

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2023/24

Service Aims and Objectives

The food safety service aims of Chorley Council is to provide public protection through the appropriate use of interventions applied to food businesses operating within the borough.

The service will undertake interventions on a risk-based approach and investigate all legitimate complaints made against food business. In addition, the service seeks to support business in achieving full compliance with food safety and associated legislation.

The service links into all four strands of the Councils corporate strategy which are:

- Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all;
- Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities;
- A strong local economy; and
- An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area.

Background

Chorley is a Lancashire District Council with a population of approx.120,000. The Food Service is part of the Public Protection Team within the Communities Directorate. There are 5 generic Environmental Health Officers (4.2 FTE) responsible for delivery of food safety, managed by the Public Protection Service Manager. Public Analyst and Food Examination services are provided by agreement with the Lancashire County Public Analyst and the microbiology service of the Public Health England FWE Lab.

This service is primarily concerned with the implementation of a range of legislation, principally the EU Food Safety Directives. These are enforced taking into consideration the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency.

In common with many similar sized organisations management of the function is shared with other local authority activities which include but not limited to all key functions of Environmental Health, Housing Standards, Community Safety and Anti-social Behaviour. These functions fall under the Shared Director for Communities to whom powers are delegated under the Council's Constitution. The Lead Officer for Food Safety answers to the Environmental Health Manager who in turn answers to the Director (communities). As you will see from the Organisational Chart our manager and director are shared with another local authority, this being South Ribble Borough Council. District Environmental Health Officers are responsible for all Environmental Health matters in their allocated geographical area.

The number of Premises in Chorley subject to inspection under the Food Safety Act by risk profile are as follows:

Category	Total Number of Premises
A – High Risk	1
B – High Risk	27
C – Medium Risk	144
D – Low Risk	396
E – Low Risk	455
Unrated Premises – Awaiting Inspection	60
Total Number of Premises	1082

There are also 10 premises within Chorley Council approved under Regulation EC No. 853/2004.

Approved Dairy Products Premises:	3
Approved Meat Products Premises:	3
Approved Egg Products Premises:	3
Approved Cold Store Premises:	1

The food safety service is delivered from the Union Street Offices with a Contact Centre point for customers in the same location. A professional service is available from 09.00hrs to 17.00 hrs on weekdays and a customer service available from 08.00hrs to 18.00hrs by telephone. An out of hours service is available to deal with food emergencies through the callout arrangements.

The directorate has a published enforcement policy and is available on the Council's web site. The Council has regard to Central Government's Regulators' Compliance Code when developing policies or principles or in setting standards or giving guidance.

Service Delivery

The Council's policy is to inspect all eligible food premises in its area by reference to the frequencies specified in FSA Code of Practice. The inspection programme is determined by reference to the due dates generated by the Uniform IDOX database. This next inspection date is determined by the application of the Food Law Code of Practice frequency table, based on the risk band calculated for the premises by the inspector following its inspection.

The number of premises where interventions are due during 2022/23 by risk category are as follows:

Category	Total Number of Premises
A – High Risk	1
B – High Risk	27
C – Medium Risk	124
D – Low Risk	267
E – Low Risk	254
Total Number of Premises	673

Category Number Hours required to complete programme (including revisits)

A High Risk	-	1	37
B High Risk	-	27	405
C Medium Risk	-	124	558
D Low Risk	-	267	934.5
E – Low Risk		254	317.5
Total		673	2252

Historically 4.2 FTEs have been needed to run the service (including non-food activities such as EP, Housing and Health & Safety) Officer Hours available = 4.2 FTEs = 7148 Hours per annum.

Conclusion: We expect this to be sufficient if food safety activities are prioritised. The 1717 hours needed should easily be met to carry out all programmed inspections. However, this does not include service requests and complaints relating to food safety and other environmental health functions such as housing, pollution and health and safety, and so it is possible that we may need to extra resources such as contactors or staff overtime.

Food complaints are investigated by personal enquiry or telephone interview. In the region of 80-90 complaints are investigated annually.

Chorley is an 'inland authority' and as such only has limited responsibility in relation to imported food. However occasionally suspected illegally imported food may be discovered and this may from time to time impact on our enforcement workload. However this has not been the case recently.

The Council has adopted the principles of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Primary Authority Scheme to ensure that our regulatory services are consistent, targeted, accountable, transparent and proportionate to risk. At present the Council does not act as the Primary Authority for any premises but regularly undertake inspections which are covered by Primary Authority Agreements.

The Council provides free advice to food businesses to help them comply with food law and protect public health. This is both offered during interventions and is available over the phone if businesses ask for it proactively.

The Council's food sampling programme is devised annually by the Health Protection Agency/ PHE in consultation with the Food Officer's Group of Environmental Health Lancashire.

This department also has a routine sampling programme which includes sampling from the Approved Premises within the borough and where appropriate any sampling undertaken in relation to a complaint.

Samples are examined or analysed by agreement with the Lancashire County Public Analyst, the UK Health Security Agency Laboratory Service based in York or, in the case of insect identification by Killgerm Chemicals identification service. Exceptionally the services of the State Veterinary Service or the Government Scientist are used. Radiological assays are performed through a contract with an accredited private analytical laboratory or RADMAN Associates.

The Council has a policy of investigating all suspect and confirmed outbreaks and cases of infectious disease capable of being transmitted by food. Outbreaks and cases are dealt with by the officer for that specific district area. It is estimated that this will take up less than 1% of a district officers time over the course of a normal year. In year when outbreaks occur this could be many times more.

Outbreaks are investigated through the outbreak control mechanism partnership with The PHE Cumbria & Lancashire Health Protection Team. Investigations may be by personal visit, telephone interview or postal questionnaire.

Our statement on policy for handling Food Alerts– All Food Alerts are dealt with in accordance with FSA Code of Practice. All food officers are notified of the "Alerts- For Information" via email and are instructed to read them. The "Alerts- For Action are recorded in IDOX. This may involve liaison with County Trading Standards and action such as site visits to seize food, canvassing relevant business, issuing press statements and providing advice.

Food enforcement consistency and liaison is conducted through the following mechanisms:-

- The Councils internal corporate performance review and personal development mechanism for Council Officers
- Departmental documented quality management system
- The Food Officer Group of Environmental Health Lancashire's technical working group arrangements.
- The Lancashire Joint food liaison panel with the PHE Microbiology Services
- Joint training procurement through the Environmental Health Lancashire training plan
- Internal liaison with Planning, Licensing and Building Control application processing

National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The scheme has been in operation at Chorley from 1st June 2011 along with several other LA's in Lancashire.

There are currently 1077 premises identified as being within the scope of the scheme which aims to provide information to the public regarding hygiene standards within food premises and also to encourage improvements via competition with other businesses.

Resources

Information on expenditure is available within the Public Protection Service element of the directorate budget. The provision of IT resources falls within another directorate and is dependent on the current priorities within the ICT Service. Public Protection is dependent on ICT to provide all the support for administration, maintenance and reporting from the database system.

Any exceptional legal costs would be met from the Councils contingency arrangements.

The number of staff available to work on food law enforcement is as follows:

Post	Authorisation	Scope
Public Protection Manager	Full Food Safety Enforcement	Inspection, serving notice, food seizure and detention, sampling and emergency closures.
Public Protection Team Leader (Environmental Health)	Full Food Safety Enforcement	Inspection of high and medium risk premises serving notice, food seizure and detention, formal sampling and emergency closures.
Public Protection Team Leader (Food)	Full Food Safety Enforcement	Inspection of high and medium risk premises serving notice, food seizure and detention, formal sampling and emergency closures.
Environmental Health Officer (3 Posts)	Full Food Safety Enforcement	Inspection of high and medium risk premises serving notice, food seizure and detention, formal sampling and emergency closures.
Graduate Environmental Health Officer	Partial Food Safety Enforcement	Inspection low risk premises and accompanied inspection of medium and high risk premises Informal sampling of foods

Staff training requirements are identified as part of an annual competency review process in line with the Food Law Code of Practice and Brand Standard Requirements. Training requirements for the forthcoming year are identified through the training needs assessment. This is reviewed throughout the year in the light of Government and FSA guidance and direction.

There is a likely to be a staffing resource shortfall from 1st July of 1 fully qualified Public Protection Team Leader (Food) while we recruit to this post for maternity cover. In addition, there is one EHO who has other duties which effects resource. As a consequence, the has already got in place a temporary contractor to ensure our duties are fulfilled. The structure allows for 4.2 FTE for food law enforcement work.

The allocation of inspections is based on risk and therefore the higher risk and lower FHRS scoring premises are prioritised. The scheduled inspections are overdue for reasons outside of the control of the authority, such as the business not setting up as quickly as expected having registered.

Quality Assessment

The Council has its own verification and internal monitoring procedures in place, carried out by the Food Lead Officer to ensure that any changes to a food premises record including risk rating is reviewed and verified at the time of upload to the Food Standards Agency.

Review

The business plan is subject to continuous review at officer level by the Directorate's Management Team and the Service Manager has a specific remit for the collation and comparison of target achievement.

Variances are reported through the Councils Performance Review process by exception on a quarterly basis this includes the reasons for any variance and action taken or proposed to redress the shortfall. Where alternative works have been undertaken the reason for this will be stated.

Service improvements are identified through a number of measures:

- Team meetings
- Customer feedback
- Verification procedures
- Performance review

Matthew Cropper

Interim Public Protection Food Lead May 2023