

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE AND CONSUMER RESEARCH

27th March 2009

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Presentation outline

- The story so far
- Work of the social science research Unit
 - Strategy
 - Cross cutting research
 - Research advice and support
 - Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)
- What's coming up?



What is social science?

Scientific enquiry into society and the manner in which people behave and impact on the world around them.

Measuring, describing, explaining and predicting



Social science methods

Quantitative

Numbers
Measurements
Proportions

e.g. Surveys
Longitudinal research
Experimental design

Qualitative

Explores issues in
depth

e.g. Depth interviews
Focus groups
Observation
Case studies

The story so far

Why is social science important to the FSA?

- Not new – some areas already looking to the social sciences
- Development of Strategic Plan 2005-2010 and Science Strategy 2005-2010
- In the future need to do more to understand people's attitudes & behaviours to meet FSA policy aims e.g.:
 - encouraging the public to make informed choices about the food they eat
 - influencing catering outlets to follow food hygiene standards



Research Unit

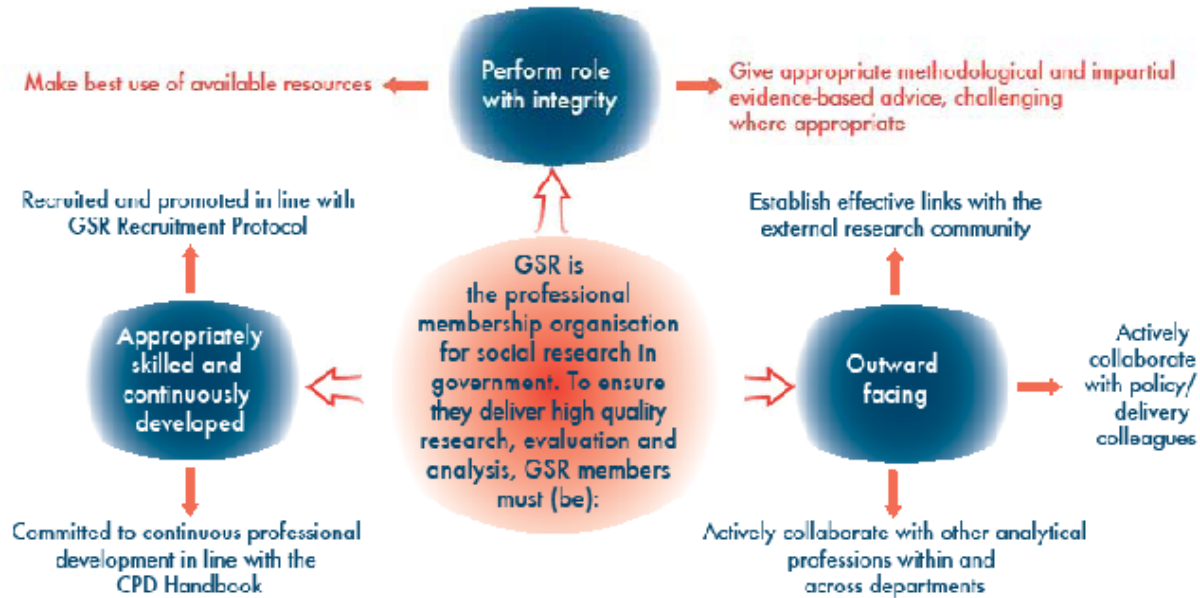
The story so far

About the Social Science Research Unit

- Established July 2007
- Small team
- Part of Analysis & Research Division
- Part of Government Social Research (GSR) network
- Aim to strengthen Agency's access to social science in the same way as the physical & natural sciences

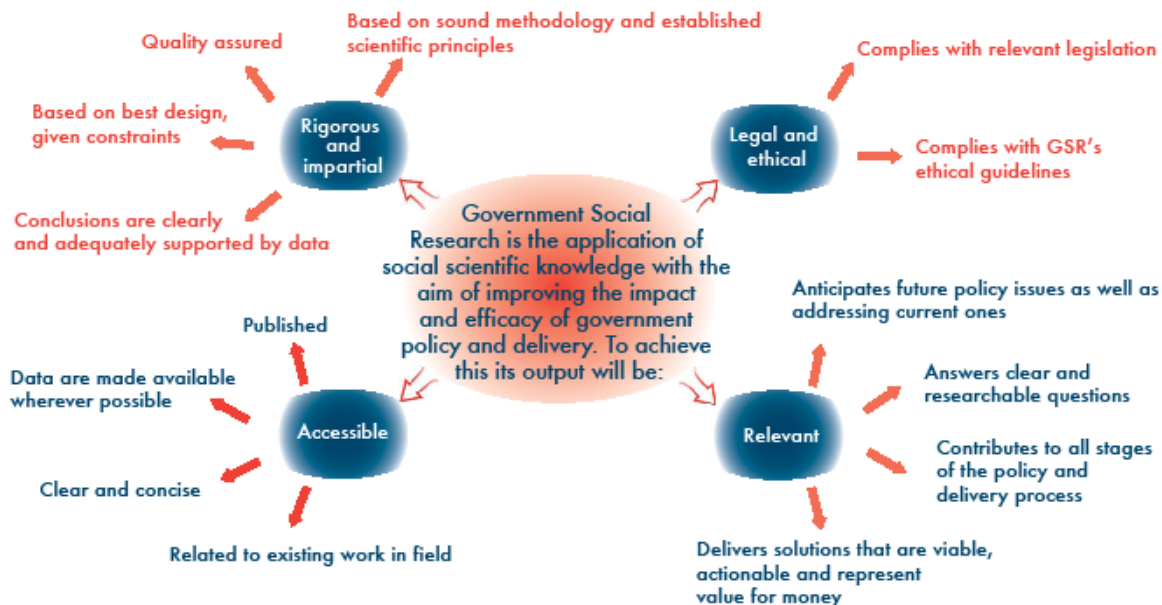


Research Unit



The Government Social Research Service (GSR) exists to serve the public through providing the government of the day with high quality, objective, reliable, relevant and timely social science research to inform policy making and delivery. The GSR Code sets out seven key principles that all GSR members must adhere to in order to ensure research and analysis that is scientifically rigorous, relevant and valued.





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Work of the Social Science Research Unit

- Strategy
- Cross-cutting research
- Social science advice and support
- Social Science Research Committee
- Future work

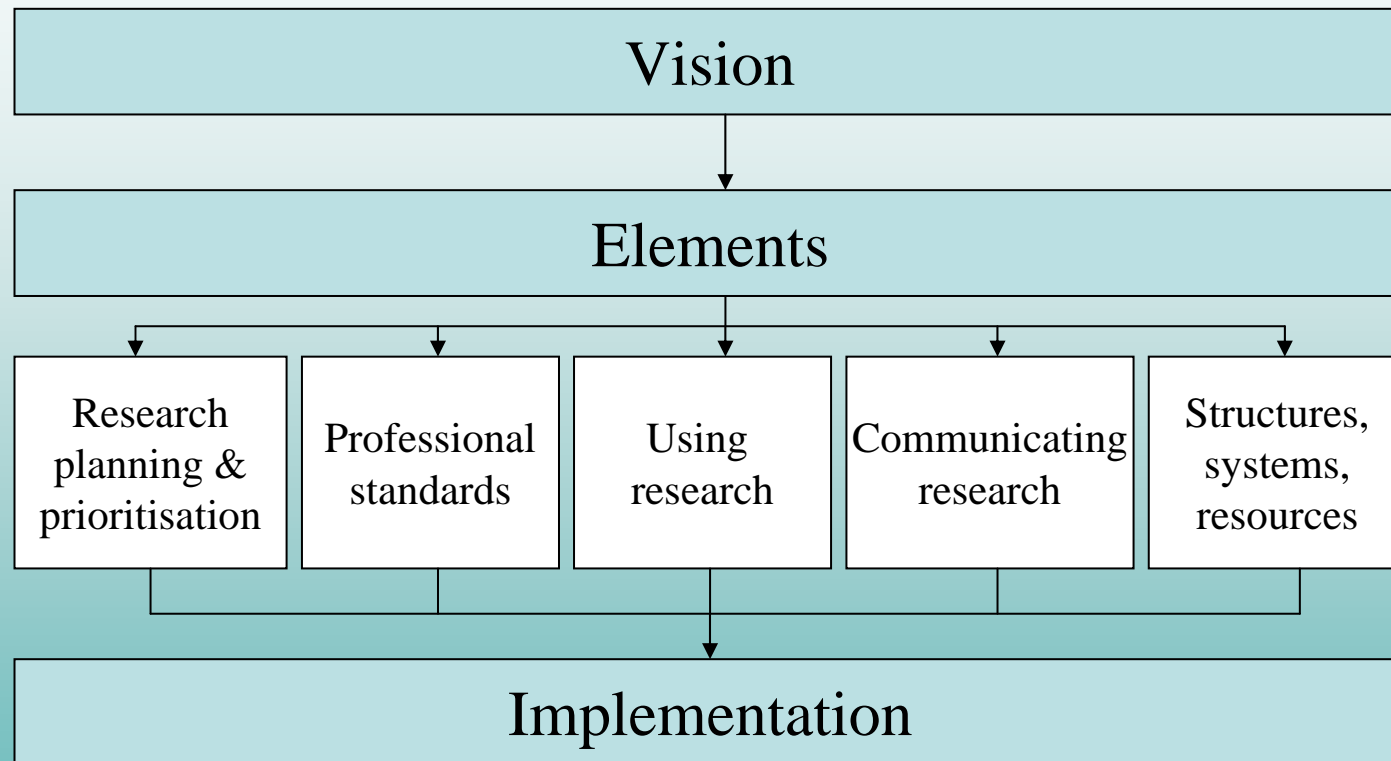


Social Science Research Strategy Vision

‘.....recognised, **valued** and **taken into account** in the same way as is research from the physical and natural sciences; utilises the **best available thinking and evidence** and has the resources and processes to support the provision of **objective**, reliable, relevant and timely **evidence.....**’



Social Science Research Strategy Elements



Cross cutting research

- Annual Consumer Attitudes Survey 2000-2007
- Public Attitudes to Food Issues 2008
 - factors affecting food choices in and out of home
 - increasing food prices and resulting changes to diet
 - changes made to diet recently and changes want to make in the future
 - food hygiene at home and when eating out
 - communications (specifically web use)
- Review of CAS



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Policy applied research

Food Labelling

- Eye tracking pilot
- Study used in designing new behavioural project to investigate how people actually use labels
- Robust evidence review



Policy applied research

Emerging food technologies

- Evidence review - Public attitudes to emerging food technologies
- Quantitative - British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey
- Qualitative - BSA follow-up study



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Social science advice and support

- Follow-on formula review
- Information in catering outlets
- Eatwell week
- “One-stop shop” project
- Scores on the Doors
- Campaign evaluations



Social Science Research Committee

- Established April 2008
- Chair, Sir Roger Jowell
- eleven members
- meets twice a year
 - 23rd July 2008
 - 19th November 2008
 - 20th May 2009



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Remit of the SSRC

1. advise how social science can best contribute to meeting Agency's Strategic Plans
2. advise and critically assess how the Agency gathers and uses social science evidence
3. draw on wider expertise as appropriate to provide independent critique on social science based evidence
4. keep the Agency in touch with relevant social science activity in the UK and internationally

Papers and information about SSRC can be found at

www.food.gov/science/ouradvisors/ssrc



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Future work

- New attitudes and behaviour survey
- Food safety
 - Listeria
 - organisational behaviour change evidence review
- Health eating
 - FSA-ESRC collaboration
 - Calories information and wider nutrient research
- Social science governance



Questions?



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