

TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



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Public Protection

Food and Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan 2022/23



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FOOD HYGIENE RATING

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Introduction

Local authorities have a duty to enforce food and animal feed safety and standards legislation, and to produce an annual service plan, setting out the arrangements in place to discharge this duty, in accordance with the Food Standards Agency's (FSAs) *Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities*. This Food and Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan (the Plan) has been produced in response to that requirement, and is designed to inform residents, the business community and other interested parties of the arrangements Torfaen County Borough Council has in place to regulate food and feed safety. It also demonstrates how these activities contribute to and support the Council's [corporate objectives](#).

The Plan sets out how the Council will ensure food and feed produced, sold, stored, distributed, and consumed in Torfaen is safe, what it says it is, and that businesses comply with food and feed law. Officers in Public Protection, provide advice, education and guidance on what the law requires, conduct interventions, investigations, sampling, and take enforcement action to secure compliance, where appropriate.

In accordance with the [FSA's Local Authority Recovery Roadmap](#), the Council resumed business-as-usual activities on a phased basis, following the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Significant Public Protection resource was diverted from food and feed regulatory activities during the pandemic to ensure local communities were protected, businesses supported, and government restrictions enforced. Planned food and feed interventions were largely held in abeyance and officers had to rapidly adapt to new ways of working.

The Council is aware of the significant [impact](#) Covid-19 has had on the hospitality sector. Some businesses have suffered irreparable damage, while others have thrived as the pandemic provided them with new opportunities or forced them to diversify, yielding positive results. Increased food prices, shortages of some commodities as a consequence of world events, increased energy costs and workforce challenges for the sector are adding to these pressures.

Since resuming business-as-usual activities, officers have reported a general reduction in food business compliance. This means inspections are taking longer and more follow-up action is required. The situation will continue to be closely monitored to identify the resource implications and ensure the public continue to be protected from any risks associated with food and feed.

Officers will support businesses wishing to export goods and continue to work collaboratively with local authorities in the Gwent region and across Wales.

The Council's Head of Public Protection is the strategic lead for the Directors of Public Protection in Wales on food and feed matters, chairs the *Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales Committee* and is a member of the Wales Feed Governance Group and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Food Advisory Panel.

Adopting a proportionate, risk-based approach to enforcement, the Council remains committed to providing the greatest possible protection for consumers and to supporting food and feed businesses in Torfaen to thrive.



Councillor Mandy Owen
Executive Member for Environment

1. Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the food and feed law enforcement service in Torfaen is:

To protect public and animal health by ensuring food and feed produced, sold, stored, distributed, and consumed in Torfaen is safe, labelled and described correctly, and that food businesses comply with food and feed law.

The team will implement the following objectives and actions to achieve the aim:

Objective 1

Improve food and feed safety and levels of compliance with food and feed law, and contribute to reducing the risk of foodborne illness, through the delivery of a programme of proactive interventions in Torfaen food businesses.

Actions to achieve objective 1:

- 1a Implement risk-based intervention programmes for food hygiene, food standards and feed
- 1b Implement microbiological and compositional food sampling plans, including for allergens, to verify compositional and health claims

Objective 2

Improve food and feed safety and levels of compliance with food and feed law, and contribute to a reduction in foodborne illness, through the delivery of reactive interventions relating to food safety, food standards and feed.

Actions to achieve objective 2:

- 2a Investigate complaints and service requests relating to food and feed safety and standards in accordance with internal procedures
- 2b Investigate cases and outbreaks of foodborne illness in accordance with Public Health Wales guidance and take action as necessary to prevent further spread in the community
- 2c Initiate and respond to food and feed incidents and alerts, liaising with the FSA and other stakeholders as necessary to protect public health
- 2d Work with partner agencies where there is local intelligence indicating potential food fraud activities or organised crime, and notify the FSA's National Food Crime Unit as appropriate

Objective 3

Support and educate businesses to help them improve food and feed safety standards

Actions to achieve objective 3:

- 3a Provide targeted advice to food and feed businesses on request, and in the case of events, to participating businesses through Torfaen's Event Safety Advisory Group
- 3b Support national food and feed safety awareness campaigns on social media
- 3c Maintain a level playing field for honest and diligent businesses by taking action to deal with unscrupulous food and feed businesses, and rogue traders

Objective 4

Raise awareness of the service, local and national food and feed safety issues, including hygiene standards in Torfaen food businesses, enabling consumers to make informed choices about where they eat and purchase food

Actions to achieve objective 4:

- 4a Issue Torfaen food businesses with food hygiene ratings for display on their premises and upload ratings data to the FSA website for publication in accordance with requirements of the statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- 4b Socialise food and feed alerts issued by the FSA as appropriate in local press and on social media
- 4c Provide consumers, businesses, and elected members with information about food and feed services

Objective 5

Provide a consistent approach to food and feed regulation

Actions to achieve objective 5

- 5a Deliver food and feed law enforcement services in accordance with the standard set out in the *Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities*
- 5b Deliver food and feed services having regard to the FSA's [Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice](#) and other official guidance, including industry guides
- 5c Produce timely data and information to the FSA about food and feed services as required
- 5d Ensure any actions identified following FSA audits are completed
- 5e Ensure officers delivering food and feed law enforcement services maintain, and where necessary, develop their competencies, meeting continual professional development (CPD) requirements set out in the *Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice*
- 5f Provide representation at local authority liaison groups, including their sub-groups and participate in national, regional and local consistency exercises as appropriate
- 5g Take a proportionate approach to enforcement in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

In March 2021, the Council adopted its Corporate Plan 2021- 2023, based around the three priorities set out in its [2016-2021 Corporate Plan](#). Unfortunately, Covid-19 disrupted many planned services in 2020/21, which was also the final year of the Corporate Plan.

In adopting these priorities, it was agreed that the Council's [Recovery Plan](#) be integrated into the Corporate Plan, and that the priorities should continue as the Council's well-being objectives.

The three priorities for the Council are:

- Ensure a clean and green county borough
- Support children and young people's wellbeing and raise educational attainment
- Support for Torfaen's most vulnerable residents

The Council believes these priorities will achieve the following outcomes:

- Cleaner and greener communities and a sustainable local environment that residents are proud of
- All young people being given the best possible chance in life by achieving a good education, and
- Healthier communities where vulnerable people are assisted to lead socially inclusive, independent lives, free from inequality.

A clean and green Torfaen

The service supports this objective by ensuring:

- food and feed businesses have adequate arrangements for the disposal of their waste and unfit food/feed does not re-enter the human or animal feed chain
- food and feed establishments are maintained in a clean and hygienic condition for the benefit of consumers
- new food and feed businesses are provided with advice to ensure they supply food and feed that is safe and legal

Raising educational attainment

The service is committed to raising educational attainment by ensuring:

- food and feed business operators are well informed and suitably trained, commensurate with the tasks they carry out

Support for Torfaen's most vulnerable residents

The service supports the most vulnerable residents:

- the young, elderly and sick are more susceptible to foodborne illness. Interventions at care homes, hospitals and schools helps prevent foodborne illness and control its risk of spread
- healthy, nutritious food is essential for health and wellbeing. The service ensures food is accurately labelled, so consumers can make informed food choices
- the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme enables the vulnerable to make informed decisions about where to eat and purchase food to stay safe

2. Background

2.1 Area Profile

Torfaen County Borough Council is a unitary local authority in South-East Wales, covering an area of 126km² (49 sq miles). It is one of five authorities in Gwent and is bordered by the county of Monmouthshire to the east, the city of Newport to the south, and the county boroughs of Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent to the south-west and north-west respectively. It has three urban centres, Pontypool, Cwmbran and Blaenavon, with a total population of around 94,000. Much of the southern part of the county borough around Cwmbran is extensively urban. The north of the county borough is greener and retains extensive areas of countryside, especially on the route to Blaenavon.



The administrative centre is located in Pontypool in the middle of the county borough. Most of the administration of Torfaen County Borough Council is conducted from Pontypool Civic Centre.



The Torfaen area is dominated by the new town of Cwmbran, which has a good mix of housing, light industry and retail areas, including a large and expanding regional shopping centre.



The towns of Pontypool and Blaenavon are older and are subject to various improvement strategies, although some areas in these towns have high levels of deprivation and ill-health. Blaenavon is a world heritage site, and this area of the district is consequently attracting new investment. The former coal-mining and iron-working town of Blaenavon in the northern part of the county borough is now a recognised UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Torfaen has a thriving catering and retail sector, and excellent road links mean that a number of local and national manufacturers have chosen to be based in the borough. The size and topography of the area means that there is little farming activity.

On 1 April 2022 there were 837 food establishments in the borough. However, this number changes constantly as businesses fold, and new businesses start up; this has been particularly noticeable in the last few years.

2.2 Organisational Structure

2.2.1 Council Structure

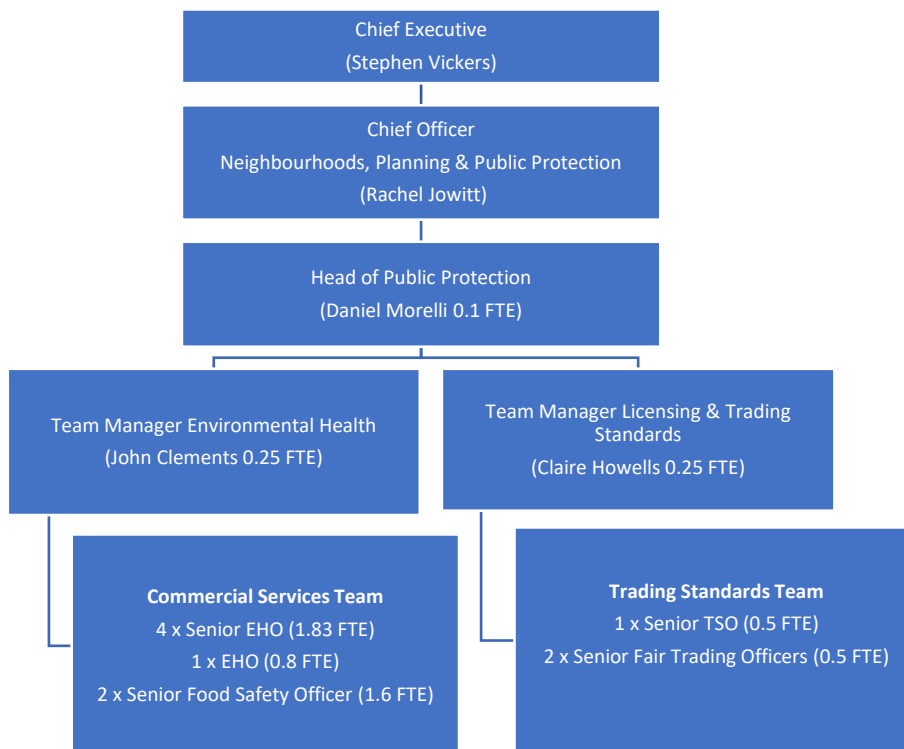
The Council has a Cabinet-style structure, comprising the Leader and Executive Members. The Executive Member for Environment, which includes Public Protection, has responsibility for food and feed services.

The Council's [Constitution](#) sets out arrangements for the discharge of functions and decision making through a scheme of delegation. Food and feed activities, including inspection and enforcement, are delegated to suitably competent, authorised officers.

2.2.2 Directorate Structure

Food and feed services are provided by officers in the Commercial Services and Trading Standards teams in the Council's Public Protection service. Public Protection sits within the Council's Neighbourhoods, Planning and Public Protection directorate.

Structure diagram showing full time equivalent (FTE) professional officers allocated to food and feed



Total resources allocated to food hygiene are 4.48 FTEs

Total resources allocated to food standards and feed are 1.25 FTEs

2.2.3 External Services

Chemical and physical analysis of feed and foodstuffs:

The Council has appointed Mr. Alastair Low of Minton, Treharne & Davies Ltd, Laboratories Division, Forest Farm Industrial Estate, Longwood Drive, Coryton, Cardiff, CF14 7HY to act as:

- Public Analyst, as required by Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990; and
- Agricultural Analyst, as required by Section 67 of the Agriculture Act 1970;

Food Examiners for microbiological examination of feed and foodstuffs and faecal samples:

Public Health Wales – Cardiff Laboratory based at Llandough Hospital for food and environmental samples and University of Wales Hospital, The Heath, Cardiff for faecal samples.

2.3 Scope of Feed and Food Services

Torfaen County Borough Council is designated as a food authority under the Food Safety Act 1990.

The Council's Commercial Services and Trading Standards teams in Public Protection are responsible for the delivery of food safety, food standards and feed services, as well as the control of infectious diseases.

Work activities include:

- Maintaining a register of food and feed business establishments
- Carrying out risk-based interventions at food and feed businesses to verify compliance with food hygiene, food standards and feed legislation in accordance with the Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice
- Approval and inspection of food businesses handling food of animal origin within scope of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 and approval of relevant feed businesses
- Investigating complaints about food (including allergens), feed and hygiene of food and feed establishments
- Microbiological food and environmental sampling
- Food and feed sampling to verify compliance with compositional and labelling requirements
- Provision of advice to businesses and consumers on food and feed issues
- Investigating cases and outbreaks of communicable disease, including food poisoning, food-borne disease, and other relevant infections
- Responding to food and feed incidents and alerts, and working with other interested parties to investigate food fraud or organised food crime
- Implementing the statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Delivering imported food and feed controls as an inland authority through sampling, inspection, and enforcement
- Issuing Export Health Certificates to businesses exporting certain foods
- Responding to planning, licensing, and event safety advisory group applications/consultations in relation to food premises and related food activities

2.4 Demands on Food and Feed Services

2.4.1 Food

As of 1 April 2022, there were 837 food businesses subject to regulatory controls located in Torfaen. The profile of these businesses is set out below and highlights catering and retail as the dominant sectors. Food Business Operators (FBOs) must register their businesses with the Council, except where the establishment requires approval. Six establishments are approved out of the 837 identified food businesses.

Food Business Profile by Premises Category - 1 April 2022	
Type of premises (by FSA category)	Number
Primary Producers	0
Manufacturers and Packers	15
Importers/Exporters	1
Distributors/Transporters	9
Retailers (including Supermarket/Hypermarket, Smaller Retailers)	202
Caterers: (including Restaurants & Cafés, Hotels & Guesthouses, Takeaways, Pubs & Clubs, Businesses providing care, Schools & Colleges, Mobile food businesses & other caterers)	615
Total	837

Food Hygiene Premises Profile by Risk Rating - 1 April 2022	
Premises Rating Category	Number
A	0
B	44
C	334
D	82
E	334
Unrated	43
Outside risk rating scheme	0
Total	837

Food Standards Premises Profile by Risk Rating - 1 April 2022	
Premises Rating Category	Number
A	4
B	215
C	543
Unrated	71
Outside risk rating scheme	0
Total	833

Under Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 relating to the production, handling, and storage of Products of Animal Origin (POAO), there are currently six approved establishments operating in Torfaen. The range of establishments consist of:

Approved Establishments - 1 April 2022	
Establishment type	Number
Cold store	1
Re-wrapping and/or re-packaging establishment	1
Minced meat and meat preparations	2
Meat products	1
Fishery products	2
Dairy products	2
Egg and egg products	1
Total	10*

- It should be noted that some establishments are approved for more than one activity

2.4.2 Feed

The service is responsible for the enforcement of animal feed legislation controlling feed quality, safety, hygiene, labelling and traceability throughout the feed chain, including importation, manufacturing, and primary production (feeding of farmed livestock and growing crops). These controls help ensure the safety of the feed and food chain. Historically, most major animal disease

outbreaks such as BSE and Foot and Mouth have been linked to animal feed. Likewise, major food incidents such as dioxins in pork have been linked to contaminated animal feed.

As of 1 April 2022, there were 110 feed businesses subject to regulatory controls in Torfaen. The profile of these businesses is set out below:

Feed Establishments - 1 April 2022	
Establishment type	Number
Manufacturer (A01-08 and R01-04)	1
Co product producer (R12)	5
Mobile mixer (R04)	
Importers	
Stores (R09)	
Distributors (A01-08, R01-03 & R05)	4
Transporter (R08)	
On farm mixer (R11)	
Pet food manufacturer (R06)	
Supplier of surplus food (R07)	9
Livestock farms (R13)	90
Arable farms (R14)	1
Total	110

In March 2022, the FSA published the following National Enforcement Priorities for animal feed enforcement services, which officers will have regard to:

- Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems
- Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems at businesses supplying former foodstuffs or co-products
- Effective monitoring of feed on farms
 - a: Examination of former foodstuffs / co-products being used for feed on farms
 - b: On-farm record keeping requirements and documented procedures
- Effective monitoring of storage arrangements at feed premises
- Verification of the accuracy of feed labelling
- Effective monitoring of consignments of feed originating from non-EU countries, at points of entry

2.4.3 External Demands on Services

Suspension of routine inspections due to Covid-19

As a consequence of Government restrictions on non-essential travel, social distancing to prevent the spread of infection and the closure of a significant proportion of food businesses, routine inspections were largely suspended during the pandemic. Officers were diverted to other duties. This was acknowledged by the FSA who issued advice to local authorities highlighting food priorities during the pandemic. Further advice was provided to local authorities by the FSA to ensure a consistent approach to recovery planning when, in May 2021, they published their Local Authority Recovery Roadmap. There was an expectation that local authority food and feed services should return (as close as possible) to business-as-usual as officers were freed-up from Covid related duties.

In common with other local authorities, due to the pandemic, Torfaen now has a backlog of inspections. In line with FSA guidance, officers have been focusing on recovery and reporting progress to the FSA at regular intervals. Progress was reported to the FSA on 1 October 2021, 28 April 2022 and most recently on 15 July 2022.

Falling food hygiene standards

Since the resumption of planned food hygiene inspections in 2021, there is evidence that food hygiene standards have deteriorated, inspections are taking longer and there is more follow-up work required. In some cases, formal enforcement action has been required. The impact of the need for increased enforcement action is that the number of inspections that can be carried out is reduced, impacting on delivery of the annual inspection programme.

Allergen control and management

Food allergies can be fatal, and an estimated 1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children have a food allergy, which accounts for around 2 million people in the UK. There have been several high-profile cases involving the deaths of teenagers following the consumption of undeclared allergens. New legislation was introduced in October 2021 relating to foods prepacked for direct sale. Generally, business compliance with new allergen labelling requirements has been found to be poor. The provision of information and assistance to businesses to help them comply with the requirements has had, and continues to have, resource implications for the service.

New officers developing competencies

New officers have been appointed to undertake food hygiene official controls. While they are developing their competencies, their authorisations are limited, which means they cannot undertake the full range of duties. It is anticipated that all officers currently employed to undertake food hygiene official controls will be assessed by the lead food officer to be competent to carry out the full range of food duties during 2022.

Out of hours working

Food business interventions are generally undertaken during office hours. However, an increasing number of food businesses, such as takeaways, only open in the evenings so the team must work flexibly to meet the demands of the service.

New business demands

The number of registered food businesses fluctuates because of new businesses opening for trade, existing businesses which cease trading, and businesses where there is a change in ownership, management and/or food activities. All new food businesses need to be inspected to assess compliance with food law and receive a food hygiene rating. It is always difficult to predict the number of new businesses that will commence trading, although it should be noted that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of new businesses registering with the Council. This impacts other areas of programmed work carried out by food hygiene and food standards officers. As of 1 April 2022, there were 43 newly registered businesses awaiting inspection in respect of food hygiene and 53 for food standards.

Statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) safeguards

The FHRS incorporates safeguards to ensure it is fair for businesses. This includes an appeals procedure, a 'right to reply' and a mechanism for requesting a re-inspection or revisit for a re-rating. The additional work these safeguards generate cannot be predicted year on year, although a fee is payable where re-visits are requested.

Improved intelligence

Better intelligence in relation to local, regional, and national food crime has increased the number of requests to work with partner agencies. Again, the impact is difficult to quantify but it can be significant and affect planned intervention programmes.

Impact of the new molecular diagnostic techniques

The Council is anticipating a significant increase in the number of confirmed cases of pathogens requiring investigation due to the introduction of new molecular testing methods in microbiology laboratories. The new (PCR) testing regime is more sensitive than traditional methods putting increased demands on the service. There are already signs of this increasing trend.

Border controls imported food

The Government [announcement](#) that physical checks on imported food at border controls posts will not commence in July 2022 as planned, is likely to impact inland authorities such as Torfaen, who carry out checks on imported foods. It is impossible to quantify the likely impact, but officers will need to be vigilant to ensure imported food does not pose a risk to consumers.

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests

Increased public awareness has led to a rise in Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests, placing increased demands on officers.

FSA transformation programmes

For several years, the FSA has been focusing on programmes to modernise how businesses are regulated. The [Operational Transformation Programme](#) and [Achieving Business Compliance](#) (ABC) Programme place increased demands on local authorities to inform this work. Increased requests for data, consultations, requests to participate in pilots have all added to pressures on already stretched food services across Wales.

2.4.4 Access to Services

Food and feed services are delivered from:

Ty Blaen Torfaen
Panteg Way
New Inn
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 0LS

Office hours are 9am - 5pm (Mon - Thurs) and 9am - 4.30pm (Fri).

Tel: 01495 762200 Fax: 01495 756198.

Some planned interventions are delivered out of office hours if necessary. The service can be contacted out of office hours, including at weekends, to deal with emergencies only, via the Council's Emergency Duty Manager, who will contact managers in Public Protection.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Fair and effective enforcement is essential to protect the economic, environmental, and social interests of the public and business. Decisions about enforcement action, and in particular the decision to prosecute, can have serious implications for food businesses and individuals. Torfaen's Public Protection service will enforce food and feed legislation, in a proportionate manner, in accordance with the principles of 'Better Regulation' set out in the [Regulators' Code](#).

The Regulators Code is based upon six broad principles:

- Regulators should carry out their activities in a way that supports those they regulate to comply and grow;
- Regulators should provide straightforward ways to engage with those they regulate and hear their views;
- Regulators should base their regulatory activities on risk;
- Regulators should share information about compliance and risk;
- Regulators should ensure clear information, guidance and advice is available to help those they regulate meet their responsibilities to comply;
- Regulators should ensure that their approach to their regulatory activities is transparent

These principles and the Council's approach to enforcement of food and feed law safety are set out in the Public Protection [Enforcement Policy](#). All enforcement action will be taken having regard to the Enforcement Policy. Wherever possible, enforcement activities will be co-ordinated with other enforcement agencies and local authorities.

The Enforcement Policy is supported by formal procedures relating to inspection, sampling, complaint handling and enforcement.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Interventions at Food and Feed Establishments

Food Hygiene Interventions

Food hygiene interventions are undertaken to ensure that food businesses are complying with the requirements of food hygiene legislation. Measures and conditions necessary to control hazards and to ensure fitness for human consumption of foodstuffs are assessed.

The FSA has provided guidance for local authorities, the ‘Local Authority Recovery Roadmap’ to assist their return to business-as-usual activities following the pandemic. This runs to April 2023 and focusses on re-starting the regulatory delivery system in line with the Food Law Code of Practice for the highest risk establishments, while providing greater flexibility for lower risk establishments. The recovery roadmap is illustrated below:



The table below illustrates the risk ratings of premises, the intervention frequencies, and the total number of food hygiene interventions to be delivered during 2022/23 having regard to the FSA's recovery roadmap:

Food Hygiene Intervention Plan 2022-23				
Premises Rating Category	Minimum Intervention Frequency	Date by which premises should have an intervention	Number of premises due an intervention	Intervention target
A	6 months	31 March 2022	0	100%
B	12 months	30 June 2022	44	100%
C with a hygiene rating of 2 or less	18 months	30 September 2022	15	100%
C with a hygiene rating of 3 or better	18 months	31 March 2023	292	100%
D with a hygiene rating of 2 or less	24 months	31 December	2	100%
E	36 months		0	N/A
*Unrated which are high priority	Within 28 days of opening	31 March 2023	21	100%
*Unrated which are low priority	Within 28 days of opening	31 March 2023	22	100%
Total planned food hygiene interventions due in 2022/23			396	100%

* The activities of unrated premises will be kept under review, which may result in them being reclassified high or low priority, prior to first inspection.

Additional Interventions

In addition to the 396 planned interventions detailed in the table above, it is estimated, based on previous years' data, that there will be an additional 130 interventions required during the year. These are a consequence of new business registrations, requests for re-ratings under the statutory food hygiene rating scheme, revisits to verify that improvements identified during initial inspections have been carried out and in response to intelligence. The implications are that a total of some **526** food hygiene interventions will be required during the year.

Food hygiene revisits

Revisits may be required to food businesses following inspections to verify that improvements have been carried out or for enforcement. An All-Wales revisit policy has been agreed, which requires all food businesses with a food hygiene rating of zero to be revisited within 28 days and all those rated 1 or 2 to be revisited within 3 months.

Requested revisits for FHRS

The impact of a low food hygiene rating on a food business can be significant, so there is provision in the legislation for businesses to request a revisit for the purpose of re-rating, where they have carried out improvements. Businesses with ratings of 3 or 4 can also request a revisit and this is sometimes the case if a business thinks they have improved sufficiently to achieve a 5 rating. As these re-rating revisits are outside the authority's programme, they are paid for by the business at a cost agreed by local authorities on an All- Wales basis.

Food Standards Interventions

Food standards interventions are delivered to ensure that food meets the requirements of food standards law, including correct presentation, composition, labelling and advertising, so as not to mislead the consumer.

The intervention plan for food standards is detailed in the table below:

Food Standards Intervention Plan 2022-23			
Premises Rating Category	Minimum Intervention Frequency	Number of premises due an intervention	Intervention target
A	12 months	4	100% (FSA Recovery Roadmap milestone)
B	24 months. No interventions required unless intelligence /information suggests that risks have increased/standards have fallen or if	98	100% (local target - No FSA Recovery Roadmap milestone)

	the establishment is otherwise considered a priority for intervention due to the risk posed		
C	Alternative enforcement strategy or intervention every five years. No interventions required unless intelligence /information suggests that risks have increased/standards have fallen or if the establishment is otherwise considered a priority for intervention due to the risk posed	112	100% (local target - No FSA Recovery Roadmap milestone)
Unrated	-	53	100% (FSA Recovery Roadmap milestone)
Total planned food standards interventions due in 2022/23		267	

Feed Interventions

Funding was removed from the local authority Revenue Support Grant in 2015 and is now managed by the FSA to fund regional delivery of feed official controls in Wales. The FSA adopts a risk-based approach to determine the number and nature of interventions to be delivered by each local authority and pays directly on delivery.

Feed Business Operators (FeBOs) who demonstrate high standards of feed safety, by taking appropriate steps to comply with the law, may have these standards recognised when determining the frequency of inspections, and therefore qualify for 'Earned Recognition'. Businesses can also earn recognition by being a compliant member of an approved industry assurance scheme, such as 'Red Tractor' or an Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) member.

The following feed interventions have been agreed for 2022/23 in Torfaen:

Premises Category	Number of premises due an intervention	Intervention target
Farm	30	100%
Co-producer	1	100%
Total planned feed interventions due in 2022/23	31	

3.2 Feed and Food Complaints

The purpose of investigating food and feed complaints, whether the product originated within the UK or elsewhere, is to:

- Provide a service to the public
- Identify and resolve problems which pose a risk to public health or where consumers may have been prejudiced
- Identify whether the complaint may be an indication of a wider national or international problem, which needs to be escalated
- Offer advice and guidance, where appropriate, to food businesses and consumers
- Prevent future complaints

Some customers contact food companies direct regarding complaints about food and feed, as a means of being compensated for their inconvenience.

The Council's policy on food and feed complaints is to investigate where there may be a genuine public health implication, or where an offence may have been committed and the complainant is willing to give evidence in Court. Customers are referred to the retailer if compensation only is being sought.

The Council has procedures for dealing with food complaints. All are acknowledged within five working days, prioritised according to risk, and investigated as appropriate without undue delay, having regard to the seriousness of the complaint and the need to preserve evidence. Anonymous complaints are not usually investigated.

Following a complaint, an officer may carry out an investigation to ascertain the facts, obtain evidence, and where necessary minimise the risk. This will often require the procurement of a food or feed sample, which would not form part of the sampling programme. Support from the Public Analyst and/or Public Health Wales laboratory may be needed to complete investigations, which could have financial implications for the service.

It is difficult to predict the volume of complaints that will be received in 2022/2023. Based on the number of complaints received over the last four years, it is estimated that for the period 2022/23 the following numbers of complaints will be received.

Type of complaint	Number
Food hygiene (premises)	36
Food complaint (safety)	22
Food (other)	15
Food complaint (standards)	13
Feed complaint	0

Note, the above table does not include service requests.

3.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

Although the Council currently has no formal agreements in place to act as a Primary Authority for any food businesses, officers support the Primary Authority scheme and have regard to the relevant principles and guidance when dealing with any food business in a Primary Authority partnership. Officers recognise the role Primary Authorities play in ensuring a consistent approach to enforcement. Primary Authority training, including the specific arrangements for inspection and enforcement, has been provided to officers to ensure they understand the approach regulators are required to take as enforcing authorities.

All officers have access to the Primary Authority website and will have regard to Primary Authority principles. Before undertaking planned interventions, they routinely check the online Primary Authority Register to identify whether the business has a Primary Authority partnership and, if so, whether there is a specific inspection plan or assured guidance that they must consider. Officers will feed back findings as required to both the Primary Authority and the business.

If enforcement action is warranted, officers will ensure they notify the Primary Authority before taking action within the designated time period or retrospectively in the event of an imminent risk to health being identified.

The Council is the 'originating authority' for food producers, food manufacturers and other food businesses which supply food outside of Torfaen, and will provide advice to relevant businesses on legal compliance. In addition, regard to any information or advice received from home and/or originating authorities elsewhere will be considered. Officers will liaise with the home and/or originating authority of any business where identified non-compliance appears to be associated with the business' policies and procedures.

The Council will respond to all reasonable requests for information and/or assistance from other authorities about locally produced food sold outside Torfaen, which is the subject of a complaint.

3.4 Advice to Business

Providing good quality, timely advice to businesses will continue to be a priority, particularly in respect of EU Exit. It fulfils the Council's obligations under the Regulators' Code to assist businesses to grow.

- Routinely, officers will advise businesses of the action they need to take to enable them to achieve a higher Food Hygiene Rating
- Ad-hoc advice will be provided on request, and where necessary, businesses will be advised how they can access specialist support
- Further improvements will be made to the business advice available on the Council's web pages
- Details of what to expect during an inspection are included on the reverse of inspection reports, which are left onsite following an inspection, together with the officer's contact details

- Advice is generally provided on correspondence issued following interventions. As well as detailing contraventions and legal requirements, best practice advice is provided.
- When new legislation is introduced, targeted information is provided to businesses by the most effective means, e.g., via mail shot, email
- Business advice on food standards is offered to all businesses at the point of contact, i.e., via telephone, during inspection or post inspection by advice leaflet or by letter.

It is difficult to predict the number of requests for advice that will be received each year. Factors such as the introduction of new legislation and/or guidance or an influx of new businesses may increase the number of requests received. However, based on the trends over the last four years, it is estimated that some 160 requests for business advice will be received across food hygiene, food standards and feed during the year.

3.5 Feed and Food Sampling

Food and feed sampling is undertaken in accordance with the Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice, the Council's sampling policy, and sampling procedures.

Where samples fail to meet the required standards, investigations are carried out to identify the cause of the failure, and appropriate action taken to ensure the safety and quality of food products in the food chain.

Sampling is achieved by examination and analysis of foods to ensure they meet standards for microbiological safety, labelling, chemical and compositional quality, and may be taken:

- as part of a planned survey
- where a complaint has been received requiring further investigation
- for enforcement purposes, where there are concerns about food safety practices identified during an intervention or from intelligence received
- as part of a national, cross regional or locally co-ordinated sampling project
- where there is an alleged or confirmed report of food poisoning forming an essential part of a full investigation of the cause and means of control
- as part of an FSA funded imported food control or other co-ordinated sampling programme
- for Home and Originating Authority samples;
- for process monitoring and verification;
- as directed by the FSA following notification of food safety incidents and food alerts for action

Annual sampling programmes are drawn up and implemented to reflect the number, nature and risk ratings of the food businesses in Torfaen, taking account of Originating Authority obligations, national and regionally coordinated sampling programmes.

Food Hygiene Sampling

Each year the Council receives an allocation from Public Health Wales for microbiological analysis of food samples and develops a sampling plan. The plan is informed by priorities identified by the Welsh Food Microbiological Forum, and agencies such as the FSA, Public Health Wales, and Public Health England.

The Welsh Food Microbiological Forum was established to coordinate the sampling and examination of ready-to-eat foods and the centralised collection of results for the whole of Wales. Each year a 'Shopping Basket' survey of products is agreed which are sampled across Wales. Participation in this survey helps to identify non-compliant foods, provides useful intelligence, and enables action to be taken to protect public health where unsafe products are identified.

As the Council emerges from the pandemic, resources will be focused on addressing the backlog of inspections. Microbiological sampling will therefore only be carried out reactively in 2022/23. A proactive sampling plan will be developed later in the year.

Food Standards Sampling

The Council has a limited budget for food standards sampling and will proactively bid for additional funding for this work when opportunities arise. Priorities are identified having regard to local and national intelligence, risks to consumers in terms of safety or economic loss, data from the previous year's sampling programme, and emerging risks and priorities identified by local and national intelligence.

Torfaen will continue to support operation OPSON, a global initiative jointly coordinated by Europol - INTERPOL focusing on counterfeit and substandard food, and the organised crime networks behind this illicit trade. In the UK, activities are co-ordinated by the FSA's National Food Crime Unit (NFCU).

The 2022-2023 food standards sampling plan is at Appendix 1

Feed Sampling

Local authority funding for feed sampling is allocated by the FSA. Sampling is focused at ports of entry therefore there are no plans to sample animal feed in Torfaen during 2022/23

3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

Individual Cases of Food Poisoning and Foodborne Illness

Officers work closely with Public Health Wales to investigate reported cases of food related infectious diseases in accordance with documented procedures. The method of response and

investigation varies according to risk and is based on the nature of the illness and causative organism. The response may be by visit, telephone, or postal questionnaire.

Outbreaks of Foodborne Illness

In addition to the ongoing investigation of sporadic cases of foodborne illness, officers also identify and investigate outbreaks. An outbreak is defined as illness affecting two or more people, who share a common exposure factor linked by time, place, or person. Sometimes outbreaks are caused by suspected Norovirus where the most common mode of transmission is either person to person or environmental contamination, rather than foodborne transmission. Considerable work is undertaken to support educational and care home settings, particularly during the winter months to minimise the disruption caused by these viral infections.

Outbreaks of foodborne illness occur only occasionally. In the event of an outbreak, officers act in accordance with the Public Health Wales *Outbreak Control Plan*, which sets out the approach to managing all communicable disease outbreaks and is followed by all 22 local authorities in Wales.

The Plan requires designation of a named Lead Officer for Communicable Disease in each local authority. Torfaen has a nominated lead officer for Communicable Disease who is supported by other suitably qualified, competent officers in carrying out investigations.

In the case of an outbreak, the Lead Officer for Communicable Disease will be a core member of the Outbreak Control Team (OCTs) and will have defined responsibilities, including contacting and interviewing affected individuals, taking samples, carrying out investigations at implicated food premises, and attending OCT meetings. Depending on the scale and type of outbreak, the investigations can be resource intensive and impact on other planned work.

The investigation of cases and outbreaks of foodborne illness routinely includes: -

- The receipt and verification of laboratory confirmed isolates from Public Health Wales Microbiological Laboratories (via Tarian) and unconfirmed reports of food poisoning from medical practitioners, members of the public, cases, employers, other local authorities
- Telephone, and less frequently, face to face interviews with cases, close contacts and the provision of infection control advice;
- Managing exclusions of cases and contacts from the workplace, schools, and health care settings;
- Liaison with GP surgeries, hospitals, Public Health Wales, and other stakeholders during investigations for the purposes of identifying the source of infection and preventing onward transmission;
- Undertaking site visits to apply controls and preventive interventions;
- Managing the collection and submission of faecal samples;
- The collection, analysis and reporting of data relating to foodborne illness;
- The investigation, management, and control of outbreaks of communicable disease where food or water is, or is thought to be, the vehicle of infection.
- Taking the lead on, and contributing to, local and national communicable disease initiatives and surveillance programmes

It is difficult to estimate the number of cases or outbreaks of food related infectious disease for investigation in 2022/23. However, based on the last four years data, the following estimate is provided:

Communicable Disease 2022-2023 (based on last 4 years data)	
Type of investigation	Number
Foodborne illness notifications	225
Number of outbreaks/incidents	40
Number of service requests	36

3.7 Feed/Food Safety Incidents

A food incident occurs when concerns around the safety or quality of food (and/or feed) may require action to protect consumers.

Incidents broadly fall into two categories:

- contamination of food or animal feed in processing, distribution, retail, and catering
- environmental pollution incidents such as fires, chemical/oil spills, and radiation leaks

The Council has arrangements in place to respond to food alerts for action and food safety incidents communicated by the FSA. Food and feed officers subscribe to the FSA's *Smarter Communications* system and as a result receive food alerts directly via email. The FSA issues three types of food alert:

- Food Alerts for Action
- Product Recall Information Notices (PRINs)
- Allergy Alerts that provide information directly to the consumer

A Product Withdrawal Information Notice or a Product Recall Information Notice is issued where a solution to the problem has been put in place. The product has been, or is being, withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers, for example.

A Food Alert for Action is issued where intervention by enforcement authorities is required. In the case of food alerts requiring action, the team will ensure that all actions specified are taken in line with the advice given by the FSA. Officers will also follow documented procedures, outlining operational arrangements for dealing with such incidents in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. Response to the alerts may involve contacting or visiting premises, where an implicated food product is likely to be on sale.

Where officers become aware of a serious localised incident, or a wider food safety problem, they will notify the FSA in accordance with the requirements set out in the Food Law Code of Practice.

Should a feed incident occur in Torfaen, contact will be made with the FSA immediately. The nature and scale of the incident will be established as soon as possible to ensure that any feed still in circulation is detained. Feed safety incidents will take priority over routine inspections and sampling activities.

Whilst it is difficult to predict the number of food/feed incidents that are received in any given year, these investigations can potentially have a significant impact on the planned intervention programmes. In previous years, the number of incidents requiring local authority action has varied.

3.8 Liaison with other Organisations

Liaison is an appropriate mechanism for ensuring consistency between enforcers, for sharing good practice, for sharing information, and for informing other enforcers of potentially difficult situations.

The main stakeholders for food and feed services are: -

- Food Standards Agency
- Directors of Public Protection Wales - Food Safety Expert Panel;
- Directors of Public Protection Wales - Communicable Disease Expert Panel;
- Wales Heads of Trading Standards Food Panel; Food and Agriculture Panel
- Directors of Public Protection Wales Regional Liaison Group
- Gwent Food Group
- Gwent Regional Feed Officer
- Welsh Food Microbiological Forum
- Wales Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Steering Group.
- Liaison with professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Chartered Institute of Trading Standards, the Royal Society of Health, the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene
- Public Health Wales, Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales.
- Office for Product Safety and Standards
- Advisory groups, e.g., National Food Hygiene Focus Group.
- Liaison with other Council services, such as Business Rates, Planning and Building Control to inspect and review applications;
- Welsh Government
- Local Government Data Unit
- Public Health Wales, including Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, microbiologists, laboratories at Llandough and the Heath Hospital
- Local Health Board
- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- Centre for Radiation and Chemical & Environmental Hazards
- Public analyst laboratories - Minton Treharne and Davies, Cross Hands and Cardiff
- Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales Committee
- Welsh Water in respect of mains water disconnections

3.9 Feed and Food Safety and Standards Promotional Work and other Non-Official Control Interventions

The Service will participate in promotional activities whenever these are appropriate to local needs and priorities, and where resources permit, but not at the expense of the other food and feed safety and standards activities such as inspections, complaint investigations, etc. Consequently, it is difficult to predict the resource implication for promotional activities.

The Council remains committed to continuing to promote the FHRS and aims to increase use of social media and the Council's website to promote food safety messages, and where resources permit, will make use of any toolkits produced by the FSA for this purpose.



One of the FSA promotional campaigns supported in 2022 is food safety in connection with the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations, when the country enjoyed a four-day bank holiday and a proliferation of public events and street parties.

It is of interest that the FSA's new 5-year strategy has taken account of growing public concern about health, and the sustainability and affordability of food. Their vision for the food system for the next five years is that:

- Food is safe
- Food is what it says it is
- Food is healthier and more sustainable

As a signatory to the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Charter, Torfaen County Borough Council is committed to making sustainable development a central organising principle of its activities. In 2022/23, the Council will consider how food and feed services can contribute to the sustainability and healthier food agendas, with a view to developing a Plan setting out proposals for action in 2023/24.

4. Resources

4.1 Financial allocation

The budget for official food and feed controls in 2022-2023 is £343,655, broken down as follows:

Food Service budget	
Expenditure	Budget
Staffing	£327,885
Travel and subsistence	£2,015
Training & development	£1,000
Supplies and services	£10,678
Sampling	£2,077
Total	£343,655

The budget for official food controls has increased since 2019/20 (the most recent Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS) report) because of increased officer resource allocated to food hygiene.

Feed funding was removed from the local authority Revenue Support Grant in Wales in April 2015 to enable a regional delivery model to be established and more effective targeting of resources at area of highest risk. The Council is committed to the regional delivery model and has undertaken inspections for other local authorities in the Gwent region to ensure the success of the model.

Funding for feed official controls is now held by the FSA, who allocate it to local authorities based on the number and type of premises inspected. The local authority feed work plan is agreed with the FSA annually. It is anticipated that Torfaen will receive approximately £4,666 of feed funding from the FSA in 2022/23.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

The staffing allocation for food and feed law enforcement and related matters, including strategic management and administrative support is 6.08 FTEs:

- 1 Head of Public Protection 0.1 FTE
- 1 Environmental Health Manager 0.25 FTE
- 1 Licensing and Trading Standards Manager 0.25 FTE
- 4 Senior Environmental Health Practitioners 1.83 FTE
- 1 Environmental Health Practitioners 0.8 FTE
- 2 Senior Food Safety Officers 1.6 FTE
- 1 Senior Trading Standards Officer 0.5 FTE

- 2 Senior Fair Trading Officers 0.5 FTE
- 1 Administrative Support 0.25 FTE

The Council's Head of Public Protection is the Directors of Public Protection Wales' strategic lead for food and feed matters, chairs the Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales Committee and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Food Advisory Committee.

The Environmental Health Manager and the Licensing and Trading Standards Manager are not competent food officers, but have an important role, managing staff, overseeing and reporting on service delivery.

There are three officers competent and authorised to deliver the full range of official food safety and hygiene controls, including inspections of high-risk businesses. The remaining officers undertake official food control duties as per their current qualification and authorisation status.

There are three officers competent to undertake the full range of food standards official controls, which equates to 0.86 FTE officer. Two food officers who ordinarily deliver food hygiene official controls completed food standards training in 2021/22.

In respect of feed, there is one competent officer, which equates to approximately 0.13 FTE competent officers delivering official feed controls.

The initial approval of premises subject to product specific legislation is restricted to those authorised officers who have undertaken training relevant to those premises and are deemed competent by the Lead Officer for Food Hygiene. Currently, three officers are authorised to undertake approved premises inspections.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

The Council will comply with the requirements of the Food and Feed Law Codes of Practice in relation to staff training and the qualifications of officers and contractors. Currently, most officers are required to complete 20 hours CPD per annum.

Torfaen Council has a staff appraisal scheme in place which offers an opportunity to:

- Review achievements and identify barriers to achieving targets during the previous year
- Agree key tasks and objectives for the year ahead
- Assess core competencies and areas for development, using the FSA's pro-forma based on its Competency Framework
- Identify training and development needs to ensure the Council has a competent workforce and support career development

In addition to regular team briefings, where matters of concern and consistency are discussed, lead officers audit the work of authorised officers and provide feedback.

Food and feed officers have access to up-to-date reference material, through:

- The FSA's Smarter Communications database (RIAMS)

- Online courses delivered through the FSA
- Peer to peer discussion on Knowledge Hub
- Dedicated shared team folders and access to the internet

Development opportunities arise throughout the year and officers are encouraged to attend training appropriate to their role. Examples include:

- FSA funded training
- Training offered by professional bodies e.g., CIEH, CTSI
- National consistency training exercises provided by the FSA

The training programme agreed for the current year is outlined in the table below, although further opportunities may arise:

Food and Feed Officer Training and Development Plan 2022-2023			
Topic	Provider	Duration	Information
Imported Food	FSA	2 days	Imported food controls
Imported Food (E Learning)	FSA	1 day	Imported food controls
FHRS Consistency	FSA	0.5 days	National consistency exercise FHRS
Vacuum packing	CIEH	0.5 days	Hazards, risks and controls
HACCP	FSA	1 day	Principles, application and assessment of HACCP
General Food Law Update	FSA	2 days	Overview of food hygiene and food standards legislation including application and case studies
Allergens	FSA	2 days	Includes new PPDS requirements, use of precautionary labelling, risk assessment and case studies

Food Sampling	FSA	0.5 days	Roles and responsibilities, informal and formal sampling for analysis and examination, interpretation of results and enforcement options
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5. Quality Assessment

5.1 Quality Assessment and Internal Monitoring

Internal monitoring is carried out to inform training and development needs and promote consistency. The Team Manager Environmental Health, Team Manager Licensing and Trading Standards, and lead officers for food hygiene and food standards all have a role in internal monitoring. The lead officers carry out qualitative internal monitoring, highlighting any issues of concern to officers and the appropriate team manager. Quantitative internal monitoring is the responsibility of team managers, supported by lead officers as necessary.

A work procedure has been developed for internal monitoring, which includes checks on inspection records and reactive work, peer review, consistency exercises to assess officer competence and compliance with statutory requirements, guidance, internal procedures, good enforcement practice and customer care.

Monthly performance reports are produced to compare performance against service plan targets.

The Team Manager Licensing and Trading Standards is responsible for verifying the number of feed interventions undertaken and for the accuracy of claims for funding to the FSA. Qualitative monitoring of Torfaen's feed service is the responsibility of the Regional Lead Feed Officer.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The following KPIs have been identified for food and feed law enforcement services, with performance against these reported quarterly to the Council's Senior Corporate Improvement and Scrutiny Officer.

- Percentage of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards (PAM/023)
- Percentage of planned food hygiene interventions at higher-risk food businesses (category A, B and non-broadly compliant C rated) achieved

The following performance indicators (PIs) have been identified for reporting quarterly to the Head of Public Protection:

- Percentage of planned food standards interventions at targeted establishments (high-risk and priority unrated) achieved (cumulative)
- Percentage of planned food hygiene interventions at food businesses achieved (cumulative)
- Percentage of food hygiene rating appeals determined within 21 days
- Percentage of food complaints and service requests responded to within 5 working days (cumulative)
- Percentage of FSA audit recommendations completed
- Percentage of food related infectious disease notifications responded to within Public Health Wales target timescales

6. Review

6.1 Review Against the Service Plan

During the pandemic, food hygiene services were largely held in abeyance. Officers responded to food matters of public health significance and any other matters of immediate concern.

In 2021/22, the Council delivered food hygiene interventions at the following:

5 A rated businesses

19 B rated businesses

38 C rated businesses

10 D rated businesses

1 E rated businesses

14 new food businesses

Six businesses were subject to voluntary closure, six Improvement Notices and three Remedial Action Notices were served.

In March 2021, the Council commenced a telephone survey, targeting all food businesses in the borough to obtain information on their food operations throughout the pandemic, and to establish whether they had introduced any changes that could increase food safety risks.

The findings of the survey are summarised below:

- 406 (60%) of all food businesses in Torfaen, including 94 (84%) of 112 newly registered food businesses responded to the survey.
- 100 (32%) of food businesses that had previously been inspected by the Council had closed, of which 28 (28%) reported that they had permanently ceased trading. The majority of the 100 food businesses are categorised as restaurant/caterers/others and are subject to certain restrictions on opening.
- 212 (68%) food businesses that have previously been inspected by the Council were trading at the time of the survey. However, more than half (56%) of these had closed at least once during the past year.

- 31 (11%) of 284 food businesses that have previously been inspected by the Council reported they had changed the type of food they sell in the past year.
- 102 (36%) of 284 food businesses that have previously been inspected by the Council reported they had changed the way they sell food in the past year, most of which related to introducing collection or delivery services.
- 40 (43%) of newly registered food businesses had not commenced trading and 17 (18%) had closed for a period during the year.

In 2021/22, the following food standards interventions were carried out:

- On-site inspections of all 5 A rated food businesses, in advance of the FSA Recovery Roadmap milestone of June 2022.
- 78 interventions at B rated businesses
- 96 interventions at C rated businesses
- 85 on-site inspections of new businesses (138 new businesses had registered with the Council during the year).

In 2021/22, the Council participated in a number of food standards sampling initiatives, including operation OPSON, an international initiative which focused on sampling fish from takeaway establishments. Fraudulent labelling of seafood for economic gain is widespread around the world. The findings of fish sampling in Torfaen revealed that of the five samples procured for 'Cod' speciation analysis, all were deemed to be satisfactory, with no misdescription of Cod found at the five food establishments visited.

Other sampling initiatives included:

- Almond substitution in Indian takeaway meals
- Presence of peanut allergen in Chinese takeaways
- Misdescribed/substituted ham in non-prepacked pizzas
- Dairy free alternative drinks at cafes/coffee houses
- Informal sampling of manufactured foods, where the Council is the Originating Authority

New allergen labelling legislation was introduced in October 2021, requiring all food products prepacked for direct sale to have a label listing full ingredients and highlighting any of the 14 major allergens it contains. The Council reminded over 170 local food businesses of the new requirements through targeted guidance and advice. Further, officers assisted colleagues at Caerphilly County Borough Council in developing an award-winning, multi-lingual food allergen awareness toolkit, which was subsequently recognised nationally as good practice.

In respect of feed, 21 feed inspections were carried out in 2021/22 against a target of 22. This generated income of approximately £5,600 for the Council.

6.2 Identification of any Variation from the Service Plan

The Council's progress in delivering food services against the targets set out in the Local Authority Recovery Roadmap will continue to be reported to the FSA. Progress reports were provided on 1 October 2021, 28 April 2022 and most recently on 15 July 2022.

Since April 2022, internal reviews have identified that business compliance with food law requirements has reduced. This trend is being observed across England and Wales, and means officers are having to spend longer at food establishments, more legal notices are being served and more businesses are subject to follow-up and formal enforcement action. This, along with staff absences, impacts productivity and may impact the Council's ability to meet the requirements of the Recovery Plan without additional resources. The FSA has been advised of these issues.

The Head of Public Protection is responsible for ensuring appropriate action to mitigate risks associated with any shortfalls in performance is identified, implemented, and where necessary, escalated to the Chief Officer Neighbourhoods, Planning and Public Protection. The Head of Public Protection is considering a number of mitigating actions to support recovery, which include:

- The offer of overtime to officers for additional food hygiene interventions
- Use of a contractor to carry out food hygiene interventions
- More regular work reviews by team managers to monitor performance
- Identification of a 'duty officer' to deal with reactive food hygiene work enabling other officers to focus solely on delivering planned interventions
- Return of officer seconded to manage Test, Trace, Protect contact tracing service to food duties

6.3 Areas for Improvement

In 2015, the Council's food law enforcement service was audited by the FSA. The Action Plan arising from that audit is still open, although some of the recommendations have since been implemented.

The Council is committed to the continual improvement of services and will ensure appropriate action is taken to implement any outstanding audit recommendations. The following areas have been identified for improvement in 2022/23:

- Consider how food and feed services can contribute to the sustainability and healthier food agendas, with a view to developing a plan setting out proposals for action in 2023/24
- Continue to develop food hygiene officer competencies to enable more officers to undertake the full range of food hygiene interventions, including inspections of approved establishments
- Continue work to ensure the accuracy of the feed premises database
- Provide a programme of legal training to officers to increase their confidence and competence in undertaking formal enforcement action
- Review and update the Council's website to ensure consumers and businesses have access to good quality, accurate advice and information about food and feed services
- Respond to government and FSA consultations on food and feed matters as appropriate
- Work with the Torfaen Business Direct Project to develop and implement business satisfaction surveys to obtain feedback on interactions with food and feed services

Food Standards Sampling Plan 2022/23

Food Standards Sampling Programme 2022/2023

Date	Survey	Estimated No. of samples	Notes
April 2022- March 2023 (inclusive)	HOME AUTHORITY – Torfaen-based food manufactures.	14	As part of routine food standards inspections and other official controls, food samples will be procured from Home/Originating Authority food businesses.
April 2022- May 2022	ALLERGENS – Presence of egg in meals ordered from take away establishments. CHINEESE TAKEAWAYS	10	
April 2022- May 2022	ALLERGENS – Presence of peanuts in meals ordered from take away establishments. INDIAN TAKEAWAYS	10	
April 2022- May 2022	ALLERGENS – Presence of milk in meals ordered from take away establishments. KEBAB TAKEAWAYS	10	
October 2022	DAIRY-FREE ALTERNATIVES IN CAFES/COFFEE HOUSES	5	
To be confirmed	MILK ALLERGEN IN VEGAN BISCUIT PRODUCTS	5	