

Appendix B

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Public Health and Protection

Annual Review of the Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2016/17

Background

In accordance with the Service Plan a review has been carried out to identify any variances from the preceding year.

Summary

There were no significant variances from the plan.

The service has prioritised the highest risk food businesses and will achieve all category A and B inspections. However, it is unlikely that we will have achieved all our low risk food inspections by the year end.

It has been a busy year on the food service as the team has continued to take formal enforcement action due to the persistent poor performance from some food businesses. This has mainly been in the service of hygiene improvement notices but we have also continued to utilise the intervention option of voluntary closure to ensure public safety. The service took a further food hygiene prosecution case this year, with a further two cases imminently pending based upon work completed in 2016/17.

With regards to staffing, we have continued to carry one vacant Technical Officer post throughout the year but we have utilised the funding for the post with a contractor to assist in the delivery of food inspections and now have two Environmental Health Officers on casual contracts. This provides us with the flexibility to draw upon extra resources as and when required.

Officer Training

During 2016/2017 all food authorised officers involved in food safety enforcement undertook the mandatory 10 hours of food related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as required by the Food Law Code of Practice (England).

We have continued to delivery regular cascade training sessions and maintained regular meetings of the food officers to share learning and good practice.

Training courses attended by officers over the last year include:

- Food/water sampling
- Food Standards Agency Strategic Planning
- FHS FSA National Consistency Exercise
- Legal Update training – note taking and statements
- HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) (3 day course)

Food Business Training

The service has continued to provide low cost food training to local residents and businesses. This is provided by food officers as part of their normal duties which as predicted has resulted in a decreased number of courses being delivered because of the impact this has on our resources. In addition we have looked more closely at the costs associated with providing this training to ensure we have sufficient attendees booked into each course run. Pass rates for these courses remain extremely high.

Type of Food Training	Numbers of Food Handlers Trained 2014/15	Numbers of Food Handlers Trained 2015/16	Numbers of Food Handlers Trained in 2016/17
Level 2 Food Safety	84	141	53
Level 3 Food Safety	21	29	17

Primary Authority Partnership

The Primary Authority agreement with Ocado continues to be successful. One day per month is fully funded by Ocado which enables a food officer to provide advice on changes in legislation, guidance and food alerts. Welwyn Hatfield also provides the first point of contact for other local authorities across the country if they have concerns with food supplied to Ocado customers.

Ocado has continued to grow and expand it's food operation within England. Since the Primary Authority partnership was originally agreed a further two distribution warehouses have opened and a fourth site is currently under development. We have noted an increase in the amount of work this has generated and this will be kept under review.

A second primary authority partnership was signed this year with Retail Concessions. This is a co-ordinated partnership. Retail Concessions act as agents at hundreds of sites across the UK providing high quality food concessions. We have just started working with them to develop their existing food safety management systems. In addition we will support them as the first point of contact for local authorities across the country if they have food safety concerns about a food concession operating on one of the sites contracted by Retail Concessions.

Food Sampling

Food sampling is undertaken formally in response to food poisoning outbreaks but also as a routine intervention within the delivery of our food safety service.

During the last year we participated in both national and local sampling programmes and took a number of formal samples in relation to complaints about food businesses.

During 2016/17 the authority took 57 microbiological samples and 1 sample was sent to the public analyst for composition analysis. This figure is an increase on the previous year (46) as we continue to use sampling as an alternative intervention to inform our intelligence about food businesses. The number of samples failing reduced slightly to 16. All microbiological samples are tested using our annual allocation of credits at the public health laboratory.

Inspection completed 2016 -2017

In 2016-2017, 377 food businesses have been risk rated (to mid-February 2017) this is a 30% increase in the figure reported last year. Given the pressures on staff resources we have prioritised the inspection of high risk food businesses (categories A and B premises), all of these have been inspected within the required timescales.

Of the category C inspections, which are lower risk, we currently have approximately 30 outstanding at the time of writing for this year. These are expected to be completed before the end of the year.

We have continued to see a small percentage of our food businesses struggling to meet satisfactory standards of compliance; this has resulted in formal enforcement action. Whilst the service of improvement notices has decreased from the peak in 2015/16, to 38 in 2016/17 we have taken another prosecution and issued 2 simple cautions for food safety offences. Taking enforcement action is resource intensive but proportionate to the risk presented to public health.

Other Food Interventions

In 2016-2017 the authority received 134 requests for new business registration. The majority of new registrations are low risk in terms of food safety. Those businesses that are identified as high risk due to the food handled or cooking methods are prioritised for inspection. New Businesses place a considerably additional draw upon our resources; best practice in addressing this demand for service will be discussed through Herts & Beds Food Group to ensure a consistent approach is maintained with our neighbouring authorities.

In addition to the new businesses officers responded to 40 complaints about food businesses (37 during 2015/16).

Written warnings and enforcement notices served

Type of enforcement action	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Letters/ written warnings	122	182	166
Hygiene improvement notice	16	56	41
Hygiene prohibition notice	0	0	0

*Please note these figures are only accurate as at the time of writing and change on a daily basis.

It should be noted that the increase in food hygiene improvement notices served has a significant impact upon the resources available to undertake routine inspections. Some of these notices have not been complied with and lead to further investigation including interviews under caution.

Food Hygiene Prosecution

On 20th October 2016 a prosecution was taken against Mohammed Karmal Hussain the Food Business Operator of Khyber Balti House, 34 Market Place, Hatfield. Following years of poor food hygiene compliance a prosecution was initiated following a routine inspection of the premises earlier in the year.

Mr Hussain entered guilty plea to a combined total of 23 food hygiene offences. He was fined a total of £35,366 which included all costs incurred by the Council at St Albans Crown Court. The Judge made reference to the new sentencing guidelines in making his judgement and after much deliberation determined that Mr Hussain had not been honest in his financial accounts relating to his affairs, concluding that he had sought to mislead the court. In addition to the fine the Judge imposed a prohibition on Mr Hussain from running and participating in any food business.

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

During 2016 -17 we were notified of 29 residents suffering from food related infectious disease. Where confirmed food poisoning can be related to a specific food business investigations are undertaken to identify improvements required in the structure and/or practices employed to prevent a re-occurrence.

Directorate F Fact Finding Visit

In January we were visited by Directorate F (formally known as Food and Veterinary Office) on a 'fact finding mission' on the official controls of internet sales of food. The team included two officers from the Food Standards Agency, two auditors from Directorate F and Head of the Government Unit monitoring Internet trade at the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety in Germany, considered to be a national expert in the subject. The day's visit included questions around the Council's general approach to the regulation of internet based food sales with reference to new guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency in December regarding the same.

The afternoon focussed on the Council's primary authority relationship with Ocado including a site visit to their Hatfield distribution centre. We await feedback from the visit and any shared good practice identified during the auditors visits to other local authorities as part of their mission.

Food Safety Week/Playday

Food safety week was delivered this year by the team holding a stall in Hatfield market and erecting a temporary shelter in Welwyn Garden City town centre. Working in partnership with Environmental Services we focussed on the topic of reducing food waste providing recipe cards about using up your leftovers, food samples of some of the recipes, giving out food caddies to encourage composting and talking with the community about general food safety messages including promotion of the Food Hygiene Rating scheme. These two days proved to be useful in reaching a wide audience to promote our service.

The team attended Playday and supported the event by developing a range of new interactive educational games for the children and their families to play. It was an extremely busy event and our smoothie bike, noise booth, bash the bug and hook a food were all well received.

Conclusion

It has been a year of staffing change with a new Head of Service and Director, and an increased pool of officers involved in the delivery of food interventions. The inspection rate has increased and the enforcement activity has remained fairly stable. We have delivered a range of proactive food safety interventions including our first seminar targeted to those businesses scoring a food hygiene rating of 0 or 1, food safety week, healthfest and playday.

We are aware that not all of our due lower risk inspections have been completed within the required timeframe but we have continued to prioritise based by risk throughout the year in accordance with the Food law Code of Practice in order to make sure our work is focussed on protecting the public.

The forthcoming year will be steered by changes to the delivery of food services in accordance with the FSA Strategy and Strategic Plan 2015-2020 which is gathering momentum. This is likely to introduce a new inspection framework and cost recovery for services.