

Herefordshire Council - Scores on the Doors Scheme Policy

Rating Scheme for Food Businesses in the Counties of Worcestershire and Herefordshire

Introduction

Local authorities have a duty under food safety legislation to inspect food businesses in their areas to ensure that food hygiene standards are maintained. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 has introduced the opportunity for local authorities to provide this information to the public. This document provides information to businesses, consumers and officers on the way in which we will make the information available.

Aims

The overall aim of the scheme is to improve food safety and hygiene standards among businesses providing food and drink to consumers living, working or visiting Worcestershire or Herefordshire.

The aims of the proposed scheme are:

- To provide consumers with a user-friendly way to access the information they need to make informed choices about where to eat in the two Counties.
- To encourage food businesses where deficiencies are found to improve their standards of food hygiene leading to safer food.
- To ensure that those food businesses achieving consistently high standards of food hygiene are publicly recognised and rewarded.

Currently there is no national scheme or format for publishing information about individual businesses. Our scheme involves publishing the results of recent inspections on our internet sites (**links will be available from 28th January 2008**) and providing a certificate to premises which they may choose to display showing their 'score' in the form of a star rating. This document is designed to inform users about the background to the system.

Consultation

As responsible councils we have consulted to ascertain the views of those groups affected by this scheme.

Food hygiene inspections

All food businesses are rated for food safety by qualified officers during routine inspections and inspections following complaints, using a national scheme. Each business is scored against 8 main criteria, 3 of which are under the direct control of the business and impact on food safety standards. They are:

1. Food hygiene and safety
2. Structural requirements
3. Confidence in management

It is therefore considered reasonable to base any score on these 3 criteria. The better the business, the lower the combined scores for these three criteria will be.

Rating methods

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Council's scheme turns the total score for a business (see above and below) into a simple star rating – from 0 stars for the worst performing businesses to 5 stars for the best.

Score	Level of Compliance	Number of Stars
Up to 5	Excellent	*****
6 - 15	Very Good	****
16 - 25	Good	***
26 - 30	Broadly Compliant	**
31- 45	Poor	*
46 +	Needs improvement	none

Excellent – Very high standards of food safety management. Fully compliant with food safety legislation

Very Good – Good food safety management. High standards of compliance with food safety legislation

Good – Good level of legal compliance. Some more effort may be required

Broadly Compliant – broadly compliant with food safety legislation. More effort required to meet all legal requirements

Poor – Poor level of compliance with food safety legislation, much more effort required

Needs improvement – A general failure to comply with legal requirements. Little or no appreciation of food safety. Major effort required.

Legal implications

The publication of ratings could have a very negative impact upon the turnover and profitability of those food businesses with a poor score. However the Council is obliged to disclose information held on any business under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The proposed scheme provides the information in a format which can be simply accessed and interpreted by consumers so that they may make an informed choice about where to purchase food.

Re-rating

We will revise the rating of food premises, if appropriate, when we visit. This may be for a number of reasons including full inspections, to check compliance with legal notices, on complaint or to carry out a check on food safety management systems. We will always publish the most recent rating, which will reflect the conditions found at the time of the visit and the track record of the business. Further information on the frequency of inspection of food businesses and the rating policy can be found on the Food Standards Agency website.

Scope of the scheme

Ultimately the aim is to apply the scheme to all food businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Initially the majority of caterers will be involved in the scheme. We expect a national scheme to be

published in the next year or two and we will revise our scheme to take account of any such scheme when it is published.

Need for consistency in inspections

Any scoring system needs to be fair, robust and consistent. Consistency meetings and exercises take place within each Council and between authorities in Worcestershire and Herefordshire. Consistency will be actively monitored and any problems addressed.

Business ownership changes

A change of ownership may result in standards improving or falling. We will endeavour to only publish scores relating to current owners and to inspect new businesses when they register with us. It is the responsibility of businesses to inform us of changes and to maintain an up-to-date registration with us.

Appeals procedure

Businesses that wish to discuss the results of an inspection are encouraged to do so by contacting the officer concerned or the Principal Environmental Health Officer on 01432 261670. If informal discussion fails to resolve the issue a business may formally appeal their rating by writing to:

Commercial Manager
Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service
PO Box 233
Hereford HR1 2ZF

Where the appeal is upheld and the original score is judged incorrect following the investigation, an amended score will be given.

Comments

We are interested to hear your views about the scheme as we will periodically review it.

Any comments should be sent to:

Mr D Stacey
Principal Environmental Health Officer
Herefordshire Council
PO Box 233
Hereford HR1 2ZF

Emailed to drs@herefordshire.gov.uk

Telephone 01432 261670

Faxed to 01432 261982

Or submitted via our webpage www.herefordshire.gov.uk