Food hygiene rating scheme

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The scheme helps you choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving you clear information about the business' hygiene standards. We run the scheme in partnership with the Food Standards Agency.

The scheme gives businesses a rating from 5 to 0 which is displayed at their premises and online so you can make more informed choices about where to buy and eat food.

- 5 - Hygiene standards are very good
- 4 - Hygiene standards are good
- 3 - Hygiene standards are generally satisfactory
- 2 - Some improvement is necessary
- 1 - Major improvement is necessary
- 0 - Urgent improvement is required

The scheme is set out in law in Wales and Northern Ireland but display of the rating sticker is voluntary in England.

Understanding Ratings

A food safety officer inspects a business to check that it follows food hygiene law so that food is safe to eat.

The rating shows how well the business is doing overall, based on standards found at the time of inspection. It is the responsibility of the business to comply with food hygiene laws at all times. The ratings can be found online and on stickers which are displayed at business premises. The back of the sticker and the online rating will also show the date of the inspection.

Ratings are typically given to places where food is supplied, sold or consumed, such as:
Our proposed budget is taking shape but there's an opportunity for you to have a say. Business and budget proposals are just a part of the work we do. As we develop the budget, you can have your say. Just follow the link below.

At the inspection, the officer will check the following three elements:

1. How hygienically the food is handled - how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored
2. The physical condition of the business - including cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation, pest control and other facilities
3. How the business manages ways of keeping food safe, looking at processes, training and systems to ensure good hygiene is maintained.

The officer can then assess the level of confidence in standards being maintained in the future.

The food hygiene rating scheme does not provide information on the following factors:

- Quality of Food
- Customer Service
- Culinary skill
- Presentation
- Comfort

The rating scale

The hygiene standards found at the time of inspection are then rated on a scale:

- 5 is top of the scale, this means the hygiene standards are very good and fully comply with the law
- 0 is at the bottom of the scale, this means urgent improvement is necessary

To get the top rating, businesses must do well in all three elements which are referenced above. If the top rating is not given, the officer will explain to the business the necessary actions they can take to improve their hygiene rating.

Business which are given low ratings must make urgent or major improvements to hygiene standards. The food safety officer has several enforcement options available as well as giving advice and guidance to make sure these improvements are made.

Finding a rating

Businesses in England do not have to display their rating at their premises but are encouraged to do so.

To check a Hertsmere Score rating please [click here](#).
There may be temporary differences between the rating displayed at a business and online rating for which there are valid reasons, such as:

- The business has appealed its latest rating and is awaiting the result
- The local authority is in the process of uploading the new rating to our website

**Frequency of inspections**

A new rating is given each time a business is inspected by a food safety officer from the business's local authority.

Each local authority plans a programme of inspections every year. The frequency of inspections depends on the potential risk to public health.

The assessment takes account of the following factors:

- Type of food that is handled
- The number and type of customers, for example vulnerable groups
- Types of processes carried out before the food is sold or served
- Hygiene standards seen on the day of the last inspection

Businesses that pose a higher risk are inspected more often than businesses that pose a lower risk, for example a small retailer selling a range of prepacked foods that need to be refrigerated. The time between inspections varies from six months for the highest risk businesses to two years for lower risk businesses. For some very low risk businesses, the interval between inspections may be longer than two years, however there may be some exceptions to this.

In between inspections, local authorities may also monitor businesses in other ways to ensure they are maintaining hygiene standards. If these checks reveal anything that might indicate that hygiene standards have deteriorated, the officer will carry out an inspection and the business will get a new rating.

If the local authority receives complaints or new information about a business that they are not due to inspect, and this suggests hygiene standards are not being maintained, the local authority will investigate and may inspect the business and give it a new hygiene rating.

**Where can I get further information?**

Read more about the [scheme](#).

See also:

- [A guide for consumers](#)
- [A guide for business](#)

[Comments, compliments and complaints form](#)