

## Introduction – Challenges due to Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic and the Government response to control the spread of the virus will have a significant impact on our ability to undertake proposed work for the forthcoming year.

The Food and Safety Team has reviewed all of its activities, in line with Government guidance and as the lockdown is lifted will continue to provide a safe and appropriate level of service to local businesses and the public.

All proactive inspection activities initially ceased when food businesses stopped trading and priority was given to delivering critical functions and being ready to respond to serious public health issues such as food safety incidents, infectious disease outbreaks, or investigation of fatal or major accidents.

The Food and Safety team alongside the Police and Trading Standards were given powers to enforce The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020. This legislation determines those businesses which must remain closed and activities which cannot currently take place.

A range of resources have been developed on the New Forest District Council website with advice to support businesses who remain open, have changed how they operate or are seeking to start-up again. The team have already answered over 170 enquiries from businesses and the public requesting advice and assistance.

However, there have been a very small number of businesses who have decided to continue operating. These have been visited, officers have explained the risk they pose, two have been issued written warnings and two have been served with Prohibition Notices. The team always take a staged approach to enforcement but public safety and compliance with the law is paramount.

As we undertake recovery planning, the approach will be centred on guidance provided Government, Food Standards Agency (FSA), Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive and best practice with other Local Authorities. The FSA recognises that Local Authorities will not be able to 'catch-up' on outstanding monthly inspections and many catering establishments will not reopen until later in the year. The team will work to support businesses, many who will be financially fragile, and any enforcement involvement would need to be considered carefully against the risk to public safety.

New innovative ways of working have had to be developed to ensure prioritisation of work based on greatest risk but also protecting officers, employees, and customers of the businesses. In the short-term, this may include some remote assessments such as virtual inspection of well performing businesses and all site visits will be subject to an officer Covid-19 risk assessment.

In the future, work practices will change to ensure they are fit for the purpose and sustainable but we will aim to carry out work in line with the priorities detailed below.

Priorities	
1	<p>To inspect all high-risk food businesses (A, B and C rated) due inspection, all approved businesses and all newly registered food businesses (approximately <b>350 inspections</b>).</p> <p>To carry out an intervention on all D rated food businesses by inspection, audit, monitoring or sampling (approximately <b>300 businesses</b>).</p> <p>To carry out alternative enforcement action on low risk E rated establishments. This may include inspection if there have been substantial changes. These are low risk businesses and therefore we will seek to undertake as a minimum 50% of those interventions due.</p>
2	To support the operation of the national food hygiene rating scheme by providing business ratings during food hygiene inspections, updating the national website, and by offering businesses safeguards, including the opportunity to be re-inspected and provided with a new food hygiene rating.
3	To undertake the sampling of food and food business environmental sampling to support work locally and nationally. To investigate where unsatisfactory results are identified.
4	To continue to offer support to businesses through the Primary Authority partnership scheme.
5	<p>To fulfil health and safety enforcement work in line with Health and Safety Executive guidance. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Undertake health and safety assessments whilst undertaking food hygiene inspections</li> <li>- Investigate workplace accidents, securing of improvements and taking action where necessary.</li> <li>- Intelligence based proactive inspections</li> <li>- Local priority work –including inspection of beauty establishments, inspection of riding establishments and raising awareness of inflatable safety at public events.</li> </ul>
6	To register and inspect premises undertaking skin piercing activities – cosmetic body piercing, acupuncture, tattooing, electrolysis and semi-permanent skin colouring.
7	To investigate all GP notifications of notifiable food-borne infectious and suspected food poisoning outbreaks. Take any necessary actions arising from the investigation and to report outcomes to assist in national surveillance.
9	To undertake all inspections of businesses subject to licencing under Animal Welfare legislation, including any mid-term visits. This includes horse riding establishments, zoos, pet shops, animal boarders and dog breeders.
10	In all areas of work identified above, to act in accordance with our enforcement policy to select the most appropriate course of action for dealing with issues of non-compliance. This may range from the provision of advice, to service of enforcement notices, and where appropriate the taking of enforcement action to deal with cases of blatant disregard for the law.