



SAFER FOOD SCORES
GUIDANCE

Tips for top
food hygiene
ratings



Tips for top food hygiene ratings

The Food Standards Agency's food hygiene rating scheme is operated by local councils in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Following a routine inspection by an environmental health officer, food businesses are given a rating of 0 (Urgent Improvement Necessary) to 5 (Very Good). This rating is published on a website for your customers and the media to read.

It is now compulsory for this rating to be displayed at the entrance to food businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland and the Government plan to make this a legal requirement in England. Scotland has a similar system known as the Food Information Scheme which awards food businesses with either a 'pass' or 'improvement required'.

Safer Food Scores provide a wide range of food hygiene rating training and advisory services. We can visit your premises regularly to check that the law is being complied with and provide coaching on how to improve. Following our visits, we give you a prediction of the food hygiene rating you would have received and an action plan of how you can achieve 5 out of 5.

We can also liaise with the local council on your behalf and assist you in applying for a re-score or making an appeal. Please contact us on (01442) 877322 or at hello@saferfoodscores.co.uk to learn more.

Do you have the food hygiene basics in place?

Answer these questions for clues as to the minimum requirements:

- Do you have a documented food safety management system?
- Have your food handlers taken a Level 2 (one day) training course in food hygiene in the last three years?
- Do your food handlers have high standards of personal hygiene?
- Do you check these temperatures regularly: food deliveries, freezers, fridges, cooked food, food on display?
- Do you check daily that stored food is in date and in good condition?
- Are your premises and equipment in good repair and condition?
- Do you have a documented cleaning schedule?
- Do you have a pest control contract?



Is your food safety management system adequate?



Check your documented FSMS (Food Safety Management System – you may know it as SFBB, Food Safety Policy, HACCP). When was it reviewed? Is it still relevant? Is it up to date?

Make sure the FSMS is being followed. Do team members responsible for carrying out the controls and checks know what they are supposed to be doing – and why? Devise tests specific to your procedures that they must pass.

Are your teams engaged with food safety?

Have team meetings to find out to see if people are having problems maintaining the standards. This is a great way to get really practical solutions, get people involved and help people understand other roles.

Spend time observing as well as questioning. You'd be amazed by what people know they should do; what they think they do and what actually happens when they are under pressure!

Invest in training. Cheap on-line training solutions can be ineffective and allow misconceptions to spread. Consider game-based training which is proven to be the best way to retain knowledge and understanding e.g. A Game to Train Food Safety.



Is your pest controller providing good value?



Don't accept lengthy treatments that are not solving the problem.

Get a second opinion from one of their field biologists or a food hygiene consultancy e.g. Safer Food Scores.

Can you prove due diligence?

Make sure you keep accurate records of all your monitoring checks.

Remember your EHO will understand if there are a few missing entries and would prefer this to pages of ticks when checks clearly have not been made. Even better use a cloud-based monitoring app to record your checks e.g. SFS Hub.



Make sure you detail any corrective actions when targets have not been met.

Is your EHO confident food safety is being managed?

An EHO inspection can be stressful, but by understanding the process and treating your EHO with respect, you will have the best opportunity to prove to them that you are running a safe operation. Follow these tips to help the inspection run smoothly.

- Introduce yourself and check their identification card.

A food enforcement officer may be an environmental health practitioner (EHP) - often known as an EHO - or technical officer with additional skills in food safety. They are employed by the local council.

- If you are very busy and/or short staffed, you can ask if they would mind coming back at a better time. However, if they would prefer to carry out the inspection then you must let them.

They have the right to inspect without giving notice. They have the right of entry at all reasonable times which is generally considered to be any time that food is being handled on site – not just when we are open.

- Offer them a soft drink or tea/coffee, ask why they have visited, where/what they want to see and if there is any paperwork or documents we will need to gather to show them. They have the right to see any documents relating to food safety unless they are considered to be and have been marked as 'legally privileged'
- Accompany the enforcement officer during the visit and take a pen and paper so you can make notes about things pointed out to you.
- Do not volunteer too much information unless asked but always answer the questions they have, fully and truthfully.
- At the end of the visit, ask them to summarise their findings. They may complete an inspection summary form and give you a copy.
- Make sure that you understand which items are legal requirements and which are their recommendations. You need this information so that you can prioritise your actions.
- If you do not understand something, ask. It is part of the officer's job to explain and ensure you know what is going on
- Ask if they are going to take any other action and what this may be.
- Ask if they could let you know which food hygiene rating, they are going to give.
- Find out if and when they are going to come back.
- Thank the enforcement officer for their visit, help and advice.

Cautionary note

Any guidance given in this brochure is not official and Safer Food Scores can take no responsibility if the information is used to form part of any legal or regulatory compliance for your business. However, please do get in touch if you are interested in our support services and would like to benefit from official guidance tailored to your specific circumstances.

Working with Safer Food Scores

If you are looking for food hygiene, allergen management and health and safety experts, consultants, auditors or trainers, Safer Food Scores can help. We provide food hygiene, allergen management and health and safety expertise, audits, compliance software, training courses and e-learning.

We care about your business



We are passionate about food hygiene, labelling, allergen management and health and safety and know how important it is to motivate your teams. We do have excellent software to help streamline your operations and remove needless paperwork – but most importantly, we are there to keep you up to date and to provide trusted advice.

You can contact your client manager easily so do not need to explain your problems to a call centre that knows little about you and your operations. We get in touch with you regularly to advise on forthcoming legislation and industry guidance, to check that you are delighted with our services and, if there is anything that you are struggling with, to find cost-effective solutions.

We know what we are doing

Our team has been carefully selected on the basis of their qualifications, experience, and attitude.

Our trusted advisers have been working in the regulatory and/or commercial fields for at least 10 years, as we do not feel that a recently qualified graduate is suitably experienced to be able to offer advice to your professional teams. Not knowing the law and science inside out or not having seen sufficient good and bad practice, can lead to consultants offering over-cautious and costly solutions.



We would love to work with you.



To learn more about how we can help with your compliance challenges, please contact us at:

hello@saferfoodscores.co.uk

Or call us on (