

# Food Standards Scotland Accessibility and Inclusive Communications (AIC) Plan 2024-2026

## 1. Section 1: Introduction and context

### 1.1 Background

Welcome to Food Standards Scotland's (FSS) Accessibility and Inclusive Communications Plan.

The FSS Accessibility and Inclusive Communications (AIC) Steering Group is leading on this piece of work. It is made up of colleagues from across FSS who work in different teams and have a range of expertise and varying backgrounds.

The group was formerly the British Sign Language (BSL) Steering Group, but the remit has broadened to include the overall improvement of our digital content and communications to ensure that everyone has equal access to FSS information and advice. FSS continues to recognise the importance of BSL in Scotland and remains committed to supporting [Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023 - 29](#).

The broad aims of the Accessibility and Inclusive Communications Steering Group are to:

- Improve access to FSS information and advice for everyone across Scotland
- Meet the accessibility requirements for public bodies in Scotland which are primarily governed by the UK-wide Equality Act (2010)
- Ensure compliance with the [Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) \(No. 2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#)
- Ensure FSS follows the '[Principles of Inclusive Communication](#)', published by the Scottish Government
- Improve the practice and understanding of inclusive communications across the organisation.

This plan aims to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of FSS guidance and information in relation to healthy eating and food safety. It details the goals and specific actions that FSS aims to carry out and implement by 2026 to ensure there are limited barriers to users in accessing information in accordance with their individual needs and requirements.

## 1.2 Definitions

Throughout this plan we will use the terms ‘Accessibility’ and ‘Inclusive communication’, which have different meanings. In line with [FSS’s Corporate Plan \(2024-26\)](#), we consider the definitions to be:

‘Accessibility’ is defined as providing equal access to information, services, and products for individuals with disabilities and/or impairments. It ensures that people with various impairments, such as visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive, can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with information or environments effectively.

‘Inclusive communication’ is defined as the practice of conveying information in a way that is considerate and respectful of the diversity of your audience. It aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, experiences, or abilities, feels included and can understand the message.

## 1.3 About FSS

Food Standards Scotland was established on 1st April 2015 as the new public sector food body for Scotland to protect the health and wellbeing of consumers in relation to issues around food and feed law and standards.

FSS is part of the Scottish Administration but is independent of the Scottish Ministers and of industry. FSS is accountable to the Scottish Parliament and currently reports to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

FSS puts consumers’ interests first and aims to be a credible, consistent and trusted voice on food matters in Scotland. FSS’s over-arching mission is to be Scotland’s leading authority on food safety, standards and healthy eating; using data and evidence to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improves public health.

This information needs to be easily accessed by all to ensure that we protect public health and help all people in Scotland to have diets conducive to good health.

FSS is mainly funded by government, with a budget this financial year (2024/25) of £22.6m. We also charge fees to recover costs for statutory functions we carry out, such as meat inspection and providing vets in abattoirs. The organisation has around 300 staff and operates a hybrid working model with our head office located in Aberdeen and with field-based staff across Scotland.

## 1.4 How to contact us

We welcome your views and feedback on this plan. If you have any suggestions for improvements and/or comments, please contact us:

**Email:** [accessibility@fss.scot](mailto:accessibility@fss.scot)

**Telephone:** 01224 285100

**Post:** FAO Accessibility and Inclusive Communications Group, Food Standards Scotland, Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road, Aberdeen, AB11 5RL

Contact Scotland:



## **2. Section 2: Goals and actions**

Listed below are the goals and actions that FSS will address over the next two years. These have been developed to ensure all members of the public can easily access the guidance and information they need from FSS.

A detailed action plan will be used to monitor progress and outline the specific actions that need to be addressed to achieve each goal. Each action will have a responsible Owner/Owners that sit on the AIC Group, and these will provide regular updates to the Group. They are expected to oversee their allocated action/s and will be supported by colleagues from across FSS to deliver them in a timely manner.

Where there are risks to delivery, these will be highlighted at the Group meetings.

### **2.1 Goal 1 – Enhance awareness and understanding of the importance of accessibility and inclusive communications and embed best practice and a collective responsibility right across the organisation.**

#### **Actions:**

- Explore and introduce suitable mandatory accessibility training for all FSS employees and include this in HR induction packs.
- Seek opportunities from external contributors and/or organisations/groups who can share their knowledge and experiences of accessibility and inclusion with FSS employees.
- Encourage all staff to promote the different ways that members of the public and stakeholders can [communicate with FSS](#). This includes FSS's dedicated accessibility email [accessibility@fss.scot](mailto:accessibility@fss.scot) and Contact Scotland BSL national video interpreting video relay service.
- Promote the work of the AIC cross-office group internally.

### **2.2 Goal 2 - Provide resources for colleagues to ensure content is accessible and inclusive**

#### **Actions:**

- Update the [FSS brand guidelines](#) to ensure these are accessible.
- Develop and maintain accessibility guidance documents for staff.
- Develop a suite of accessible templates and share these with staff.
- Encourage staff to use accessibility function in Microsoft Office (PowerPoint, Word, Excel and Outlook) to check the accessibility of tasks they are working on.

### **2.3 Goal 3 - Ensure contracted third-party organisations and suppliers comply with accessibility and inclusive communications regulations/ requirements across all outputs**

#### **Actions:**

- Engage with Shared Services Procurement and FSS procurement colleagues to ensure accessibility is a key consideration when recruiting third parties and is written into all procurement specifications. Colleagues should stipulate that reports/documents are produced in an accessible format in the supplier brief. Make sure colleagues are empowered to push back to suppliers if what is supplied (e.g. a report) is not accessible.
- Work with existing suppliers to ensure best practice is adopted consistently in output such as research reports and similar documents.
- Development of FSS's website to ensure accessibility is at the forefront and in line with current legislation.
- Keep the FSS website [accessibility statement](#) up to date.

### **2.4 Goal 4 - Identify any new legislation and emerging technologies to be prepared for change**

#### **Actions:**

- Attendance at internal Scottish Government Accessibility Champions group.
- Regular meetings with FSS's internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group.
- Parliamentary monitoring to identify any changes in legislation that may require FSS to update policies and practices.
- Regular horizon scanning of emerging technologies that could impact upon how we produce accessible and inclusive information.

### **2.5 Goal 5 - Consider specific tactics to communicate with vulnerable and minority groups**

#### **Actions:**

- Consider who the audience is for all communication and consider language translations where there is a distinct need. A recent example would be the vitamin D campaign where translations were done given that research showed that some minority groups are impacted more by a lack of vitamin D.
- Research the development of 'Easy Read' documents to make information more accessible to people with learning disabilities and other communication difficulties.
- Develop a procedure for responding to requests for information in alternative formats.

### **2.6 Goal 6 - Continue to deliver BSL commitments**

#### **Actions:**

- Integrate content for BSL users across the new FSS website
- Provide BSL/English interpretation at events/Board meetings when requested, where possible.

- Review the [FSS BSL Plan 2021-2024](#).

## **2.7 Goal 7 - Strengthen relationships and engagement with key stakeholders/groups**

### **Action:**

Create ongoing opportunities to engage directly with key stakeholders, including all staff, neurodiversity groups/forums, the BSL community and other relevant groups to seek their views/feedback on FSS's Accessible and Inclusive Communications Plan and related work.

## **3. Risk**

It is acknowledged that there may be some challenge on the content and delivery of the plan. Any risks will be discussed at the regular AIC Group meetings.

In writing them, we have tried to ensure the actions are ones that we can currently realistically deliver in terms of staffing and budgetary resource. However, it could be the case that unexpected situations occur that make delivery of certain and/or all the actions impossible.

We are also aware that there may be some internal resistance as it will require colleagues to rethink how they approach some of their work. It's hoped that through the introduction of training and support from the AIC group that concerns can be mitigated. We will use internal communications channels to share success stories and employee experiences.

There could be technical challenges in the delivery of this plan, such as,

- a lack of technical skills to make a particular piece of content accessible, or
- limitations of a particular piece of software.

In this case, we will deal with them on a case-by-case basis and try to find alternative solutions.

## **4. Monitoring and evaluating**

This plan will be regularly monitored to maintain its progress and ensure each goal is addressed. The following governance and metrics will be implemented:

- Monthly progress updates from the AIC group supplied to the FSS Executive Management Team.
- User testing of the FSS website before launch and every two years thereafter.
- Engagement with key stakeholder groups and consideration of an annual user satisfaction survey.
- FSS staff completion rates of mandatory accessibility training course.

## **5. Next Steps/What happens next?**

This is a two-year plan that colleagues from across FSS will work to deliver. It is due for review by June 2025. An interim report will be published in 2025 to outline progress to date.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the plan's implementation and its lifetime to ensure that we're working towards delivering the goals and actions.

We will monitor feedback from stakeholders and incorporate this into the plan, if appropriate and feasible. Should there be any legislative changes in respect of how accessible and inclusive information should be provided to the public, then these will be addressed.

**Date: 18 September 2024**