

Folkestone and Hythe
District Council Food Safety
Service Plan 2017/18

1. Service Aims and Objectives

The overall service aim is to ensure that food and drink intended for sale for human consumption, which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed within the district is safe.

1.2 Link to Corporate Objectives

Folkestone and Hythe's Corporate Plan (2017-2020) sets out the following strategic objectives:

- More jobs
- More homes
- Appearance Matters
- Health Matters
- Achieving Stability
- Delivering Excellence

Food Safety is not specifically referred to in the corporate plan but the work of the food safety service integrates with some of these objectives.

The overarching service plan for the Commercial Team has 2 specific performance indicators linking to food Safety

- To complete 95% of programmed inspections due
- 95 % of food premises to be 'broadly compliant'

2. Background

2.1 Profile of the district

Folkestone and Hythe is a district authority on the South Coast of England. It covers an area of 140 square miles in east Kent. It is sandwiched between the North Downs, the south coast and Romney Marsh. Folkestone and Hythe has 37km of coastline

Some 75 miles from London, Folkestone and Hythe is a major link in the vital transport artery of the M20 corridor and is gateway to and from continental Europe. The district's connections with London and Europe have been strengthened as the benefits from the high speed rail link are realised.

Cross channel traffic is concentrated around the Eurotunnel site at Cheriton but the airport at Lydd may expand in the future.

The residential population of Folkestone and Hythe is 109,452 based on 2014 figures. The majority of the population is concentrated around the towns of Folkestone and Hythe, but there are also sizeable towns at Hawkinge, Lydd, New Romney and along the coastal strip.

The main industrial areas are to be found in Folkestone, Hythe, Lympne and New Romney.

Folkestone and Hythe has, historically, been a resort area so there are a many hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast premises and small food premises to serve the visitor. The legacy of large Victorian houses has lead to many being converted to residential care homes and nursing homes.

There is an army presence within the district. This includes a Ghurkha regiment which has lead to an established Nepalese Community within the Folkestone/Cheriton areas.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Folkestone and Hythe has a two tier local authority structure. Folkestone and Hythe District Council has responsibility for Food Safety Enforcement. Food Standards and Feed Enforcement are dealt with by Kent County Council

Folkestone and Hythe District Council is run on a Cabinet basis, reporting to full Council with a Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet member for Environmental Health holds the portfolio for the food safety enforcement service

Public Analyst Services are provided by Kent Scientific Services. Microbiological Examination is carried out by Public Health England (FWE Laboratory in Colindale, London)

2.3 Scope of the Service

The food safety function is carried out by the Commercial Team. This is done through activities including:

- Receipt and recording of food premises registrations
- A planned programme of food hygiene inspections and revisits
- Implementation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Selective food hygiene interventions at events
- Microbiological food sampling
- Investigation of food safety complaints concerning food items or premises
- A reactive response to food alerts and incidents
- A reactive response to infectious disease notifications

- A reactive response to requests for advice and information from businesses, the public and others.
- Provision of food hygiene training
- Provision of general advice and information through our website and newsletters
- Participation in national food safety campaigns
- The issue of export certificates
- Determining applications for approval of food establishments handling certain products of animal origin.
- The port health service.

The Commercial Team has responsibility for other functions, including:

- Health and Safety Enforcement,
- Corporate Health and Safety
- Participating in Safety Advisory Group for events.
- Animal Licensing inspections (zoos, riding establishments etc)
- Inspections relating to byelaws on skin piercing

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

As of end of 2016/17 year there were 1294 food premises in the district. The profile is as follows:

Primary Producers	19
Manufacturers/Processors/ packers	18
Importers/ Exporters	1
Distributors/ transporters	7
Restaurants, pubs and other caterers	1035
Retailers	214
Total	1294

Profile by hygiene rating (% distribution at 13th March 2017):

						No rating issued			
5	4	3	2	1	0	Excluded	Sensitive	Exempt	unrated
58.6	13.3	9.9	2.3	0.5	0.2	2.9	5.6	5.8	0.9

96.5 % of rated establishments have a rating of 3 or better.

There are 6 premises approved under EC Regulation 853/2004. These include two cold stores, a small dairy products manufacturer and fish processing premises.

The Kent and Medway food liaison group have a Memorandum of Understanding which provides for the sharing of knowledge and expertise on approved premises.

As a seaside town, the summer months bring in additional visitors. Some food businesses such as seafront kiosks and ice cream vans only trade during the summer period.

Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in outdoor events held in the area..

The Port of Folkestone, for which we are a Port Health Authority, is currently only being used as a lorry park. This may change with the redevelopment of the harbour area. The port currently has no food hygiene or imported food implications.

Lydd Airport has catering facilities within the terminal building. The airport can be used for freight although this is rare. Lydd occasionally receives aircraft diverted from other airports. There are no inspection or clearance facilities for imported food. Regular contact is maintained to discuss any imported food

If either the sea port or airport expand there may be a resource implication for the authority.

Eurotunnel places a demand on the food service. The food outlets on the Cheriton site are regularly inspected. There is no Port Health Authority for the Channel Tunnel. Dover District Council are responsible for any imported food examination at the border.

Most of the food safety requirements enforced by the team are currently set out in EU Legislation. Following the outcome of the EU Referendum , there will be long term implications for the Regulatory and enforcement framework for food safety once the UK exits the EU .

The Food Standards Agency is currently gathering information for development of a new model for delivery of food controls under the project banner “Regulating our Future”. This work is due to be completed as part of its 2015-2020 strategy.

2.5 Access to the Service

Most services of the team are delivered at the relevant food premises within the District. The team can also be contacted in the following ways:

- Visiting the main council offices in Folkestone. These are open Monday-Friday 9-5
- Visiting the “ One Stop” shop in New Romney (9-12.30 on Tuesday and Friday)
- By phone through the Council’s Contact Centre
- By email via the council’s website or using the teams dedicated mailbox foodteam@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
- Via referrals from the hygiene ratings area of the Food Standards Agency website where problems about a particular establishment can be reported.
- Where an officer has carried out an intervention at a business or is dealing with a specific issue, officers provide their phone numbers or email addresses enabling them to be contacted directly.

Information is available on the council's website at www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

.The website was improved and modernised as part of a Corporate Project, improving user experience. Businesses can submit food registrations via an online platform.

- Outside normal office hours an emergency contact number is in operation.

2.6 Regulation Policy

The council has a documented Food Safety Enforcement Policy setting out its principles and approach to enforcement of hygiene requirements. This was reviewed and approved by Cabinet in February 2016. It is published on the Council Website.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Interventions

The Commercial Team operate a risk based, planned food intervention programme. Intervention frequencies are determined using the risk rating system set out in the Food Law Code of Practice. This takes into account factors such as the type of food handled, the nature and scale of activities, standards of food hygiene practices, condition of structure/facilities and confidence in management. Premises are categorised from A-E with A being the highest risk, requiring most frequent interventions.

Intervention Frequency

Intervention Category	Score	Minimum Inspection Frequency
A	92 or higher	At least every 6 months
B	72-91	At Least every 12 months
C	52-71	At least every 18 months
D	31-51	At least every 2 years
E	0-30	Alternative enforcement strategy at least every 3 years.

The table below sets out the planned interventions due for 2017/18

Inspection Category	A	B	C	D*	E**	Unrated/new business
Interventions due	2	27	152	156	128	unknown

The service objective is to complete a minimum of 95% of interventions due.

*Within Folkestone and Hythe Category D premises have been subject to inspections. The Food Law Code of Practice does allow some flexibility in that they can alternate between

inspection and non official controls (such as educational/advice visits or informal sampling). This option maybe considered for some D premises dependent on other demands on resources.

** Category E premises are very low risk due to the nature of foods handled or very limited numbers served. The Food Law Code of Practice allows these to be subject to alternative enforcement strategy. Category E premises generally are dealt with by a self assessment questionnaire or contact to confirm there have been no changes. Inspections may be carried out in response to complaints , where questionnaires are not returned or on a “sample” basis.

Where the service becomes aware that ownership of a food business has either changed or a new business has commenced, it aims to undertake an inspection within 28 days of the business starting trading.

In addition to the planned programme of interventions, the team carries out other interventions . These include

- Revisits following inspections or to check compliance with notices.
- Verification/surveillance visits , e.g. to investigate complaints or incidents
- Inspections of new businesses
- Inspections to reassess a hygiene rating following a request from a business
- Inspections of food premises not included on the programme (eg market traders not based in the area/ mobile food businesses trading at events.
- Visits to give advice
- Visits solely for the purpose of taking food samples.
- Information / intelligence gathering

A summary of interventions carried out is shown in the table below.

	2015/16	2016/17
Inspections & Audits	570	626
Verification and Surveillance visits (including revisits following inspection)	158	210
Sampling Visits	7	32
Advice visits	22	18
Information / intelligence gathering, (including questionnaires for Cat E establishments.)	67	99

Revisits following inspections are carried out where

3.2 Food Complaints

The team receives and reacts to complaints concerning hygiene of food premises, unsatisfactory food items, allegations of food poisoning linked to food premises and general requests for advice. Historical activity is shown below.

	2015/16	2016/17
Food allegedly caused illness	42	43
Unhygienic premises	37	71
Unfit food/foreign matter	22	24
business advice /request for information	215	225

Action taken in response to complaints will depend on factors such as seriousness of the matter reported, availability of evidence (eg food items) and inspection history of premises concerned. Action may range from recording information to guide and influence future inspections/ projects, to a full investigation and/or inspection.

3.3 Home Authority and Primary Authority.

The Service recognises the Home Authority principle and Primary Authority Scheme. This is referred to in its documented enforcement policy. The authority does not currently act as a primary authority for any businesses. However, there are many businesses that are in a primary authority partnership that trade within the district.

Officers have access to the Primary Authority register where they can check details of partnerships and related inspection plans and assured advice.

3.4 Advice to Businesses

The team recognises that it has an important role in providing information and advice, particularly to small business and new start ups. This early advice can assist business in getting successfully up and running and help ensure good hygiene standards are achieved from the outset.

The team receives many enquiries from people considering starting a new business in the district. Written information and guidance is provided. This generally includes relevant central guidance, tailored to the business where possible. Advisory visits are carried out where requested.

Advice and guidance is provided in a number of ways including;

- Face to face during site visits
- As part of inspection reports
- Provision of leaflets
- Information on the council website
- Signposting to other agencies (eg Trading Standards, Food Standards Agency)
- Signposting to the Kent Better Business For All website containing an overview of regulatory areas and Kent Contacts.
- Newsletters
- Training courses
- Specially arranged seminars and coaching projects.

3.5 Food Sampling

The team carries out food sampling and environmental swabs in food premises. These are taken as part of national and local surveys or to assist inspections and investigations into food safety incidents. The general approach to sampling and priorities for sampling activity are set out in Folkestone and Hythe's Food Sampling Policy.

Kent receives an allocation of funding to cover microbiological sampling. This covers costs in relation to provision of sampling containers, transport of samples , examination and written reports.

Folkestone and Hythe uses the UKSS database system for recording sampling activity and submitting information to the laboratory. The system enables sharing of sampling information with Local Authorities across the UK.

Year	2015/16	2016/17
No. Of samples	64	78

During 2016/17 Folkestone and Hythe took part in the following national/regional surveys

- PHE National Survey 58 Hygiene in Catering Premises
- PHE National Survey 59 Reactive Response (sauces)
- PHE Cross regional Study of the microbiological quality of RTE smoked, cured and fermented, fish (including shellfish), meat and cheese from manufacturing and retail premises

In addition, local district based sampling has continued, in accordance with our local sampling policy, which includes sampling of products from approved premises and local intelligence led sampling.

The team also has ATP monitoring equipment which can be used as means of assessing the cleanliness of food preparation surfaces and equipment. This gives instantaneous results and has been used effectively as an educational tool during inspections and other visits.

3.6 Control and Investigation of Infectious Disease

Certain infectious diseases cases must be notified to the Local Authority. Investigation of individual cases and outbreaks is carried out in partnership with Public Health England with (PHE). Arrangements for investigation are agreed in a memorandum of understanding

During 2016/17, 171 official notifications were received.

3.7 Food Safety Incidents and Alerts

Food Alerts are received via email and by text. These are responded to in accordance with FSA Codes of Practice and our internal procedures. All alerts are logged and the action taken is noted. Most alerts are for information only but occasionally they will involve action to contact businesses directly, trace affected products and ensure they are removed from sale. Where necessary alerts may be further publicised to alert consumers.

3.8 Liaison Arrangements

Folkestone and Hythe is represented on the following groups which provide a formal means of liaison with other local authorities and agencies.

- Kent and Medway Food Technical Liaison Group. The membership of the group consists of representatives from food safety and trading standards teams from each local authority, Public Health England (Food and Water Laboratory) and the Food Standards Agency. The group meets quarterly and is a means of sharing information and improving consistency of enforcement across the county. This group is represented on the National Food Hygiene Focus Group and the South East Food Liaison Leads Group.
- Kent Infection Control Committee – liaison regarding matters relating to infectious disease notifications and investigations. Membership includes local authorities, the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, clinicians and Public Health England.
- Kent Environmental Health Managers Group
- Kent Branch Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

In addition, officers have access to the BRDO Primary Authority website, which provides information and contact details for each Primary Authority Partnership.

Officers also have access to a national “Knowledge Hub” which enables sharing of good practice, general information and discussion of technical issues.

The team has a dedicated mailbox to receive communications from the Food Standards Agency.

3.9 Promotional Work

The service continues to publish a food and safety newsletter, distributed to most food businesses within the district. Two newsletters were issued during 2016/17.

The service continues to participate in National Food Safety Campaigns. Recent campaigns have predominantly involved sharing social media messages and putting information on our website.

During 2016/17, campaigns included Xmas Campaign to encourage use of left overs and safe freezing of food to reduce waste) and a campaign encouraging food businesses to consumers to look out for ratings around the Valentine's Day period.

3.10 Food Hygiene Training

Food Handlers must be appropriately trained / instructed and supervised in food hygiene matters relevant to their work. There are many ways that food businesses can go about achieving this. Formal hygiene training courses are one option. Folkestone and Hythe have been providing class room based courses for many years.

The service was registered with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health to deliver their Level 2 Award Food Safety in Catering course. This is a nationally recognised, certificated, full day course aimed at High risk food handlers including chefs, cooks etc. Historical training activity is shown below.

	2015/16	2016/17
No of courses	2	4
No of delegates	25	51

During 2016/17 , two courses were organised , open to all. Two courses were arranged for individual organisations.

The CIEH are changing the way in which it certifies and delivers training with new products to be relaunched in Spring. Two courses are planned for 2017/18.

4 Resources

4.1 Financial Allocation	<p>The food enforcement service budgets are not separate. The budgets are for all the activities of the Commercial Team. The following costs are pro rata of the FTE allocated to the service.</p> <p>Salaries (including on costs but excluding recharges) – £99500 This has gone down because I do not include myself in the calculation. Other Budgets – £14,000 Training - £2200 Some new ones:- Recharges - £71,000 Income - £2800 Total £183900</p>
4.2 Staffing Allocation	<p>2.081 Full time equivalent staff (FTE) consisting of 1 Environmental Health Officer (Food Specialist) , 1 Food and Safety Officer (A fully qualified inspector of high risk food premises). 1 Environmental Health Officer (H&S Specialist) undertaking small amount of food related work,</p>

	.25 FTE Food and Safety Officer (Currently providing Regulatory Support
4.3 Staff Development Plan	Staff receive relevant ongoing training to maintain competency. Identification of Specific development needs is incorporated into the PPR process. Each authorised officer is required to undertake 20 hours of CPD per year, with at least 10 relating to core food activities.

5. Review

5.1 Review against the 2016 Service Plan Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Target	Actual
Newsletters issued	2	2
% premises broadly compliant *	92 %	96%
% of interventions completed	95 % of interventions due	96%

*broadly compliant equates to hygiene rating of 3 or more.

**unrated businesses (e.g. new businesses yet to be inspected are categorised as not broadly compliant.)

**Many of those not completed that were due, were seasonal businesses that have not been trading during the time that they were due for inspection.

Compared to previous years, the year saw a high number of planned inspections due. In addition there were 131 previously new/ previously unrated businesses which were inspected for the first time. There were also 36 inspections carried out specifically in response to a request from a business to review their food hygiene rating.

This increased demand was mostly accommodated with existing resources. However, 90 inspections were completed through planned overtime to help ensure inspection targets were met.

5.2 Other activities

- Service plan, enforcement policy and sampling policy published on the council website.
- Introduction of online registration facility on council website.

- Review and updating of some key procedures , incorporating document control
- Introduction of specific forms for approved establishments
- Officers participated in a national consistency scoring exercise under the hygiene rating scheme, organised by the Food Standards Agency.
- A data cleansing exercise was conducted as part of a national FSA project relating to consistency of information displayed on their ratings website.
- Data cleanse to deal with some anomalies with closed premises on the database.
- Introduction of competency matrices.
- In January 2017 an audit of the team was conducted by the East Kent Partnership.

5.4 Areas For Action/ Improvement for forthcoming year

- Increase internal auditing work.
- Consider improved ways to identify new premises through liaison with other teams.
- To prepare options for consideration by cabinet with respect to hygiene rating review visits made at request of business, following change in scheme permitting a fee to be charged
- Improve liaison with contact centre
- To consider project targeting businesses with history of poor hygiene ratings

5.3 Delivery of the service plan.

Monthly performance figures are provided to cabinet.

The Lead officer monitors day to day delivery of the service plan. Any anticipated deviances or shortfalls are discussed at team meetings and action plans are agreed with PEHO

6. Quality Assessment and Internal Monitoring.

This is carried out in the following ways: .

- Internal audits against documented procedures
- Buddy review of notices
- Day to day monitoring of premises database and data uploaded to the FHRS system by Lead Officer.
- Review and monitoring of data on LAEMS system
- Participation in council / East Kent Partnership Audits

- Participation in external audits undertaken by FSA where organised
- Participation in inter-authority audits / benchmarking where arranged.
- 1-1 s and team briefings
- Feedback from business *

*following inspections a sample of businesses were sent a feedback questionnaire covering elements of the inspection process. Businesses could also add comments. Review of returned questionnaires has not gathered any particularly useful data to assist in identifying areas for improvement. Given that many processes can be checked through internal audits, it was decided to discontinue the questionnaires. However, inspection report forms left with business provide a generic email address through which businesses are advised they can submit feedback. This is in addition to any formal appeal processes or specific issues arising from the inspection that a business may wish to discuss with the officer or their manager.

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