

Appendix A

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Public Health and Protection

Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2020-2021

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SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims and Objectives

The Council's Public Health and Protection Service work's with relevant central government agencies to enforce statutory provisions and to provide education, guidance and emergency intervention to ensure the health of persons living, working and spending leisure time in the Borough is not adversely affected by physical, chemical or biological hazards. One element of this work involves appointing persons as Authorised Officers under the Food Safety Act 1990 to regulate food safety in the borough.

Specific objectives of the Public Health and Protection Service in connection with food safety are:

- To enforce the relevant statutory provisions and provide advice and education in order that duty holders are able to achieve and maintain a good standard of food hygiene throughout all food premises in the Borough.
- To ensure that at all levels of the food chain, all food prepared, sold or offered for sale is wholesome and fit for human consumption.
- To make a significant contribution to controlling the spread of infectious disease by carrying out investigative work on outbreaks and individual cases, in conjunction with the appropriate officers of Public Health England, and other partners as necessary.
- To meet local demand for low cost training in food hygiene and to identify and respond to new training needs.
- To respond to food related aspects of civil emergencies and maintain a core of Officers having ministerial authorisation as investigation and enforcement officers under the Food and Environment Protection Act.
- To operate the service in accordance with the relevant Code of Practice and the requirements of the Food Standards Agency.
- To contribute and assist in the achievement of better health and wellbeing for our communities.
- To work with partners to maintain a safe community.

This work underpins the council's corporate vision, priorities and values which include a commitment to:

- Promote inclusive and safe communities
- Improve public health and well-being
- Supporting sustainable economic growth
- Being business friendly
- Putting our customers first

BACKGROUND

Profile of the Local Authority

Welwyn Hatfield Council is a blend of old and new and covers an area of approximately 130 square kilometres of mid Hertfordshire. It is made up of both urban and rural communities, with the towns of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield the main commercial centres, with eight other large villages and settlements.

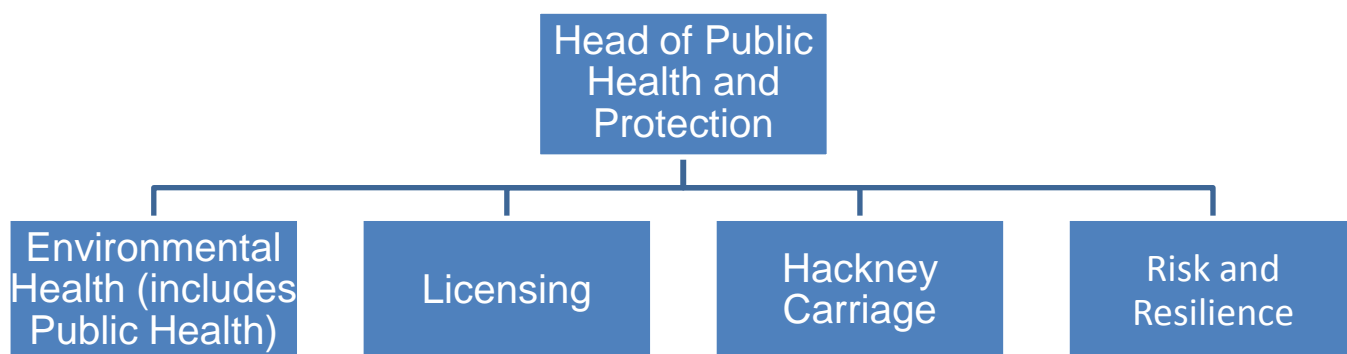
The borough has a population of approximately 122,700. Government demographic projections of population and household growth indicate that Welwyn Hatfield is expected to reach a population of 123,000 in 2021 and reach 135,000 in the next 10 years (2031). Welwyn Hatfield is generally a prosperous area but there are some pockets of deprivation and disadvantage.

Hertfordshire has a successful and prosperous economy and this is also predicted to grow over coming decades. Major regeneration and growth initiatives are planned throughout the County and this includes Hatfield 2030+ which plans to improve both housing and business opportunities.

Organisational Structure

The Environmental Health Team is part of the Governance Directorate. The Environmental Health Team sits within Public Health and Protection.

Figure 1: General Structure of Public Health and Protection Service



Under the Head of Service for Public Health & Protection, Environmental Health services are delivered by two Team Leaders posts, three Environmental Health Officer posts, and five Technical Officer posts. In addition we employ three Environmental

Health Officers on casual contracts. There is also one part time health improvement officer whose work includes to a lesser degree the delivery of food safety promotion, with a greater emphasis towards wider public health and healthy eating projects.

The Council Constitution provides delegated authority to environmental health staff and appoints the Consultant(s) in Communicable Disease Control working for Public Health England as the “Proper Officer” for communicable disease control.

Specialist services are provided by external agencies such as the Food Examiner and the Public Analyst.

Welwyn Hatfield Council is in a 2 tier area and has adopted a Leader and Cabinet system of government. Policy decisions on food safety matters are submitted for approval to the Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then in turn to the Cabinet and Full Council.

Scope of the Food Service

The food service covers the following areas of work:

- Food Hygiene Inspections and Revisits
- Food Safety Enforcement
- Food Sampling
- Food Hygiene Training
- Food Hygiene Advice and Public Information.
- Food Complaint Investigations
- Food Alerts
- Infectious Disease Investigations
- Provision of Export Health Certificates as requested

In addition to the above, the officers who deal with food safety also cover many other aspects of Environmental Health work. This includes:

- Health and Safety at Work – proactive and reactive inspection, accident investigation, training.
- Provision of advice and guidance within the scope of the Safety Advisory Team
- Pollution Control for example, statutory nuisance, permitted premises and private water sampling
- Public Health including taking the lead on delivering the public health agenda for the Council through health protection, health promotion and improvement
- Consultations for Planning and Licensing applications, temporary event notices

All officers within Environmental Health work generically providing a full range of services within the field. All officers are expected to prioritise a workload that includes a range of cases both of a proactive and reactive nature and a risk profile suitable for their role.

Demands on the Food Service

Approximately 278 food inspections are due to be carried out in 2020/21 across all premises and risk categories, 140 of these are higher risk food businesses (category A-C). We anticipate receiving approximately 10 new food business per month (based on the demand in 2019/20) that require inspection and have updated our procedure to ensure these are inspected as quickly as possible. The total number of food businesses registered with us can be split into the following types:

FSA Code (Premises Type)	Numbers
Caring Premises	34
Takeaway	45
Distributor	19
Hotel/Guest House	12
Importer	2
Manufacturer selling mainly by retail	0
Manufacturer/processor	17
Mobile Food Unit	34
Pub/Club	56
Restaurant/Caterer – other	220
Restaurant/Café/Canteen	196
Retailer – other	55
School/college	75
Smaller retailer	81
Supermarkets/Hypermarkets	24
Total	870
*Figures correct as of 13/12/19	

Food hygiene inspections are carried out on a regular basis, to ensure that food is stored, prepared, handled and sold from this borough is safe for consumers to eat. The length of time between inspections is determined by carrying out a risk assessment against pre-determined criteria prescribed by the Food Standards Agency within the Food Law Code of Practice.

We currently have one food business that is an approved establishment; this food business is approved for the supply of fishery products. This business does not present any complex processes for inspection purposes.

Regulation Policy

The Environmental Health service follows the Corporate Enforcement Policy to inform enforcement activity in food safety and we are working within the scope of the Corporate Enforcement Policy approved by Full Council and published on 21st June 2019 which embraces the Better Regulation principles of proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency and targeting.

SERVICE DELIVERY

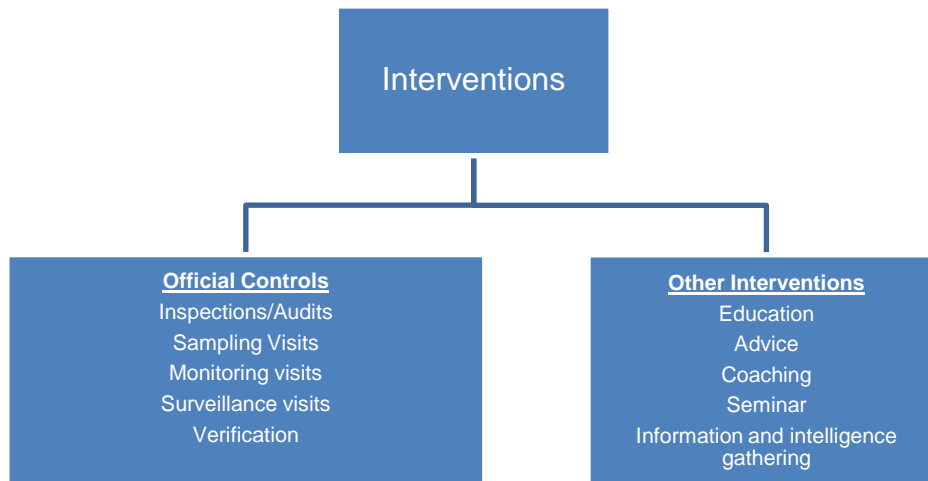
Inspections due 2020 - 2021

The Food Law Code of Practice (England) March 2017 details the five risk categories of food premises with each class of risk group having a specific minimum frequency of intervention. The number of premises in each category due to be inspected in the forthcoming year is detailed below:

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection	Numbers in category 2020/21
Category A	Inspection, partial inspection or audit at least every 6 months.	0
Category B	Inspection, partial inspection or audit at least every 12 months.	25
Category C	Inspection, partial inspection or audit every 18 months unless the business is 'broadly compliant' when planned interventions can then alternate between either an inspection, partial inspection, audit or other type of official control.	115
Category D	Intervention at least every 2 years and dependant on 'type of food' and 'method of handling' as defined in the food law code of practice.	124
Category E	Alternative enforcement strategy or intervention at least once every 3 years	14
Unrated	This figure is constantly changing as businesses register throughout the year. New registrations are prioritised for inspection based on risk.	19

*Figures estimated at the time of writing December 2019. We know that these figures do change, but this table provides a baseline for estimating expected interventions.

Food Safety Interventions



An effective service should deliver a wide range of interventions to businesses, and we aim to deliver both our official controls and other interventions.

For the majority of our business customers their routine inspection will be the main point of contact with our team. The inspection is currently carried out by an officer who will make hand written notes using an aide memoire developed to fulfil the collection of all relevant information specified within the Food Law Code of Practice.

With a view to modernisation and increasing our efficiency in service delivery we will be using tablets to capture all of the same information electronically in 2020/21. This provides many advantages to both our customers and the Council.

Category C/D food business interventions

In 2020/2021 the service plans to continue utilising the flexibility of the Food Law Code of Practice in that it will use other types of official control intervention for those category C businesses which are currently rated as 'broadly compliant'.

The term 'broadly compliant' relates to the way a food business complies with food hygiene legislation based on the inspecting officer's risk rating at the time of the last inspection/partial inspection or audit. The food hygiene scoring system is prescribed in the Food Law Code of Practice.

A food business will be classed as broadly compliant, if they score in the manner described below in the categories listed.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| a) Hygiene compliance record | = 10 or less |
| b) Structural compliance record | = 10 or less |
| c) Confidence in management | = 10 or less |

Therefore in order to be classed as broadly compliant the business should score 10 or less in each category a) to c), and have a total of 30 or less for the sum of the categories.

Category D food interventions will also utilise the flexibility allowed within the Food Law Code of Practice enabling both official controls and other interventions to be used based upon the last recorded risk rating.

Alternative Enforcement Strategy/Low Risk Establishments

Category E food businesses shall be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy rather than by means of official control. Typically this may be by assessment by a Regulatory Support Officer based upon known compliance history combined with telephone or written communication with the food business operator.

Other Food Interventions

In addition to routine, planned interventions the service also reacts to complaints and enquiries about food businesses. These are unplanned demands on our service, but an effective response can maintain consumer confidence in local food businesses and improve standards. Complaints are also a key way in which we can gain intelligence about food businesses.

Statutory revisits are carried out to food businesses that have a sufficiently high risk score and/or where the inspecting officer deems it necessary. The number of revisits we are carrying out has decreased and is currently about 1 in every 7 inspections. Positively this reflects an improvement in standards of compliance found over the last year.

Requests for revisits are also undertaken in response to a business wishing to improve upon their food hygiene rating score. In the last year we have received 7 requests for revisits and no appeals, we anticipate a similar level of demand going forward.

Following Food Standards Agency guidance for the delivery of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme the Council introduced a cost recovery charge for those businesses that requested a revisit after April 2018. The agreed charge of £180 per requested revisit is listed within the Council's fees and charges and will this year increase in line with inflation.

We will continue to use newsletters to provide education, advice & guidance to food businesses. Outside of routine inspections this is our main means of communication directly with food businesses. The newsletter is emailed where possible with a small proportion sent out by post. In addition to newsletters face to face advice is provided at the time of inspection and during the delivery of food hygiene training courses, which continue to be well attended.

Over the forthcoming year we will be trialling a different approach to business engagement for those businesses obtaining a food hygiene rating of 0-2, offering support on a one to one basis to help businesses achieve a higher score.

Imported Food

As an inland authority our imported food controls are embedded within our routine inspection planned visits. We have prompts within our aide memoire to check the

traceability of foods. We have a limited number of food businesses that are the first destination inland after import and in these premises import documentation can be checked.

Our team of officers maintain competency in imported food control through formalised training and their experience in this field. Where food fails to meet food safety requirements officers have sufficient competency to act appropriately and we will take enforcement action.

We are aware that there will potentially be an increase in workload and certainly legislative changes post our exit from the EU. We will react and deliver food safety interventions based upon risk and direction from the Food Standards Agency.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The service is committed to deliver the national food hygiene rating scheme which rates food businesses on a scoring system of 0 (urgent improvement necessary) - 5 (very good) based on compliance at the time of the last routine inspection.

As stated above a charge for requests for revisits made by businesses after April 2018 was introduced by the Council and there has not been any significant increase on demand following this change in policy. To improve the customer experience we have been pursuing the development of online payment for FHRS revisits and food hygiene training courses. This should be fully operational for 2020/21.

The service participates in the national consistency exercise delivered by the Food Standards Agency every year.

Food Sampling

It is the Council's policy to participate, where appropriate and where resources permit, in national, regional and locally coordinated sampling programmes.

Welwyn Hatfield Council has a credit allocation with Public Health England which is set at the beginning of each financial year. We are not aware of any changes in the forthcoming year for credit allocation for the Council (3720 credits). (25–50 credits are required depending on the nature of each sample). We will continue to work within the allocation set.

We plan to take part in the some of the coordinated sampling programmes set by Public Health England for 2020-2021. At the time of writing these programmes have not been confirmed. In addition we will participate in co-ordinated sampling projects within Herts and Beds.

Sampling will also be undertaken, where appropriate, in relation to food poisoning outbreaks and food complaints, where formal action is being considered. The Authority also has a local sampling plan which includes sampling manufacturers and any businesses with which we have a primary authority agreement. The local plan focusses on businesses that we feel locally present the greatest risk in terms of compliance and/or those with a wide distribution, impacting upon a larger number of consumers.

In respect of Microbiological Examination our samples will be sent to:

London Food, Water and Environmental Microbiological Laboratory, London
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5HT

Samples for analysis will only be taken in response to customer complaints when appropriate and considered necessary. The Public Analyst appointed by Hertfordshire County Council and therefore used by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council are:

Hampshire & Kent Scientific Services
Public Protection, Growth, Environment & Transport
Kent County Council
8 Abbey Wood Road, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4YT

Primary Authority

The service has one Primary Authority agreement for food hygiene. This involves the delivery of around 90 hours of food safety support per year.

An Environmental Health Officer deliver this agreement which includes the provision of advice, guidance, and the investigation of complaints liaising as appropriate with other enforcement authorities.

We are open to the development of further primary authority agreements with either locally based or other multi-site companies. Given that primary authority support is provided through the existing staffing allocation currently, we must be careful to ensure we select relationships that suit the resource and skills available.

The Primary Authority scheme has now been extended and all businesses are eligible to join regardless of size and Primary Authority is anticipated to have increased legal weighting in the future within the Food Standards Agency's review of food delivery, Regulating Our Future.

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

When food poisonings occur, our officers become involved in investigating the cause and identifying any unsafe food that is still in the food chain to help prevent further cases of illness.

In the event of an outbreak, the resource demand would be significantly higher due to the intensive staffing requirements when dealing with such eventualities. This would be accommodated by diverting resources from other less critical environmental health work.

It is difficult to predict the number of cases of food poisoning that we will need to investigate during the coming year but all outbreaks will be investigated.

Food Safety Incidents/Alerts

Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2020/21

Classification: Unrestricted

A 'food alert for action' is a communication from the Food Standards Agency to food authorities concerning a food hazard or other food incident and should be read accordingly.

The agency may require action by us in response to these alerts and we have a documented procedure for dealing with such incidents. It is difficult to determine the resource such incidents require on an annual basis as it is dependent on the nature of the action required and the number of food business it affects locally.

Food Fraud

Food fraud is committed when food is placed on the market with the aim of deliberately misleading the consumer. Food fraud is carried out for financial gain and has become an ever increasing phenomenon nationally. Food Fraud can give rise serious health risks.

Examples of food fraud include;

- Recycling of animal –by-products back into the food chain
- Packing and selling of beef and poultry with unknown origin
- Knowingly selling goods which are past their 'use by' dates
- Deliberate false mis-description of food for example cheaper alternatives, peanuts instead of almonds, farmed salmon sold as wild, the widely publicised use of horse meat.

Our Service helps to prevent and act upon food fraud by responding to FSA food alerts, and reporting suspicions or information gained through our routine interventions with business and the community. Tackling food fraud ensures that there is a level playing field for all businesses and encourages a vibrant economy.

Business Growth & Development

The food industry is regulated by a range of legislation that aims to keep our food safe. Our work with food businesses is focused on helping them to comply with food safety legislation.

The Council helps businesses achieve compliance in various ways

- Advice given during the course of inspections and other visits.
- By responding to enquiries.
- By offering a comprehensive advice service to new businesses.
- Offering low cost food hygiene training courses.

The Council is also part of a Hertfordshire wide initiative called 'Better Business for All', which seeks to reduce regulatory burdens on business and support growth in the County. We will continue to support businesses by looking for opportunities with our Economic Development Officer, Town Centre teams and other regulatory services.

It is the aim of the Service to deliver the following food hygiene training courses during the coming year:

- 6 Level 2 Award Food Hygiene (Basic – 1 day course)
- 3 Level 3 Award Food Hygiene (Intermediate – 3 day course)

Food Safety Promotion

During 2020/2021, we will aim to promote food safety through:

- Supporting national campaigns co-ordinated by the Food Standards Agency where we feel the topic is relevant to our local community.
- Supporting the range of events that run locally and are brought to our attention through the safety advisory team.
- Distribution of 5 food safety newsletters throughout the year to all food businesses
- Active involvement in the planning and delivery of 'Healthfest', a Council event which focusses on the 5 ways to wellbeing.
- Writing a food safety/healthy eating article for every publication of the Council's ONE Magazine

Where appropriate and in line with local priorities we will also consider developing working partnerships with local businesses.

Liaison with other Organisations

The Council is committed to ensuring the enforcement approach it takes is transparent and consistent with other local authorities.

Regular meetings are held with Herts and Beds Food Study Topic Group. Representatives from the Food Standards Agency and Public Health England are also in attendance at these meetings.

RESOURCES

Financial Allocation

The Public Health and Protection Service is allocated an annual budget as agreed by the Council's Cabinet and Full Council which is set out in the Council budget book. This is published and with regard specifically to the delivery of the food service allocates budget for:

- Computer software
- Consultancy fees including specialist and legal advice
- Laboratory examination
- Promotional materials
- Personal protective equipment for food officers
- Sampling
- Technical equipment for food officers
- Training and development of food officers
- Travel (including car mileage)

There are no known changes (at the time of writing) in terms of growth or reduction to this budget in 2020/21. However enforcement cases may require additional spend over and above that allocated in the base budget at the start of the year.

Staffing Resources

The team currently has one Team Leader, two Environmental Health Officers and three Environmental Health Technical Officers who contribute to the delivery of the food service interventions. We also have support from our IT Support Manager and our Environmental Health support team.

We estimate the number of staff working on food law enforcement is 2.5 FTE. With 1 FTE for administrative support.

As stated above, the officers undertaking food safety interventions also carry out other Environmental Health work. There is currently one Environmental Health Officer and one Technical Officer who are actively involved in the delivery of the food inspections, with a further Technical Officer undertaking food sampling.

A further Technical Officer will also be involved in the delivery of all categories of food hygiene inspections further to recently obtaining their Environmental Health Board registration and completing a period of shadowed visits.

Casual Environmental Health Officers also support this work as and when required and subject to sufficient budget provision.

For the officers involved in food delivery the degree of involvement varies according to other responsibilities and duties and the overall risk profile of their current workload.

Technical Officers undertake food safety work to a level appropriate to their qualifications and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.

A team of support officers is available to assist the food officers in the delivery of their work in addition to supporting the delivery of all other aspects of the environmental health service.

Staff Development Plan

The Authority will ensure that all officers involved in food safety work receive ongoing training in order to maintain and improve their level of competency and comply with the Food Law Code of Practice (England).

The Food Law Code of Practice 2017 details competency and qualification requirements for authorised officers. There is also a requirement for officers and the lead officer for food to fulfil criteria with respect to a number of skills and knowledge.

The Code of Practice requires that Lead Food Officers and all authorised officers obtain a minimum of 20 hours CPD, the Council will ensure that all authorised officers receive this training annually. Senior, experienced officers within the team must obtain a total of 30 hours CPD annually.

Quality Assurance

The following monitoring arrangements are in place:

- Paper/computer based checks in respect of food hygiene inspections.
- Paper/computer based checks in respect of food complaints.
- Shadow inspections for new staff or those returning to food work
- Peer review/audit of enforcement action in respect of food safety work.

REVIEW

Review against the Service Plan

As part of the service planning process, a full review of all activities referred to in this document will be undertaken.

Identification of any Variation from the Review

The review will identify where the Authority is at variance from the service plan and, if appropriate, the reasons for that variance.

Areas of Improvement

The Authority will set out any relevant improvement plan identified as necessary by the review. This is in addition to the matters identified and agreed in the public health and protection annual service plan and the council business plan.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Environmental Health Service is located at:

The Council Offices,
The Campus,
Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire
AL8 6AE

Service users may contact officers in the following ways:

- By mail
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Classification: Unrestricted

- In person at the reception to the above premises
- By telephone between 8.45am and 5.15pm (4.45pm on a Friday) on 01707 357242
- By email: e.health@welhat.gov.uk. In addition, each officer has their own email address
- Through local Councillors

Complaints against the Service should be put in writing to Cheryll Brown, Team Leader (Public Health & Protection) at the above address or by email to c.brown@welhat.gov.uk. Customers may also have recourse to the local government ombudsman.

Appeals against enforcement action must be lodged with the appropriate Court or tribunal within the statutory timescale.

The majority of food safety work is carried out during the above office hours, although officers may conduct inspections out of hours if it is felt necessary to do so.

An out of office hours service for serious food emergencies can be contacted via the Welwyn Hatfield Council Emergency Contact Centre on 0800 1114484.