

Food Hygiene and Safety Newsletter

The stats: 2015-2016 What did we get up to?

There are six officers in the Commercial Team and we deal with almost 2,800 businesses. Here's a summary of how we spent our time during 2015-16

Requests for advice

198 requests for advice from food businesses; 157 visits to check compliance or to give advice to businesses

New Businesses

Inspected or gave advice to 186 new businesses

Cases of food poisoning

Responded to 169 cases of food poisoning and food borne illness

Premises Inspections

546 food hygiene inspections and 35 health and safety inspections

Enforcement Action

Served 26 notices for significant breaches of food safety or health and safety requirements; prosecuted two businesses for food hygiene offences and issued a caution to one food business; five food businesses closed voluntarily as an alternative to court action

Food Samples

28 food samples were submitted for analysis

Complaints and investigations

Investigated 145 complaints about food premises or contaminated food, 19 workplace accidents and 69 health and safety complaints

The **top five** food myths that we hear

You should wash chicken before cooking

Raw chicken should never be washed as it risks contaminating sinks, taps, work surfaces and equipment with dangerous bacteria. Thorough cooking of chicken will kill any bacteria present.

You can smell when food it is off

Food poisoning organisms don't affect the quality of food. In fact, if the food smells 'off' it is less likely to have food poisoning organisms in it. Food poisoning bacteria aren't good competitors and the kind of bacteria that cause the smell would most likely get the better of the dangerous bacteria.

As long as it's before the use-by date, your food is fine

The use-by date on the label ceases to be relevant as soon as the food packaging is opened. That date refers to how long the food will last if the seal remains intact. Instructions on the label which refer to 'once opened, use within X days' should be strictly followed.

Serious food poisoning comes on quickly

We receive many complaints from people who have been unwell and they often claim that their illness was caused by the last meal that they had. This is extremely unlikely as most food poisoning symptoms take much longer to present themselves: anything from 12 hours to 5 days after infection.

The worry about reheating rice is an old wives' tale

There are bacteria in rice, the spores of which can be heat-resistant. The spores will survive the boiling process, and may produce poisonous by-products if the rice is not cooled down rapidly. Rice must be cooled quickly (for example it can be refreshed under cold running water) and then refrigerated, so that it is in the 'temperature danger zone' for as short a time as possible. Rice must be reheated thoroughly and served immediately.

Allergen responsibilities **A cautionary tale**

In May this year, following a trial at Teesside Crown Court, Mohammed Zaman was found guilty of the manslaughter of a customer who suffered a severe allergic reaction after eating a curry purchased from his restaurant. Mr Zaman was charged with manslaughter by gross negligence and with six food hygiene offences. He was found guilty and jailed for six years. The court heard that Mr Zaman had cut corners by using cheaper ingredients which contained peanuts. In what is thought to be a landmark trial, Mr Zaman denied that he was responsible, but a jury was told that he substituted almond powder for

a cheaper ground nut mix which contained peanuts. When placing an order for a chicken tikka masala, the customer had specified that no nuts should be included in his meal and this instruction was written on the lid of his takeaway. Despite this, his meal was found to contain traces of peanuts, which led to him suffering a severe anaphylactic shock, and he subsequently died.

This case comes as a timely reminder for all food business operators to review and update their allergen procedures. Further guidance and information on allergens and intolerances can be found on the [Food Standards Agency's website](#).

Environmental Health has joined **Twitter**

Our team now has a Twitter account. We will be sharing news from the Food Standards Agency, details of product recalls and hazard warnings, updates on Food Hygiene Ratings, and generally any topical food-related subjects. If you are a Twitter user please follow us @HuntsEH.



Environmental Health

Important revised guidance on preventing *E. coli* O157 contamination in your food business

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has recently revised its guidance on how to control the risk of contamination from *E. coli* O157 in food businesses. The full guidance can be found at:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide

The original guidance was developed in response to serious outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 food poisoning in Scotland and Wales, and the recommendations of Professor Hugh Pennington following the Welsh outbreak.

The revised guidance provides greater flexibility for businesses on how they manage food safety risks. The guidance clarifies that:

- Businesses do not need to have separate areas for handling raw and ready-to-eat foods (RTE) if they can demonstrate that separation by time with effective cleaning and disinfection will

manage the risk of cross-contamination.

- Less complex equipment such as temperature probes, mixers and weighing scales, can be used for both raw and RTE foods subject to the business being able to demonstrate that the equipment will be effectively cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- More complex equipment such as vacuum packers, slicers and mincers can also be effectively cleaned and disinfected between uses so long as the equipment can be completely dismantled to allow all surfaces to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. In practice, it is unlikely to be feasible for businesses to use a separate vacuum packer for raw and RTE products, as a competent engineer would need to undertake a complicated dismantling and reassembling

process between uses.

- In the case of slicers and mincers, dismantling, cleaning and disinfecting may be more straightforward but might be impractical during normal business operations. Businesses wishing to use the same equipment for raw and RTE foods need to fully assess the risks and demonstrate to an authorised officer that cleaning and disinfection between uses will effectively control cross-contamination risks.

Officers will discuss the revised guidance with you at future inspections and will expect to see written confirmation as part of your Food Safety Management System (eg Safer Food Better Business) that this guidance is being adopted. You are encouraged to read the guidance and implement procedures in your business prior to your next routine inspection.

Training Opportunities

Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering

Our classroom-based course is nationally accredited by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. It is suitable and highly recommended for anyone working in a catering, manufacturing or retail setting where food is prepared, cooked or handled.

It is delivered by our team of experienced Environmental Health Officers, who carry out food hygiene inspections of food businesses in Huntingdonshire. One of the benefits of this course is that delegates will receive the latest food safety updates, advice and guidance from the Food Standards Agency. The course tutors also share their experiences and observations from their inspections of premises and the different situations they encounter.

There will be an opportunity to discuss the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and how to improve and maintain a high rating.

Dates for 2016:

All courses are held at **Pathfinder House, Huntingdon** and run from 9am to 5:30pm.

- Thursday 22 September
- Thursday 20 October
- Thursday 24 November

The cost per candidate is £60, which includes all course materials, exam fees and refreshments (excluding lunch). If you are interested in hosting a course at your premises, please email food@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or call us on **01480 388302**.

Proposed mandatory display of **Food Hygiene Ratings**

Since May 2015 it has been a legal requirement in Wales for food businesses to display their food hygiene rating. Since then the number of premises rated as "Zero" (urgent improvement necessary) has reduced from 0.9% to 0.6%. Mandatory display of ratings in Northern Ireland comes into force in October this year. The Food Standards Agency has recently carried out a consultation exercise to inform their recommendation for mandatory display of ratings in England.

In 2015 we took part in a Food Standards Agency funded project to look at the number of 3, 4 and 5 rated premises in Huntingdonshire that were not displaying their distinctive food hygiene rating stickers. Visits to premises found that only 59% of businesses that were rated 3, 4 and 5 were displaying their stickers. Premises which were not displaying their stickers were provided with a replacement and provided with advice about the benefits of displaying their rating.

Subsequent visits found that the number of business displaying their rating had increased to 81%.

This work will contribute to the Food Standards Agency's commitment to the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings at food businesses in England and they are currently gathering evidence to present to the Government for consideration. If you'd like to know more about these proposals then check the **FSA website**

Risks associated with undercooked **Chicken Liver Pâté** and **Parfait**

Data from Public Health England (PHE) shows that since the year 2000 there have been 1,595 cases of food poisoning caused by campylobacter. These were all associated with the consumption of poultry products and of these 80% had reported eating chicken liver dishes. Campylobacter is the bacteria most commonly associated with gastrointestinal illness and PHE records show that there are on average 60,000 confirmed cases each year. Most of these infections

are isolated cases and not associated with outbreaks.

Any meat can be contaminated with campylobacter and poultry is commonly affected as the bacteria get onto the surface of the meat during the slaughtering process. It can also be found inside chicken livers. If chicken livers are not cooked thoroughly bacteria can survive and this increases the risk of infection. Chicken liver parfait and pâté dishes have increased in popularity over the last few years and many chefs

recommend leaving the centre of the livers pink which does not kill the bacteria. PHE records show that the number of people linked to outbreaks where chicken livers were implicated has risen from eight people in 2000 to 210 in 2013.

The Food Standards Agency recommends that the core temperature of chicken liver pâtés and parfaits should reach a minimum of 68°C. It is good practice to record the temperature of each batch of pâté or parfait produced.

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