



BASILDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Please contact 01268 294280 if you would like further advice

FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Each year Basildon Council's Environmental Health professionals undertake inspections of food businesses within the Basildon District. In general terms, we are responsible for inspecting food factories, wholesalers, retailers, and caterers, including pubs, restaurants and takeaways.

There are some types of food premises which do not undergo inspection by the Council's Environmental Health Services, for instance; the [Meat Hygiene Service](#) are responsible for inspecting businesses such as licensed meat cutting plants and slaughterhouses. Contact us if you need further information about responsible inspection authorities.

Frequency of inspections

Businesses are inspected on a frequency ranging from 6 months to 2 years. Each year, we compile a list of businesses which we will be inspecting according to a "risk rating". In addition, we may carry out inspections of businesses not on this list, for example as the result of a complaint, or when a new business opens.

The "risk rating" is a score allocated to a business following inspection.

The type of issues which have to be considered when deciding on the rating include:

- the nature of the food,
- the number of customers,
- the structure and cleanliness of the premises
- the level of confidence the officer has in the management of the business (*this last criterion is the most important individual part of the score*).

The risk rating score then determines which risk category the business falls into and how often it needs to be inspected.

Businesses which are considered to be highest risk (Category A) will be subject to an inspection twice a year.

The other categories are as follows:

- Category B – once every 12 months
- Category C – once every 18 months
- Category D – once every 2 years

From April 2005, very low risk category businesses such as grocers, off licences, community halls, etc. can be assessed using a variety of methods other than inspection. Until then we will continue to inspect low risk category businesses using their existing inspection frequency.

The purpose of an inspection

A food hygiene inspection has several purposes:

- To advise on the prevention of food poisoning
- To raise awareness of food hygiene matters
- To ensure compliance with legislation.

The inspection

Wherever possible, **an officer will not make an appointment to carry out an inspection** – the purpose of the visit is to see how the business operates under normal conditions. This is likely to mean that a visit may be carried out when a food business is at its busiest, (including outside of our normal office hours).

We do of course try to minimise the inconvenience to the business, but this has to be balanced against the need to make a reasonable assessment of its operation in terms of food safety.

A full inspection is normally carried out, except where we may be investigating a complaint in which case we will use our discretion to decide how far the inspection should go.

Samples of food may be taken or surfaces swabbed for analytical purposes. In some circumstances, photographs and/or video recordings may be taken as evidence of the circumstances found.

An inspection will normally begin with a discussion between the inspecting officer and the manager/proprietor of the business, in order to establish how the business is operated. This is likely to involve looking at any paperwork that the business should have available relating to food safety.

During an inspection itself, the officer will seek to identify risks arising from the activities being carried on and the effectiveness of the food businesses' own assessment of hazards and control risks.

This will normally involve a visual inspection of the premises, and could include observation of staff practices, questioning of staff, monitoring of temperatures, etc.

Officers will also identify contraventions of the Food Safety Act and Food Hygiene and Processing Regulations and seek to have them corrected.

At the end of an inspection, the inspecting officer will brief the manager/proprietor of the business on any issues which have been identified and establish how these should be put right. Timescales for any necessary works will also be discussed.

Officers are always prepared to offer advice where this is appropriate.

Officers' powers

Following an inspection, all proprietors will receive a written report on the inspection, which will clearly indicate any works that are required by law, and may include recommendations of good practice to improve food hygiene.

We may decide to revisit to assess whether these works are completed, in which case we will advise the business that a revisit will be carried out.

Officers have the power to serve improvement notices requiring works to be carried out within a stated time period.

If there is an imminent risk to health (e.g. rat or cockroach infestation, leaking sewage, etc.) premises can be closed and food equipment seized.

FOOD SAFETY CONTRAVENTIONS ARE CRIMINAL OFFENCES IN LAW and where significant contraventions of food hygiene legislation are found, then the proprietor or manager of a food business may be taken to court and fined on conviction.

We do not take any formal action lightly and will have regard to our enforcement policy before deciding whether to take a particular course of action.

**We are always happy to give advice over the telephone or during a visit.
If you have any queries or if you are in need of advice -
Do please feel free to contact us on 01268 294280.**