

# Environment and Regulation

## Food and Safety Team

### Service Review 2017-2018

- This report explains the work carried out by the food team in the past year.
- We are responsible for enforcing food hygiene and food safety legislation in all food premises in the District.
- We carry out proactive inspections and interventions, investigate food and premises complaints and cases of suspected food poisoning or water borne diseases.
- There are **1854** food businesses in the New Forest area, this number remains relatively stable, despite new businesses opening, and some businesses ceasing trading.
- Protecting the public through food safety links into the wider public health agenda; and we have launched an Eat Out Eat Well Award scheme which rewards businesses who offer healthier eating alternatives; helping to tackle issues of obesity in the District.
- The food and safety team is also responsible for workplace health and safety regulation, caravan site licensing, regulation of skin piercing and a animal welfare licensing.

## Food businesses in the New Forest

- Of the 1854 food businesses in the District, a majority of **1432**, are restaurants and other caterers such as takeaways. These range from national companies to sole traders. There are also **342** retailers, **45** manufacturers / packers, **17** importers / exporters, **13** primary producers, and **5** distributors / transporters. Of the total, **14** are approved premises, subject to enhanced control.

## Inspections Completed

- Inspections or other interventions are carried out according to the risk of the business; a business may pose a higher risk due to the processes carried out and the food handled, also the standards observed during inspection, as well as whether those served are from a vulnerable group.
- During inspections we observe and ask questions to judge three aspects of the business: 1 - how well the business is managed based on food safety management, 2- the food hygiene and food handling practices, and 3 – the structure of the establishment which includes cleanliness, layout and maintenance.
- Higher risk businesses with an A, B or C risk category receive a full inspection on a more frequent basis – A's are visited every 6 months, B's every year, and C's every 18 months.
- Lower risk businesses with a D or E risk category may not always be inspected, and may receive a different intervention such as a partial inspection as explained in the table.

Category	Frequency of intervention	Type of intervention
A	At least every 6 months	Inspection / partial inspection / audit
B	At least every year	Inspection / partial inspection / audit
C	At least every 18 months	Inspection / partial inspection / audit until business is broadly compliant. Thereafter, intervention can alternate between the above and surveillance / verification.
D	At least every 2 years	Interventions alternating between inspection / partial inspection / audit, and surveillance / verification.
E	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every 3 years	Flexible strategy set out in food service plan – in the New Forest businesses are subject to alternative surveillance / verification and audit / partial inspection.

Fig. 1: Intervention Frequencies and Type.

- The team focused resources on ensuring that all high risk food inspections were completed. A total of **98%** of the high risk inspections (A, B and C category) were completed on time. 2% of the businesses could not be inspected within the timescale due to being closed, for example, if a seasonal business.

- **246** out of 252 D category premises interventions were undertaken representing almost 98%. This shortfall was again due to difficulties in gaining access to the premises.
- For category E businesses (the lowest risk), **116** out of 245 – **47%** were completed. This highlights how resources are allocated on a risk bases approach and that officers are working at full capacity.

The darker columns of the chart indicate show the number of premises which received an intervention, and lighter shading shows those which were not completed.

This chart also shows that new and unrated businesses were also inspected on time. Those not completed were due to difficulty in gaining access.

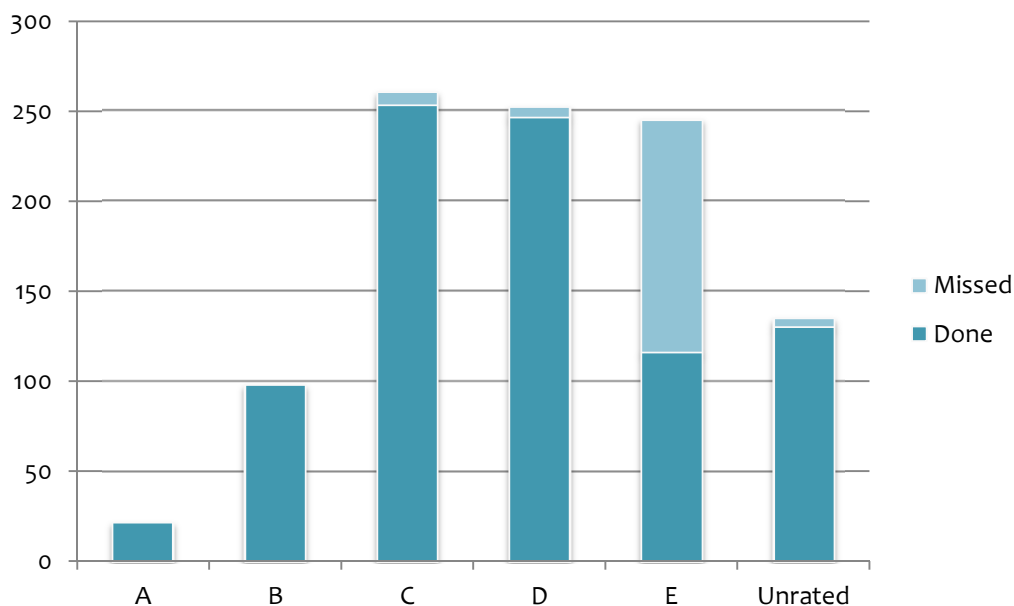


Fig. 2: Food Inspections undertaken 2017 – 2018.

## National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme



All Local Authorities in England participate in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) which is a partnership initiative with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) who are the central competent Food Authority. This was originally called Scores on the Doors. The FHRS is designed to allow consumers to make informed choices on places where they eat out or shop for food and encourages 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 is published on the FSA website.

### Business Ratings in the New Forest

The majority of businesses in the New Forest have a rating of 3 – generally satisfactory or better. Therefore almost **97%** of businesses fall into this category. The diagram shows that only 4 businesses (less than **1%**) received a '0' rating, and a total of 38 businesses have a 1 or 2 rating – only **3%** of the total.

Once a rating has been provided it will normally remain until the next inspection is undertaken. Businesses may apply 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 £162 for a re-inspection as this is a discretionary service, but many businesses recognise the importance of having a good rating and in 2017-18, **27** applied for a re-inspection.

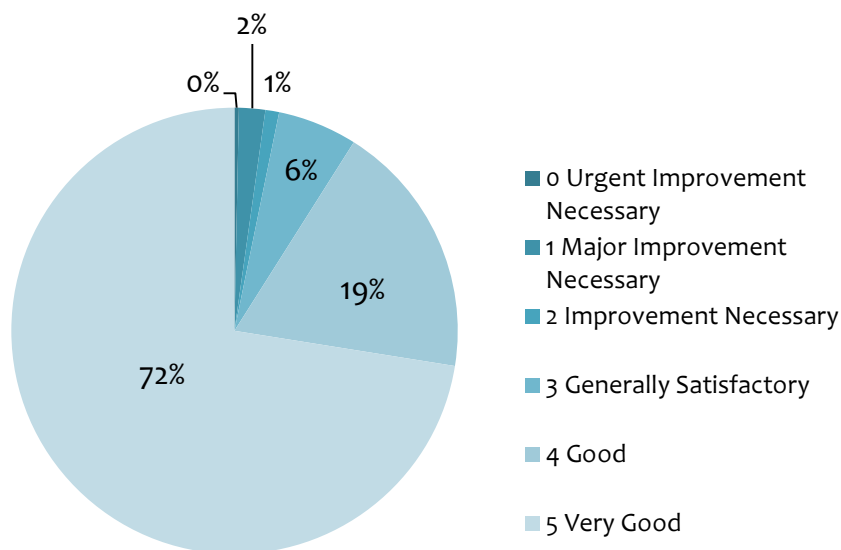


Fig. 3: Food Hygiene Ratings in the New Forest Area

## Enforcement Actions

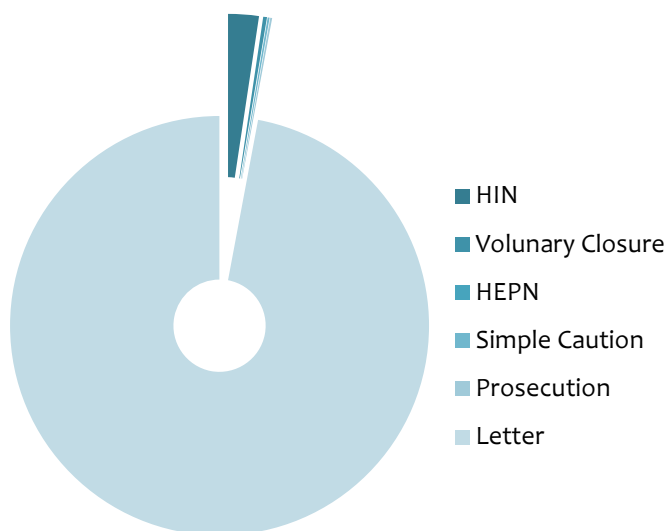


Fig. 4: Enforcement action taken

The chart shows the enforcement actions the food team took in the past year. We act in accordance with our enforcement policy to ensure that food businesses meet the high standards expected, to promote and achieve sustained compliance with the law and to ensure that food business operators take action to deal immediately with serious food safety risks.

Most businesses in the District seek to comply with the requirements and **658** received inspection letters explaining any areas where improvement was required to comply with the law. A small number of these cases, shown by the wedge, required further action.

The team served **45** hygiene improvement notices (HIN) on **16** businesses and **2** businesses were voluntarily closed based on serious risks to health. **1** business was prosecuted and another offered a simple caution for serious food hygiene offences.

## Investigations and Advice

In the past year we responded to **528** service requests relating to food, or cases of infectious disease. These investigations can indicate where food manufacturing processes may have failed. Of these requests, **191** (the first two columns of the graph) were complaints made by members of the public about food that was purchased or consumed, or standards of hygiene observed at a premises. **42** complaints related to food where it is alleged to have caused illness. In these cases, action will only be taken if there is evidence to support this or there are a number of cases (an outbreak) linked to a single premises.

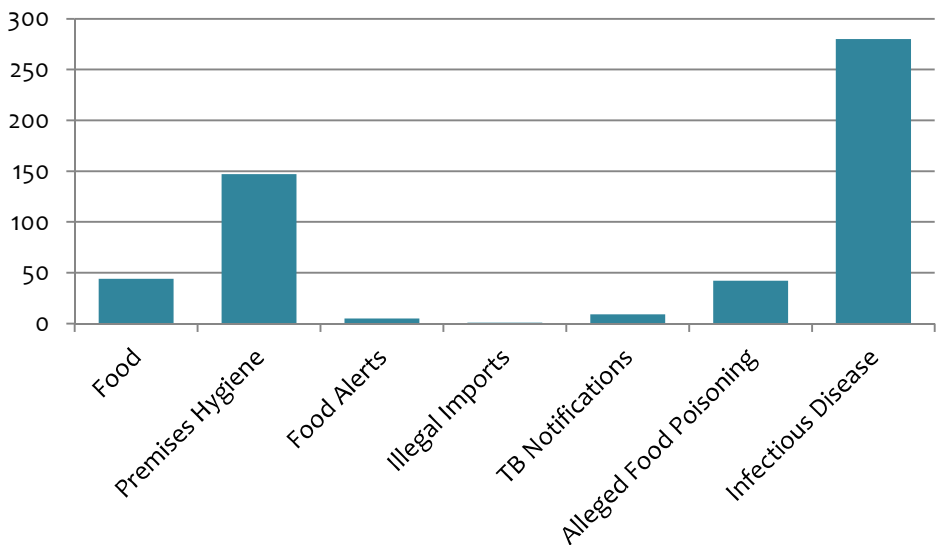


Fig. 5: Types of Request for Service

**280** cases of infectious disease / food poisoning were reported by Public Health England to the food team for investigation. The work is considered high priority, as early intervention can prevent further cases should it be possible to identify a link between a case of illness and food prepared and served.

Advice is provided to food businesses on new business set up, and may relate to premises design, good hygiene and food handling practices, training requirements and food safety management.

A small amount of reactive work relates to notifications of the tuberculosis status of dairy herds, the requirement to halt imports of animal origin which have left Southampton port prior to necessary checks being undertaken, and food alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency which may require the removal of food from sale.

## Food Sampling

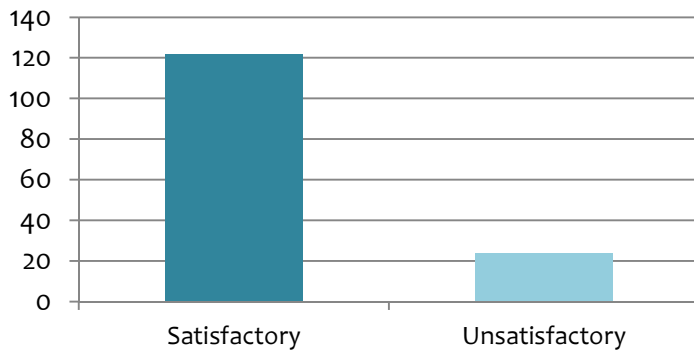


Fig. 6: Samples Taken

Over the past year the food safety team took a total of **146** samples, **24** of which did not meet food safety requirements. We helped businesses to investigate what had gone wrong and how to ensure that unsafe food is not placed on the market. The Food Standards Agency places considerable emphasis on the importance of sampling as part of the delivery of a local authority's food service. We sample local high risk businesses such as manufacturers, especially those carrying out specific processing (e.g. sous vide or fermentation) and also participate in Hampshire sampling projects.

## Eat Out Eat Well



Eat Out Eat Well is a scheme which recognises businesses which make an effort to give the consumer healthier eating and drinking choices. It has been successfully running in a number of areas of the UK, and was introduced in the New Forest within the past year with member support. This is one way in which NFDC can contribute with measures to deal with the national obesity crisis; it also feeds into our local public health agenda, by assisting the well being of those people who live and work within the district, along with those who visit the area.

We help businesses to consider their menu and foods offered for sale, and to provide options to consumers, such as foods which have a reduced sugar content, main meals with healthier cooking methods and ingredients, and a greater availability and profile of sugar free drinks.

The initial focus has been on higher profile businesses with a high footfall, which included a local theme park, and two large schools – all who have gained the Gold award. The scheme is promoted during food hygiene inspections, and future businesses to get involved in the scheme include a large restaurant chain, other tourist attractions, and a holiday park operator.

## Primary Authority

### PRIMARY AUTHORITY

The food team will over the next few months be considering adopting the Primary Authority Scheme. This allows businesses to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority (or group of authorities) and gives the business access to assured, robust and reliable advice for a reasonable cost. The advice can be on a variety of areas which includes food hygiene and safety, health and safety and licensing and gives companies greater consistency of advice particularly where they have outlets which operate in several areas.