

Food Safety Team Annual Report 2023-2024

Introduction

The Food Team in discharging its statutory functions has to meet the regulatory objectives set out in the Food Law Code of Practice to protect public health in relation to food. The Food Team are responsible for approximately 1550 food businesses in the borough ranging from large manufacturers to sole traders. Our key objectives are:

- To ensure that food sold or offered for sale within the borough is fit for human consumption,
- To ensure, through inspection and advice, that food premises in the borough maintain standards of hygiene that will minimise the risk of food poisoning.
- To investigate all complaints concerning food supplied in the borough.
- To provide advice, guidance and support to new start up food businesses in the borough
- To seek to ensure services are available and accessible to all the public and business sectors that need them.
- To maintain a high quality, competent and professional workforce providing best value services to the council taxpayer

The Food Team enforces food safety requirements in food premises and carries out hazard spotting for breaches of health & safety law. This is done through targeted, risk based programmed inspections and re-visits. Our Environmental Health Officers are also responsible for responding to food hygiene complaints, food alerts, investigation of food poisoning notifications and outbreaks, food sampling programmes, pest infestation of food premises, dealing with general enquiries from members of the public and giving advice to local businesses.

Our [Service plan 2023-24](#) objectives align with the [Councils Corporate Strategy](#). The Corporate Strategy details the delivery of key statutory responsibilities and identifies the golden threads that tie projects, policies and strategies together, linking service performance to overall council performance. This report sets out how we delivered our aims and objectives and our achievements for 2023-2024

The Food Team's Year in Numbers

About Us



Our Team has **5** members
2 part time managers and 2.5 EHO's

Inspections & Audits



We carried out **573** inspections & **150** revisits

Complaints



We dealt with **735** Service Requests

Business Advice & Support



We processed **199** new food business registrations and provided specific business support and guidance

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme



Carried out **40** Food Hygiene Rating visits

Proactive visits



We carried out **161** complaint visits

Communications

Email Newsletters – **9**
Each newsletter reaches over **6000** inboxes

Social Media

21 Posts and tweets
Total Reach **96,500**
Likes **377**

Enforcement



Issued **452** written warnings

Legal Work

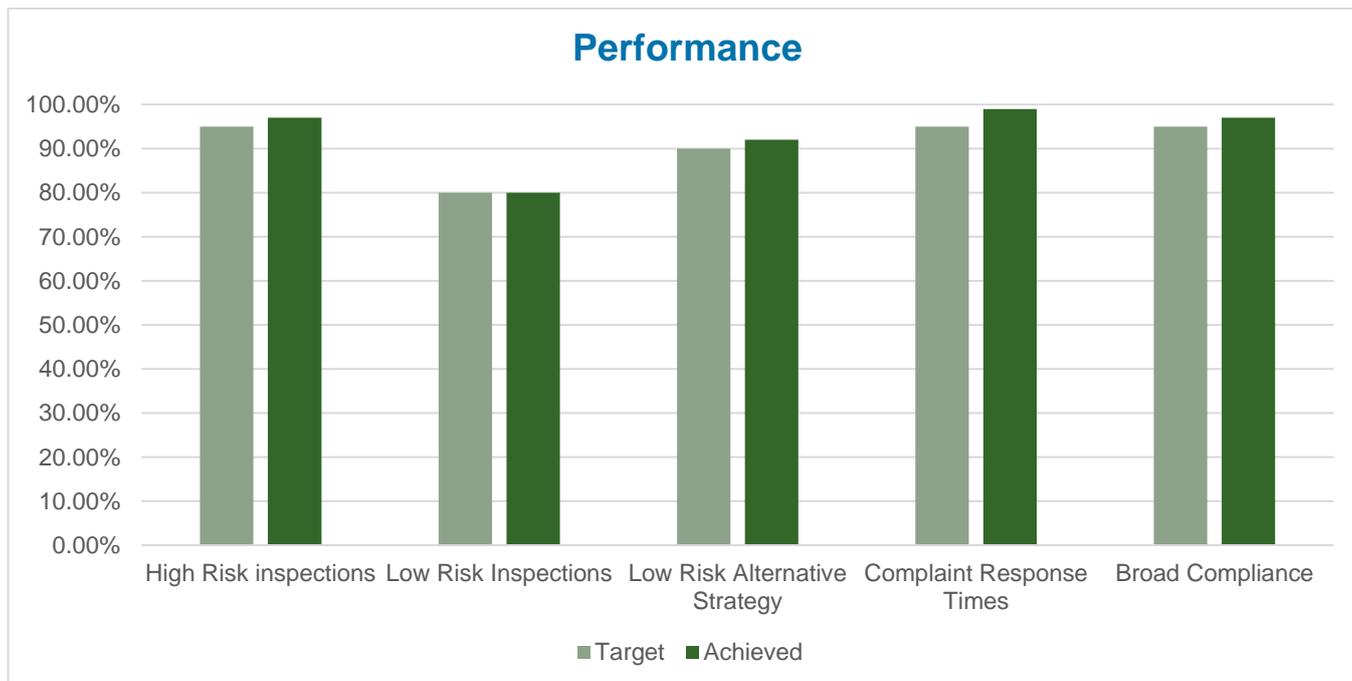


Issued **20** Food Hygiene Improvement Notices

Performance

What we achieved and said we would do to meet our key indicators

- We exceeded our target of 95% and inspected 97% of high risk inspections due.
- We achieved our expected target and inspected 80% of low risk inspections due.
- We exceeded our target of 90% and completed 92% of low risk alternative strategy interventions.
- We exceeded our target of 95% and consistently maintained a 99% 3 day response time for all complaints
- We exceeded our target of 95% and consistently achieved a 97% compliant rate of food businesses across the borough.



Between July 2021 and April 2023 the food safety inspections were carried out in accordance with the [FSA's recovery plan](#). For 2023/24 team resources have been devoted to resuming and completing the annual food safety inspection programme, which is a variance, from the previous two years. Due to pandemic business restrictions, there was a substantial backlog of over 900 D and E rated food inspections to deal with. It was recognised that this inspection workload would be extremely challenging to complete given the current resources.

Significant efforts were made by the team to reduce the backlog, a request for resources was approved by the Senior Management Team who understood the challenges facing the Food Team. We engaged the services of 2 external consultants and offered additional hours to officers to assist with the backlog of inspections.

Team Achievements

Advice to Business

Officers respond to enquiries or requests for advice from existing businesses or those planning to set up a new food business in the borough.

Our team provided enhanced new business information and guidance specific for individual business sectors as part of our “[New business triage and coaching project](#)”. We have ensured that 98% of all new business inspections reach broad compliance and awarded a food hygiene rating of 3 or above. This is particularly important for a new business to gain access to takeaway food platforms such as Just Eat, Deliveroo and Uber Eats. A business with a food hygiene rating less than a 2, can be removed from the platforms, having a significant detrimental effect on the business.

We pride ourselves in the service that we provide specifically to new business and supporting economic growth for the borough.



Some of the many positive comments received from businesses :-

‘Very good, thanks for the effort’ & ‘It’s extremely useful and helpful to someone new to catering business or highly recommended to someone to keep high standards of food hygiene’ –

‘Thank you for your sensitivity when carrying out your duties over the time I have had the pleasure to know you’.

‘I just wanted to thank you for all your support and advice in getting my business up and running. I had the EHO out a few days before Xmas and she passed me with a 5. Thank you for all your support.’

Events in the Borough

We provided support and guidance to event organisers in the borough to ensure they operate a safe environment for outdoor events.



Our largest outdoor festival is Glastonbudget held at Turnpost Farm, Wymeswold, with up to 15,000 festival goers over 3 days.



We provided support to the Market and Fairs team to ensure the food vendors at the annual Loughborough Fair were providing safe food.



Over 50 food vendors were inspected across the two events.

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food-Related Infectious Disease

In 2022/23 there were **61** reported alleged food poisoning complaints and **55** Food-Related Infectious Disease notifications. Notification numbers are similar to previous years. Notifications from doctors of a patient suffering food borne disease are followed up and dealt with according to the (UKHSA) Guidelines and our documented Infectious Disease Investigation Procedure. There were no food poisoning outbreaks reported. However, we investigated 2 viral outbreaks at residential care homes.

Food Safety Incidents

Food Alerts are dealt with in accordance with the FSA Code of Practice and our Food Alerts Procedure. These are invariably unpredictable, and may require immediate action, which means the deployment and re-direction of staff resources at short notice. In 2023/24 there were 65 food alerts and 7 food recalls. It is anticipated that the team is currently resourced to respond to any food safety incidents received in 2024/25.

During November 2023, we were involved in a multi-agency, cross county investigation involving chocolate that contained illicit hallucinogenic substances and had caused several people to become ill, including children. This was a complex investigation which had a successful outcome from a public health perspective in that the origin of the chocolate was swiftly identified and contained, preventing further harm. Nottinghamshire Police are continuing their criminal investigation



Primary Authority

We operate a Primary Authority Agreement with Dunelm (Soft Furnishings) Ltd. The partnership is a statutory mechanism that enables businesses, trade associations and other co-ordinated groups to receive assured advice from a single local authority. It helps to improve confidence, certainty and safety outcomes. Dunelm currently operate 100 in store catering outlets and have plans for expansion. During the year we continued to develop this partnership regarding food safety compliance most relevant to Dunelm's business needs. We specifically focused on their procurement & training policies, as well as their food safety management monitoring and verification. We also dealt with several enforcement issues reported to us from other authorities.



Food Safety Promotional Work and Communications

In conjunction with our Communications Team we provide communications on our website and routinely post on social media. It helps our team to engage with our customers, provides up to date food safety information and we promote food safety education. We send out newsletters by email, each newsletter reaches over 6000 inboxes.

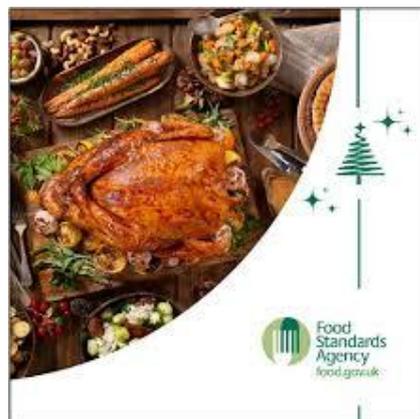


We also promote the food hygiene rating scheme and those businesses who achieve a top food hygiene rating.

This promotional business post is always a popular on Facebook, receiving many comments, shares and likes.



We participate in the promotional campaigns run by the Food Standards Agency. This year we have assisted with many of the annual promotions, for example Food Safety Week and the Christmas Food Safety campaign.



What's Next :

Our aim is always to provide exceptional customer service and you can expect the Food Team to go above and beyond for business and customers. We will be trying to make the service more effective and efficient by transforming our digital processes to improve productivity. We have recently recruited a new Environmental Health Officer to the Team and this will assist with ensuring we can continue to deal with the challenges ahead and deliver our food inspection programme.

New business unrated inspections are still at a record high of 179 and we continue to receive at least 20 new business registrations each calendar month. We will continue to make a concerted effort to reduce this figure.

During the pandemic and the associated Recovery Plan, our sampling programme has been put on hold. However we intend to resume our sampling programme starting in September 2024 with a focus on imported foods.

Contacting us

We are committed to providing a high standard of service and dealing with everyone in a way that is fair, transparent, and proportionate. We welcome your feedback on our services, particularly where the level of service has exceeded or fallen below your expectations.

Your comments and suggestions are important to us as they will help us to meet our obligations to you and to improve our performance.

Contact us

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