

Food Safety

The food safety team are a small team of ten officers including administrative support, based at Tooley Street. We sit within the Community Safety & Enforcement Division. Councillor Richard Livingstone, the cabinet member for finance, resources and community safety, is responsible for this department. It is responsible for regulating nearly 3000 food businesses in the borough.

Scope:

Regulating food hygiene compliance in all food businesses in Southwark, including:

- Practices and procedures
- Structural and equipment requirements
- Management of food safety and food handlers' awareness of requirements
- Waste management and risk to food safety
- Composition of food – what's in it and in what amounts
- Labelling of food – how you tell consumers what's included and for how long it can be kept
- Traceability and illegal imports
- Food fraud, substitution, adulteration.

The laws that affect the work we do are:

- Food Safety Act 1990 as amended
- Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006
- Various European Regulations on the hygiene of foodstuffs.

Enforcing the law:

A national code of practice sets out how food law is enforced. Food safety officers have to follow the provisions of the code of practice. It requires inspections of food businesses based on risks.

- High risks are inspected every 6 – 12 months
- Medium risks are inspected every 18 months
- Low risks are inspected every 2 – 3 years
- Proportionate enforcement approach.

Contraventions are dealt with using:

- Written warnings
- Formal hygiene improvement or prohibition notices
- Prosecution or simple cautions (prosecution leads to criminal proceedings – there must be a lot of strong evidence to be successful in court).

Officers cannot issue fines or fixed penalties for contraventions.

The team has limited resources, so doesn't know what is always happening in every food businesses all the time. We rely on information from members of the public and complaints as source of intelligence.

Local statistics:

305 inspections have been completed so far this year. Of the 91 high risk premises in the community council area:

- 49 of these are due an inspection by 1 December 2012
- 47 inspected, and the remaining two have been scheduled
- 2 have had formal notices served, both have now complied with the requirements.

296 written warnings have been issued this year. There has been one prosecution, because of seven offences in the location. Of 110 complaints about food or food businesses this year, 92 have been satisfactorily resolved or were unfounded, and 18 are still subject to follow up or ongoing investigations.

Food Hygiene Rating

The Food Hygiene Rating is a national scheme developed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and adopted by Southwark. There are six tiers of hygiene standards, ranging from 0 (the worst) to 5 (the best). Stickers are provided for display on the premises. It is not currently compulsory to display the stickers, but it is likely to be in future. Premises which are not currently displaying a sticker are most likely to have been given a low rating.

- Food Hygiene Ratings can be viewed online at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk>

Healthy Catering Commitment

The Healthy Catering Commitment encourages the owners of takeaways and restaurants to offer healthy options. It was started as a pilot initiative including a few selected businesses. It is a voluntary initiative, where the council works with colleagues in the primary care trust to support businesses to make the change to healthier catering.

There are a few criteria necessary to receive an HCC award – you can find out more by going to <http://www.cieh.org/healthier-catering-commitment.html>.

There are ten businesses in Southwark with an HCC award, and two of them are in the Borough, Bankside and Walworth Community Council area. The business details will be displayed on the website. Certificates for display are given to businesses awarded the Healthy Catering Commitment status. The programme is now being rolled out across the borough to include all appropriate businesses.

Contact:

Tel: 0207 525 2000 and follow the voice prompt

Email: food@southwark.gov.uk

Or visit our office at 160 Tooley Street and an officer will be happy to help

Prepared by: E. Legister, December 2012