

BASILDON COUNCIL FOOD SAMPLING POLICY

The Food Law (England) Code of Practice requires food authorities to prepare and publish a Sampling Policy, and make it available to businesses and consumers.

The following sets out the policy that is in place within the Basildon Borough. It has taken account of the specific requirements of this authority in the context of both regional and national priorities. Its objective is to protect public health and enhance food law enforcement.

This authority will where appropriate submit samples for examination in the following situations:

1. Where an investigation is being undertaken to ascertain food contamination and/or food poisoning incidents.
2. Where an investigation is required to follow up a complaint.
3. Where this authority has a defined statutory responsibility to sample.
4. As part of a routine Food Hygiene Intervention, to assist in the assessment of hygiene standards and procedures.
5. Where the authority is participating in EU co-ordinated Programmes
6. Where the authority is participating in other national/PHE co-ordinated Sampling Programmes.
7. Where the authority has agreed to participate in any co-ordinated programme, and surveillance sampling with other local authorities, including through the Eastern Region Food Groups.
8. Where there is an issue particularly relevant within the authority that may be related to local products, events, initiatives.

SAMPLING PROGRAMME

At the start of each year, Basildon Borough Council will prepare a sampling programme that details more specifically the authority's intended food sampling priorities. A copy can be obtained from Environmental Health Services by request.

The main aims of this programme are: -

1. To protect the consumer through the enforcement of food legislation.
2. The identification of foods that pose a hazard to the consumer because they contain significant levels of pathogenic bacteria.
3. To help evaluate temperature control, food handling, and process practices at food premises in relation to hazard analysis requirement.
4. To assist in determining whether advice or formal action may be required.
5. To assist in the assessment of the microbiological quality of food, manufactured, distributed or retailed in the authority's area.
6. To contribute to the gathering of information at regional and national level on safety of food;

We will seek to include imported foods as part of our routine sampling, with a view to achieving a minimum of 10% of the total annual food samples taken.

To fulfil these aims and objectives -

1. The authority will sample in accordance with any national, EU, Regional or County co-ordinated Sampling Programme or protocols.
2. The authority will sample and submit food for examination where it is considered appropriate, to enhance the detail of a food hygiene intervention as undertaken under the provision of the Food Law Code of Practice.
3. The authority will continue to submit food for examination where there is a reason to suspect the food has been or is likely to be associated with a food borne illness.
4. The authority will submit food for examination when it deems it appropriate to provide end product testing for surveillance purposes, and as a way of providing confidence that procedures are adequate.

ADVICE TO BUSINESSES

Wherever samples are taken, the results will be fed back to the business through the use of a written report and advice leaflet. Where, the results indicate a failure in food safety management systems (e.g. unacceptable results), Officers will liaise with the business concerned to identify where improvements could be made to improve food safety. Where appropriate, further sampling will be undertaken, and action in accordance with the service enforcement policy.