



**WELWYN  
HATFIELD**

## **Food Safety Service Plan 2023-2024**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>2</b>
Aims & objectives	
Links to corporate objectives and plans	
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
Profile of the Local Authority	
Organisational Structure	
Scope of the Food Service	
Demands on the Food Service	
Regulation Policy	
<b>SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>8</b>
Interventions at food establishments	
Inspections due in 2023/24	
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme	
Other regulatory interventions	
Staff resource required	
Food Complaints	
Home Authority and Primary Authority	
Advice to Business	
Food Sampling	
Food Safety Incidents	
Liaison with other organisations	
Food promotional work	
Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease	
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>13</b>
Financial Allocation	
Staffing Allocation	
Staff development plan	
<b>QUALITY ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
Quality Assurance and internal monitoring	
<b>REVIEW</b>	<b>15</b>
Review against the Service Plan	
Identification of any variation from the Review	
Areas of improvement	

# 1. SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## Aims and Objectives

To improve, the health of residents and visitors and enable a prosperous local food business economy by ensuring the safe production, processing, handling, storage, distribution and sale of food in the borough.

## Links to corporate objectives and plans

Food Safety service work underpins the [Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24](#) which include a commitment to:

- evolving, vibrant town centres and a growing economy;
- a sense of community where people feel safe; and
- a well-run council which puts its customers first

This Food Safety Service Plan sets out how the Council will deliver the elements of food safety and hygiene for which the Council has responsibility.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Profile of the Local Authority

Welwyn Hatfield Council covers an area of approximately 130 square kilometres of mid Hertfordshire in the East of England. It is made up of both urban and rural communities, with the towns of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield the main commercial centres, with eight other large villages.

The borough has a population of approximately 119,900 in 2021 (Census 2021). This is an increase of 8.5% between 2011 and 2021, higher than the overall increase for England at 6.6% and the East of England (8.3%). Welwyn Hatfield is generally a prosperous area but has some areas of deprivation and disadvantage.

### Organisational Structure

Welwyn Hatfield Council is in a two-tier area and has adopted a Leader and Cabinet system of government. The Council's committee structure is [here](#). The Food Safety Plan is approved by the Cabinet.

The Council's management structure is [here](#):

Food Safety is delivered by the Environmental Health Team, which is part of the Public Health & Protection Service which is part of the Resident & Neighbourhood Directorate.

The food service is now delivered by 3.6 full-time equivalents, as follows:

- 1.0 x Team Leader (Senior Food Officer);
- 1.0 x Environmental Health Officer
- 1.0 x Technical Officer
- 0.6 x EH Technician

There is a 0.5 FTE Health Improvement Officer who works to improve wider health determinants and supports the promotion of food hygiene and healthy eating. We also are grant-funded by Hertfordshire Public Health to deliver a health-based sign-posting scheme known as Healthy Hub. A component of this relates to healthy eating.

The whole Public Health & Protection service, which includes food safety, is additionally supported by a team of 3½ administrative officers (1 vacancy) and a single IT Systems Manager.

Specialist services are provided by external agencies such as the Food Examiner and the Public Analyst.

### Scope of the Food Service

The work of the Food Safety Team was narrowed to focus on food safety, health and safety at work matters, advice to the Safety Advisory Group and communicable disease control.

Food-related roles include:

- delivering a food service that adheres to Food Standards Agency’s Food Law Code of Practice;
- undertaking food hygiene interventions in accordance with the Food Standards Agency’s minimum inspection frequencies and standards;
- participating in the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme;
- determining approvals for foods of animal origin;
- involvement in the control of imported foods;
- taking proportionate regulatory action if required to achieve and maintain a good standard of food hygiene;
- keeping an accurate register of food businesses;
- keeping records of food regulatory activities;
- responding to Food Standards Agency food alerts;
- undertake surveillance, inspection and sampling of foods and contact materials;
- investigating complaints relating to food sold or handled in the borough;
- investigating cases and outbreaks of food or water-borne illness and taking effective action to control the spread of infection;
- providing appropriate responses in support of public health emergencies; and
- subject to the availability of resources, to support initiatives that improve the health of residents & visitors.

Demands on the Food Service

Food hygiene establishments are regularly inspected. The time between each inspection is determined using the national risk assessment scheme.

The table below shows the total number of food establishments in the borough broken down by the type of food business as of 8 March 2023:

Premises type (FSA category)	Establishments
Caring Premises	34
Caterer / Restaurant	1
Distributor	15
Hotel/Guest House	8
Importer	3

Manufacturer/processor	10
Mobile Food Unit	25
Pub/Club	52
Restaurant/Café/Canteen	167
Restaurant/Caterer – other	124
Retailer	42
School/college	69
Smaller retailer	79
Supermarkets/Hypermarkets	23
Takeaway	50
Uncategorised	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>706</b>

We currently have one food business that is an approved establishment. This food business is approved for the supply of fishery products. This business does not present any complex processes for inspection purposes.

The use of privately owned venues for entertainment events results in significant demand for regulatory advice to promoters and the Safety Advisory Group. This includes major festivals at Hatfield House and Colesdale Farm. As our team is very small, these have a significant impact on more routine food safety work, especially during the spring/summer event season.

### FSA Recovery Plan

In March 2020, the Food Standards Agency required all councils to suspend all but the most essential regulatory activities during the COVID pandemic.

During 2022-23 all local authorities have been recovering that lost time and bringing inspections back up to date. During 2022/23, we successfully completed all due and overdue inspections and so cleared the backlog accrued during COVID.

### Service delivery points

The service is wholly located at:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Council Offices,  
The Campus,  
Welwyn Garden City,  
Hertfordshire, AL8 6AE

Service users may contact officers in the following ways:

- **Email:** [e.health@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:e.health@welhat.gov.uk)
- **In person:** between 8.45am and 5.15pm (Mon – Thu) 8.45am - 4.45pm (Fri)
- **Telephone:** 01707 357242 during the above hours.

An out-of-office hours service for serious food emergencies can be contacted via the Welwyn Hatfield Council Emergency Contact Centre on 0800 111 4484.

### Regulation Policy

Regulation adheres to the [Corporate Enforcement Policy](#), which was approved by Full Council on 9 July 2018 and embraces the Better Regulation principles of proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency and targeting.

Any queries or concerns about enforcement action should be discussed with the enforcement officer in the first instance. If this is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, they can register their [complaint online](#) or using one of the above service access routes.

### 3. SERVICE DELIVERY

#### Interventions at Food Establishments

The authority ensures that all establishments are risk-rated and inspected or receive an intervention in accordance with the national Food Law Code of Practice.

#### Inspections due between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Food Law Code of Practice (England) 2021 details the five risk categories of food premises with each class of risk group having a specific minimum frequency of intervention. The number of premises in each category due for inspection this year is:

Risk category	Frequency of inspection	Establishments	Inspections overdue	Inspections due in 23/24
Category A	Inspection, partial inspection or audit at least every 6 months.	0	0	0
Category B	Inspection, partial inspection or audit at least every 12 months.	18	0	18
Category C	Inspection, partial inspection or audit every 18 months unless the business is 'broadly compliant' when planned interventions can then alternate between either an inspection, partial inspection, audit or other type of official control.	187	0	133
Category D	Intervention at least every 2 years and dependant on 'type of food' and 'method of handling' as defined in the food law code of practice.	267	0	71
Category E	Alternative enforcement strategy or intervention at least once every 3 years	225	0	1
Unrated	This figure is constantly changing as businesses register throughout the year. New registrations are prioritised for inspection based on risk.	9	0	100 (estimation)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>706</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>323</b>

*As of 23 March 2023.*

It should be noted that the required intervention level is less than would ordinarily be the case, because of the compression caused by last year's recovery inspection programme of most establishments. As many establishments have an inspection frequency of more than 12 months, this means that there will be fewer inspections in the coming year.

We plan to use this as an opportunity to redouble our work in the coming year to help local establishments to improve hygiene standards and obtain high Food Hygiene Ratings.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The FHRS is a national scheme that provides consumers with information about hygiene standards at each rated establishment. Establishments rated 3 or higher are regarded as being ‘*broadly compliant*’.



The rating scheme allows consumers to make informed choices about hygiene standards at each establishment and encourage businesses to improve standards without regulatory action.

There is no mandatory requirement for food establishments operating in England to display the rating sticker, and some businesses with a lower rating choose not to do so.

The table below shows the food hygiene rating against establishment risk. ‘*broadly compliant*’ establishments are shown in green. For printed versions of this report without colour, establishments that are not ‘*broadly compliant*’ are shown using an asterisk.

	FHRS 0	FHRS 1	FHRS 2	FHRS 3	FHRS 4	FHRS 5	Total
<b>A-rated risk</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>B-rated risk</b>	0	1*	0	3	5	9	18
<b>C-rated risk</b>	0	1*	0	30	72	84	187
<b>D-rated risk</b>	0	1*	1*	8	23	234	267
<b>E-rated risk</b>	0	0	0	0	19	173	192
<b>Total</b>	0	3	1	41	119	500	664

As of 8 March 2023.

Thus 99.4% of local food establishments are ‘*broadly compliant*’.

During 2023/24 we aim to:

- maintain existing standards of '*broad compliance*';
- reduce the number of food establishments that are not '*broadly compliant*' to *nil*; and
- reduce the number and proportion of local businesses with a food hygiene rating of fewer than '4 Good' from the current 41 establishments

The rating scheme allows establishments to ask for re-inspection subject to payment of a fee. The demand for this service has been increasing year by year, with 15 requests and 2 appeals in 2022/23. A similar number are expected in the coming year.

#### Other regulatory interventions

2 hygiene Improvement Notices;  
1 Condemnation Order;  
0 Prohibition Notices; and  
1 seizures

were issued in 2022/23.

Revisits are undertaken where formal notices have been issued or to assure that required remedial actions have been undertaken by the establishment. 14 revisits undertaken in 2022/23. A similar number is likely in 2023/24.

#### Staffing resource required

All local authorities submit performance monitoring data to the Food Standards Agency and the agency publishes this information annually. This includes inspections undertaken and staff resources. Using this data, we can extrapolate and normalise this data to determine the maximum number of food establishments a full-time inspector may be allocated before this starts to adversely impact the delivery of required inspections.

The most recent published data is for 2019/20, and this showed that the UK average benchmark for maximum establishments adversely impacts the delivery of required inspections was 371.

We are satisfied that 2.6 front-line FTEs are sufficient for the number of food establishments (and non- food safety work) to fully deliver the Food Law Code of Practice requirements of a food service.

#### Food 'complaints'

All food service requests (sometimes called complaints) are assessed, prioritised and dealt with according to available capacity and risk. In 2022/23 there were:

- 120 for food hygiene;
- 128 for Health and Safety/COVID; and

- 8 communicable disease notifications (other than COVID) from the NHS.

### Home Authority and Primary Authority

The service has one Primary Authority agreement for food hygiene with Ocado. This involves the delivery of around 155 hours of food safety support per year and is delivered from within existing resources.

### Advice to Business

The council is committed to supporting hygiene standards, business prosperity, thriving town centres and local employment.

The Council helps businesses achieve compliance by:

- giving advice during interventions;
- responding to requests for advice.

The Council seeks to reduce regulatory burdens and support business prosperity through the Hertfordshire-wide '[Better Business for All](#)' scheme.

In the coming year, we intend to utilise the tools being developed by the Better Business for All partnership to help support food businesses with their compliance around the provision of a documented food safety management system.

### Food Sampling

The Council participates in national, regional and locally coordinated sampling programmes.

The Council has a UKHSA credit allocation for microbiological sampling of 3,720 credits, which is equivalent to around 100 samples per year depending on the complexity of laboratory processes.

Microbiological Examination is undertaken by:

Food, Water and Environmental Microbiological Laboratory  
61 Colindale Avenue  
London  
NW9 5HT

The County-appointed Public Analyst is:

Hampshire & Kent Scientific Services  
Kent County Council  
8 Abbey Wood Road  
West Malling  
Kent  
ME19 4YT

## Food Safety Incidents

The council handles food safety incidents including 'alerts' from the Food Standards Agency in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and our local operating procedure.

There were no alerts requiring action in 2022/23. However, the service is sufficiently resourced to handle the number of incidents or alerts that are ordinarily received each year.

## Liaison with other organisations

The council has effective joint working with:

- the Food Standards Agency;
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs;
- the Health and Safety Executive;
- the UK Health and Security Agency;
- other local authorities; and
- the Public Analyst

The Council is also represented at the following groups:

- Hertfordshire, Beds & Bucks Food Liaison Group;
- HEHOC Business Guidance Group;
- Hertfordshire Health Protection Board;
- Hertfordshire Health Protection Group; and
- Hertfordshire Environmental Health & Licensing Leaders Group.

## Food promotional work

There is a 0.5 FTE Health Improvement Officer who works to improve wider health determinants and supports the promotion of food hygiene and healthy eating. We also are grant-funded by Hertfordshire Public Health to deliver a health-based sign-posting scheme known as Healthy Hub and Place Based Health Inequalities work. A component of this relates to healthy eating.

## Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

When suspected food poisonings occur, our officers become involved in investigating the cause and identifying and acting on any unsafe food that is still in the food chain to help prevent further cases of illness.

In the event of a suspected outbreak, the resource demand would be significantly higher due to the intensive staffing requirements when dealing with such eventualities. All notifications are investigated.

## 4. RESOURCES

### Financial Allocation

The Public Health and Protection Service is allocated an annual budget as agreed by the Council's Cabinet and Full Council. The budget for Environmental Health in 2023/24 is £828,520 which includes other services as well as the Food Safety Team, notably Environmental Protection.

### Staffing Allocation

The food service is delivered by 3.6 full-time equivalents, as follows:

- 1.0 x Team Leader (Lead Food Officer);
- 1.0 x Environmental Health Officer
- 1.0 x Technical Officer
- 0.6 x EH Technician

Whilst these officers primarily undertake food law regulation they also undertake H&S communicable disease prevention and event safety advisory work.

There is also a 0.5 FTE Health Improvement Officer who works to improve wider health determinants and supports the promotion of food hygiene and healthy eating. We also are grant-funded by Hertfordshire Public Health to deliver a health-based sign-posting scheme known as Healthy Hub. A component of this relates to healthy eating.

The whole Public Health & Protection service, which includes food safety, is additionally supported by a team of 3½ administrative officers (1 vacancy) and an IT Systems Manager.

The Environmental Health Officer and Environmental Health posts are assigned work based on their competency, qualifications and the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice.

### Staff development plan

Specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements as required by the Food Law Code of Practice, membership of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health or equivalent professional bodies are followed.

## 5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

### Quality Assurance and Internal Monitoring

Prior to the COVID pandemic quality assurance & internal monitoring included:

- sample record reviews for food hygiene inspections;
- sample record reviews for food service requests (“complaints”);
- shadow inspections for new staff or those returning to food work;
- review of FHRS appeals findings and re-rating requests; and
- peer review/audit of enforcement action.

However, COVID, the difficult tasks of post-COVID inspection have all adversely affected our arrangements for quality assurance & internal monitoring.

A full re-establishment of our quality assurance and internal monitoring will be a key priority for the service in 2023/24.

It is understood that this recovery process may identify additional staff development needs and if so, positive steps will be taken to fulfil development needs.

## 6. REVIEW

### Review against the Service Plan

#### **Performance reporting**

The KPIs during 2022/23 were:

- approved premises inspections, A & B food inspections undertaken within a month of the due date(target 100%); and
- number of food interventions (target 60).

A review of the performance measures was undertaken and additional KPIs have been added from April 2023 as follows:

- FOOD HYGIENE - overdue food hygiene inspections;
- FOOD HYGIENE - establishments not in broad compliance;
- FOOD HYGIENE - establishments unrated more than 30 days after registration;

In respect of service requests (“complaints”), the following new performance measures are now being used:

- CASES: open
- CASES: age of the oldest open case
- CASES: average end-to-end time

### Identification of any Variation from the Review

This Annual Delivery Plan has described variations from the Food Law Code of Practice which were identified in 2022/23. These were:

- a) food hygiene inspection backlogs due to COVID;
- b) performance reporting not providing sufficient assurance regarding the inspection programme;
- c) COVID-driven impacts on routine service;
- d) suspended sampling programme;
- e) suspended quality assurance and internal monitoring.

These issues have been resolved during 2022/23.

### Areas of Improvement

Our aspiration for the coming year is not ‘an area for improvement’, as it does not involve a shortfall against the Food Law Code of Practice but is an aspiration to support local food establishments to raise FHRS standards in 2023/24. For this, during 2023/24 we will aim to:

- maintain existing standards of *'broad compliance'*;
- reduce the number of food establishments that are not *'broadly compliant' to nil; and*
- reduce the number and proportion of local businesses with a food hygiene rating of less than '4 Good' from the current 41 establishments