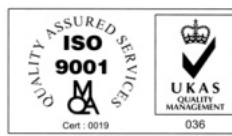
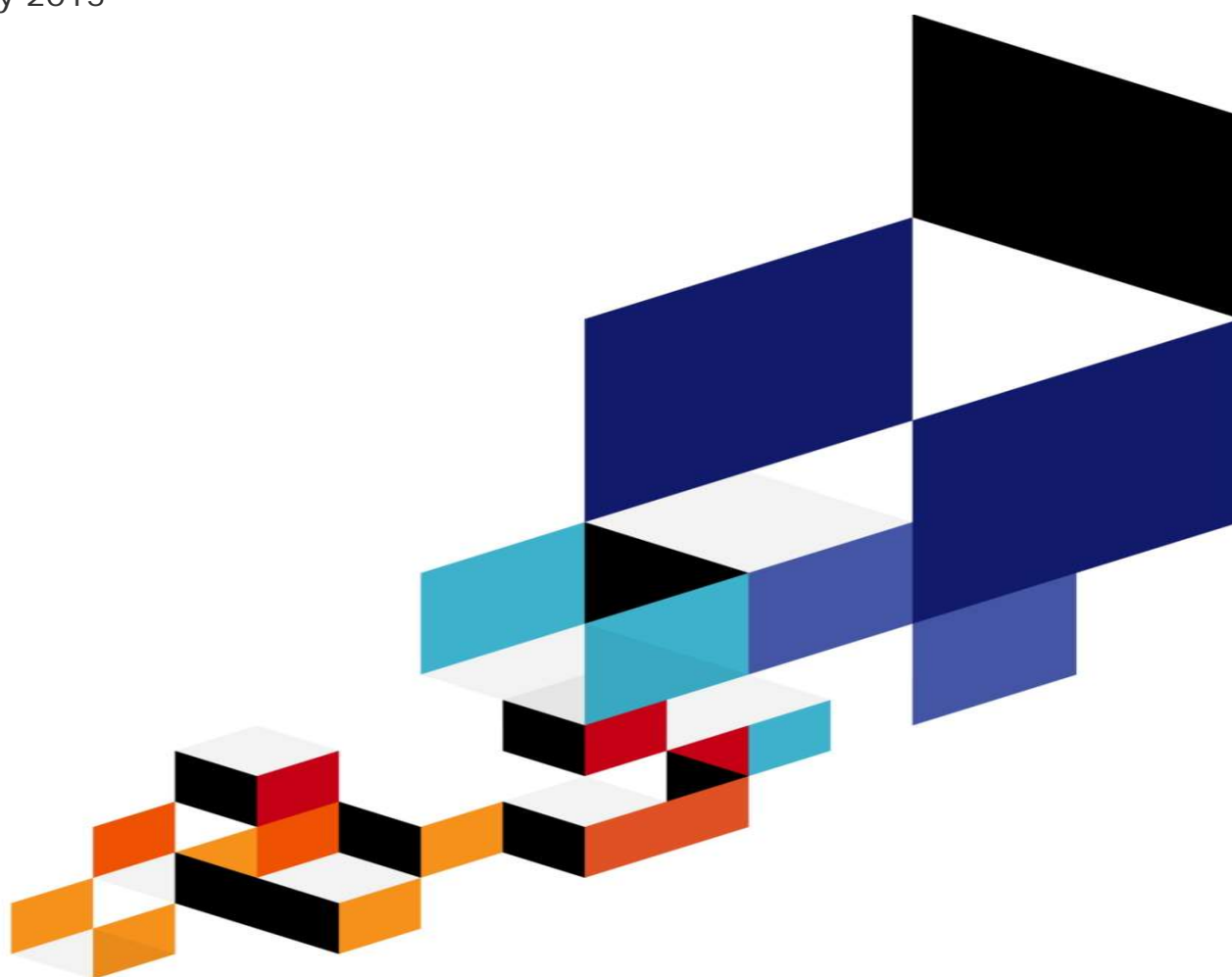


# FSA: Business Information Needs

## TNS BMRB Qualitative Research with Businesses

February 2015





# Executive Summary

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a fundamental responsibility to help ensure that food produced or sold in the UK is safe to eat. Education, engagement and regulation of food business operators (FBOs) is critical to this overarching mission: the FSA needs to ensure that businesses have the information they need to ensure consumer safety; to promote positive safety behaviours and compliance with regulations; and identify breaches of appropriate food hygiene practice.

This research aimed to:

- Understand business' awareness of available information – and how this is used and shared within FBOs
- Understand perceived relevance and appeal of information
- Gauge the perceived impact of materials currently used
- Establish format and channel preferences for guidance
- Identify any gaps in existing support and priorities for alteration

## **Current support channels and FSA positioning**

Ensuring good food hygiene was seen as a priority for FBOs (Food Business Operators). High quality hygiene was associated with customer satisfaction and overall quality of products and services offered. However, many other challenges and priorities also compete for FBOs' attention, and food hygiene was not always a top-of-mind concern.

FBOs sought information from a wide variety of sources, with Local Authorities (LAs) tending to be seen as the primary information provider. FBOs who found engagement with Government/LAs more daunting tended to turn to informal information sources such as networks of colleagues and business associates.

Although the FSA tended not to be mentioned spontaneously as a source of information and guidance, FBOs were in fact fairly familiar with FSA-provided guidance materials – particularly the Safer Food Better Business packs. Some had received these from the LA or Environmental Health Officers; others had found materials through internet search engines. In many cases, they had used these materials without directly associating them with the FSA brand.

This lack of brand association with the FSA was tied to a range of misperceptions about its role in maintaining food safety. The FSA tended to be perceived as responsible for legislating and overseeing inspections rather than providing help and advice. There was also confusion between the role of the FSA and that of the Local Authority and Environmental Health Officers.

### **Information seeking needs and journey**

Newer FBOs tended to be most proactive in seeking information, but faced key challenges in terms of 1) information overwhelm, and 2) ensuring that food hygiene guidance 'cut through' alongside other business support needs. FBOs were most interested in practical, comprehensive guidance at this point.

Established businesses were less likely to seek information overall; food hygiene was seen as 'common sense' which could be a barrier to critically evaluating current practice. These businesses present a key challenge for the FSA, as bad habits must be overcome for information to change behaviour.

Established businesses were most receptive to advice and support immediately preceding or following an inspection. FBOs tended to prioritise information seeking around new legislation or 'checklists' to prepare for inspection; however, they may also be receptive to other materials and guidance. The opening of a new branch or business also presented a moment of habit disruption, where older businesses again proactively sought out advice and support. These two 'journey' points thus represent key opportunities for FSA information to influence habits among an otherwise hard-to-access audience.

### **FSA Materials – current use and FBO response**

FBOs were quite positive about the range of materials the FSA provides; taken as a whole, the information on offer was seen to answer nearly all of their needs. Nearly all FBOs had seen at least some of the materials before, with the Safer Food, Better Business (SFBB) booklet being most familiar. Businesses responded well to level of detail provided, overall tone and ease of use of the materials. This positive response tended to shift brand perceptions – leaving FBOs with the impression that the FSA is a good source of guidance and support.

Specifically:

- The **SFBB** packs were well liked and well used, typically in hard-copy form. For some, it was a practical part of the day-to-day running of their business, used as an on-site reference manual; others used it as a training document that could be used to instruct new staff; some made use of the practical elements of the booklet – diary pages and ‘safer methods’ checklists.
- The **FSA website** was less familiar, although some FBOs had used it to look up a specific detail on legislation; print off PDF resources; aid staff training; or as part of an exhaustive search when setting up a new business. Although it was recognised as a usefully detailed resource, FBOs also raised a variety of barriers to use (e.g., lack of internet or computer access; low computer literacy or confidence; English-language issues; and concerns about ‘information overwhelm.’)
- The range of **FSA leaflets and brochures** were least familiar overall, although FBOs did feel there is some potential for these materials to be used as on-site reference points, or to be shared with staff members. The ‘Starting Up’ guide was most positively received. However, FBOs generally felt that similar material was covered across the leaflets and SFBB packs, and preferred the level and range of detail offered in the latter resource.

Overall, the SFBB packs and FSA website were viewed as complementary – with the SFBB packs acting as a practical and fairly comprehensive day-to-day guide, and the website providing detailed information for specific queries.

### **The Ideal Information Journey**

Ideally, FBOs would like to seek comprehensive information on food regulation and hygiene at the start of their business journeys, and are eager for ‘official’ information from the FSA or other authorities. FBOs hoped this would be offered proactively by the FSA or other authorities during this busy time. The SFBB packs seem to work best in terms of providing a range of information and depth. However, the most proactive businesses noted that they would also have found value from the level of detail provided by the FSA website had they been more aware of it during business set up.

FBOs then wanted access to practical information that would be able to aid them when the time came for an inspection. Suggestions included checklists of what to have ready for an inspection; reference materials (such as SFBB) to refer to as needed during inspection, in case of any queries; and practical advice on completing any necessary paperwork for inspection.

If they had already received all necessary information ahead of any inspection, FBOs were hopeful that they would not need new information in the period after an inspection took place. A combination of the SFBB pack and the FSA website were expected to be able to resolve any outstanding queries.

Lastly, FBOs wanted information that was quick and simple to refer to that could be used as a reference during day-to-day running of the business. This included leaflets/ posters that could be shared with staff; reference material on the FSA website to deal with specific queries; the SFBB pack as a central reference point; and updates about changes to regulations and standards.

FBOs were also eager for other more proactive dissemination from the FSA – although this has obvious resource implications. In particular, FBOs raised that they would be interested in receiving information via LAs; receiving on-the-ground training; and email updates or bulletins.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Despite the high positivity around the range of support and guidance materials provided by the FSA, awareness that these are *from the FSA* is fairly low. The FSA is also not top-of-mind as an information source and so materials are not often proactively sought out, which means that overall materials need to be pushed to FBOs proactively – likely through intermediaries such as Local Authorities.

However, the positive reception of FSA materials suggests that there is a key opportunity to use materials to educate businesses about the role and purpose of the FSA, and to build productive relationships going forward.

One prevalent problem with business' current experience is that information often reaches FBOs too late, and so is used to correct

mistakes rather than embed good practice. As far as possible, it will be useful to ensure that materials get into FBOs early in their business journey – when habits are still being established. However, inspection points and new business development should also be recognised as key influence points where FBOs may be more receptive to guidance and support.

The paper SFBB packs in particular are widely used and highly valued – and where these had not been received early in business development FBOs felt that they would have been beneficial. Although provision of paper SFBB packs is resource intensive, it also presents a key opportunity to provide businesses with fundamental information, shape habits at the outset, familiarise them with the FSA, and set the groundwork for positive relationships with the Authority going forward. Where FBOs are internet enabled and computer-confident, online packs will serve as a useful and less resource-intensive alternative.

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# 1. Introduction

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a fundamental responsibility to help ensure that food produced or sold in the UK is safe to eat. Education, engagement and regulation of food business operators (FBOs) is critical to this overarching mission; the FSA needs to ensure that businesses have the information they need to ensure consumer safety; to promote positive safety behaviours and compliance with regulations; and identify and act on breaches of appropriate food hygiene practice.

TNS BMRB's previous research with Food Business Operators (FBOs) on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) has found that small businesses can find food hygiene and safety guidance unwieldy and sometimes believe that guidance has not been developed for businesses like theirs. New businesses in particular often struggle to understand and take on board what is required of them. In some cases, this may discourage or prevent them from adopting simple practices to safeguard food hygiene – simply because guidance appears very complex.

As part of its education and engagement efforts, the FSA provides a variety of information for new and existing businesses, including information available on the FSA website, a variety of web products and the Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) food safety management information packs. Tailored SFBB packs have been developed for different business audiences: e.g. caterers and retailers

Together, the FSA provides a range of introductory as well as tailored materials for small food businesses to help them to comply with food hygiene regulation and adopt appropriate food safety management procedures. However, less is known about how these materials are used currently, and about when materials could be most usefully targeted to FBOs to enable good habit formation.

## 1.1 Aims of the research

This research was designed to explore the response to and uptake of the range of information and guidance materials provided for new and existing food businesses. Research focused on caterers<sup>1</sup> and retailers<sup>2</sup>.

The key aims of the research were to understand:

- the degree to which businesses are **aware** of the materials available to them – and any differences in awareness;
- and how they were first **notified** of the information provided by the FSA; e.g. via LA's, FSA, trading bodies etc.
- perceived **relevance** and **appeal** of these to their own business;
- how the information is **used** (one off review/training/regularly scheduled use/ongoing/posted in business, etc. **and shared** (e.g., with other staff, with other businesses);
- **fit** between the information offerings and businesses existing/planned training, oversight and enforcement efforts;
- the perceived **impact** of use and what encourages this;
- what drives **engagement** with the informational materials currently and any **barriers** to engagement;
- **channel and format preferences** (e.g., factsheets/online guides/print/paper/digital)
- overall responses to the **tone/branding/corporate voice**, etc.;
- any support **gaps** or priority **alterations** and the reasons for these; and
- **audience differences** (e.g. in terms of business type or age) in terms of needs and channel preferences.

This research explored the range of factors driving engagement and usage with the information provided, and identified ways in which businesses could be better supported in terms of support awareness and uptake.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., restaurants, cafes and takeaways.

<sup>2</sup> Including small independent retailers selling fresh produce – i.e., bakeries, fishmongers, butchers as well as independent shops selling some fresh produce – e.g., corner shops selling fresh sandwiches and chilled foods

## **1.2 The approach**

This research drew upon the established Citizens' Forum approach which TNS BMRB has employed for a range of previous research for the FSA (see further details in Appendix 2).

The research comprised a mixed method qualitative approach, combining 6 'Business Forum' group sessions with 8 depth interviews with FBOs – segmented by key audience types as outlined above.

The six Business Forum groups explored FBO's responses to a selection of information and support materials, looking at how they would best become aware of the materials; whether these appealed and seemed relevant to them; how they (would) use the materials; how use (would) help improve current food safety practices and compliance with food hygiene regulation; the tone, look and feel of the materials; and how to motivate FBOs to use the materials more effectively in the future.

Data from depth interviews was used to supplement the Business Forms, ensuring that we achieve sufficient depth of information about business 'journeys' during set-up and maintenance. Depth interviews explored what information is needed and when; how businesses currently become aware of support on offer (FSA and other); key barriers and motivators for materials engagement up-take; and how to best 'reach' businesses with support materials.

Depth interviews also included a structured 'customer journey' element. In this part of the interviews, we asked businesses to map out key steps taken when setting up their food business in relation to becoming compliant with food hygiene legislation – e.g., developing a plan of action, gaining certification, providing training for staff, etc.

### **1.2.1 Sample**

The sample frame was oriented around the primary variable of business type (catering or retail) and age (with 'new' businesses of 2 years or less and 'established' businesses of two years or more. A more detailed breakdown of the sample is provided in Appendix 1.

**Final sample**

	<b>Group sessions</b>	<b>Depth interviews</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Catering</b>	1 new x 7 people 1 established x 7 people 1 mixed x 8 people	2 new 2 established	<b>26</b>
<b>Retailers</b>	1 new x 7 people 1 established x 7 people 1 mixed x 7 people	2 new 2 established	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>51</b>

Across the above, businesses were sampled from across a wide mix of different business types, sizes, and food type – as below:

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Quota</b>
<b>Location</b>	London: 2 groups, 2 depths Oldham: 2 groups, 2 depths Cardiff: 1 group, 2 depths Belfast: 1 group, 2 depths.
<b>FHRS rating</b>	Spread within groups
<b>Type of outlet</b>	Catering included a spread of: café/sandwich shop; takeaway; restaurant  Retail included a spread of: corner shop selling sandwiches / other chilled goods; butcher; fishmonger; bakery

## 2. Needs and behaviours in relation to food hygiene

In this section we discuss the needs and behaviours of FBOs when seeking food hygiene information – within the context of wider business priorities and guidance needs. We also explore perceptions of the FSA to understand current positioning in the guidance ‘landscape.’

Key findings:

- Food hygiene is considered important due to its impact on reputation among customers. However, it is often competing with other “more pressing” business priorities affecting how proactively FBOs seek information about it
- A range of information sources are used, but the FSA is not considered a go-to information source and is mainly associated with regulation rather than guidance and support
- Business age seems to be the primary driver of receptiveness to advice and guidance, with new FBOs being the most proactive information seekers
- For new FBOs, the challenge of establishing compliant and safe practice is competing with a broad range of business priorities; for more experienced FBOs it is around challenging established habits that may no longer comply with standards

### 2.1 Food hygiene as a priority

FBOs widely agreed that ensuring good food hygiene was a priority for their business. They measured business success in part by customer satisfaction, and wanted to ensure that customers felt their food was safe. A strong FHRS score was seen to bolster business reputation.

However, there were many other business priorities competing for FBOs’ attention - for example, concerns related to employee recruitment and training; financial accounts; and arranging resources and suppliers. Often these were perceived as more critical to the functional running of the business than food hygiene, which could mean that they took precedence.

Figure 2.1 (overleaf) illustrates the range of other priorities that FBOs raised as competing with food safety and hygiene for their attention.

**Figure 2.1: Competing business priorities for FBOs**



While all FBOs experienced these challenges within their business, the level of priority given to each one varied according to other factors such as level of experience, time of year and staff turnover. Food safety became a bigger priority at key moments such as when setting up, carrying out renovations, training new staff and at or after an inspection. These will be explored in more detail in Section 3 of this report.

In addition, food hygiene felt like “common sense” for lots of FBOs – particularly more experienced businesses. Established habits typically served as a barrier to information seeking or reflection on food hygiene practice.

## **2.2 Food hygiene information sources**

Across the sample, a wide range of sources were used to find out information about food hygiene. While there was some variation by

individual and FBO typology (see Section 2.3 below), the following sources were consistently mentioned by all groups. In Figure 2.2 below, the size of the text gives an approximate indication of how frequently that was raised by FBOs during qualitative research sessions:

**Figure 2.2: Food hygiene information sources**



Overall, the FSA tended not to be spontaneously mentioned as a resource to turn to for advice and information.

Instead, **Local Authorities** were typically cited as the key source of authoritative information and FBOs' first port of call if they needed advice or clarification. As local business owners or managers, respondents tended to have established relationships and relatively regular contact with LAs – e.g., around licencing and regulation practices – so they trusted the information provided to them via this channel. Many LAs reportedly had very comprehensive information on their website about food hygiene; FBOs also noted that they would feel comfortable calling up LAs to ask specific questions about food hygiene and regulation.

For many FBOs in the sample, **colleagues and associates** were an equally trusted source of information. Both new and established businesses often knew others in the industry – and it could feel easier to speak to them for advice and guidance than to navigate through information provided by third parties. There was a perception that 'official' information could be hard to digest and therefore quite daunting, so

speaking to someone they knew who would use simple language and speak from personal experience was a very appealing option. Some FBOs relied on their **suppliers** and **business networks** in a similar way. Often, FBOs would feel they got enough information this way and not necessarily seek out anything further unless no-one they knew had the answer.

**Google** was another key source, particularly for those just setting up as they often did not know where to obtain key information relating to any area of their business. They would Google key terms such as “food hygiene” and use the search results to find out what practices they needed to comply with. However, they often would not necessarily remember which search results came up and so would still go to Google for future searches, rather than direct to the information provider. This meant that, often, they were coming into contact with FSA materials via Google searches, but were unaware of this and would not necessarily go to the FSA as a port of call for future queries.

Many FBOs, particularly those with established businesses or experience within the food industry, reported that they simply relied on **common sense** to inform their food safety practice. They felt they already knew how to maintain good hygiene standards and so did not need to refer to any additional information or support. This was particularly true if FBOs had successful inspection experiences; these ‘confirmed’ that their practice was safe and appropriate.

**Environmental Health Officers** were also mentioned on a few occasions as an information source, given it is the body associated with inspections and therefore setting standards.

The low spontaneous mention of the FSA as a source of support and guidance is perhaps surprising. This seems to be in part due to low brand awareness and mis-perceptions of the FSA’s role in relation to food safety, discussed below.

### **2.2.1 Perceptions of the FSA**

FBOs were typically aware of the FSA and understood that it played a role in food safety in the UK. However, they were less sure if they had any direct contact with the FSA; how the FSA and LAs worked together in



relation to food safety; or whether any of the materials they used were FSA-provided.

As mentioned above, there was a general wariness around government-issued information and advice because it often felt hard to digest and impersonal. FBOs wanted to feel like they could speak to a person or body who they knew and who understood their needs. However, the FSA tended to be perceived as a regulatory body associated with enforcement and standards-setting rather than help and guidance. Immediate associations included “scary,” “distant” and “not there for advice.”

FBOs often also saw Environmental Health and the FSA as having the same function. They came into contact with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) during inspections, from which FHRS ratings were set - and because the FHRS comes from the FSA, they saw these two bodies as the same. Experiences of EHOs was variable and impacted perceptions of the FSA.

There was also confusion around how the FSA worked with and related to LAs. During the research process, some recognised information on the FSA website as material they had previously found online at their LA’s website.<sup>3</sup> This led them to question what the role was for each – they had often always seen the LA as the authority to turn to as they issued their licence.

Despite this initial confusion, FBOs changed their view of the FSA on reviewing the materials during the course of this research – materials which were readily recognised, perceived positively, and reported to be used frequently. This highlights a clear opportunity to re-educate businesses around the role and purpose of the FSA, to make sure they are top-of-mind as an information source, rather than seen as a distant regulator.

While the information sources explored above were mentioned across the groups, there were differences in how and when different kinds of FBO sought and used information. We explore the information journey in detail

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<sup>3</sup> NB: It is possible that FBOs were in fact confusing the original source of the material they were reading; they may have originally read the material on the FSA website without realising the source of the guidance.

in Section 3. First, Section 2.3 below explores the different typologies identified to help understand the different needs and behaviours around information seeking.

## **2.3 Three key FBO typologies**

Within our sample, we identified three key FBO typologies which applied regardless of business type (retail/ catering) or location – based on FBO experience level and business age. These factors were the most important in driving the needs and behaviour of an FBO around food hygiene information seeking.

The three typologies identified were:

- New business, no experience
- Experienced and established
- Experienced but taking on new business

Each typology is described in more detail below.

### **2.3.1 New business, no experience**

Those who were new to the food industry and who were setting up a business for the first time were the most proactive in seeking information – generally, as well as in relation to food hygiene. However, this also meant that they could be easily overwhelmed by the amount of information they needed; food safety could get pushed down the list in favour of functional priorities relating to getting the business up and running such as questions around licensing, finances etc.

*“When you set up a business, the key challenge is setting up the systems. You have to find the staff ... Then you need to think about stock management. ... I wasn't really thinking about hygiene until I got a big leaflet from the Local Authority.”*

New, Catering, London

New FBOs tended to rely on trusted authorities (often the LA or EHO) and Google searches to find the information they needed when establishing their business. They were often in regular communication with the LA due to more general business questions regarding licencing and other regulations already, and tended to expect food hygiene information to come from here as well. However, there was also a desire among this

cohort to really 'understand everything themselves' so that they can feel confident in what they are doing. Google was used for proactive searching for relevant information; although few identified specific key websites and online sources of information they had found most helpful.

In terms of the kind of information they are most interested in, new FBOs were interested in **learning about all the food hygiene regulations and processes** relevant to their business. They also wanted to **keep up to date with any changes** on an on-going basis.

New businesses thus present a key opportunity to establish correct habits right from the start. The FSA is well placed to provide trusted information and help alleviate FBOs' sense of overwhelm here, building relationships for the future.

### **2.3.2 Experienced and established**

For established businesses, practice around food hygiene had often become embedded into daily operation; as such, there was little active information seeking around the topic, as current practice became routine.

*"The thing is, my butchery skills are really good. I've been in the trade for so long – over 25 years now. ... I didn't really need to look for advice as such."*

Established, Retail, Cardiff

This cohort was likely to draw on 1) existing networks, colleagues and associates, and 2) their own experience and 'common sense'. They had much less on-going contact with the LA, so while they may still go here if necessary relating to a specific issue (e.g., questions about legislation changes), they were much less likely to use them as a source of information than new businesses.

In terms of their information needs, established businesses were mainly interested in **changes to legislation that may affect them** and impact on their practices. However, they admitted to often taking a passive approach to this – sometimes only finding out there are changes relevant to them if an issue is identified at inspection.

*“Every year they’re trying to change things. Last year I was told my hazard plan was fine. This year, I was told I need to change it. The changes, they’re getting so sophisticated now. It’s hard to put pen to paper.”*

Established, Catering, London

Experienced and established FBOs are a challenging group to engage with because their behaviour is driven by established habits and social norms. These need to be disrupted for new information to be considered.

However, if habits are disrupted and better practice becomes entrenched, there is a possibility that established businesses could come to represent a key opportunity for FSA. Their reliance on networks and the behaviour of others in their industry means there is a possibility for good behaviour to become self-reinforcing, and to be spread to other businesses in their network.

### **2.3.3 Experienced but taking on a new business**

When experienced FBOs take on a new business this often prompted new reflection on food hygiene practice and information seeking. However, research also suggested that FBOs will still bring knowledge and habits from their previous line of business or inherit these from the previous business owner/ manager they are taking over from. This can introduce some risk of inappropriate practice – knowledge from the catering industry gets applied to retail and vice-versa – and/or that bad habits can be transferred across and become embedded and reinforced in the new business.

*“When we were training the staff at the new place, we knew the training company that we’d used last time and so we sent them on the same course.”*

Established, Catering, Oldham

As with the experienced and established FBOs more widely, FBOs beginning new businesses often used their own networks to check or confirm business practice and regulation. Some also consulted with the LA to find out what they need to know in relation to their specific new line of business, in case there is anything they have missed.

Information seeking for this cohort is about plugging gaps in knowledge where the new business may differ from the previous one – and about using the opportunity of reflection on practice to introduce support and information.

However, FBOs may not always be aware of where these gaps are and so this information needs to be easily accessible and ideally proactively provided. Otherwise, FBOs are likely to 'default' to use of network knowledge, and issues may only be identified during inspection.

The opening of a new outlet or new business by an experienced owner offers an opportunity for the FSA to introduce new information and disrupt existing habits. The same is true when building or renovation work takes place.

## 3. Business information journey

This section explores FBOs information and support seeking journey in relating to food hygiene, taking into account the needs of the different typologies as outlined above.

Key findings:

- As outlined above, there are a few key moments where information seeking tends to take place for businesses: initial set up; inspection and post-inspection; upon legislation change; or when experienced owners establish a further food business
- However, there is also the opportunity for on-going information seeking to help embed good practice into daily routines
- These moments are consistent across all business types, but the approach to information seeking varies by typology as discussed above

### 3.1 Journey overview

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, information needs and behaviour relating to food hygiene vary according to business stage. This highlights a current information journey with three distinct opportunities for information seeking, and an overarching opportunity for embedding knowledge in the day-to-day. Proactivity around information seeking during day-to-day running of the business is low.

Figure 3.1 (overleaf) illustrates this journey. Although it is displayed in a linear way, the information and planning journey can be considered an on-going cycle as the business continues to embed practices and undergo inspections.

#### **Figure 3.1 The food hygiene information and planning journey**



The following sections will look at each of these moments in detail in terms of the information needed and the behaviours displayed.

## 3.2 The journey in detail

### 3.2.1 Setting up or taking over a business: initial information seeking

This is the most proactive stage of information seeking, and newer businesses were emphatic about the need to find support with ensuring good food hygiene practices at this point in their journey. More established businesses did not remember it being such a key issue for them when they set up because there was so much else to think about; that felt more important to get the business off the ground, instead emphasising the importance of feedback received after an inspection (discussed below in section 3.2.3). There is likely to be a degree of personal preference here, but in all cases it represents a key moment when FBOs are getting to grips with requirements.

*"It had to be done, in my eyes."*  
New, Catering, Belfast

*"That was one of the last things we considered, to be honest."*  
Established, Catering, Oldham

Similarly, renovations and/or building works to extend premises can re-invigorate information seeking. Here, because FBOs often need to apply for planning permission, they are in a receptive mindset and may well be

reminded of food safety regulations by the LA or building contractors as they go through this process.

At this stage, the LA is often the first port of call for information, particularly among FBOs with less experience, but friends and colleagues are also often consulted. For any specific queries or to check information, Google searches are often carried out.

There is a clear sense at this stage of a steep learning curve and so any information that can be found that provides **easy-to-understand and clear guidance** on what needs to be done is very much appreciated. Often, **practical guidance**, such as how to complete your HACCP form, is valuable and can help the process of setting up feel less daunting. The key issue here is that new FBOs may not know the right questions to ask to get all the information they need, and so the more **comprehensive** the information they receive at this stage the better.

FBOs are coming into contact with FSA material here, but without always being aware of it or explicitly seeking it out. There is, therefore, the opportunity for the FSA to become a trusted go-to source at this stage with more overt promotion

### **3.2.2 Inspection: getting feedback**

Currently, inspections provide a key moment for getting information in terms of receiving feedback; however, this is mainly very passive. Many FBOs received information and guidance from EHOs when they visited for an inspection, either in the way of printed materials or verbal advice. This was felt to be very useful by those who had had it, but it could feel like it was information that arrived too late. Experiences also varied – some FBOs reported had received no advice from EHOs and felt unfairly judged by inspectors.

Some FBOs, however, recognised the “threat” of random inspection and this encouraged them to stay on top of hygiene issues and seek information where there were queries throughout the year. This was most likely to be newer FBOs who were naturally more proactive in seeking information. More experienced FBOs tended to instead rely on their own knowledge and experience, so any issues highlighted at inspection could come as a surprise.



*"[You need to be thinking about it] throughout the year. Health officers can visit randomly."*

Mixed, Catering, London

*"The rules seem to change so often. It's getting so sophisticated now – I find it quite difficult to understand."*

Established, Retail, Cardiff

The priority information needs at this stage were related to **what inspectors would be looking for**, as some FBOs felt they did not have a clear idea of this. They wanted peace of mind that when the inspectors called, they would have nothing to worry about.

Inspections are a key point in FBOs' journeys as an enforced interaction with authorities and with food hygiene regulations. They therefore signal a key opportunity for promoting information, support and guidance that will help the process run smoothly. Although FBOs are focused on inspection-related information, they are likely to be more receptive to information provision overall.

### **3.2.3 Post-inspection: taking action**

Depending on the level of information received at inspection, FBOs may then be prompted into further information seeking in order to address any issues that were highlighted to them as points to improve on. In many cases, the EHOs provide the necessary information to them at inspection, as discussed above. This is helpful, but can feel a bit too late to be told about things they should have known about before.

*"The inspector was happy with everything and told me to contact her when I'm ready to expand so that she can help."*

New, Retail, Oldham

However, some had less positive experiences with EHOs and they felt at a loss here as to what to do. Some FBOs who had not received any information or advice from EHOs were prompted at this stage to actively seek information and advice, often turning to the LA as the authoritative figure. Those who were less proactive had waited for the LA to contact them with information, and were left feeling frustrated and unsupported

that they did not know any more about how they could remedy the issues highlighted. Established businesses in particular often associated inspections with the council and so looked to them in these situations to help them.

*“The council seems to be the only point of contact for every single business. At the end of the day, we are responsible to them.”*

Established, Catering, Oldham

In terms of information needs at this stage, FBOs were looking for **specific guidance on how they could remedy any issues** highlighted. However, the tone is very important here as FBOs do not want to feel judged and, again, there was very varied experience within the sample relating to this.

In the aftermath of an inspection – whether successful or unsuccessful – FBOs were often presented with new information and many were more receptive to it at this point than before inspection. However, the opportunity exists to help businesses better prepare for inspections through the delivery of information, to avoid the sense of “too little too late.”

### **3.2.4 Day-to-day running of business: maintaining standards**

In addition to these key moments throughout the business journey, there is also more limited on-going information seeking that takes place to address specific issues that may arise, and specifically to train new staff. Where FBOs displayed this kind of information seeking, this was to ensure that good practice was embedded and that standards are maintained.

For experienced and established FBOs, the main driver here was training staff. They were not proactive in seeking out new information, but would revisit the information they had to help staff understand how they needed to behave. For this reason, it was important to them that they could access up-to-date information; however, this was not always the case because they were not always aware of any changes in regulations that had taken place since their last inspection.

*“When you have a high turnover of staff, you need to train each and every one of them when they start.”*

Mixed, Catering, London

For all typologies, networks and common sense played a big part in information seeking here. Once they had understood the requirements (for new FBOs) or had experience of running a business (for experienced FBOs) they tended to just keep conversations going within networks – such as suppliers, colleagues and associates – so that they had a sense of what practices were expected, and would apply “common sense” on top of this.

*“When talking about food hygiene, you know it – it’s all about your instincts and your common sense.”*

New, Catering, London

However, some would come unstuck here and need to seek more specific advice or information when particular issues came up that they could not find an answer to through these networks. In this case, they would be likely to contact the LA to answer their queries. These might be in relation to issues raised by customers, or problems they encountered through trying to carry out what they understood to be best practice. Although the LA was often consulted here, sometimes FBOs did not know where to go to find the answer to their specific queries, and this felt frustrating.

*“I felt confident at first, but then all these obstacles came in the way and I didn’t know where to get that information.”*

New, Retail, Oldham

We will look at specific FSA materials in the following section. However, it is worth noting here that lots of FBOs were currently using Safer Food, Better Business (SFBB) from the FSA as a general reference manual here; they just were often not aware it was an FSA publication. This means that they are using it to embed good practice as they go along.

The materials that businesses turn to for day-to-day support quickly transfer into habit. Where businesses are familiar with them, FSA materials can be used frequently as a go-to resource. There is an opportunity to improve awareness by promoting these materials as associated with the FSA more.

## 4. Response to materials

In this section we explore FBOs' response to the range of FSA support and guidance materials presented to them during research. The materials examined included: the FSA website; the SFBB packs (both in booklet and DVD/ online formats); and a selection of the other paper materials printed from the FSA website.

Key findings:

- Overall, the materials were positively received – viewed as providing the right kind and level of information to meet needs
- The SFBB packs were seen as the definitive reference guide for FBOs; awareness and usage of this resource was high
- The website was appreciated for offering very detailed and comprehensive information, but FBOs also perceived it as 'dry' in tone and unwieldy
- Other paper materials were perceived as repetitive to information contained in the SFBB packs and so need to be effectively targeted to meet specific needs
- Online and paper resources complement each other by being used for different kinds of information seeking

### 4.1 Overview of responses

Overall, FBOs responded very positively to the materials presented to them during the research. As a set of information, they felt it answered nearly all their needs. FBOs were also impressed by the level of detail, overall tone and language level, and general ease of use.

*"All this is very informative. If you had any question, you'd probably be able to find it in here. There's more than I thought!"*

New, Retail, Oldham

Despite low initial awareness of the FSA, and an initial perception that few if any FSA resources had been used in the past, upon examining the materials FBOs displayed high recognition. Almost all reported that they had seen at least some of the materials before. The SFBB packs had the highest levels of recognition overall.

Figure 4.1 below provides an overview of how each kind of resource was received. Overall, the SFBB packs were also positively received in relation to perceived practical application; ease of use; tone and design; and level of detail provided. FBOs did not feel that the packs could answer all queries for all occasions – but the FSA website was felt to offer a level of specificity and detail which complemented the packs in an ad hoc fashion. Overall, whilst the paper leaflets were felt to be appealing, they performed less well than the SFBB packs and website combination.

**Figure 4.1 An overview of FBOs’ response to materials**



Reviewing these materials challenged perceptions of the FSA as a regulatory body, and all respondents had a much better understanding of the level of information and advice that could be provided by the FSA through seeing them. This reflects well on the materials, but highlights the need to re-examine how the FSA is promoting and positioning themselves as well as the materials in order to ensure they are being found and used in the most effective way.

The rest of this section explores responses to each of the materials in detail and how FBOs reported each is currently being used.

## 4.2 Responses in detail

## 4.2.1 FSA website

### Current website usage

Most FBOs consulted within this research had not previously visited the FSA website, preferring to turn to their LA website or Google for online help. They tended not to remember 'lingering' on the FSA website itself where Google had signposted them to it, although some did report having found specific resources (e.g., the SFBB packs) via online search.

### Overall response to website support

When FBOs were asked to review a selection of FSA website material, the range and depth of material was quickly apparent. This was reported to be both a benefit and a barrier. Of all the materials explored, the website was perceived to be most useful for finding detailed and specific information, and this held high appeal. However, for many it felt a little overwhelming and not as easy to digest as other materials.

*"It helps you dot every 'i' and cross every 't'."*  
Mixed, Catering, Belfast

*"I take things on board better when I'm being told, meaning not reading things."*  
New, Retail, Oldham

Figure 4.2.1 (overleaf) provides an overview of FBOs' positive and negative comments relating to the website. The size of the text gives an approximate indication of how frequently FBOs raised the response. We then provide further information about perceived benefits as well as barriers to use.

Figure 4.2.1 Overall response to FSA website support



### Perceived benefits of website support

Upon further review, FBOs reported that they thought the FSA website offered a wide variety of useful information. They also thought that it might have a number of benefits in supporting their own safe and effective practice. FBOs felt the website was well placed to support them in:

- **Looking up detailed answers to specific queries.** Often when FBOs had a very specific question they would turn to online help and targeted information searches. The FSA site was recognised as very comprehensive in terms of the information it contains and so had been used (and could be used) to complement existing knowledge and resources when a very specific question arose: for example, information on allergens, HACCP advice. FBOs specifically noted that the website resource complemented the SFBB packs very well in this way.
- **Printing off PDFs.** The printable resources on the site were perceived as particularly useful to FBOs for sharing with their staff. Some FBOs mentioned they had printed materials off and pinning them up on walls, or handed them out as reminders for their staff about good practice.

- **Supporting staff training.** Due to the self-sufficient and comprehensive nature of the site, many FBOs perceived it as a good tool for helping them to train in safe practice. They would give them the website address and/or show them some of the online videos and ask them to read/ watch these. This was appealing because it didn't require them to be present to transmit key guidance – they could be confident that everything their staff needed to know would be covered in this way and they could therefore 'leave them to it'.
- **Providing a range of information during business set-up.** The website was felt to be best suited to those setting up their business due to its comprehensive nature, and many (including some established FBOs who had recently opened a new branch or business) wished they had known about it at this stage. It was felt to be less useful to more established businesses, who primarily wanted to see an easy way to check any legislation updates, as this is what they were most interested in.

*"It's got all the different sections, and all the different topics you could want. Hazard plan, that's very useful. And there are links to click through and download. It's very easy to use."*

Established, Catering, Oldham

Specific information contained on the site that was felt to be particularly useful included:

- Guidance on completing the HACCP plan – this was a real sticking point for some FBOs who were daunted by the task
- Information on staff training – this was of key importance to FBOs to maintain high hygiene standards
- FHRS ratings information – a key concern when it came to food hygiene and something that all FBOs wanted to have a good understanding of before inspection
- Product recalls – this meant the site could provide the most up-to-date information and they could use it as a reference point for that.

### **Barriers to use**

Despite the clear usage opportunities and advantages outlined above, FBOs also reported that the online format also presented some basic challenges.



Not all businesses had access to the internet on their premises and so consulting the site was reported to be something they would need to do “out of hours”.

Those looking for more general advice found it harder to digest the information and preferred to refer to the simpler, printed materials. Those with extremely niche enquiries also found the site a little hard to use as they were sometimes not sure where to look. In this instance, an FBO might be tempted to use a Google search or call someone they know or the LA to seek the information they need. For example, internet searchers might be used to find out how food hygiene applies to stalls and vans specifically.

Some FBOs were also not very computer confident and were daunted by the idea of going online. Their jobs do not require frequent computer work or internet usage and so this medium was not always familiar to them. Those who were less digitally confident were more likely to be overwhelmed with the task of sorting through and digesting the range of material on the site; some FBOs mentioned they might delegate website review to other members of staff who were more comfortable online.

Finally, FBOs also reported that they were more likely to go to their LA for online support around specific queries and clarification around food hygiene issues than the FSA. In some cases, FBOs thought that the information they saw on the FSA website during our research was identical to that seen on their LA website. This is not necessarily an issue as it means the information provided by councils is correct; however, it may also indicate a missed opportunity for FBOs to develop positive associations with the FSA as a source of guidance and support.

Overall, the website was seen as a useful gateway to information for those who were looking for it – with the most proactive FBOs particularly appreciating the level of detail provided. However, few seem to be finding and using the website currently in comparison to other sources given barriers around proactive information seeking, and in the absence of FSA being a top-of-mind information provider.

FBOs want to find their way quickly to information that seems relevant or they will begin to disengage. To maximise their engagement, further

signposting may be needed, both online but also in other materials where cross-referencing is appropriate.

#### 4.2.2 Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) packs

##### Current SFBB usage

The majority of the sample had already seen SFBB in some way or another, and many used it regularly as the definitive on-site reference guide. It had also been used frequently for training purposes.

Both the online and hard-copy versions of the guide had been used, but for different purposes. The key uses are outlined below:

- **On-site reference manual** – FBOs frequently reported that they had a copy of the booklet at their premises, said that they used it frequently as a reference manual for any food hygiene issue. The SFBB packs were even referred to it as “the Bible” – made available to staff as a reference guide, or even put in a folder and/or laminated to keep it clean. The hard-copy format lent itself particularly well to on-site usage in this way. More experienced FBOs reported that they would be less likely to consult it as they felt more confident in their practices, but said that it nonetheless often served as a useful reference guide for them if there was anything they needed to check.
- **Training material for staff** – due to the comprehensiveness and simplicity of SFBB, it was often used as a training manual for new staff. New employees would be asked to read it through when they joined so that FBOs knew they had seen all the information they needed to. While the booklet was sometimes used for this purpose, the video content was reported as particularly helpful here as they are easy to digest and specifically targeted to different kinds of staff (managers/ employees) and different topics. The cleaning video in particular was mentioned as being one of the most helpful for teaching staff how they should maintain cleanliness on the premises.
- **Diary templates and ‘Safe methods’ pages for inspection** – although the main purpose of SFBB is to provide easy-to-digest

information for FBOs, one of the features that was most used and appreciated was the diary template and the 'safe methods' pages. Some FBOs reported that they were using this religiously, and had made use of and requested refills, because it helped them ensure they were maintaining best practice, whilst also providing documentation and checklists they could use to prepare for an inspection. While the rest of the booklet and accompanying videos were very useful for information reference, the diary templates and 'safe methods' checklists provided a really useful practical tool that could then also encourage FBOs to look at the rest of the information more than they may have done without this.

*"Our staff and managers use the [SFBB] book practically. We use it when doing the opening checks, and then if anything changes we write it down – although there's not a lot of space in the pages for writing!"*  
Experienced, Catering, London

Despite considering the SFBB booklets and online materials as essential resources, FBOs had often failed to realise that these had been provided by the FSA. This was largely because of the way they came into contact with the resource. Given the unclear distinction in FBOs' minds between the roles of the LA, EHO and FSA, and the lack of direct contact with the FSA, they frequently attribute the resource to the organisation or point of contact where they had sourced it. Many had been given the SFBB packs by EHOs at inspection; some had found it just via a Google search.

For those who had received the SFBB pack at an inspection, or when they were already an established and experienced FBO, there was a sense that, while this was still a highly useful and relevant resource for them, they had come into contact with it too late. Those who had received it from an EHO at inspection appreciated this, but on reading it wished they had seen it before this point so that they could have ensured they better met the inspection requirements. Newer FBOs were more likely to have seen it earlier on as they had often come across it via a Google search when they were starting out.

SFBB is regularly used by many FBOs and is seen as a highly valuable resource, but there is a key opportunity to introduce the information sooner in the journey and use it to raise awareness of the FSA
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## Response to SFBB materials

Overall, SFBB was viewed very positively as a resource that was comprehensive, easy to use and easy to digest. There were few issues reported with it in terms of its content or its format, and these tended to come down to a desire for very specific, tailored content.

*"If you follow that, nothing can go wrong. It tells you what can go wrong, what to do to make [it] right, and what to do to make sure it doesn't happen again."*

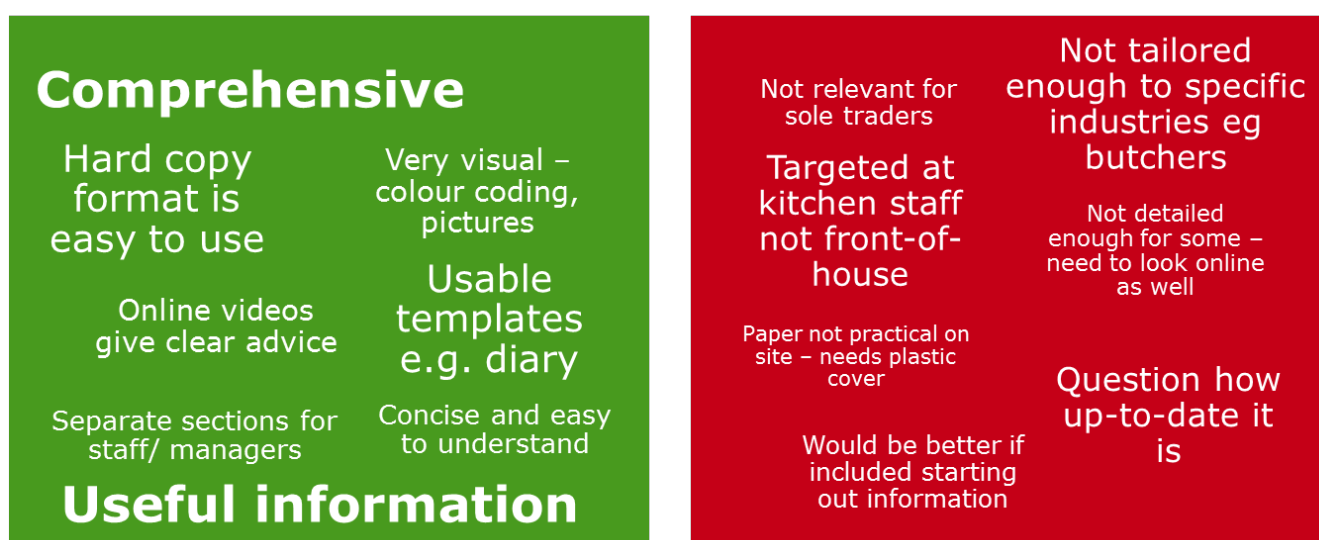
Established, Retail, Cardiff

*"[There should be] someone there like me, talking our language...Every trade has a language."*

New, Retail, Oldham

Figure 4.2.2 below illustrates the overall response to SFBB suite, including the hard copy booklet and the online/ DVD videos. As before, the text size gives a rough sense of the frequency with which responses were expressed.

**Figure 4.2.2 Response to SFBB suite of materials**



The most appealing element of the SFBB booklet was its clear and visual guidance on day-to-day tasks. This made the information very easy to

digest and the booklet format made it very easy to disseminate to staff. FBOs noted that this meant there could be 'no excuses' for bad practice!

Particular topics that were highlighted as important and useful were:

- Meat handling
- Cross-contamination
- Fridge temperatures

However, the main issue that hindered SFBB's appeal was its lack of detail on some issues, particularly when it came to more niche enquiries. This is where the website became a useful complement; however, some did not want to go elsewhere to find this information and wanted a tailored version of SFBB for their industry or job role instead.

The SFBB packs are already widely used and highly valued by FBOs as a central information resource. This presents a key avenue for familiarisation with the FSA, to get across fundamental information, and to be repositioned as an advisor rather than a regulator

### **4.2.3 FSA leaflets**

#### **Current usage of FSA leaflets**

Existing awareness and usage of the other paper materials was low, as was reported actual usage. Where FBOs did recognise the paper leaflets, they had typically been provided by EHOs during inspections – prompting a view that the leaflets were often 'too little too late.'

#### **Response to FSA leaflets**

Despite struggling to find strong usage opportunities for many of the paper materials, FBOs did feel they contained good information and were in general easy to understand. The main issue was the number of different publications, and the perception that much of the content was repeated from SFBB.

*"There are ones you can put on your wall or on the side of your fridge to remind you."*

Mixed, Retail, London

*"It's the same information. I just think put everything in to one. If you start up a business, you want one thing to read."*

Established, Retail, Cardiff

Figure 4.2.3 below provides an overview of FBOs' responses to the leaflets.

**Figure 4.2.3 Response to FSA leaflets**



The following key usage opportunities were particularly appreciated by FBOs:

- **A reference point on premises** – similarly to the SFBB packs, FBOs could see how it was useful to have materials such as these available on site for them or their staff to refer to for specific issues. Those that were more leaflet format, such as "Working with Food" were felt to be particularly well suited to sticking up on walls or on the fridge to act as a constant reminder to staff, and in this way offered something SFBB did not.
- **Shared with staff** – in addition to using these materials on site as a reference, FBOs raised that they would be useful to have to physically give to staff. This was felt to be better than directing them to any online materials, for example, because they could know that they actually had seen the information – again, no excuses!
- **Starting Up guide** – this was felt to be the most useful of all the leaflets, and FBOs raised that they wished they had had access to it

when they were starting out themselves. It was suggested that if this information was included in the SFBB materials then all they would ever need 'in one place'.

However, there was a general sense that FBOs struggled to see the use for these materials alongside SFBB, which was so comprehensive. Where they did add value was where they addressed a specific issue that FBOs did not perceive could be addressed via SFBB, such as Starting Up.

"Starting Up" was the best received of the paper materials because it clearly addressed a specific need not covered by SFBB. It was also appreciated for being easy to use, with FBOs reporting that:

- Colour-coded content was easy to find and digest
- Checklist provided in the back offered a practical tool to help FBOs make sure they were doing things correctly
- Information about hygiene, staff training and suppliers was felt to be better than in SFBB

Where information in the leaflets is seen as superfluous, irrelevant or repetitive based on SFBB, there is a risk of FBOs disengaging. Paper materials need to address specific queries or needs so that FBOs are clear what their purpose over and above what SFBB offers.

### **4.3 Format preferences**

It is clear that specific materials met some needs better than others, according to the kind of information that is being sought and, in some cases, the level of experience of the FBO.

However, the format also played a crucial role in FBOs' responses. It is important to consider how paper and online formats can complement each other to provide the best possible access to relevant information within the information journey.

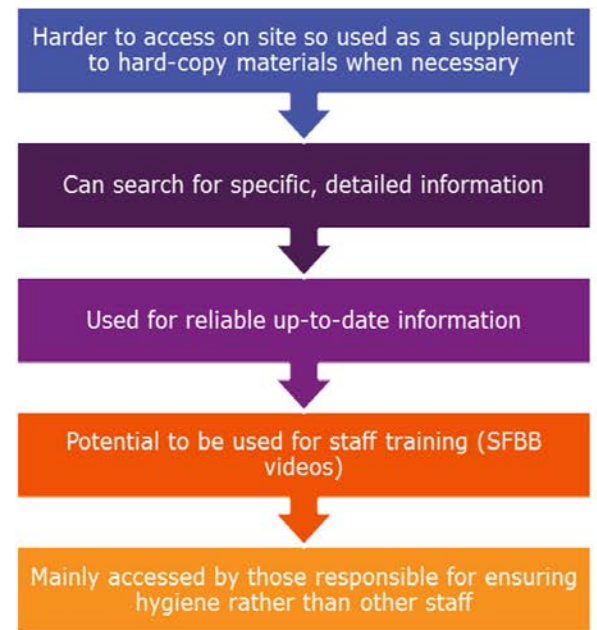
Figure 4.3 below summarises the perceived attributes of paper and online materials to provide an insight into which format may be favoured to meet different needs.

**Figure 4.3 Complementary attributes of paper vs online formats**

**Paper formats provide on-site reference material**



**Online materials provide useful detail on specific queries**



Following these guidelines may make it easier to target specific materials to the end user and tailor them to situations in which they are most likely to be used.



## 5. The ideal information journey

This section outlines the ideal information journey for FBOs as they plan and maintain their food hygiene, taking into account the findings discussed so far. It takes into account the needs of the different typologies at different stages, and factors in the different information sources and formats available to them.

Key findings:

- Relevant information often reaches FBOs too late in their current business journeys
- There is therefore scope to better align needs along the journey with the information received at each potential touch-point
- Comprehensive and easy to digest material is required at business set up; the SFBB packs complemented by website use are well positioned to meet this need
- Check-lists and reminders are desirable to prepare for an inspection
- On-going updates and easy-to-use, visual reminders and reference materials are needed throughout the day-to-day running both for business owners and for their employees

### 5.1 Recap on the current journey

The current food hygiene information journey observes three key moments when information is particularly pertinent, in addition to an on-going need to stay up to date and reminded about best practice.

**Figure 3.1 The food hygiene information and planning journey**



The key issue with the current business journey is that information often reaches FBOs too late, meaning it is used to correct mistakes rather than embed good practice. The section below describes the ideal journey in terms of what information is desirable at what stage in order to better aid embedding knowledge and understanding earlier on.

## 5.2 The ideal journey in detail

### 5.2.1 Setting up a business: information seeking

New FBOs are in the most proactive information-seeking mind-set, but they often suffer from overwhelm as there is so much else to learn. Food hygiene can get de-prioritised in favour of other “more pressing” issues that are required to get the business up and running.

FBOs with previous experience and setting up a new business are also more proactive in seeking information, although this is generally tempered with reference to their previous knowledge and existing networks to implement what they understand to be good practice. They may need reminding to revise the regulations and to look into new ones that are now relevant to them.

Those carrying out renovation or extensive building work on their premises may be prompted to look into food hygiene standards to check they are conducting the works correctly. However, these FBOs may also be overwhelmed with other priorities, or not realise there are things that they need to take into consideration; often they are prompted by the contractors or the LA (if they need to apply for planning permission or change their licence) to seek guidance.

In all cases, **comprehensive information** that is **easy to access** is vital at this stage. FBOs have so much to think about and factor in here that any information needs to be quick to assimilate, and ideally pointed out to them by an intermediary or authority they trust.

The ideal information to receive at this stage is:

- **SFBB** – as a comprehensive guide to everything they need to know

- Link to the **FSA website** – to find more detailed information according to their specific needs
- **“Starting Up”** booklet – for new FBOs to help them make sure they have all they need for setting up

In order to make this information as obvious and accessible as possible, FBOs wanted it to be given to them, rather than having to search for it themselves, especially as, often, they did not know exactly what they were looking for. They suggested two possible options for this:

- **LA to provide packs** to new businesses
- **FSA to send information** directly

*“I’d hope it could be [brought by] the Environmental Health guy when I set up. That would be fantastic.”*  
New, Catering, Belfast

*“For somebody who’s starting out...it’s all important.”*  
Established, Retail, Cardiff

Comprehensive information is needed when starting up, but this needs to be offered proactively by the FSA or other authorities businesses come into contact with at this stage as FBOs are often too busy/ overwhelmed to seek it out themselves.

## **5.2.2 Inspections: getting feedback**

Inspection time is currently a key moment for receiving information, as EHOs often give it out to FBOs when they visit. However, this can feel like ‘too little too late’ to receive information that would have helped them get a better rating.

New FBOs who are undergoing inspection for the first time can feel judged at this stage if they are told they need to make changes; more experienced FBOs (whether in an established business or not) can be surprised by new regulations that they are only made aware of at inspection.

For these reasons, FBOs would like to have easy access to **practical information** that will help them through their inspection. This is likely to include the following kinds of materials:

- **Checklists** of what to have ready for an inspection
- **Reference materials** (such as SFBB) to refer to as needed during inspection, in case of any queries
- **Practical advice** on completing any necessary paperwork for inspection eg HACCP form

For new businesses in particular, the tone of the information they receive at this stage is important so that they feel supported not judged – it can be a very daunting experience.

*“You don’t want someone in a suit and tie – a government person – telling you what you should know. That’s like a teacher.”*  
New, Catering, Belfast

*“The key information that I would need is how to fill out the HACCP form.”*  
Established, Retail, Cardiff

Information and guidance is often front of mind when FBOs are considering an inspection. The ideal information suite would have practical application before and during this period.

### 5.2.3 Post-inspection: taking action

Currently, this is a key moment when FBOs, at whatever stage of experience, are likely to be seeking information on food hygiene standards in order to make sure they can adequately rectify any issues identified. Those who are less proactive can feel lost as to what to do here and so very unsupported. It is a key time for learning new information about food hygiene standards.

However, in the ideal journey, there would be **no need for new information** to be sought or provided here as they should have already received all the information they need. In some cases, they would expect to need to **clarify** any issues raised during inspection, which should be possible through the materials they already have, namely:

- **SFBB** for checking general points
- **FSA website** for clarifying any specific or niche queries

While FBOs were clear they hoped not to need further information at this point, this remained an important moment to be reminded of information

if a business was not up to regulatory standards. The FSA could act as supporting advisor in this situation.

#### 5.2.4 Day-to-day business: maintaining standards

In addition to these key touch points when FBOs come into contact with authorities, it was also important for food hygiene information to be kept top-of-mind on an on-going basis. For new FBOs, this was primarily for their own peace of mind to ensure they are embedding the correct practices and building the best habits, while for more experienced FBOs it was mainly about maintaining standards among staff as new employees joined.

However, in both cases, it was important to have access to information that was quick and simple to refer to and that provided practical reminders to embed habits. This included:

- **Leaflets/ posters** to share with staff or stick up on walls
- **FSA website** links for specific queries that may pop up
- **SFBB** as a central reference guide and staff training resource
- **FHRS information** to help prepare for inspections
- Frequent **updates about changes** to food hygiene regulations and standards, especially for more established FBOs who were only interested in this other than for staff training purposes

Currently, FBOs did not know about how they could get access to on-going updates, but made suggestions for how they would like to do this. These are explored more in Section 5.3 below.

*"It would be useful to have a laminated wall chart, that I could put up, of the things that I'll need to do every day, step by step."*

New, Retail, Oldham

*"I want a regular tool to use...to say to my people, 'ok, on your break today I want you to read this section.'"*

Established, Retail, Cardiff

Providing FBOs with practical, usable reference materials for both staff and managers allows good practice to be built into daily routines. Newer businesses were particularly receptive to this, but more established ones

still feel it is important and it represents an on-going opportunity to keep FSA top of mind.

### 5.3 Signposting information

The key issue with accessing food hygiene information was that it was not visible enough to FBOs, who are often not sure what questions to ask let alone where to find the answers. This is why they would often fall back on existing networks and previous habits to help them make practical decisions.

However, FBOs did have a number of suggestions for how they could be better informed about food hygiene standards, often involving a higher level of proactivity from relevant authorities.

- Packs to be sent out at the moment of registration with the local council:
  - The FSA website, SFBB and “Starting Up” booklet were all seen to be potentially very useful at this early stage in the running of a business – and FBOs were keen that the LA should signpost towards these when a business applies for its licence.
  - This represented a possible opportunity for the FSA to start a relationship with FBOs as a partner rather than be perceived as a regulator.
- Updated information to be sent out alongside businesses’ rates bills:
  - This was another reliable point of contact with authorities that was suggested by some FBOs as an opportunity to disseminate FSA information. Established businesses were especially keen to hear about any relevant changes in regulation, or other updates that would be of importance to them.
- On-the-ground ‘ambassadors’ to help spread information:
  - Some FBOs suggested that the FSA could make links with individuals in existing business networks, or visit businesses to talk through materials.
  - This would help make the FSA feel less distant, whilst also helping to instil good habits by influencing those who many (particularly more established) FBOs rely on for information – colleagues and associates.

- Email updates to be made available about changes in regulation:
  - A few FBOs wanted to be able to sign up for regular updates on changes to regulation or other notices that were relevant to them.
  - However, updates such as these would need to be clear and succinct – and might require clear signposting from other organisations (such as the LA or council) for FBOs to find them.
- Clearer signposting from LA website and materials:
  - Given the prominence of LA information and resources in current information-seeking behaviour, FBOs suggested that LAs could signpost clearly and explicitly to the FSA in order to improve the latter’s visibility, and increase awareness of the breadth of resources available.
  - FBOs also wanted clarity around which resources came from the LA, and which from the FSA – clearer signposting was seen as playing an important part of this. Currently, documents produced by the FSA (e.g. Safer Food, Better Business) were associated with the LA/council because that was the organisation which had introduced the FBO to those materials.
- Run more FSA training days:
  - A small number of FBOs had experienced training days run by the FSA, and generally viewed these positively. Others called for the FSA to run more of these training sessions, as a potential opportunity to give new businesses comprehensive information, and to provide information that could be targeted at particular individuals within a business (e.g different training sessions that could be run for kitchen staff and for management).

It is important that any information provided by the FSA, whether provided directly or through an intermediary such as the LA, is quick and easy to access and simple to digest.

*“I think there should be a mandatory training course for each industry. Someone to bring you in, sit you down and show you where to find all the information for your industry. If every butcher had to go on that course every two years, it would make sure we were all at the right standards.”*

New, Retail, Oldham

*"I'd definitely sign up to email updates in order to get details about updates [to SFBB, and food hygiene regulation more broadly]. It would be good for annual staff training – so maybe every 6 months to get an update."*

Established, Catering, Belfast



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.1 Information seeking

Food hygiene is an important issue for businesses because it relates to customer satisfaction and reputation; businesses with a high FHS score can be confident they are running their business according to the standards set out, and do not need to worry about customer complaints or poor reviews.

However, while food hygiene and safety are important, they can often get de-prioritised in favour of other on-going challenges perceived to relate more directly to the basic functioning of the business. Newer businesses can often become overwhelmed with these other issues, which feel more pressing in terms of getting the business off the ground. There is a danger that unless good practice is established from the beginning, bad habits could become embedded.

Happily, **new businesses** also present a key opportunity for the FSA to support habit formation. They are the most proactive in seeking out information about food safety and hygiene to make sure that they are setting things up correctly and are thus very receptive to FSA advice and guidance. The issue for them is knowing where to look for this information.

There is an opportunity for the FSA to increase visibility amongst new businesses, providing information early on to build good future habits.

**Established businesses** tend to be less proactive in their information seeking, instead relying on old habits, 'common sense' thinking and advice from peers. They therefore present a challenge for the FSA to engage with, unless a route can be found to disrupt existing habits.

The most obvious pathway to change the food safety habits of established businesses is to leverage contact around key opportunity points: 1) when there are changes to food hygiene legislation, 2) around inspection times (when these are expected or after they have taken place. Whilst proactive

information seeking may be narrow, supportive guidance that supports day-to-day business management may nonetheless be gratefully received.

**New businesses opened by owners or managers with existing experience** represent an interesting cohort between the two outlined above. They are likely to bring existing knowledge and old habits with them to the new venture, but may also be looking to plug gaps in their knowledge relevant to the new business or re-evaluate their practice.

There is an opportunity here for the FSA to gain traction by making the most of habits being disrupted to provide new information and guidance.

Across the board, FBOs' preferences for information seeking are grounded in habit, and they will often turn to those they know to learn from or seek advice, as they can be sure they will receive information they can easily understand and digest. Once businesses are established, or FBOs have an established network of colleagues, associates and advisors, they can become almost completely reliant on these networks for finding out information. The longer they rely on these personal networks, the more distant they feel from "official" sources, and government/ public sector bodies can feel very daunting. Similarly, those starting out can feel overwhelmed by the level of information these bodies hold and prefer to use information that feels easier and simpler to digest.

Those with strong relationships with the LA would go here as a first port of call for any advice, so there is the opportunity for the FSA to leverage these relationships to become more visible and appealing as an information source to FBOs, and to ensure that materials reach FBOs.

### **6.3 Existing materials**

The current level of information provided within FSA materials is received highly positively and gives FBOs all the information they need to know. There is also good synergy between different materials in the support portfolio, so they can be used to complement each other, particularly SFBB and the website. SFBB is seen as the definitive guide and is perceived as the most useful of all the materials; the website acts as a detailed information source for specific queries.

However, some materials (across the range of paper leaflet information) can feel un-targeted and appear to repeat information within SFBB, which leads to disengagement if the SFBB packs have been seen first. Shorter paper leaflets need to meet specific needs at particular moments to feel relevant. FBOs are generally eager to take on the fuller range of information 'in one go' rather than digest a range of shorter materials.

At present, the key issue with the materials provided by the FSA is not the content but FBO awareness. The FSA is not top-of-mind as an information source and so materials are not often proactively sought out.

It is important materials are found at the relevant point within the journey, or they are likely to be disregarded, and perceptions of the FSA as a body that does not give advice will be strengthened.

#### **6.4 The ideal food hygiene information journey**

There are key points within the information seeking journey that present themselves as opportunities for increasing contact and visibility so that FBOs feel they have the right information at the right time. These are common to all FBOs and so there is scope to leverage them further:

- Comprehensive information, proactively pushed out to FBOs, is needed at the time of business set up; the SFBB packs function well in this regard
- Checklist-style guidance and specifics on regulations are desired to help FBOs prepare for inspection. However, given receptivity to food hygiene information generally, this may be a good time to introduce or refresh awareness of the SFBB information (potentially online for those already aware).
- Reference materials that can be easily circulated and checked throughout the day are useful to have to hand on site all the time

Ideally, FSA materials need to be made more visible to FBOs at earlier stages in the journey than is currently the case. In this way, they can be used to embed good practice rather than to correct mistakes – whilst also building positive awareness and associations of the FSA for the future.

FBOs are very receptive to increased proactivity from the FSA to help them become aware of the materials they need at the appropriate time. FBOs raised interest in:

- Proactive dissemination of SFBB packs via LAs
- An FSA presence within business networks
- FSA-delivered on-the-ground training
- Pushing out updates to standards via email bulletins

The potential for the FSA to improve perceptions of its role and increase awareness and usage of its materials is great. By shifting perceptions from regulator to information provider and supporter, FBOs will be more inclined to turn to the FSA as a first port of call when they need help and support. An easy way to address these perceptions is to ensure that information provided aligns with needs at each stage of the journey.



## APPENDIX 1 – Sampling and recruitment

Six focus groups were held in London, Oldham, Cardiff and Belfast. Each group comprised 7-8 participants, and discussions lasted 90 minutes. Additionally, 8 depth interviews were conducted in the same locations, each lasting 60 minutes each. 51 participants were included in the research in total.

Locations were selected to include a geographical spread across England, Northern Ireland and Wales. The sample profile of each group sought to reflect the local population in each location, including a spread of gender, age, and ethnicity (see breakdown below).

All recruitment was managed by TNS BMRB's in-house qualitative field team, who are specialists in social research to inform Government policy and practice, and in the recruitment of small businesses specifically. Field managers were fully briefed on the project and provided with detailed recruitment instructions and a screening questionnaire in order for the recruiter to assess participants' eligibility to take part in the research. All recruiters are members of IQCS (Interviewers Quality Control Scheme), adhere to MRS guidelines at all times, and have signed data security agreements in line with ISO27001 the data accreditation held by TNS BMRB.

Participants were identified using a mix of business and 'free-find' techniques, where contacts are identified using 'on the street' recruitment. Following recruitment, all sample details were verified by our internal team.

Within each location, we recruited homogenous groups in terms of socio-economic group and ensured a spread across age, ethnicity and gender to reflect the local population. The table below indicates the breakdown of participants recruited to participate in this research.

**Table A1.1: Demographic Breakdown of Research Participants**

Group	Business Age		Business Type		Number of Employees		FHRS Score			Total resps
	0-2 years	>2 years	Retail	Catering	1-9 (Micro)	10-49 (Small)	0-1	2-3	4-5	
<b>Belfast</b>	7	0	0	7	4	3	0	3	4	<b>7</b>
<b>Oldham 1</b>	7	0	7	0	7	0	0	2	5	<b>7</b>
<b>Oldham 2</b>	7	0	0	7	7	0	1	2	4	<b>7</b>
<b>London 1</b>	0	7	6	1	3	4	0	4	3	<b>7</b>
<b>London 2</b>	2	6	0	8	7	1	0	3	5	<b>8</b>
<b>Cardiff</b>	0	7	7	0	6	1	1	2	4	<b>7</b>
<b>Depths</b>	4	4	4	4	6	2	0	3	5	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>51</b>

## APPENDIX 2 – Method

### 2.1 Citizens' Forum work programme

In December 2005, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board agreed to develop more creative and experimental ways of engaging directly with individual consumers and to construct a new model for consumer engagement. Central to this aim was the establishment of a nationwide series of consumer forums to enable the FSA to establish an ongoing dialogue with the public on food standards.

The Citizens' Forums typically use a deliberative method, whereby during the sessions, expert witnesses or educational materials provide context and in-depth information to the group, informing participants' discussions. These forums therefore provide a deeper understanding of attitudes than traditional focus group discussions.

Outlined below are some of the previous Citizens' Forums conducted by TNS BMRB for the FSA:

**Citizens' Forums: Communications Research (2014)**

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/food-safety-message.pdf>

**Citizens' Forums: FSA Strategy 2015-2020 (2014)**

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa-strategy-research-report.pdf>

**Citizens' Forums: Acceptability of Trace DNA in processed meats (2013)**

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/tracedna-viewsc.pdf>

**Citizens' Forums: Research with consumers and staff delivering official controls (2013)**

[http://www.foodbase.org.uk//admintools/reportdocuments/871-1-1614\\_FINAL\\_Consumers\\_Report\\_260111460\\_FSA\\_RDOC.pdf](http://www.foodbase.org.uk//admintools/reportdocuments/871-1-1614_FINAL_Consumers_Report_260111460_FSA_RDOC.pdf)

[http://www.foodbase.org.uk//admintools/reportdocuments/871-1-1615\\_FINAL\\_Professional\\_Report\\_260111460\\_FSA\\_RDOC.pdf](http://www.foodbase.org.uk//admintools/reportdocuments/871-1-1615_FINAL_Professional_Report_260111460_FSA_RDOC.pdf)

### **Citizens' Forums: Expanding Food Hygiene Information (2012)**

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/citizens-forum-report-2012.pdf>

### **Citizens' Forums: Nanotechnology in Food (2011)**

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/fsacfnanotechnologyfood.pdf>

## **2.2 Facilitation and recording**

All discussions were moderated by independent facilitators, and representatives from the FSA were on hand to answer questions and help clarify any areas of uncertainty. Stimulus materials and exercises were used to encourage discussion and provoke debate. The findings were subject to full analysis, which forms the basis for this report.

The sessions were recorded using digital recording equipment for future analysis. Recordings are confidential and available only to the research team. To reassure respondents of anonymity only the TNS BMRB research team have access to the raw data.

## **2.3 Analysis**

It is important to note that the methods employed in this element of the research were qualitative in nature. This approach was adopted to allow for individuals' views and experiences to be explored in detail. Qualitative methods neither seek, nor allow, data to be given on the numbers of people holding a particular view nor having a particular set of experiences. The aim of qualitative research is to define and describe the range of emergent issues and explore linkages, rather than to measure their extent.

Verbatim quotations are used throughout this report to illustrate points made; such quotations are referenced according to relevant quota characteristics.



## APPENDIX 3 – Discussion Guides

### Topic Guide FSA – Business Information Needs Research – Focus Groups

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#### Introduction (5 mins)

- Facilitator introduce self and purpose of research
- Inform audio/video recording
- Rules of discussion
- Ask participants to introduce self, nature of business, role in business, and how long the business has been in operation
- Pre-task groups: ensure all participants have got pre-task with them

#### Your business journey so far (refer to task if completed) (15-20 mins)

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- Thinking back over the years you have been in business, what have been the main challenges you have had over the years?
  - Starting at the beginning – what are the main challenges you had when setting up in business?
    - How did you know what to do?
    - Where did you go for help and information?
    - When did you ask for help and information – at what point in the process?
    - How useful was that help and information?
    - Did you seek out information about the legal requirements of running a food business? Where?
  - What were the other main challenges for your business over the years?
    - Where did you go for information and help?
    - How useful was that help and information?
  - What has been your most recent challenge?
    - Where did you go for information and help?
    - How useful was that help and information?

- Brainstorm all organisations they might turn to if looking for support and information
  - Who would they go to? Why?
  - For what?
  
- Where has food safety and hygiene figured in the challenges you've identified?
  - How did you find out what you needed to do?
  - Where did you get information? (probe channel, type of info, organisation)
  - When did you get information? If seeking information – what prompted this? If given information – at what stage of business development?
  - What was most useful? What was least useful?
  - Are there any things you're still not clear on/worried about?
  
- Prompt on Food Standards Agency
  - Are you aware of it?
  - What do you think it does?
  - Do you think it could help you with any of the challenges you've identified?
  - Would you go to the FSA for information or support? Why/not?
  - What, (if any) materials from FSA have you seen? (pre-task will have been prompted to look at FSA website)
    - What did you think of those materials?
    - How useful/not useful were they to you?
    - When do you think you would use them/how?
    - Probe to uncover any issues/problems with materials

## **In depth self-directed exploration of FSA materials (25-30 mins)**

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This section will be completed by participants splitting into 2 mini groups, assessing materials from 3 information stations in rotation; each station will be assessed by participants in a self-directed fashion for 10 minutes.

Participants will also be given a SELF-COMPLETION FORM to complete while assessing materials. The facilitator will observe participants at the different stations and ensure they keep to time:

- Information station 1 (paper) – will include paper copies of new business materials
- Information station 2 (online) – will include the main navigation page for businesses and pre-loaded specific web pages for exploration
- Information station 3 (paper and online) – will include SFBB materials in paper form and a laptop preloaded with the main navigation pane for SFBB

## Discussion of materials (25-30 mins)

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Following on from the self-directed self-completion section, we will ask participants to come together as a group and will ask them:

- Spontaneous responses – overall what is your reaction to the materials you saw?
- Which stood out to you? Why?
- Which materials were particularly useful/interesting for you?
  - Why were they useful? (Content? Format? Ease of accessing these?)
  - When do you think you would use them?
  - How do you think you would use them? (one-off; regularly; put on display for staff to see in business; distribute to staff;etc)
  - How would they help you run your business successfully?
- Which materials did you think looked less useful/interesting?
  - Why? Probe issues in terms of content, format or presentation
- Specific probes on new business support materials (online and paper):
  - *Ask participants to think back to what they said about when they were starting up in business*
  - How likely would you have been to look for/find these materials on your own when you were setting up your business?
  - What is your reaction to them, now you know they are available?
  - What are the best/most useful materials?
    - When would you have wanted to have access to these, and why?
    - How would you want to have been informed of these?
  - What are the worst/least useful materials? Why?
  - How could they be improved? (Moderator note: given limited scope for adjustments, please limit discussion time on improvements)
- Specific probes on SFBF materials (online and paper):
  - Were you aware of these materials? If aware:
    - How did you find out about them?
    - Had you used any of them in the past?
    - How useful/helpful were they?
    - Do you still refer to anything? If so, what and why?
  - If unaware: What is your reaction to them, now you know they are available?
  - What are the best/most useful materials?
    - When would you have wanted to have access to these, and why?
    - How would you want to have been informed of these?
  - What are the worst/least useful materials?
  - How could they be improved?
- Specific probes on online materials:
  - How easy was the FSA site to navigate and find different bits of information useful to your business?

- Is the info where you expected to find it? Moderator note: Given limited scope for adjustment, please limit discussion on any potential improvements – save this for Section 4 of guide)
- When would you use the site? What key content would you want access to? Why?
- Which bits would you focus on? Why?
- Which bits would you ignore? Why?
- Probe on individual online publications/guides:
  - Thinking about one of the online publications you identified as useful to you...
  - What do you think would be the best way to ensure you found it? (probe for signposting from other agencies, signing up to email alerts etc)
  - How would you use it? (probe on read online, download and store, print and read, print copies for staff etc)
  - When would you use it? How often?
  - How could it be improved? (probe for content, format, presentation, location of information)

## Optimal suite of materials and user ‘journey’ (10-15 mins)

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- Ask participants to develop an ‘ideal’ suite of materials from those available
  - Ask for rationale
  - Photograph selection/take screenshots of web pages chosen
- When would you have wanted to see these in your own business journey?
- How would you like to have been notified about these?
- Thinking back to the challenges and needs we discussed at the beginning of this discussion, how could these materials be improved to make sure they better meet your needs? (Cover only briefly – as a way to understand any remaining gaps and summary identification of key content)
  - Probe on channel, format, intermediaries/signposting, content
  - Probe specifically on how to ensure they find the materials and are aware of them

**Thank and close**

# Topic Guide FSA – Business Information Needs Research – depth interviews

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## Introduction (5 mins)

- Facilitator introduce self and purpose of research
- Inform audio/video recording
- Rules of discussion
- Ask participants to introduce self, nature of business and how long they have been in business
- Pre-task groups: ensure all participants have got pre-task with them

## Your business journey so far (refer to task if completed) (10-15 mins)

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*The beginning of this section is different, depending on whether they are new or experienced businesses, please follow questions for appropriate business until prompted to 'ask all', the guide is the same from that point*

### **EXPERIENCED BUSINESSES ASK:**

- Thinking back over the years you have been in business, what have been the main challenges and times when you have needed information or support over the years?
- PARTICIPANTS TO CREATE JOURNEY MAP AND REMEMBER KEY MOMENTS - FOLLOW THE PROMPTS BELOW
- Starting at the beginning – what are the main challenges you had when setting up in business?
  - How did you know what to do?
  - Where did you go for information?
  - Probe information they were looking for
  - Probe information they eventually found/used, format, content etc
  - Did you contact any organisations for information/support?
  - Probe contact method used, information requested, type of response received
  - How useful was that support?
  - Did you seek out information about the legal requirements of running a food business? Where?
- What were the other main challenges for your business over the years?
  - How did you know what to do?
  - Where did you go for information?
  - Probe information they were looking for
  - Probe information they eventually found/used, format, content etc

- Did you contact any organisations for information/support?
- Probe contact method used, information requested, type of response received
- How useful was that support?
- What has been your most recent challenge?
  - Repeat probes as above
- Brainstorm all organisations and channels? they might turn to if looking for support and information
  - Who would they go to? Why? Reputation, recommendation, etc
  - For what?
  - Probe contact method, type of questions/information they would ask, what information or support they would be looking for and the preferred channel/format

#### **NEW BUSINESSES ASK:**

- What prompted you to set up this business?
  - - Probe on any previous business or food industry experience before
  - How confident did you feel when you first started setting up the business?
- What has been your journey this far?
  - What did you do first, what next etc...
  - PARTICIPANTS TO USE PEN AND PAPER TO CREATE JOURNEY MAP AND REMEMBER KEY MOMENTS - FOLLOW THE PROMPTS BELOW
- What have been the main challenges of setting up your business?
  - How did you find out what to do?
  - What help/support/information have you received?
  - From whom?
  - Did you seek out information about the legal requirements of running a food business? Where?
  - Did you look for the information or was it provided?
    - If looked for information – when? How? Where? Why these sources?
    - If provided – when? How?
  - How useful was the help/support/information you received?

Is there any advice/help/information you would have liked to receive but did not? What is it? Why? From whom?

- Brainstorm all organisations they think could help them in setting up their business
  - Who would they go to? How did they know who to contact in the first instance?
  - For what?
  - How would they contact them?

#### **ALL BUSINESSES ASK:**

- Where has food safety and hygiene figured in the challenges you've identified?

- How important an issue has it been in your business?
    - Probe for all the different times in their business journey when food hygiene and safety has posed a challenge
  - How did you find out what you needed to do?
  - If seeking information – what prompted this?
  - Where did you get information? (probe channel, type of info, organisation)
  - When did you get information?
  - If given information – at what stage of business development?
  - What was most useful? What was least useful?
  - Are there any things you're still not clear on/worried about?
- Prompt on Food Standards Agency
    - Are you aware of it?
    - What do you think it does?
    - Do you think it could help you with any of the challenges you've identified?
    - Would you go to the FSA for information or support? Why/not?
    - What, (if any) materials from FSA have you seen? (pre-task will have been prompted to look at FSA website)
      - What did you think of those materials?
      - How useful/not useful were they to you?
      - When do you think you would use them/how?

Probe to uncover any issues/problems with materials

## **In depth self-directed exploration of FSA website (15 mins)**

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The facilitator will direct the participant to access the FSA website on a laptop provided and to browse the information available in any way they choose – the aim of this exercise is to observe more naturalistic interactions with the FSA website and business information materials on it. As the participant is browsing the facilitator will observe and note their activities, they will also ask the following questions:

- Have you ever used the FSA website (prior to being invited to this interview)?
  - If not, why not?
    - Who, if anyone, would you like to direct you to the site?
    - As you look at the site now, what key content would you want access to?
    - When do you think you would use the site now you know about it?
  - If yes, when?
    - For what reason? How did you find it?
    - How easy did they find it to find what they were looking for?
    - How useful were the materials they did find?

- As you are browsing the site now, how easy is it to navigate and find different bits of information? (Moderator note: Given limited scope for adjustment, please limit discussion on any potential improvements)
  - Which bits are you focussing on? Why?
  - Which bits are you ignoring? Why?
  - Which publications in particular look useful to you? Why?
- Thinking about one of the online publications you identified as useful to you...
  - How would it help you to run your business successfully?
  - What do you think would be the best way to ensure you found it? (probe for signposting from other agencies, signing up to email alerts etc)
  - How would you use it? (probe on read online, download and store, print and read, print copies for staff etc.)
  - When would you use it? How often?
  - How could it be improved? (probe for content, format, presentation etc)

## Discussion of paper materials (15 mins)

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Following on from the web surfing exercise, we will show participants a selection of the paper materials available, allow participant time to look at the materials and then ask:

- Spontaneous responses – overall what is your reaction to these materials?
- Which stand out to you? Why?
- Which materials look particularly useful/interesting for you?
  - Why are they useful? (Content? Format? accessibility?)
  - When do you think you would use them?
  - How do you think you would use them? (one-off; regularly; put on display for staff to see post in business; distribute to staff; etc.)
  - How would they help you run your business successfully?
- Which materials look less useful/interesting?
  - Why? Probe issues in terms of content, format or presentation
- Do you prefer to look at materials online or on paper?
  - Probe reasons, occasions and different issues/tasks which may affect format preference

## Optimal suite of materials and user 'journey' (10 mins)

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- Which of the materials you have seen do you think would have been most useful to you at the key moments and challenges we identified earlier?
  - Probe for online vs paper preference
  - Probe for how they would like to find these
  - Probe for key content that they think is useful



- Ask participants to develop an ‘ideal’ suite of materials from those available
  - Ask for rationale
  - Photograph selection/take screenshots of web pages chosen
- When would you have wanted to see these in your own business journey?
  - How would you have wanted to access them?
  - How would you like to have been notified about these?
  - Who would you have liked to signpost them for you, and at what point?
- Any additional comments?

## **Thank and close**