

Scrutiny call for evidence Theme: Physical health of the borough Availability of healthy eating food establishments
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This report covers:

- Food safety and food hygiene
- Applying planning restrictions to hot food takeaways
- Promoting healthier menus ('Healthier Catering Commitment')

Food safety & food hygiene

According to records held by the food safety team, there are currently 3191 known food businesses of various types operating in the borough of Southwark. Although the north of the borough has the highest concentration of food businesses per square metres, the distribution of food businesses is reasonably spread out across the entire borough.

Through a programme of food hygiene inspections, food businesses are given a risk rating which can range for category A to E. Category A businesses are considered as high risk often because of the type of food handled on those premises and poor standards of hygiene practices observed. While the condition of the physical structure of the business is often a main factor affecting the risk classification in the vast majority of businesses, a lack of adequate food hygiene training among staff and the absence of a satisfactory written food safety management system are also common occurrences in food businesses which affect compliance levels. The current distribution of food businesses in Southwark by risk classification is set out in the table below. It is clear to see that there are very few high risk businesses in the borough and the vast majority of businesses are in the medium to low risk classification.

Risk category	No. of businesses
A	5
B	187
C	796
D	1097
E	833

Table 1 showing number of food businesses by risk category

The hygiene compliance standards of food businesses in Southwark can be viewed online where the outcome of food hygiene inspections are translated to a food hygiene rating score published at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk> Ratings range from 0-5 with 5 being the best. Businesses that are usually targeted for participation in healthy food initiatives usually have a food hygiene rating of 3 or greater. The distribution of food hygiene ratings for Southwark food businesses is shown in Table 2 below

Food Hygiene Rating	No. of premises
5 - Very good	975
4 - Good	688
3 - Generally satisfactory	449
2 - Improvement required	162
1 - Major improvement required	175
0 - Urgent improvement required	16

Table 2 showing the number of food businesses by hygiene rating

While all food businesses can play a role in the promotion of healthy eating initiatives, food establishments that are invariably targeted for inclusion in these schemes or projects are restaurants and takeaways/fast food outlets. Together these types of food businesses make up approximately 31% of the food premises in the borough.

Restricting hot food take away in Southwark

Southwark has amongst the highest rates of childhood obesity nationally. Over 40% of our 10 and 11 year olds are overweight or obese. Obesity is a complex problem that requires action from individuals and society across multiple sectors. One important action is to modify the environment so that it does not promote sedentary behaviour or provide easy access to energy-dense food. The aim is to help make the healthy choice the easy choice via environmental change. In Southwark, there are various planning policy restrictions relating to hot food takeaways including saturation policies and proximity to secondary schools.

Healthy Catering Commitment in Southwark

The Healthier Catering Commitment is a voluntary scheme that supports businesses to make and provide healthier menus and options by making small changes to the way food is prepared. To gain the award, food businesses must reduce the amount of salt, fat and sugar in their recipes and menus and are encouraged to offer healthier options to include fruit, salad or vegetables.

Since the London wide launch of Healthy Catering Commitment (HCC) in March 2012, Southwark food safety team has worked closely with colleagues in the public health team to roll out the initiative in the Borough. Although progress has been made introducing the scheme to some food businesses, this has been limited both in the number of businesses involved and the distribution across the Borough.

Businesses targeted for inclusion in the scheme are those considered to be broadly compliant with food hygiene requirements and having at least a hygiene rating of 3. During food hygiene inspections environmental health officers (EHOs) would introduce the scheme and an application and assessment form given to the business and follow up made.

Currently 12 food businesses in Southwark have received the HCC award and a further 3 are being processed. Work is underway with the food standards agency to identify food businesses with the healthy catering commitment award on the same national web based platform currently used for the publication of food hygiene ratings. Southwark's progress and achievements in healthy catering commitment compare favourably with our neighbouring boroughs and London- wide.

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