

Appendix 2:

Work Plan 2023-2024

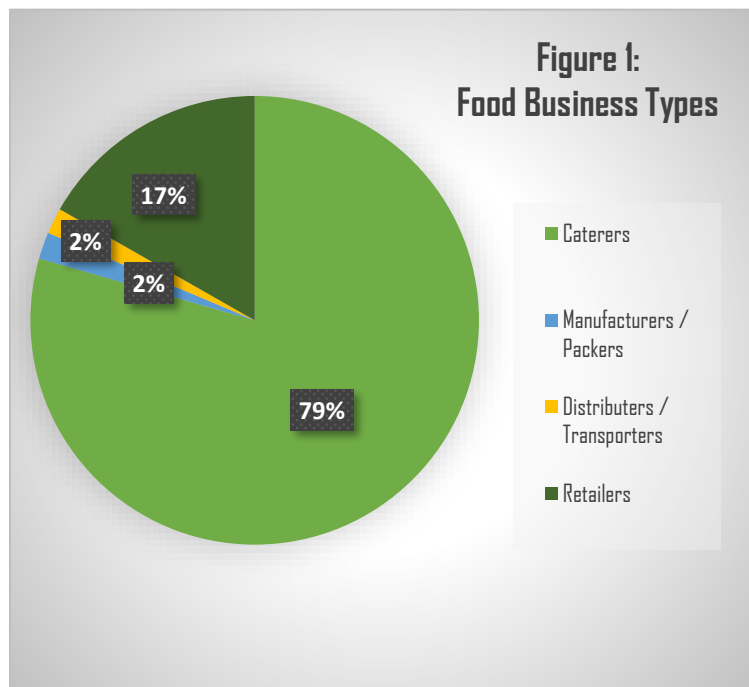
Environmental & Regulation: Food & Safety Team

This work plan explains the proposed delivery of food controls which will be carried out by the Food and Safety Team in the year 2023 – 2024. The role of the Food and Safety Team includes:

- The responsibility for enforcing food hygiene and food safety legislation in all food premises in the district.
- Carrying out proactive inspections and interventions of food businesses, investigating food and premises complaints, as well as cases of suspected food poisoning and water borne diseases.
- Programming the frequency of inspections of the 2000 food business in the New Forest area; this number remains relatively stable, despite new businesses opening, and some businesses ceasing trading.
- Undertaking workplace health and safety regulation, caravan site licensing, regulation of skin piercing and animal welfare licensing, however this report only relates to food safety work.

Food businesses in the New Forest

There are currently 2032 food businesses in the district, the majority of **1612**, are restaurants and other caterers such as takeaways and they range from national companies to sole traders. There are also **340** retailers, **39** manufacturers / packers, and **31** distributors / transporters. There are **13** approved premises which are subject to enhanced control as well as **22** businesses which are primary food producers, such as fishing vessels, fruit farms and deer larders. This is illustrated in Figure 1.



At the conclusion of a food hygiene inspection a business is given a risk rating which dictates when the next routine inspection will be due. This risk rating is based upon the scale of the business, the types of food handled, whether the business undertakes any specific high-risk processing or primarily serves vulnerable groups, and how well the business is performing.

The purpose of this risk rating is to ensure that local authority resources are effectively targeted towards businesses requiring assistance, whilst reducing the burden on low risk, compliant businesses.

The risk categories are A, B, C, D and E, where A and B are often larger or poor performing businesses, C and D are mainly caterers, and E rated are often very small-scale home-based businesses such as cake makers or retailers.

Figure 2 shows the current profile of businesses in the New Forest. Almost half of all businesses are low risk – often domestic cake makers, childminders, and small retailers, and these are contacted less frequently. Officers time is prioritised on those 20% of premises which are of higher and medium risk.

It should be noted that A and B rated businesses may not be a poor standard but could be high risk due to being large food manufacturers or serving vulnerable groups such as care homes.



Figure 2 – Risk rating of food businesses in the New Forest

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme



In addition to the risk rating generated following a food hygiene inspection, most businesses will also receive a food hygiene rating. This national scheme is designed to allow consumers to make informed choices on places where they eat out or shop for food whilst encouraging businesses to improve their hygiene standards. The ratings range from 5, (very good) to 0, (urgent improvement necessary). A business is given a window sticker which displays the rating and the score awarded. In England businesses are not obliged to display their rating, although it is available to view on the Food Standards Agency website.



Figure 3 – distribution of food hygiene ratings

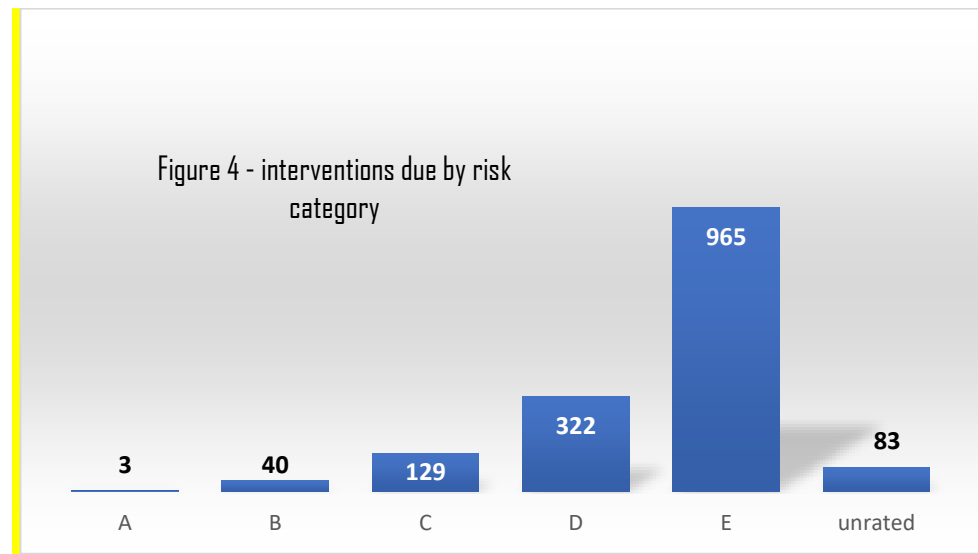
The majority of businesses in the New Forest have received a rating of 3 or above. A total of 98% of businesses have a rating of 5 - very good, 4- good or 3 - generally satisfactory. Only a 2% minority of businesses require improvement, urgent improvement or very urgent improvement. These businesses receive a rating of 2, 1, or 0. Overall consumers can have confidence in the food provided by businesses in the New Forest.

Once a rating has been provided it will normally remain until the next inspection is undertaken. However, businesses may apply and pay for a re-inspection, when they have carried out necessary works identified during the inspection and then a new rating will be issued.

There is a fee of £195 for a re-inspection, as this is a discretionary service, but many businesses recognise the importance of having a good rating and in 2022-2023, **21** businesses applied for a re-inspection. In addition to re-inspections, there is also the option for businesses to appeal their rating should they consider it to be incorrect.

Food Inspections and Interventions due in the coming year

Figure 4 shows the due interventions during the 2023-2024 year. It should be noted that the unrated column indicates newly registered food businesses which have not yet had an inspection. It is estimated that during the year an additional 60 registrations may be received requiring an inspection.



These interventions consist of both inspections due as part of the programme and those outstanding because of the pandemic which are approximately 100 of the D rated premises, 800 of the lowest E rated premises and 60 of the new unrated businesses.

Strategy for delivery of the food service

The food and safety service has remained agile since the pandemic due to a challenging recruitment market and has adopted the following strategy to ensure continued effective delivery of the food safety programme.

1. Recruiting two apprentices and training and supporting them through a 4-year university degree course to become qualified Environmental Health Officers.
2. Triaging newly registered food businesses, identifying those undertaking high risk activities and requiring immediate inspection, from those which are lower risk.
3. Flexible working for Environmental Health Officers to inspect businesses during their operating hours which includes evenings and weekends.
4. Reviewing our business systems to ensure that they are as efficient as possible, and that time taken to undertake individual inspections is optimised.
5. Ensuring that interventions are undertaken making full use of the flexibility in delivery of food controls outlined in the Food Law Code of Practice. This involves using a full range of interventions which are detailed below.

Risk Category of premise	Frequency of intervention	Type of intervention
A	Every 6 months	Inspection or audit
B	At least every year	Inspection or audit

C	At least every 18 months	Alternate between inspection and another 'official control' where the business is broadly compliant. Official controls are normally verifying an aspect of the business or monitoring the business.
D	At least every 2 years	Alternate between inspection and another 'non-official control'. A non-official control could be information gathered not by qualified staff (apprentices)
E	At least every 3 years	Flexible strategy which may include an official or non-official control.

Figure 5 – official and non-official controls

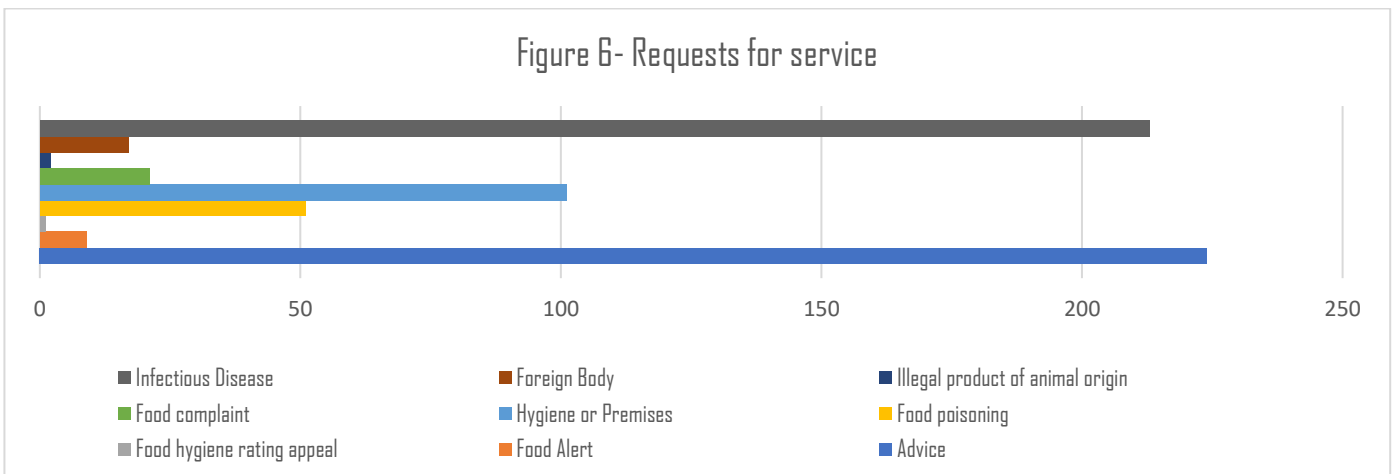
By applying this strategy, the Food and Safety Team aim to complete all due A, B, C and D rated inspections and a large proportion of the E rated interventions. Progress is reviewed on a quarterly basis, by the Service Manager, to ensure the key changes in the strategy deliver an effective, consistent and proportionate approach.

Investigations and Advice

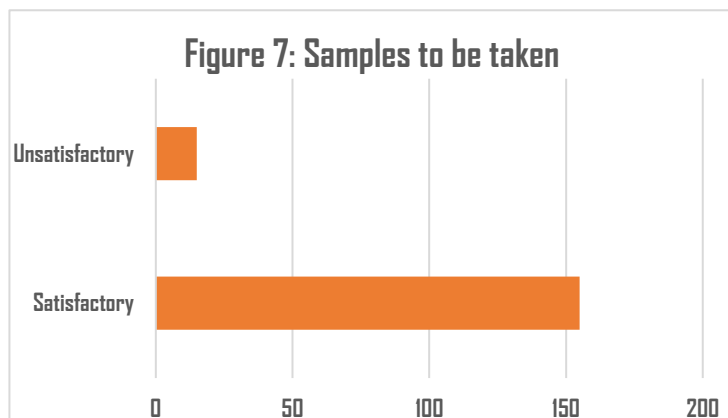
The Food and Safety Team receives a wide range of requests for service and during 2022/23 they responded to 1119 requests across all areas of their work. Over half of these service requests related specifically to food and infectious disease work. Since 1 April 2023, the team has received a total of 632 service requests, which indicates that at the current rate, they will receive a similar number to last year.

Moving forwards it is estimated that they will respond to over 600 service requests during the year, specifically relating to food, hygiene or cases of infectious disease. Generally, a third of these are complaints made by members of the public about food purchased or consumed, or standards of hygiene observed at a premise. They also receive complaints from people claiming that food they have eaten has made them ill and although difficult to investigate where there is no physical evidence, further investigations are carried out where more than one complaint is received. The team are notified of over 200 cases of infectious disease per year, most of which are as a result of food poisoning bacteria, such as salmonella and campylobacter. Their role with these cases, is to determine how the individual became unwell, whether a food business could be implicated and if it is a single isolated case or a potential outbreak.

Figure 6 illustrates the range of service requests which are likely to be received in 2023/24.



Food Sampling



The Food Standards Agency places considerable emphasis on the importance of sampling as part of the delivery of a local authority's food service. Sampling can be used as both a means to support business, to verify that they are producing safe food and also to emphasise when their food safety controls are inadequate. Local high-risk businesses are sampled, such as manufacturers, especially those carrying out specific processing, including sous-vide foods, butter manufacture, fermentation, or aseptic packaging.

The Food and Safety Team also participates in national and local Hampshire wide sampling projects which are identified by emerging issues and epidemiological data. In the coming year, the team will participate in studies of ready to eat salads, and hand contact surfaces in food businesses.

Last year 150 food samples were taken and sent for analysis and a similar number is planned to be taken this year. Whilst the majority of samples taken are satisfactory, last year 10% were found to not meet food safety requirements. In these cases, officers support the businesses in investigating what went wrong and will re-sample where necessary to demonstrate that any additional measures put in place by the business have been successful. The role of the team is to ensure that measures are taken to prevent unsafe food from being placed on the market.

Primary Authority

PRIMARY AUTHORITY

The Primary Authority (PA) scheme allows businesses to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority (or group of authorities) to access assured, robust and reliable advice at a reasonable cost. The advice can be on food hygiene and safety, health and safety or licensing and gives companies greater consistency particularly where they have outlets operating across several areas.

We currently have two Primary Authority Partnerships, one with a care home provider and the another with a fish products manufacturer.