent employee experience**

We will provide an excellent employee experience by refreshing our ASPIRE values to reflect the importance we place on inclusion and supporting each other.

Our culture enquiry told us that we feel enabled within our immediate teams and there is an authentic sense of trust and care for others across the agency however, pockets remain in the FSA where people feel less included and relationships with managers can vary.

We'll provide an excellent employee experience by refreshing our ASPIRE values and behaviours to reflect the importance we collectively place upon inclusion and supporting each other, embedding these in performance objectives, reward and recognition and in our leadership and management development offering to clearly communicate behavioural expectations and help us shape our culture for the future.

We'll preserve and continue to build on our supportive organisational culture so that you feel welcome, included and accepted here, and want to come back to the FSA if your next career move takes you elsewhere in the Civil Service.

Your feedback in the people survey against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis highlights how important it is for you to feel fairly rewarded for your role in ensuring food is safe, food is what it says it is and food is healthier and more sustainable. We'll help you to understand our total reward package (the combination of pay and benefits) more clearly, and carry out a detailed review to identify key improvements we can make to employee reward within the constraints of Treasury pay guidance.

We've been working in challenging times and will continue to do so. We want to ensure we're ready for the unexpected and supportive of people's wellbeing so we can engage effectively with our work. We'll take a more integrated approach to your mental and physical wellbeing by considering the impact of workload during busy times, ensuring opportunities to spend time together in person and improving your experience of equipment and technology to help you in your role, wherever you work in the FSA.

We'll continue to listen to your views through our employee feedback channels (such as our pulse surveys, the Civil Service People survey and our culture enquiries) and work with our staff networks and trade unions to understand how it feels working in the FSA and use your feedback to continually strive to improve your employee experience.

“The FSA seems to genuinely embrace working flexibly, trusting people, and supporting a healthy work life balance. We understand we are people first and working is just one part of our busy lives. I know that I am far more productive at work because of this. I feel like the FSA continually looks for ways to improve the human connections we make at work, almost completely agnostic of where we are located.”

**James Ambrose, Business Analyst, Openness Data and Digital**

**Table 1: Planned activities for an Excellent Employee Experience**

| In year one we will...   | We'll know it's worked with...   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1. Review our reward and benefits package</b></p> <p>Explore options and provide recommendations to EMT for an affordable, transparent and simple-to-understand reward and flexible benefits package, within the constraints of the Civil Service pay remit rules, to inspire performance, attract and retain people.</p>  | <p>Broader allocation of reward</p> <p>More hits on Edenred</p> <p>Better people survey results for pay and reward</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Further integrate wellbeing into our working environments</b></p> <p>Work collaboratively with MHIs and Food Business Operators to explore possible improvements to office environments in plants and ensure they are safe, accessible and inclusive.</p> <p>Provide our people with improved tools to keep them safe, connected and effective at work.</p> <p>Implement clearer expectations around when and why we come together in person, and new channels and initiatives to support strong working relationships, peer learning and effective collaboration in an increasingly virtual and geographically diverse organisation.</p> | <p>Better people and pulse survey scores for wellbeing, fair treatment, recognition and work environment.</p> <p>More people are reporting via ASSURE system.</p> <p>A reduction in long-term sickness absence.</p> <p>Increased in -person team engagement across the organisation.</p> |

| In year one we will...   | We'll know it's worked with...   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>3. Embed our refreshed ASPIRE values</b></p> <p>Embed our refreshed values throughout FSA awards, people processes and policies, reiterating what is both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Develop and roll out a new management charter to articulate our expectations of our managers including behaviours, attitudes and core management responsibilities such as providing support to new starters, bringing teams together in person and conducting fair, consistent and regular performance and talent management.</p> <p>Use feedback from our people to regularly review and direct necessary behaviour change.</p> | <p>Better pulse survey results mapping to each value.</p> <p>Culture cited as a one of the top 3 reasons to stay at the FSA in our pulse surveys or culture enquiry.</p> <p>Long term decline in internal bullying and harassment reports.</p> <p>A rise in leavers citing they would return to the FSA.</p> |

| In year 2 and 3 we will...  | We'll know it's worked with....  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>4. Gather your feedback on culture</b></p> <p>Conduct our next culture enquiry in 2025 to capture your views and experiences and explore our cultural progress.</p> | <p>Prevalence of cultural strength and reduction of cultural barrier themes.</p> |

## Our people plan: Maximising capability

To deliver our strategy, we need to work with and through others as effectively as possible.

To deliver our strategy, we need to work with and through others as effectively as possible. We must nurture our existing strengths, such as our scientific and analytical capability, our reputation with the public, our expertise on and passion for food, and our technical working relationships with local authorities and with the food industry, whilst further developing key skills that we know we'll need more of in the future, such as leadership, incident management, use of data to inform decision making and drive performance, more confident external stakeholder engagement and general data and digital capability. We will also need to grow competence in professional fields such as in policy making, science specialisms, operational delivery and the veterinary profession.

We'll carry out a strategic skills and capability forecast to ensure our development and recruitment priorities over the coming years align to strategic requirements whilst nurturing the



strong set of knowledge, skills and experience we already have, and support your learning and career progression through continued professional development in line with this. We'll introduce an enhanced centralised talent management approach to alert people to suitable upcoming development opportunities and create a surge capacity response so we're ready to meet business needs.

We want to ensure that someone's background or protected characteristics are never a limiting factor in the FSA, but rather an asset that can help improve policy making and service delivery. We'll work towards becoming the best in class for inclusion, improving representation and access to opportunities for people from under-represented groups continuing the positive trajectory of recent years whilst aligning to the Civil Service inclusion strategy.

We'll continue working to a 50/50 model for Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs) and Contract Meat Hygiene Inspectors (CMHIs) with our service delivery partner, building consistent competence and on-going positive collaborative relationships within frontline teams to ensure effective delivery.

Through our culture enquiry, people survey and frontline engagement, our people and leaders alike have also identified a need for a more consistent standard of people management to enhance people's day-to-day experience at work and ensure we are effectively, consistently and inclusively managing workload, resources, performance, accessibility, career progression and much more. We'll develop visible and approachable leaders and managers who make a positive difference to your experiences and place as much emphasis on people management as they do on delivery.

"I have been a meat inspector for over 25 years and, in that time, I have seen an organisational cultural change. I have seen many of my colleagues take on new roles such dairy inspectors, wine inspectors and assessors. I have taken advantage of the diverse work we do as an organisation by becoming an NVQ assessor for the FSA training school. What better way to train the next generation of meat inspectors by placing them in a team of experienced colleagues so the knowledge they have can be passed on organically?"

**Jeremy Dawson, Meat Hygiene Inspector, North of England**

**Table 2: planned activities for maximising capability**

| <b>In year one we will...</b> | <b>We'll know it's worked with...</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

## **5. Focus on fair, supportive, inclusive and consistent people management**

Develop mandatory management induction modules for all newly promoted/recruited managers

Implement our FSA leadership and management development framework which defines standards and expectations at each level, and organisational expectations around involvement in wider corporate activity.

Articulating the core skills required for people management in recruitment materials for all management roles as well as any technical criteria.

Introduce mandatory management objectives on performance management and talent reporting to build an evidence base for future talent management and succession planning. These will be nuanced by grade to reflect individual responsibility as a manager and leadership responsibility for the quality and consistency of performance management within business areas.

Better people and pulse survey scores relating to managers and quality performance conversations.

Increase in performance ratings and 9 box grid positions recorded on the system.

All new managers (newly promoted or new to the FSA) to complete manager induction within 3 months of starting.

## 6. Conduct a strategic capability and skills forecast

Work with senior leaders and Heads of Profession to understand strategic skill requirements and produce an action plan articulating how best to address these through a range of solutions i.e. training, refocussing, job design, recruitment, apprenticeships, internships, graduate placements or buying in. This will include:

- briefing skills and written communications
- project and programme management
- leadership skills
- evidence-based decision making
- stakeholder engagement
- incidents handling
- general data and digital capability

Work with our Heads of Profession to map FSA roles to civil service professional frameworks to inform professional development and succession planning. This will include developing competence in the following professions:

- operational delivery
- policy making and analysis
- science specialisms
- veterinary

Improved understanding of strategic skills required and any associated skill gaps.

Organisational level action plan to address any skills gaps identified.

Improved recruitment forecasting.

Compliance with government functional standards.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>7. Maintain momentum on inclusion</b></p> <p>Create inclusion champion-chaired action groups to evolve inclusion governance and support strategic and corporate delivery.</p> <p>Complete assurance framework, accreditation and audit activities to form an evidence base that guide inclusion actions for the next 3 years (including disability confidence leader level and carers' accreditation level 2).</p> <p>Provide enhanced interviewer training for recruitment panellists, empowering them to actively encourage and support candidates to provide their best evidence.</p> <p>Continue and complete reviews in each plant to ensure effective cohesion between MHIs and CMHIs in the undertaking of duties within plants, supporting the one team approach.</p> <p>Continue to offer a range of engagement channels and networking opportunities to our colleagues on the front line to help them feel more included, with additional support for groups who are under-represented in Field Operations.</p> | <p>Achievement of disability confidence leader level and carers accreditation level 2.</p> <p>Increased declaration of protected characteristics (including socio-economic background) and progress towards an even more representative workforce, particularly in Operations and at management grades.</p> <p>More consistent people survey results across protected characteristics.</p> <p>Maintain our position in the top 75 employers for social mobility.</p> <p>Better people survey results and regional engagement day polls/feedback relating to frontline team relationships and engagement.</p> |
|---|--|

| In years 2 and 3 we will...   | We'll know it's worked with...   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>8. Enhance people management capability</b></p> <p>Implement mandatory core modules which all managers will need to refresh periodically.</p> | <p>Longer-term drop in B&amp;H reports related to managers/leaders.</p> <p>Reduced under- and overspend budgets.</p> <p>Continued improvement in people and pulse survey scores relating to managers and quality performance conversations</p> |

| In years 2 and 3 we will...  | We'll know it's worked with...   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>9. Introduce annual corporate development planning</b></p> <p>Work with senior leaders/ Heads of Profession to confirm the yearly corporate development plan to progress us towards our strategic capability requirements and maintain professional standards across all parts of the FSA.</p>   | <p>Improved understanding of our year-on-year progress towards building/acquiring the skills required to deliver our strategy.</p> <p>Reduction in skills gap.</p> <p>Up-to-date, meaningful development plans on record for all our people.</p>   |
| <p><b>10. Evolve our succession planning and talent management</b></p> <p>Design and introduce a new centralised talent management and succession planning approach based on the evidence base built throughout year 1.</p> <p>Formally identify pivotal or business critical roles within directorates to inform succession planning.</p> <p>Targeted communications about ringfenced places on talent programmes (such as Beyond Boundaries) to people from under-represented groups in our talent pool.</p> | <p>A strong internal talent pipeline to support business continuity, surge capacity and prioritisation evidenced by at least one reported 9-box grid position in any 12-month period for our people of Grade 7 to SCS.</p> <p>Better People Survey scores around development and career opportunities.</p> <p>'Living' succession plans for pivotal roles in all business areas.</p> <p>Improved understanding and transparency of internal moves, talent movement metrics and external attrition.</p> |
| <p><b>11. Become best in class for inclusion</b></p> <p>Explore a sponsorship offer in line with positive action principles.</p> <p>Complete the voluntary evidenced framework for improving race equality and progression.</p> <p>Achieve carers accreditation level 3.</p> <p>Report on ethnicity pay gap.</p> <p>Support our staff networks' evolution to align with the civil service inclusion strategy and contribute to strategy/policy whilst continuing to support staff.</p>                         | <p>Achievement of carers' accreditation level 3.</p> <p>Rise in the People Survey scores related to ethnicity and progression.</p> <p>Improve on our 2023 position in the social mobility employers' list.</p>   |

| In years 2 and 3 we will...  | We'll know it's worked with...   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>12. Contribute to the development of a Government Veterinary Profession Graduate Scheme</b></p> <p>Work with the Government Veterinary Service and other government departments to develop a Civil Service Veterinary Graduate Scheme.</p> | <p>Increased awareness of an an improved talent pipeline for our veterinarian roles.</p> |

## Our people plan: An enabling organisation

We'll be an enabling organisation where our agility and impact are supported by effective infrastructure, organisational set up and processes.

Our culture enquiry highlighted our deep commitment to our mission however, it also showed that priorities, structures and responsibilities across teams and directorates can be unclear. This can make it more difficult to collaborate effectively - especially in an increasingly geographically diverse workforce where people are working remotely (whether on the front line or multi-location/home-enabled).

We'll be an enabling organisation where our agility and impact are supported by effective infrastructure, organisational set up and processes.

Our organisation wide Connect programme brings people and finance systems into a single system, streamlining processes, improving management reporting and making it easier for you to complete administrative tasks. This will drive culture change and improve digital capability.

We'll help you manage your workloads with rigorous and ongoing prioritisation to reflect what's most important at any given time, in line with our guiding principle to take a risk based and proportionate approach to all work.

Through our estates strategy and Our Ways of Working (OWOW) we will provide you with attractive, inclusive and effective FSA workspaces across the United Kingdom where you can come together to collaborate and build effective working relationships to optimise our performance, whatever your contract choice or role.

"Joining a new organization and working remotely I envisaged that forming relationships within the team might cause difficulties however, this has not been the case. Meet and greets were organised across the directorate enabling me to form strong relationships not only within the Executive Support Unit but across a wide range of teams.

I am impressed with the training and ongoing support that is offered which enables me to carry out my role effectively. Having worked in other Civil Service departments it is refreshing to now work for an organisation that actively champions flexible working rather than just paying lip service to this."

**Clodagh O' Doherty, Executive Support Officer Northern Ireland**

**Table 3: Planned activities for an enabling organisation**

| In year one we will...   | We'll know it's worked with  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>13. Roll out a single People and Finance system</b></p> <p>Implement Finance and core HR modules on Workday.</p> <p>Provide training and guidance for managers and staff on how to effectively use the new HR and Finance system.</p>  | <p>Improved ease and range of reporting/ management information including finance and people forecasting.</p> <p>Completion rate of training.</p> <p>User feedback of time saving, capability and improved synergies.</p>  |
| <p><b>14. Improve corporate prioritisation and planning</b></p> <p>Hold regular EMT/BDG workshops to enable cross-organisation prioritisation and planning, breaking down silos and considering important business as usual and people management commitments.</p> <p>Ensure that staff feedback on workload is a priority for review by senior leaders (SCS) when people survey and pulse survey results are released to differentiate between surge effort and sustained patterns of overwhelm.</p> <p>Prioritise effective people and workload management via extended check ins.</p> | <p>Improved people and pulse survey scores for workload and overwhelm.</p> <p>Reduction of the Overwhelm culture theme in our next culture enquiry.</p> <p>A reduction in excess flexi-hours carried over at the end of each period for people in non-frontline roles.</p> |
| <p><b>15. Develop our Estates Strategy to support Our Ways of Working</b></p> <p>Develop a modern hybrid estates strategy which optimises use of our estate, ensures inclusivity, accessibility and value for money whilst supporting Our Ways of Working and aligns to the Government Property Agency model.</p> <p>Clarify organisational expectations around when we should come together in person to build and support strong collaborative relationships whilst maintain our flexibility and ensuring value for money.</p>   | <p>Reduction of the Disconnect and Disjointed culture themes in our next culture enquiry.</p> <p>Improved people survey results relating to relationships and work environment.</p> <p>Increased usage of our offices across the UK.</p>                                   |

| In year 2 and 3 we will...  | We'll know it's worked with...                                      |
|---|---|
| <p><b>16. Explore additional HR modules on Workday</b></p> <p>Explore and implement possible additional functionality for example, Total reward statements, talent management, performance management, recruitment.</p> | <p>Improved ease and range of reporting/management information.</p> |

## Our people plan: Three year roadmap

Our people plan three year roadmap setting out the actions under each theme and the order they will be completed.

### Year one 2023 to 2024

#### Exceptional employee experience

1. Review our reward and benefits package
2. Further investigate wellbeing into our working
3. Embed our ASPIRE values

#### Maximising capability

5. Focus on fair, supportive, inclusive and consistent people management
6. Complete strategic skills and capability forecasting
7. Maintain momentum on inclusion

#### An enabling organisation

13. Roll out a single People and Finance system
14. Improve corporate planning and prioritisation
15. Develop our Estates strategy to support OWOW

### Year two and three 2024 to 2026

#### Exceptional employee experience

4. Repeat our culture enquiry



## **Maximising capability**

8. Enhance our people management capability
9. Introduce annual corporate development
10. Evolve our succession planning and talent management
11. Become best in class for inclusion
12. Support development of Government Veterinary Profession graduate

## **An enabling organisation**

16. Explore additional HR modules on Workday

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