

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2023/34

1. Service Aims and Objectives

The Council is committed to the provision of a comprehensive public health and protection service and aims to work in partnership with local people, other agencies, businesses and staff to protect consumers within the Borough to ensure that all foods imported, produced, stored, handled, distributed, sold and consumed within the Borough, are safe to eat.

The food safety service aims to provide public protection through the appropriate use of interventions applied to food business operating within South Ribble Borough Council area.

The service will undertake interventions on a risk-based approach in accordance with the Food Hygiene Interventions Programme and investigate all complaints made against food business in South Ribble. In addition, the service seeks to support businesses in achieving full compliance with food safety and associated legislation.

The priority activities for the Food Hygiene service are:

- Maintaining high levels of business compliance with food hygiene law and best practice with resources focussed on improving those businesses with the lowest standards of compliance
- Delivering the statutory planned food hygiene intervention programme
- Ensuring staff are trained and supported to deliver a high-quality service
- Building relationships with business and developing the balance between enforcement and business support in a way that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents and consumers
- Monitoring the growth and threat from organised food fraud in Lancashire

In order to achieve this the following will be provided:

- Information and advice for businesses, on request, to promote good practice
- Clear written information to businesses following an intervention identifying legal responsibilities and measures required to achieve compliance and or improve the Food Hygiene Rating Score
- A planned risk-based inspection programme of food premises which may also incorporate health & safety at those premises for which council has enforcement responsibilities
- Investigations of complaints, referrals and notifications
- Investigations of targeted cases and outbreaks of foodborne infectious diseases
- Respond to food alerts and intelligence shared by other agencies relating to food fraud

All interventions with business and members of the community are carried out having regard to the Regulators Code of Conduct, the Council's Enforcement Policy and in accordance with the Council's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for local people.

2. Background

2.1 Profile

South Ribble Borough Council is situated in a strategic position on the road network in the northwest where the M6, M61 and M65 meet and is served by the West Coast mainline railway. The Borough therefore has a mix of industrial and transport related industries concentrated in the

parts bounding the major road and rail infrastructure. The population of the Borough is estimated to be 111,086 with approximately 50,600 households. The Borough forms part of the City Deal with Preston and this plans to expand jobs and the population.

The Borough is a mix of rural and residential areas, with the majority of businesses located in high streets in a number of town centres. Most food businesses fall within the catering and retail sectors. There are a small number of food manufacturers and wholesalers within the borough providing a range of food products and includes a large pizza manufacturer and a large sandwich producer.

The delivery of the food safety service is primarily concerned with the implementation of a range of legislation principally the Food (Hygiene and Safety) England Regulations 2013 and Regulation 852/2004. These are enforced taking into consideration the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency. It is focussed on the themes of maintaining or improving public health using smarter and targeted interventions, In addition to the statutory planned food hygiene intervention programme.

Should the Council fail to complete its food safety intervention plan then the FSA reserves the option to place the service into special measures and begin formally monitoring the progress of the authority with the implementation of this plan. Continued failure to meet the performance outlined in this plan could ultimately result in the Food Standards Agency (FSA), after consulting the Secretary of State, giving the council a direction requiring them to take any specified steps in order to comply with the Food Law Code of Practice.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The food safety function of the Council is within the Environmental Health Service which is a part of the Communities Directorate. The Environmental Health Service is delivered generically by two teams which cover the district split into East and West areas. Those teams and the West area team leader are responsible for delivering the food safety programme as well as all other environmental health functions.

Our work is supported by accredited laboratory services provided by UKHSA, located in York and by the Lancashire County Scientific Services Ltd. public analyst located in Preston, water samples are analysed United Utilities Scientific Services and in the case of insect identification by Killgerm Chemicals identification service. Specialist Public Health advice is obtained from Lancashire and Cumbria branch of UKHSA based in County Hall Preston.

The Food Safety service is delivered from the Civic Centre, Leyland with the offices open from 08.30hrs to 17.15 hrs Monday – Thursday and 08.30hrs to 16.45 hrs on Fridays. An out of hour's service is available to deal with food emergencies through the emergency callout arrangements. Contact telephone numbers are 01772 625625 during office hours and dialling 01772 625625 out of hours will direct callers to an emergency response number

2.3 Scope of the Food Safety Service

The delivery of the food safety function involves the following

- Delivery of the planned food hygiene inspection programme
- Investigating complaints and referrals from the public and businesses
- Enforcement of food safety law
- Advising the public and businesses on food safety and hygiene
- Investigating cases and outbreaks of foodborne infectious diseases
- Undertaking revisits and re-inspections requested by businesses under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Undertaking inland imported food control at retail and catering establishments

- Responding to national food alerts
- Registering food premises and issuing approval for premises under product specific hygiene legislation
- Delivery of inland imported food control at retail and catering establishments
- Taking part in regional and national food sampling surveys

In addition to the above the general service requirements on the teams are:

- Service Requests; - approx. 2500 per annum (includes planning applications, noise & food complaints, accumulations, filthy and verminous premises, etc.)
- Permitted Process Interventions/Inspections
- Air quality and smoke complaints
- Animal boarding/licensing/zoo & pet shop licensing, riding establishment licensing
- Housing complaints, HHRS inspections, Immigration Inspections, Rent bond scheme, HMO inspections & licensing
- Enforcement of occupational health and safety legislation including accident investigation
- Private water supply sampling and risk assessment
- Monitoring local drinking water quality and liaising with United Utilities particularly on incident and outbreak management
- Contaminated land enquiries
- FOI requests
- Land drainage investigations
- Managing the pest control service
- Health and safety interventions/RIDDOR reports
- Skin piercing and tattoo licensing
- Statutory licencing act consultee
- Service transformation programmes
- Delivering the street trading consent scheme
- Attending multiagency programmed meetings as required i.e. Genga, Making space for Water
- Climate Change agenda

The demand on the food safety aspect of the service at 1st April 2023 is:

Number of Premises in South Ribble liable for inspection 1st April 2023 under the Food Safety Act by risk profile.

| Category | Intervention Type | Required frequency (months) | Total number of Premises |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A – high risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 6 months | 2 |
| B – high risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 12 months | 32 |
| C- medium risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 18 months | 68 |
| Category D – low risk | Full hygiene inspection | 24 months | 352 |
| Category E – very low risk | Alternative Enforcement Strategy | 36 months | 453 |
| Unrated premises | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of knowledge of trading | Within 28 days of starting to trade | 29 |

There are also 6 premises within South Ribble Borough Council approved under Regulation EC No. 853/2004.

The service has a published enforcement policy which is available on the Council's web site. The Council have signed the Cabinet Office's Enforcement Concordat setting out the Council's Policy regarding enforcement activities with business. The Council will also have regard to Central Governments Regulators' Compliance Code when developing policies or principles or in setting standards or giving guidance.

The effective delivery of the food safety intervention programme supports the Corporate Priority set for the delivery of statutory services and business transformation.

The Council has adopted the principles of the 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 business.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Policy

The Council's policy is to inspect all eligible food premises in its area having regard to the frequencies specified in the FSA Code of Practice, service resources, the corporate target for food safety, and prioritising high risk, non-compliant premises.

Scheduled number of interventions due during 2023/2024 by risk category.

| Category | Intervention Type | Required frequency (months) | Total number of Premises |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| A – high risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 6 months | 2 |
| B – high risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 12 months | 32 |
| C- medium risk | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of due date | 18 months | 40 |
| Category D – low risk | Full hygiene inspection | 24 months | 255 |
| Category E – very low risk | Alternative Enforcement Strategy | 36 months | 121 |
| Unrated premises | Full hygiene inspection within 28 days of knowledge of trading | Within 28 days of starting to trade | 32 - plus an unknown amount of businesses that will register throughout the coming year |

6 of these establishments are approved under 853/2004

Category A – C premises will receive a full intervention and receive a report letter by post

Category D premises will receive partial inspection – the service does not intend to use alternative strategies for these premises. These premises will not receive a letter unless they are going to receive a new score of less than 5. New stickers will be left on site and advice will be given verbally. Some of the lower risk Category D premises will be pushed back to the following year to smooth out the premises profile as we currently have a large number of category D premises due every two years as a legacy of catching up after COVID interrupted the programme.

Category E premises will receive an intelligence gathering intervention. This was historically a questionnaire sent by post however it has been decided by the head of service that this is not sustainable due to the cost of postage and return envelopes.

3.2 2022/23 Performance

Of these due interventions (above) those outstanding and carried over from 2022/23 are:

Unrated: 32*
Category A: 0
Category B: 0
Category C: 0
Category D: 0
Category E: all cat Es due for an intervention have had questionnaires**

*There are 32 unrated premises, and all have been contacted, but these have not been inspected because they are not yet trading or are seasonal businesses that have not started trading for the year at the time of the report.

**84 require follow-up for non-return. This has been rolled into this year's inspection programme (this is included in the cat Es due for 2023/24).

Depending on staff resource availability we plan on inspecting a sample of category E premises in person using local knowledge and intelligence. We intend of employing a student EHO who is likely to carry out these visits.

Officers will resort to formal action in accordance with our enforcement policy. Details of formal action take in 2022/23 are set out in the following table:

| Type of Formal Action | Number |
|--|--------|
| Hygiene Improvement Notice | 5 |
| Remedial Action Notice | 0 |
| Suspension/Withdrawal of Approval Status | 0 |
| Emergency Prohibition Notice & Prohibition Order | 0 |
| Voluntary Closure | 0 |
| Simple Caution | 0 |
| Prosecution | 0 |
| Prohibition of people following prosecution | 0 |

The service received an internal audit in October 2019. An action plan was agreed, and all points have now been actioned.

3.3 Food Complaints:

The response target to food complaints made to the service is 5 days and to all reports of emergencies, suspected food poisoning or outbreaks within 1 working day.

In 2018/19 the team responded to 64 food complaints of which 33 related to food items and 31 to hygiene of premises.

In 2019/20 the team responded to 92 food complaints of which 22 related to food items and 70 to hygiene of premises.

In 2020/21 the team responded to 107 food complaints of which 43 related to food items and 64 to the hygiene of premises.

In 2021/22 the team responded to 109 food complaints of which 33 related to food items and 76 to the hygiene of premises.

In 2022/23 the team responded to 68 food complaints of which 33 related to food items and 35 to the hygiene of premises.

The Food Standards Agency support a referral page on the .GOV website which enables consumers to readily complete on-line complaints and this combined with a greater awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is ensuring residents can access our services and report their concerns.

3.3 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Diseases

The teams responded to a number of suspected outbreaks of food poisoning. The investigations were largely inconclusive although from discussions with the complainants many are consistent with community viral infections caused by the winter vomiting Norovirus.

Investigation of outbreaks will be in accordance with the Outbreak Control Plan published by Public Health England.

3.4 Food Sampling

The Council's food sampling programme is devised annually through the Food Officer's Group of Environmental Health Lancashire in consultation with UKHSA and the Lancashire County Public Analyst

No food samples/food premises environmental swabs were submitted during the period 2023/24. The service did sample private water supplies throughout the borough. Sampling is currently done on an ad-hoc where officers in conjunction with official food examiner or PHE scientists feel this is appropriate. We hope that this year we will be able to take a more proactive approach to sampling but this will depend on the availability our food sampling officer, who has been off sick for a significant amount of time and also has other responsibilities including housing enforcement.

3.5 Food Safety Incidents

Food alerts are issued by the Food Standards Agency to relate information on national food issues to local authorities. Most of these are for information only but those requiring action are given a preliminary assessment by the SEHO and service requests raised for action by officers where necessary. All officers have access to the FSA secure website on RIAMS and alerts are also circulated to the group by the administrative officer.

3.6 Liaison

The service is committed to identifying and adopting best practice which is identified via:

- The Councils internal corporate performance review and personal development mechanism for Council Officers
- FSA consistency training exercise when taking place
- The Food Officer Group of Environmental Health Lancashire's technical working group arrangements.
- The Lancashire Joint food sampling liaison panel with Public Health England
- Joint training procurement through the Environmental Health Lancashire training plan
- Attendance at the Central Lancashire Health Protection Team liaison group

4.0 Review against the Corporate Target

Our ambition is to maintain our position of being up to date with all of our inspections at the end of 2023/24. We intend to continue to maintain conformity with the code of practice over and above the requirements in the FSA's recovery plan. This may require the use of overtime inspections to assist if a significant amount of time is diverted from our resources into other Environmental Health priorities. The inspection load this year is much heavier than last year but the appointment of a new officer covering mostly Environmental Protection work, the return of officers on long term sick and a graduate on a temporary contract running until January is expected to allow more capacity to than in previous years and is expected to make up the short fall.

4.1 Performance against Corporate Target

On the 1st April 2023 there were no over-due inspections in any category, although as previously mentioned there are a number of category E premises with need to be followed up on and have been rolled into the 22/23 intervention programme.

There are currently 616 premises identified as being within the scope of the Food Hygiene Rating 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.

Performance indicators:

We have achieved conformity with the two KPIs for the food service in 2022/23:

- 1) A, B and non-compliant Cs inspected no later than 28 days from their due date. This has been proposed to be changed from non-complaint Cs to high risk Cs as this will improve reporting ease and accuracy through automation.
- 2) No food business will have a rating of 0, 1 or 2 for longer than 12 months without being subject to formal action. 1 premises is rated less than a 3 as of the 1st April 2023. These businesses are progressing through our graduated enforcement process. Appropriate enforcement action is underway to achieve compliance. All businesses that were not broadly complaint received an intervention within this period.

On 1st April 2023 the number of premises included within the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme with a Food Hygiene Rating of less than 3, which means a business is broadly compliant with the law, were:

| FHRS Score | Number of Premises |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 |
| Total | 1 |

The service is applying in full, the scoring system contained within the Food Law Code of Practice which allows for the assessment of a business's ability to prevent cross contamination from allergens. For our lowest scoring premises and those that struggle to remain compliant this is a challenging concept.

5.0 Resources

The food safety intervention programme is delivered by the Environmental Health service. The service reports to the Director of Communities and there is an appointed portfolio holder for the

service. Only staff with the appropriate qualifications and competency as laid down by the FSA Food Law Code of Practice can undertake food interventions. Not all staff can undertake food interventions.

In 2023/24 Qualified staff available to deliver the food hygiene intervention programme

| Officer Post | Full Time Equivalent Resource | Full Time Equivalent Demand |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| SEHO/EHO/EHTO | 3.6 | 3.6 |

We also have 7 other staff members who are qualified EHPs and which could assist with food inspections were the need to arise. This would require the lead officer to do an appropriate competency assessment against the Competency Framework, which is proportionate to the length of the absence and relevant to the activities. This will usually entail an accompanied inspection and checking the minimum CPD requirements as per the Food Law Code of Practice.

An Alternative Inspection Strategy was adopted for the Category E premises and these received a postal questionnaire and were followed up, if not returned, by a second questionnaire, a visit or telephone call.

It is estimated that resources required to deliver interventions within Category A –E premises without any revisits, complaint investigations or service of notice or other enforcement action for 2023/24 is:

| Category | No Interventions Due 20/21 | Estimated Officer Hours |
|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| A* | 1 | 37 |
| B | 32 | 480 |
| C | 40 | 180 |
| D | 252 | 882 |
| E | 121** | 151.25 |
| Unrated | 32 | 96 |
| Total | 394 | 1826.25 |

*An allowance of 37 hours of officer time is made for those premises rated after 1st April 2023 as an A rated premises and will receive interventions at 6 monthly intervals. These are the highest risk premises.

** 84 of the due Es are follow ups to unreturned questionnaires.

There are 6 approved premises due an intervention during 2023/24 and the estimated hours allocated are 50 hours.

The total officer hours estimated are in excess of 1 FTE for one year and the service acknowledges that resource is limited. The service has reviewed the resources required to deliver the programme considering the estimated officer hours and in order to complete the programme.

1. Allocated all A, B, C & D rated premises due for an intervention within the geographic teams and communicated by a spreadsheet on a shared drive.

2. Allocated category E premises to be dealt with by telephone interventions to named officers on the same spreadsheet. These shall be carried out in conformity with the category E procedure.

The service without any major incidents or absences estimates that we have the capacity to complete our programme of A, B, C & D rated premises as well as inspecting any new businesses.

Progress with the intervention programme is reported at the wider team meetings fortnightly and during quarterly review meetings. The Director of Communities reviews the performance against the service plan.

6.0 Quality Assessment and Review

Quarterly review meetings are held to monitor progress against this service plan and the resources required to secure delivery in accordance with the documented food internal monitoring procedure.

The service is supported using RIAMS, a regulatory information and management system, which is supported and updated by the service provider.

The service takes part in the FSA consistency exercise when they take place.

The Council as part of its transformation process has developed a 5 year plan to ensure that best use is made of technology. To this end it is committed to ensuring that the IDOX software system is fully utilised.

The quality of officer's interventions is monitored as per the verification procedure.

Service improvements are identified through a number of measures including team meetings, customer feedback, performance review and internal audit.