FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2023-2024



FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2023-24

INTRODUCTION

The Service Plan relates to the year commencing 1st April 2023 and ending 31st March 2024.

It covers the service provision for the Food Safety, Food Standards and Feed functions of Flintshire County Council.

The purpose of this Plan is to provide:

- Information about the scope of the Service.
- Information about the services provided.
- Information about the means of Service provision.
- Information about performance of the Food Service against Performance Targets set out in the Plan as well as against national or locally defined Performance Indicators.
- Information relating to reviewing performance in order to address any variance from meeting the requirements of the Service Plan.

Service Plans are usually produced annually to allow for meaningful review and progression, in accordance not only with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) "Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement" but also with the principles of the "Wales Programme for Improvement". In respect to Feed, this function is delivered as part of the FSA Funded North Wales Regional Feed Enforcement Delivery Plan, with all inspection and sampling targets being reviewed and set annually by FSA Wales. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on service delivery lead to it being severely impacted through 2021-22 which continued through into 2022-23.

This Service Plan also forms part of the Authority's commitment to delivering the aspirations of the Local Service Board to provide citizen centred services and to work in collaboration and co-operation.

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2023-24

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1.0 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Food Service are to:

- 1. Promote, through education and enforcement, the sale and/or production of food which is fit and without risk to health.
- 2. Prevent and control the spread of food borne illness through education and enforcement.

These will be achieved by:

- (a) Providing a complete and holistic food law enforcement service covering the areas of food hygiene and safety, food standards and animal feed in accordance with relevant food legislation and Codes of Practice, thereby fulfilling statutory obligations.
- (b) Providing a responsive service to demand driven elements such as food safety incidents, outbreaks of food related infectious disease, complaints and request for advice from both businesses and members of the public, in accordance with relevant statutory Codes of Practice
- (c) Assisting businesses to comply with all relevant legislation by using a balance of techniques and approaches in order to ensure the safety and well being of the Public and of the environment in line with the Public Protection Enforcement Policy 2010.
- (d) Maintaining an up-to-date database of all food establishments in the County so that resources can be effectively defined and utilised to meet statutory, national and locally defined targets of inspection, sampling, specific initiatives and tasks set by FSA Wales, other agencies, or based on local need.
- (e) Providing an open and transparent Food Service with clear lines of communication for all service users.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

The Food Service links to the Council Plan 2023-28. There are seven priority areas which are as follows:

Poverty

- Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Green Society and Environment
- Economy
- Personal and Community Well-being
- Education and Skills
- A Well-managed Council

Each year, sub-priorities are identified which will receive significant attention over a particular year.

The Food Service sits within the Community and Business Protection Service of the Planning, Environment and Economy Portfolio. Each Service area within Community and Business Protection writes annual Operational Action Plans, which have been informed by a range of external and internal drivers and through a greater focus on robust risk assessment, intelligence led intervention, targeting and performance management. All team members contribute to devising the Operational Action Plans for each Service Area.

Food and Feed Law regulation is a statutory duty of the Council. Targets to be achieved are set in relation to both National Performance Accountability Measures and Service Improvement Data. A Corporate Performance Management System termed InPhase, monitors performance of all services within the Council. The areas reported on are the Performance Accountability Measure, "the percentage of premises Broadly Compliant with Food Hygiene Legislation". This is reported annually.

The following Service Improvement Data is also usually monitored and reported on within the Service Plan:

- (a) Food Safety inspections undertaken
- (b) Food Standards inspections undertaken
- (c) New Food Safety and Standards businesses inspected
- (e) Feed inspections carried out
- (f) New Feed businesses inspected

The Food Service will continue to implement performance management systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in a meaningful way to the citizens of Flintshire. From July 2021 to the end of March 2023, performance monitoring had focussed on the performance of the service against the Food Standards Agency COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan: guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023-

24. This was to ensure our resources were targeted where they added the greatest value in providing safeguards for public health and consumer protection in relation to food and to maintain the credibility of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. For 2023-24, performance will be monitored against the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) July 2021 for those premises due inspection within this financial year and against Appendix 2 of this plan for those premises that are overdue their inspection.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Authority Profile

Flintshire is a Unitary Authority. The County has an area of 43,464 hectares and a population of approximately 155,000 as per the 2021 Census. It is made up of a mixture of small towns and conurbations, particularly to the south and predominately rural and agricultural land located in the north. The population is subjected to small seasonal fluctuations due to influx of tourists to the area. It has a number of industrial estates on which many manufacturers including food manufacturers are located, as well as headquarters for several food manufacturers including one large national food retailer. The coastal edge of Flintshire County Council abuts the Dee Estuary upon which cockle and mussel beds are situated and there is a small port located at Mostyn.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The Food Service sits in the Community and Business Protection Service within the Planning, Environment and Economy portfolio area. The responsibility of the Food and Feed service sits under the Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards, with the line management of most Feed officers being the responsibility of the Team Manager - Trading Standards Compliance and Animal Health as these Feed officers also undertake other Trading Standards functions such as Animal Health. Both team managers' report in to the Community and Business Protection Manager. The organisation structure of the Food Service is illustrated on the chart detailed in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 also includes the Management and Cabinet structure of the Council.

The Lead Officer for Food Safety is the Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards. The Lead Officer for Food Standards is the Specialist Trading Standards Officer (Food Standards) and the Lead Officer for Feed is Specialist Trading Standards Officer (Feed). Specialist services are provided by Public Health Wales and Public Analyst Scientific Services as the Public Analyst.

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The scope of the respective component parts of the service are detailed below:

Food Safety

- Enforcement of relevant food safety and food hygiene legislation in all food establishments in Flintshire
- Registration of food businesses and approval of premises subject to compliance with product specific legislation such as meat products, fish, shellfish, fishery products and dairy products
- Implementation of the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013
- Investigation of food complaints that relate to fitness of food for human consumption and complaints that relate to the nature, substance or microbiological quality of the food, taking appropriate action as necessary
- Investigation of all complaints which relate to hygiene matters (premises, practices, personnel) in food businesses
- Investigation of sporadic cases of food-related notifiable diseases and suspected cases of food poisoning
- Investigation and control of outbreaks of food poisoning and food-related notifiable diseases
- Response to Food Alerts and food related incidents taking appropriate action as necessary
- Advice to new and existing business, responses to plans, licensing and land charges referrals
- Providing relevant export attestations to businesses who are exporting
- Act as Home and/or Originating Authority for other companies where necessary
- Undertake food sampling in accordance with the Sampling Programme
- Educational and promotional initiatives, when appropriate and based on local need

Food Standards

- Respond to requests for consumer advice in matters regarding food standards, labelling and composition
- Undertake a pre-planned programme of visits to food premises within Flintshire

- Investigation of complaints relating to the nature, quality or substance of food and complaints relating to mislabelling of food taking appropriate action as necessary
- Provide advice, information and assistance to food businesses
- Undertake food sampling in accordance with the Sampling Programme and in response to incidents
- Undertake promotional and educational initiatives, when appropriate
- Act as Home Authority and Originating Authority for other food businesses within Flintshire where necessary

<u>Feed</u>

- Undertake a pre-planned programme of visits to feed premises within Flintshire
- Undertake a pre-planned programme of targeted Feed sampling
- Provide advice, information and support to feed business operators, including manufacturers, distributers, and users of feed products
- Investigation of complaints relating to feedstuffs and complaint-based sampling of feed as required as part of complaint investigation

The Service Delivery Point for the Food Safety, Food Standards and Feed Service is Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe. For all of the above, the Service Delivery Points are usually open during normal office hours of 8.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

During the pandemic service delivery was reviewed to reflect the 'Working from home, wherever possible' steer from Central Government. A new Hybrid Working Policy has been introduced which seeks to assist the Welsh Government target of 30% of the workforce working from home. The team provides a duty system to respond to reactive elements of the service.

There is no official "out of hours" provision. However, there is a call centre who will contact team members should specific scenarios be reported to them which includes Food-related incidents.

2.4 Demands of the Food Service There are 1399 food premises in Flintshire. A full breakdown by activity type is provided below:

Table 1 : Breakdown of food premises in Flintshire by FSA activity type

Premises Type	Number
Primary Producer	13
Supermarket /	40
Hypermarket	
Manufacturers / Packers	45
Retailer – Others	57
Importers / Exporters	0
Distributors / Transporters	50
Small Retailer	255
Restaurant / Café /	212
Canteen	
Hotel / Guest House	16
Pub Club	145
Takeaway	132
Caring Establishments	171
Schools / Colleges	85
Mobile Food Unit	44
Restaurant and Caterers – Other	134

There are 22 premises approved under EU Regulation 853/2004 as they handle products of animal origin. These regulations place additional control measures on these types of premises and on the Local Authority.

The types of food manufacturers within Flintshire vary greatly in the types of processes they use to produce food. These range from cooked meat and ready meal manufacturers with national distribution, through to an onfarm milk pasteuriser supplying milk locally and shellfish dispatch centre. The diversity in the types of manufacturers operating within the County places a significant demand on the breadth and depth of knowledge required by officers within the Team.

Dee Estuary and Shellfish

The Dee Estuary has one actively fished cockle bed falling within Flintshire's jurisdiction. There had previously been two beds but due to a recent Sanitary Survey undertaken on the Dee, commissioned by the FSA, the two beds were able to be merged to be considered as one bed. The remaining beds fall within Wirral Council's jurisdiction. Given the nature of the estuary, the shellfish bed places significant demands on the Team, particularly

during the six month cockle opening season. The bed has a Class A classification, meaning that cockle harvested from this bed during these months is considered safe to consume without any further processing and can be exported to the EU.

The management of the Dee accounts for a large portion of the Sampling Budget due to the statutory sampling of the water and shellfish for both microbiological classification and for algal biotoxin monitoring. In addition to the shellfish bed on the Dee, there are several companies operating as buyers, grading yards and / or collection points for cockle harvested elsewhere within the UK at different times throughout the year. This has placed significant demand on the service and it is anticipated this will continue throughout 2023-24. There is also one approved Dispatch Centre under Retained (EC) Regulation 853/2004.

Enforcement on the Dee involves a cross-agency partnership working with National Resources Wales, Wirral Council, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), other Local Authorities, the North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and FSA Wales.

There are 53 licensed cockle gatherers for the Dee Estuary with a low number of endorsees. There are also 18 registered fishing vessels spread over 13 fishermen.

Port Health

There is a port at Mostyn. The service has responsibility in relation to ships coming in to port requiring a Ship Sanitation Certificate or a food hygiene inspection.

<u>Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 and associated</u> legislation

Since 28th November 2013, the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 mandated businesses with a food hygiene rating to display a valid food hygiene rating sticker. The administration of this Act accounts for a considerable volume of work for the Team. The introduction of the Food Hygiene Rating (Promotion of Food Hygiene Rating) (Wales) Regulations 2016, required takeaway food premises to provide a prescribed bi-lingual phrase on promotional literature which contains a price of the food and a method of ordering it remotely.

The Service is committed to delivering the requirements of the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated regulations.

Premises Profile

The premises profile, as defined in the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) July 2021, is detailed in Table 2:

Table 2: Breakdown of premises profile by risk band for Food Safety and Food Standards — June 2023

FOOD S	TANDARD	S	FOOD SAFETY			
Risk	Min.	No. of		Risk	Min.	No. of
High	12 months	7		А	6 months	1
			High	В	12 months	27
Medium	2 years	386		С	18 months	327
Low	5 years	931	Low	D	2 years	397
				E	3 years	589
OUTSIDE		12		OUTSIDE		13
UNRATED		63		UNRATED		45
тоти	1399		тота		1399	

Please note: there are 5 bands of risk for Food Safety, with A to C being deemed to be High Risk and only 3 bands of risk in Food Standards, with only A being deemed High Risk.

<u>Feed</u>

Under the Retained EU Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005) feed activities are clearly defined and are broken down in to 'Approved' and 'Registered' feed activities. Activities requiring Approval include any activity involving the manufacture and/or placing on the market of feed additives including zootechnical products (the technology of animal husbandry), with all such activities being classed as high risk. There are currently no businesses in Flintshire that have an Approval under the Regulations.

'Registered' feed activities are all other feed activities that are undertaken of which there are 14 registerable feed activities defined and coded by the FSA these are termed as 'R Codes' and run consecutively from R01 (the highest risk activity) through to R14 (the lowest risk activity).

Table 3: Breakdown of Feed premises by activity type – June 2023

3
0
12
0
21
4
1
3
31
6
398
4

The diversity in the types of Feed Businesses operating and activities being undertaken within the County places a significant demand on the breadth and depth of knowledge required by officers within the Team.

Following a review by FSA Wales in 2014 of the delivery of Animal Feeding Stuffs Enforcement across Wales, the system for risk assessing feed activities was simplified with all registerable feed activities across Wales being broken down in to one of two categories based on risk. These two categories are referred to as 'Above the Line' and 'Below the Line'. Above the line activities are high risk activities, which include businesses undertaking any 'Approved' feed activity and those engaged in 'Registered' feed activities involving production, processing, storage, transportation, sale of feed, or supply of food co-products, or surplus foods for use in animal feed and ultimately human consumption as part of the human food chain. These activities require a 'qualified' and 'competent' officer to inspect them.

Below the line activities are the low risk activities that include premises that are feeding animal feed stuffs to livestock or growing straight feed crops that are to be consumed in their natural state such as silage. This applies to all of Flintshire's farms. These activities have a lower requirement for officers to be able to perform these activities, requiring that an officer be 'competent' to complete this work.

Since 1st April 2015, the number of inspections of feed premises has been determined by FSA Wales in the form of the 'North Wales Feed Enforcement Delivery Plan'.

The breakdown of the Feed premises profile is detailed below by risk band:

Table 4: Breakdown of the premises profile by risk band for Feed.

FEEDINGSTUFFS			
Risk	Frequency of Inspection	Total no. of registered activities subject to inspection	
High	Every 3 years (as per Feed Law Code of Practice)	81	
Low / Medium	Every 14 years (as per Feed Law Code of Practice)	400	
TOTAL insp	481		

The vast majority of food business owners are English speaking with a minor requirement for written reports in Welsh. All advisory literature is produced bilingually in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards of the Council which came in to force on 30 March 2016. Approximately 14% of residents in Flintshire are recorded as Welsh speaking.

Approximately 4% of food businesses are of ethnic origin (Asian, Chinese, Turkish and Greek) and once again advisory literature is available in a range of ethnic languages to assist in understanding.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

The Food Service undertakes enforcement in accordance with the Public Protection Enforcement Policy which has been updated and approved by Members in 2010. This policy has been based upon the principles of the Enforcement Concordat adopted by Members in September 2000 and the Regulators Compliance Code.

There is also an Enforcement Policy for residents entitled "Regulation and Enforcement – Involving Local Residents", which was approved by Council in September 2011.

3.0 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1. Food Premises Inspections

The Food Service carries out inspections in accordance with pre-planned programmes drawn up annually and commencing on 1st April each year to coincide with the reporting requirements for the Service to the Food Standards Agency Wales. These inspection programmes are based on the risk rating of the premises. However, due to the significant impact on service delivery of the pandemic, the usual method of determining and implementing a planned inspection programme had to be suspended.

Food Safety and Food Standards

The performance of the Food Safety and Food Standards Team against the service priorities outlined by the Food Standards Agency recovery plan was excellent. The service inspected all Category A - C premises for Food Hygiene. The FSA Recovery Plan directed local authorities to undertake a prioritisation of new businesses. The service achieved 84% of all new business Food Hygiene inspections, across all priorities – Low to High. Only 14 new businesses prioritised for inspection during 2022-23, were not inspected for Food Hygiene.

For Food Standards, all Category A premises were inspected and 82.2% of new businesses across all priorities were inspected in 2022-23 with 22 premises prioritised as Higher Priority not inspected. A total of 224 Food Standards Category B and C interventions were undertaken. The service had therefore moved at a faster pace than the minimum pace stipulated by the FSA's Recovery Plan.

There is a Public Accountability Measure in place, namely the percentage of businesses which are Broadly Compliant with Food Hygiene legislation. For 2022-23, this figure has reduced slightly from 98.5 to 97.5% of food businesses within Flintshire falling into this category. This was anticipated, given the effect of the pandemic on the number of premises overdue their food hygiene intervention.

The service has prioritised all Category A and Category B Food Standards inspections, equating to 206 inspections and all Category A – C Food Hygiene inspections, equating to 194 inspections to be achieved

by the end of March 2024.

With regards to the remaining premises, there are 254 Category D and 314 Category E Food Hygiene inspections which are overdue from at least 31st March 2023 and 123 Category B and 293 Category C overdue for Food Standards. This gives 668 Category D-E Food Hygiene inspections and 653 Category B-C Food Standards inspections due or overdue.

In recognition of the above volume of overdue inspections in the Medium / Low risk bandings, the FSA have acknowledged that local authorities have a backlog of interventions due in lower risk premises and that it will take some time to fully realign with the Food Law Code of Practice. In our efforts to realign with the Food Law Code of Practice, we are prioritising interventions in Category D Food Hygiene and Category B Food Standards premises over the lowest risk Category E Food Hygiene and Category C Food Standards premises. The service will also inspect all Category C Food Standards premises that are due or overdue their Cat A – Category D Food Hygiene inspections.

From Alternative Enforcement Questionnaires completed in quarter 4 of 2022-23, the service has identified 32 Category E Food Hygiene premises for inspection in 2023-24. The remaining Category E premises will be reviewed in Quarter 3 of 2023-24 when a decision will be made on which individual premises will be subject to an Alternative Enforcement Strategy questionnaire or a physical inspection.

The service will prioritise those new businesses that undertake open food high risk food preparation but will also endeavour to inspect 90% of all of those businesses that begin to trade during the remainder of the year for both Food Hygiene and Food Standards.

The key objectives for the coming year in relation to programmed inspection and enforcement work are:

Food Safety

- New businesses overdue from 2022-23
- Carry out prioritisation of new businesses we become aware of in 2023-24 and inspect those deemed High priority
- All Category A Category D premises
- Inspect those Category E food hygiene premises identified as requiring an inspection from AES

- questionnaires undertaken in 2022-23
- To follow the requirements of the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 and associated regulations
- To revisit all premises receiving a Food Hygiene Rating of 2 or lower to assess compliance, in line with the All Wales Revisit Policy
- To inspect any low-risk premises where local intelligence highlights a potential issue with compliance levels

Food Standards

- New businesses overdue from 2022-23
- Carry out prioritisation of new businesses we become aware of in 2023-24 and inspect those deemed High priority
- All Category A Category B premises
- Inspect those Category C food standards premises due their Category A – Category D Food Hygiene inspection
- Inspect those Category C Food Standards premises identified as requiring an inspection from AES questionnaires undertaken in 2022-23
- To revisit all premises with major non-compliance with Allergen Information requirements
- To inspect any low risk premises where local intelligence highlights a potential issue with compliance levels

A full breakdown of premises programmed for inspection 2023-2024 by risk band is given in Appendix 2.

There were 27 revisits for Food Hygiene and Food Standards in 2022-23. This was an increase from 9 revisits undertaken in 2021-22. We anticipate that the number of revisits required will increase this year also both due to the increase in number of full inspections undertaken and due to a potential drop in compliance levels found in Category D Food Hygiene and Category B Food Standards premises.

Feed

For 2022-23, the FSA-directed inspection programme allocated 66 inspections to Flintshire, 16 Above the Line, 50 Below the Line. A total of 64 inspections were carried

out.

As there are overdue inspections from last year for the Below the Line premises and inspections due in this year, risk assessment has been applied to prioritise which inspections should be undertaken. As such, all Above the line inspections due / overdue have been prioritised for inspection. For Below the Line premises, the inspections have been prioritised as per:

- Farms that are not registered but are known to keep livestock by other information sources
- Farms that have registered for Feed but have not yet been inspected
- Farms that are significantly overdue their Feed inspection
- Farms that due their Feed inspection this year and are not members of a Farm Assurance Scheme

The target for programmed inspections for 2023-24 is 117 inspections. The breakdown of these by the activity code is detailed in Table C in Appendix 2.

3.1.1 Additional Targeted Inspection/ Enforcement Activity

Additional targeted inspection and enforcement activity due to be undertaken is as follows:

- Shellfish compliance assessment with the completion of registration documents
- Effective and professional liaison and co-operation with other LA's and Regulatory Delivery relating to Primary Authority (PA) matters.
- Investigation of notified food safety related fraud incidents, such as illegal slaughter of meat, including referrals made anonymously.
- Issue of Ship Sanitation Certificates for incoming vessels to the Port of Mostyn.
- Appropriate response and liaison with other agencies for Civil Contingency matters.

3.1.2 Resources for Inspections and Additional Enforcement Activity

Food Safety and Food Standards

The programmed food hygiene inspections will be undertaken by Environmental Health Officers (EHO) and Food Safety Officers (FSO). A full breakdown of resources is given in 4.2 – Staffing Allocation.

Food Standards work will be carried by our Trading Standards Officer. EHOs and FSOs.

Other areas of Trading Standards work within food premises such as Weights and Measures will be carried out by the Specialist Trading Standards Officer within the Food Team. This places an absolute requirement for a fully competent Trading Standards Officer to be within the Team.

Feed

All aspects of Feed work will be carried out by 0.2 FTE fully qualified Specialist Trading Standards Officers and 0.4 FTE Trading Standards Enforcement Officer. This work is to be distributed across 7 officers who are qualified and/or competent in accordance with FSA Feed Law Code of Practice requirements. 5 of the Feed officers are based in the Trading Standards Compliance and Animal Health Team and 2 officers are based in the Food Safety and Food Standards team.

3.2 Food/Feed Complaints

Food complaints cover the full range relating to fitness for human consumption, presence of extraneous matter in foods, microbial contamination and Food Standards issues such as food labelling, chemical adulteration and spoilage of food.

It is the policy of the Food Service to investigate all food complaints reported including those made anonymously.

Food Safety and Food Standards

All food complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) July 2021, having regard to the documented Public Protection Enforcement Policy 2010.

Based on data for previous years, the estimated number of Food Safety and Food Standards complaints is between 110 and 140.

Please note the above figures do not indicate dealing with food complaints referred by other Local Authorities when acting as Home or Originating Authority.

Feed

All feed complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Feed Law Code of Practice (Wales) 2014, having regard to the documented Public Protection Enforcement Policy 2010.

The number of Feed related complaints received by the service is low, typically no more than 3 a year.

3.3 Primary Authority Principle

Food Safety and Food Standards

Flintshire County Council subscribes to both the Primary and the Home Authority Principle. The Food Service acts as both Home Authority and/or Originating Authority for approximately 50 food businesses.

Flintshire is also committed to improving relationships with business and will continue to develop relationships with business and encourage effective business engagement at all times.

Feed

There is currently no formal Primary Authority relationship between FCC and any Flintshire based Feed Business Operator.

3.4 Advice to Business

The policy of the Food Service is to provide a balanced approach between the provision of advice and enforcement activity. The Service is committed to providing an effective and responsive advice and assistance service, both during inspections or upon request, for all Flintshire businesses, including a service in accordance with the Regulatory Delivery Primary Authority Principle and the Local Government Regulation (previously LACORS) Home Authority Principle.

In addition, the Service provides advisory literature, (either produced nationally or in-house) to businesses to assist them with compliance with relevant legislation.

Food Safety and Food Standards

In order to maximise the use of limited resources, advice

is targeted as follows:

- During inspections and as part of follow up documentation.
- Start-up advice on request.
- Through guidance information available on the Food Team's website pages.
- Distribution of relevant food safety and food standards material to food businesses.
- Advice and information is given to businesses requesting guidance either by telephone, email or post.

Based on data from the last 3 years, the estimated number of requests for advice is anticipated to be approximately 200-230 in relation to Food Safety and Standards. Advice to businesses is provided by all members of the Team.

<u>Feed</u>

Flintshire is committed to supporting feed businesses and working with them to enable compliance with all regulatory and best practice standards, and to protect animal health and welfare, and the human food chain. In order to maximise the use of limited resources, advice is targeted as follows:

- During inspections and as part of follow up documentation.
- Start-up advice on request to new businesses.
- Through sign posting to guidance information available on the Trading Standards Wales and FSA Wales websites.
- Distribution of relevant feed hygiene and standards material to feed businesses.
- Advice and information is normally given to businesses requesting guidance

3.5 Food Inspection and Sampling

Food Safety and Food Standards

Sampling will be carried out in accordance with the documented Sampling Policy for the Food Service which was referred for Member Approval in July 2001. The sampling programme is devised so that the procurement of samples will follow a risk based approach. The

programme takes in to account statutory requirements as well as the requirements of the FSA, the Welsh Food Microbiological Forum and local need.

Samples taken for Food Standards issues are submitted for analysis by the formally appointed and NAMAS accredited Public Analyst for the Council (and Agricultural Analyst for Animal Feed purposes):

Public Analyst Scientific Services Valiant Way Wolverhampton WV9 5GB

Samples taken as part of the Sampling Programme for Food Safety issues are submitted for microbiological examination by the designated and NAMAS accredited laboratory of:
Public Health Wales
Ysbyty Gwynedd

Penrhosgarnedd Bangor

Each Local Authority is allocated sampling accreditation by Public Health Wales.

The Food Sampling Programme does not preclude the need to undertake reactive sampling e.g. as a result of a food complaint or during food poisoning investigations. Sampling undertaking as part of an Infectious Disease Notification or Outbreak are sent to the laboratory at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor.

A member of the team attends the WFMF, which is responsible for devising Food Safety Sampling Surveys across Wales, based on risk assessment and intelligence to better target resources at particular foods or food poisoning organisms of concern within the UK. Samples are taken as part of programmed inspections at manufacturers and premises where product specific legislation applies. The budget for sampling will remain the same as it was in 2022-23.

The anticipated number of samples for Food Standards is around 20 including samples taken for labelling checks, both as planned sampling and as a result of a complaint received.

For 2022-23, the service took part in a regional sampling programme for Acrylamide in fried products and Free

Fatty Acids in oil, in addition to a project based on labelling of Prepacked for Direct Sale food items for lunchtime service which also tested for dairy and egg cross-contamination from an allergen perspective.

The team will take part in the Regional Sampling project for Food Standards, which is targeting American Imported Sweets and Drinks during 2023-24. Samples will be taken as part of programmed inspections at manufacturers, approved premises and premises where product specific legislation applies for analysis.

For Food Safety, there will be statutory sampling for shellfish classification, biotoxin monitoring, in response to any serious food complaints / hygiene concerns and taking part in a WFMF survey. The anticipated number of samples for Food Microbiological examination is around 60 samples including the shellfish classification and biotoxin monitoring samples.

Feed

There will be a minimal amount of sampling work undertaken in relation to Feed. Sampling undertaken in 2022-23 was in relation to a Feed incident. Other than sampling directly funded by FSA Wales any other feed samples taken during 2023-24 will only be done in response to complaints received or feed safety incidents.

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

Investigation and control of outbreaks of food related infectious disease will be carried out in accordance with the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales was approved by Members in 2011.

Investigations of sporadic notifications of food related infections disease shall follow the existing documented procedure within the Section. Based on data from previous years, it is estimated that there will be approximately between 300 to 350 cases of sporadic notifications and between 0 and 10 outbreaks. Public Health Wales have introduced molecular testing of faecal samples of suspected cases and this has resulted in an increase in the number of positive cases detected for specific organisms.

Campylobacter was the highest incidence of food-borne illness for 2022-2023 in Flintshire, with 263 cases being notified to us out of a total of 355 sporadic cases of

potential food-borne illness notified to us. The notifications for Campylobacter were sent a questionnaire to complete which, when returned to the service, was reviewed by a competent officer to assess for any food-related risk factors.

Outbreaks are characteristically resource intensive but do not follow an annual trend, therefore the anticipated burden on staffing cannot be predicted. However, should they occur the impact on resources cannot be overestimated and would require rapid contingency planning for maintaining the delivery of the rest of the Service.

3.7 Food/Feed Safety Incidents

Food Safety and Food Standards

Food Alerts will be initiated and responded to in accordance the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) July 2021. The contact details for the Team and relevant Agencies (including out of hour's contacts) will be kept up to date. It is difficult to quantify the resource implication of this function as it depends upon the category of Food Alert and the extent of food or businesses affected within Flintshire.

There were 9 food incidents during 2022-23. We anticipate we will be involved in 8 to 10 food incidents during 2023-24, using previous food incident data.

Feed

Alerts will be initiated and responded to in accordance with the Feed Law Code of Practice (Wales) 2014. Responses to Feed Alerts will be kept in a centralised documented format and the contact details for the Team and relevant Agencies (including out of hour's contacts) will be kept up to date. It is difficult to quantify the resource implication of this function as it depends upon the nature of the Feed Alert and the source, type, quantity and distribution of feed product involved.

3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Food Service is committed to ensuring effective liaison with other relevant organisations to enforce consistency of approach. This includes liaison with:

- FSA Wales
- Regulatory Delivery

- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and Chartered Trading Standards Institute
- Public Health Wales, National Resources Wales, CEFAS, Animal and Plant Health Agency and other relevant advisory/liaison bodies
- Other Local Authorities in Wales as a whole by attending the All Wales Food Safety Expert Group, the All Wales Communicable Disease Expert Group and the WFMF and regionally, by attending the North Wales Food and Communicable Disease Task Group.
- Other relevant local bodies e.g. local fishermen by way of the North Wales and Deeside Shellfish Liaison Group.
- Other Departments within Flintshire County Council, such as the Planning Department, with whom a system of formal consultation with relevant sections of Community and Business Protection

Liaison is also maintained between members of the Food Team by monthly Team Meetings. There is also a weekly management meeting for Team Managers and the Service Manager.

The Feed element of the service is committed to ensuring effective liaison with partners and other relevant organisations to ensure and enforce consistency of approach. This includes liaison with:

- Food Standards Agency Wales (FSA Wales)
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
- Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
- Professional bodies such as the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), National Trading Standards (NTS) and the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO).
- Other Local Authorities across Wales and the UK
- Partner Local Authorities in the North Wales Feed Enforcement Delivery Plan (Wrexham, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Ynys-Mon, and Conwy).
- Liaison with regional and national panels and expert interest groups including the joint Trading Standards Wales/FSA Feed Working Group, Trading Standards Wales and UK Animal Health and Welfare Panels etc.

Liaison is also maintained within the Feed element of the Trading Standards Compliance and Animal Health Team through regular team meetings with the Team Manager –

Food Safety and Food Standards. They also have regular one to ones with their line manager. There is also a weekly management meeting for Team Managers and the Service Manager.

3.9 Food Safety/ Food Standards and Feed Promotion

Educational and promotional activities are important components of a comprehensive Food Service.

Food Safety and Food Standards

For 2022-23, we had planned to undertake a project on Pre-packed for Direct Sale (PPDS) legislation, to assist micro-businesses in fully understanding the definition of PPDS. This project had to be put on hold due to the requirements of the reactive elements of the service. A review of this project plan will be undertaken in Quarter 4 when there is more information available on the number of premises that are handling PPDS foods following any AES questionnaires completed.

For 2023-24, the team will be delivering a project on American Imported Sweets and Drinks to address an increase in the number of business stocking American Imported Sweets and Drinks that contain ingredients not permitted in Wales. This project will combine a proactive educative element with follow-up sampling of local small retailers.

Feed

Officers of the service work with the trade offering advice and guidance on compliance with legal and best practice standards during routine inspection work and when carrying out routine animal health and welfare and disease control work. Promotion work is usually done as part of routine inspection or in response to enquiries made by business to the service.

4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Allocation

The financial allocation for the Food Service is split between budgets provided for the Food Safety and Food Standards and for Animal Health. The expected overall level of expenditure providing the Food Safety and Food Standards Service for 2023-24 is detailed in Table 5.

Table 5: Expected Overall Budget for the Food Safety and Food Standards Team 2023-2024

COST ITEM	FINANCIAL ALLOCATION
(a) Staffing (total staff costs)	£611,294
(b) Travel (mileage and rail warrants)	£4,127
(c) Equipment	£4,977
(d) Sampling	£4,177
(e) Shellfish Sampling	£6000
(f) Support Costs for Printing and Translation	£650
(g) Training	Centrally held budget. Accessed via application

The Food Sampling budget covers Food Safety and Food Standards. This is in addition to the allocation provided by Public Health Wales. Additional funding can be made available should there be an incident. There is an income target of £8,000 which is generated by Ship Sanitation Certificate, Food Hygiene re-rating inspections and Export Health Attestations.

Table 6 shows the expected overall level of expenditure for Feed Service delivery:

Table 6: Expected Budget for the Feed Service Delivery 2023-24

COST ITEM	FINANCIAL ALLOCATION
(a) Staffing (total staff costs)	£29,316
(b) Travel (including mileages and Subsistence	£850
(c) Equipment	£500.00
(d) Sampling	Budget is held Regionally
(e) Training	Centrally held budget. Accessed via application

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Food Safety and Food Standards

The Food Safety and Food Standards structure is made up of the Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards 1.0 FTE, 6.5 FTE Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), 3.0 FTE Food Safety Officers(FSOs), 1.0 FTE Specialist Trading Standards Officer (STSO) and 1.0 FTE Trading Standards Enforcement Officer (TSEO). All members of the team are permanent positions. EHOs and FSOs undertake Hygiene and Standards work. The STSO undertakes Food Standards, Feed and other TS duties in Food premises. The TSEO undertakes Feed and Animal Health duties predominantly.

Administrative support is provided by 1.0 FTE Administration Officer. This role is situated within Social Services as a central administration function.

All Environmental Health Officers in post are qualified Environmental Health Officers, registered with the Environmental Health Registration Board or subsequent requirements. Food Safety Officers are qualified to the Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection and all officers are qualified in HACCP Principles (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). All three of the Food Safety Officers hold the Higher Certificate in Food Control.

All staff are authorised appropriately for the duties they perform. One the EHOs is currently being assessed against the Food Law Code of Practice Competency Framework as they have recently returned to Food Law work following a gap of over 10 years. As such, they are not yet authorized to undertake the full range of enforcement activities. Most officers also hold the Lead Auditor qualification.

The Specialist Trading Standards Officer (STSO) holds the Diploma in Trading Standards and has also successfully completed the five day QMS Auditor/Lead Auditor training course. The Trading Standards Enforcement Officer has completed the Higher Certificate in Food Control, following successful completion of the learning portfolio and professional examination during 2022-23. They will predominantly be utilised to undertake Feed and Animal Health interventions. They will undertake a limited amount of Food Hygiene and Food Standards interventions to maintain their competency.

The full breakdown of resources usually required to deliver the Food Safety and Food Standards service is given below:

Table 7: Full Breakdown of Resources by Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to Deliver the Food Safety and Food Standards Service*

Intervention Type	Food Safety FTE	Food Standards FTE	
Inspections	5.5	2.5	
Revisits	0.3		
Complaints	0.6		
Primary Authority	0.3		
Food Incidents	0.2		
Food Business			
advice/promotion and other Non- Official Controls Interventions	0.3		
Communicable Disease	0.5	N/A	
Sampling	0.2	0.1	

^{*} this breakdown of resources includes the 0.2 FTE operational aspect of the Team Manager. The remainder of the Team Manager 0.8 FTE is not taken account of above as this includes the operational management functions of this role including Feed and Corporate matters. A further 0.1 FTE of the Specialist Trading Standards Officer role is spent regulating other Trading Standards legislation in food businesses such as Weights and Measures legislation and Feed work.

The inspection resource requirement is based on completing the majority of inspections as joint inspections i.e. the officer does both a Food Safety and Food Standards audit during the same visit. This flexibility is key to ensuring the service can be delivered based on current resources.

Feed

All aspects of Feed work will be carried out by seven individual officers of the service with the overall management of the area by the Team Manager – Food Safety and Food Standards. The Specialist Trading Standards Officer who reports in to the Team Manager – Trading Standards Compliance and Animal Health is the Lead Feed Officer. All officers involved in the delivery of

the feed service also undertake other duties which are non-Feed related. The Feed component of their roles for this year equates to 0.2 FTE Specialist Trading Standards Officer and 0.4 FTE Trading Standards Enforcement Officer.

The two Specialist Trading Standards Officers within the two teams satisfy all criteria as a 'qualified' and 'competent' feed officer, including holding the Diploma in Trading Standards (or equivalent), successful completion of the five day QMS Auditor/Lead Auditor Training Course, completion of CIEH accredited HACCP training and participation in a FSA programme of Feed Training. Both officers are therefore suitably qualified and competent to undertake all aspects of Feed work.

The five Trading Standards Enforcement Officers satisfy the 'competency' criteria based on experience and training that enables them to perform Below the Line Feed work on both Livestock and Arable Farms.

All seven officers satisfy the FSA requirements re qualification and /or competency to enable them to undertake Feed enforcement work. This includes meeting the requirement to undertake a minimum of 10 hours relevant CPD annually.

All posts within the Food Safety and Food Standards team are filled. For officers undertaking Feed work, there is one TSEO who is on maternity leave until January 2024.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

During the forthcoming year the following training is planned:

- (i) Support of national and regional seminars on relevant subject matters.
- (ii) In-house training sessions

Each member of the Team will receive the required twenty hours Continuing Professional Development as required by the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) July 2021 (or thirty hours for officers with Chartered Status). Staff will be subject to annual Staff Appraisals in line with the Corporate policy with a mid-year review which identifies and tracks training and development needs. All staff have monthly one to ones with the Team Manager to identify and monitor areas requiring development.

One EHO was supported to achieve both their Chartered Status and their full professional qualification. The TSEO was also supported to attain the full professional qualification for the Higher Certificate in Food Control.

All officers achieved the required CPD during 2022-23 and they are fully supported to achieve this for 2023-24.

Feed

All authorised officers will take part in training to ensure the meet the CPD requirements for Feed during 2023-24. All feed training is provided regionally across Wales as part of the North Wales Regional Feed Enforcement Delivery Plan that is funded by FSA.

5.0 QUALITY ASSESSMENT

5.1 Quality Assessment

Food Safety and Food Standards

Within the Food Service, quality systems are in place to ensure that work is completed and checked by a competent person in line with the fully documented Quality Monitoring Procedures. Documented procedures and work instructions exist to ensure consistency of approach with various computer report mechanisms to check accuracy on the APP Database. Work Instruction is provided on key areas of work retained within Formal Procedure Manuals.

The Team Manager sits on the North Wales Food and Communicable Disease Task Group, the All Wales Food Safety Expert Group and the All Wales Communicable Disease Expert Group. The Specialist Trading Standards Officer also sits on the North Wales Food and Communicable Disease Task Group. These forums offer the opportunity to discuss a wide range of quality issues relevant to Food Law Enforcement and Food Hygiene incidents and outbreaks.

The service completed and returned End of Year Return questionnaires to the FSA which assessed the service's performance against the FSA-priorities during 2022-23 for Food Hygiene, Food Standards and Feed.

Feed

Quality systems are also in place to ensure that work is completed and checked by a competent person in line with the fully documented Quality Monitoring Procedures. Documented procedures and work instructions exist to ensure consistency of approach with various computer report mechanisms to check accuracy on the APP Database. Work Instruction is provided on Key Areas of work retained within Formal Procedure Manuals.

In addition, for the whole Food service, external audits including focused audits, are undertaken by the Food Standards Agency Wales (frequency determined by FSA).

The North Wales Regional Feed Delivery was audited by FSA Wales in November 2019.

6.0 REVIEW PROCESS

6.1 Review Against the Service Plan

The Service Plan is subject to annual review.

Performance against this Service Plan is monitored by several means:

- Monthly team meetings
- Monthly one to ones with individual team members
- Informal team briefings held on a regular basis
- Quarterly Feed returns to the regional Feed officer

The FSA Recovery Plan which ran until the end of March 2023 provided a timeline in 2 phases. Phase 1 ran from 1 July to 30 September 2021 and Phase 2 runs from 1 October 2021 to 2023-24. The FSA continued to require local authorities to submit a Temperature Check Survey at various points during 2022-23 to monitor Phase 2 expectations and to gauge the local authority's confidence in achieving continued alignment with the recovery plan.

Appendix 3 provides full quantitative analysis of service delivery during 2022-23.

As overarching achievements:

- All Category A Category C Hygiene inspections were undertaken
- We moved ahead of the Recovery Plan by undertaking 152 Category B inspection
- Alternative Enforcement Strategy questionnaires were completed for 113 low risk businesses which lead to 32 of them being prioritised for inspection this coming year
- The team dealt with 9 Food Incidents and 1 Feed incident which took significant resources at a time

- of Avian Influenza Virus and trying to move ahead on the Recovery Plan for the Food Hygiene and Standards officers
- Further focussed auditing of Shellfish Registration documents was undertaken, improving compliance on traceability from shellfish in the food chain
- Submission of a successful business case for the introduction of the Food Standards Agency Register a Food Business platform
- Preparatory work for the move to the new MIS supplier

6.2 Identification of Any Variation

The main areas where the service deviated from the Service Plan for 2022-23 were:

- There was one non-broadly compliant Food Hygiene Category D premises that was not inspected
- There were 22 Food premises that had been identified as priority for Food Standards that were not inspected by 1st April 2023 and 14 premises that were identified as a priority for Food Hygiene that were not inspected by 1st April 2023. These have been prioritized for inspection during quarter 1 of 2023-24
- Not all Feed officers received 10 hours of CPD
- There were a number of Feed businesses who did not become registered

6.3 Key Areas of Improvement / Development

The main areas for improvement or further development are:

- To undertake project work in relation to the sale of Imported American confectionary and drinks
- To achieve the inspection of all Feed premises that are Below the Line and funded by the regional model
- To register those Feed businesses that have previously not registered with the service
- To inspect all new Businesses prioritised for inspection by the end of Quarter 1

6.4 Forthcoming Considerations

 A new Management Information System database is due to go live in Quarter 2. The impact of this move cannot be underestimated has it underpins all activities, service planning and performance monitoring undertaken by the service. It will also mean that all current procedures and processes will need to be reviewed as a matter of priority. This will directly impact on the service's ability to deliver against the Service Plan, thereby requiring a review of the impact on resources in Quarter 3.

- While the FSA have directed LAs to return to service delivery as per the Code of Practice, the backlog of lower risk premises inspections is significant which means the intervention frequency cannot be undertaken within 28 days of the inspection due date. The impact of this backlog on service delivery as per the code will continue for the next 2-3 years, as a minimum. The prioritisation of interventions will be done based on risk and on any relevant information / intelligence.
- The Food Standards Agency Achieving Business Compliance programme is continuing to be consulted on. We have been advised that the pilot on the new Food Standards Delivery Model will be ran during this financial year in Wales. We are not one of the pilot authorities. The new model has recently been introduced in England Northern Ireland. The proposal for the new Food Hygiene Delivery Model is being consulted on currently.

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Chief Executive Chief Officer
Governance

Chief Officer
Education
and
Youth

Chief Officer Social Services Chief Officer
Streetscene
and
Transportation

Chief Officer
Planning,
Environment
and
Economy

Chief Officer Housing

Chief Officer Assets

Chart 2

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - POLITICAL STRUCTURE

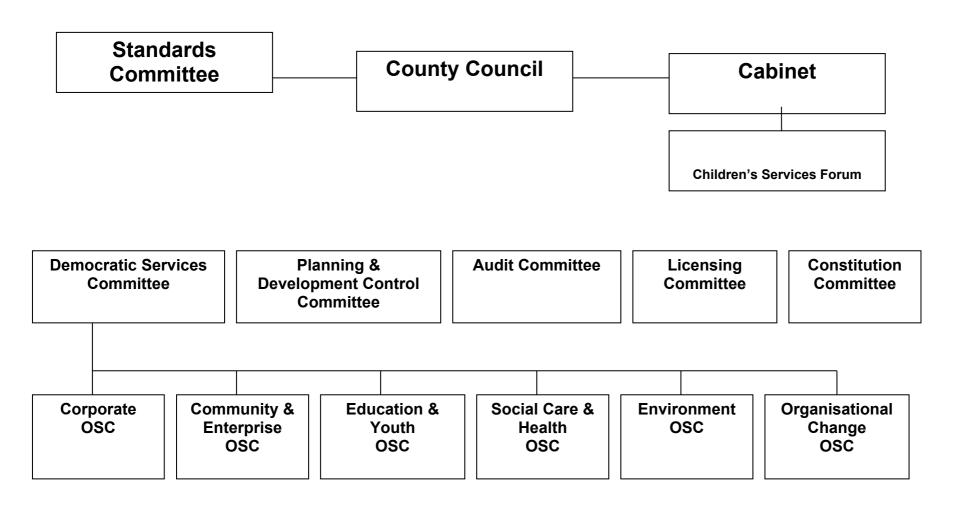
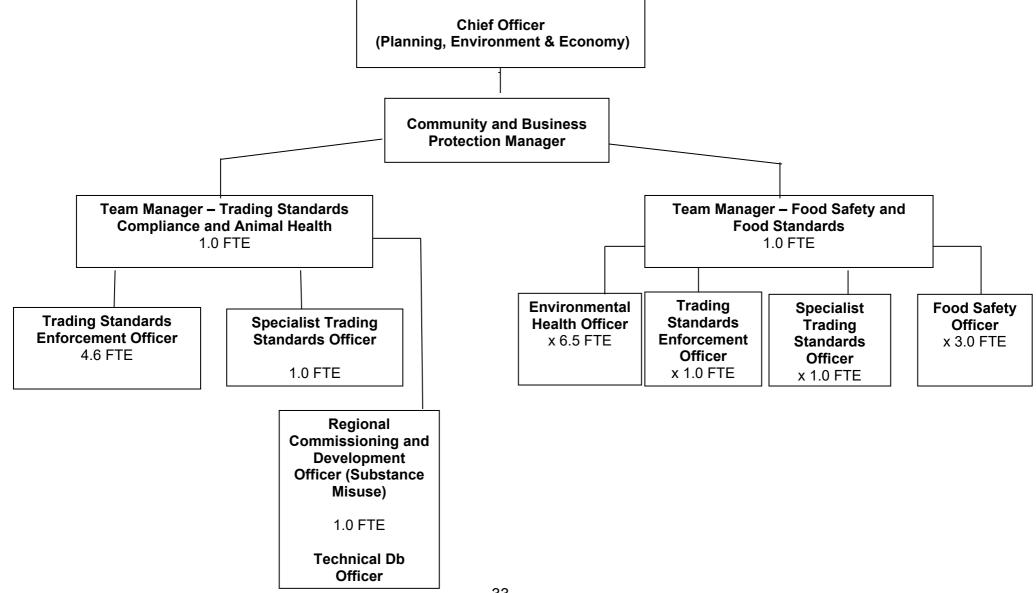


Chart 3

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS PROTECTION - FOOD SERVICE



APPENDIX 2

Please find below a breakdown of the profile of programmed Food Safety and Food Standards inspections for 2023-24 by Risk Rating:

Table A

PROGRAMMED INSPECTIONS - FOOD HYGIENE			
Risk	Number Due		
A	2		
В	28		
С	164		
D	292		
E	32* (344 as AES)		
Unrated	52		
TOTAL	570		

Table B

PROGRAMMED INSPECTIONS - FOOD STANDARDS			
Risk	Number Due		
Α	7		
В	199		
С	32* (422 as AES)		
Unrated	55		
TOTAL	293		

The Risk Rating is determined in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. It dictates the frequency of which the food premises must receive a full food hygiene or food standards inspection.

For Food Safety High Risk premises are those with a Risk Rating of A - C. For Food Standards High Risk premises are those with a Risk Rating of A.

^{*}denotes the number of physical inspections that have been programmed. The remaining number of premises will be completed as an Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES) questionnaire.

Please find below a breakdown of the profile of programmed Feed inspections for 2023-24 by Feed Business Activity. The figure in brackets denote the total number of inspections due within the activity code, with the un-bracketed number denoting the actual number of inspections to be achieved

Table C

	PROGRAMMED INSPECTIONS - FEED		
High Risk (ATL)/Low Risk (BTL)	Registered/Approved Feed Business Activity	Number Due	
High Risk – R01-4	Manufacturer of Feed	0	
High Risk – R12	Co Product Producers	5	
High Risk – R09	Feed Stores	0	
High Risk – R05	Feed Distributor	2	
High Risk – R08	Feed Transporter	1	
High Risk – R10 and R11	On Farm Feed Mixers	26 (2 – R10, 24 – R11)	
High Risk – R07	Supplier of Surplus Food	8	
High Risk – R06	Pet Food Manufacturer	1	
Low Risk – R13	Livestock Farms	74	
Low Risk – R14	Arable Farms	0	
	Total	117	

APPENDIX 3 – PERFORMANCE 2022-23

Food Safety

Risk	Inspections Achieved
A High Risk	2
B High Risk	15
C High Risk	318
D Low Risk	20
E Low Risk	113
TOTAL	468

Food Standards

Risk	Interventions Achieved		
A High	6		
B Medium	152		
C Low	72		
TOTAL	230		

Feed Inspections (as per requirements of FSA/Trading Standards Wales Regional FLEDP 2022-23)

Risk	Programmed	Achieved
High	16	20
Medium/Low	50	45
TOTAL	66	65

Food Hygiene Ratings

Profile of Ratings within Flintshire: June 2023

	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Very Good	Good	Generally Satisfactory	Improvement Necessary	Major Improvement Necessary	Urgent Improvement Necessary
% of Premises	82.1	13.1	2.3	1.3	1.2	0.1

Number of Requests for Rescore Visit to be undertaken - 19

Number of Appeals on Rating - 1

Number of Fixed Penalty Notices - 3

Right to Reply - 0

Other data in relation to Demands on Food Service

Food and Feeding Stuffs Complaints

Food Safety number of complaints - 87
Food Standards number of complaints - 20
Feeding Stuffs number of complaints - 1
Food Incidents - 9
Feed Incidents - 1

Advice to Business

Food Safety - 215 requests for advice Food Standards - 7 requests for advice Feeding Stuffs - 2 requests for advice

Food and Feeding Stuffs Inspection and Sampling

Food Safety - 54 including Shellfish Classification samples

Food Standards - 15 samples – monitoring for composition and labelling

Feeding Stuffs - 2

Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease (Food Safety only)

Sporadic Notifications - 355 (of which 263 were Campylobacter)

Outbreaks - 0 Incidents or Outbreaks declared

Other Types of Service Requests (Food Safety only)

Water Disconnections - 5

Ship Sanitation Certificates - 0

Export Health Attestations - 86

Shellfish Registration Document Reguests - 24