



FOOD SAFETY

SERVICE PLAN 2024/25

This document has been developed in accordance with guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency.

Introduction

The Council has a statutory duty to carry out Official Food Controls and enforce food hygiene regulations within the Borough. This ensures that all food sold within the Borough is safe and fit for human consumption. Issues from the COVID-19 pandemic have considerably subsided, but it continues to affect the pattern in which inspections can be carried out which has caused year end pressures for officers.

Whilst highlighting achievements, this plan also sets the standard for how the service will be delivered over the next financial year. The service will strive to continue in providing a quality, customer focussed service in line with the Corporate priorities.

Nesta Barker
Service Director - Regulatory Services

May 2024

Section 1 - Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Service Aim

The Council recognises that its food safety regulatory function plays an important role in maintaining and improving public health within the district. It is committed to ensuring that all food sold within the borough is safe and without risk to health, to this end we are prioritising our work to ensure that the borough businesses operate and remain safe for their customers.

Service Objectives

Food Safety Enforcement

The Food & Safety Team has enforcement responsibilities in a wide number of areas affecting the public and businesses within the Borough. These include:

- Ensuring that food and drink intended for sale for human consumption is produced, manufactured, stored, distributed, and handled safely and in hygienic conditions.
- Investigating complaints about food and food premises.
- Responding to notifications of food alerts.
- Control and prevention of infectious disease and food poisoning.

1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans

The Borough's Council Plan 2022-2026 sets out the overall vision and priorities for the Council. These are then incorporated into specific service and financial plans.

The council has developed four priorities to focus delivery:

One Council delivering for local people

This underpins everything we do. We will be a council that listens to our local residents and communities and is responsive to their needs. We will work with them to deliver first-class, efficient services while keeping Council Tax low.

A successful and sustainable growing borough

We will build a strong and sustainable economy to ensure opportunities and support are available to everyone to improve their lives.

Healthy, active, and safe communities

We will ensure everyone enjoys a safe environment and access to a wide-range of facilities and activities to support and improve their health and quality of life.

Town centres for all

We will transform Newcastle and Kidsgrove town centres to ensure their future as places everyone can live, work, shop, study and spend their leisure time.

The work of the Food and Safety team can be linked to all of these priorities; however, it is perhaps more closely associated with

- **One Council delivering for local people**
- **Healthy, Active and Safe Communities**

The team report on the following key performance indicator each quarter to the Council's Cabinet:

- **Indicator 1.1 - The percentage of food premises that have a zero or one national food hygiene rating.**
- **Indicator 1.2 Percentage of category A and B food business inspections completed on time.**

Other priorities for the inspection of food premises and workplaces are prescribed in guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency. (The Food Standards Agency are considering further guidance on how they expect Local Authorities to undertake food premises interventions moving forward. When this is known, it will form part of the priorities)

2 - Background

2.1 Profile of Newcastle – under – Lyme Borough Council

Newcastle-under-Lyme borough council is a local government district with borough status in Staffordshire, England. It is named after its main settlement, Newcastle-under-Lyme, where the council is based, but includes the town of Kidsgrove, the villages of Silverdale and Keele, and the rural area surrounding Audley. The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme forms part of the conurbation of North Staffordshire and covers some 81 square miles with a population of around 123,000.

The traditional industrial base of mining and pottery manufacture has changed significantly over the last century. The closure of local mines, and factories has seen the growth of hi tech and research industries within the area. The Borough has areas of considerable affluence, but also includes two wards that fall into the 10% most deprived in the country

Newcastle is an ancient market town and still maintains a vibrant market culture. Stallholders set up on a part of the town locally known as The 'Stones' and this area is used on an almost daily basis for events ranging from the regular market to specialist events such as vegan markets and antique fairs. Due to the Boroughs central geographical location and the proximity to the M6 motorway, recent years have seen a significant increase in the numbers of distribution depots in the area. A large bakery supplying retailers nationally is based here, as is a large meat product manufacturer. The Borough also has the prestigious Keele University, medical school and conference facilities located within its' boundaries.

2.2 Organisational Structure

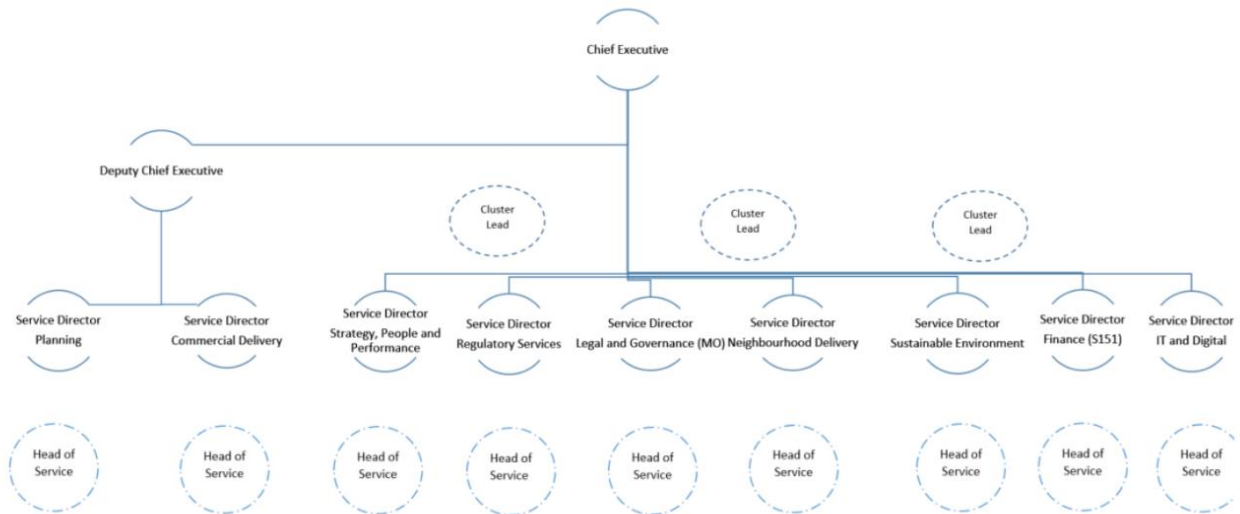
The Council is made up of 44 locally elected representatives, otherwise known as councillors or elected members.

The Council has a Leader who is elected by the members of the Council and is nominated by the largest group on the Council. The Council also has a Mayor, who presides over the Council meeting. The Mayor is a councillor who is appointed by all councillors to serve for one year as Chairman of the Council. The Council operates a Cabinet System consisting of a Leader and a Cabinet. Members of the Cabinet oversee the 'portfolios' or groups of services.

There are a number of other Council committees who have important roles to play in a variety of areas including Licensing & Public Protection Committee and Health, Wellbeing & Environment Scrutiny are relevant to the food safety service. Please refer to the Council's website for further details at: <https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

Executive Management

The Council’s Corporate Leadership structure comprises of the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Service Directors. This is shown in the organisational structure below:



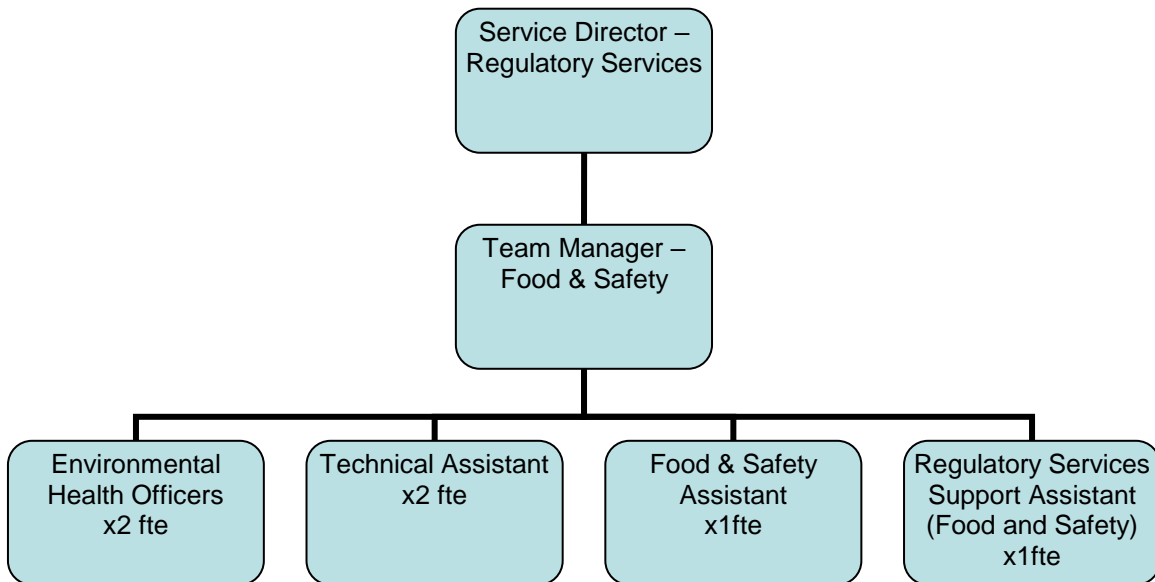
The Council operates an innovative collaborative leadership model. The Service Director of Regulatory Services report to the Chief Executive with regard to service management and operational output.

The service directors operate in within 3 clusters of their peers which offer mutual support and challenge throughout the business cycle. On a rotational basis, one service director from each cluster acts as lead.

Food and Safety Team:

The Food and Safety team operate within Regulatory Services together with the Environmental Protection, Housing & Vulnerability and Licensing teams.

The Food and Safety Service structure is as follows:



These officers do not spend all of their time on food law enforcement as they are also responsible for a number of other professional functions such as health and safety enforcement and interventions, infectious disease control, registrations and licensing.

The use of outside contractors will only be considered in the future if the following criteria are met:

- There is a backlog of inspections which cannot be completed by Officers;
- There are Agency contractors meeting the requirements of the Food Safety Act Code of Practice Qualifications and Experience of Authorised Officers; and
- The cost of the work is being met within existing budgets.

Expert assistance is provided by the following outside organisations: -

- Food Examiner and Microbiology Department, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), London
- Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, UKHSA,

2.3 Scope of the Food and Safety Service

The food and safety team are responsible for enforcing food hygiene law within the borough. Issues relating to food standards and feed are dealt with by our colleagues in Staffordshire County Council's Trading Standards Department.

The Food and Safety team is responsible for the delivery of a number of regulatory services including:

- Food Safety and Hygiene
- Occupational health and safety (in premises where enforcement responsibility is allocated to the Local Authority)
- Prevention and control of infectious diseases.
- Public health licensing – tattooing, piercing etc.

The service is provided in order to ensure that the Council meets its' legal obligations specified in primary legislation. The team uses a range of interventions to deliver the service which can be divided into two main areas:

- **Inspection/Audit:** Inspection of food businesses at a minimum frequency laid out in the Food Law Code of Practice.
- **Demand:** Investigation of complaints regarding food and food premises, accidents and notifications of food poisoning.

The following functions are provided by the service:

- Maintenance of a food premises registration database for all food businesses located within the borough;
- Provision of advice to local businesses to assist them in complying with their legal responsibilities and to promote good practice.
- Inspections and audits of food businesses to ensure they comply with food safety legislation.
- Approval of food manufacturers handling products of animal origin.
- Sampling and analysis of food and water to check their compliance with safety requirements.
- Investigation of complaints about illegal/unfit food and unlawful food businesses;
- Investigation of food poisoning outbreaks;
- Investigation of national Food Alerts (issued by the Food Standards Agency).
- Health and safety inspections where we are the enforcing authority.
- Investigation of complaints about occupational health and safety.
- Investigation of accidents, dangerous occurrences, and occupational diseases.
- Inspection of establishments carrying out tattooing, ear piercing and electrolysis and other beauty services.
- In the most serious cases, formal enforcement action is taken to protect public health including the seizure of food, service of notices, and closure of premises and prosecution of offenders.
- Consultation with external agencies and internal services i.e. licensing, trading standards, planning;
- When necessary ensuring that COVID-19 guidance and legislation is being followed
- Enforcement of Smoke-Free legislation

Service Delivery Points

The team are based with their Regulatory Service colleagues at the Central Depot, Knutton Lane, Newcastle-under-Lyme and the service operates between 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Monday – Friday.

Newcastle Borough has two dedicated Customer Service Centres, located in Castle House, Newcastle Monday - Friday 9am to 4:30pm and the Town Hall, Kidsgrove is open Tuesday and Thursday 9am to 1pm.

The out of hours Emergency Call Centre service has been outsourced and is operated by Redditch and Bromsgrove Council. The Environmental Health Service operates an emergency stand-by rota so there is always an officer available to respond to the contact centre in the event of any emergencies or incidents.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

In 2023/24 there were 1040 registered food businesses in the Borough with 1025 in 2022/23. These businesses were given a risk rating band between category A and E as shown in the table below.

Food Premises Risk Band	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
A	0	1	0	0	1	1
B	21	27	15	13	31	37
C	143	145	157	152	124	169
D	406	387	370	369	202	365
E	444	443	480	565	674	527
UNRATED	28	14	37	81	20	19
OUTSIDE	7	8	8	1	1	1
TOTAL REGISTERED	1049	1025	1067	1181	1053	1119

The risk rating awarded is generated by the inspecting officer who scores the business based on the types and quantities of food produced and their compliance with food hygiene requirements. Businesses awaiting inspection are classified as 'Unrated' and those registered with other council's and trading in our area are deemed 'outside' the inspection programme. The figures for 2020/21 were subject to Covid 19 restrictions causing an increase in the unrated total.

The risk band awarded also determines how often the food business will be inspected as detailed in the table below:

Risk band	Minimum intervention frequency
A	At least every 6 months
B	At least every 12 months
C	At least every 18 months
D	At least every 24 months
E	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every three years

Businesses can be rated as a category A or B if they carry out a high-risk activity such as food manufacturing, or if they are found to have poor compliance such as a premises awarded a zero or 1 Food Hygiene Rating.

A number of specialist and complex food manufacturers are located within the district, which are known as 'Approved Food Establishments'. Additional detail is provided in section 3.1

2.5 Enforcement Policy

The Council has approved an Enforcement Policy and carries out its' regulatory functions in accordance with the Regulators Compliance Code. The importance of achieving a fair and consistent approach to enforcement is recognised by the council. The Enforcement Policy has been updated and approved by Council in April 2024, this is followed for all enforcement action undertaken by the food service and is available on the council's website.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Interventions at Food Establishments

An annual risk-prioritised programme of inspections will be undertaken in accordance with the Food Safety Act 1990 Code of Practice. The Service will use the full range of interventions and enforcement options available to ensure that the highest standards of food hygiene and safety are achieved and maintained.

In 2024/25 there are 531 food premises due for a Food Hygiene Inspection shown in the table below:

Food premises risk band	Total due in 2024-25	Total due in 2023-24	Total due in 2022-23	Total due in 2021-22
A – Highest ‘risk’	0	1	0	0
B	19	27	10	8
C	84	82	89	75
D	162	219	83	163
E – Lowest ‘risk’	229	28	170	114
OUTSIDE	8	8	8	2
UNRATED	29	15	37	81
Grand Total	531	380	397	443

In 2024/25 the Service aims to achieve:

- 100% of inspections with regard to High-Risk food premises (categories A – B).
- 100% of category C premises using full inspections/audits.
- 90% of category D premises using full inspections/audits.
- 100% of category E premises will be subject to an inspection or alternative enforcement strategy such as a self-inspection questionnaire.
- 100% of Unrated premises using full inspections/audits.

In 2023/24 the service completed the following inspections:

Food premises risk band	Completed in 2023/24	Completed in 2022/2023
A – Highest ‘risk’	0	1
B	24	29
C	97	120
D	243	193
E – Lowest ‘risk’	49	228
OTHER (Includes ceased trading visit)	124	16
Grand Total	537	587

We received 148 new food premise registration forms in 2023/24 notifying us of new food businesses or changes in ownership. This area of work places a significant demand on our Service as these inspections should be carried out within 28 days. We have no control over this

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reactive type of work and will aim to achieve 100% of these inspections. However, if demand becomes excessive, then resources will be diverted away from lower risk category E and D inspections.

Approved Food Establishments

Wholesale food businesses supplying food of animal origin require approval by the competent authority under [Regulation 853/2004](#). This is separate from the requirements for food registration that applies to all food businesses.

Establishments approved by local authorities include:

Meat establishments

These are:

- cold stores that are re-wrapping and re-packaging meat
- minced meat establishments
- meat preparations establishments
- mechanically separated meat establishments
- meat products processing plants
- rendered animal fats and greaves processing plants
- treated stomachs, bladders and intestines processing plants
- gelatine processing plants
- collagen processing plants

Fish and shellfish establishments

These are:

- live bivalve molluscs (LBMs) establishments including dispatch centres and purification centres
- establishments working with fishery products using factory and freezing vessels, processing plants, fresh fishery products, auction halls, wholesale markets

Animal produce establishments

These are establishments that produce:

- raw milk and dairy products
- eggs and egg products, including packing centres, processing plants, liquid egg plants.

In Newcastle there are six approvals issued, all under meat establishments.

Establishments that require approval have to comply with the general hygiene requirements (given in EC Regulation 852/2004) and some specific hygiene requirements which vary depending on the types of products made (given in EC Regulation 853/2004).

Such premises require a higher level of intervention from the service, as they additionally require:

- Shelf-life testing
- Sampling
- Establishments also have to put in place food safety management procedures based on the HACCP principles.

Premises that are approved will carry an Identification Mark similar to below:



Officers responsible for inspecting/auditing these premises have received specialist training in the relevant fields.

During 2023 the Food Standards Agency undertook an audit of the Authorities delivery of the official controls for approved premises. The Executive summary details:

4.1 This audit of the Food Safety Service (the "Service") delivered by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, sought to gain assurance that key food hygiene service systems and arrangements were effective regarding the approval of establishments, and that local arrangements were managed and delivered effectively. Due to the often-complex nature of these types of businesses and their importance to the security and safety of other parts of the national and international food supply chain, these types of business are subject to additional hygiene requirements set out in specific legislation.

4.2 Auditors assessed the planning, delivery and monitoring of official controls and other activities delivered by the Authority in relation to approved establishments.

4.3 A Priority Delivery Plan was in place for 2023-26, which outlined objectives, actions and milestones relevant to teams within Regulatory Services. The Authority had developed a Food Safety Service Plan for 2023/24 to demonstrate how it planned to use its available resources to deliver official controls and other activities under its remit, including the delivery of controls at local authority approved establishments. The Plan had been approved at the appropriate member forum, through the Licensing and Public Protection Committee. Although the Plan included details of key demands on the Service, it did not provide a breakdown of the resources needed to deliver the Plan or an analysis of the resources required compared to those available.

4.4 Monthly monitoring of programmed and reactive work was being undertaken and reported internally. Annual performance reviews of the Food Safety Service Plan took place through monitoring its intervention programme and focused on two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), rather than all aspects of planned delivery.

4.5 The Authority had developed appropriate documented policies and procedures covering some Service activities such as sampling, responding to complaints about food and food premises and for responding to food incidents and alerts. The Authority would benefit from developing procedures to provide guidance on all Service activities relating to approved establishments including the approvals process, undertaking inspections, and using available enforcement options.

4.6 Officer authorisations were available for all staff involved in undertaking official controls at approved establishments and authorisations detailed relevant food safety legislation providing officers legal powers to deliver official controls. An officer competency matrix was available but had not been fully implemented as an assessment tool. Furthermore, some gaps were noted in areas where officers would benefit from additional or updated training to enable them to fully demonstrate they meet the competencies relevant to their role and the activities they undertake.

4.7 At the time of the audit there were five approved establishments including four meat product approved establishments and a cold store, all subject to additional legislative requirements. Risk-based inspections at these establishments had been undertaken at a frequency which was in line with Food Law Code of Practice requirements.

4.8 Officers were generally able to demonstrate that businesses were being assessed against the relevant requirements. Approval files were being maintained for each establishment and inspection reports that had been issued were generally in accordance with legal requirements, although some gaps and inconsistencies in approach were noted.

4.9 Some, mostly quantitative internal monitoring activities were being undertaken such as those relating to monitoring numbers of interventions. However, there was only limited evidence of any qualitative monitoring to ensure the consistency and quality of the work being carried out by officers.

Recommendations

4.10 Future food service plans should include an analysis of the resources required against those available and should consider the significant extra demands and resources required to carry out official controls and other official activities related to the approval and inspection of its approved establishments.

4.11 A more structured annual performance review of the Food Safety Service Plan should be undertaken to ensure that cabinet members are made aware of any issues relating to the delivery of the Plan, including official control activities at approved establishments.

4.12 The Authority should develop and expand its documented procedures to ensure they cover inspections and undertaking approvals at establishments including any follow-up actions such as enforcement actions.

4.13 Officer authorisations should be based on a competency assessment and all authorised officers should receive appropriate training to enable them to demonstrate they meet and maintain the competencies relevant to their role and the activities they undertake.

4.14 The Authority should implement comprehensive risk-based internal monitoring procedures covering all elements of service delivery to strengthen the Service and improve consistency in the delivery of official controls.

National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council launched the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in June 2011. This has allowed residents and visitors the opportunity to make an informed choice about where they eat based on the premises last Food Hygiene inspection.

After each inspection all food premises are given a score based on their compliance with food hygiene law and confidence in management. These scores are then converted into a Food Hygiene Rating based on the FSA's 'Brand Standard'. Businesses can receive a Rating between zero and five.

On 1st April 2024 the following profile of Food Hygiene Ratings were published:

FHRS	Total Premises April 2024	Total Premises April 2023
5 – Very Good	786	757
4 – Good	64	78
3 – Generally Satisfactory	26	28
2 – Improvement Necessary	4	3
1 – Major improvement necessary	6	1
0 – Urgent Improvement Necessary	None	None
Grand Total	886	867

The Food and Safety Team plan to target any premises rated 3 or below to try and improve hygiene standards and protect public health. These premises will be subject to an enhanced number of revisits with the aim of improving standards. However, where very serious hygiene offences are identified these premises may also be subject to enforcement action.

Please note, certain categories of food businesses are exempt from the scheme if they do not sell direct to the public or are handling low risk food only.

FHRS Re-score Visit

FHRS Re-score Visits are undertaken at the request of the food proprietor following payment of a fee because they wish to improve their FHRS before the next routine inspection. Last year 8 enquiries for Food Hygiene re-score were made which resulted in 8 re-score visits being carried out.

Alternative Inspection/ Intervention Strategies

The Service uses an alternative enforcement strategy to deal with lower risk category E food premises. This approach is advocated by the Food Standards Agency as a means to target limited resources towards areas of greatest risk.

The strategy involves sending a food safety questionnaire to those low-risk businesses rated as an E. Proprietors must then self-assess the food safety risk posed by the business and return the questionnaire. Responses are assessed to determine whether any further action is required, and non-respondents are targeted with follow up actions and visits if necessary.

Inland control of Imported food

Officers routinely check the traceability of all food during their interventions, and this includes food that has been imported from outside the EU ('Third' countries). Officers within the team have received specialist training in Imported Food Control from the Food Standards Agency and support materials are available on the FSA website. Officers also monitor the microbiological quality of imported food as part of national and cross-regional sampling programmes.

3.2 Food Complaints

Food complaints received and investigated by the service fall into one of the following categories of Service Request:

- Food contamination
- Complaints about Hygiene of food businesses (hygiene, pests etc.)

Year	Food Complaints	Hygiene of Food Premises
2023/24	27	71
2022/23	50	67
2021/22	33	49
2020/21	35	27
2019/20	52	251
2018/19	29	161

We have no control over this reactive area of workload and will aim to respond to all service requests within the necessary timescales. Where the service receives excessive numbers of service requests then the Team Manager and Service Director will make a decision on how these should be prioritised and whether resources need to be re-allocated.

Service requests are investigated in accordance with established procedures and policies. The initial response to complaints will be within five working days depending on the severity of the complaint, with more serious complaints receiving a more urgent response.

3.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

The Home Authority Principle is an arrangement where multi-national food businesses can enter into a formal arrangement with a single local authority (known as their Home Authority), to agree on common standards and interpretation of the Regulations in their many premises with the aim of ensuring consistency of enforcement. Local Authorities dealing with these businesses are then expected to have regard to any arrangement agreed by the Home Authority before taking enforcement action.

Primary Authority Scheme

Regulatory Delivery's Primary Authority Scheme is the gateway to simpler, more successful local regulation. It gives businesses the right to form a statutory partnership with a single local authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance.

Newcastle Borough Council is not currently acting as a Primary or Home Authority for any businesses within the borough. All of our officers are aware of the schemes and prior to any inspection of a food business that has a Primary Authority, our officers will check the Primary Authority website to review documentation and inspection plans.

3.4 Advice to Business

Wherever possible, our officers will try and work with new and existing food businesses to help them comply with the legislation. Officers will offer advice when requested and will encourage food business operators through an educative approach to adopt good practice. This is achieved through a number of measures:

- On request, Business support and advice ;
- Advisory visits to new and existing businesses who require guidance;
- Advice is routinely given during inspections and other visits to premises;
- Provision of information leaflets and signposting;
- Responding to service requests and enquiries;
- The Council's website;

3.5 Food Inspection and Sampling Programme

Our food sampling activities play an important role in monitoring the microbiological quality of food sold locally which helps us verify that the food business operators have effective food hygiene controls in place. Food is sampled according to a programme co-ordinated through the Staffordshire and Shropshire Food Liaison Group, together with colleagues at the regional UKHSA laboratory at in London. Members of the group implement national, cross-regional and local sampling initiatives based on national intelligence and incidents.

Additional food sampling is carried out as necessary to support food hygiene inspections, the investigation of food complaints and outbreaks of food borne disease.

Samples are currently sent for microbiological examination to the UKHSA, UKAS accredited laboratory in London. The laboratory sends a courier to collect samples from the Council offices on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Samples requiring analysis for chemical or physical parameters are sent to the Public Analyst.

The following table outlines the number of food samples taken from food premises for microbiological examination in the last 6 years, (from 2020 to 2022 the sampling program was paused due to Covid-19):

Year	Microbiological Food Samples
2023/24	172
2022/23	29
2021/22	0
2020/21	0
2019/20	104
2018/19	113

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

The Food and Safety team investigates all reported cases and outbreaks of food poisoning occurring within the borough in liaison with our colleagues at UKHSA.

The objectives of this service are to:

- Fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities relating to the control of infectious disease;
- Identify the source and cause of reported infection;
- Implement measures to prevent further spread;
- Protect public health by providing cases and members of the public with advice on personal hygiene, safe food handling and control of infection;
- Exclude food handlers and people working with high-risk groups in consultation with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC);

Large outbreaks are resource intensive and place significant demands on the Service. In the event of a significant outbreak, the Team Manager and Head of Service will monitor the situation and re-allocate resources and staff from other areas as necessary.

During 2023/24 the Council received 329 reported cases of infectious disease. Control of food related infectious disease is a priority area due to the possible health consequences for the individual and the risk of infection spreading within the community. This area of the service will therefore receive whatever resources are required to fulfil these duties.

3.7 Food Safety Incidents

Food alerts, product withdrawals and recalls

The FSA issues information about product withdrawals and recalls to inform consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. A 'Product Withdrawal Information Notice' or a 'Product Recall Information Notice' is issued where a solution to the problem has been put in place – the product has been, or is being, withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers, for example. A 'Food Alert for Action' is issued where intervention by enforcement authorities is required. These notices and alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal or recall by a manufacturer, retailer or distributor.

When a Food Alert for Action is issued, the Council must carry out the specified actions within the alert which may include visiting food premises and removing contaminated food from sale.

The FSA also sometimes issues Allergy Alerts which are normally dealt with by our colleagues in Staffordshire County Council's Trading Standards department.

Food Alerts are sent to the Council via a designated e-mail address which are auto forwarded to members of the Food and Safety team for their prompt attention. Outside normal working hours the Team Manager subscribes to the FSA's Food Alert text messaging service to alert them to any significant Food Alerts: For Action. The Environmental Health Service also operates an emergency out of hours standby rota so there is always an Officer available to respond in an emergency.

Given the reactive nature of Food Alerts it is not possible to predict the likely resources required. A 'Food Alert: For Action' can have large resource implications as they sometimes involve the need for us visit a large number of food businesses. However, due to the risk to Public Health, it is essential that adequate resources are provided to action these Alerts and this area of the service will receive whatever resources are required to fulfil these duties. In serious cases the Team Manager and Service Director will reallocate or obtain additional resources to deal with the incident and maintain other high-risk workload.

In 2023/24 we received:

	2023/24	2022/23
Food alert for action	16	5
Food alert for information	216	90
Food allergy alert	57	49
Food recall information notice	61	52

3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Council is committed to ensuring that the enforcement approach it adopts is consistent with other enforcing authorities.

This is achieved through regular meetings of the Central Food Group North (Staffordshire & Shropshire) Food Liaison Group, which is attended by the Regulatory Services Team Manager - Food and Safety. This group comprises of representatives from each of the 9 district and borough councils in the county, alongside Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Council's, the County Council Trading Standards Department and the UKHSA laboratory and Health Protection teams.

This forum provides an opportunity for the authorities to discuss consistency issues both in their approach to enforcement and in the operation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The group holds regular training and consistency events and has also implements an inter-authority auditing programme. The group also considers centrally issued guidance and consultations from the Food Standards Agency.

The Council also sends a representative to regular meetings with the Health protection team at UKHSA in Birmingham, where communicable disease issues are discussed. These meetings are also attended by the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), local Water companies, DEFRA, AHVLA, Public Health nurses and the Microbiology department.

3.9 Food Safety Promotion

Officers routinely promote food safety issues during their day-to-day contact with Food Business Operators. We will also be participating in campaigns to promote awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating scheme as part of national Food Safety week.

4. Resources

4.1 Financial Allocation

The Food Safety and Regulatory Services budget is published separately on the Council's website at <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/finance/spending-plans/2>

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Food and Safety Team within the Council, employees the following officers:

Regulatory Services Team Manager – Food and Safety
2 FTE Environmental Health Officers

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2 Technical Assistant
1 Food and Safety Assistant
1 Support Assistant (Support staff)

These officers do not spend all of their time on Food Law enforcement as they are also responsible for a number of other professional functions such as Health and Safety enforcement, Infectious disease control, Licensing etc. One of the Technical Assistants does not undertake routine food safety work.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

The council is committed to providing each officer responsible for Food Law enforcement with a minimum of 20 hours Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training each year.

All officers undertaking food safety work meet the qualifications and experience requirements detailed in the Food Safety Act Code of Practice.

Officers responsible for inspecting complex manufacturing and formally approved processes have previously received specialist training.

Professional and technical competence is also supported by:

- The council's annual Performance Appraisal system which helps identify training and development needs;
- Membership of the Staffordshire and Shropshire Food Safety Liaison Group;
- In-house training sessions/team briefings;

5. Quality Assessment

The Environmental Health service has systems in place to help ensure that food hygiene interventions are carried out consistently and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. To assist this process a number of procedure notes and templates have been created that are available electronically to all Officers.

A procedure relating specifically to quality monitoring of inspections has been developed and this is further reinforced by:-

- The Food and Safety Manager carrying out a regular review of the paperwork, notices, and reports produced by officers following inspections;
- Consistency exercises
- Internal and inter-authority audits;
- Monthly team meetings;
- Monthly management meetings;
- Annual Performance Appraisal;

5.1 Conflicts of Interest

Article 4(2b) of [Regulation 882/2004](#) requires that staff carrying out official controls are free from any conflict of interest.

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All officers are aware of potential conflicts of interest that may arise in an enforcement situation through promotion of the Food Authority’s services. Officers do not provide their own services, e.g. training, in their own time within the borough. We also ensure that potential or actual conflicts of interest do not arise as a result of Home or Originating Authority responsibilities and contracting in services for enforcement purposes.

Our officers do not promote the Borough Council’s services exclusively if other providers of those services exist in the area. Pest control is an example of a Council service that may be provided in competition with those supplied by other organisations. In such circumstances customers will be made aware of the availability of alternative service providers.

5.2 Enforcement within local authority-run establishments

The Service has arrangements in place for ensuring compliance with food law in establishments where the Authority is itself the food business operator, and that steps are taken to ensure enforcement decisions are free from any conflict of interest.

If serious breaches of food law are detected in borough Council establishments, this will be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive, without delay.

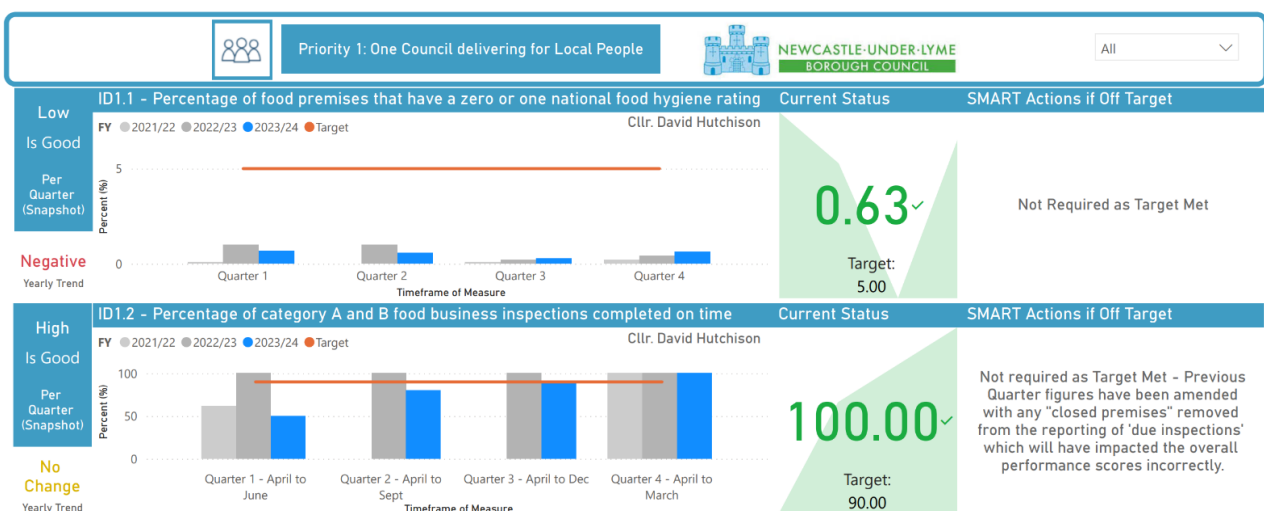
Contract caterers that operate within local authority establishments will be registered and inspected in the normal way. In some Council buildings, café’s and vending machines are provided by outside contractors who register their businesses independently.

In some Council buildings small amounts of confectionary and ice cream are occasionally sold. In such circumstances the relevant Service Manager is responsible for registering the operation with the Food and Safety team and the operation will receive an inspection in the usual way.

6 Review

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

Each quarter performance data on key performance indicators is reported to Cabinet, data for 2023/24 is detailed below:



The first indicator measures the percentage of food premises that have a zero or one national food hygiene rating, where following each Food Hygiene Inspection, a food business is awarded a rating of between zero (Urgent improvement necessary) and Five (Very good). These ratings are published on the website at <https://www.food.gov.uk/> and <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/> Those

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premises that are rated zero (urgent improvement necessary) or one (major improvement necessary) have been found to be not complying with Food Hygiene Regulations and will be subjected to enhanced business support visits/revisits (and in the most serious cases enforcement action) to help them raise their compliance and protect public health.

The second indicator measures our performance in meeting the inspection timescales for the highest risk premises (ie those which are category A or B). This shows that these were all inspected within the appropriate timescales.

6.2 Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS)

Each year we submit performance data to the Food Standards Agency via an online LAEMS return which is reviewed by the food standards agency. The return for 2023/24 has been submitted, which includes the performance data included in this report.

The data from all Local Authorities submitted is no longer published on the Food Standards Agency website.

6.3 Identification of any variation from the Service Plan

Key performance indicators listed in the above tables are reviewed on a regular basis. Results are reported to the Head of Service along with reasons for any significant variation, and where necessary an action plan is agreed to prioritise workload.

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