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Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2023–2024

For the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024





Food Standards Agency

Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2023–2024

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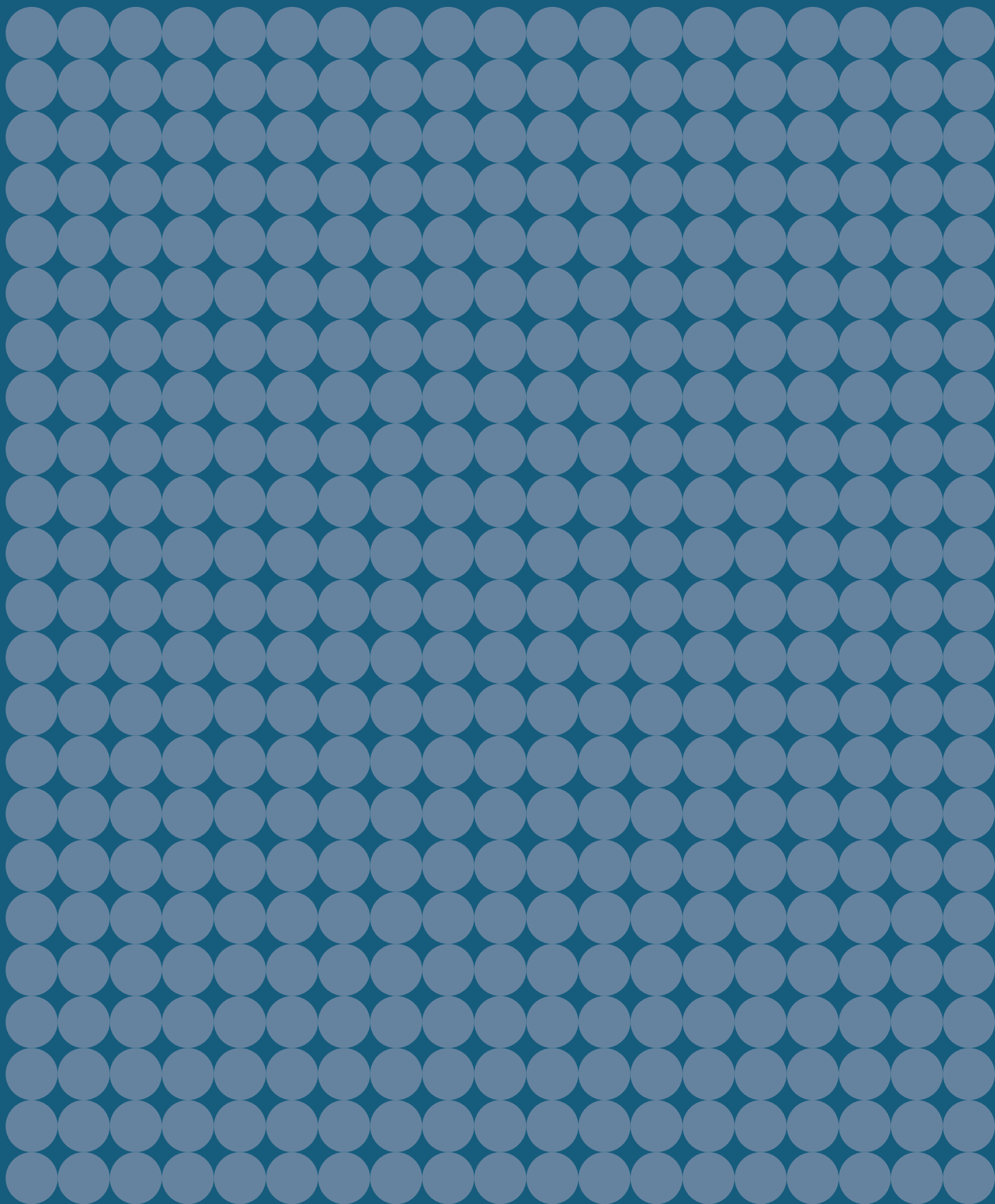
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2 Performance report

Performance report



Performance overview

The Performance overview explains the role, and purpose and how we, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), are organised. It also provides a summary of the FSA's story and our performance and impact and management of our key risks over the 2023/24 financial year.

Chief Executive's Foreword



I am pleased to lay before the Westminster Parliament, the Welsh Parliament, and present to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Annual Report and Accounts, covering performance and activities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2023/24.

The FSA has performed well through the year. Our staff have inspected and audited meat cutting plants, wine producers and on-farm dairy establishments across England and Wales to ensure regulations are being met. Our 24/7 incidents response unit responded to 1,837 food and feed incidents, including a number of high-profile outbreaks. We also worked alongside other government agencies, coordinated by the Cabinet Office, to deliver the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), helping to implement a new, global, risk-based approach to border checks.

Through the FSA's risk analysis process, we provided independent food safety advice and risk management recommendations to consumers, ministers and businesses. We also considered applications for the approval of regulated food and feed products for the UK market, with 116 applications to our Regulated Products Service received through the year.

We have continued to play an important role in providing guidance to food businesses, whether that's advice on allergen labelling or updating Safer Food Better Business, our food safety management handbook for small businesses. The FSA's decisions continue to be informed by the latest science and evidence. Our sampling, risk assessment, and surveillance work has allowed us and others to identify risks in the food chain and prevent unsafe products being placed on the market.

We worked closely with local authorities over the year, overseeing their performance, offering insight into risk, and developing guidance on calculating resource requirements to deliver food services. Although resource challenges in local authorities persist, our data shows that they are continuing to deliver risk-based interventions and made significant progress clearing the backlog of inspections that built up as a result of the pandemic.

I would like to thank FSA staff for all of the work detailed in this report and in particular to thank our former Chief Executive Emily Miles, who led the organization through the reporting period. I am also grateful to all of our partners in local authorities, the food industry and in the third sector, who are working to make sure people have food they can trust.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'K. Pettifer'.

Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive

Chair's Foreword



On behalf of the FSA Board, I would like to thank everyone in the Executive who has contributed to this latest annual report and accounts – not just in the preparation of the report, but in all the work that goes on throughout the year. The report highlights the extensive range of activities the FSA carries out to ensure food is safe and what it says it is and shows how the FSA is working to deliver its statutory obligations to protect consumers. It also reflects the FSA's ambitions to support the development of a system that offers food that is healthier and more sustainable which we know are important issues for many consumers.

There are three lines of defence in the food system that keep the public protected: food businesses; local authorities; and the FSA. Businesses are responsible for ensuring that their food is safe and authentic. They have the knowledge, controls, and obligation to ensure the food they are selling can be trusted. Local authorities enforce food standards and make sure that businesses are doing the right thing. The FSA provides a backstop for these protections. As the national regulator for food, the FSA works with local authorities and the industry to protect consumers.

The FSA Board monitors the FSA's performance throughout the year, to make sure it is playing its part in upholding standards and that the regulatory framework is effective and proportionate. I am pleased that the findings captured in this report show that the FSA is delivering on its core mission of food you can trust, and also working to keep pace with the challenges of an evolving food system. New technologies and business models mean the FSA needs to adapt the way it regulates, and it is good to see that the regulatory reform programme is progressing, though more remains to be done.

We cannot know exactly what is to come, but we can be fairly sure that global events will continue to impact on the food system. The Board is confident that the FSA is well positioned to maintain the high food standards we all value and to continue to protect public health.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Jebb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Susan Jebb
Chair

Our organisation

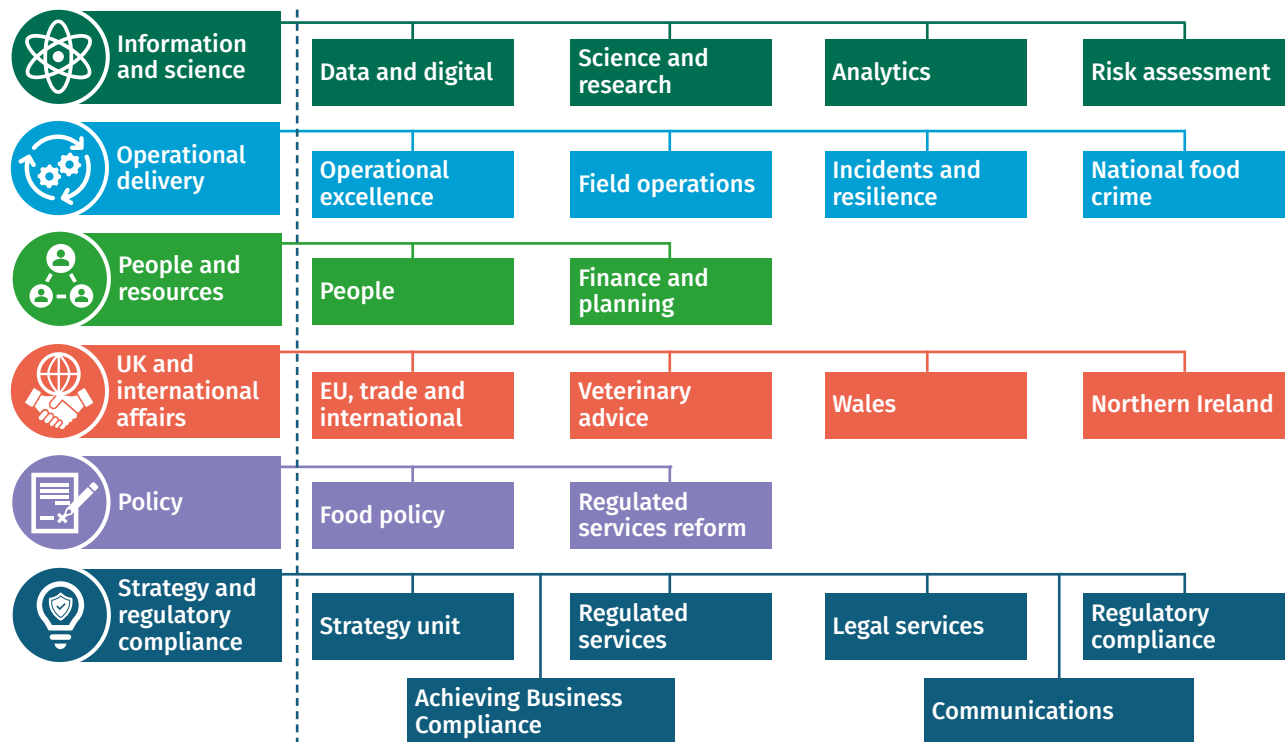
The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was established in 2000, following several high-profile outbreaks of foodborne disease. Set up as an independent government department, the FSA’s statutory objective is to protect public health and consumers’ wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our work, and that of Food Standards Scotland (FSS), also supports the UK economy by reducing the economic burden of foodborne disease and ensuring UK food has a strong reputation for safety and authenticity in the UK and abroad.

Our purpose

The FSA is a non-ministerial government department. Our objectives, powers and duties are set out in legislation, primarily the [Food Standards Act 1999](#). Our main statutory objective is to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food (including risks caused by the way in which it is produced or supplied) and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. Where we refer to ‘food’ in our strategy, we also include this wider role in the way food is produced or supplied, for example, animal feed and animal welfare.

How are we organised?

Most of food policy making is devolved, so we maintain strong working relationships with the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive but we act independently of ministers and are governed by an independent board. We work closely with Food Standards Scotland (FSS), an independent public body with responsibility for food policy and implementation in Scotland. An organisational chart is provided below:



For further information on the FSA’s organisation, please see a more detailed breakdown in the ‘**Governance statement**’ section.

Our strategy



The [FSA's strategy 2022-2027](#), outlines the outcomes that we want to achieve and how we plan to get there.

Our Mission

Food you can trust

This mission has remained constant since our previous strategy, published in 2015. However, the food system is evolving and our strategy to deliver this mission needs to reflect and anticipate change. The FSA has greater responsibilities now the UK is outside of the European Union. New technologies and business models, and changing consumer behaviours, means the FSA needs to think differently about how we deliver our mission. We also need to take account of growing public concern about health, sustainability and affordability.

Our Vision

Our vision is split into three parts:

Food is safe



Food is vital to everyone, every day. We all have the right to expect the food we eat will not make us ill. To deliver this, we prioritise keeping the level of foodborne disease low. We do this in many ways to set standards to help industry produce safe food; through our direct inspection work in the meat, dairy and wine industries; our surveillance and preventative programmes; and our work alongside local authorities to deliver food business inspections.

Food is what it says it is



Consumers should be confident that food is what it says it is. That is why we will ensure food is authentic and properly described. Furthermore, for consumers with food hypersensitivities, accurate labelling has a big impact on health.

Food is healthier and more sustainable



Health and sustainability are growing priorities for the UK Government, Welsh Government and NI Executive, and for the consumers whose interests we protect. To meet these ambitions, the food system needs to contribute. We need to play our part in supporting government partners and others in the wider food system to make it easier for consumers to access a healthier and more sustainable diet.

Roles and Ambitions

Strategic roles

We have a range of statutory powers and duties, and carry out different roles in the food system:



The FSA as a 'regulator'

Our statutory responsibilities as a regulator focus on making sure that food is safe and is what it says it is within the meat, dairy and wine sectors. We also monitor and enforce compliance with animal welfare rules in slaughterhouses on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in England and the Welsh Government in Wales. In Northern Ireland, this work is carried out for the FSA by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).



The FSA as a 'policy maker'

The FSA has a statutory function to develop policies that relate to the areas **set out in the diagram below**. In other policy areas, we still offer advice or input to policymakers where we have relevant evidence or skills, but other departments "own" the policy and advise their ministers on it. Our focus is primarily on our core role of food that is safe and is what it says it is, and our nutrition remit in Northern Ireland.

Areas of FSA policy responsibility

Across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland:

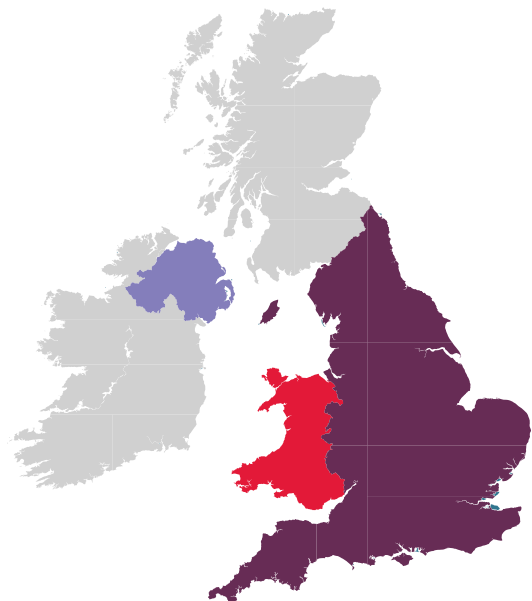
- Food and feed safety
- This includes food hypersensitivity

In Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Compositional standards and labelling*

In Northern Ireland only:

- Nutritional standards and labelling
- Dietary health and surveillance



*In England, the FSA implement and enforce rules but does not lead policy development.

The FSA as an 'evidence generator'

One of the main statutory functions of the FSA is to act as a generator of evidence and analysis on the areas within our remit (set out in section 8 of the Food Standards Act 1999). We obtain, review, and publish information and understand risks to develop our evidence base and gather intelligence to inform our approach across other areas of our work. Most of our work as an evidence generator will concern food safety and authenticity. However, we also grow our existing evidence base on healthier and more sustainable food.

The FSA as a 'watchdog'

The FSA can look across the food system and monitor developments or progress toward actions that support public health, or the other interests of consumers in relation to food. We use our powers to publish advice and information and seek to use this watchdog role to speak out publicly on areas of consumer interest to encourage high food standards in the UK.

The FSA as a 'convenor and collaborator'

The FSA is just one of the actors in the food system. To deliver food you can trust, we need to work with other parts of government, including the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, FSS and local authorities, our delivery partners, industry and consumer associations.

The FSA's enabling functions

To facilitate the work delivered within our roles, the FSA has a variety of supporting functions. These include our legal, communications, finance, Data and Digital, and HR functions. Together these are referred to as the 'enabler' role.

Ambitions – our priority outcomes for financial years 2023 to 2026

In 2023, the FSA published our [3-year corporate plan](#), which defined how we will turn the ambitions set out in the strategy into actionable objectives and deliverables. The plan begins by stating our ambition for our mission and each part of the vision and how we will monitor progress. In the next three years we want to:



Maintain the current high levels of **trust and confidence** in the food system and FSA.



Maintain food standards, so that **food is safe and what it says it is**, and consumers can continue to have confidence in their food.



Grow our contribution to and influence on food that is **healthier and more sustainable**, building on the work we have started since we published our strategy.

To monitor whether our mission and vision are being delivered we have identified progress indicators which provide an overview of whether the food system is continuing to deliver food you can trust or if there are areas needing more attention. Progress against these indicators can be seen in the **‘Progress against our ambitions’** section below.

Progress against our ambitions (priority outcomes)

We monitor progress against the strategy using the indicators below. Progress indicators must be interpreted carefully in their context, to give an accurate picture of delivery of our strategy. Many factors can cause change in the food system and the FSA does not have direct influence on all of them. The FSA produced an [annual update](#) against these indicators to the Board in June 2024 which provided them the first annual update against these baseline figures.

Further detail on performance data and explanation of trends can be seen in the ‘Performance analysis’ section.

Ambition 1: Maintaining food you can trust



Trust and confidence in the FSA and food system – Food & You 2 consumer survey, published April 2024 (difference between previous survey published July 2023)

83%
confident



That information on food labels is accurate. (-4% points)



88%
confident

The food they buy is safe to eat. (-5% points)

79%
confident



The FSA can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks. (-3% points)



69%
confident

Trust the FSA to ensure food is safe and what it says it is, of those with some knowledge of the FSA. (-9% points)

Ambition 2: Maintaining food that is safe and is what it says it is



Foodborne disease – UK laboratory confirmed cases per 100,000 population of the four major gastrointestinal pathogens in 2023

Campylobacter

105.1

(+6.5 from 2022)

Salmonella

14.6

(+1.3 from 2022)

Shiga toxin producing E.coli O157

1.1

(-0.7 from 2022)

Listeria monocytogenes

0.3

(No change from 2022)

Food crime

79

Food crime disruptions

(-10 from 2022/23 but above our target of 55 for 2023/24)

Business compliance

96.9%

Of food businesses with a **Food Hygiene rating** of 3 or better. (+/-0% from March 2023)

98.5%

Approved meat establishments rated 'good' or 'generally satisfactory'. (-0.2% points from 2022/23)

82.8%

Registered dairy farms

Inspected during 2023/24 rated 'good' or 'generally satisfactory' (England and Wales). (-2.8% points from 2022/23).

1,837

Incidents

Of food, feed and environmental contamination investigated (England, Wales and NI). (-10% from 2022/23).

13%

Of total incidents investigated were allergen incidents. (-2.4% from 2022/23)

Ambition 3: Contributing to food that is healthier and more sustainable



Nutrition Northern Ireland - Making Food Better Consumer Tracker (previously known as the Eating Well Choosing Better survey)



25%
female



15%
male

Awareness

of recommended daily calorie intake. (-3% points from 2022 (male and female))



79%

Understand

what traffic light labels are for. (-6% points from 2022)



65%

Use traffic light labels always or most times to choose foods with healthier traffic light colours. (+3% points from 2022)

Nutrition Northern Ireland

15,301



MenuCal users

(+3,177 from 2022/23)

3,177



Logins on MenuCal

(-1,085 from 2022/23)

10,129



New recipes inputted

(-8,080 from 2022/23)

Progress against our strategic objectives

We have set nine strategic objectives, each attached to a strategic role, providing a framework for more detailed activities in each financial year turning our mission and vision into concrete action. Progress is found below with further detail in the performance analysis section.

Status key: **R** Not delivered **A** Delivered in part (some deliverables not met)
G Delivered

Regulator

1 Deliver our regulatory responsibilities to enable feed and food businesses to comply with the rules so that food is safe and what it says it is. **G**

2 Reform the feed and food safety regulatory framework to deliver more proportionate and risk-based assurance, now and in the future. **A**

Policy Maker

3 Make robust recommendations and support decision makers to take informed decisions on rules relating to food, based on evidence and independent assessment. **A**

4 Create a proportionate, effective, efficient and future focused approach to regulation through the risk analysis process and regulated products service, that protects consumers and removes barriers to innovation. **G**

Evidence Generator

5 Ensure our decisions, and those of others (consumers, businesses and policy makers) are informed by science and evidence. **G**

6 Build evidence, including through science and research so we can anticipate opportunities and risks across the UK food system. **G**

Watchdog

7 Speak publicly about areas of consumer interest to support UK food standards. **G**

Convenor and Collaborator

8 Work in partnerships across the food system to address issues in the food system affecting consumers and businesses. **G**

Enabler

9 Provide the people, resources and processes needed to deliver the FSA's corporate objectives and priorities. **G**

Summary of our principal risks

The FSA have identified nine principal risks which pose the greatest threat to successfully achieving our objectives, summarised below:



Food risks harming consumers



Four-country working



Major food/feed incident



Local and Port Authority support



Meat Official Controls delivery



Utilising resources to support staff



Deliver required duties with allocated resources



Maintain cross-government and international relationships



Stakeholder trust

During 2023/24, we made progress in mitigating and managing these principal risks by introducing our veterinary resourcing programme to maintain and secure Official Veterinarian resources to deliver Official Controls in abattoirs in England and Wales from 2025. The Board agreed a set of principles to guide our reforms to our regulated products service to create a more efficient regulatory system which will benefit consumers by enhancing choice of safe food. We created a risk crisis management programme to strengthen our resilience and emergency preparedness. Within our Borders and Trade Operating Model we carried out scenario planning to better understand the impact of increased demand prior to the implementation of the new border checks. Through the Achieving Business Compliance programme we also tested new models for future regulation. We set up a project to help address Local Authority resourcing issues with our research outlining multiple and complex contributing factors to a shortage of qualified and competent officers to deliver official food and feed controls and broader regulatory services. These programmes and activities serve to improve our ability to respond to incidents and improve consumer safety. To support our people, we delivered phase one actions from our [people plan](#) with a focus on activities that support colleagues to deliver our priorities including line management and prioritisation skills and reward and culture.

Emerging risks

We operate in a dynamic environment and have identified the following emerging risks that may affect future performance:



Governmental



Global and economic



Non-compliance



Climate and environmental



Growth in novel foods

For further detail on the activity we have undertaken to manage our risks and our emerging risks, see the '**Principal risks and uncertainties**' section.

For further detail about our risk management approach, see the '**Governance statement**' section.

Future plans for 2024/25

The work the FSA completed in 2023/24, whilst impactful, also builds towards delivery of our mission in the future. Some of the work the FSA identified in the three-year corporate plan for 2024/25 is:

Regulator – Deliver regulatory responsibility via Local Authorities, Official Controls (directly except in Northern Ireland), Incidents and food crime activity. Improve accessibility of the manual for Official Controls.

Ensure the new food standards and revised hygiene delivery models for Local Authorities are in place and working well. Support the full implementation of the Food Law Code of Practice and support government to implement controls for the Border Target Operating Model for import controls.

Maintain an effective and efficient risk analysis process and regulated products service for market authorisations, supporting decision makers across all UK countries.

Policy Maker – Deliver policy work, with a focus on supporting Free Trade Agreements; delivering required amendments to the Windsor Framework and fulfil 3 and 4 country working obligations.

Targeted reform to food and feed legislation using powers in Retained EU Law (REUL) Act. Deliver regulations required for Precision Breeding and explore further targeted reforms to the regulated products regime.

Improve the provision of allergy information in the out-of-home sector, and to ensure precautionary allergen labelling is communicated more clearly and consistently through a range of activities.

Evidence Generator – Improving evidence to better understand and control foodborne illness: with the focus on antimicrobial resistance.

Transforming our science capabilities to support regulatory reforms: focusing on analysis in support of core and change priorities.

Sustaining and building our national surveillance and science capabilities including the future labs plan, PATH-SAFE and UK Research and Innovation collaboration.

Consumer interests with the focus on consumer attitudes to novel foods/regulated products, imported food standards, interventions around healthy sustainable diet and building the evidence base around ultra processed foods.

Watchdog – Support trade negotiations by publishing advice in line with the Department for Business and Trade deadlines.

Publish the third annual report on food standards.

Convenor and Collaborator – Work with wider UK governments to ensure the delivery of key government priorities.

Influence Codex Alimentarius food safety standards development by leading five committees.

Enabler – Progress the FSA's People plan into its second-year objectives. Continue transition to realise Estates strategy defined in 2023/24.

Performance analysis

This section provides a detailed view of the FSA's performance, which includes progress against achieving our objectives during 2023/24, principal risks, enforcement, prosecutions, complaints, financial performance and sustainability reporting.

All graphs and data in the performance report represent the FSA's whole area of responsibility, using a consolidated approach, unless specified otherwise.

Regulator

In our role as a Regulator, the FSA aimed to:



Objective 1

Deliver our regulatory responsibilities to enable feed and food businesses to comply with the rules so that food is safe and what it says it is.

Objective 2

Reform the feed and food safety regulatory framework to deliver more proportionate and risk-based assurance, now and in the future.

Regulator

(Objective 1): Deliver our regulatory responsibilities to enable feed and food businesses to comply with the rules so that food is safe and what it says it is.

Introduction

We have direct responsibility for inspecting, auditing and assuring businesses in England and Wales producing meat, wine and dairy. We tackle serious food supply chain fraud and criminality in England, Wales and NI and operate a 24/7 incidents response unit which responds to food and/or feed-related and environmental contamination incidents.

Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible for delivering Official Controls, including inspections, audits, surveillance, and sampling in most food and feed establishments (In Northern Ireland (NI), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) are responsible for feed). For food, these controls relate to food hygiene (microbiological quality and contamination of food by microorganisms or foreign matter) and food standards (composition, chemical contamination, adulteration and food labelling).

We implement a rigorous risk analysis process to provide independent food safety advice and risk management recommendations to consumers, health ministers and businesses, used to consider applications for approval of regulated food/feed products for UK market.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Deliver responsibilities to assure that feed, food and importing businesses are compliant with the rules.
- B. Deliver Official Controls in meat, dairy and wine businesses (including exporters).
- C. Deliver an efficient and effective response to food and feed incidents.
- D. Deliver an efficient and effective response to food crime.
- E. Maintain an effective and efficient risk analysis process and regulated products service for market authorisations.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Local authority delivery

We work with all 318 LAs in England, 22 in Wales, 11 in NI and with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, who deliver feed Official Controls in NI. 89 LAs perform port health controls at points of entry, with four port health authorities.

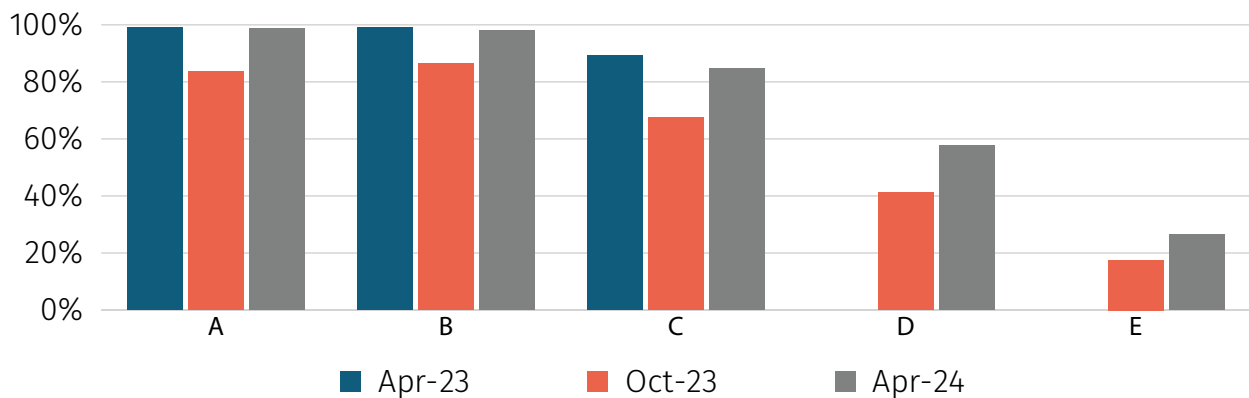
LA performance monitoring

We monitor enforcement authorities' performance, including setting standards. We gather performance data biannually from LAs, using this and other sources to monitor performance. When we have concerns about performance, we use a graduated and proportionate approach, engaging with LAs and seeking action plans to rectify performance. We employ an escalation process to engage LA senior leaders where required. LAs tell us they appreciate FSA support, and some food teams have bid successfully for more resources following our input. There have been six escalations in 2023/24, three of which were de-escalated once assurance was received.

Are required interventions at all risk establishments taking place?

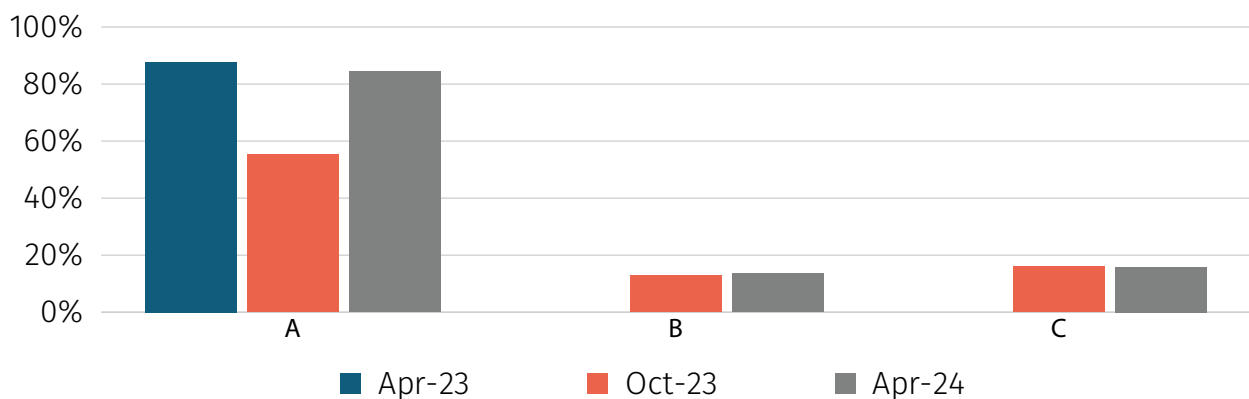
Since 1 April 2023, when the COVID-19 Recovery Plan came to an end, we have asked LAs to realign with the Food Law Code of Practice (FLCoP) for official food controls delivery. LAs were required to submit biannual data returns (October for quarters one and two and April for quarters three and four) to monitor delivery against these expectations. The data below compares the numbers of interventions carried out across all risk categories. Further detail on risk categories A-E for food hygiene are explained in Annex 1 and section 4.4.1 of the [FLCoP England](#) and the equivalent codes for Wales and NI. For food standards, risk categories A-C are explained in the [FLCoP Wales](#) (Annex 2 and section 4.4.2) relevant in all three countries.

Fig. 1: % of due food hygiene interventions achieved (England, Wales and NI)



April 2024 data indicates an improvement in interventions carried out in establishments due for all categories compared with October 2023 data. Compared with 2022/23 data, this indicates LAs continue to deliver risk-based interventions and are progressing with the increasing backlogs at low-risk establishments. It will take LAs time to get back on track to carry out all interventions in accordance with the FLCoP, which causes us concern.

Fig. 2: % of due food standards interventions achieved (England, Wales and NI)

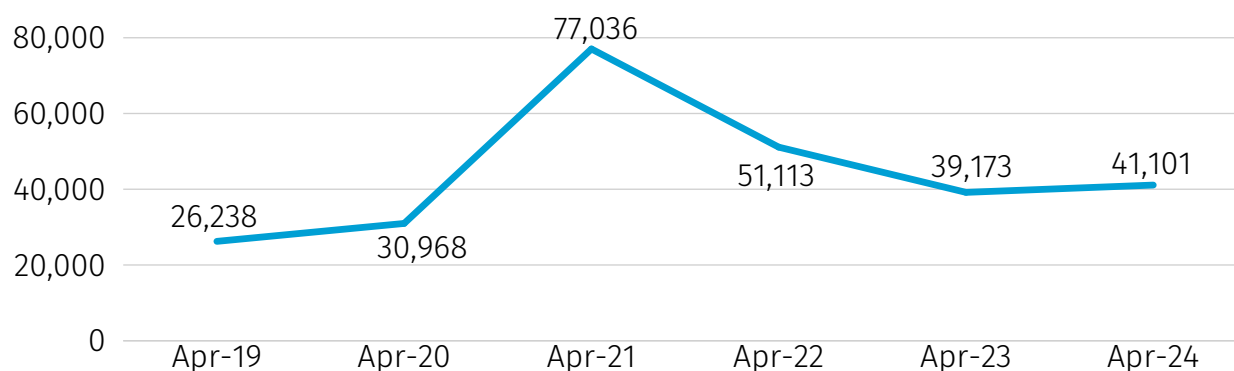


April 2024 data indicated significant improvement in interventions carried out for the highest risk category A establishments compared to October 2023 data. Outstanding interventions at higher risk establishments dropped from 548 at 31 March 2023 to 299 at 31 March 2024. Interventions in lower-risk categories remain low. LAs in England and District Councils in Northern Ireland are due to move to the new model for delivery of food standards controls in 2024/25. The revised FLCoP issued to LAs in June 2023, included the transitional arrangements for LAs moving to the new model.

Are LAs managing unrated businesses?

Backlogs of food hygiene inspections at new business registrations (unrated businesses) rose during the COVID-19 pandemic around April 2021, declined steadily by April 2023 and have increased slightly in April 2024 as LAs were expected to deal with all interventions in line with FLCoP requirements. This remains a big challenge for LAs. Volume of new business registrations (food hygiene) has continued to increase with 90,613 reported during 2023/24 compared to 83,594 from the annual data reported in April 2023.

Fig. 3: Unrated businesses reported at end of year (food hygiene in England, Wales and NI)



What resources do LAs have in place to deliver controls?

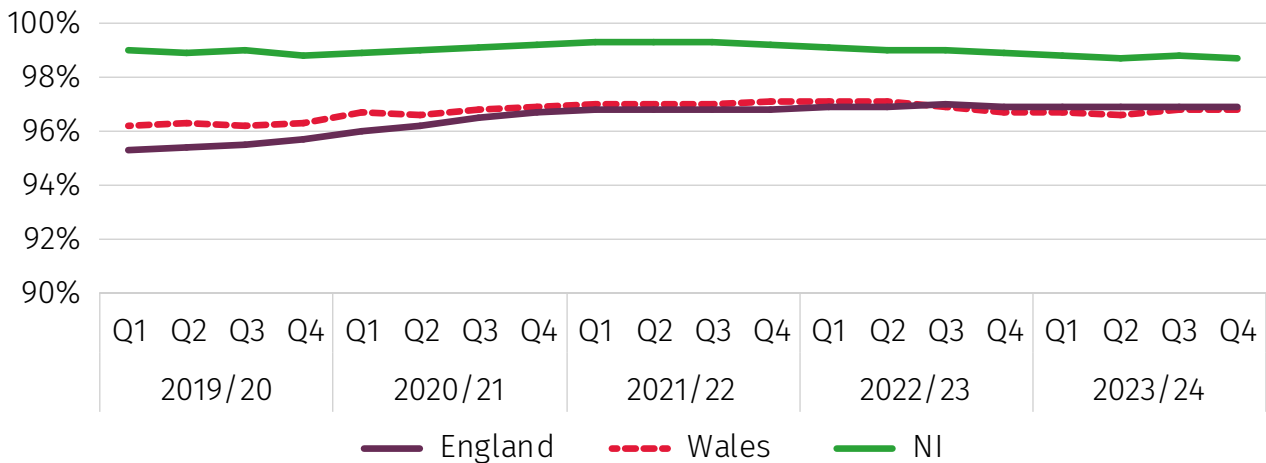
Although resources appear to have returned to pre-pandemic levels, many LAs reported challenges around recruitment and retention. The inclusion of trainees in the reported FTEs in 2023/24 may be masking reductions in the numbers of experienced, competent staff.

A key challenge is the shortage of new officers studying to become food/feed officers. We worked with the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers and Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) to endorse a new Level 6 Trading Standards Practitioner Apprenticeship which proved popular. 96 students signed up and 87 of those specialised in food/feed with CTSI highlighting a further 23 studying towards CTSI food standards professional qualifications. Our CEO wrote to LA Chief Officers to remind them of their statutory obligations which was well received and drove resourcing conversations in LAs. We commenced a project to develop guidance to assist LAs in calculating resource requirements to deliver food services. Where LAs were contacted about their performance, they were asked when they anticipated realigning with the FLCoP, encouraging LAs to engage their senior management and elected members if more resources were needed.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

FHRS is operated in partnership with LAs across England, Wales, and NI, providing clear information about food business' hygiene standards at the time of LA inspections. Business compliance remains high and has shown no signs of significant change during 2023/24.

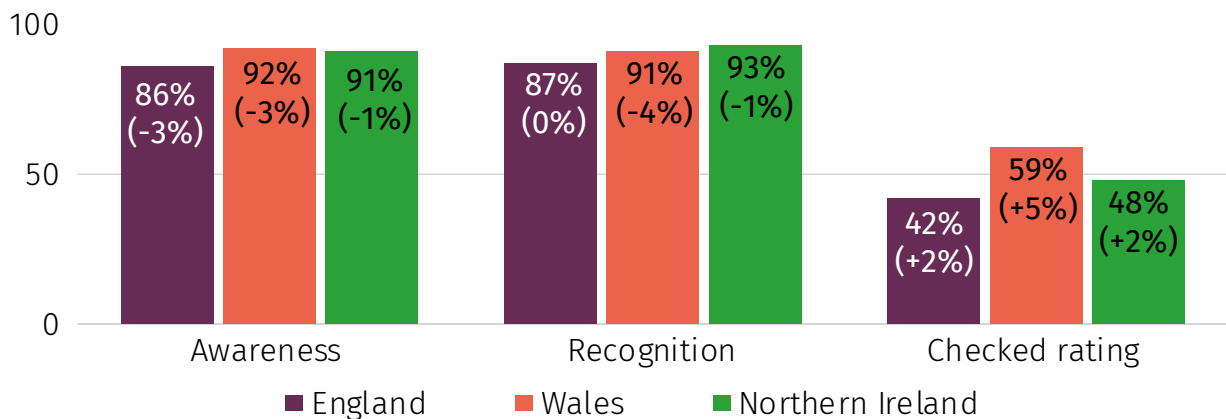
Fig. 4: % Food businesses with a food hygiene rating achieving rating of 3 or better



Consumer awareness, recognition and use of FHRs

Food businesses covered by the scheme are provided with stickers showing their rating. Those in Wales and NI are required by law to display these, while those in England are encouraged to do so. It is our ambition to introduce a statutory scheme to require mandatory display in England both at premises and online. However, this would require new primary legislation and cross-Government support and is dependent on Parliamentary timetabling. In 2023/24, we concluded that there was no realistic prospect of introducing this legislation within the Parliamentary timetable ahead of the General Election.

Fig. 5: Consumer awareness, recognition, and use of FHRs (% point difference from the last survey published August 2022)



Findings from Food and You 2 consumer survey, published July 2023, indicated the following from respondents in the 12 months prior to completing the survey (% points difference from survey published August 2022):

86%

Heard of the FHRs
(-3% points)

87%

Recognised the FHRs sticker
(-1% point)

43%

Checked a food business' hygiene rating
(+2% points)

We work with LA partners and industry to maintain and improve the impact and benefits of FHRS. Our data and research indicate FHRS is still well recognised by consumers. Display of FHRS stickers indicated an upward trend in England and a return to pre-pandemic rates in NI and Wales. In Wales, the three-year report to review the implementation and operation of FHRS and the appeals system was laid at the Senedd 28 February 2024 in [Cymraeg](#) and [English](#). This demonstrated the scheme continues to have a positive impact.

LA audits

The FSA is responsible for auditing Official Controls delivery by competent authorities, including LAs, FSA operational delivery and the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in NI. This included audits of approved establishments, LA service planning and prioritisation, LA delivery arrangements, and control activities in relation Pre-Packed for Direct Sale to consumers. Audits of micro sampling criteria, operational enforcement and a follow up audit on postmortem inspection were delivered. Although some positive findings emerged, they also revealed some issues for the FSA, and appropriate management action plans have been developed. In NI, two audits of DAERA were delivered on raw drinking milk and meat establishment controls, and recommendations for minor improvement were made.

LA engagement

We engaged with all LA regional food liaison groups in England with FSA attendance at over 130 meetings to promote FSA policies and priorities, obtain immediate feedback to support policy development, gain insight into current challenges and influence the local uptake of FSA priorities. We facilitate and attend the national LA Food Hygiene Focus Group and Food Standards and Information Focus Group – independent groups attended by regional representatives from LAs, professional bodies, academia and a business/trade representative.

We provided six live online webinars, with around 1,000 LAs attending, updating on key priorities and topics with an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback on policy proposals. The FSA's Smarter Communications platform issued almost 700 letters to LAs across the three nations. These have communicated allergy alerts/recalls, consultations, policy, legislation, and guidance updates.

In Wales, the FSA engages with LAs through Directors of Public Protection Wales and attend meetings of the Food Safety Expert Panel, The Food Standards Information and Labelling Group and The Safe, Sustainable, Authentic Food Wales Group. In NI, the FSA engages with district councils via the NI Food Hygiene Managers Group and its four subgroups. In addition, across England, Wales and NI, a package of LA training has been delivered to address capability needs identified as priorities for officers in those nations.

Local Authority Intelligence

Intelligence is key for the new food standards delivery model for England and NI. We have taken a coordinated approach to use intelligence agency-wide and worked with LAs and other government departments to address threats to food standards identified through intelligence. Key outputs included public messaging in respect of counterfeit chocolate and vegan products. A multi-agency task and finish group was established to explore options to mitigate the risks posed by “grey market imports” (goods supplied

and distributed in the UK but not intended for UK supply by manufacturers or trademark holders). We continue to administer the Food Standards Directed Sampling Programme providing LA grant funding to conduct intelligence-led Official Control sampling to address food standards risks. Total spend in 2023/24 reduced by 8% from 2022/23, but despite resource pressures, 64% more LAs participated (23 vs 14) and 23% more samples were procured (323 vs 263). Unsatisfactory sample results increased from 51% to 68%, suggesting improved targeting of LA resources to sampling in areas of concern.

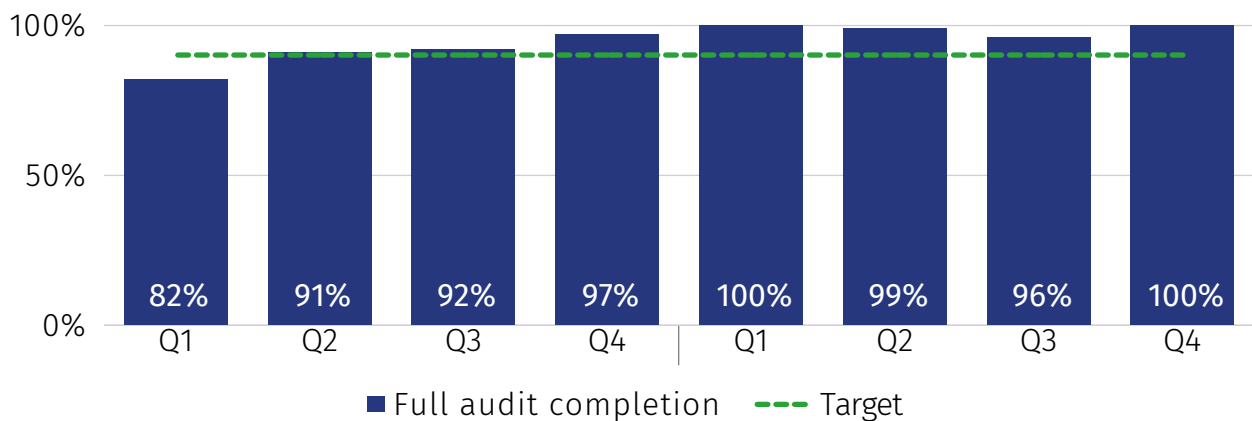
B Official controls in meat, dairy and wine businesses

The FSA directly delivers Official Controls in abattoirs and game handling establishments, auditing and inspecting meat cutting plants, wine producers and on-farm dairy establishments to ensure regulations are met. In NI, DAERA deliver food safety Official Controls in approved fresh meat establishments (abattoirs and cutting plants) and in relation to dairy, egg and primary production hygiene on behalf of the FSA. The FSA and LAs deliver shellfish controls jointly. Effective regulation of these areas remains a top priority and ensured appropriate assurance in meat, dairy and wine Official Controls delivery.

Meat food business operator (FBO) compliance

We carried out inspections of 923 million Porcine, Ovine, Bovine and Poultry animal throughput in slaughterhouses prior to meat entering the food chain. We completed 606 full audits and 276 partial (follow up) audits in FSA approved meat establishments in England and Wales, 25 full and 8 partial audits fewer than 2022/23 due to reduction of approved premises and an overall improvement in FBO compliance requiring lower audit frequency. We consistently achieved our 90% target for full audits each quarter, reaching 100% at the end of Q4 in England and Wales. In NI 100% of audits were achieved within target consistently across 2023/24.

Fig. 6: Full audit completion against quarterly targets England and Wales



Audit outcomes are rated as Good, Generally satisfactory, Improvement necessary (IN) and Urgent improvement necessary (UIN). Establishments with IN and UIN scores remained low, less than 2% of FSA approved sites in England and Wales, continuing the gradual downward trend since 2019. In NI, all premises were rated either Good or Generally satisfactory. Audit outcomes are used to assess FBO performance. The audit process takes a risk-based approach and prioritises resources to poorer performing establishments with higher risk.

Fig. 7: Meat FBO by compliance rating in the three nations (good and generally satisfactory)

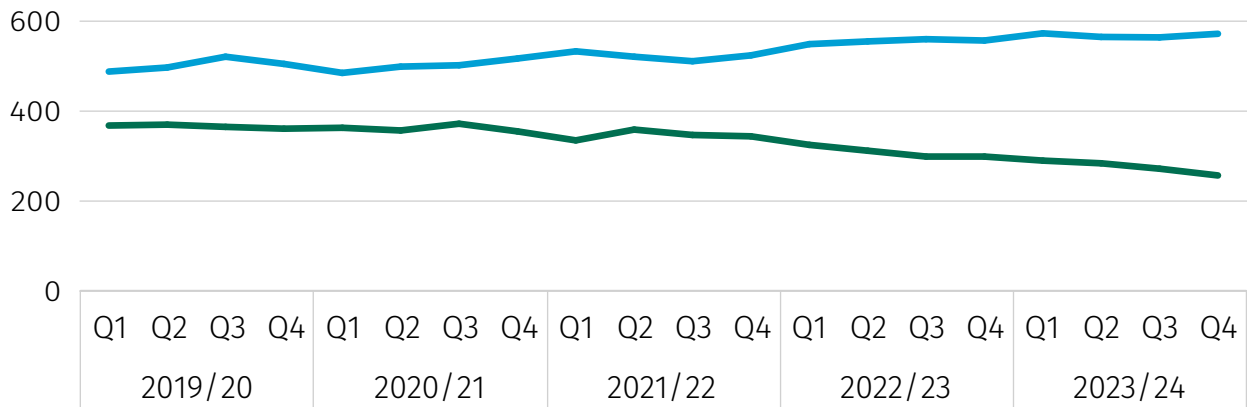
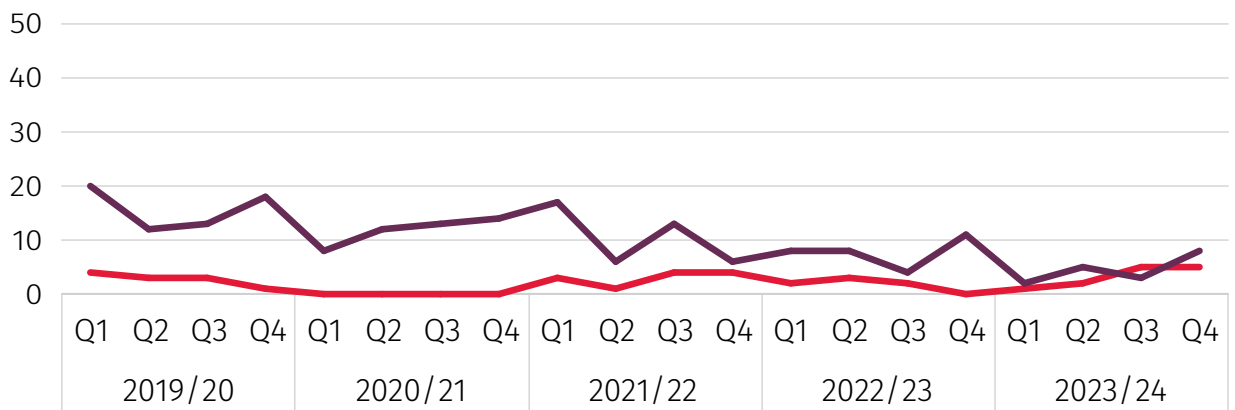


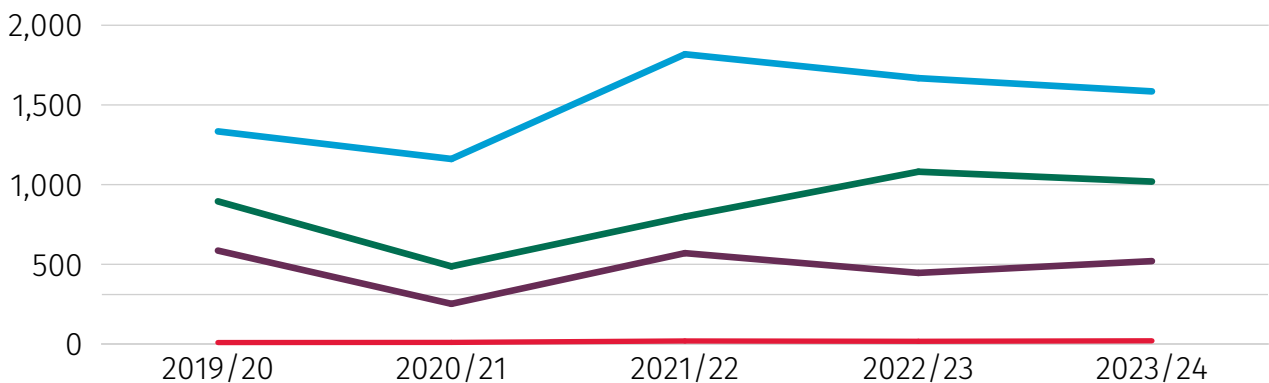
Fig. 8: Meat FBO by compliance rating in the three nations (improvement necessary and urgent improvement necessary)



Dairy inspection

Premises are inspected to ensure compliance with legal requirements for raw milk, and raw drinking milk production, whilst promoting best hygiene practices. In 2023/24, there was a 2.2% decrease in dairy farms in England and Wales compared to 2022/23 (7,763 vs 7,940). FSA carried out 98% of visits within targeted frequency continuing the trend from 2022/23.

Fig. 9: Total dairy inspections and outcomes for 2023/24 (good, generally satisfactory, improvement necessary and urgent improvement necessary)



Most dairy farms achieved the highest compliance ratings in 2023/24, with many falling into lower categories being managed back into compliance within a set timeframe. In most cases, formal enforcement action was not required to achieve compliance.

Wine

The FSA is responsible for the safety, traceability and authenticity of wine and UK wine sector products. In 2023/24 wine inspections were carried out in 451 vineyards and 364 wine traders using a risk-based matrix to deliver a targeted and cost-effective service. The FSA gave 1,326 pieces of advice and dealt with 168 infringements affecting 35,973 litres of wine, assuring businesses achieve compliance. The FSA is unable to compare previous year's data due to changes in reporting methodologies and collection technology.

Official Veterinarian (OV) resourcing

OVs working across the meat sector underpin the economy as key facilitators in the £10.9bn domestic meat industry and £2.1bn meat export trade. Domestic and international veterinary recruitment is increasingly competitive. Rising salaries in private practice and enhanced visa and language entry requirements for EU vets coming to the UK post-EU Exit are affecting recruitment into veterinary public health roles. Additionally, a low number of UK vet graduates are choosing veterinary public health careers, so we and our service delivery partner rely heavily on international OVs, critical in protecting public health, managing disease risks, maintaining welfare standards, and providing Official Controls at abattoirs, ports, and elsewhere along the agri-food chain. To mitigate the shortage of skilled resource, we established a new Veterinary Resourcing Programme to ensure OV resources to deliver Official Controls in abattoirs in England and Wales, whilst creating greater political visibility of the chronic UK vets shortage.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons approved an 18-month extension for the FSA to use their temporary registration scheme for OVs (TRNOV) until December 2024. This allows qualified vets from European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education accredited universities to practice under supervision whilst they undertake technical and English language training. In preparation for the scheme's closure, we and our service delivery partner, reduced use of the temporary registration scheme to 18% of OVs in March 2024 compared to 38% in March 2023. This is an area we continue to monitor closely.

To raise awareness of veterinary public health roles, the Veterinary Resourcing Programme successfully delivered an extra mural studies pilot to run on a biannual basis. The aim is for veterinary students to gain practical experience in a government veterinary role and the FSA week-long extra mural studies placement focuses on operational and office-based experiences, allowing students to see the diverse range of veterinary roles available at the FSA.

The current contract for delivery of Official Controls in abattoirs in England and Wales is due to end in March 2025. Work is underway to complete a retender exercise with new contracts in place from 2025. Following FSA's detailed reporting on the challenges faced by the veterinary profession, as outlined in the FSA/FSS [Our Food 2022 report](#), we submitted written and oral evidence to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs

Committee non-inquiry session on veterinary shortages in March 2024. We are committed to working with the new Government to review these recommendations. The Programme has made good progress in securing the OV pipeline to deliver Official Controls. However, [the announcement](#) by the Home Secretary in December 2023 on plans to cut net migration and increase the minimum salary threshold for overseas workers could impact our ability to attract overseas OVs and meat hygiene inspectors.

Improving the effectiveness of the delivery of Official Controls

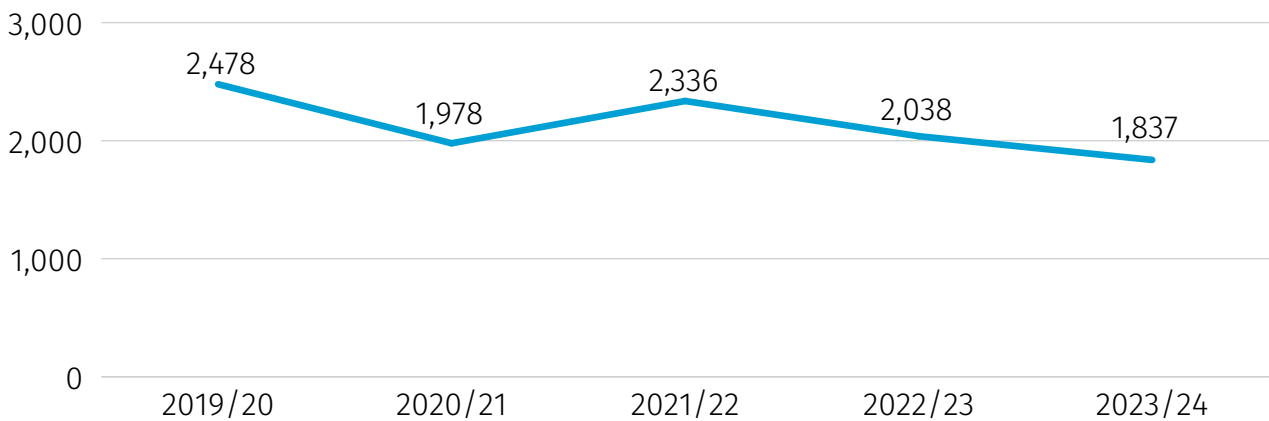
The FSA continued to improve Official Controls delivery. The Operational Modernisation Programme focused on this through the introduction of technology and digital capability, streamlining operational processes, and improving operational data. The programme has delivered the following milestones in 2023/24:

- **Improving accuracy of inspection data collection** – Initial discovery was undertaken to provide a flow of inspection data between FBO and FSA systems. This aimed to remove manual data input by meat hygiene inspectors following inspection activity and reduce errors associated with re-keying data. The discovery was successfully completed and next steps are underway to create a sustainable digital solution.
- **Completion of digital project phases, including FBO account access** – sharing establishment-specific data with FBOs leads to more responsive decision making, resulting in quicker remedial action with industry to improve relationships, compliance and food safety. We worked closely with industry to develop operational and technical data capture processes and build an FBO account solution. Development of the digital solution continues with plans to implement by the end of 2024/25.
- **Remote Technology** – Used by veterinary auditors since its launch in 2021. Current usage levels are creating additional auditor capacity, with 20% of partial audits done remotely. The wider application will expand the benefits already seen which will include reduced processing times, quicker evidence-based decision making, savings in relation to time and fuel costs associated with on-site visits and environmental savings benefits associated with reduced carbon footprint because of less frequent travel. It also supports the FSA strategic objective of being risk-based and proportionate in our regulatory activity, by reducing the burden on FBOs where possible.
- **Stakeholder engagement** and change management activity across Operations. Positive progress has been made in the project and stakeholder engagement, but overall pace and scope of modernisation activity has been constrained by limited resource and competing priorities such as digital and technology, meaning lower priority projects have been closed to enable a greater focus on workstreams with the greatest potential for benefits realisation.

C Food and feed incidents

The FSA receive notifications of food incidents from a range of sources, including LAs, industry, international surveillance activity and consumers. We engage in a range of incidents covering public health, safety, allergens, labelling and crime and national security.

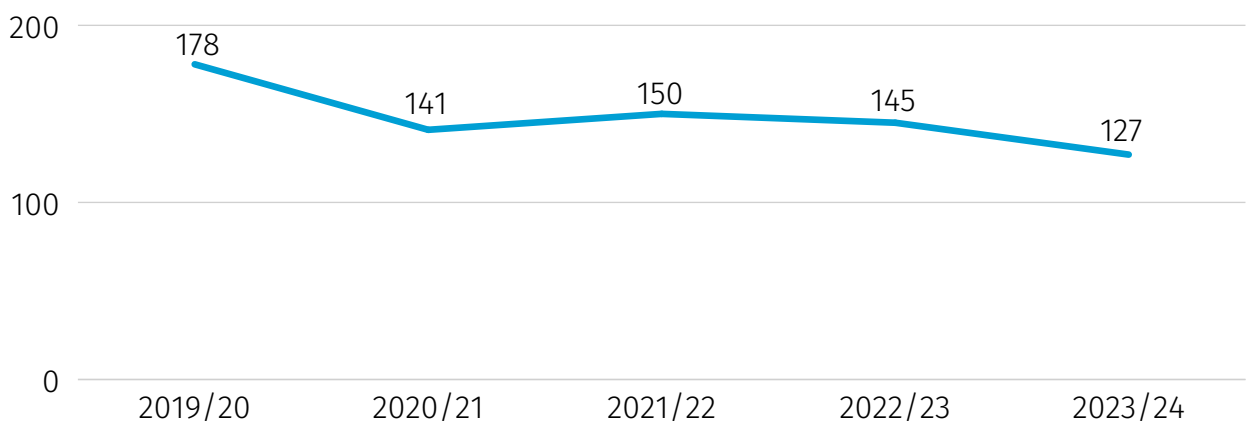
Fig. 10: Incident notifications received by the FSA to 31 March 2024



Total food, feed and environmental contamination incidents reduced by 10% compared to 2022/23 with 13% of total incidents relating to allergen incidents (-2.4% from 2022/23).

There were several significant outbreaks and complex incidents, including Salmonella linked to Polish poultry products ongoing since 2020, and has taken significant cross-departmental resource from FSA, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Defra and LAs. A cluster of shiga toxin-producing E.coli (STEC) O145 was identified in December 2023. The FSA supported a recall of the implicated products in December 2023 with updated product recall information notices issued in December 2023 and February 2024.

Fig. 11: Food alerts notifications issued by the FSA to 31 March 2024



Alerts published including 62 Allergy Alerts and 65 product recall information notices, reduced by 11% from 2022/23. Pathogenic microorganisms were the most common hazard type (25%), due to legislation requiring microbiological surveillance that led to small number of failures.

Improving our approach to preventing and managing incidents

To raise awareness of food safety issues and take preventative action to protect consumers, we host monthly Food Industry Liaison Groups where incidents and emerging risks are discussed with the main food and feed trade associations. Our prevention team, set up Post-EU exit to take proactive incident measures, continued the development of incident prevention functions through monitoring of food safety signals, stakeholder engagement and root cause analysis (RCA) to determine causes. Prevention activity included industry communications on listeria in enoki mushrooms from south-east Asia, salmonella in imported melons and publication through industry publication of RCA analysis relating to undeclared peanut in African spices.

In these cases industry provided information to the FSA to aid our understanding of products on the UK market and relayed FSA concerns to industry members to raise awareness and improve industry practices. Listeria in enoki mushrooms was the subject of an enforcement letter to LAs and consumer advice was provided on this potentially contaminated product which caused serious outbreaks in the US and Canada.

Stakeholder engagement involved engagement with food safety authorities from US, Turkey and Eire seeking cooperation on incident prevention matters over 250 RCAs received from businesses during 2023/24. An RCA working group was established with an independent ex-industry chair to improve the use of root cause information to prevent future incidents. RCA linked to undeclared peanut in African spices was shared with industry resulting in publication of a Grain and Free Trade Association news article with distribution to over 3,000 businesses in over 100 countries. We established prevention principles that will be used to align prevention strategies and identify joint prevention activities as part of a 2024/25 Operations business plan.

D Response to food crime by the National Food Crime Unit

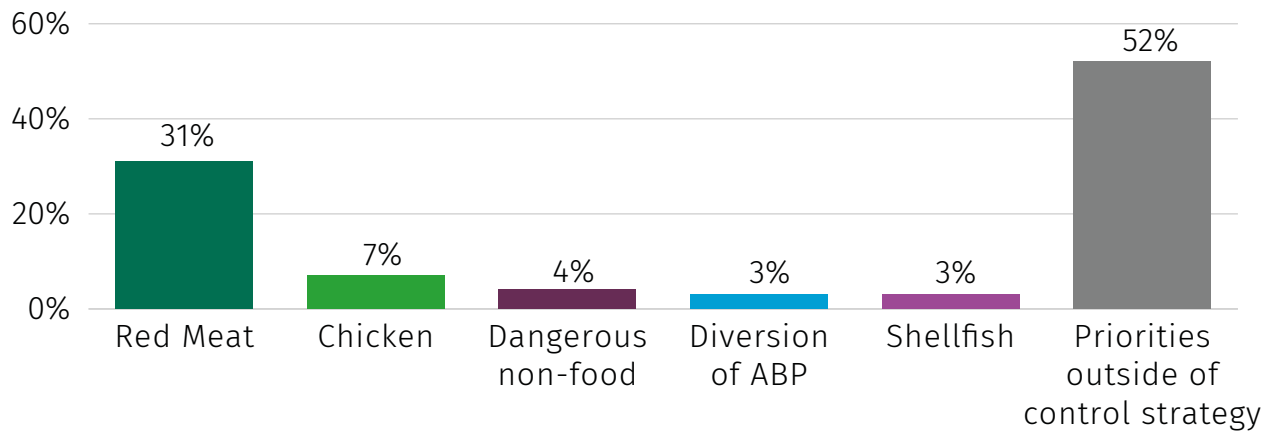
We identify, investigate, disrupt and prevent serious food fraud. Outlined below is the progress made in 2023/24 against three out of the four key performance questions, set by the FSA Board.

How comprehensive is our understanding of food crime?

To better understand food crime, we produced a new Food Crime Strategic Assessment in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland, outlining our current understanding of food crime threats which informs our [control strategy](#) priorities, with defined focus areas.

New intelligence that falls within our control strategy priorities is routinely monitored. In 2023/24, 48% of new intelligence recorded fell within at least one control strategy priority, 52% fell outside of those priorities (fig.12), below our benchmark of 50% or above. This was due to expansion of our intelligence recording thresholds in October 2023, to include a wider range of criminal and regulatory intelligence. This enhanced our ability to contribute more effectively to the FSA's wider intelligence picture and increased the volume of intelligence recorded by 13%.

Fig. 12: Food crime intelligence reports by control strategy priority 2023/24

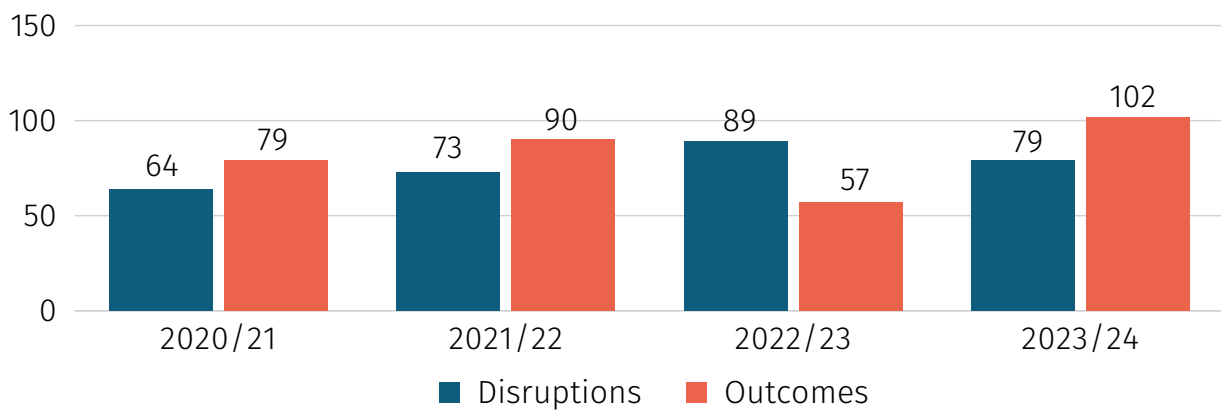


We set new targets for improving our strategic intelligence requirements (SIRs), which are identified intelligence gaps relating to our control strategy priorities. Once SIRs are developed, we undertake activities to fill these gaps. We achieved an overall improvement rating of **54%** for 37 identified SIRs, **+14% above our target**. This enhanced understanding across our control strategy priorities, improving the targeting of food crime interventions.

How effective is our response to food crime?

Disruptions and outcomes measure our impact on food crime. Disruptions are defined and validated by the National Crime Agency and recorded when FSA activities directly impact serious organised crime, such as successfully securing prosecutions against food criminals. Outcomes are recorded when activities fall short of the disruption criteria but impact a food crime threat before it has escalated into serious organised crime, such as the correction of regulatory infringements. We surpassed our targets of 55 disruptions and 50 outcomes, recording 79 disruptions and 102 outcomes during 2023/24. The fall in disruptions was tentatively assessed to be a consequence of our activity effectively targeting 2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP) supply over several years; fewer DNP sellers meant fewer disruption opportunities arose.

Fig. 13: Disruptions and outcomes achieved by financial year



Our activities contributed to the achievement, by the FSA or our partners, of four judicial outcomes in 2023/24, disrupting criminals' ability to conduct unlawful practices and deterring those considering criminal activity. These included:

- Prison sentences for three defendants who conspired to commit fraud and acquire criminal property relating to poultry, amounting to a loss of £318,347.
- Supporting an LA with a case resulting in fines totalling £36,643 for three defendants operating an illegal smokies business – food prepared by the illegal and unsanitary process of blowtorching the fleece from the unskinned carcass of a sheep.

We targeted criminals' financial assets through FSA accredited financial investigators:

- **Two confiscation orders:** requiring convicted defendants to pay, to the public purse, the amount they financially benefited from the convicted crime.
- **Three restraint orders:** prohibit a suspect from dealing with their assets, reducing the possibility of them dissipating them.
- **11 production orders:** obtaining material relating to a known person/business, e.g. bank statements, documents used to open accounts and banking correspondence.

We mapped two organised crime groups (OCGs) this year. This contributes to wider law enforcement community's ability to identify and dismantle OCGs.

How effective are we at working with partners?

55% of disruptions and outcomes were achieved through multi-agency working. We successfully coordinated unannounced regulatory visits by 35 LAs to 65 food retail premises across England, with 16 disruptions achieved via removal of illegal smoke meat.

We extended the scope with other partner agencies, strengthening the food system lines of defence e.g. supporting the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority in NI with intelligence and financial investigation capabilities, resulting in sentencing of an unlicensed gangmaster and a suspended prison sentence in March 2024. We are progressing a confiscation order targeting criminal profits of c.£250,000. 154 businesses accessed our 'Food Fraud Resilience Self-assessment' tool providing support and advice on food fraud (+33 from 2022/23).

Media coverage of an NFCU investigation in spring 2023 sparked renewed interest into how regulators and industry tackle food crime. We created a working group with industry partners to improve the provision and visibility of routes to report food crime, explore improved data sharing with third party assurance schemes and improve intelligence-based alerts. Activity resulted in a new freephone number for the NFCU's Food Crime Confidential hotline, which led to relevant calls more than doubling from 19 to 53 in the comparable 6-month period from the previous year.

Additional Powers for the NFCU

We made progress towards securing additional powers to enable food crime officers to conduct investigations more effectively and independently. The powers sought would enable our officers to interview suspects under caution, obtain warrants and seize

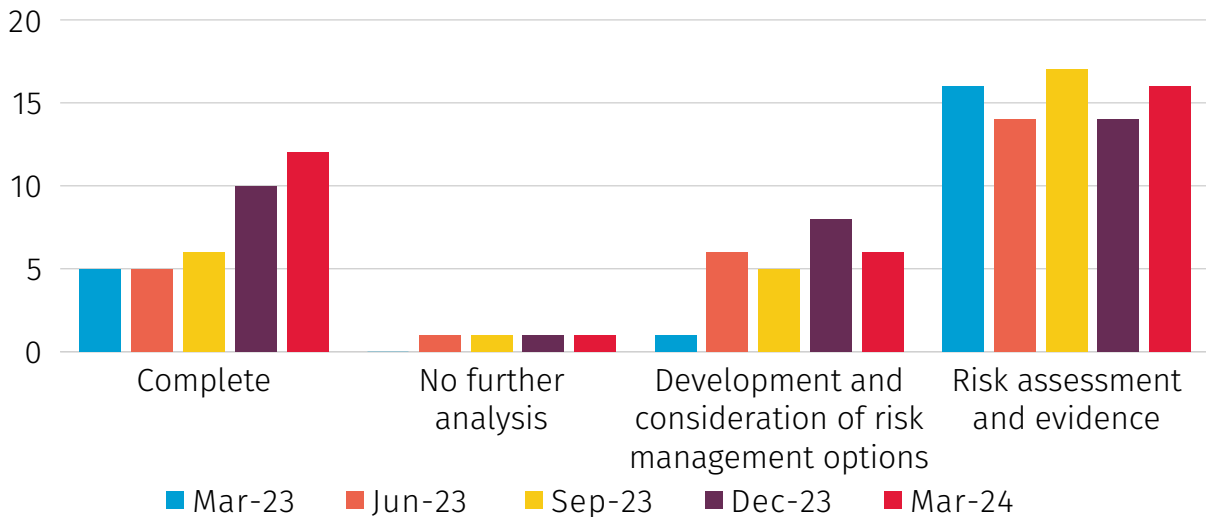
evidence. We are working towards laying the necessary statutory instruments before Parliament in early 2025, subject to Ministerial clearance. We continue to work with the Independent Office of Police Conduct to establish appropriate complaint handling regime, as well as pursuing inspection arrangements with His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

E Risk Analysis Process including Regulated Products Service

Risk Analysis Process

The joint FSA-FSS risk analysis process assesses, manages and communicates food and animal feed safety risks, ensuring high food and feed safety standards and consumer protection. Issues can be initiated via the regulated products service, other government departments or by the FSA and FSS directly. The cross-government assurance mechanisms on prioritisation, system workflow and risk management advice development supported progression and completion of risk analysis.

Fig. 14: Status of risk analysis issues added to the issues register (England, Wales and Scotland)



Our cross-government structures align three and four-nation working and contributed to effective partnerships between FSA, FSS and other key government departments. No formal dispute resolution was triggered on any individual risk analysis issue during 2023/24.

Established performance indicators support the delivery of our commitment to openness by providing stakeholders with information on risk analysis. Risk analysis issues that reach risk assessment were published on a public register in line with our openness policy. In 2023/24, 35 issues were recorded (+13 from 2022/23) as risk assessments were commissioned to inform risk management advice. 12 issues were complete (+7 from 2022/23). 1 issue no longer needed risk analysis. Since March 2023, there were 13 new additions to the register. This included:



Risk associated with **Bisphenol A (BPA)** in food.



Consideration of **titanium dioxide as a feed additive** alongside its ongoing assessment of the safety of titanium dioxide's use as a food additive.



Periodic **review of import controls** on certain high-risk food and feed products not of animal origin. We, alongside FSS, commenced and progressed through consultation the 2nd such review, and initiated assessment work on a 3rd review.

Progress of existing issues on the register includes:

- Launching a joint FSA/FSS call for data for **T-2 and HT-2 mycotoxins**.
- Evaluation of responses to calls for evidence by Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) surrounding the safety of **bamboo plastic** and **environmentally sourced 'ocean bound' recycled plastic** food contact materials.
- Publishing a risk assessment on the safety of **vitamin D intakes from infant formula and follow on milks** following a review in the context of existing advice.
- Progressed a review to consider whether any additional consumer risk exists because of the supply and consumption of less than fully chilled **Qurbani meat and offal** during Eid al-Adha. A follow up assessment and consumer survey during 2023, concluded the industry-led mitigations that were implemented in previous years could be applied in England and Wales during Eid al-Adha 2024.

Since March 2023, seven issues have progressed to completion. This included FSA initiating assessments and amending advice in relation to:

- The risk to vulnerable consumers associated with **listeria monocytogenes in blue cheese**, and **smoked fish** ensuring consumer guidance, provided by government and the NHS, is consistent and reflects the latest scientific understanding of risk.
- Supporting the development of wider government health policy by undertaking an assessment of the risk of allergic reaction from the **fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid**.
- An **oyster risk profile** commissioned by the UK Office for SPS Trade Assurance (in Defra) to identify and characterise the hazards associated with oysters from different global regions to ensure trade controls continue to protect UK consumers.

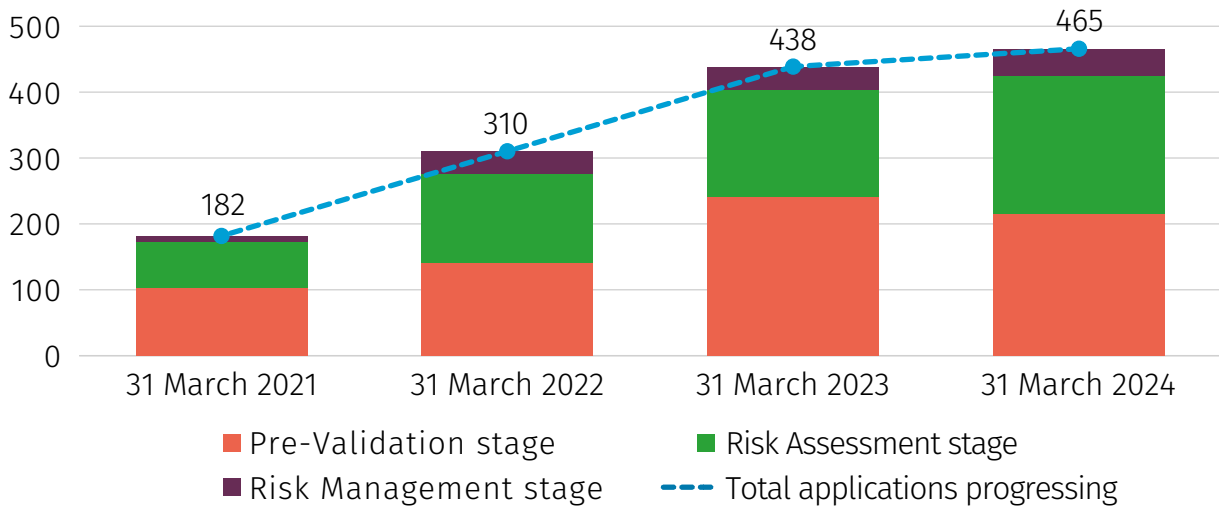
Regulated Products Service (RPS)

Regulated products e.g. flavourings and novel foods are food and feed products that require FSA authorisation to ensure they are safe to eat before being placed on the UK market. A complete list of product types required to go through the pre-market approval process is on our website. During 2023/24, we received 116 applications and, as of 31 March 2024, had 465 applications progressing through the RPS for market authorisations.

We launched our new Case Management System (CMS) on 20 June 2023 and closed the legacy application portal to new applicants. Our previous report anticipated a reduction in the number of incomplete applications received due to improved applicant guidance

and interface. Since the launch of the CMS, 80% of contacts have progressed to applications, a significant increase compared to 21% on the legacy application portal.

Fig. 15: End of year position for the RPS (England, Wales and Scotland)



All applications went through a public consultation process to ensure transparency and received a range of between 1 and 76 responses. A summary of those responses for each consultation is published on the FSA website. As of 31 March 2024, we have completed 63 applications since the service went live in January 2021 and established a programme of continuous improvement to support RPS delivery.

Delivery of the end-to-end service remains complex, and performance has been challenging. To address this, a Board sub-group was established to scrutinise the RPS performance. The sub-group made recommendations for the short and medium term, to be implemented in 2024/25, such as, the FSA should actively manage the application caseload so resources are focused on achieving the best outcomes in the interests of consumers and, at all stages of the process; firm deadlines must be set and adhered to when seeking information and input from stakeholders and applicants. The recommendations led to the formulation of an implementation plan with clear deliverables.

Recommendation to Ministers

In addition to the other risk analysis issues progressed to completion, we completed 29 regulated product applications in 2023/24. Of those, we made recommendations to Ministers on 27 applications, enabling informed decisions to be taken on their authorisation based on rules relating to food, evidence and independent assessment. The 29 completed applications included the following:



Case Study: Urgent authorisations for use of Cobalt compounds in feed additives

Context

We progressed several regulated product applications relating to cobalt compounds through the provisional (urgent) authorisation process provided for in animal feed regulations. The applications sought authorisation for certain cobalt compounds used as additives in animal feeds to remain on the GB market when existing authorisations were due to expire in July 2023. Cobalt is an essential trace element used to meet the nutritional demands for ruminants, horses, and other animal species. There could have been significant animal welfare concerns if these compounds had been removed from the GB market.

Process



Worked on a four-nation basis to consider applications



Worked with industry, FSA vets and the Animal and Plant Health Agency to collate relevant data and evaluate scientific evidence

This indicated there was a long history of safe use of these compounds, that an urgent authorisation was needed to maintain market supply of cobalt additives to satisfy the nutritional needs of animals and protect animal welfare.



Within a compressed timetable FSA and FSS undertook a public consultation on proposed (provisional) authorisations for the relevant compounds to continue to be used as additives in animal feed.

Result



Informed by science and evidence, and taking account of stakeholder views, FSA and FSS subsequently provided advice to ministers and brought forward relevant statutory instruments for England, Wales and Scotland. As a result, following relevant approvals and scrutiny, provisional (urgent) authorisations came into force in England, Scotland and Wales in July 2023.

Regulator

(Objective 2): To reform the feed and food safety regulatory framework to deliver more proportionate and risk-based assurance, now and in the future.

Introduction

The food system is dynamic, as such our approach to regulating the food system must evolve to keep pace with those changes. The FSA has undertaken this task through the 'Achieving Business Compliance' (ABC) programme. The programme has explored ways the FSA can regulate in a smarter way to ensure food is safe and is what it says it is.

The FSA also worked alongside other government agencies, coordinated by the Cabinet Office to deliver the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), which aims to modernise border controls for imports, developing and implementing a new, global, risk-based approach, which represents the biggest change to our border controls in generations.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Ensure the new food standards and revised hygiene delivery models for LAs are in place and working well (ABC).
- B. Develop a sustainable and legally compliant model for official controls (ABC).
- C. Work effectively with governments in each country to agree and deliver the BTOM for import controls.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Food standards and food hygiene delivery models

We developed a new Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) to improve the system of food standards Official Controls delivered by LAs. We revised the Food Law Code of Practice for England and NI, laid before Parliament, enabling LAs to follow the new FSDM and included transitional arrangements until the model was ready for implementation. We collaborated with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, to ensure training content was developed and launched for LA officers. Over 100 LA officers from 12 LAs attended FSDM training webinars with an e-Learning module made available online. The FSDM requires changes and updates to LA local data systems and the agreement for this data system was directly between the company providing it and the LA, meaning we worked across various third-party MIS providers and LAs.

We carried out a 6-month pilot of the proposed FSDM model in Wales, which concluded in Q4 2023/24 and is being evaluated.

We proposed improvements to modernise Food Hygiene Delivery Model (FHDM) and carried out a 12-week consultation across the three nations gathering feedback from LAs, industry and other government departments. Nine LA engagement events and an FHDM online webinar resulted in approximately 2,000 pieces of feedback. The FHDM consultation feedback, summarised and published in Q3 2023/24, indicated LAs strongly

supported some changes to ease resource challenges. Having considered responses, we decided to take forward some proposals, which focus on:

- enhancing regulatory roles
- updating practices for efficiency and clarity, and
- ensuring food safety and allergen management within the existing legal framework

We explored needs for a new mechanism for capturing LA data for Official Controls delivery, which will replace the Local Enforcement Monitoring System and LA biannual surveys.

B Model for Official Controls

The ABC programme tested a potential new enterprise level approach to regulation, that runs alongside the existing regulatory model. In the existing model every food business premises is regulated by a LA, through regular inspections or interventions by environmental health officers. The trial tested using regular analysis of business data, supported by closer working between the FSA and business, and their primary authority, with a small number of verification checks, to establish if an accurate picture of the retailers' compliance could be determined. The trial moved regulation from the premise view to looking at the whole business as one enterprise. Working with the large retailers, Asda, Aldi, Sainsbury's, Waitrose and Tesco and their primary authorities, a proof-of-concept trial was launched to help future-proof a rapidly evolving food system. The trial commenced in Q1 2023/24 and concluded in Q4 2023/24. The mid-point review provided a positive progress assessment. The independent final trial evaluation to understand if regulating at an enterprise level is possible, credible, and proportionate was undertaken in April – June 2024.

Through collaborating with Deliveroo, JustEat and Uber Eats, we hold a better understanding of current processes for using the FHRS and what that means for food businesses trading on their platform. In collaboration with these food aggregators and LAs we developed a Training Aide Memoire that provided aggregator onboarding teams with accurate information about all aspects of the registration requirements for FBOs. This product also enabled LAs to better support food businesses that trade on the platforms and who come to the LAs for support and advice. LAs now have accurate information on the aggregators processes and can offer tailored support to food businesses.

We worked with aggregators to use their communication channels to send out and promote the FSA (and FSS) allergen e-training to all restaurant partners currently using their platforms (170,000+).

We carried out an engagement exercise with over 80 stakeholders in the food sector, including food system experts and businesses, to gather views on the current regulatory model and identify possible areas for change, putting proposals to the [FSA Board in December 2023](#) on the building blocks for future reform.

C Border Target Operating Model

The introduction of controls on EU food and feed imports is a crucial element in our ability to protect public health and be assured that our food is safe and is what it says it is. The BTOM is a cross-government programme, designed to modernise border controls for imports of goods into Great Britain. The FSA has been involved in the development of the BTOM, working closely both with central government departments on the importation of food and feed, as well as our colleagues on a four-country basis. The BTOM is being implemented in a phased approach:

- **The first stage**, the introduction of Export Health Certificates for EU and European Free Trade Association medium-risk products of animal origin, and the commencement of the first of three trusted trader pilots, went live on 31 January 2024.
- **The second phase**, the implementation of physical checks and the extension of the new risk model to imports from the rest of the world went live on 30 April 2024 and is being delivered through a graduated approach that increases checks in phases on a risk basis to avoid port congestion. Two further trusted trader pilots were launched at the same time.

The FSA's work across government has ensured that our core message of food safety has been heard throughout the development and implementation of the BTOM. We will continue to monitor and act to ensure the level of food and feed safety is maintained (or improved); the policy is driven by science, data and evidence; is dynamic, changing responsively to ensure food controls target where risk is greatest and the proposals are aligned with global SPS standards.

As of 31 March 2024, the BTOM is in the first phase of implementation and we have been closely monitoring compliance by industry with the new requirements and in particular the level of accuracy in the documentation that they are required to complete, for example, export health certificates. More detailed data will become available as the system is fully implemented and new IT systems come online. We are developing a strategy to make full use of this new information. Industry is gradually adapting to the new requirements with a steady improvement as businesses become acquainted with the new controls.

Policy Maker



In our role as a Policy Maker, the FSA aimed to:

Objective 3

Make robust recommendations and support decision makers to take informed decisions on rules relating to food, based on evidence and independent assessment.

Objective 4

Create a proportionate, effective, efficient and future focused approach to regulation through the risk analysis process and regulated products service, that protects consumers and removes barriers to innovation.

Policy

(Objective 3): Make robust recommendations and support decision makers to take informed decisions on rules relating to food, based on evidence and independent assessment.

Introduction

The FSA plays a large role in setting food system rules, directly in our decision making and Ministerial advice about actions needed to maintain food safety and standards, and indirectly to advise other decision-making bodies. For example, we offer expertise into Defra to support market access requests and free trade negotiations, ensuring public health is considered during assessments. Regulatory requirements can differ between trading nations, which is known as divergence. The FSA's remit across England, Wales and NI is covered under three common frameworks which set out how the four nations work together in certain devolved policy areas following the UK's departure from the EU. The FSA monitors this and works to minimise the impact of divergence in food regulation on businesses and consumers, particularly between GB and NI under the Windsor Framework.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Manage divergence, meet our common framework obligations and ensure consistency for consumers and businesses across the UK.
- B. Ensure food standards and public health are maintained, under the arrangements of the Windsor Framework for trade between GB and NI.
- C. Deliver Statutory Instruments in England, Wales and Statutory Regulations in NI to preserve Retained EU Law (REUL) within our remit in the respective nations.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Managing divergence

The devolved context of our work, the application of the UK Internal Market (UKIM) Act enables the free flow of goods across UK even where there is divergence and Windsor Framework arrangements means we have a complex and dynamic set of arrangements impacting regulatory change and divergence.

There have been no new significant instances of UK driven divergence across the FSA's policy responsibilities. Import controls on Higher Risk Foods Not of Animal Origin under REUL 2019/1793 remain an active area of UK-driven divergence between GB and the EU but there is likely to always be an element of divergence as GB imports different commodity types compared to the EU, and controls are tailored to our trade flows and consumption habits. Generally, EU-driven divergence has occurred more frequently than UK-driven divergence. The EU continues to make regulatory proposals and regularly publishes new regulations through its tertiary legislative process which the FSA implements in NI. In 2023/24 there were specific technical changes but did not result in significant differences in our core approaches to food safety.

The FSA stood engaged with key industry partners on divergence issues, ensuring the broad picture across our remit is communicated and discussed. This includes sharing a summary of key divergence issues and regular meetings with trade bodies to discuss select issues. A House of Lords Select Committee on impacts of divergence (2023), positively referenced the FSA's approach to stakeholder engagement, demonstrating our communications approach was well received.

The FSA began a review of the four-nation common frameworks where we hold policy responsibility which is ongoing as finalising frameworks was contingent on the return of the NI Executive. Since the Executive reformed in February 2024, work to secure final sign off from Ministers has started. The FSA's progress is dependent on wider progress in the UK-devolved administration common Frameworks Programme.

In conclusion, the FSA has met all but one of its commitments in the annual plan and did not deliver on one commitment due to wider political dependency. Having these processes in place means we actively manage key impacts of divergence across the FSA of UK and EU-driven regulatory changes and enable implementation of EU law in NI.

B Monitoring arrangements under the Windsor Framework

The FSA's role in the delivery of commitments under the Windsor Framework Agreement 2023 is part of a wider cross-government programme to meet the UK's international commitments. The FSA established a new programme for the delivery these agreements in 2023. This established governance structures and project delivery plans for all key delivery elements the FSA is required to implement to meet its international agreement with the EU including the delivery of public health controls at points of entry, legislation enabling goods meeting GB standards to continue to be placed on the NI market and development of unfettered market access arrangements.

The FSA delivered, through joint work with other departments, two statutory instruments. The first SI applies GB standards in NI for GB pre-packed retail goods moving via the green lane under the new NI Retail Movement Scheme. The second SI extends enforcement provisions in NI to those GB goods that have moved through the green lane, ensuring that FSA delivery partners have the necessary enforcement powers to act where needed in NI, maintaining consistent food safety arrangements. The FSA delivered guidance and a series of training in NI to support delivery partners to understand the new regulatory arrangements for GB pre-packed retail goods and made the same materials available across the UK.

On 31 January 2024, the UK Government published the Command Paper titled ‘Safeguarding the Union’ because of successful negotiations to restore the NI Executive. This included setting up the NI Windsor Framework democratic scrutiny committee (DSC). The DSC will scrutinise incoming EU laws applicable in NI, which encompasses most of the FSA’s remit in NI. We have established clear governance for reporting and fulfilling the new requirements.

To date, the FSA has delivered on its requirements under the Windsor Framework Agreement with the second phase of implementation running into 2024/25.

C Retained EU Law (REUL)

In April 2023, the UK Government revised its approach to the REUL (Revocation and Reform) Bill 2023 so that assimilation of REUL became the default. The revised approach meant only REUL listed in a revocation schedule would be revoked on 31 December 2023, while remaining REUL would become “assimilated law”. The time-limited powers to amend, restate and revoke now apply to assimilated law and are available until 23 June 2026. The revised version of the REUL Act received Royal Assent on 29 June 2023. Following a comprehensive review, FSA identified eight regulations for inclusion in the REUL Act’s revocation schedule as they were no longer required in UK law and their removal would not impact food safety and standards. During the Act’s passage through Parliament there was significant interest in the FSA’s work, and the FSA was commended for its openness and transparency on the rationale for revoking these regulations, provided on the FSA [website](#).

Looking forward towards reform opportunities, the FSA:

- triaged policy areas
- engaged stakeholders
- delivered targeted scoping workshops, and
- secured legal advice to identify where the food and feed regulatory system could be enhanced through exercise of the REUL Act powers.

In considering future reform opportunities, the FSA was guided by the [principles](#) set by the FSA Board. The FSA concluded, having considered input from stakeholders, that scope for enhancement of current system existed within the Regulated Products and ABC programme areas, and prioritised these areas for any future reform under the REUL Act. The reforms subsequently proposed to the Regulated Products system are described on page 40 below.

Policy Maker

(Objective 4): Create a proportionate, effective, efficient and future focused approach to regulation.

Introduction

Much of the work carried out by the FSA is underpinned, or defined, by legislation. To keep up with a dynamic food system, we regularly review our legislative remit, seeking opportunities to make our work more efficient, or more impactful. The FSA also drafts regimes to tackle emerging products and techniques within the food system.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Explore targeted reforms to the regulated products regime through powers to be created under the Retained EU Law Bill.
- B. Develop a new regulatory regime for precision bred food and feed.
- C. Explore options to improve the provision of allergen information for people with a food hypersensitivity.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Targeted reform of the regulated products regime

In December 2023, the Board agreed a [set of principles](#) to guide our reforms. In a public consultation (closed June 2024) we proposed two immediate reforms to reduce the number of applications, and significantly improve service efficiency. These reforms could deliver substantial indirect benefits e.g. safe new products reaching the market quicker, improving returns on investment for food businesses, and consumer access to innovative products. Having efficient regulatory approvals will support investment in the UK food industry, addressing concerns from some businesses about the practicalities of entering the GB market. With the new government in place, we are seeking ministerial decision on whether we can take forward these reforms. Any reforms we propose now, or in the future, will not reduce food safety or standards. The two reforms we are focused on are:

- **Removal of renewals:** After a set time, every food/feed containing, consisting of or produced genetically modified organism, smoke flavouring and feed additive product must have a renewal application submitted. Removing this legislative requirement will reduce 22% of applications containing renewals.
- **SI removal for authorisations:** All regulated product authorisations are confirmed by secondary legislation, an SI. The laying process adds at least three months to the time it takes for new products to get authorisation. We are looking to bring authorisations into force via a published official register, rather than laying a SI.

B Precision bred food and feed

Precision breeding (PB) is a technique allowing retention, deletion, or replacement of DNA sections in plant or animals. Changes could occur naturally or through traditional breeding techniques. PB can create these changes more rapidly and is less complex than genetic modification where foreign DNA is inserted into an unrelated species' genes.

In September 2023, the FSA Board considered [several potential options](#) for pre-market authorisation based on the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes' advice and agreed which proposals most closely aligned with policy objectives.

[The FSA's public consultation](#) on proposals for a new framework for the regulation of PBOs in England used for food and animal feed was launched in November 2023 and ran until January 2024. 412 responses were received, 358 of which via the online consultation response form. 66% of respondents identified as consumers with the remaining 34% from businesses, academics, farmers, and organisations representing wider stakeholders.

Our summary of responses highlight different themes raised by stakeholders and how the FSA proposes to take action on issues within our remit and was presented to the FSA Board in March 2024 who agreed to the approach outlined in the consultation. We are working closely with Defra on next steps.

C Allergen information for Food Hypersensitivity (FHS)

An estimated 6% of the UK adult population and 5-8% of children have a food allergy. 1% of adults have coeliac disease. Labelling legislation requires all food products indicate the presence of the 14 regulated allergens, however, where there is a risk of unintentional allergen cross-contact, at some point in the food supply chain, from farm to fork, a food business can use precautionary allergen label (PAL) to communicate the risk.

We have focused on improving the dissemination of information between food businesses and consumers, and improved business application of and consumer understanding of, PAL. We built our evidence base and carried out research to understand how allergen information is provided to consumers in the non-prepacked sector e.g. restaurants. This included:

- [A qualitative study of small and medium food business](#) looking at how different non-prepacked business models operate, published June 2023.
- [A consumer survey of the nature and extent of FHS reactions](#), including where they occur and near-misses.
- [An international review of different approaches for written information](#), published June 2023.
- A study visit to the Republic of Ireland to discuss their approach to the provision of allergen information for non-prepacked foods, published March 2023.

The FSA Board in December 2023 agreed an expectation should be set that non-prepacked food businesses provide allergen information in writing, as well as verbally. It was also recommended that providing written information should be a legal requirement and the FSA Chair wrote to ministers with this recommendation.

Our research informed our policy on PAL including an assessment of the FAO/WHO allergen risk assessment reports that are being used by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) to develop international standards for PAL application. It included scientific literature reviews on cleaning to mitigate allergen cross-contamination (June 2023) and availability and efficacy of tests to detect allergens in foods (September 2023).

In September 2023 we published new standards for PAL as part of an update of FSA allergen labelling technical guidance for food businesses.

In October 2021 new requirements for labelling prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods were introduced, referred to as Natasha's Law, requiring FBOs to emphasise the 14 regulated allergens on PPDS food labels. In July 2023, we published a joint Natasha's Law evaluation with FSS and in October 2023 ran a campaign to promote PPDS resources and guidance for food businesses, receiving around 15,000 views on social media.

Evidence Generator



In our role as a Evidence Generator, the FSA aimed to:

Objective 5

Ensure our decisions, and those of others are informed by science and evidence.

Objective 6

Build evidence, through science and research, to anticipate opportunities and risks across the UK food system.

Evidence Generator

(Objective 5): Ensure our decisions, and those of others are informed by science and evidence.

Introduction

As an evidence generator, we produce robust scientific evidence and analysis and take input, scrutiny and challenge from experts and other stakeholders. We obtain, review and publish data and analysis to understand risks and opportunities and develop an evidence-based approach. We gather intelligence to inform our approach e.g. targeted surveillance or assessing the risk and impact of a new or emerging food risk or disruption in the food system. We prioritise science with investment in science accounting for 10.9% of FSA spend in 2023/24.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Ensure risk analysis decisions and priority 'core and change' work are informed by timely and robust science and evidence.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Science and evidence

Certain food and feed products must go through a risk analysis process and be authorised before they can be sold in the UK. In 2023/24, we aimed to improve timelines to safety assess regulated products through continuous improvements. We also contributed to the development of a new framework to safety assess precision bred organisms. We have completed the following during 2023/24:

86



Safety assessments

150



Incident risk assessments

15



Risk analysis risk assessments

When reviewing these assessments for timeliness, quality assurance and fit for purpose for policy needs, we achieved a score of 92% compared with 95% for four risk assessments in 2022/23. The decrease reflects variation in timeliness and fitness for purpose scores. All risk assessments achieved 100% of agreed level of quality assurance. Our 2023/24 targets for safety assessments, strategic risk assessments and to support the needs of incident and emergency risk assessment has been achieved. The total risk assessments delivered via the risk analysis process has more than tripled in 2023/24.

Recommend risk assessment approach for Precision Bred Organisms

The PB Act became law in England in March 2023. We are developing a new authorisation framework to regulate the use of PB organisms in food and feed products in England and will consider any risk these organisms pose on a case-by-case basis to ensure all associated food safety risks are proportionately assessed.

The first full draft technical guidance has been reviewed by an independent risk communication expert for advice. Meetings with external technical experts have begun and are continuing to inform the guidance development.

Delivery of next version of the International Disease Monitoring+ (IDM+) tool to feed into BTOM

IDM+ is a risk ranking tool developed to analyse information from a variety of sources and incorporate opinion from internationally recognised experts, data on trade volumes on border compliance, assessing the safety of products of animal origin (POAO). The model outputs are a core component to assigning risk categories to imported POAO informing import controls as part of the government's BTOM. Work in 2023/24 included refining the methodology used and incorporating additional data sources. The updated model version was used to generate outputs that fed into cross-government decision-making regarding risk categories for imported commodities to deliver our goal of ensuring that the UK's standards of food and feed safety continue to be maintained and verified.

Including assessment of wider socio-economic risks and benefits in our risk analysis

The FSA [Science Council](#) is looking at how we might include a wider set of factors in our risk analysis process and how such evidence could be sourced. The project working group will test the evidence needed using three use cases, listed below. Findings will be published in September 2024.

Define focus of wider consumer interests and deliver design phase of SALIENT

In line with the FSA strategy, we built on joint work with Defra, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Education and UK Research and Innovation as well as civil society stakeholders such as Nesta, started in the previous year to support evidence on what works to encourage healthier and more sustainable food. For example:

The School Food Standards pilot – testing whether nutritional standards could be assessed alongside food safety in schools.

SALIENT – ‘food system trials for impact on environment, nutrition and health’ – a programme to understand what food system interventions can effectively encourage and enable people to have healthier and more sustainable diets. Working with Defra, UK Research and Innovation, HM Treasury and an Oxford/Cambridge consortium delivering multiple trials around healthy sustainable food; this will be used to show the food policy community what works. Our financial contribution concludes in 2024/25. The randomised controlled trials in the English food system to test interventions related to availability, cost, provision of information and choice-architecture. Seven trials have been completed, with three more planned for the coming year. Results will be published in 2024 and 2025.

Resource pressures led to in year prioritisation (see FSA Board papers December 2023) including not taking any other new work forward around our contribution to making food healthier and more sustainable until resources are available.

Evidence Generator

(Objective 6): Build evidence, including through science and research so we can anticipate opportunities and risks across the UK food system.

Introduction

The FSA builds an evidence base generated around the food system and influencing factors. This work allows the FSA to maintain a global reputation for science and research, to identify risks quickly and inform decision-making with high-quality, transparent research.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Develop a labs and sampling regime that is fit for purpose and resilient to the future to assure food safety and authenticity.
- B. Identify and test technical and scientific innovations to enhance the FSA's and our partners' capabilities (Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment PATH-SAFE).
- C. Maintain and build our evidence base on the public interest in food.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Labs and sampling

The FSA has delivered sampling which underpins our and other's work by providing intelligence and evidence for food and feed safety and authenticity on the UK market. We undertake four types of sampling as part of our programme of work:

Regulatory monitoring

£1.5 million spent
(vs. £1.3 million 2022/23)

6,563 samples tested
(vs. 6,768 2022/23)

224 non-compliant
(vs. 51 2022/23)

Purpose: To fulfil our food and feed safety monitoring responsibilities e.g. Official Controls monitoring of shellfish (and associated waters) and radiological sampling.

Successes: Annual shellfish and associated water classifications implemented necessary actions to prevent unsafe products being placed on the market and reassured stakeholders that regulated chemical contaminant levels were below legal limits. The annual radiological monitoring programme report, published in 2023, showed that doses of radioactivity from food from UK nuclear sites were well below legal limits.

Sampling to inform science and research

£0.5 million spent
(vs. £0.7 million 2022/23)

2,921 samples tested
(vs. 1,301 2022/23)

73 non-compliant
(vs. 39 2022/23)

Purpose: Focused on specific areas to increase knowledge to inform risk assessment.

Successes: A 2023/24 survey informed risk assessments used for advice on safe handling and storage of raw pet food in homes, working with industry to reduce risks. Sampling results were used to respond to an environmental event, involving an algal bloom at a lake in NI, enabling us to update guidance on fish consumption from this area.

Targeted surveillance sampling

£0.9 million spent
(vs. £1 million 2022/23)

1,947 samples tested
(vs. 2,585 2022/23)

174 non-compliant
(vs. 367 2022/23)

Purpose: Specific commodities for specific hazards to consider emerging risks. Decisions on what to target are intelligence-led and aims to validate that there may be a risk.

Successes: Results from this year's retail surveillance survey have been used to provide information to LAs on risks, enabling them to target their own sampling. In addition, it allows targeting of grant funding for LA Official Controls sampling to be directed to address areas of risk to bring businesses into compliance.

Official Controls (enforcement sampling)

£0.4 million spent
(vs. £0.4 million 2022/23)

2,440 samples tested
(vs. 1,214 2022/23)

593 non-compliant
(vs. 216 2022/23)

Purpose: Supports LA activity by funding targeted sampling and are taken due to adverse results from FSA targeted surveillance, to bring businesses into compliance.

Successes: We funded 23 LAs to take 263 samples from targeted points within the supply chain with known risks, as part the food standards directed sampling programme. Where non-compliant results were obtained, LAs took appropriate action to bring businesses into compliance. This is targeted at risk areas identified by the FSA through horizon scanning, surveillance, and intelligence, enabling the focus of limited resources to deliver Official Controls. Samples included imported snack foods and bakery items at importers and prepacked for direct sale bakery items to address allergen concerns identified in previous surveillance sampling. In addition, lamb dishes from takeaways were tested for meat species substitution. Results have facilitated business advice and lead to LA investigations into breaches of legislation.

Building UK laboratory capability and capacity

Designated Public Analyst Official Laboratories (PA OLs) undertake chemical and physical testing of food and feed samples, in order to maintain food safety and standards. Most of this work is conducted on behalf of LAs, as part of their enforcement activities or conducting statutory checks, for example, on imports, and as a result, PA OL funding is coupled to LA sampling rates.

However, as LA resources have become constrained, sampling rates have declined, reducing funding and leading to a decline in PA OLs capacity and capability (including the closure of laboratories in 2018 and 2019). Since 2020, the FSA has been investing in an OL-focused labs programme to reverse this situation and reduce the associated risk posed to the UK's food and feed safety system.

In 2023/24 the FSA has provided funding amounting to:

- £300,000 of grant funding awarded to four laboratories.
- £60,000 for Public Analyst training.
- £700,000 for targeted surveillance sampling, delivered by PA OLs.

This targeted intervention for PA OLs has maintained the UK's testing capacity and helped rebuild capability requirements for routine testing, incidents and research-related analysis. Sample numbers are stabilising, new methods are being deployed, new PAs are being trained, and ultimately, there has been no reduction in the number of UK PA OLs for the last 5 years.

Incident and Difficult or Novel Testing service for Official Laboratories and FSA

To address the loss of capability for non-routine sampling areas within the UK's laboratory system, the National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) were funded £100,000 to improve incident response capability and develop mechanisms to undertake difficult or novel testing.

In collaboration with the FSA, NRLs have developed that mechanism by which testing capability can be accessed rapidly in an incident. This was utilised to provide rapid testing of shellfish during the oil spill incident at Poole Harbour in April 2023. They have established a process for testing non-routine, difficult or novel samples. OLs have been consulted on analyses and matrices to include in this programme and amendments are underway.

Work commissioned through the NRLs

The FSA provided £1.2 million across 17 NRL areas from foodborne viruses to chemical contaminants to maintain and improve national capability.

Since 2020 there has been a significant increase in the number of projects commissioned through the NRLs (from 2 activities in 2020 to 16 activities in 2023/24), due to improved engagement between FSA and the NRLs. Highlights include:

- Development of a method for detection of Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) in food, feed and food contact material matrices.

- Guidance materials and standard operating procedure for detecting *Escherichia coli* in shellfish for monitoring purposes.
- GMO training has been successfully delivered to OLs in England and Wales allowing them to apply for UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) accreditation.

B Foodborne Disease and development of Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE)

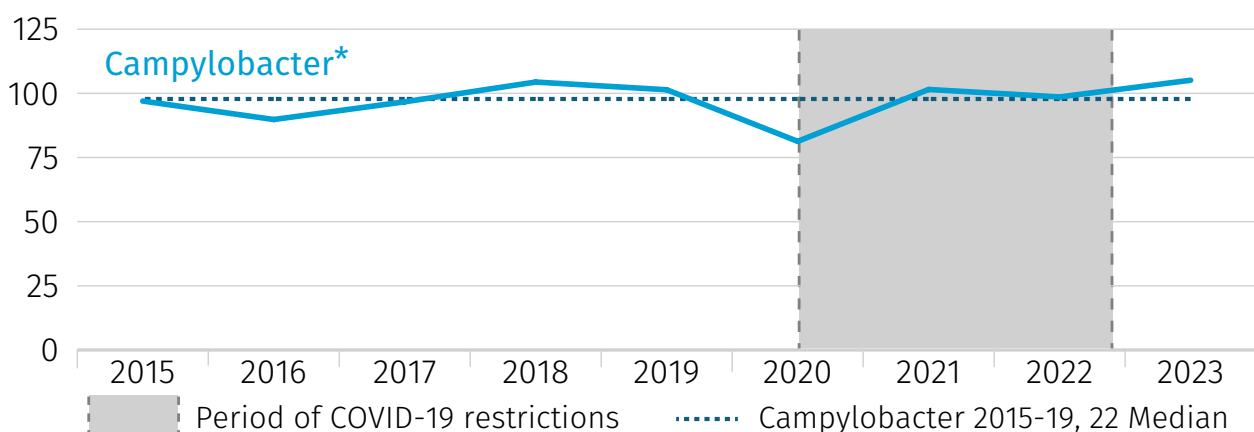
Foodborne disease

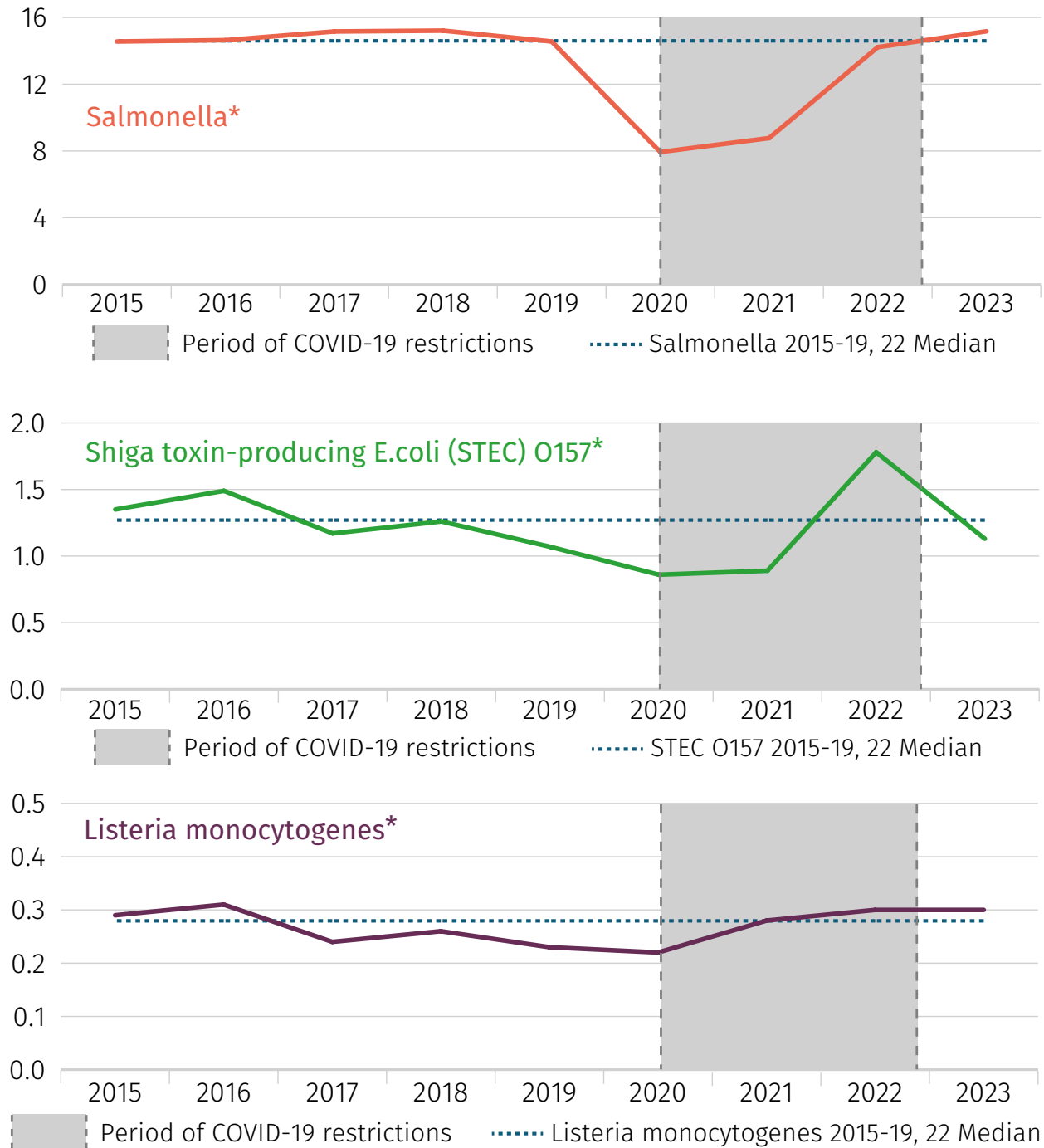
A key objective of the FSA is to reduce cases of UK foodborne illnesses. We achieve this through activities such as:

- monitoring industry adherence to food safety standards;
- identifying and promoting effective interventions to reduce food contamination;
- assessment of surveillance data derived from multiple sources, response and management of contamination incidents in food and related foodborne disease outbreaks;
- commissioning research and horizon scanning to better identify sources of foodborne disease-related infections; and
- continuing to effectively communicate risk, and risk reduction strategies, to consumers and businesses.

Trends of gastrointestinal pathogen reporting

The graphs below show trends in UK laboratory confirmed cases per 100,000 population of the four major bacterial gastrointestinal (GI) pathogens. This includes all laboratory confirmed reports (in some cases infection may have been acquired by routes other than foodborne transmission).





* Data are provisional and may change and are derived from multiple live reporting systems developed and maintained by the UK public health agencies (UK Health Security Agency, Public Health Wales, Public Health Scotland and Public Health Agency NI). Rates per 100,000 population are calculated using ONS mid-year population estimates. Trends should be interpreted with caution, particularly over the COVID-19 period (2020 to early 2022) due to multiple factors which impacted pathogen reporting. The median annual rate for historic years, excludes the COVID period.

In 2023, reports of all four pathogens returned to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, STEC O157 reports dropped compared to 2022, when two large national outbreaks were identified (one foodborne and one person-to-person), leading to the highest reported UK rate since 2015.

In 2023, the FSA investigated 59 new or ongoing outbreaks and incidents of GI linked with foodborne disease (FBD), working with UK public health agencies and LAs. Several successful investigations identified the food source, after which control measures were implemented.

We have used published research, e.g. [Kitchen Life 2](#), to improve consumer facing messaging so information is accessible, so consumers can make informed choices to keep themselves safe and minimise food waste. We have been proactive in issuing advice to vulnerable consumers about food safety issues, e.g. highlighting [the risk of listeria from enoki mushrooms](#) and [cold-smoked fish](#), supported by developing and publishing advice to ensure food is kept safe during emergency situations e.g. [power outages](#).

We have invested in world class research to further understand foodborne disease. In 2023, the FSA began collecting data for its [third infectious intestinal disease study \(IID3\)](#), due to complete in 2026. IID3 will provide new data to update estimates for underreporting of foodborne illnesses and will inform and support foodborne disease policy development.

Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE)

The ability to detect and identify pathogens early and to accurately trace foodborne disease outbreaks to their source are critical to protect public health and reduce associated economic costs. The PATH-SAFE programme aims to capitalise on technological advances to enhance public health protection. The programme worked to pilot new FBD pathogen and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) surveillance approaches, across the four nations taking a cross-government, One Health approach. This supported FSA research priorities related to FBD and AMR. In 2023/24, the programme met all its key objectives:

- Piloted an environmental AMR surveillance system through collaboration with other government departments and published [ten reports/publications](#).
- Engaged with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and on the [UKRI transdisciplinary networks to tackle AMR call](#) to ensure the agri-food view was considered as part of a One Health agenda, and to present the existing, extensive AMR collaboration developed through PATH-SAFE as a resource to support the successful network.
- In March 2024, the first iteration of the new national genomic data platform to improve FBD and AMR surveillance, went live to cross-government partners, with Salmonella as its exemplar pathogen.

The programme had several other successes:

- With an intended aim of improving border inspections, the onsite diagnostics project successfully piloted two portable testing technologies with end users.
- Through its AMR and FBD research, contributed to national initiatives including the [AMR National Action Plan](#), and the [UK Biological Security Strategy's](#) 'Detect' pillar.
- Fostered a four-nation, One Health focused collaboration of over 50 partners, with two in person events (Innovation in Bio-surveillance and the [PATH-SAFE Bio-surveillance Conference](#)).

In February 2024, the programme was successful in securing continuation funding from HMT's Shared Outcomes Fund (£2.2million) which, combined with just over the same amount in match funding contributed from programme partners, will enable the proof-of-concept position for the programme to be advanced in 2024/25.

C Maintain or build our evidence base on the public interest in food

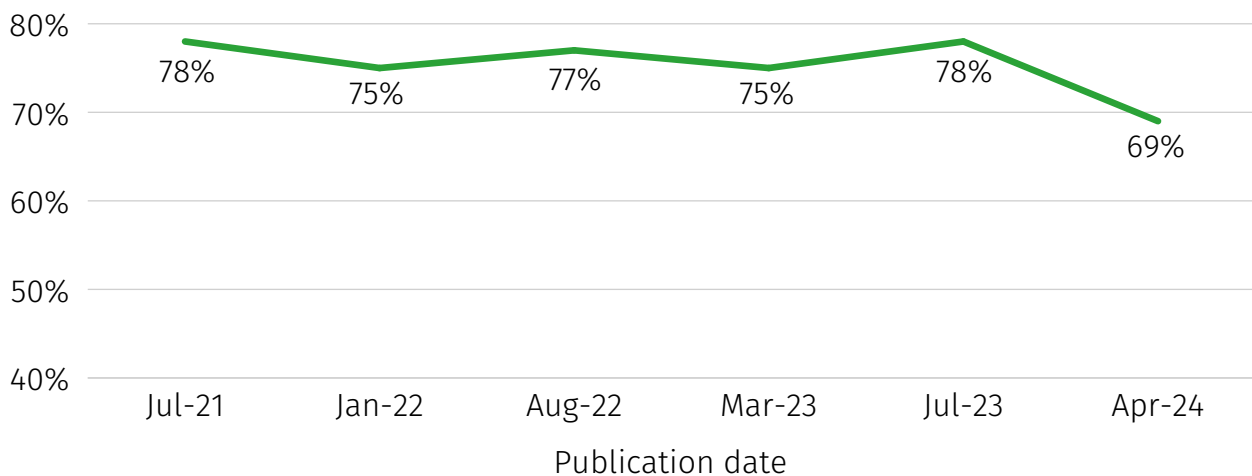
To monitor progress against our mission and inform decision making, we conduct research with consumers across England, Wales and NI. The FSA's core research with consumers includes:

- [Food and You 2](#) – Our official statistic survey, conducted biannually with approximately 6,000 people covering a variety of topics of strategic interest.
- [Consumer Insights Tracker](#) – A monthly online survey conducted with 2,000 people, providing regular insights on key or emerging topics.

Trust in the FSA

Latest results from [Food and You 2](#) (published in April 2024) indicate awareness of FSA is high, with 89% of respondents reporting they had heard of FSA. Most respondents with some knowledge of the FSA, trust the FSA to do its job, to ensure food is safe and what it says it is (69%). This has decreased since the last survey with an increase in respondents reporting they 'neither trust nor distrust' the FSA. Distrust remains low at 2%. We continue to monitor trust data and will undertake follow up research to understand drivers of the decline and lessening perceptions of trustworthiness and where relevant, mistrust.

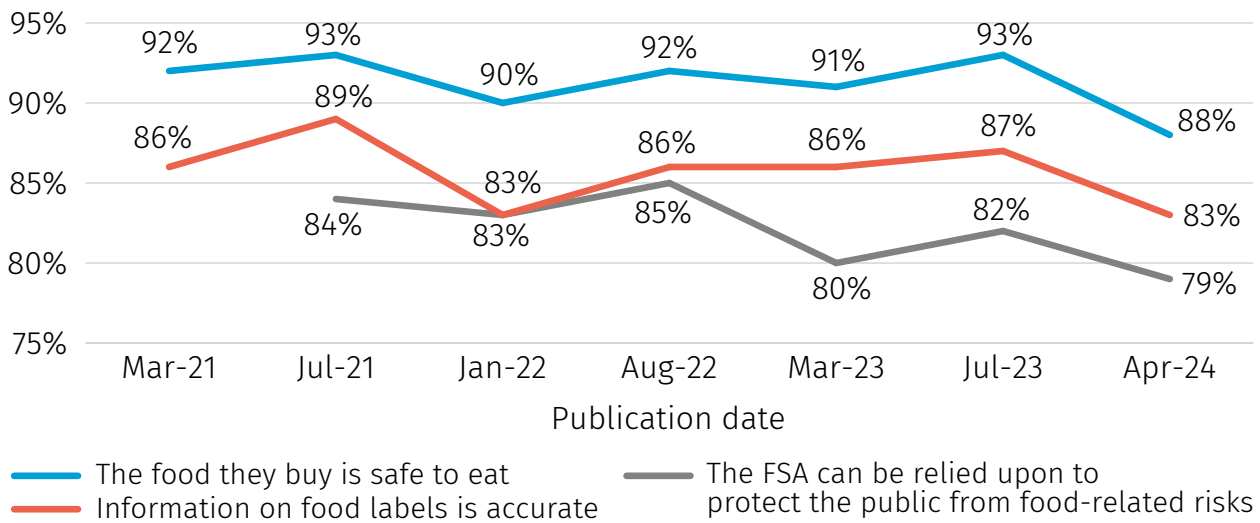
Fig. 16: Consumer trust in the FSA by Food and You 2 survey publication date



Trust in the food system

Latest results from Food and You 2 indicate confidence in food safety and authenticity remains high; 88% of respondents are confident food is safe to eat; 83% are confident information on food labels is accurate and 79% are confident the FSA (or government agency responsible for food safety) can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks.

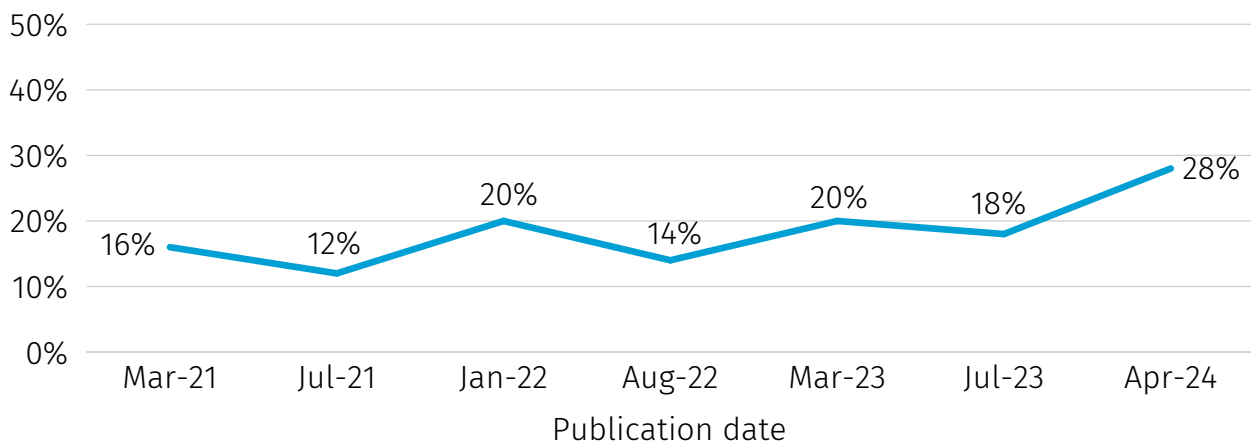
Fig. 17: % respondents reporting confidence in safety of food and accuracy of food labels



The latest [Food and You 2 consumer survey](#), published April 2024, indicates the following findings in relation to the public’s interest in food:

Consumers’ concerns about food

Fig. 18: % respondents reporting having a concern about food

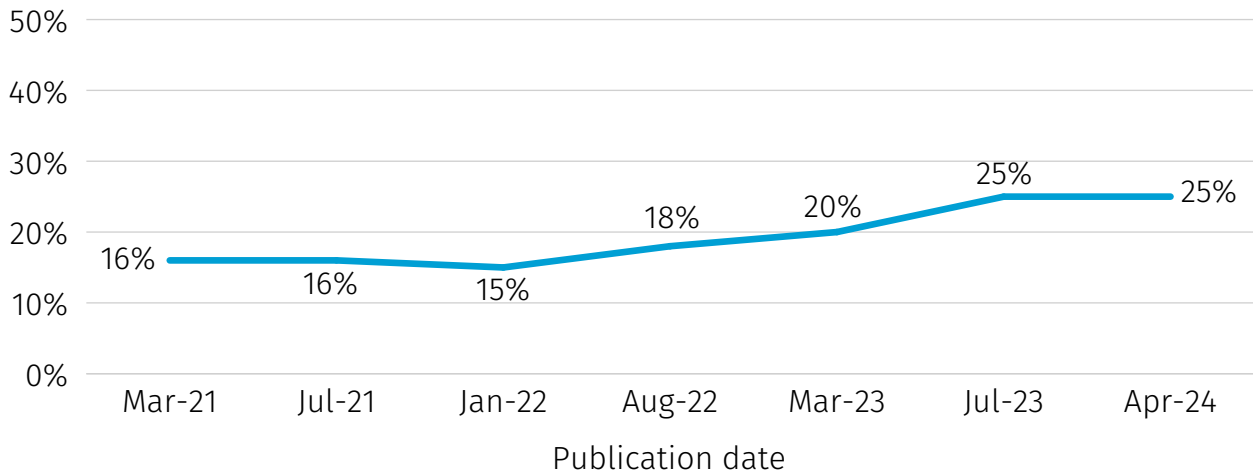


Of those concerned about the food they eat; the most common prompted food-related issues were the following (difference from the previous survey published July 2023):


<p>72% </p> <p>Food prices (+/-0% points)</p>	<p>58% </p> <p>Food waste (+4% points)</p>	<p>56% </p> <p>Food quality (+1% points)</p>
<p>56% </p> <p>Amount of sugar in food (+/-0% points)</p>	<p>56% </p> <p>Amount of food packaging (-5% points)</p>	


Food insecurity and food affordability

Fig. 19: % respondents classified as food insecure



[Latest findings](#) from our Consumer Insights Tracker (March 2024) also show the following compared to figures from September 2023*:

22%  Were worried about their household being unable to afford food in the next month (-3% points)

55%  Used cheaper cooking methods to save money instead of an oven to heat or cook food in the month prior (+/-0% points)

* Due to changes in methodology and supplier, users should not directly compare the results of the older surveys pre-September 2023 with current survey results.

Watchdog

In our role as a Watchdog, the FSA aimed to:



Objective 7

Speak publicly about areas of consumer interest to support UK food standards.

Introduction

The FSA gathers information from across the food system, via our evidence generator activity and stakeholder engagement and apply this information to report factually on food standards and consumer interests around food, as well as speak out publicly on areas of interest, championing consumer rights.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Produce advice and comment publicly on human health statutory protections in trade deals to protect consumer interests in relation to food and assess and make recommendations on market access requests.
- B. Monitor the standard of UK food and regularly review the state of national food standards (concerning safety and authenticity).

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

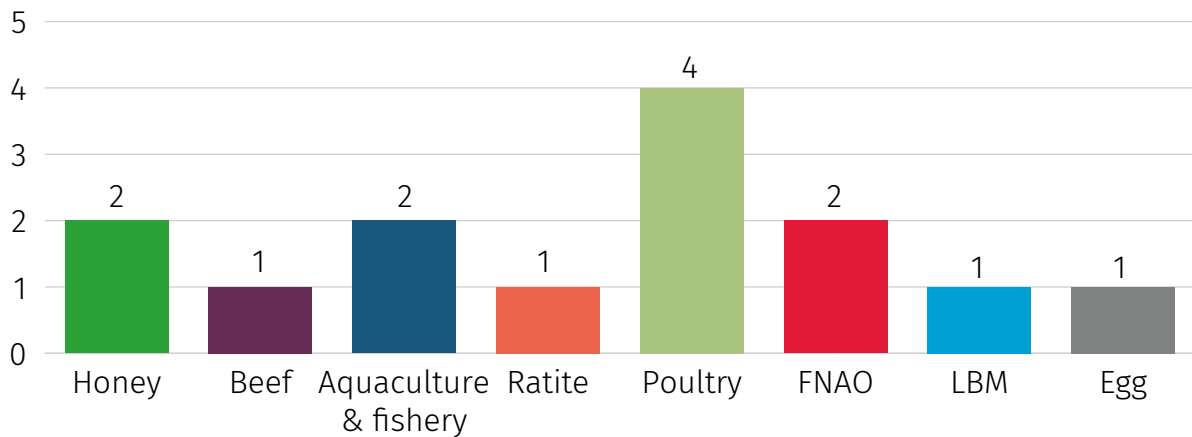
A

Supporting other departments and the consumer in trade through Market Access Requests and Technical Input

FSA's role in imports market access is to ensure food safety and public health are considered as part of the assessment process, led by Defra's UK Office for SPS Trade Assurance, for market access requests and to provide recommendations in our area of competence to the relevant cross government decision making bodies.

We have met all our market access objectives during 2023/24, delivering assessments to time and budget. A notable success was the completion of our first full assessment and recommendation since UK Government took on this responsibility from the EU. This created the model for subsequent assessments.

We received 14 new market access requests during 2023/24 (+9 from 2022/23), covering 8 different commodity types (+7 from 2022/23) from 12 trading partners (+7 from 2022/23).

Fig. 20: Market access requests by commodity 2023

We commenced the assessment process for nine market access requests and two market access equivalence assessments. Four market access assessments included in-country verification audits with five audits planned for delivery prior to the end of 2024. It is anticipated one of the equivalence assessments will also be completed by the end of 2024.

We completed our first formal assessment, following a request in 2022 by the Brazilian competent authorities to review import controls in place on beef and poultry due to previous salmonella contamination. We provided a [recommendation](#) to the UK Office for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Trade Assurance (the UK Office) to lift the enhanced import control and the restriction on Brazil to list poultry and beef establishments for export to Great Britain.

For high-risk food not of animal origin, we lead 6-monthly legislation reviews to ensure emerging public health risks are mitigated and collect data from various sources for risk assessors and risk managers to review on a four-country basis and completed two reviews.

For exports, the FSA supports Defra in maintaining existing markets for exports or opening new markets. Where food safety export requirements of destination countries go above and beyond UK domestic requirements, we carry out exports-related, assurance activities, on behalf of Defra, ensuring businesses meet requirements. We are currently resourced to support four significant inward visits per year from our trading partners, plus a number of smaller tasks. Since the UK's exit from the EU, exports market access activities have increased, placing additional pressure on FSA resources.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations

FTA negotiations are led by DBT under mandates agreed by UK Government, with Defra leading on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) chapter negotiations. The FSA offers technical input during negotiations and supports wider UK Government trade objectives concerning rules related to food safety. We contributed technical input to several negotiations, including FTAs with India, Canada, Mexico, the Gulf Co-operation Council, Israel, Switzerland, and South Korea. The UK signed an Accession Protocol to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in July 2023. CPTPP parties reviewed and accepted the UK's compliance with the treaty provisions, with FSA providing input to UK government throughout the process. We provided support to Defra in notifying new

domestic measures in line with our international commitments, and input into SPS Committee meetings taking place under World Trade Organization and FTA agreements.

As part of the scrutiny process of FTAs, We, along with FSS, are commissioned by the DBT to provide advice in accordance with Section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 as to whether agreements maintain statutory protections for human health. We published our joint advice in January 2024, concluding that the UK's accession to CPTPP upheld statutory food safety and nutrition protections in line with consumer interest and food standards in the UK.

B Monitoring national food standards and the food regulatory system

'Our Food', a joint FSA/FSS report, provides a comprehensive review of UK food standards over the calendar year. We published '[Our Food 2022](#)' in October 2023 and laid the document in front of all four UK parliaments. The report reviewed data and evidence on the impact of cost-of-living pressures on consumer behaviour, food import patterns, hygiene and standards compliance across businesses and establishments, incidents, food crime and sampling. Its broad conclusion was that food standards had been maintained in 2022 but that challenges, particularly those relating to Local Authority and Official Veterinarian capacity and capability, remained. The FSA has used the report to support its position in several areas, including being the impetus for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs select committee hearing on vets in March 2024. [The 2023 report](#) was published in October 2024.

Convenor and Collaborator

In our role as a Convenor and Collaborator, the FSA aimed to:



Objective 8

Work in partnerships across the food system to address issues affecting consumers and businesses.

Introduction

Few of the outcomes the FSA strives towards can be achieved in isolation, as we hold a small amount of the food system remit. To deliver our mission, we must work with a variety of external stakeholders, within and outside government.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Work with other UK governments, to ensure we contribute to the delivery of key cross-government priorities.
- B. Influence the Codex Alimentarius food safety standards development.
- C. We should build strong working relationships with industry and food system stakeholders to work with and through others.
- D. Build our international reputation and influence as a food safety and regulation leader.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

A Working with governments across the UK on cross-government priorities

The FSA was involved in multiple of cross-government projects, seeking to champion consumer interests and improve transparency and compliance across the food system. This has included the Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP) and the School Food Standards compliance pilot which aimed to improve assurances around school food compliance.

In NI, we supported the development and delivery of policy, research, and resources to achieve healthier food environments within outcomes in the new Department of Health-led NI obesity strategy, supporting the NI consumer to access a healthier diet such as:

- Progress the Making Food Better Programme.
- Progress implementation of the nutritional standards in health and social care and council settings.
- Progress the nutritional sampling programme with a focus on children's meals.

Food Data Transparency Partnership

We worked with other government departments and food sector businesses to provide support on technical feasibility of the approach needed to deliver consistent, accurate and accessible environmental impact data for the agri-food system. This supports global demand for data and a trend towards outcome-based approaches to environmental management. The programme is also looking at improving nutrition data quality. Along with GS1, we co-chair the data and technical working group that looks to ensure technical feasibility and governance of proposals.

We worked with Defra towards publication of a roadmap (which was subsequently [published in May 2024](#)).

We have delivered our 2023/24 objectives and supported Defra and DHSC on the multi-year partnership. Food system and industry relationships have been initiated, or strengthened, and we engage proactively with industry, academia and non-governmental organisations.

School Food Standards (SFS) compliance pilot

SFS compliance pilot ran across 18 LAs from September 2022 until July 2023. This was a joint project between FSA and Department for Education, with support from Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. The pilot tested whether Food Safety Officers carrying out routine food hygiene inspections were able to identify potential non-compliance with SFS and where instances of potential non-compliance were raised, LAs were able to instigate a supportive intervention. The pilot was delivered in stages as follows:

- **Discovery Phase** – outlining early insights on school food provision and the differing LA set up across the participating authorities, [published November 2023](#).
- **Feasibility Study Phase 1** – findings around experiences of Food Safety Officers' completing the SFS check and LAs responding to results, [published November 2023](#).
- **Feasibility Study Phase 2** – findings around experiences of Food Safety Officers and LAs for the revised pilot approach and schools' experiences [published August 2024](#).

The pilot gave insight into whether assuring compliance with the SFS was feasible and was a good example of cross-government working. The FSA became more involved in the school food space, helping us to grow our evidence base on healthier and more sustainable food.

Northern Ireland – Nutrition and Health

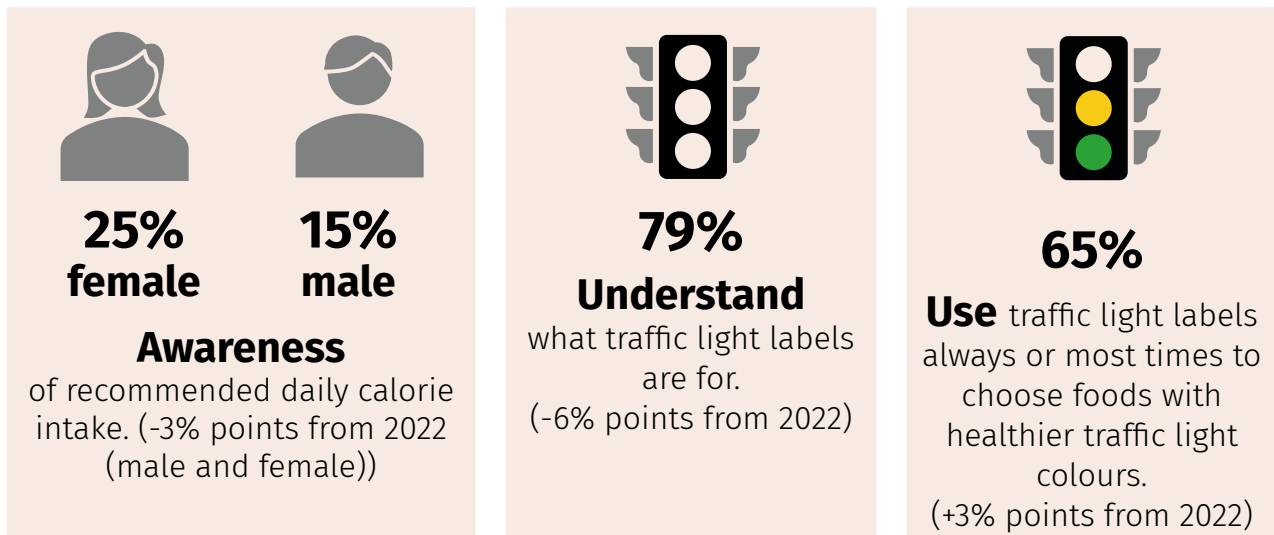
In NI, we share responsibility for nutrition and health policy delivery with the Department of Health. Our aim is to improve health outcomes by increasing the availability of healthier food and increasing consumers' understanding of nutrition. There are four main objectives:

Support policy, research and resources development and delivery to achieve a healthier food environment supporting the NI consumer to access a healthier diet

The FSA gathered evidence to support policy development on the restriction of promotions of food high in fat, sugar and salt. We engaged with the Scottish and Welsh Governments on their promotions' policies, using available research and economic modelling to prepare NI proposals.

Progress the Making Food Better Programme and the workstreams

We worked with local food manufacturers, retailers and the out-of-home sector to support NI food businesses build a healthier food environment through reformulation, reducing portion sizes, providing nutritional information, and delivering responsible promotions. The findings of the Making Food Better Consumer Tracker (previously known as Eating Well Choosing Better survey) from 2023/24 were:



Data collected can be affected by many factors including wider consumer interests, preferences and the current economic climate. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the data as a direct measure of FSA performance.

[Guidance](#) was published signposting food businesses to sources of funding and technical expertise in NI to help reformulate products to reduce calories, sugar, saturated fat, and salt. The resource has been viewed 645 times since publication (April 2023). The Making Food Better Newsletter currently has 1,032 subscribers (+325 from 2023/24). Two newsletters were issued between April 2023 – March 2024.

The [Calorie Wise](#) scheme is supported by [MenuCal](#), the FSA's free online calorie calculator and allergen management tool.

Fig. 21: Total number of MenuCal users per quarter

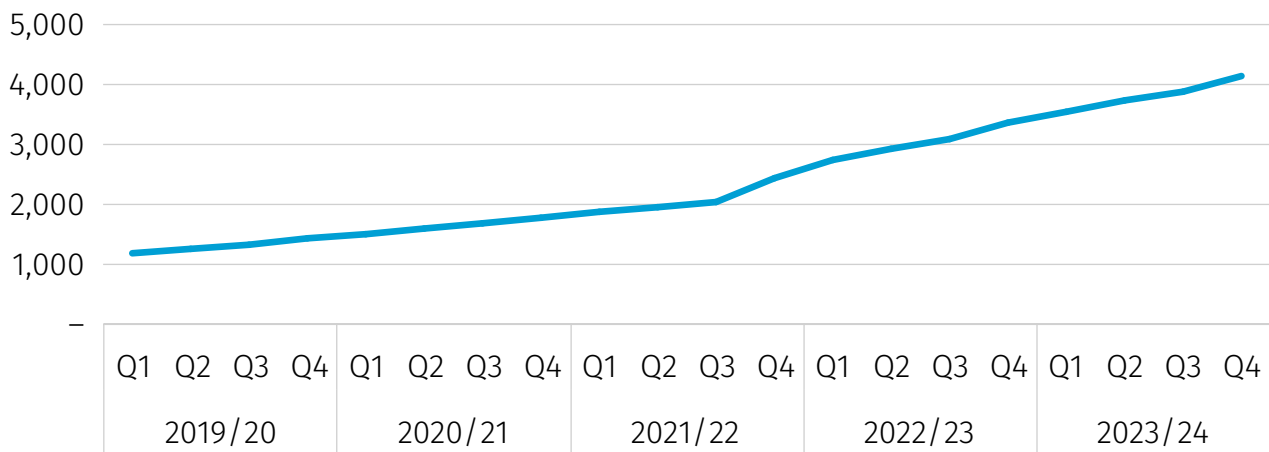


Fig. 22: Total number of MenuCal logins per quarter

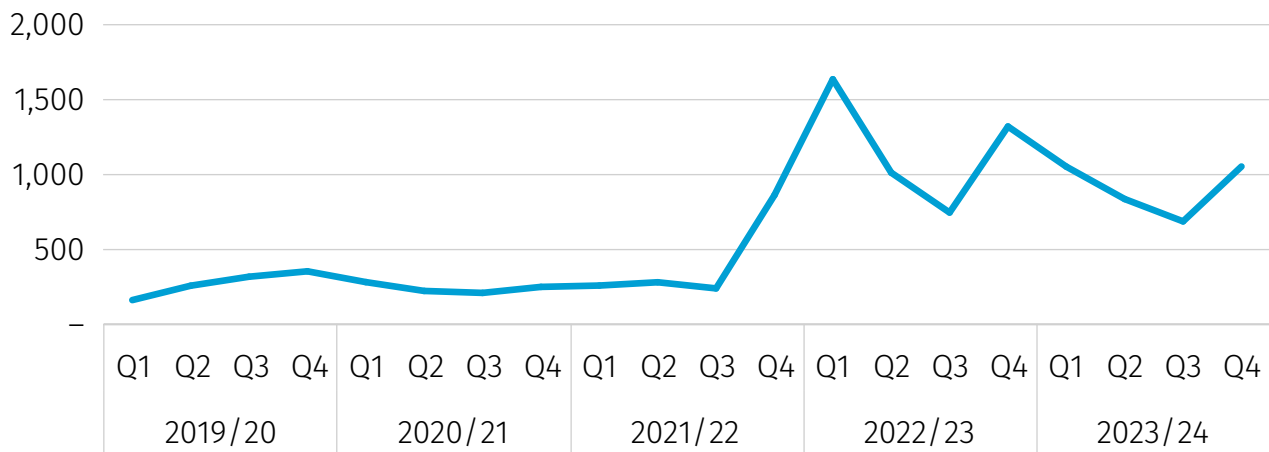
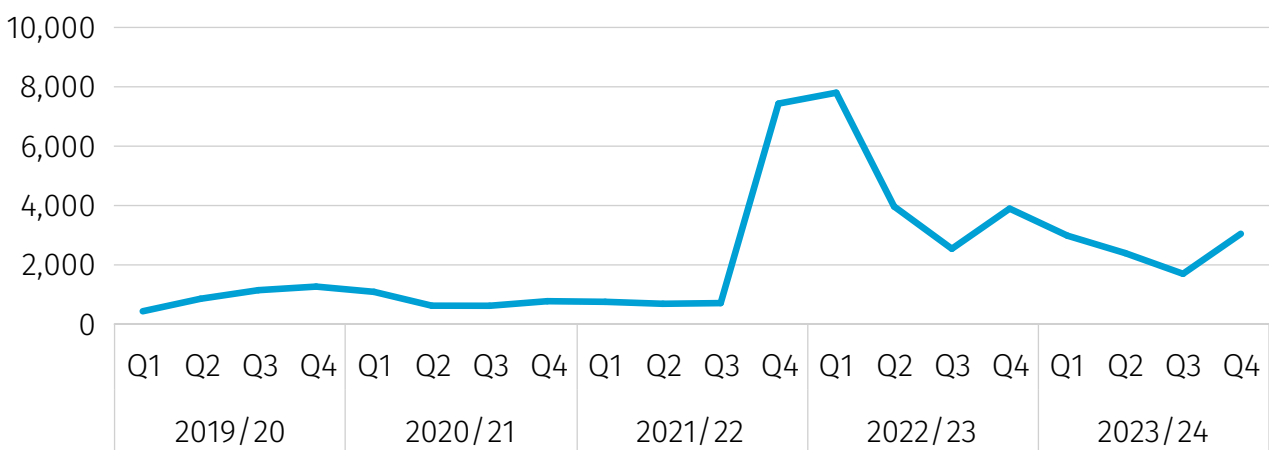


Fig. 23: Total number of recipes inputted into MenuCal per quarter



People that created a new MenuCal account increased by 26% and the number of logged in sessions decreased by 23%. A user would need to log in to add/amend a recipe, although the FSA does not collect data on what activity occurs during login sessions.

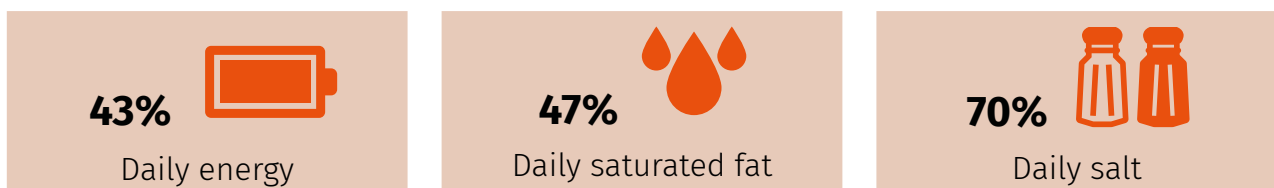
Progress implementation of nutritional standards in Health and Social Care and local council settings

We part-funded five part-time catering posts to support each of the five NI Health Trusts with implementation of the [Nutritional Standards for catering in Health and Social Care](#). The FSA led an evaluation of the application of nutritional standards to vending in NI hospitals.

We published guidance on [healthier and more sustainable vending](#), launched at an event in March 2024 which included 10 expert speakers and 14 exhibitors from the local food manufacturing and vending industry. This event was the first of its kind totalling 97 attendees, receiving positive feedback. 80% of participants, who provided feedback, said they were likely or very likely to introduce nutritional standards in their organisation.

Progress the nutritional sampling programme with a focus on children's meals

The FSA and local councils conducted research to explore food on offer to children when eating out in local NI restaurants and the nutritional content of popular children's meals. The report was published in March 2024 and highlighted limited choice and few healthy options available on children's menus. Most meals were high in energy, saturated fat and salt. This will inform further business engagement by councils and industry associations. We have developed guidance on [healthier catering tips for children's menus](#) in restaurants. Nutritional information from surveyed children's meals found that the following percentage of meals contained more than half the average recommended for a 5-year-old:



The objectives set for 2023/24 have been delivered by continuing to support the development of policy and working closely with the Department of Health on the obesity strategy. In addition, various workstreams have been progressed through the Making Food Better Programme, implementing Nutritional Standards in Health and Social Care and completing a nutritional sampling programme on children's meals in NI.

B Influencing development of Codex Alimentarius food safety standards

We engage constructively in the five Codex committees led by the FSA and actively influenced a range of issues and topics in these committees.

Significant achievements during 2023/24 include:

- Work with the United States to successfully propose new work on traceability.
- Creating two discussion papers exploring the role of toolkits in Codex and made recommendations on the alignment of the suite of existing Codex hygiene texts with the newly adopted General Principles of Food Hygiene (and HACCP annex), work that FSA led and completed in 2021.

C Building relationships with industry and food system stakeholders

The FSA chairs or otherwise participates in a broad range of engagement with industry and food system stakeholders. These include regular technical engagement groups on issues including [food hypersensitivity](#), imported food and feed, the FHRs, and many more. We convene industry and other stakeholder around major incidents and events, for example the working groups convened in spring 2023 in response to media coverage of an NFCU investigation. Beyond this valuable working level engagement, our Chair and Executive Management Team have regular engagement with senior stakeholders in all parts of the food system, including a quarterly meeting with organisations representing civil society and consumers in the food system. Our Board holds their quarterly meetings in different parts of the UK, combining the theme with visits which allow them to hear directly from local food businesses and other stakeholders in all parts of the food system.

As mentioned on page 35 above, we tested a potential new enterprise level approach to regulation, running alongside the existing regulatory model with five large UK supermarket retailers and developed partnerships with the online food aggregators; Deliveroo, JustEat and UberEats to establish the Aggregators' Food Safety Charter. The new Relationship and Account manager function with the large retailers and their primary authorities enhanced the FSA's understanding of retailers food safety management which included store visits and shadowing of auditors. ABC's partnership with the online food aggregators secured commitment from the aggregators to inform the FSA of any proposed changes to their business onboarding processes. The aggregators made the FSA allergy training available to the 60,000+ food businesses that use their platform.

D Building our international reputation

The FSA undertakes international engagement to support delivery of FSA priorities while building and consolidating our international reputation as a trusted regulator. We work strategically to focus international engagement on the strongest opportunities to progress FSA priorities. Since the last report, senior leaders, including the Chair, CEO and Chief Scientific Advisor, have conducted international engagement with regulators in Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, India, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, and Israel. This has helped us strengthen work with partners on shared interests, such as regulated products, risk assessment, and Official Controls.

We have engaged in multilateral fora such as the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum, actively participated in events such as India's Global Food Regulators Summit during its G20 Presidency and hosted a Precision Breeding event in Brussels. We engaged with the EU under the formal governance structures of the Trade and Cooperation agreement, including leading technical engagement on collaboration during crises coordination and major incidents and supporting discussions on live bivalve molluscs.

There has been an increased interest from international regulators to collaborate with the FSA and from other government departments to support their work with specific countries. Notably, there has been increased contact from the UK Agriculture Attaché network overseas, which actively promotes UK interests.

Enabler

To enable our other work, the FSA aimed to:



Objective 9

Provide the people, resources and processes needed to deliver the FSA's objectives.

Introduction

We published [our People Plan](#) in April 2023, setting out how we aimed to improve as an employer and the benefits this would provide. This outlined our three key themes:

1. an excellent employee experience;
2. maximising capability; and
3. an enabling organisation.

Since then, the wider Civil Service People Plan has been published setting out the Government's long-term commitment to modernisation and reform in the Civil Service and there were strong synergies between our themes and wider civil service approach.

Key deliverables to achieve our objectives for 2023/24

- A. Attract, retain, and support our people, identifying current skills and needs and delivering and implementing the People Plan.

Achievements delivered and challenges overcome in 2023/24

Enabler

A: Deliver and implement the People Plan

1 An exceptional employee experience

Embedding our ASPIRE values

We launched our refreshed ASPIRE values (Accountable, Supportive, Professional, Inclusive, Ready and Evolving) alongside the People Plan in April 2023, embedding them in reward and recognition, and performance management. Senior leadership delivered a campaign featuring spotlight months and articles for each value to showcase changes and demonstrate the values' pertinent to everyone in the FSA. Our 2023 Civil Service People Survey (CSPS) results demonstrated that FSA colleagues had a strong awareness of our refreshed values, with 93% of staff familiar with them.

Further integrate wellbeing into our working

We promoted awareness of workplace wellbeing and the resources and support available. We reviewed staff welfare provisions working in third party premises and developed an action plan agreed at local site level. We reviewed ergonomic risk assessments in relation to frontline work within meat premises with local protocols

being adjusted where necessary. 100 workplace adjustments were provided (+38 from 2022/23), removing obstacles to work for employees with health conditions. A new Mental Wellbeing staff network was launched to support the ongoing programme in 2024/25.

Reviewing our current staff benefits offer

Continued pay restraints have increased pressure to attract, retain and engage employees, particularly in specialist areas. Employee benefits are non-cash provisions within our reward package, e.g. paid holidays and pensions. Our wider offer encompasses additional benefits such as enhanced retail discounts, cycle to work scheme, gym membership discounts, and dental insurance. A review was undertaken to establish what aspects of the wider benefits offer were most valued by staff and what they perceived might be improvements on the current arrangement. This information will inform a tendering exercise 2024/25, shaping our future employee benefits offer to ensure it gives maximum value to our people.

2 Maximising capability

Focus on fair, supportive, inclusive and consistent people management

We developed our Management Charter to articulate manager expectations including behaviours, attitudes and core management responsibilities. The charter and toolkit, which provide quick links to relevant policies and processes, were developed in 2023/24 and launched in April 2024. It will be embedded in all job descriptions for positions with line management responsibility, ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly and consistently communicated. A mandatory management objective linked to the responsibilities articulated in the charter around performance management was launched in Q1 2024/25.

We developed FSA Ascend, a structured leadership and management framework to develop our people in line with our Management Charter expectations; the Civil Service Line Management Standards and strategic capabilities forecast requirements. Ascend will launch during 2024/25. An entry level programme is being developed centrally to provide aspiring managers with the knowledge, skills and experience to progress with confidence.

Strategic capability and skills forecast

We conducted our strategic capability and skills forecast to identify what we required to deliver our strategy. This identified three overarching priority skills areas:

- **business delivery**
- **leadership and management**
- **communications and relationships**

We delivered a corporate learning and development plan, prioritising investment in development supporting a priority area and will be repeated annually.

Work began to define and implement targeted learning requirements for incidents handling and we are piloting programmes for Leading in Complexity and impactful written communications during 2024/25, which will be evaluated to understand their impact.

Recognising the importance of the policy profession in delivering our priorities and enhanced responsibilities post-EU Exit, we ran generic recruitment campaigns to fill roles, removing the need for candidates to submit multiple applications, helping to create a more agile workforce. This developed a talent pipeline to meet the growing demand for policy professionals and ensured the most efficient cross-agency use of recruitment resource. We will focus investment on the policy profession through our strategic capabilities forecast and corporate development plan.

Recruiting to our critical Trainee Official Auxiliary (TOA) roles remained challenging however, we saw significant improvement in the success of TOA recruitment campaigns. New recruitment strategies including social media activity, online open evenings and more tailored assessment criteria resulted in an increase in our average success rate per campaign. We continue to explore new and innovative ways to attract candidates to critical roles to support our aim for civil servants to fill 50% of FSA Meat Hygiene Inspector roles.

Maintain momentum on inclusion

We aim to ensure someone's background or protected characteristics are an asset to improve policy making and service delivery. We perform an annual 'Speak up' campaign to ensure staff feel able to raise issues and this year held focus groups with the LGBT+ network. Equality of opportunity is addressed through several development programmes e.g. Beyond Boundaries, an innovative and evidence-based cross-government 12-month development programme. We ringfenced a portion of the places to people with protected characteristics. We have our own development programme for people from under-represented groups and have a programme of reverse mentoring. Our actions to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not are delivered through our networks and community groups.

Our actions on inclusion in the People Plan relate to the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and National Disability Strategy (NDS). In 2023/24 the Disability Action Group completed our application for Disability Confident Leader level, an NDS requirement. Our application received commendations for our approach to recruitment, workplace adjustments guidance for managers and analysing the Civil Service people survey (CSPS) results by protected characteristics.

We monitor and analyse diversity data through voluntary declaration to understand our workforce protected characteristics and ensure we are attracting a diverse skillset through recruitment practices. Our declaration rates were broadly in line with those across the Civil Service, although disability declaration is below the Civil Service's. During 2024/25 we will ensure new joiners know how to complete declarations on our finance and HR system and understand why people may choose not to disclose their protected characteristics.

From April 2024, we were able to collect data on socio-economic background, caring responsibilities and multiple disabilities via our new finance and HR system. This will enable future reporting and provide further insights from examining representation within the employee lifecycle from recruitment, progression, people survey and exit. Based on available data, our workforce representation is below the Civil Service benchmark for disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity. However, it remained steady, and representation for these groups has not reduced significantly over time.

Fig. 24: Workforce representation by protected characteristic as at 31 March 2024 (% points difference from 31 March 2023)

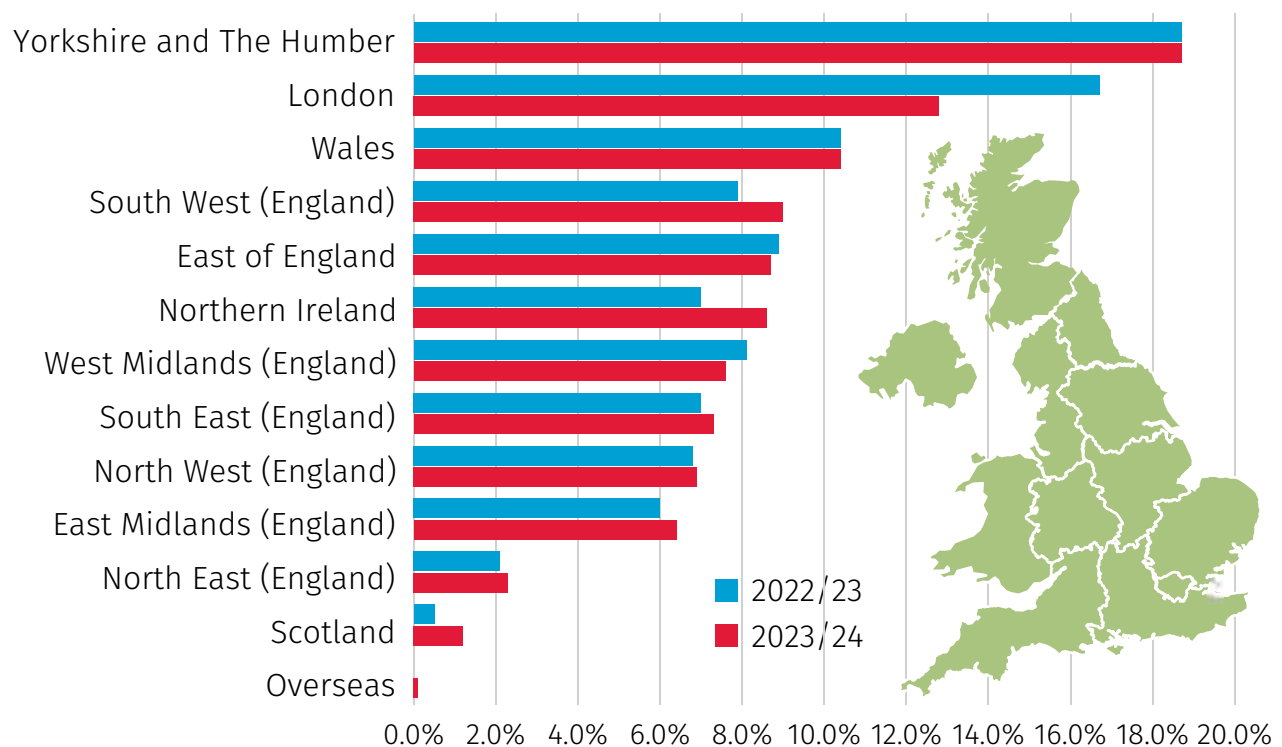


Further information on D&I and workforce representation trends can be found in the 'Staff composition' section.

3 An enabling organisation

Through Our Ways of Working we have provided workspaces to enable effective working relationships which optimise performance and to support an increasingly geographically diverse workforce.

Fig. 25: Headcount as a % of staff by UK region map

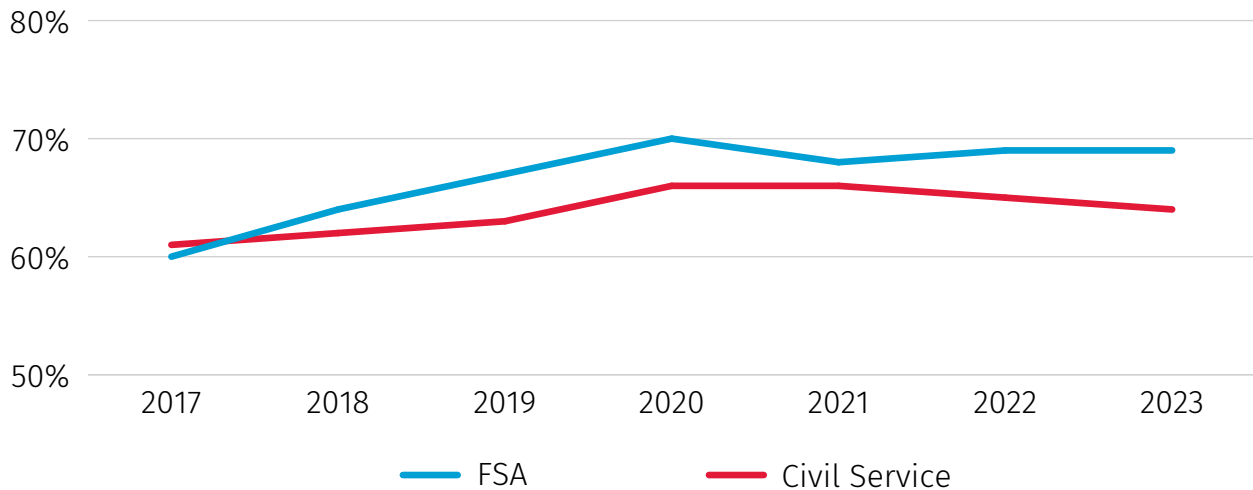


Our new system for finance, payroll and HR was rolled out across the FSA in September 2023. This huge change has enabled us to collaborate effectively but was challenging. All staff took on new technology requiring training, guides, and communications alongside technical challenges of system integration, process configuration and data management.

The Discovery for Smarter Communications replacement was completed as scheduled and new ways of working developed and systems identified. These have formed into the currently in development and nearing deliver “FSA LINK”.

The CSPS is used to track our staff’s attitudes and experiences of working for us. 82% of our staff took part in the 2023 survey, +3% points from 2022 and 17% points above the Civil Service. Our results were strong, with our engagement score at 69% (same as 2022), exceeding the CS median benchmark for engagement and all other core themes. We have used our 2023 organisational-level CSPS results to understand the impact of our People Plan rather than to inform a separate set of activities.

Fig. 26: FSA CSPS score vs Civil Service Employee’ and Engagement Index (EEI)



Principal risks and uncertainties

To protect public health and consumer interests in relation to food, we have identified nine principal risks. These are managed by appropriate Directors and Deputy Directors, all mitigations are timebound and reviewed quarterly (or monthly by exception). Complete risk elimination isn't always possible or cost-effective, some may arise from unforeseen circumstances and others inherent in the food industry and system. We actively monitor and manage our risks in accordance with our risk policy, taking necessary actions and providing assurance to our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Key mitigations to manage our risks are summarised below:

Strategic objective key:

- 1 Deliver our regulatory responsibilities
- 2 Reform the feed and food safety regulatory framework
- 3 Support decision makers to take informed decisions on food rules
- 4 Create a proportionate, effective and future focused approach to regulation
- 5 Ensure our decisions, are informed by science and evidence
- 6 Build evidence, through science and research
- 7 Speak out about areas of consumer interest to support UK food standards
- 8 Work in partnerships across the food system to address issues
- 9 Provide the people, resources and processes needed to deliver

Risk trend key:

The risk has worsened



The risk is stable (or new)




The risk has improved



Principal risk trends and key mitigating activities

Risk 1: An inability to effectively identify, prioritise, assess and act to prevent avoidable food risks harming consumers		
Risk exposure assessment	Trend this year	Link to strategic objective
A		1 3 4 5 6

We protect consumers by coordinating responses to foodborne disease incidents and outbreaks with Public Health Authorities, LAs and others. The BTOM programme assessed the potential impacts on incident capacity in the lead up to the implementation of the new border checks. This scenario planning and modelling work ensured we have a better understanding and preparedness for downstream impacts of increased checks, which will ensure public safety and continued trust in the system. We will continue to reform and implement agreed changes to our Regulated Products Service (now known as Market Authorisation System), to provide an effective, proportionate and transparent system to deliver efficiency and ‘safe by design’ will keep consumers safe, support growth while removing unnecessary barriers to innovation.

Risk 2: An inability to work effectively and cohesively across multiple nations of the UK and administrations to ensure consumers are well protected despite potential food/feed policy differences between systems		
Risk exposure assessment	Trend this year	Link to strategic objective
R		3 8

We work with UK regulatory partners, Wales and NI governments, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the Scottish government to ensure the UK food/feed regulatory regime continues to provide strong consumer protection. We are party to three cross-government UK frameworks, making commitments to joint ways of working and seeking consensus on changes across the UK, while recognising that trading businesses and consumers require consistency and equal levels of protection. Our commitment to a ‘one FSA’ approach has enabled collaboration in England, Wales and NI, and is embedded in our ways of working.

Risk 3: An inability to provide an appropriate response to a major food/feed incident to protect consumers from potential harm		
Risk exposure assessment 	Trend this year 	Link to strategic objective   

To manage our risk to handle major food or feed safety incidents we have robust contingency and resilience plans in place. We have continued to strengthen our resilience and emergency preparedness by establishing the Risk Crisis Management (RCM) Programme that is building FSA capability and capacity to respond to large scale crises and non-routine incidents in response to a review commissioned by the FSA in spring 2023.


Risk 4: An inability to effectively supporting Local and Port Authorities in delivering Official Controls reducing potential food safety risk to consumers and maintaining confidence by trading partners and consumers		
Risk exposure assessment 	Trend this year 	Link to strategic objective   

Food and feed law places reliance on others to deliver many regulatory functions and we work closely to ensure service/consumer protection are not compromised. We monitor LA performance for Official Controls delivery through data analysis of biannual surveys. LAs are facing increased pressures and financial challenges, and some struggle to deliver Official Controls. Through the ABC programme, we are testing new models for future regulation, including a trial of enterprise level regulation. We are working on other mechanisms to improve business compliance e.g. our Food Safety Charter with the online aggregators.


Risk 5: An inability to deliver our Official Controls functions in England and Wales for Meat to protect consumer safety and confidence plus wider implications such as food supply interruption, trade and animal welfare		
Risk exposure assessment 	Trend this year 	Link to strategic objective   

In England and Wales, we deliver Official Controls in approved meat establishments, wine producers, and on-farm dairy establishments. This involves a mix of FSA-employed staff and contractors via a Service Delivery Partner (SDP). The SDP employs our Official Veterinarian cohort and over 50% of our Meat Hygiene Inspectors. We established the Veterinary Resourcing Programme following an update to the Board in June 2023 on the current risks to veterinary supply and our work with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), our current SDP and across government. The programme aims to maintain and secure OV resources to deliver Official Controls in abattoirs in England and Wales from 2025, whilst creating greater political visibility and public awareness of the


systemic shortage of UK vets and globally. We are reducing reliance on the RCVS's temporary registration scheme, allowing qualified vets to practice under supervision while they undertake technical and English language training.

Risk 6: An inability to successfully utilise our resources and support our people to deliver the FSA Strategy benefiting consumers		
Risk exposure assessment	Trend this year	Link to strategic objective
A		9

We will continue to focus on improving our effectiveness and efficiency, as we are always prioritising work due to pressure on resources. Enabling us to leverage great impact from small resources. We continue to implement our People Plan, building on our activities by enhancing people management capacity, introducing corporate development planning, evolving our approach to succession planning and talent management, and supporting development of Government Veterinary Profession Graduate Programme. To support our wide range of stakeholders, FSA toxicologists have discussed the toxicology skills gap with the British Toxicology Society and the profession has worked with the Capability and Development team to set a new training agenda.





Risk 7: An inability to maintain delivery of our required duties to sufficient standard with allocated resources		
Risk exposure assessment	Trend this year	Link to strategic objective
R		9

Dynamic economic conditions could have significant impacts on our ability to deliver our statutory duties and maintain standards. We have commenced the next Spending Review (SR) preparations with planning sessions held across the FSA to understand the scope and develop clear proposals. We are liaising across government, the wider veterinary profession and our current service delivery partner to understand the potential impact of the migrant worker salaries increase. The SR is crucial in ensuring we use our resources efficiently, prioritise key areas and align finances with our strategy and is vital for us to continue cross-departmental collaboration to protect consumers. We will maintain positive relationships across government to influence plans and thinking in the early stages.

Risk 8: An inability to maintain informative and influential relationships across government and internationally to advance consumer protection		
Risk exposure assessment	Trend this year	Link to strategic objective
A		3 4 5 6 7 8

We must influence governments effectively in Westminster, Wales, NI, and internationally, to ensure our work is understood, supported and achieves change. We engage with government and Parliamentary stakeholders across all three nations, including the



reformed NI Assembly, on a range of issues relating to food standards, hygiene controls, and wider consumer protection matters. Our engagement programme drives awareness, understanding and support for existing work and planned reforms.




Risk 9: An inability to maintain confidence and trust from consumers, business, government and/or other stakeholders sustaining our ability to deliver our strategic objectives to protect consumers		
Risk exposure assessment 	Trend this year 	Link to strategic objective  



Failing to influence and engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders would risk our pledge to put consumers first in everything we do. Trust and confidence are central to achieving our consumers outcomes. One foundation is our use of evidence, openly published and well communicated. We designed public communications and stakeholder engagement strategies to build and maintain trust amongst different audiences. This includes providing accurate, evidence-led information for consumers about food safety and hygiene, driving awareness and understanding of our policy making. We created a new strategic communications unit that have responsibility for monitoring progress against the plan and evaluating the impact of our communications.



Emerging risks



The food system is complex and dynamic with developments such as new technologies around food production, logistics, shifting consumer habits and trading influences. With the dynamic nature in which the FSA operates we have identified the following emerging risks that may affect future performance across all our strategic objectives:

- 
Governmental factors – Uncertainty around devolved nations, political differences across UK and the General Election made medium-term planning difficult due to unknown changes to requirements which may result in delay or failure to deliver our regulatory responsibilities. 

- 
Growth in novel food creation – such as alternative proteins.  

- 
Global and economic factors – pose a risk to the food supply chain and food prices rises which may result in increased food crime and impact our ability to work in partnership across the food system to address issues. 

- 
Climate and environmental events – may increase the risk from food pests and microbiological prevalence or resistance resulting in increased threat of food safety incidents. 

- 
Non-compliance – During implementation of the BTOM, there may be an increase in non-compliance detection and food safety incidents impacting our ability to work in partnership across the food system to address issues and our reputation. 

Enforcement (England and Wales)

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 the following numbers of Written Advice, Hygiene Improvement Notices, Remedial Action Notices and Referrals for investigation were recorded on Chronos, the FSA's enforcement tracking system, in FSA approved establishments in England and Wales.

Action	Number
Written Advice	694
Hygiene Improvement Notices	20
Remedial Action Notices	45
Referrals for investigation	44
Total	803

In relation to written advice assuming that a single letter is issued per day per establishment containing multiple contraventions there were 426 letters issued in relation to written advice.

NI: Formal enforcement action

The level of NI enforcement action was lower than in England and Wales. This is partly because the number of FSA meat approved establishments in NI is relatively low at 53. Of these, only 22 (slaughterhouses and game handling establishments) required constant veterinary presence during operations. Most of the slaughterhouses are very large, high throughput establishments driven by export markets, where requirements are in addition to EU compliance. In terms of audit outcomes, NI has recorded no 'Improvement Necessary' or 'Urgent Improvement Necessary' from Q1 2019/20 onwards. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible for the meat operations delivery on behalf of the FSA in NI. We monitor performance of DAERA as part of the service-level agreement, and there is a system of verification visits in place where levels of enforcement at the establishment are assessed against the observations made on the day; there have been no concerns in relation to this.

Formal action	Number of notices 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	Number of notices 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice, served under the Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, giving a food business operator a day's notice of the intention to apply to a court for the granting of a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Order which would result in an immediate cessation of business	0	0
Hygiene Improvement Notice served under the Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2006	0	0
Remedial Action Notice served under the Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006	0	0
Informal action	Number of notices 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	Number of notices 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Written advice	12	17

Prosecutions

There are 20 ongoing prosecution cases: 11 being prosecuted by the FSA and 9 by the CPS. However, since 1 April 2024, there have been 13 referrals for investigation submitted to the FSA Legal Investigation Team. One referral each under animal welfare and animal by-products legislation, which will ultimately be referred to the CPS, and the remaining eleven referrals for alleged offences under food hygiene regulations.

Referrals made from April 2024 are still being investigated and although since April 2024, we laid two fresh sets of proceedings, they stemmed from referrals made in the last financial year.

Complaints including those made to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

The FSA will always seek to address and learn from any issues identified through its Complaints Policy. We aim to resolve all complaints quickly and as close as possible to the point of delivery. For this reason, complaints are normally handled at the 'local' level in the first instance. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with how the FSA has responded to their complaint, they can escalate the matter through to the 'central' level of our process. This level effectively offers two stages of 'appeal' firstly through the office of the Complaints Coordinator and secondly, through the office of the Chief Executive. Although there may be occasions when it is necessary for a complaint to commence at the 'central' level of the process.

Details of our Complaints Policy can be found on [our website](#).

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied having exhausted the FSA's process, at both the 'local' and 'central' levels, they can refer their case to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). Further details about the PHSO are available online at www.ombudsman.org.uk/

During the calendar year 2023:

6 cases were responded to at the 'local' level. Of these, 2 cases were not upheld, 2 were partially upheld and 2 were withdrawn by the complainant.

2 cases were responded to at the 'central' level through the office of the Complaints Co-ordinator. Both cases were not upheld.

2 cases were escalated to the office of the Chief Executive. 1 was not upheld and 1 was partially upheld.

0 cases were referred to the PHSO.

This compares to 2022, which saw:

5 cases handled at local level. Of which, 4 were not upheld and 1 was partially upheld.

4 cases handled at Complaints Co-Ordinator level. All 4 were not upheld.

3 cases escalated to the office of the Chief Executive, with 2 not upheld and 1 partially upheld.

Budgeting Framework

The Department of Finance (DoF) is responsible for management of the Northern Ireland Budget process in line with a budgetary framework set by Treasury.

The total amount a department spends is referred to as the Total Managed Expenditure (TME); which is split into:

- Annually Managed Expenditure (AME)
- Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL)

Treasury, and in turn DoF, do not set firm AME budgets. They are volatile or demand-led in a way that departments cannot control. The Department monitors AME forecasts closely and this facilitates reporting to DoF, who in turn report to Treasury.

As DEL budgets are controllable, Treasury sets firm limits for DEL budgets for Whitehall departments and Devolved Administrations at each Spending Review. The NI Executive, based on advice from the Finance Minister, will in turn agree a local Budget that will set DEL controls for Executive departments.

DEL budgets are classified into resource and capital.

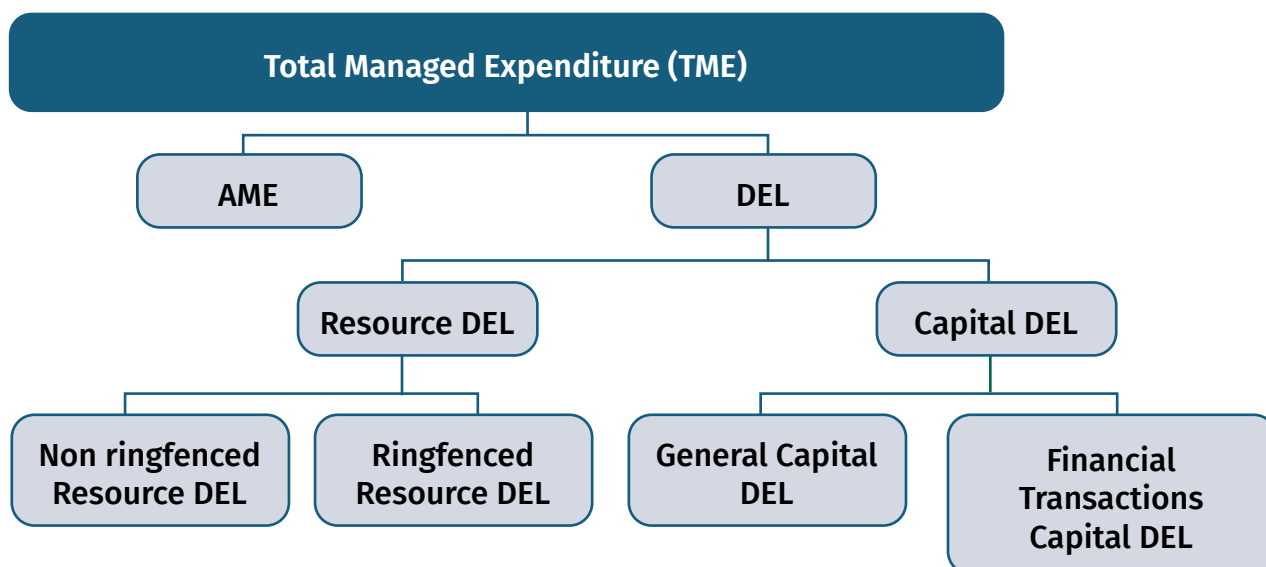
- Resource budgets are further split into non-ringfenced resource that pays for programme delivery and departmental running costs, and separately ringfenced resource that covers non-cash charges for depreciation and impairment of assets.
- Capital DEL is split into 'Financial Transactions Capital (FTC)' which can only be used for loans or equity investments in private sector organisations; and 'general' Capital for spending on the purchase and/or acquisition of assets.

Further detail on the Budgeting Framework can be found in the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance published by Treasury.

[Consolidated budgeting guidance 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115442/consolidated-budgeting-guidance-2023-to-2024.pdf)

Previously the information contained within budgetary controls did not read directly to financial information presented in Financial Statements due to a number of misalignments. The Executive's Review of Financial Process (RoFP), which was implemented in 2022-23, has helped to address these differences and improve transparency. Further information on the Executive's Review of Financial Process can be found on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

Budget Structure



Budgetary Performance

Details of the Department's performance against Budgetary Control totals is set out in the table below.

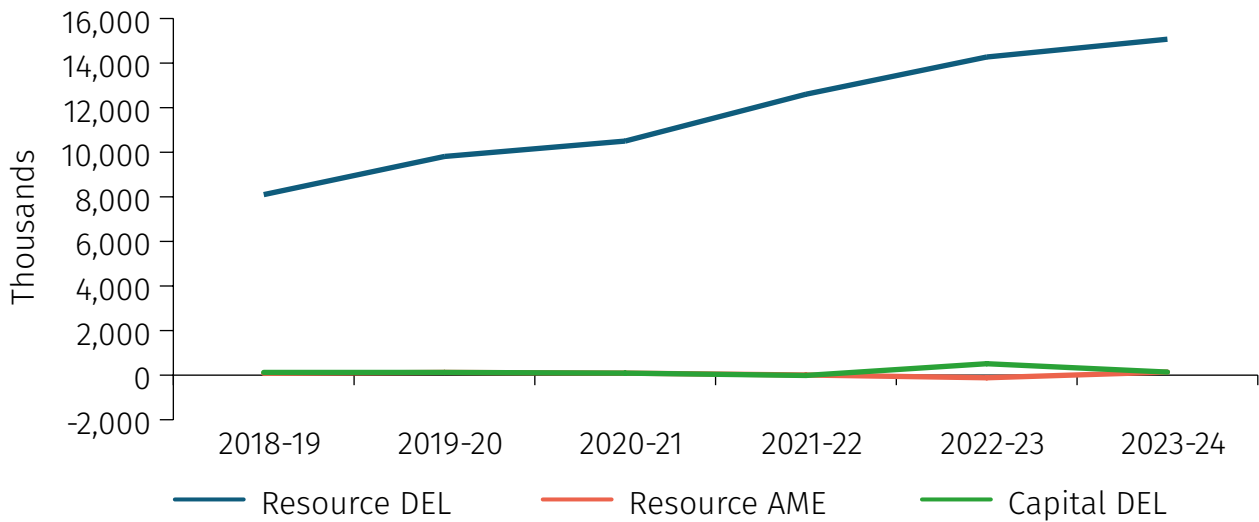
	Final Plan 2023-24 £000	Provisional Outturn 2023-24 £000	Underspend/ (Overspend) £000
Resource DEL	15,177	15,072	105
including			
Non-ringfenced	15,009	14,919	90
Ringfenced D/I	168	153	15
Capital DEL	180	138	42
including			
General Capital	180	138	42
FTC	–	–	–
Total DEL	15,357	15,210	147
AME	300	-21	321
including			
AME Resource	300	–	300
AME Capital	–	-21	21
Total Managed Expenditure	15,657	15,189	468

Explanation of Variances

The Resource DEL underspend was mainly due to expenditure on Meat Hygiene Inspections being less than expected.

The FSA in NI carries £300k AME budget cover (this is non-cash) in the event of default on payments. In addition, there was a revaluation of a dilapidations provision on a building lease due to a change in discount rates.

FSA total departmental spending trend analysis (£000s)



Resource DEL total expenditure has increased in time with the prepartate and delivery of EU Exit.

Sustainability Report

Sustainability and Climate Change Adaption

The Foods Standards Agency has reported on climate-related financial disclosures consistent with HM Treasury's TCFD-aligned disclosure application guidance which interprets and adapts the framework for the UK public sector. We have complied with the TCFD recommendations and recommendations disclosures around governance, metrics and targets in line with the central government's TCFD-aligned disclosure implementation timetable.

Climate-related risks and issues are covered by our existing governance and risk management arrangements as set out in the Governance Statement.

Climate and environmental events have been identified as an emerging risk within the Performance Analysis section and Ruth Nolan, Director of People and Resources, is the member of the Executive Management Team who is responsible for the management of climate-related risks and issues. The management of this risk includes:

- Carrying out periodic risk assessments and reporting to the ARAC on climate-related risks and issues;
- Assessing climate-related and environmental factors that may affect new and existing policies and informing the Executive Management Team of any risks and opportunities; and
- Providing assurance to the Accounting Officer that adequate controls are in place to mitigate climate-related risks.

The FSA's Environmental Sustainability Strategy defines our priorities and commitment to protecting the environment, whilst aligning with the Greening Government Commitments (GGC) in support of the goal for achieving Net Zero by 2050.

Following the securing of funds for a full time Environmental Sustainability Manager the previous year, the post was filled on a temporary basis for six months and in June 2023 we recruited the position full time. Since then, carrying on the work of delivering a sustainability and climate change action plan which enables us to meet our policy targets has been a priority, to provide clarity and direction to leaders across the organisation to build sustainability into their work.

We have taken an active role in contributing to the refresh of the next reporting cycle of the GGC for the 2026/30 period. We're working alongside policy officials and strategy experts from across Government in reviewing the Commitments, specifically relating to travel emissions (which fall under Commitment A). This is the area where the FSA generates most of its greenhouse gas emissions due to business travel, and therefore where we should aim to make the biggest impact in the setting of refreshed targets. It is an 18-month process which began in August 2023 and will be completed around March/April 2025. An initial first draft of the refreshed Commitments were reviewed in November 2023, with a second expected during Oct/Nov 2024. It is currently too early to tell what the final revised targets will look like, but our hope is they build on previous versions and are more ambitious than ever before.

Our Climate & Environment Action Group (CEAG) staff network was relaunched in December 2023. Bringing together old and new members, we acknowledged the role of the Group had changed slightly since it had been previously operating and agreed new Terms of Reference to better support the aims of our action plan. Currently we are reviewing which areas of the action plan to take forward first and pulling together appropriate timescales for each.

In January 2024 we underwent a further independent UKAS-approved surveillance audit for Environmental ISO 14001 Standard. The audit was over four days, covering our York and Birmingham office practices and the legislative requirements of our central Environmental Management System (EMS). We are very happy to report we passed and retain our accreditation for the final year of the certification cycle.

In March 2024, we updated the FSA Board through our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on our performance meeting targets set out in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy. We reported on how we were meeting GGC targets, the GGC refresh project, actions taken to further reduce our office footprint, the results of recent audits, and if further actions and targets were appropriate. ARAC accepted our recommendation that no additional targets were required. Through regular updates to ARAC we will continue to review and introduce changes where necessary.

Our Intranet page continues to provide a dedicated resource of information giving all FSA staff easy access to our sustainability targets and performance, as well as a summary of the climate crisis, UK government goals, ISO 14001, tips and resources.

Following an uptick in face-to-face meetings during the 2022/23 reporting year, we've seen a reduction during this year which has generated less business travel/building energy consumption and impacted our GHG emissions positively. We remain committed to continuing to reduce our carbon footprint.

Ultimately, overall evaluation of our progress is that we remain on track in meeting our headline target "Mitigating climate change: working towards Net Zero by 2050". This links into one of the actions for goal 13 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

We plan to make further disclosures for strategy, risk management and remaining metrics and targets in future reporting periods, in line with the TCFD implementation timetable.

Carbon Footprint

Business Travel

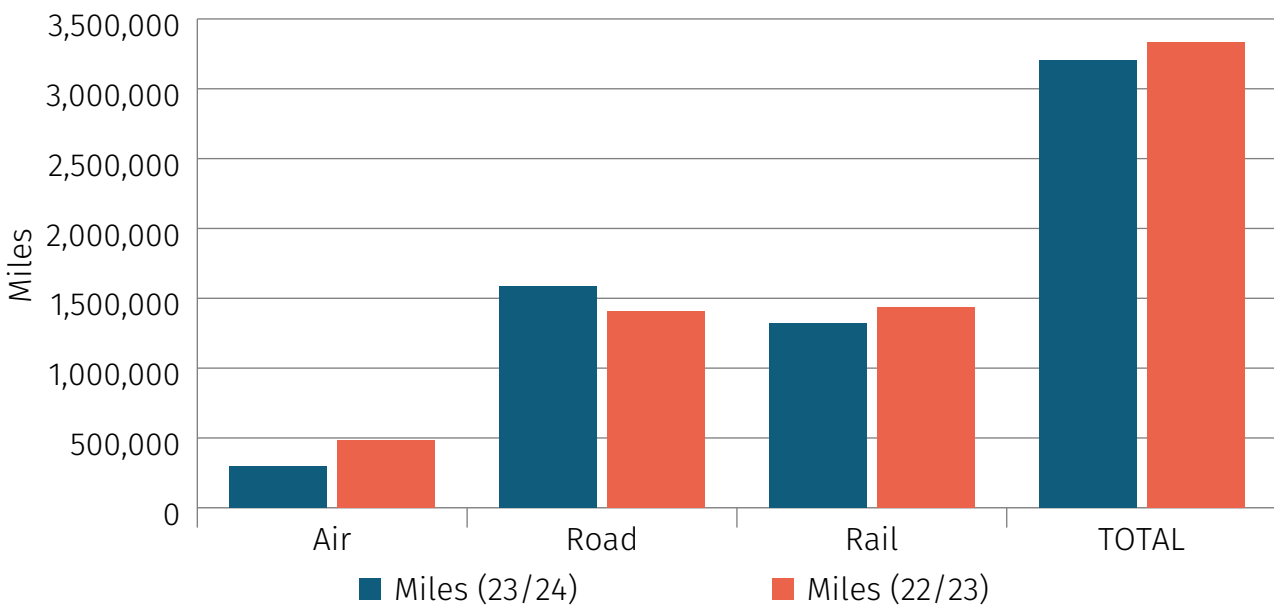
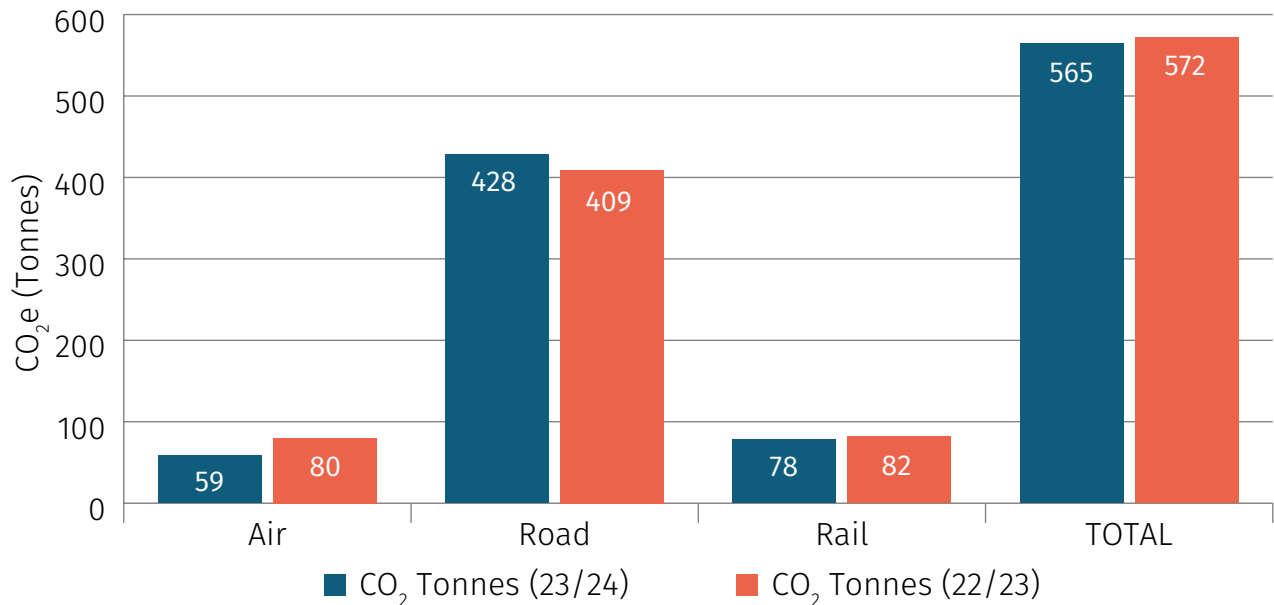
We have been successful in reducing our carbon footprint, both in terms of miles travelled and CO₂e tonnes produced. This is attributed to a reduction in both air and rail travel.

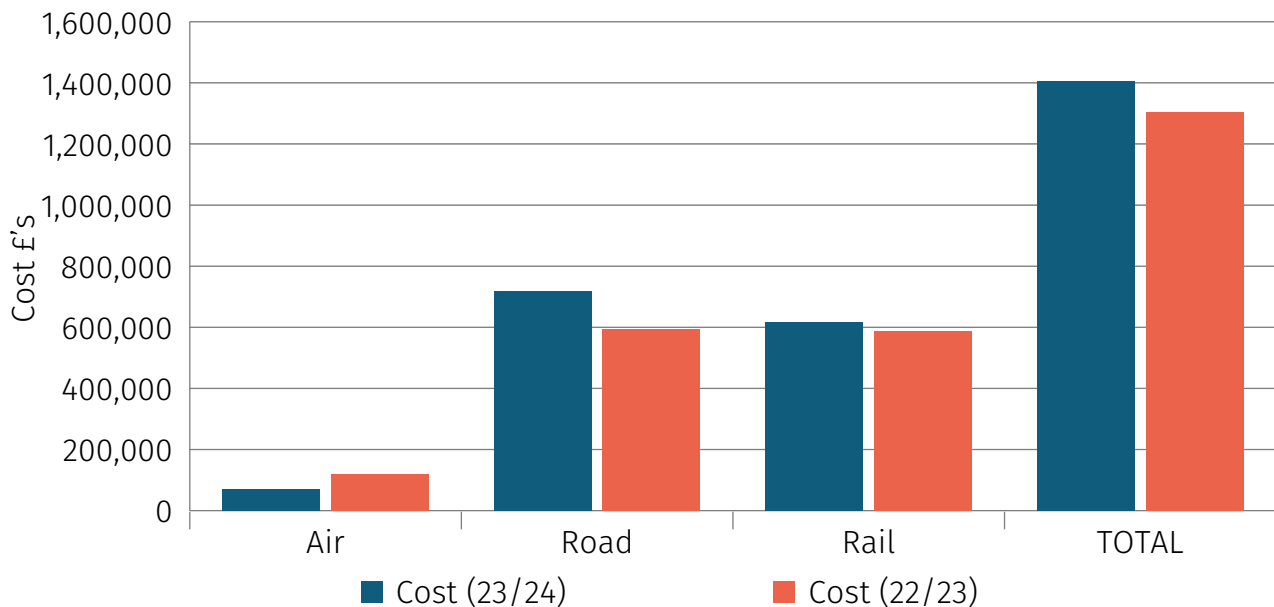
The reduction has been achieved in part by us continuing our OWOW (Our Ways of Working) programme launched in 2017 to modernise how we work. This continues to be embraced by our staff, with many choosing to work from home. This, combined with us continuing to make even greater use of the digital tools we have available has helped to contribute to the decrease.

Total CO₂e generated is 564.68 tonnes, a decrease of 1.13% from the previous year (571.18 tonnes). This breaks down as 58.52 tonnes (air), 428.19 tonnes (road) and 77.97 tonnes (rail) for the year.

Total miles travelled is 3,203,307 a decrease of 3.83% from the previous year (3,331,050).

Total spend related to this is £1,406,481.35, an increase of 7.86% from the previous year (£102,495.50 spend increase).





Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Scope 1 (Direct)

We have continued to build on our achievements relating to the Government Fleet Commitment target of ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEV) for lease cars. Having met the 2022 target ahead of time we're pleased to report that 84% of the FSA fleet are now ULEV. We remain on target for 100% by 2027.

Our GGC reporting now reflects a more accurate picture of our emissions following the ability to report our lease fleet data by fuel type; we have seen a dramatic decrease in the use of petrol and increase in the use of hybrid and electric vehicles which positively reflects behaviour changes.

Estates

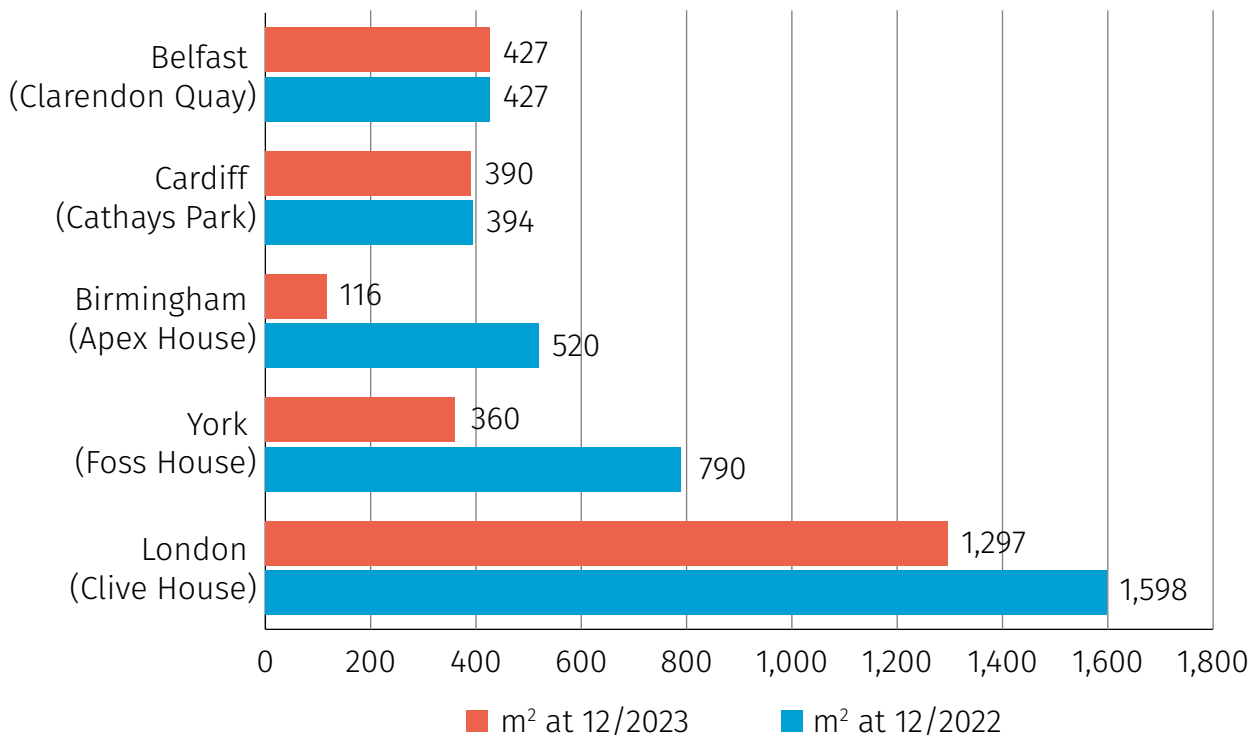
Our Estate is now managed by GPA (Government Property Agency) who have responsibility for its maintenance and oversee our utility usage; we are apportioned costs based on our footprint size. Because of this we are also not able to control whether these have been moved onto green tariffs.

Total energy consumption is 167.97 tonnes, a decrease of 8.03% from the previous year (182.64 tonnes). Breaking this down in terms of gas kWh usage for the year which is 385,864.09, this has increased by 7.79% for London (from 319,846.43 to 344,769.09) and decreased by 4.89% for Belfast (43,208.00 to 41,095.00).

Total energy costs for the year are £146,655.23 (£135,716.00 for London and £10,939.23 for Belfast), a decrease of 14.9% from the previous year (£25,731.44 spend decrease)

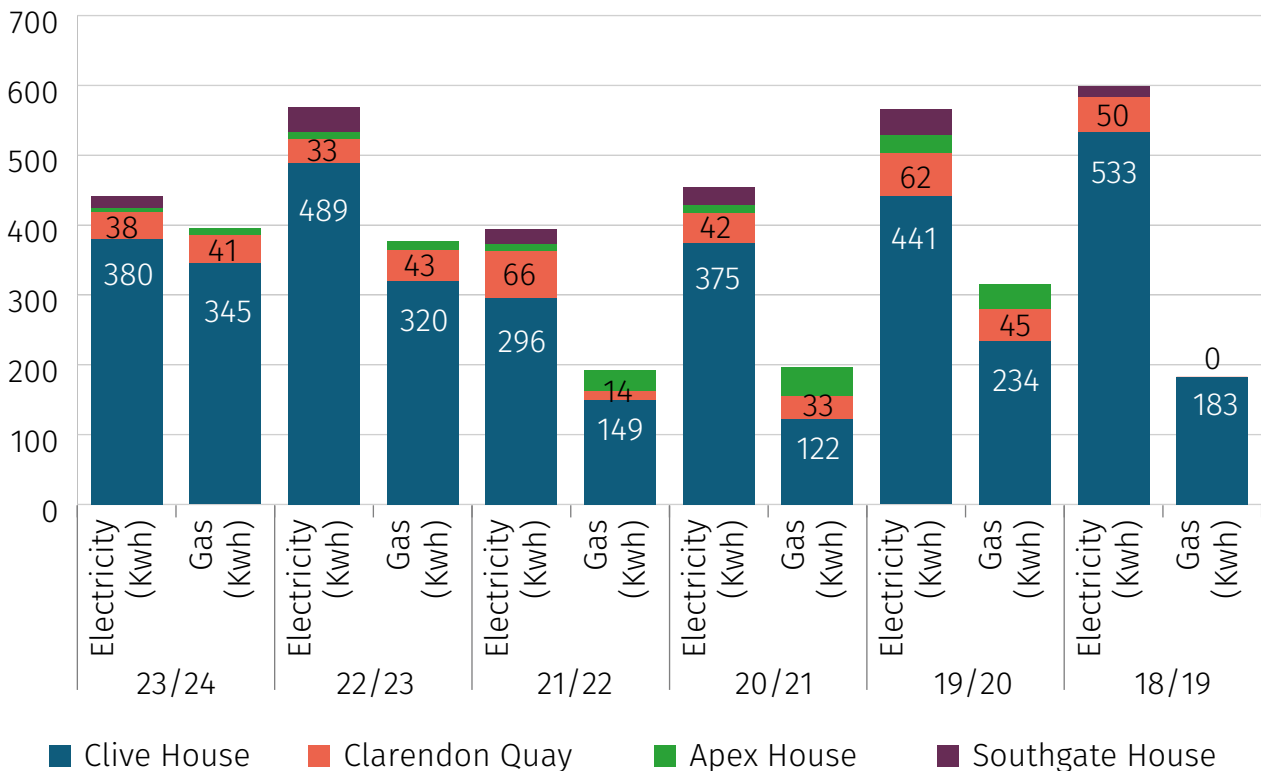
One way we have been able to influence has been by continuing to review our office footprint utilization – optimizing of our footprint ensures we are not over apportioned in our resource usage beyond our actual occupancy level (based on occupied square metres). During the past 12 months we've undertaken reviews of our York and Birmingham offices and have reduced our size in both to better align to its utilisation (details in the table below). We are currently undertaking a similar exercise in London and will continue to monitor each of our offices to ensure the size and layout remains fit for purpose.

Reduced footprint



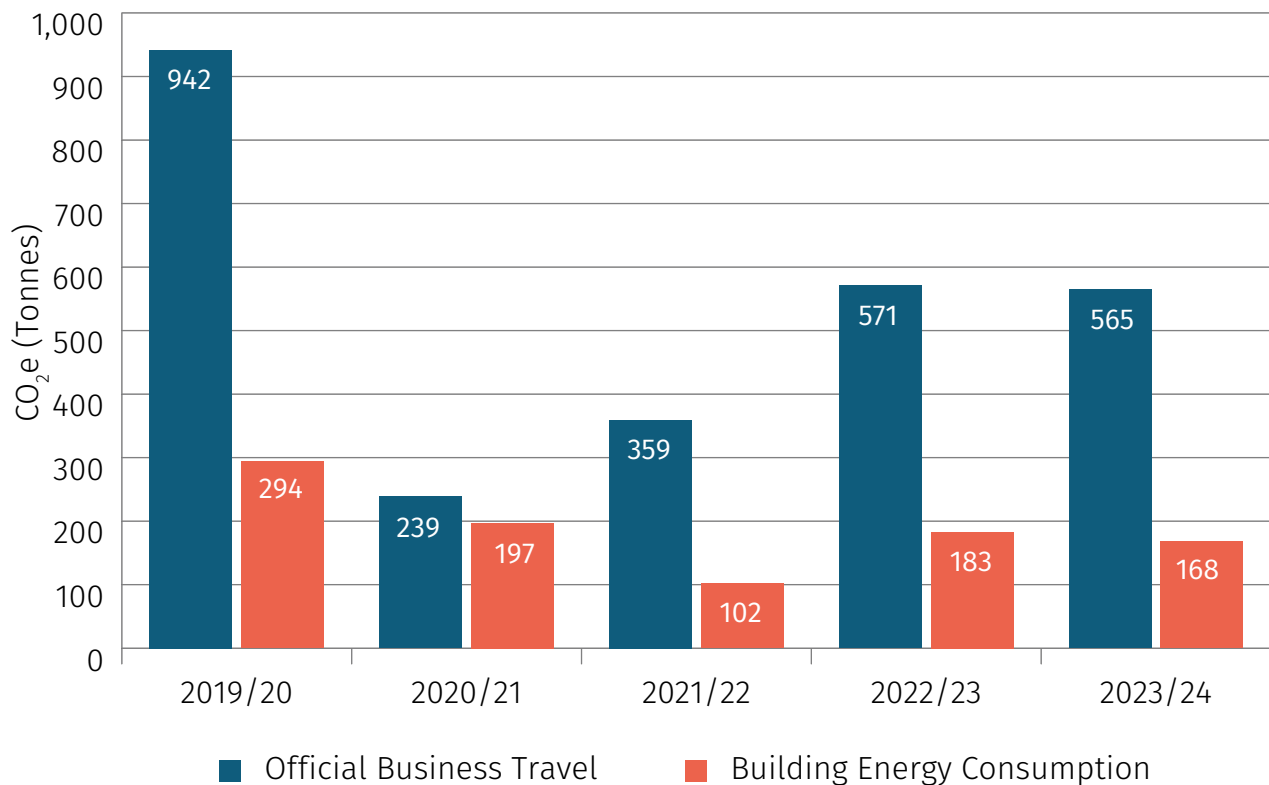
Revised figure includes 36 sqm (four desks) at the Birmingham Govt. Hub. Cardiff office relocated from Southgate House to Cathays Park in Sept 2023

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Scope 2 (indirect)¹



¹ Data for office in York is accounted for by Defra. Cardiff office relocated from Southgate House to Cathays Park in Sept 2023.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Scope 3 (indirect)

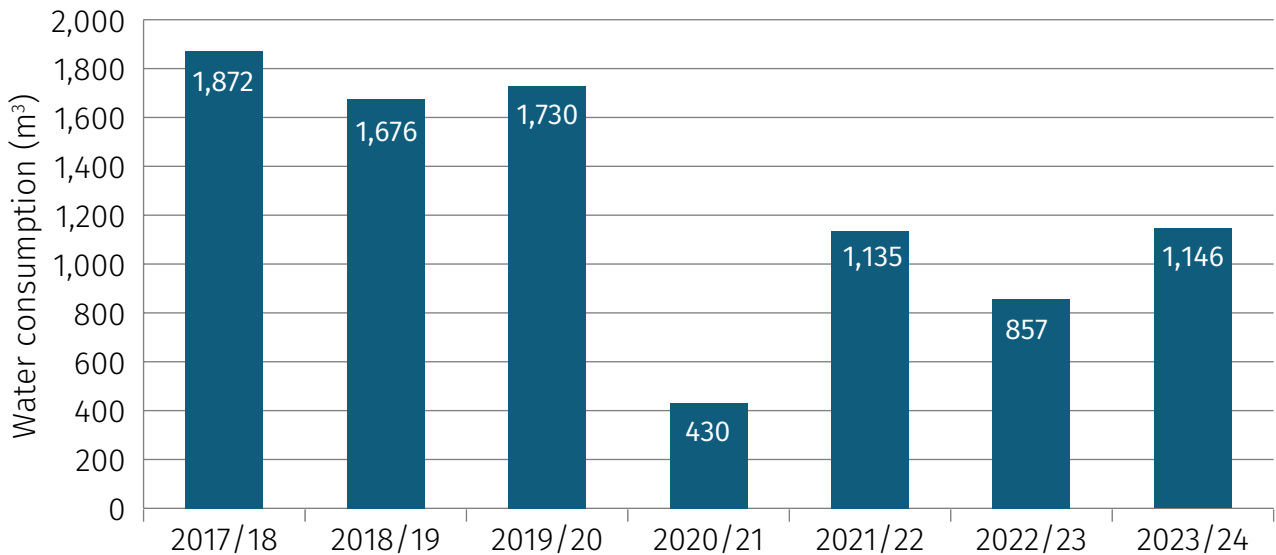


Conserving Natural Resources

Water Consumption

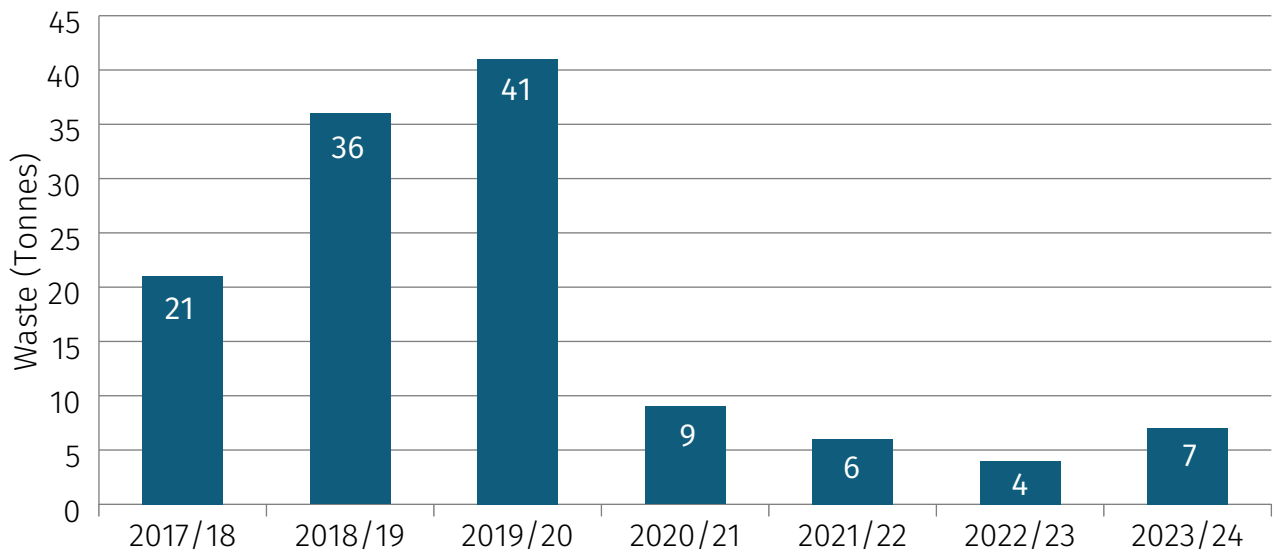
With our Estate now managed by GPA (Government Property Agency) who have responsibility for its maintenance and oversee our water management, we are apportioned based on our footprint size and not actual usage. This means we are unable to determine in real terms whether a decrease has taken place. Figures indicate an increase in consumption during the reporting year. It should also be noted that we have been unable to obtain water usage data for our Birmingham office since July 2022, due to an issue with the meter.

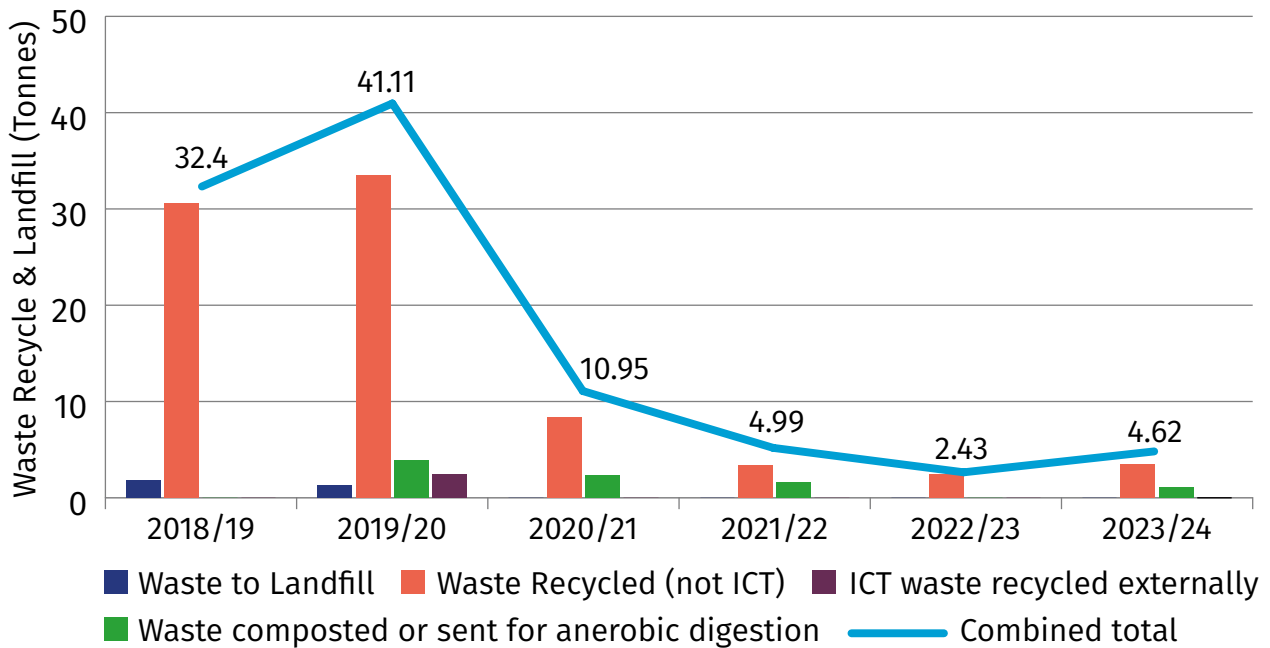
Whilst we're unable to confirm a reduction in consumption on the previous year's figures, our overall target 'to reduce water consumption by at least 8% from the 2017/18 baseline' has been achieved with a reduction of 48%.



Waste Management

Whilst we have remained well on target ‘to reduce the overall amount of waste generated by 20% from the 2017/18 baseline’, the total amount of waste generated has increased from the previous reporting year. This can be in part attributed to building alterations having taken place at both our London and Birmingham offices during the reporting year. That said, we are pleased to report for a fourth consecutive year none of our waste has been sent to landfill again surpassing our target of less than 5% ending in landfill.





Using the waste hierarchy, we strive to prevent, re-use and recycle wherever possible. With this in mind, we introduced a printer consumable recycling scheme during quarter one of the year, to be implemented across plants and our offices. This is available to homeworkers and anyone on a multi-location contract to use during any office/site visit.

We have a scheme for ITC recycling. Business in the Community (BITC) put us in touch with Computers 4 Charity. C4C work with charities that support homeless people, young carers, domestic abuse sufferers, bereaved children, armed forces veterans, schools and hospices, providing them with electronic equipment. We securely data wipe all returned devices, resulting from a new upgrade and/or device rollout project. Benefiting charities based in Birmingham & York include Changing Lives, Staying Put, SASH, Inner City Life, Trident Reach and Active Wellbeing Society.

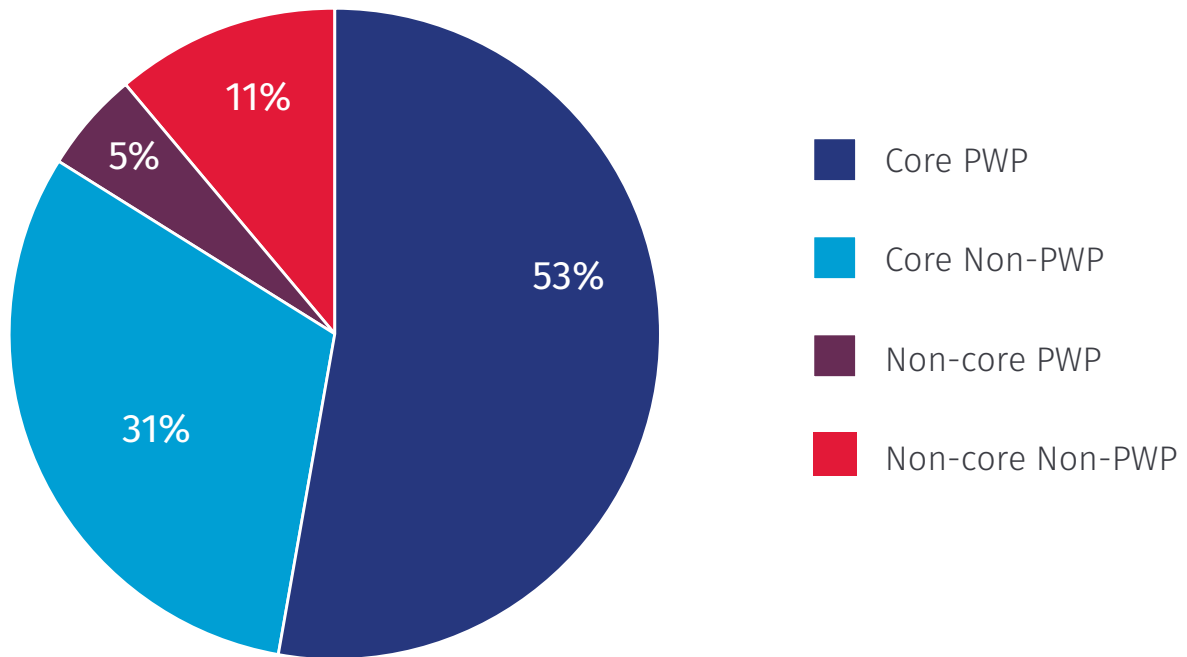
Our paper usage for the year has decreased from 402 reams to 347. This can be attributed to less staff working in offices, and a general move towards working more digitally.

Sustainable Supply Chain

The FSA promotes sustainable thinking by ensuring sustainable considerations, including net zero objectives, minimum environmental product specifications & principles are built into all aspects of the procurement process. This is set out in our sustainable procurement policy published the previous reporting year and helps support goal 12 of the UN SDGs; 'promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities'.

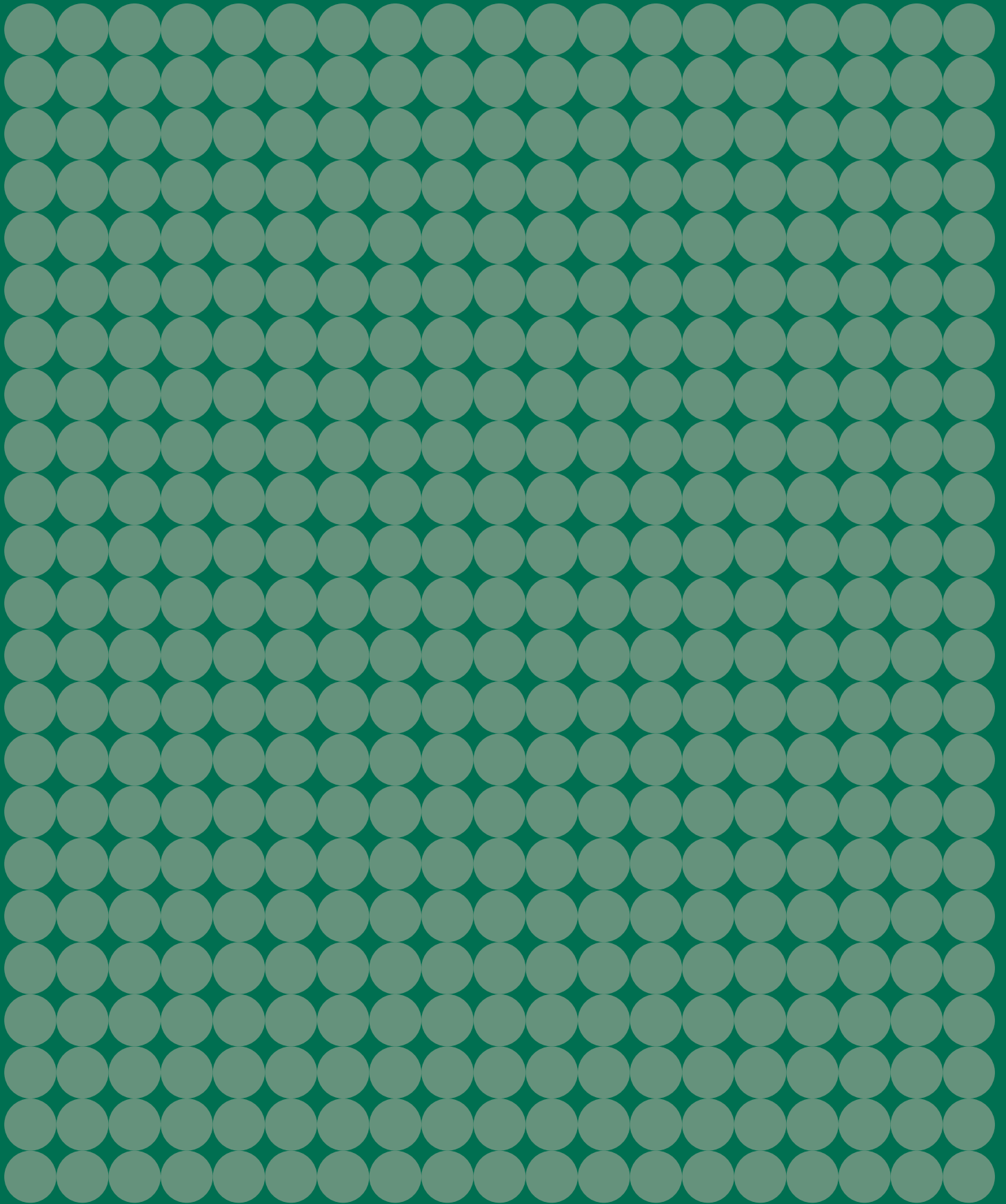
Procuring sustainably means considering the environmental, social and economic impacts of the product or service over its lifetime, such as: design, use of non-renewable material, methods of manufacture and production, logistics, operation, maintenance, reuse, recycling options and disposal; plus the suppliers' capability to address these impacts throughout the supply chain.

We have been working with our business supplies partner, who like the FSA, are extremely passionate about the social and environmental impact of its activities. They introduced a range of over 2000 items called 'Products with Purpose' (PWP). All PWP items create a tangible positive ethical, social or environmental impact. From the below graph, it shows we are doing reasonably well, with 58% of the items bought being from the PWP range. We now look to improve this where possible through promotion and encouraging staff to choose PWP items and look to review our current core list.



Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
16 January 2025

Accountability report



Accountability report

The Accountability report contains the following three sections:

- [Corporate governance report](#) which explains the composition and organisation of the entity's governance structures and how they support the achievement of the entity's objectives.
- [Remuneration and staff report](#) which provides information on staff numbers and costs, and the remuneration of members of the Departmental Board; and
- [Parliamentary accountability and audit report](#) that presents the Department's expenditure against the budgets set by Parliament and the audit opinion on the financial statements prepared by the National Audit Office.

Corporate Governance Report

Directors Report

The requirements of the accountability report are based on the matters required to be dealt within a Directors' Report, as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and Schedule 7 of SI 2008 No 410, and in a Remuneration Report, as set out in Chapter 6 of the Companies Act 2006 and SI 2013 No. 1981, and as set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual.

The FSA is a non-Ministerial Government Department. Staff are accountable through a Chief Executive to the Board, rather than directly to ministers. The Board consists of a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to 12 members. The Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in agreement with health ministers in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Board is mainly appointed by the Secretary of State for Health, with one member appointed by the Welsh Health Minister and one by the Northern Ireland Health Minister.

The Board is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the FSA, ensuring that it fulfils its legal obligations so that its decisions or actions take proper account of scientific advice, the interests of consumers and other relevant factors. Day-to-day management of the FSA is delegated to officials through the Chief Executive. In addition to the FSA Board, the FSA has advisory committees, chaired by Board members, in Wales and Northern Ireland. The role of the committee in each country is to advise the Board. The Board is required by statute to take account of their advice in its work.

Details of the Board and Directors

The FSA Board

During the year, the membership of the non-executive FSA Board was:

Member name	Role
Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci	FSA Chair from July 2021
Timothy Riley PhD, FRASE	Deputy Chair from January 2024. Board member from November 2019 (Reappointed November 2022)
Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE DL	Deputy Chair from July 2020 until June 2023
Peter Price	Board Member from September 2020 until August 2023
Margaret Gilmore	Board member from November 2019 (Reappointed November 2022)
Mark Rolfe	Board member from November 2019 (Reappointed November 2022)
Fiona Gately	Board member from June 2021 (Reappointed June 2024)
Lord Blencathra	Board member from June 2021 (Reappointed June 2024)
Anthony Harbinson	Board member from September 2022
Hayley Campbell-Gibbons	Board member from September 2022
Justin Varney	Board member from September 2022
Dr Rhian Hayward MBE	Board member from September 2023

Executive Management Team

During the year, the membership of the Executive Management Team was:

Member name	Position
Katie Pettifer	Chief Executive (Interim) from September 2024. Previously Director of Strategy, Legal, Governance and Communications
Emily Miles	Chief Executive until September 2024
Julie Kettell (aka Pierce)	Director of Information and Science
Rebecca Sudworth	Director of Policy
Anjali Juneja	Director of UK & International Affairs
Junior Johnson OBE	Director of Operations from May 2022
Ruth Nolan	Director of People & Resources from August 2023
Tara Smith	Director of People and Resources until July 2023

All senior officials have been appointed under the rules laid down by the Civil Service Commissioners. Salary and pension details of the Board and the EMT are disclosed in the Remuneration Report.

FSA advisory committees

During the year, the membership of the food advisory committees was:

Northern Ireland member	Position
Anthony Harbinson	Chair
Judith Hanvey	
Cathal McDonnell	
Dr Michael Johnston	
Greg Irwin	
Dr Lynne McMullan	
Ciaran McCartan	

Wales member	Position
Dr Rhian Hayward MBE	Chair
Alan Gardner	
Dr Philip Hollington	
Georgia Taylor	
Dave Holland	
Helen Taylor	
Jessica Williams	
Dr John Williams	
Chris Brereton OBE	

Audit and risk assurance committee

Membership of the FSA Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:

Non-executive members	Position
Anthony Harbinson	Chair
Timothy Riley	
Margaret Gilmore	
Justin Varney	

Preparation of accounts

The Consolidated Resource Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the direction given by HM Treasury. They are presented to the House of Commons pursuant to Section 6(4) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000. The costs of FSA offices in Wales and Northern Ireland are funded through the relevant devolved government.

Supplier payment policy

It is FSA policy to pay all invoices not in dispute within five days of receipt. During 2023/24, 76.5% of all invoices received were paid within this target. The policy is to remain the same for 2024/25.

Financial instruments

The FSA has no borrowings. It relies primarily on departmental grants for its cash requirements, and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risks. It also has no material deposits. All material assets and liabilities are in sterling, so the FSA is not exposed to significant interest rate risk or currency risk.

Going concern

FSA NI has significant net expenditure and net current liabilities. However, the accounts are prepared on a going concern basis since, as a government department, all expenditure and liabilities will be met by future funding from the NI Assembly.

Pensions

FSA employees are civil servants. Most are members of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and Civil Servant and Other Pension Scheme (CSOPS). These are central government unfunded pension schemes. Pension payments are made through the resource account. Board members are not civil servants therefore they are not members of these schemes. However, some previously had similar pension arrangements independent of them.

Some employees are members of the LGPS. This is a defined benefit scheme governed by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1995. It is administered by the London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA), whose financial statements are prepared for the whole LGPS.

Disclosure of Board members' interests

Board members are appointed to act collectively in the public interest, not to represent specific sectors. Provisions for declaration of interests and withdrawal from meetings are intended to prevent the Chair, Deputy Chair, and members being influenced or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their collective public duties. All personal or business interests which may, or in the judgement of the member may, be perceived by a reasonable member of the public to influence their judgement, should be declared. Such interests include, but are not limited to, involvement in the agriculture, food, and related industries. The Code of Conduct for Board members was updated in 2023/24 and includes a guide to the categories of interest that must be declared. Details of Board members, their register of interests, and the Code of Conduct, as part of the Board Operating Framework are on [our website](#).

Auditors

The accounts have been audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Food Standards Act 1999. The audit fee for all the FSA's accounts for the year was £159,000, of which £17,500 was charged to Northern Ireland (2022/23 £145,000 of which £17,000 was charged to Northern Ireland). I have taken all necessary steps to make myself aware of relevant audit information and to ensure that information is made available to the auditors. No payments have been paid to the Comptroller and Auditor General for non-audit work in 2023/24 (2022/23 £nil).

Important events which have occurred since the end of the financial year

No events have occurred since the end of the financial year.

Performance in correspondence with public and MPs including Parliamentary Questions

The FSA does not centrally record all incoming and outgoing correspondence and contact with members of the public. Contact details for FSA business areas are available on the FSA website for members of the public and food businesses to contact directly. During 2023/24, the FSA's general enquiry team dealt with 4,589 cases from members of the public via its online form (in 2022/23, 4,917 emails and 5,405 phone calls were handled).

Additionally, FSA Private Office managed 127 items of correspondence, including items sent by members of the public to members of Parliament, the FSA Chair, FSA Chief Executive or other, replying to 95% within target (in 2021/22, 145 items of correspondence were managed and 97% were replied to within target).

The FSA also drafted answers for 27 Parliamentary Questions, returning 94% on time to the Department of Health and Social Care to answer via their ministers.

Better regulation

Better regulation is integral to our regulatory approach and we apply the principles of good regulation to all our regulatory activities. The FSA strives to take a clear, proportionate and risk-based regulatory approach to protecting public health.

Excessive or unclear regulations place unnecessary burdens on business and hinder the intended regulatory benefits to consumers and business.

We support the government's Better Regulation agenda and the ambitions of the Industrial Strategy, including on innovation, where we strive to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to new technology and support industry advancements in the interest of consumers. All new regulations are subject to post-implementation reviews to ensure the objectives are being met and the regulations remain necessary.

Business Impact Target (BIT) reporting

The FSA introduced no qualifying regulatory provisions under the BIT in the last Parliament. In line with our statutory reporting requirements the FSA published details of its regulatory activities in December 2022, as well as contributing to the Government's End of Parliament BIT Report. Details of the FSA BIT reporting are published on [our website](#).

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under the Food Standards Act 1999, the Department of Finance has directed the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to prepare, for each financial year, resource accounts detailing the resources acquired, held or disposed of during the year and the use of resources by the department during the year. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the FSA and of its net resource outturn, resources applied to objectives, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

1. observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Finance, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
2. make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
3. state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts; and
4. prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
5. confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

HM Treasury has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the FSA. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records, and for safeguarding the FSA's assets, are set out in *Managing Public Money* published by the HM Treasury.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that Food Standards Agency's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Governance Statement

This Governance Statement explains the FSA's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements for 2023/24 and up to the date of approval.

FSA Board

The FSA is a non-ministerial government department, which operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Staff are accountable through a Chief Executive to a Board, rather than directly to ministers and the FSA Board consists of a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to 12 members. The Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in agreement with health ministers in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Board is mainly appointed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with one member appointed by the Welsh Health Minister and one by the Northern Ireland Health Minister.

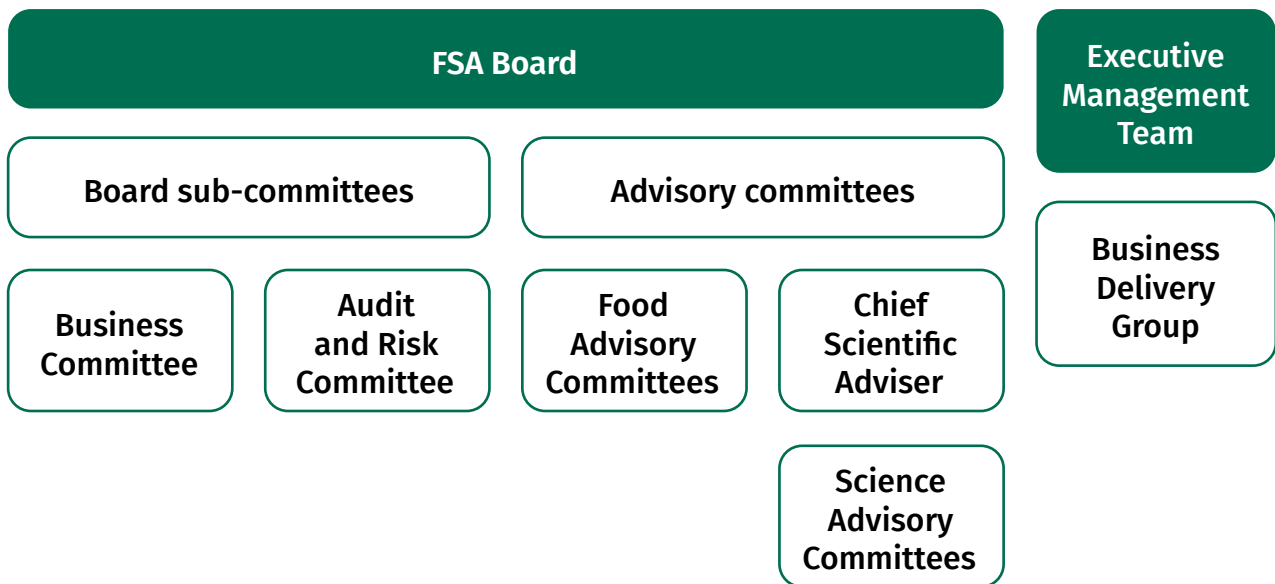
The Board is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the FSA, ensuring that it fulfils its legal obligations so that its decisions or actions take proper account of any scientific advice, the interests of consumers and other relevant factors. The Board is chaired by Professor Susan Jebb.

The FSA has a culture of openness and therefore the Board holds its decision-making meetings in public, and they are broadcast live via the FSA's website. The agendas, minutes and recordings of Board meetings are also published on [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk), together with other information in the public interest. The Chief Executive holds meetings with officials in advance of Board sessions to ensure information is accurate and clear. The Chief Executive and the Chair agree to and participate in the process of preparing Board papers to ensure they are of sufficient quality.

The Board has two Committees, the Business Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which are comprised of a selection of board members. The Board also takes advice from Food Advisory Committees in each of the Devolved Administrations and is required by statute to take account of their advice.

Day-to-day management of the FSA is delegated to officials through the Chief Executive who attends all board meetings and chairs the Executive Management Team. The FSA Chief Executive and Principal Accounting Officer is responsible for delivering the FSA's strategic objectives and is accountable to Parliament for managing FSA resources. Emily Miles was the Chief Executive until September 2024 and Katie Pettifer assumed the role on an interim basis from this point. Further information on the Accounting Officer's responsibilities can be found on page 97.

Fig. 28: FSA Board and Committee Structure



Business Committee

Timothy Riley, as deputy Chair of the Board, is the Chair of Business Committee and provides high-level oversight of operational matters, including performance and use of financial and human resources, at Board level and to hold the Executive Management Team to account on delivery of FSA plans and policies.

During the year, the Business Committee met quarterly and reviewed the impact and outcome measures set for the FSA strategic priorities to track delivery of the annual business plan. The FSA’s priorities and high-level budget for the financial year 2024/25 were agreed at the Business Committee meeting in March 2024.

The Chair of the Business Committee provides the Board with a written report following each meeting.

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

ARAC is chaired by Anthony Harbinson and is responsible for reviewing, in a non-executive capacity, the reliability of assurances on governance, risk management and the control environment. It is also responsible for assuring the integrity of Annual Report and Accounts, including the financial statements.

During the year, ARAC met six times and considered a range of issues including: the Corporate Risk Register, the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23; the National Audit Office’s (NAO) Audit Completion Report; the Head of Internal Audit’s annual opinion; and the internal and regulatory audit plans for 2023/24. Committee members had bilateral meetings with representatives of the NAO and with the Head of Internal Audit to discuss expectations and current issues.

In ARAC’s annual report to the FSA Board relating to 2023/24, the ARAC Chair noted that sufficient and comprehensive work was undertaken by ARAC and that internal and external assurances were received during the year to adequately inform ARAC’s assessment on the effectiveness of FSA risk management, control and governance

arrangements. Based on this, he concluded that the arrangements in place during the year 2023/24 were satisfactory.

Food Advisory Committees

The Welsh Food Advisory Committee and Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee are chaired by Dr Rhian Hayward, FSA Board Member for Wales, and Anthony Harbinson, FSA Board Member for Northern Ireland.

The committees act as independent advisory bodies to the Food Standards Agency and their role is to advise the Agency on food safety and standards issues, with emphasis on their respective nations.

The Chairs of these Committees report formally to each Board meeting on issues considered.

Executive Management Team

The Executive Management Team (EMT) is chaired by the Chief Executive. EMT meets weekly and is responsible for providing corporate leadership to the FSA, delivering the FSA strategy, directing the day-to-day business of the FSA and championing the values of the FSA.

On 31 March 2024, membership of the EMT comprised six directors, including the People and Resources Director who is a qualified accountant, and the Chief Executive.

Business Delivery Group

During the year Business Delivery Group (BDG) was chaired by Katie Pettifer, the Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance, and is primarily made up of deputy directors from each directorate. BDG meets fortnightly and oversees the delivery of the FSA's priorities as set out in the annual business plan, the implementation of key EMT decisions and ensures the delivery of day-to-day business.

The Chief Scientific Adviser

The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), Professor Robin May, reports to the FSA Board and works closely with EMT. The CSA is responsible for senior scientific oversight and provides independent, objective challenge to the way that the FSA uses science and evidence. In addition, the CSA works across government as part of the wider CSA network and plays a key role in communicating the FSA's science to consumers, businesses and the public.

Scientific Advisory Committees

The FSA has several Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) who meet regularly throughout the year and their work ensures that FSA advice to consumers is always based on the best and most recent scientific evidence.

All Committees report to the Board or the Chair, either directly or through the Chief Scientific Adviser.

More details about the individual Committees can be found at [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk).

Board and Committee Effectiveness

Every year, the FSA Board performs an internal review of its effectiveness, with independent input at least once every three years. This year's internal Board Effectiveness Review comprised the conclusion of actions to meet the [recommendations from the 2022 External Board Effectiveness Review](#).

Since the Board accepted the recommendations from the Working Group on the Review at the [December 2022 Board meeting](#), all actions from the accepted recommendations have been completed including the review of the reconfigured Business Committee. When joining the FSA, all Board Members receive Induction packs, including the Governance Statement.

The Board [considered the review of the Business Committee](#) and agreed the actions that came out of it, reaffirming the [Terms of Reference for the Business Committee, at its December 2023 Board meeting](#).

ARAC members and standing attendees completed a self-assessment on the effectiveness of the ARAC in line with HM Treasury guidance and concluded that ARAC is either meeting or excelling against the effectiveness standards.

Compliance with the Corporate Governance Code

As a non-ministerial department, the FSA is encouraged to adopt the practices set out in the Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice 2017 wherever relevant and practicable. An assessment of compliance with the code was completed in April 2024, which concluded that the FSA complies with all but 5 requirements and that 4 of these are not relevant to a non-ministerial department. The remaining requirement relates to special areas of interest for non-executive directors, which, while not listed in the Board Operating Framework, are agreed and documented annually as part of Board appraisals.

Board and Committee Meeting Attendance

Records of each Board member's attendance at Board, Business Committee and at ARAC meetings are detailed below.

Board Member	Board Meeting	Business Committee	ARAC
Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci	4/4	4/4	N/A
Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE	1/1	1/1	1/2
Timothy Riley PhD, FRASE	4/4	1/1	6/6
Mark Rolfe	4/4	4/4	2/3
Margaret Gilmore	4/4	N/A	6/6
Peter Price	1/1	1/1	N/A
Fiona Gately	4/4	4/4	N/A
Lord Blencathra	4/4	4/4	N/A
Anthony Harbinson	4/4	N/A	5/6
Hayley Campbell-Gibbons	4/4	4/4	N/A
Justin Varney	4/4	N/A	1/6
Dr Rhian Hayward	2/3	2/3	N/A

Select Committees

In December 2023, the FSA submitted written evidence to the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee's inquiry on UK Regulators. The submission outlined concerns about local authority capacity and capability to deliver food controls and the challenges in recruiting Official Veterinarians.

In March 2024, the Chief Executive gave oral evidence to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Commons Select Committee's non-inquiry session on the implications of vet shortages for the food industry. The FSA also submitted written evidence outlining the ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention of Official Veterinarians and how this impacts the consumer.

Management of Outside Interests

The FSA has a conflicts of interest policy for the declaration and management of outside interests, which meets the requirements of the Civil Service Management Code.

All FSA employees must consider their personal interests upon joining the FSA, and subsequently if their business or personal circumstances change. Individuals must declare any interests so a decision can be made on whether any further action is required and what that action might be. Biannual staff communications serve as a reminder to employees of their obligations under this policy.

For members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS), details of any remunerated outside employment that has been agreed through the management of outside interests process is published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) on an annual basis. A report on SCS outside interests is submitted to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee annually.

In accordance with the Civil Service Management Code, Board Members must report all relevant interests and this information is published online at [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk).

Business Appointment Rules

FSA employees who intend to leave the organisation are reminded of their obligations under the Business Appointment Rules. The table below sets out information relating to BAR for the year ended 31 March 2024:

	SCS 2	SCS 1	AA-G6
Number of exits from the Senior Civil Service (SCS)	0	2	N/A
Number of applications submitted	0	1	0
Number of applications approved	0	1	0
Number of applications where conditions were set	0	0	0
Number of applications that were found to be unsuitable	0	0	0
Number of breaches of the rules	0	0	0

In compliance with Business Appointment Rules, the department is transparent in the advice given to individual applications for senior staff, including special advisers. Advice regarding specific business appointments has been published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

A paper on Business Appointment Rules was submitted to ARAC in September 2024. ARAC were satisfied with/made the following recommendations relating to the FSA's application of the rules.

Whistleblowing

The FSA is committed to ensuring high standards of behaviour are upheld in the delivery of all its functions and this includes having effective and trusted whistleblowing arrangements, through which members of staff feel able to raise concerns.

Following the publication of an updated Raising a Concern and Whistleblowing Policy in March 2023, FSA employees were invited to sessions to increase their awareness of the Civil Service Code, what it means for their conduct and how to report concerns. The FSA also holds annual 'Speak Up' campaigns and an annual report is presented to EMT and the Board.

The 2023 People Survey results showed that 93% of FSA respondents confirmed an understanding of the Civil Service Code, 76% had an awareness of how to raise a concern, and 80% reported having confidence in how the FSA might respond to their concern. All three indicators were above the Civil Service benchmark with two indicators increasing and the other remaining consistent when compared to 2022 results.

During 2023/24, the FSA received one qualifying disclosure. The resulting investigation identified no wrongdoing but resulted in changes to how the FSA managed the external sharing of information during a food incident.

Risk Management and Internal Control

The FSA has a well-established risk management framework that is used to provide assurance to the Accounting Officer, ARAC and the FSA Board that risks to achieving business objectives are being effectively identified and managed, and that those involved understand their roles and responsibilities.

The framework is founded on a risk management strategy, which aims to raise maturity in risk management with reference to best practice across government and the principles set out in HM Treasury's guidance such as the Orange Book.

The FSA manages several corporate level risks, which are defined as risks that could materially alter the FSA's ability to achieve its strategic outcomes; fundamentally damage the ability of the FSA to operate (including reputational risks); or cannot be managed or mitigated at a lower level within the organisation. Further information relating to these risks can be found in the Principal Risks section of the Performance Report.

The Board considered Strategic Risk in its March 2024 meeting, recognising that the FSA is a risk-based organisation with the primary purpose being able to protect consumers from unacceptable food safety risk. Each year, the Board review and set the FSA's risk appetite. In addition, ARAC review the Corporate Risk Register at their meetings and the Board and EMT considered the strategic risks the organisation faces in January 2024.

The FSA's Accounting Officer has overall responsibility for risk management and internal controls, and for reviewing their effectiveness. Each corporate risk is assigned an executive 'owner' and a mitigation plan in the Corporate Risk Register. EMT regularly discuss risk and these discussions drive mitigating actions that reduce the level of risk.

The high-level focus during the year by EMT and Board members on the Corporate Risk Register was complemented by systematic risk management at different levels across the FSA. The FSA has an established network of risk advisors, who engage with cross-government risk management networks and who share best practice and help ensure that good risk management practice and processes are consistently embedded across the FSA.

Director Assurance Statements

Each year, the Accounting Officer delegates a budget to each director to deliver their agreed priorities as set out in the FSA's Annual Business Plan. Throughout the year the Accounting Officer ensures that the FSA is on track to deliver its priorities within budget through performance management, monthly financial forecasting, and risk management, which is underpinned with corporate governance.

Regular reviews are held to ensure key milestones for corporate priorities are delivered and progress made in delivering the business plan. The reviews allows the FSA to consider priorities and identify potential areas in need of extra support.

During 2023/24, the FSA faced several unanticipated pressures, which have placed significant additional demands on people and resources. In response, EMT identified a series of essential changes to the workplan that created capacity to deliver these additional demands, without compromising any statutory duties.

Each director is required to undertake an annual assurance review of their directorate and complete an annual assurance statement, which demonstrates how an effective system of internal controls has been maintained. The Accounting Officer reviews all assurance statements to establish whether there are any significant weaknesses.

The FSA is continuously monitoring its risk and internal control environment and the annual assurance review process has strengthened these systems by providing a consistent overview of assurance provision across the organisation.

Assurance Mapping

The FSA has undertaken an exercise to develop an assurance map in line with the Risk Control Framework set out in HM Treasury's Orange Book. The map has linked assurances from various sources to the risks that threaten the achievement of the FSA's outcomes and objectives.

The assurance map has allowed the FSA to assess the level of control over risk, identify potential areas of weakness or opportunities for improvement and demonstrate assurance over the FSA's control framework to ARAC, the Chief Executive and the rest of EMT. This work has helped identify gaps in assurance over significant risk areas and will enable duplicated or burdensome assurance processes to be reduced.

Functional Standards

The FSA continues to identify areas for improvement, through self-assessment against the UK Government Functional Standards, which set expectations for the management of functional work and the functional model across government.

This work drives coherence, consistency and continuous improvement to processes and controls across the organisation, and provides a stable basis for assurance mapping, risk management and supports Internal Audit planning.

Information security

The Director of Information and Science is responsible for Information Security. The FSA implements a risk-based approach to security based on the nature of its business, the information handled, its risk appetite, and its approach to transparency. Ensuring resilient security and safeguarding services and protecting technology and information assets against an evolving and changing cyber risk landscape continues to be a priority.

All staff are required to complete the security and data protection courses annually which is provided by Civil Service Learning. The FSA also conducts an ongoing Security Education and Awareness programme.

We maintain cyber, personnel, physical and incident management governance and controls to enable FSA priorities, protect FSA services and to comply with HM's Government Standards.

There were no incidents that required reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in 2023/24.

Macpherson Review of Quality Assurance of Government models

In line with the recommendations of the Macpherson Review of Quality Assurance of Government, the FSA maintains an up-to-date list of business-critical models (currently 14) and have processes in place to quality assure their inputs, methodology and outputs.

Head of Internal Audit's opinion

The internal audit plan, agreed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), is set at the beginning of the financial year, informed by several considerations including the FSA's objectives, organisational changes and key identified areas of risk. During the year, the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) consulted and informed the ARAC about changes to the audit plan and audit resource to take account of changes in the risk landscape.

For the 2023/24 financial year, the HIA provided a Moderate opinion. A Moderate rating states that some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

The internal audit opinion reflects the results of the audits in the plan that were completed and other relevant sources of assurance and was not limited in scope, to the extent that the assurance provided by internal audit is not absolute; it reflects the evidence available.

Most internal audits completed were placed in the top two categories of audit assurance opinions with one receiving Limited assurance and none in the lowest Unsatisfactory category. At each meeting, ARAC reviews all Limited and Unsatisfactory rated internal audit reports for that period. It also receives quarterly progress reports, including updates on completed and outstanding actions arising from issues identified.

FSA processes for business planning and prioritisation of resources are well established and sufficiently mature to ensure resources are targeted at key priorities. These are supported by maturing risk management, programme management and assurance frameworks which ensure risks at corporate, directorate and programme or project level are identified, assessed and mitigated accordingly.

External Assurance Reviews

During the year, FSA officials commissioned several external reviews for assurance purposes. These reviews have contributed to assurance on the effectiveness of the FSA's governance framework and identified some opportunities for improvement, which have since been implemented.

Reviews completed during the year and reported to ARAC included a review of the acquisition of communication data by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, an independent evaluation of the efficacy of withdrawals and a review of the FSA's Risk and Crisis Management (RCM) capabilities.

Other external reviews covered an assessment against the personnel security maturity model, a review of the charge rate calculation models and the ISAE (International Standard on Assurance Engagements) 3402 Report on Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL), the FSA's Shared Services provider for finance systems until September 2023.

Budget Position and Authority

The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2024, which received Royal Assent on 14 March 2024, together with the Northern Ireland Spring Supplementary Estimates 2023-24 which were agreed by the Assembly on 9 April 2024, provide the statutory authority for the Northern Ireland Executive's final 2023-24 expenditure plans. The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2024 also provides a Vote on Account to authorise expenditure by departments and other bodies into the early months of the 2024-25 financial year.

Accounting Officer's Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I am personally responsible and accountable to Parliament for the FSA as an organisation, including its management and use of resources. I have overall responsibility for risk management and internal controls, and for reviewing their effectiveness.

To ensure value for money, I delivered a prioritisation exercise through EMT, which set the budget recommended to the Board for 2023/24. Through robust discussion and mutual challenge of the FSA's priorities and available resources, EMT was able to make sound recommendations to the Board, balancing delivery of the FSA's various priorities and making best use of limited resources.

My review of the effectiveness of risk management and internal controls was informed by assurance provided by Directors, advice provided by ARAC, independent work undertaken by the FSA's internal and external auditors and several external assurance reviews as outlined above.

I can confirm that the systems set out in this Governance Statement were in place for the year under review and up to the date of approval of this Annual Report and Accounts.

I can report that there were no significant weaknesses in the FSA's systems of internal controls in 2023/24 which affected the achievement of the FSA's key strategic outcomes, aims, objectives and policies. I can also confirm that there have been no Ministerial Directions given during the year.



Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
16 January 2025

Remuneration and Staff report

Remuneration report

The remuneration of senior civil servants is set by the Prime Minister following independent advice from the Review Body on Senior Salaries. In reaching its recommendations, the Review Body has regard to the following considerations:

- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities;
- regional/local variations in labour markets and their effects on the recruitment and retention of staff;
- Government policies for improving the public services including the requirement on departments to meet the output targets for the delivery of departmental services;
- the funds available to departments as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits; and
- the Government's inflation target.

The Review Body takes account of the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations. Further information about the work of the Review Body can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-manpower-economics>

Unless otherwise indicated the number disclosures in the remuneration report reflect the combined FSA expenditure. All Board and EMT remuneration is funded from Westminster.

Service contracts

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Principles published by the Civil Service Commission specify the circumstances when appointments may be made otherwise.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commission can be found at www.civilservicecommission.org.uk

This report has been prepared in accordance with guidance EPN 710. The tables in the remuneration report, except for the off-payroll engagements, are subject to audit.

Service contracts for Board members are listed below:

Name	1st Term of Appointment	Duration of 1st Term Contract	2nd Term of Appointment	Duration of 2nd Term of Contract
Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci (Chair)	1 July 2021	3 Years 6 months	1 January 2025	3 years
Dr Ruth Hussey CB, OBE, DL (Deputy Chair) ¹	1 July 2020	3 Years		
Peter Price ²	1 September 2020	3 Years		
Timothy Riley PhD, FRASE	18 November 2019	3 Years	18 November 2022 – 31 December 2023.	3 Years
Timothy Riley PhD, FRASE (Deputy Chair)	1 January 2024	3 Years		
Margaret Gilmore	18 November 2019	3 Years	18 November 2022	3 Years
Mark Rolfe ³	18 November 2019	3 Years	18 November 2022	3 Years
Fiona Gately	1 June 2021	3 Years	1 June 2024	3 Years
Lord David Blencathra	1 June 2021	3 Years	1 June 2024	3 Years
Anthony Harbinson	1 September 2022	3 Years		
Hayley Campbell-Gibbons	1 September 2022	3 Years		
Justin Varney	1 September 2022	3 Years		
Rhian Hayward	1 September 2023	3 Years		

1. Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE served as the FSA Board Member for Wales until 30 June 2020 then as FSA Deputy Chair until her contract ended on 30 June 2023. She was Interim Chair from 01 February 2021 to 30 June 2021.
2. Peter Price's contract ended on 31 August 2023.
3. Mark Rolfe was interim Deputy Chair 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Board members may serve a maximum of two terms, and length of term may vary.

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management of the department, for the Food Standards Agency this is the Executive Management Team and the Food Standards Agency Board.

The annual increase in EMT members' remuneration is based on that recommended for office holders by the Senior Salaries Review Body. Senior Civil Service (SCS) staff salaries are uplifted in line with the central (Cabinet Office) SCS performance based pay and review system.

Full details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Executive Management Team and Board members are detailed below and are subject to audit.

a) Remuneration

Executive Management Team Remuneration

All members of the Executive Management Team are permanent members of staff except Robin May who is on secondment from Birmingham University.

2023/2024 figures (with 2022/2023 comparators in brackets).

Executive Management Team Single Total Figure of Remuneration – Audited

Name	Salary (£000)	Bonus Payments (£000)	Pensions Benefits (to Nearest £1000) ¹	Total (£000)
Emily Miles (Chief Executive)	135-140 (125-130)	0-5 (5-10)	73 (24)	210-215 (155-160)
Julie Kettell (aka Pierce) (Director of Information and Science)	120-125 (115-120)	– (5-10)	24 (46)	145-150 (170-175)
Katie Pettifer (Director of Strategy & Regulatory Compliance)	115-120 (110-115)	5-10 (5-10)	37 (35)	160-165 (150-155)
Rebecca Sudworth (Director of Policy)	115-120 (105-110)	– (–)	23 (43)	135-140 (150-155)
Junior Johnson OBE (Director of Operations)	100-105 (85-90) ²	– (0-5)	53 (55)	155-160 (140-145)
Anjali Juneja (Director of UK and International Affairs)	100-105 (95-100)	– (5-10)	37 (48)	135-140 (145-150)
Ruth Nolan (Director of People and Resources from 21/08/23)	60-65 ²	–	11	70-75
Tara Smith (Director of People and Resources from 06/06/22 to 16/07/23)	30-35 ² (90-95) ²	5-10 (–)	58 (13)	95-100 (100-105)
Professor Robin May ⁴ (Chief Scientific Adviser)	75-80 (75-80)	– (–)	– (–)	75-80 (75-80)

Notes

1. The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increase excludes increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.
2. Where individuals served for only part of the year only their actual pay and benefits during the period of the role is reported. Full year equivalents are: 22/23 Junior Johnson £90k-£95k and Tara Smith £105k-£110k. 23/24 Tara Smith £115k-£120k and Ruth Nolan £100k-£105k
3. No Executive Management Team members received Benefits in Kind during 2022/23 or 2023/24
4. Professor Robin May has been in position of Chief Scientific Advisor from 06/07/20 on secondment from the University of Birmingham. The FSA has been re-charged salary costs by the university.

Food Standards Agency Board Remuneration – Audited

2023/24 figures with (2022/23) comparators in brackets.

Name	Salary (£000)	Total (£000)
Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci (Chair)	70-75 (65-70)	70-75 (65-70)
Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE (Deputy Chair) (to 30/06/23)	0-5 ³ (10-15)	0-5 ³ (10-15)
Peter Price (to 31/08/23)	5-10 ³ (10-15)	5-10 ³ (10-15)
Margaret Gilmore	5-10 (5-10)	5-10 (5-10)
Mark Rolfe (Interim Deputy Chair 01/07/23 to 31/12/23)	10-15 (5-10)	10-15 (5-10)
Timothy Riley PhD, FRASE (Deputy Chair from 01/01/24)	5-10 (5-10)	5-10 (5-10)
Fiona Gately	5-10 (5-10) ⁴	5-10 (5-10) ⁴
Lord David Blencathra	5-10 (5-10)	5-10 (5-10)
Anthony Harbinson (from 01/09/22)	10-15 (5-10) ³	10-15 (5-10) ³
Hayley Campbell-Gibbons (from 01/09/22)	5-10 (0-5) ³	5-10 (0-5) ³
Justin Varney (from 01/09/22)	5-10 (0-5) ³	5-10 (0-5) ³
Rhian Hayward (from 01/09/23)	5-10 ³	5-10 ³

Notes:

1. No FSA board members are in a pension scheme contributed to by FSA therefore there are no pension costs to report.
2. No FSA board members received Benefits in Kind during 2023/24 or 2022/23.
3. All starter and leaver salaries are shown for their actual period of employment. The corresponding full year equivalents are: 22/23 Hayley Campbell-Gibbons £5k-£10k, Justin Varney £5k-£10k and Anthony Harbinson £10k-£15k. 23/24 Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE £10k-£15k, Peter Price £10k-£15k, Rhian Hayward £10k-£15k.
4. Fiona Gately's 22/23 comparator figures are restated as they were incorrectly reported as £15k-£20k in the 22/23 report.

There is no provision made for compensation relating to the future early termination of any board members.

Salary – Audited

‘Salary’ includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Department and thus recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in Kind – Audited

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument.

Bonuses – Audited

A Pay Committee is set up each year to assess implementation of pay awards including bonus payments in line with guidance provided by the Cabinet Office.

Pay and bonus decisions for the Chief Executive were decided by a Pay Committee consisting of the Board Chair, a Non-Executive Director, and the People Director. Pay and bonus decisions for Directors and Deputy Directors (Senior Civil Servants) were decided by a Pay Committee consisting of the Chief Executive Officer, People Director, and a Non-Executive Director. For the remainder of Food Standard Agency staff there are in-year rewards rather than bonuses which are awarded through the reward and recognition scheme.

Pay recommendations are considered on the basis of review of individual performance against objectives as well as overall consistency of performance.

Bonuses are based on performance levels attained and are made as part of the appraisal process. Bonuses relate to the performance in the year in which they become payable to the individual. The bonuses reported in the Executive Management Team Remuneration table for 2023/24 relate to performance in 2022/23 and those paid in 2022/23 relate to performance in 2021/22 except one paid relating to performance in 2022/23.

2022/23 relate to performance in 2021/22 except one paid relating to performance in 2022/23.

Pay Multiples – Audited

2023-24 figures with (2022-23) in brackets

Accounts	Subject	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Northern Ireland	Total remuneration	32,919 (31,673)	41,906 (39,009)	45,051 (41,149)
	Pay Ratio	2.66:1 (2.13:1)	2.09:1 (1.73:1)	1.94:1 (1.64:1)
	Salary Component	31,107 (31,261)	39,611 (38,097)	40,409 (39,239)
	Total remuneration range	£22,000–£87,500 (£20,000–£67,500)		

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the midpoint of the highest paid senior managers remuneration in their organisation and the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. The Food Standards Agencies workforce for the purpose of these disclosures includes permanent and temporary staff full time equivalents.

In the case of the Food Standards Agency the senior management team is the Executive Management Team (EMT) however the FSA in Northern Ireland does not contribute towards the remuneration of an EMT member, as such it is the remuneration of the highest paid staff member which is used in the calculations above.

In 2023-24, no (2022-23, nil) employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid EMT member.

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions..

For the Food Standards Agency we disclose the relevant figures on a consolidated basis, as well as by individual entity (Westminster, Wales, and Northern Ireland).

The median pay ratio for all entities is consistent with pay, reward, and progression policies for the entity's employees taken as a whole. As the Food Standards Agency's pay arrangements are subject to its existing pay policy which is governed by Civil Service Pay Guidance and is regularly assured through audit and compliance returns.

Northern Ireland Disclosures – Audited

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid staff member in the Food Standards Agency for Northern Ireland in the financial year 2023/24 was £85k-£90k (2022/23, £65k-£70k).

The FSA in Northern Ireland does not contribute towards the remuneration of an EMT Member. As such it is the remuneration of the highest paid staff member which is used in the fair pay disclosure calculations.

The midpoint of the remuneration of the highest paid staff member for Northern Ireland was 2.66 times (2022/23 2.13:1) the 25th percentile remuneration of the workforce which was £32,919 (2022/23 £31,673). The salary component of the 25th percentile staff member was £31,107 (2022/23, £31,261).

The midpoint of the remuneration of the highest paid staff member for Northern Ireland was 2.09 times (2022/23, 1.73:1) the median remuneration of the workforce which was £41,906 (2022/23, £39,009). The salary component of the median staff member was £39,611 (2022/23, £38,097).

The midpoint of the remuneration of the highest paid staff member for Northern Ireland was 1.94 times (2022/23, 1.64:1) the 75th percentile remuneration of the workforce which was £45,051 (2022/23, £41,149). The salary component of the 75th percentile staff member was £40,409 (2022/23, £39,239).

The pay ratio's for the 25th percentile, median, and 75th percentile respectively has increased. This is because, while pay has increased for all, the total remuneration of the highest paid staff member increased more than the total remuneration of the 25th percentile, median, and 75th percentile employees.

Percentage Change in Remuneration – Audited

Reporting bodies are also required to disclose the percentage change from the previous financial year in the:

- a) salary and allowances, and
- b) performance pay and bonuses

of the highest paid director and of their employees as a whole.

The percentage changes in respect of The Food Standards Agency are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

	Percentage Change for	2023-24 v 2022-23	2022-23 v 2021-22
Northern Ireland	Average employee Salary and allowances	7.6%	5.6%
	Highest paid director's salary and allowances	29.6%	-34.1%
	Average employee performance pay and bonuses	14.7%	90.3%
	Highest paid director's performance pay and bonuses	-100.0% ¹	-90.0%

Note

- 1 No Performance Pay or Bonuses were paid in 23/24 therefore the percentage change is -100% compared to 22/23.

(b) Pension benefits – Audited**Executive Management Team****2023/24**

		Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/24 and related lump sum	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31/03/24	CETV at 31/03/23	Real increase in CETV
Name	Role	£5,000 (£000)	£2,500 (£000)	(£000)	(£000)	(£000)
Emily Miles	Chief Executive	35-40 plus a lump sum of 95-100	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	806	688	53
Julie Kettell (aka Pierce)	Director of Information and Science	45-50	0-2.5	898	773	22
Katie Pettifer	Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance	35-40 plus a lump sum of 60-65	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	598	523	17
Rebecca Sudworth	Director of Policy	10-15	0-2.5	197	155	15
Junior Johnson OBE	Director of Operations	40-45 plus a lump sum of 120-125	2.5- 5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	1018	893	43
Anjali Juneja ²	Director of UK & International Affairs	30-35	0-2.5	564	495	20
Ruth Nolan	Director of People and Resources from 21/08/23	25-30	0-2.5	372	354	5
Tara Smith ²	Director of People and Resources from 06/06/22 to 16/07/23	30-35	2.5-5	586	523	50

Notes

1. Taking account of inflation, the CETV funded by the employer has decreased in real terms.
2. As Premium PCSPS Scheme members, staff can choose, within a predetermined range, how their accumulated pension benefits are split between lump sum and annual pension.

Civil Service Pensions

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. Before 1 April 2015, the only scheme was the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS), which is divided into a few different sections – **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus** provide benefits on a final salary basis, whilst **nuvos** provides benefits on a career average basis. From 1 April 2015 a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or **alpha**, which provides benefits on a career average basis. All newly appointed civil servants, and the majority of those already in service, joined the new scheme.

The PCSPS and **alpha** are unfunded statutory schemes. Employees and employers make contributions (employee contributions range between 4.6% and 8.05%, depending on salary). The balance of the cost of benefits in payment is met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions in payment are increased annually in line with the Pensions Increase legislation. Instead of the defined benefit arrangements, employees may opt for a defined contribution pension with an employer contribution, the **partnership** pension account.

In **alpha**, pension builds up at a rate of 2.32% of pensionable earnings each year, and the total amount accrued is adjusted annually in line with a rate set by HM Treasury. Members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004. All members who switched to **alpha** from the PCSPS had their PCSPS benefits ‘banked’, with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salary sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave **alpha**.

The accrued pensions shown in this report are the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach normal pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over normal pension age. Normal pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus**, 65 for members of **nuvos**, and the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of **alpha**. The pension figures in this report show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where a member has benefits in both the PCSPS and **alpha**, the figures show the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes but note that the constituent parts of that pension may be payable from different ages.

When the Government introduced new public service pension schemes in 2015, there were transitional arrangements which treated existing scheme members differently based on their age. Older members of the PCSPS remained in that scheme, rather than moving to **alpha**. In 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the transitional arrangements in the public service pension schemes unlawfully discriminated against younger members.

As a result, steps are being taken to remedy those 2015 reforms, making the pension scheme provisions fair to all members. The public service pensions remedy is made up of two parts. The first part closed the PCSPS on 31 March 2022, with all active members becoming members of **alpha** from 1 April 2022. The second part removes the age discrimination for the remedy period, between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022, by moving the membership of eligible members during this period back into the PCSPS on 1 October 2023. This is known as “rollback”.

For members who are in scope of the public service pension remedy, the calculation of their benefits for the purpose of calculating their Cash Equivalent Transfer Value and their single total figure of remuneration, as of 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024, reflects the fact that membership between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 has been rolled back into the PCSPS. Although members will in due course get an option to decide whether that period should count towards PCSPS or **alpha** benefits, the figures show the rolled back position i.e., PCSPS benefits for that period.

The **partnership** pension account is an occupational defined contribution pension arrangement which is part of the Legal & General Mastertrust. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member). The employee does not have to contribute but, where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV)

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real Increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Food Standards Agency Board

A number of former FSA Board members benefit from a by-analogy pension scheme similar to the PCSPS. The scheme is now closed to new members and there are no active scheme members.

Off-payroll engagements

The FSA is required to publish information on our highly paid and/or senior off-payroll engagements

Table 1: For all off-payroll engagements as of 31 March 2024, for more than £245 per day and that last for longer than six months

	FSA
No. of existing engagements as of 31 March 2024	9
Of which:	
No. that have existed for less than one year at time of reporting	6
No. that have existed for between one and two years at time of reporting	1
No. that have existed for between two and three years at time of reporting	0
No. that have existed for between three and four years at time of reporting	0
No. that have existed for four or more years at time of reporting	0

All existing off-payroll engagements, outlined above, have at some point been subject to a risk-based assessment as to whether assurance is required that the individual is paying the right amount of tax and, where necessary, that assurance has been sought.

Table 2: All temporary off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the year ended 31 March 2024, for more than £245 per day

	FSA
No. of off-payroll workers engaged during the year ended 31 March 2024	21
Of which:	
No. determined as in-scope of IR35	21
No. determined as out-of-scope of IR35	0
No. of engagements reassessed for compliance or assurance purposes during the year	1
Of which: no. of engagements that saw a change to IR35 status following review	0
No. of engagements where the status was disputed under provisions in the off-payroll legislation	0

Table 3: For any off-payroll engagements of board members, and/or, senior officials with significant financial responsibility, between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

	FSA
No. of off-payroll engagements of board members, and/or, senior officials with significant financial responsibility, during the financial year. (1)	0
Total no. of individuals on payroll and off-payroll that have been deemed “board members, and/or, senior officials with significant financial responsibility”, during the financial year. This figure should include both on payroll and off-payroll engagements. (2)	15

Consultancy spend

Consultancy spend for the whole FSA in 2023/24 was £289k (2022/23 £429k) relating to seven suppliers with the greatest spend relating to one supplier being £285k who is a strategic partner to support delivery programmes.

Staff report

Unless otherwise indicated the number disclosures in the staff report reflect the FSA expenditure funded from Westminster (for Westminster ARA) /the devolved government (for Wales and NI ARAs).

Staff costs (subject to audit)

	2023/24	2022/23
	£000	£000
	Total	Total
Wages and salaries	3,190	2,655
Social security costs	355	303
Other pension costs	820	704
Sub total	4,365	3,662
Temporary staff	271	361
Total	4,636	4,023

Pensions

FSA employees are civil servants. Most are members of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and Civil Servant and Other Pension Scheme (CSOPS). These are central government unfunded pension schemes. Pension payments are made through the resource account. Board members are not civil servants therefore they are not members of these schemes. However, some previously had similar pension arrangements independent of them.

Some employees are members of the LGPS. This is a defined benefit scheme governed by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1995. It is administered by the London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA), whose financial statements are prepared for the whole LGPS.

Civil Service Pension Schemes

The Principal Civil Service Pension Schemes (PCSPS) and the Civil Servant and Other Pension Scheme (CSOPS) – known as “alpha” are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes, but the FSA is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The scheme actuary valued the scheme as at 31 March 2020 and you can find details in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation (www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk).

For 23/24, employers’ contributions of £820k (2022/23 £704k) were payable to the PCSPS and CSOPS at one of four rates in the range of 26.6% to 30.3% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The scheme’s Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following a full scheme valuation. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2023/24 to be paid when the member retires and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensioners.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. No FSA in NI staff chose to do so.

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed by the FSA in Northern Ireland during the year was as follows (subject to audit):

	2023/24	2022/23
Permanent	73	72
Other	5	4
Total	78	76

Staff composition

Staff turnover

FSA staff turnover figures are calculated in line with Cabinet Office's guidance.

Consolidated	11.6%
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Number of SCS staff by pay band (as of 31 March 2024):

Pay band	Westminster	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total
SCS1	20	1	1	22
SCS2	7	0	0	7
SCS3	1	0	0	1

Number of persons of each sex (as of 31 March 2024):

	Male	Female
Executive members	1	5
Other Senior Civil Servants	11	10
Board members	5	5
Other employees	764	794

Reporting of sickness absence data

The provisional figure for staff absence as a result of physical and mental illness including injuries, disability or other health problems is approximately 6.88 days per employee, compared with 6.3 for the previous 2 years.

Table 1: Sickness data by country

Country	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Westminster	7.07	6.29	6.5
FSA in Wales	2.39	2.61	0.4
FSA in Northern Ireland	6.97	5.17	5.2
Consolidated	6.88	6.3	6.3

Diversity and Inclusion

Policies for people with disabilities

We are committed to recruiting employees in line with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles, to ensure all candidates are treated fairly and understand their employment position. Our work to attract and recruit people with disabilities includes:

- Advertising roles on [Civil Service Jobs](#), an accessible website. Anyone requiring assistance when applying for our roles can seek support from our in-house resourcing team.
- Providing information publicly about **recruitment schemes**, highlighting our Disability Confident Leader employer status.
- Making our [People Plan](#) publicly available, outlining our priority to be disability confident.
- Including a section in all **candidate packs** on equality and inclusion highlighting how we are committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found, referencing the wider Civil Service People Plan and Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- **Offering an Interview scheme under our Disability Commitment.** If candidates are disabled and meet the minimum selection criteria in the job specification, they are guaranteed an interview where selection is based on merit.
- Displaying the **Disability Confident logo** on the Civil Service Jobs page for all roles.
- Outlining our approach to flexible working in our **candidate packs**. We became location agnostic in 2017 with most staff in non-frontline roles choosing to be home-based or hybrid.
- Participating in the **Autism Exchange Internship Programme**, supporting young autistic people (up to degree level). The programme offers a three-week paid placement providing workplace exposure. In 2023, we welcomed four interns for four-week placements.

We have a Workplace Adjustment policy, guidance and e-learning alongside a dedicated **Workplace Adjustments team** to support individuals and line managers. Workplace adjustments are considered on a case-by-case basis and identified at offer-stage to enable them to be implemented at day one. We encourage staff to use the **Workplace Adjustment Passport** which facilitates reasonable adjustment conversations and acts as record of any agreements, ensuring regular reviews to provide assurance that adjustments remain effective and/or relevant. The passport can be taken to future roles in the Civil Service.

Equality of opportunity is addressed through several development programmes, most notably Beyond Boundaries and FSA Accelerate. FSA Accelerate is an internal programme that supports colleagues from under-represented groups to build their experience, grow networks and advance their career. Places are ringfenced for colleagues who have a disability. Further information on Beyond Boundaries can be found on page 66.

Wider diversity and inclusion policies

We have several policies related to inclusion to support our ambitions to improve the diversity and inclusion of the workforce; embedded in our People Plan. In carrying out our functions we are required to have due regard to and achieve the objectives set under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010. Examples of how we have done this include:

- Carrying out an annual ‘Speak up’ campaign to ensure staff feel able to raise any work-related issues. Inclusion is always an element of the campaign and 2023/24 held focus groups with the LGBT+ network.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, delivered through a partnership between our People and Resources Directorate, networks and community groups.
- We carry out several campaigns, for example, International Day of Persons with disabilities.
- Complete an annual Gender Pay Gap analysis which is shared publicly.
- As part of the annual pay review process, carry out an equality impact assessment.
- When developing policies and procedures, we complete Equality Impact Assessments and consult stakeholders, staff networks and community groups.

Workplace representation

Our People Plan actions for inclusion have focused on ensuring the foundations are in place for us to then identify barriers. This will be addressed as part of the next People Plan. For example, we focused on increasing declaration, completing the disability confidence leader level, carer confident accreditation, social mobility index and analysis of the People Survey. This has given us an evidence base to frame our actions to address barriers in our People Plan 2026.

We do not have targets for workforce representation of protected characteristics, instead we use the economically active population and/or the Civil Service average to benchmark ourselves. Data for some protected characteristics from 2019-2024 has been included below.

Fig. 29: Disability

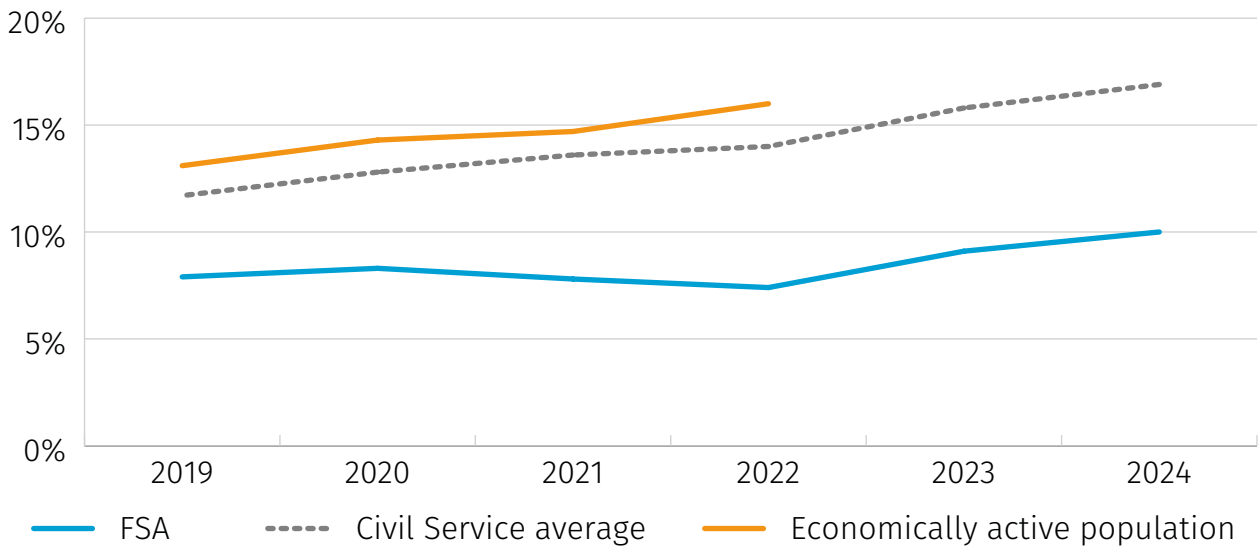


Fig. 30: Ethnicity

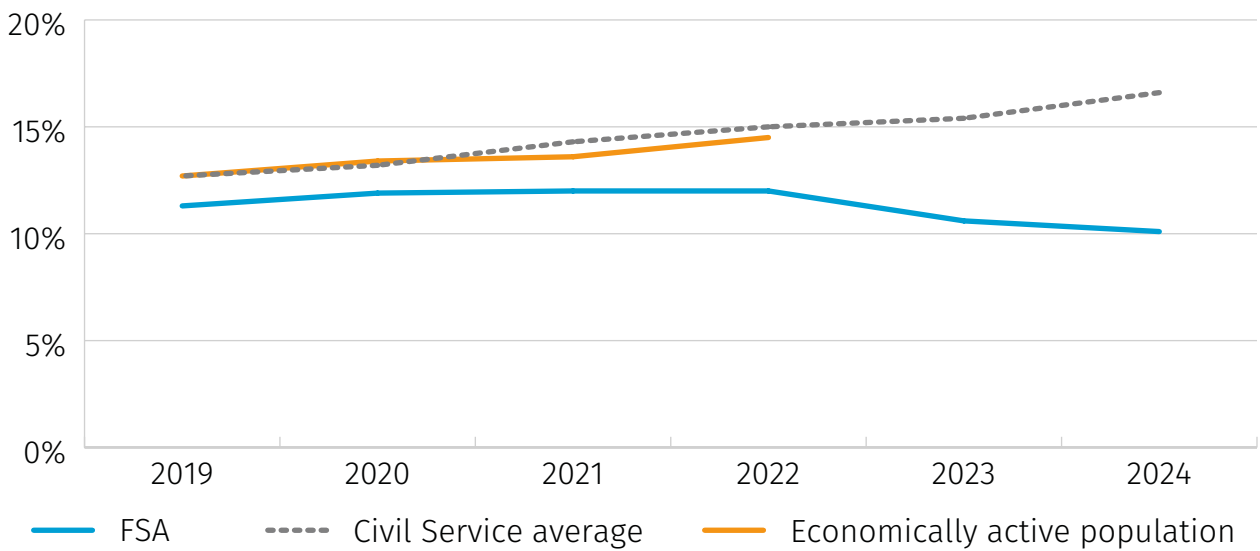


Fig. 31: Gender

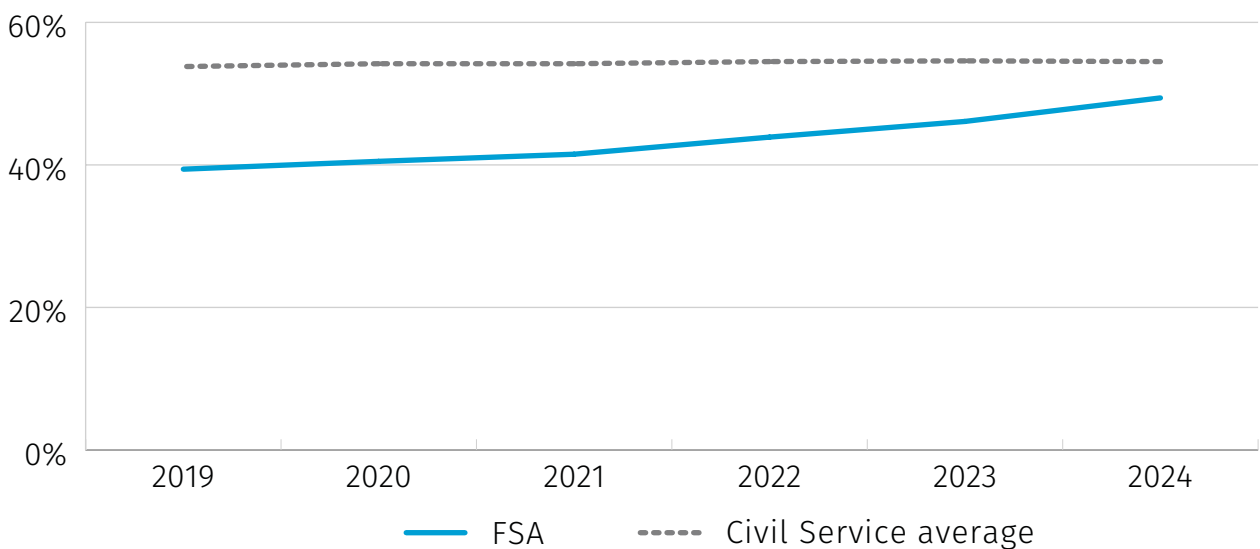
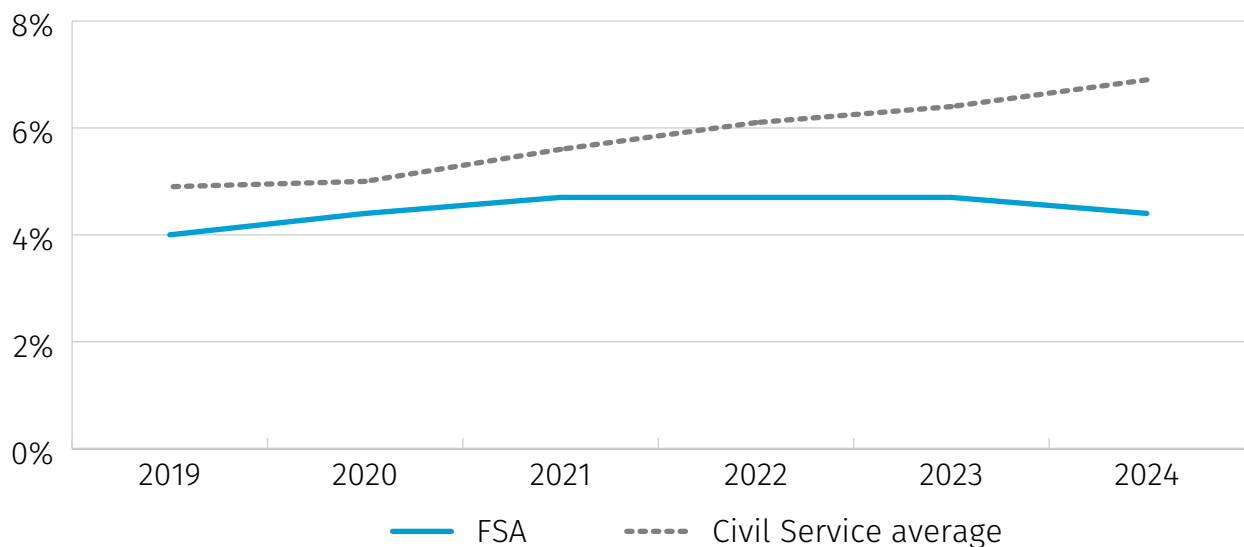


Fig. 32: LGBO+



Further detail for how we have maintained momentum on inclusion as per our People Plan can be found in the performance report (page 64).

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages (audited)

The number of exit packages for Northern Ireland during 2023/24 was nil (2022/23 was also nil.)

There were no early retirements on ill health grounds in 2023/24 and 2022/23.

Health and Safety reporting

Our National Health and Safety Committee continues to facilitate consultation with Trade Unions, enabling a platform for collaborative working, including with our Service Delivery Partner.

Our digital health and safety incident reporting system allows our central Health, Safety and Wellbeing Unit (HSWU) and management teams to better identify trends and implement targeted interventions that contribute to health and safety improvements.

Employee mental health is an ongoing area of focus. The FSA's established Mental Wellbeing Supporters Network (a group of volunteers who have received external training in mental health first aid) continues to support our employees where required as well as encouraging open mental health conversations across the FSA.

We know that bullying and harassment remains an area requiring ongoing focus and includes experiences that are wholly internal and others that involve an external third party. We continue to provide support to employees who report instances of unacceptable behaviour, via our growing network of trained Fair Treatment Champions and our Dispute Resolution Policy. We continue to work collaboratively with staff, management teams and Food Business Operators (FBOs) to uphold our expected standards of behaviour.

RIDDOR Category	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Fatal	0	0	0	0	0
Major	0	1	0	1	0
<7 day	2	2	7	4	3
Disease	1	1	3 (2*)	13 (*13)	0
Dangerous Occurrence	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	4	10	18	3

*covid cases

Recruitment practice

The FSA recruitment policy follows the Civil Service recruitment principles and is based on appointment of the best candidate on merit, identified through a process of open and fair competition. The recruitment policy is set out on our intranet site and provides a transparent approach that identifies high calibre individuals and promotes equality and diversity.

All external recruitment is currently subject to internal approval by the Director for the relevant department and the People Director. Occasionally we do appoint individuals by exception, and the use of exceptions along with external recruitment activity is reported to the Civil Service Commission on a quarterly basis. Temporary agency staff are employed via an agency and are engaged on an ad hoc or temporary basis to fulfil requirements within established posts which involve providing cover (e.g. for a vacancy, holiday or sickness) or additional resource requirements.

These engagements can be either administrative or professional roles.

Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017

The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 took effect from 1 April 2017. These regulations were laid following the enactment of the Trade Union Act 2016. The Trade Union Act was passed in May 2016; one of the elements of this Act is the requirement for employers in the public sector to publish information on facility time.

Facility Time is the provision of time off from an employee's normal role to undertake TU duties and activities when they are elected as a TU representative.

Trade Unions (TUs) play an important role in the modern workplace and there are considerable benefits to both employers and employees when organisations and unions work well together.

Table 1 Relevant union officials

What was the total number of your employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period?

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period	Full-time equivalent employee number
18	15.48

Table 2 Percentage of time spent on facility time

How many of your employees who were relevant union officials employed during the relevant period spent a) 0%, b) 1%-50%, c) 51%-99% or d) 100% of their working hours on facility time?

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	7
1-50%	11
51%-99%	0
100%	0

Table 3 Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

Provide the figures requested in the first column of the table below to determine the percentage of your total pay bill spent on paying employees who were relevant union officials for facility time during the relevant period.

First Column	Figures
Provide the total cost of facility time	£44,769
Provide the total pay bill	£89,515,959
Provide the percentage of the total pay bill spent on facility time, calculated as: (total cost of facility time ÷ total pay bill) x 100	0.05%

Table 4 Paid trade union activities

As a percentage of total paid facility time hours, how many hours were spent by employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period on paid trade union activities?

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours calculated as: (total hours spent on paid trade union activities by relevant union officials during the relevant period ÷ total paid facility time hours) x 100	0%
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Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
16 January 2025

Parliamentary Accountability and Audit Report

Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply (SOAS)

In addition to the primary statements prepared under IFRS, the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRM) requires the Food Standards Agency to prepare a Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply (SOAS) and supporting notes.

The SOAS and related notes are subject to audit, as detailed in the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The SOAS is a key accountability statement that shows, in detail, how an entity has spent against their Supply Estimate. Supply is the monetary provision (for resource and capital purposes) and cash (drawn primarily from the Consolidated Fund), that the Assembly gives statutory authority for entities to utilise. The Estimate details Supply and is voted on by the Assembly at the start of the financial year and is then normally revised by a Supplementary Estimate at the end of the financial year. It is the final Estimate, normally the Spring Supplementary Estimate, which forms the basis of the SOAS.

Should an entity exceed the limits set by their Supply Estimate and corresponding Act of the Assembly, called control limits, its accounts will receive a qualified opinion.

The format of the SOAS mirrors the Supply Estimates to enable comparability between what the Assembly approves and the final outturn. The Supply Estimates are voted by the Assembly and published on the DoF website.

The SOAS contain a summary table, detailing performance against the control limits that the Assembly has voted on, cash spent (budgets are compiled on an accruals basis and so outturn won't exactly reconcile to cash spent) and administration.

The supporting notes detail the following: Outturn detailed by Estimate line, providing a more detailed breakdown (note 1); a reconciliation of outturn to net operating expenditure in the SOCNE, to tie the SOAS to the financial statements (note 2); a reconciliation of net resource outturn to net cash requirement (note 3) and an analysis of income payable to the Consolidated Fund (note 4).

The SOAS and Estimates are compiled against the budgeting framework, which is similar to, but different to, IFRS. An understanding of the budgeting framework and explanation of key terms is provided in the financial review budgeting framework section of the performance report. Further information on the Public Spending Framework and the reasons why budgeting rules are different to IFRS can also be found in chapter 1 of the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance, available on gov.uk.

The SOAS provides a detailed view of financial performance, in a form that is voted on and recognised by the Assembly. The financial review, in the performance report, provides a summarised discussion of outturn against estimate and functions as an introduction to the SOAS disclosures.

Summary tables – mirrors part 1 of the Estimates

Summary table, 2023/24, all figures presented in £000's

Type of spend	SOAS Note	Outturn		Estimate		Outturn vs Estimate, saving/ (excess)		Prior Year Outturn Total, 2022/23
		Voted	Non-Voted	Total	Voted	Non-Voted	Total	
Departmental Expenditure Limit								
Resource	1.1	15,072	-	15,072	15,327	-	255	14,273
Capital	1.2	138	-	138	180	-	42	513
Total		15,210	-	15,210	15,507	-	297	14,786
Annually Managed Expenditure								
Resource	1.1	-	-	-	300	-	300	(118)
Capital	1.2	(21)	-	(21)	-	-	21	130
Total		(21)	-	(21)	300	-	321	12
Total Budget								
Resource	1.1	15,072	-	15,072	15,627	-	555	14,155
Capital	1.2	117	-	117	180	-	63	643
Total Budget Expenditure		15,189	-	15,189	15,807	-	618	14,798

Figures in the areas outlined in bold are voted totals subject to Assembly control.

Net Cash Requirement 2023/24, all figures presented in £000's

Item	SOAS Note	Outturn	Estimate	Outturn vs Estimate, saving/ (excess)	Prior Year Outturn Total, 2022/23
Net Cash requirement	3	15,126	15,595	469	14,204

Figures in the areas outlined in bold are voted totals subject to Assembly control.

Notes to the Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply, 2023/24 (£000's)

SOAS 1. Outturn detail, by Estimate line

SOAS 1.1 Analysis of resource outturn by Estimate line, all figures presented in £000

Type of spend (Resource)	Resource Outturn				Estimate		Outturn vs Estimate (inc virements), saving/ (excess)	Prior Year Outturn Total, 2022/23				
	Administration		Programme		Total inc. virements*	Total inc. virements						
	Gross Income	Net	Gross Income	Net					Total			
Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL)												
Voted expenditure												
1: Public Health Protection from Food and Feed Risk	-	-	20,211	(5,139)	15,072	15,072	15,327	-	15,327	255	14,273	
Total voted DEL	-	-	20,211	(5,139)	15,072	15,072	15,327	-	15,327	255	14,273	
Total Spending in DEL	-	-	20,211	(5,139)	15,072	15,072	15,327	-	15,327	255	14,273	
Spending in Annually Managed Expenditure (AME)												
Voted expenditure												
2: Provisions	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	-	300	300	(118)	
Total voted AME	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	-	300	300	(118)	
Total Spending in AME	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	-	300	300	(118)	
Total resource	-	-	20,211	(5,139)	15,072	15,072	15,627	-	15,627	555	14,155	

SOAS1.2 Analysis of capital outturn by Estimate line, all figures presented in £000

Type of spend (Capital)	Outturn		Estimate		Outturn vs Estimate (inc virements), saving/ (excess)	Prior Year Outturn Total, 2022/23
	Gross	Income Net	Net Virements*	Total inc. virements		
Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL)						
Voted expenditure						
1: Public Health Protection from Food and Feed Risk	138	-	138	180	42	513
Total voted DEL	138	-	138	180	42	513
Total Spending in DEL	138	-	138	180	42	513
Spending in Annually Managed Expenditure (AME)						
Voted expenditure						
2: Provisions	(21)	-	(21)	-	21	130
Total voted AME	(21)	-	(21)	-	21	130
Total Spending in AME	(21)	-	(21)	-	21	130
Total Capital	117	-	117	180	63	643

*Virements are the reallocation of provision in the Estimates that do not require Assembly authority (because the Assembly does not vote to that level of detail and delegates to DoF). Further information on virements is provided in the Supply Estimates in the Northern Ireland Guidance Manual, available on the DoF website.

The Outturn vs Estimate column is based on the total including virements. The Estimate total before virements have been made is included so that users can reconcile this Estimate back to the Estimates approved by the Assembly.

SOAS2. Reconciliation of outturn to net operating expenditure

Item	Reference	Outturn total	Prior Year Outturn Total, 2022/23
Total resource outturn	SOAS 1.1	15,072	14,155
Add: Research costs classified as capital DEL in the SOAS under ESA 10 but treated as operating costs in the SoCNE		66	20
Net Expenditure in Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	SOCNE	15,138	14,175

As noted in the introduction to the SOAS above, outturn and the Estimates are compiled against the budgeting framework, which is similar to, but different from, IFRS. Therefore, this note reconciles the resource outturn to net operating expenditure, linking the SOAS to the financial statements.

The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland is excluded from the Administration budget regime.

SOAS3. Reconciliation of net resource outturn to net cash requirement

Item	Reference	Outturn total	Estimate	Outturn vs Estimate, saving/ (excess)
Total Resource Outturn	SOAS 1.1	15,072	15,627	555
Total Capital Outturn	SOAS 1.2	117	180	63
<i>Adjustments to remove non-cash items:</i>				
Depreciation and amortisation	2	(153)	(168)	(15)
New provisions and adjustments to previous provisions	14	21	(300)	(321)
Other non-cash items		-	-	-
<i>Adjustments to reflect movements in working balances:</i>				
Increase/(decrease) in receivables	11	92	-	(92)
(Increase)/decrease in payables	12	(23)	256	279
Net cash requirement		15,126	15,595	469

As noted in the introduction to the SOAS above, outturn and the Estimates are compiled against the budgeting framework, not on a cash basis. This reconciliation bridges the resource outturn to the net cash requirement.

SOAS 4. Amounts of income to the Consolidated Fund

There was no surrender of excess Accruing Resources or Consolidated Fund Extra Receipts payable to the Consolidated Fund.

Other Assembly Accountability Disclosures

i. Losses and Special Payments

The following sections are subject to audit.

The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland did not incur any losses, or make any special payments during 2023/24 (2022/23 nil).

ii. Fees and Charges

This section is subject to audit.

An analysis of programme income from services provided to external customers is as follows:

	2023/24			2022/23		
	Income £000	Full Cost £000	Surplus/ (Deficit) £000	Income £000	Full Cost £000	Surplus/ (Deficit) £000
Meat Hygiene Inspection	(5,079)	7,390	(2,311)	(4,392)	7,141	(2,749)
	(5,079)	7,390	(2,311)	(4,392)	7,141	(2,749)

The FSA's financial objective is to recover costs fully. There currently remains a shortfall between the costs for the FSA of delivering meat official controls and the income received from Food Business Operators (FBOs) for these services. This is effectively a subsidy of £2.3m from the FSA to the meat industry.

In addition to meat hygiene inspection, the FSA received income from joint projects on nutrition (National Diet & Nutrition Survey) and sanitary surveys and from milk hygiene inspections.

The above information is provided to meet the Fees and Charges disclosure requirements of the FReM and has not been provided for Segmental Analysis purposes under IFRS 8.

iii. Remote Contingent Liabilities

This section is subject to audit.

There were no remote contingent liabilities (2022/23 nil). Details of any non-remote Contingent Liabilities can be found in note 15.



Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
16 January 2025

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT AND SENEDD CYMRU

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) for the year ended 31 March 2024 under the Food Standards Act 1999.

The financial statements comprise the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the financial statements is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s affairs as at 31 March 2024 and its net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Food Standards Act 1999 and Department of Finance directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects:

- the Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply properly presents the outturn against voted Assembly control totals for the year ended 31 March 2024 and shows that those totals have not been exceeded; and
- the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the UK Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of

Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2022). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019. I am independent of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which requires entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the financial statements and my auditor's certificate and report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial

statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions issued under the Food Standards Act 1999.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions issued under the Food Standards Act 1999; and
- the information given in the Performance and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance and Accountability Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;

- providing the C&AG with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit;
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view, in accordance with Department of Finance directions issued under the Food Standards Act 1999;
- preparing the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with Department of Finance directions issued under the Food Standards Act 1999; and
- assessing the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Food Standards Act 1999.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s accounting policies.
- inquired of management, Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s controls relating to the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s compliance with the Food Standards Act 1999 and Managing Public Money;
- inquired of management, the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s head of internal audit and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud,
- discussed with the engagement team and the relevant specialists, including pension experts, regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, posting of unusual journals, complex transactions and bias in management estimates. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)'s framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland). The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Food Standards Act 1999, Managing Public Money and employment law.

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the financial statements;
- I enquired of management, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and in-house legal counsel concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board; and internal audit reports;
- I addressed the risk of fraud through management override of controls by testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements on estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business; and
- In addressing the risk of fraud in revenue recognition, I tested the revenue transactions to verify them in line with Managing Public Money.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members including internal specialists and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain appropriate evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply properly presents the outturn against voted Assembly control totals and that those totals have not been exceeded. The voted Assembly control totals are Departmental Expenditure Limits (Resource and Capital), Annually Managed Expenditure (Resource and Capital), Non-Budget (Resource) and Net Cash Requirement.

I am required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the UK Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies

23 January 2025

Comptroller and Auditor General

National Audit Office

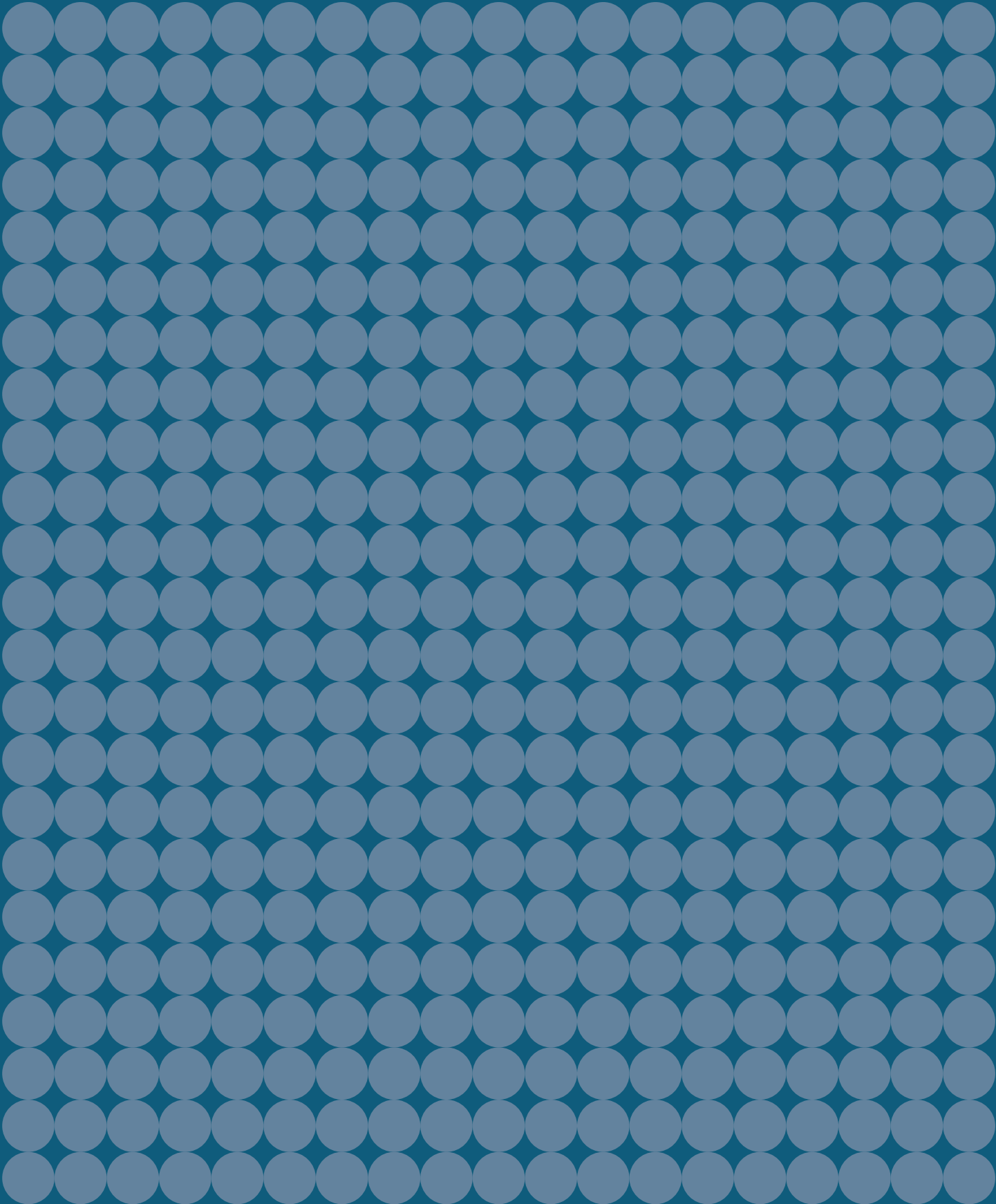
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road

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SW1W 9SP

Accounts



Financial Statements

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

For the year ended 31 March 2024

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values on non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

	Note	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Revenue from contracts with customers	3	(5,139)	(4,516)
Total operating income		(5,139)	(4,516)
Staff costs	2a	4,636	4,023
Depreciation and Amortisation	2a	153	153
Other Operating Expenditure	2a	782	568
Monitoring and surveillance	2b	14,703	13,944
Total operating expenditure		20,274	18,688
Net operating expenditure for the year		15,135	14,172
Finance expense	9	3	3
Net expenditure for the year		15,138	14,175
Notional Audit Costs	2c	17	17
Total Notional Costs		17	17
Net Expenditure for the year including notionals		15,155	14,192
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		15,155	14,192

The notes on pages 152 to 172 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Financial Position

This statement presents the financial position of the Food Standards Agency. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

As at 31 March	Note	2024 £000	2023 £000
Property, plant and equipment	4	89	54
Right of use assets	5	357	490
Intangible assets	6	-	4
Non-current assets		446	548
Trade and other receivables	11	1,117	1,021
Other current assets	11	387	391
Cash and cash equivalents	10	264	280
Current assets		1,768	1,692
Total assets		2,214	2,240
Trade and other payables	12	(58)	(30)
Other liabilities	12	(3,026)	(2,948)
Lease liabilities	13	(96)	(98)
Current liabilities		(3,180)	(3,076)
Total assets less current liabilities		(966)	(836)
Lease liabilities	13	(194)	(291)
Provisions	14	(109)	(130)
Non-current liabilities		(303)	(421)
Total assets less total liabilities		(1,269)	(1,257)
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		(1,269)	(1,257)
Total equity		(1,269)	(1,257)



Katie Pettifer
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
16 January 2025

The notes on pages 152 to 172 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Cash Flows

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Food Standards Agency during the reporting period. The statement shows how the department generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing, and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the department. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Food Standards Agency's future public service delivery.

For the year ended 31 March

	Note	2024 £000	2023 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure for the year including notionals	SoCNE	(15,152)	(14,189)
Adjustment for non-cash transactions	2a, 2c	170	52
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	11	(92)	(212)
Increase/(decrease) in trade payables	12	106	429
Less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	12	16	(176)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(14,952)	(14,096)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	4	(72)	(21)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(72)	(21)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Payments of lease liabilities*	8, 10	(102)	(87)
Financing from the NI Assembly		15,110	14,380
Net financing		15,008	14,293
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(16)	176
Cash and cash equivalents brought forward	10	280	104
Cash and cash equivalents carried forward	10	264	280

* Payment of lease liabilities includes £3k of interest as detailed in note 9.

The notes on pages 152 to 172 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Food Standards Agency, analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities of a department, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

For the year ended 31 March	Note	2024 £000	2023 £000
Balance brought forward		(1,257)	(1,285)
Net assembly funding		15,126	14,203
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year	SoCNE	(15,155)	(14,192)
Auditors' remuneration	2	17	17
Balance carried forward		(1,269)	(1,257)

The notes on pages 152 to 172 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Departmental Resource Accounts

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

1.1 Basis of Preparation

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2023/24 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury and the Accounts Direction issued by Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. The legislative basis for preparing the Northern Ireland account is the Food Standards Act 1999. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Food Standards Agency in NI (FSA in NI) for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the FSA in NI are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material to the accounts. In accordance with the provisions of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000 and the Food Standards Act 1999, all of the accounts of the FSA are audited by the Comptroller & Auditor General of the National Audit Office.

In addition to the primary statements prepared under IFRS, the FReM also requires the Department to prepare one additional primary statement. The Statement of Outturn against Assembly Supply and supporting notes show outturn against Estimate in terms of the net resource requirement and the net cash requirement.

1.2 Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets, and certain financial assets and liabilities where material. In common with other government departments, the future financing of our liabilities is to be met by future grants of supply and the application of future income, both to be approved annually by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Approval for amounts required for 2024/25 has already been given and there is no reason to believe that future approvals will not be granted. We expect to continue to deliver services into the future. We have therefore considered it appropriate to adopt a going-concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

1.3 Significant Accounting Policies and Material Judgments

Estimates and the underlying assumptions are reviewed on a regular basis by the FSA's senior management. Areas of significant judgement made by management are:

IAS37 Provisions – judgement is made on the best estimate of the amount of the obligation. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period, taking into account the risks and uncertainties. Details on provisions held can be found in note 14.

IFRS 16 Leases – FSA has judged the lease term to be up to the break point on accommodation assets and uses this term for calculating depreciation and interest.

1.4 Non-Current Assets

Non-current assets are items of the Agency's property that have a value greater than or equal to £5,000 (inclusive of irrecoverable VAT where applicable) and have a useful life of greater than one year. The capitalisation policy applies to all construction, capital improvements which enhance the functionality of a building, major equipment purchases and other capital projects totaling £5,000 or more. This also applies to multiple low cost items of a similar nature which are functionally interdependent or collectively improve efficiency within the FSA. When consolidated, these create an asset to the Agency. If these collectively have a cost in excess of £5,000 and an intended useful period in excess of a year, then the items are usually consolidated as one asset.

1.5 Property, Plant and Equipment

The FSA does not currently own any land or buildings. All property, plant and equipment assets are carried at depreciated historic cost as a proxy for fair value. This is in accordance with FReM requirements as these assets have short useful lives or low values or both. Assets under construction are not depreciated until the month after they are brought into use. All assets for fixtures and fittings (within the FSA leased accommodation space) and computer equipment are owned by FSA.

1.6 Intangible Assets

Computer software and software licences with a purchase cost in excess of £5,000 (including irrecoverable VAT and delivery where applicable) are capitalised at cost and amortised over the life of the licence, or over 7 years if the licence is bought in perpetuity. Intangible assets under construction are not amortised until the month after they are brought into use. The FSA has developed an external facing website (www.food.gov.uk) primarily for the promoting and advertising of its own services. This website will not generate future economic benefits and consequently all expenditure incurred on developing it is recognised as an expense as it occurs and is not capitalised.

1.7 Depreciation and Amortisation

Assets are depreciated from the month following the date of being available for use. Depreciation and amortisation are applied on a straight-line basis to write off costs evenly over the asset's anticipated life. This is in accordance with FReM requirements as a proxy for fair value as these assets have short useful lives or low value or both. Estimated useful lives are reviewed during the year and assets relifed where applicable. The information below shows the useful lives of the assets currently on the non-current asset register.

	2023/24	2022/23
Property, plant and equipment:		
Computer equipment	2-5 years	2-5 years
Office equipment	n/a	11 years
Fixtures and fittings	4-10 years	6-10 years
Intangible assets:		
Computer software and software licences	6-7 years	6-7 years

The FSA does not currently own any land or buildings. All property, plant and equipment assets are carried at depreciated historic cost as a proxy for fair value.

FSA in NI recognized a right of use asset in relation to accommodation lease that falls under IFRS 16. Right of use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the associated lease term, or estimated useful life where this is shorter. Impairment losses are charge in the same way as those arising on property, plant and equipment.

The information below shows the useful lives of the assets currently reflected as right of use assets.

	2023/24	2022/23
Right of Use assets:		
Leased office space	5 years	5 years

Because lease terms require payments be updated for market conditions, for example rent reviews for leased properties, these changes must be included for provisions for measuring the cost under IFRS 16. The FReM permits right of use assets to be measured using the cost model as a proxy for the measurement of the cost value in use. Right of use assets also have shorter useful lives than that of the underlying asset, using cost as a proxy for assets with shorter economic lives or lower values in accordance with the FReM.

1.8 Research & Development Expenditure

Expenditure on research is not capitalised and is treated as an operating cost as it is incurred. Expenditure on development in connection with a product or service which is to be supplied on a full cost recovery basis is capitalised if it meets those criteria specified in IAS38.

Most research projects have a retention clause to ensure the satisfactory delivery of the final report. The FSA's policy is to accrue for the final retention amount if the work has been completed at the year end.

1.9 Revenue from Contracts with Customers and Other Income

In line with IFRS 15, the FSA recognises 'Revenue from Contracts with Customers' relating to its main operating activities and the associated contracts. These are classified by activity and grouped into revenue from official controls from industry and a joint nutrition project.

FSA revenue is recognised when the performance obligation is satisfied. The performance obligation is when inspection and hygiene work is performed. More detail as to application of the 5-step model under IFRS 15 is detailed in note 3 of these accounts.

1.10 Administration and programme expenditure

FSA in NI are outside the administration budget regime.

1.11 Pensions

FSA past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Civil Servant and Other Pension Scheme (CSOPS) known as “alpha”. The defined benefit schemes are unfunded. The Department recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees’ services by payment to alpha of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the alpha. In respect of the scheme, the Department recognises the contributions payable for the year. Further details can be found in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation and at www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk.

1.12 Value Added Tax

The net amount of Value added tax (VAT) due to or from His Majesty’s Revenue and Customs is shown as a receivable or payable on the Statement of Financial Position. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, or if it is incurred on the purchase of a non-current asset, it is capitalised in the cost of the asset.

1.13 Provisions

Provisions are recognised in accordance with IAS37.

1.14 Contingent Liabilities

The department discloses for Assembly reporting and Accountability purposes:

- i) Items over £300,000 (or lower, where required by specific statute) that do not arise in the normal course of business and which are reported to the Northern Ireland Assembly Departmental Minute prior to the Department entering into the arrangement;
- ii) All items (whether or not they arise in the normal course of business) over £300,000 (or lower, where required by specific statute or where material context of resource accounts) which are required by the FReM to be noted in the resource accounts.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amounts reported to the Northern Ireland Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by the IAS37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Northern Ireland Assembly

1.15 Financial Assets and Liabilities

Financial Assets and Liabilities are accounted for under IFRS 9.

1.16 Leases

The FSA accounts for leases under IFRS 16 (Leases), as adapted by HMT, which sets out the principles for the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of leases.

The standard requires lease liabilities and associated right of use assets to be recognised in the Statement of Financial Position for all leases with a term of more than 12 months unless the underlying asset is of low value.

IFRS 16 has been adapted by HMT to expand the definition of a contract to include intra-UK government agreements where non-performance may not be enforceable by law. This brings FSA accommodation leases with other government departments within the scope of IFRS 16.

IFRS 16 does not require the recognition of assets relating to liabilities for leases where the underlying asset is of low value. HMT mandated the election of this option and the FSA therefore recognises lease payments for low value assets as an expense. The FSA applies a threshold of £5,000 for low value assets which is in line with its capitalisation policy for owned assets, see Note 1.4 for more details.

IFRS 16 also does not require the recognition of assets or liabilities for leases of 12 months or less. HMT mandated the election of this option, so the FSA recognises such leases as an expense.

IFRS 16 does not allow for inclusion of non-recoverable VAT within the value of the lease payments when calculating the value of the Right of Use Asset and Lease Liability.

On recognition Lease Liabilities and Right of Use Assets are measured at an amount equal to the Net Present Value of the lease payments to be made from recognition to the anticipated end of the lease. Such payments are discounted at either the rate implied in the contract or at the rate defined by HMT.

The rate used for leases recognised in the calendar year 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 was 0.95%, for the calendar year 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 was 3.51% and for the calendar year 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024 is 4.72%. Liabilities are only remeasured at a different rate if changes to the lease length occur.

Hindsight was used in line with IFRS 16 (C10(e)) when dealing with changes to a transitioned lease where terms were adjusted with effect 01/04/22.

“As permitted by the FReM, right of use assets are subsequently measured using the cost model as a proxy for the measurement of the cost value in use. This is because lease terms require payments be updated for market conditions, for example, rent reviews for leased properties, which will be captured in the IFRS 16 cost measurement provisions.

Right of Use assets also have shorter useful lives and values than their respective underlying asset, and as such, cost can be used as a proxy for assets with shorter economic lives or lower values in accordance with the FReM.”

1.17 Early adoption of IFRSs, amendments and interpretations

The FSA have not adopted any IFRSs, amendments or interpretations early.

1.18 IFRSs, amendments and interpretations in issue but not yet effective, or adopted

IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts, being applied by HMT in the FReM from 1 April 2025, is not likely to be applicable to the financial statements of the FSA.

IFRS 18 (Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements) was issued in April 2024, replacing IAS 1 (Presentation of Financial Statements), and is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027. IFRS 18 will be implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector if required, from a future date (not before 2027-2028) that will be determined by the UK Financial Reporting Advisory Board in conjunction with HM Treasury following analysis of this new standard.

1.19 Notional charges

Notional charges are non-cash transactions. Notional charges, in respect of services received from other Government departments and agencies and audit costs, are included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to reflect full economic cost of services. Notional costs are detailed in Note 2c.

2.

a) Operating Expenditure

For the year ended 31 March	2024 £000	2023 £000
Staff Costs¹		
Wages and Salaries	3,190	2,655
Social Security Costs	355	303
Other Pension Costs	820	704
Other Staff	271	361
Total Staff Costs	4,636	4,023
Depreciation ROUA	112	112
Depreciation PPE	37	36
Amortisation	4	5
Provision not required written back	–	(118)
Non-cash items	153	35
Accommodation costs*	162	110
Building leases ²	19	24
Staff overheads	121	88
Administration costs*	297	309
IT costs ³	155	127
Committee costs	28	28
Other operating expenditure	782	686
Total	935	721

* Some costs were reclassified this year to better reflect expenditure against headings and make more consistent with FSA in GB. No changes have been made to comparatives.

1 Further analysis of staff costs is located in the accountability report on page 121.

2 Rental costs relate to non-recoverable VAT paid outside of IFRS 16 calculations.

3 Central IT costs are recharged to FSA in Northern Ireland from FSA Westminster.

b) Programme Expenditure

	2024	2023
For the year ended 31 March	£000	£000
Enforcement & audit/local authority	5,025	4,682
Standards & dietary health	402	649
Meat inspection	7,390	7,141
Press & publicity	98	69
Microbiological food safety	1,788	1,403
Monitoring and surveillance	14,703	13,944

c) Notional Audit Costs

The non-cash auditors' remuneration for the year includes costs incurred by the Department for the departmental group audit.

	2024	2023
	£000	£000
Auditors' remuneration and expenses	17	17
	17	17

3. Income

Operating income, analysed by classification and activity, is as follows:

For the year ended 31 March	2024	2023
	£000	£000
Income for official controls charged to industry	5,079	4,392
Income from joint nutrition & food safety projects	60	124
Total income from contracts with customers	5,139	4,516

IFRS 15 requires the FSA to recognise revenue to depict the transfer of goods or services to customers in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the FSA expects to be entitled in exchange for those goods or services. The breakdown above best reflects the income generated from FSA assessed against IFRS 15.

The income from official controls charged to industry is contractual income that is invoiced in arrears and thus the performance obligation has already occurred.

There is no variable element to the transaction price. The transaction price is the cost of staff time carrying out services using an hourly rate for the grade of staff supplied/ service provided. FSA does not accept non-cash consideration for payment nor does it offset consideration due to a customer against that due from the same party. Invoices are due on receipt and there is no time value of money or financing offered.

Payment terms are immediate on receipt of the FSA invoice as all invoices are issued in arrears for services carried out in the month or quarter before. There is no separation of price invoiced against performance obligation as the obligation has already occurred. Invoices are calculated on a time basis less discount as described in the Fees and Charges Note on page 139.

In line with IFRS 15, revenue is recognised at the point of service provided to the customer, at the point of invoice raised or by accrual for services performed in month to be invoiced in future. There is no invoicing in advance of service provision.

4. Plant and Equipment

	2023-24			
4a	Fixtures and Fittings £000	Office Equipment £000	Computer Equipment £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation				
Brought forward	137	–	158	295
Additions	11	–	61	72
Disposals	(114)	–	(48)	(162)
Carried forward	34	–	171	205
Depreciation				
Brought forward	125	–	116	241
Charged in year	5	–	32	37
Disposals	(114)	–	(48)	(162)
Carried forward	16	–	100	116
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024	18	–	71	89
Carrying amount at 31 March 2023	12	–	42	54
Asset financing				
Owned	18	–	71	89
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	18	–	71	89

	2022-23			
4b	Fixtures and Fittings £000	Office Equipment £000	Computer Equipment £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation				
Brought forward	142	6	250	398
Additions	8	–	13	21
Disposals	(13)	(6)	(105)	(124)
Carried forward	137	–	158	295
Depreciation				
Brought forward	135	6	188	329
Charged in year	3	–	33	36
Disposals	(13)	(6)	(105)	(124)
Carried forward	125	–	116	241
Carrying amount at 31 March 2023	12	–	42	54
Carrying amount at 31 March 2022	7		62	69
Asset financing				
Owned	12	–	42	54
Carrying amount at 31 March 2023	12	–	42	54

5. Right of Use Assets

Right of use assets represent the right to direct the use of an underlying asset arising as a result of a lease. The FSA does not own the underlying asset, but recognised the value of the right of use in accordance with IFRS 16.

5a	2023-24	
	Land and buildings £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation		
Brought forward	602	602
Additions	-	-
Revaluations	(21)	(21)
Carry forward	581	581
Depreciation		
Brought forward	112	112
Charged in year	112	112
Carry forward	224	224
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	357	357
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2023	490	490

5b	2022-23	
	Land and buildings £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation		
Initial adoption of IFRS 16 1 April 2022	–	–
Additions	602	602
Carried forward	602	602
Depreciation		
As at 1 April 2022	–	–
Charge in year	112	112
Carried forward	112	112
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2023	490	490
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2022	–	–

6. Intangible Assets

Intangible assets comprise computer software and software licences.

6a	2023-24	
	Computer software and software licences £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation		
Brought forward	30	30
Additions	–	–
Disposals	–	–
Carried forward	30	30
Amortisation		
Brought forward	26	26
Charge in year	4	4
Disposals	–	–
Carried forward	30	30
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	–	–
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2023	4	4
Asset financing		
Owned	–	–
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2024	–	–

6b	2022-23	
	Computer software and software licences £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation		
Brought forward	30	30
Additions	–	–
Disposals	–	–
Carried forward	30	30
Amortisation		
Brought forward	21	21
Charged in year	5	5
Disposals	–	–
Carried forward	26	26
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2023	4	4
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2022	9	9
Asset financing		
Owned	4	4
Carrying amount as at 31 March 2023	4	4

7. Financial Instruments

As the cash requirements of the department are met through the Estimates process, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body of a similar size. The FSA has non-complex financial instruments – such as cash, receivables and payables – that are not subject to significant credit risk.

Credit risk – The FSA charges fees for meat official controls work to non-government industry customers for which there are some circumstances of payment default on amounts due. The FSA actively manages any default amounts and considers this not to be a material credit risk. The trade receivables figure presented in these accounts is recognized at fair value following an adjustment for the associated default risk. Other charges, which are predominantly government customers, present little or no credit risk.

Liquidity risk – The FSA has no significant exposure to liquidity risk as it's net revenue resource requirements and capital expenditure are financed by resources voted annually by Parliament.

Market risk – The FSA has no significant foreign currency risk as it does not maintain any foreign currency assets or liabilities.

Financial instruments

The FSA has no borrowings. It relies primarily on departmental grants for its cash requirements and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risks. It also has no material deposits. All material assets and liabilities are in sterling, so the FSA is not exposed to significant interest rate risk or currency risk.

8. Leases

For the year ended 31 March	2024 £000	2023 £000
Variable lease payments not included in measurement of lease liabilities	20	17
Expenses relating to short term leases	–	8
Expenses relating to leases of low-value assets, excluding short term leases of low value assets	–	–
Other lease expenditure	20	25
Total cash payments in respect of leases	102	112

The FSA's leases are those relating to its rented accommodation space.

9. Finance Expense

	2024 £000	2023 £000
For the year ended 31 March		
Interest expense for leasing arrangements	3	3
Total interest expense	3	3

10. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2024 £000	2023 £000
For the year ended 31 March		
Balance at 1 April	280	104
Net changes in cash and cash equivalents	(16)	176
Balance at 31 March	264	280
The following balances at 31 March were held at:		
Government Banking Service	264	280
Balance at 31 March	264	280

10.1 Reconciliation of liabilities arising from financing activities

	2022/23 £000	Cashflows £000	Non-cash Changes £000	2023/24 £000
Supply	280	(16)	–	264
Lease liabilities	389	(102)	3	290
Total liabilities from financing activities	669	(118)	3	554

Non cash changes comprise lease interest.

11. Current Receivables

For the year ended 31 March	2024 £000	2023 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade receivables	565	473
VAT recoverable	552	548
	1,117	1,021
Other current assets:		
Prepayments and accrued income	387	391
	387	391
Total	1,504	1,412

12. Current Payables

For the year ended 31 March	2024 £000	2023 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	55	29
Other payables	3	1
	58	30
Other current liabilities:		
Accruals and deferred income	2,762	2,668
Amounts issued from the Consolidated fund for supply but not spent in year	264	280
	3,026	2,948
Total	3,084	2,978

While FSA is jointly funded by revenue from customers and the taxpayer, the majority of funding received is from the taxpayer with industry customers subsidised as discussed in the assembly accountability disclosures. Therefore, it is right that any funds held at year end are acknowledged as due to the Consolidated Fund as industry customers are not meeting the full cost of the services provided to them by the agency and so cannot be considered due any of the funds.

13. Lease Liabilities

For the year ended 31 March	2024 £000	2023 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Lease Liabilities	96	98
Amounts falling due after more than one year but within five years		
Lease Liabilities	194	291
	290	389

13.1 Timing of non-discounted cashflows re lease liabilities

Lease Liabilities reported in note 13 are discounted, at the rates referred to in accounting policies. For comparison, the committed non-discounts cashflows as at 31 March 2024 are:

Amounts payable within one year	99
Amounts falling due after more than one year but within five years	196
Total payable	295
Interest element	(5)
Present value of obligations	290

14. Provisions

	2024 £000	2023 £000
For the year ended 31 March	Dilapidations	Dilapidations
Balance at 1 April	130	118
Provided in the year	–	130
Provisions not required written back	–	(118)
Provisions utilised in the year	–	–
Borrowing costs (unwinding of discount)	(21)	–
Balance at 31 March	109	130

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows

	2024 £000
	Dilapidations
Within one year	–
Total current provisions liability	–
Between one and five years	109
Later than five years	–
Balance at 31 March 2024	109

A provision has been created in respect of estimated dilapidation costs for Clarendon Road. The value is based on professional advice. The provision has been inflated and discounted by HM Treasury rates. Inflation at 3.6% for year 1, 1.8% for year 2, and 2.0% for years 3-4 and discounted at 4.26% over the 4 years.

15. Contingent Liabilities

There were no contingent liabilities (2022/23 nil).

16. Capital Commitments

The FSA in NI has no capital commitments.

17. Other Financial Commitments

The Foods Standards Agency in Northern Ireland did not have any other commitments as at 31 March 2024.

18. Related Party Transactions

None of the Board Members, key managerial staff or related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the FSA in Northern Ireland during the year.

The FSA in Northern Ireland had a number of transactions with other government departments and other central government bodies. All related parties are with other government bodies.

In Northern Ireland, these were the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs for the delivery of meat, milk, egg and primary production official controls; Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute for the delivery of shellfish official controls and AMR sampling; Department of Health and Social Care (England) for nutrition projects; Department of Finance for legal services, rates and training; the Executive Office and Loughs Agency.

Details of remuneration provided to Senior Civil Servants and Board Members can be seen in the Remuneration Report on page 108.

19. General Information

The Food Standards Agency is a non-ministerial government department of the Government of the United Kingdom. Its principal place of business is Clive House, 70 Petty France, Westminster, London, SW1H 9EX.

20. Entities within the Departmental Boundary

The FSA in NI has no other entities within its departmental boundary.

21. Events after the Reporting Period

In accordance with the requirements of IAS10, Events after the Reporting Period are considered up to the date on which the accounts are authorised for issue. This is interpreted as the date of the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

There are no reported events after the reporting period.

