



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Food Safety Service

Plan 24/27

Food
Hygiene
Rating

Food
Hygiene

SAFE
FOOD

Imported
Food
Control

Infection
Control

Coaching
& Advice



Food Safety Service Plan

Statutory Official Food Controls

April 2024 - March 2027

Preface

This Service Plan sets out how Ipswich Borough Council intends to provide an effective food safety service that meets the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement. It covers the functions carried out by authorised officers of the Food Safety Team under the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990, the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and relevant retained EU regulations.

1. Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Our aims and objectives are:

- To work in cooperation with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as the national food safety regulator by following the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice and Food Law Practice Guidance
- To ensure food business operators run successful businesses, fully compliant with food hygiene law whilst incorporating good practice
- To participate in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) to enable members of the public to make informed choices about where they eat or purchase food
- To educate both food businesses and consumers, to ensure safe and healthy food contributes to the health and well-being of the community
- To provide businesses and consumers with advice and assistance
- To prevent the spread of infectious diseases in homes, workplaces, and schools
- To ensure food placed on the market complies with food safety requirements

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives & Plan

Ipswich Borough Council's key objectives are set out in the Corporate Strategy -Proud of Ipswich 2023.

This service plan feeds into the corporate strategy. It sets out how the food safety team deliver their services and align with the five key priorities.

The key priorities relevant to food safety services are:

Thriving Town Centre

Promoting community wellbeing and fairness in Ipswich

To support these priorities, we will:

Ensure all established eating places are rated 3, 4 or 5 in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

2. Background

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority:

Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk and one of the oldest English towns. The population of the Borough is 139,642, living in 15 square miles.

Ipswich is a town of contrasts, with a strong core of independent retailers, and a variety of entertainment facilities. There are a range of restaurants and bars, a vibrant waterfront area, theatres, museums, and art galleries. Ipswich boasts several beautiful parks covering 1200 acres, including Christchurch Park. The central conservation area boasts more than 600 listed buildings, including medieval churches.

Ipswich has numerous industrial and retail parks as well as the Port of Ipswich and the University of Suffolk. It enjoys excellent transport links with London and the rest of the county. It is surrounded by rural landscape and dramatic coastline.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Ipswich Borough Council operates a Leader and Executive model with various supporting committees in place. The Council has 48 elected councillors, representing 16 wards. Portfolio holders are appointed for each service area. The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Sport is John Cook.

The corporate management team comprises of the Chief Executive, Helen Pluck, 3 strategic directors, 6 assistant directors and various heads of service. (See appendix 1 for structure chart)

The food safety team is managed by the Principal Environmental Health Officer (food safety) and the team comprises of:

- Environmental Health Officers
- Regulatory Support Officer

2.3 Specialist Service Providers

The Council uses:

UK Health Security Agency, Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratory, 61 Colindale Avenue London NW9 5EQ for microbiological sampling.

Eurofins Public Analysts Scientific Services, i54 Business Park, Valiant Way, Wolverhampton WV9 5GB as our Public Analyst.

3. Scope of the Food Service

The service undertakes the following food safety functions:

- Registering and approving food businesses
- Carrying out food safety inspections and other interventions
- Informing the public of hygiene standards by participating in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Advising businesses of regulatory requirements and changes
- Sampling of food from food businesses
- Enforcement of food safety law
- Investigating and controlling outbreaks of food poisoning and infectious diseases
- Responding to food alerts from the Food Standards Agency
- Investigating complaints about food and food businesses
- Issuing Export Health Certificates
- Checking inland imported food
- Enabling imported food control, vessel inspections and control of infectious disease at the Port

The Port Health function is provided through an agreement with Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority.

4. Demands on the Food Service

The food safety service is delivered from Grafton House, 15-17 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2DE, and can be contacted on 01473 432000, environmental.health@ipswich.gov.uk

As of 1st April 2024, there are a total of 1,210 food premises registered with Ipswich Borough Council.

Table 1- Profile of registered food establishments at Ipswich Borough Council. Source Assure database.

Type of Premises	Number of Establishments
Primary Producers	0
Distributors/Transporters	23
Manufacturers/Packers	10
Importers/Exporters	3
Retailers	338
Restaurants and Caterers	836

Food businesses are subject to interventions at intervals determined by risk rating, in accordance with the food intervention rating scheme set out in the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice. The profile of these food premises on 1st April 2024 can be seen in the table below.

Table 2 Profile of Premises according to risk category on 1st April 24. Source Assure database.

Category	Intervention interval	Total number of premises
A	6 monthly	1
B	12 monthly	3
C	18 monthly	129
D	24 monthly	555
E	36 monthly	463
Unrated		63
Total		1214

Food businesses are given a risk rating ranging from Category A (highest risk) to Category E (lowest risk). Businesses can be rated a high risk because of the nature of the food operation, because of poor compliance or both.

Unrated food premises are those who are newly food registered and are awaiting an inspection. The actual number of registrations received varies each month, but the service is experiencing an upward trend in this area and averages 20 new registrations per month.

The numbers of food interventions due and outstanding for 2024/25 by risk category are shown in the table below.

Table 3 Number of Interventions Due for Premises per risk category on 1st April 24. Source Assure database.

Risk Category	Outstanding from 23/24	Due 2024/25	Total
A	0	0	0
B	0	4	4
C	0	94	94
D	71	161	232
E	96	104	200
Unrated	64	240 (estimate)	304

Other interventions that become due in the year include revisits to poor performing businesses and re-rating request visits where businesses have made improvements and request officers to issue a new food hygiene rating.

Visits are also undertaken to advise new business owners, to carry out sampling and to investigate complaints received.

During 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 the food safety team dealt with a range of incidents and enquiries. These are set out in the table below.

Table 4 Interventions/enquiries 23/24. Source Assure database.

Type of Intervention or Enquiry	Number
Food Hygiene Complaints	73
Food Complaints	4
FSA Food Alerts for Action	19
Requests for Advice	193
Revisits	11
Rerating Requests	5
Routine Samples	19

Ipswich has a diverse range of food businesses, some of which are operated by ethnic minorities. These include, Eastern European, Portuguese, Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Turkish.

There is currently one business approved under EC Regulation 853/2004 which produces sausages.

The team also deliver on several projects determined by the needs of the service and/or external agencies.

5. Regulation Policy

The Public Protection Enforcement Policy covers all regulatory services in Public Protection, including food safety. It explains the Councils approach to enforcement including informal/formal actions and the options available to business aggrieved by those actions to appeal decisions.

All officers must have regard to this policy when making enforcement decisions.

6. Interventions at Food Establishments

The Council is committed to carrying out inspections and other interventions at food businesses using a risk-based approach set out in the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice.

The full range of interventions will be considered for each category as per the Food Law Code of Practice.

A workplan is produced each year to show the interventions to be carried out and the type of intervention to be undertaken at each category of food business.

7. Food Complaints

The Food Safety Team investigates complaints it receives relating to food and food businesses where Ipswich Borough Council is the enforcement authority and will liaise with the Primary and Originating Authority where appropriate.

8. Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

The Home Authority Principle was developed by food and trading standards authorities to aid consistent enforcement. The scheme provides businesses with a source of guidance and advice and provides a system for the resolution of disputes.

The Primary Authority Partnership is a statutory partnership between a food business and a local authority to assist with consistent enforcement. The guidance and advice the local authority provides must be taken into consideration by food safety officers carrying out inspections and dealing with instances of non-compliance.

The Council supports both partnership schemes and appropriate adjustments are made to the way in which interventions are undertaken when businesses have a primary authority arrangement with another Local Authority.

Ipswich is a Primary Authority Partner for two large organisations – East of England Co-operative Society and 'Vertas' (a catering company supplying school meals and other commercial food outlets).

Regular review meetings are held to ensure the partnership remains relevant and delivers on the agreement. It is also an opportunity for both partners to discuss changes to the food business and new legislation.

9. Advice to Business

Officers are committed to building positive working relationships with food business operators and will work with them to help them comply with the law and to improve food safety standards. Both new and existing businesses are encouraged to contact the service

for advice. Advice can be delivered remotely or on site. Coaching in Safer Food Better Business is an integral part of supporting food businesses.

Officers may direct businesses to web-based resources, particularly those produced by the Food Standards Agency, for further information on running a food business. Advice is also available on the Council's website www.ipswich.gov.uk

10. Food Sampling

Food sampling is carried out to establish whether foodstuffs are safe to eat and primarily considers microbiological content.

Food samples are taken either in response to complaints or as part of the Council's proactive surveillance programmes to ensure that food produced and/or sold in Ipswich is safe to eat. The Council participates in national surveys and cross regional studies coordinated by the UK Health Security Agency.

Unsatisfactory results are followed up to ensure that public health is protected, and food is safe to eat.

11. Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease

Notifiable infectious diseases are reported to the Council by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Officers investigate these infectious diseases in line with the guidance *in PHE East of England Public Health Response to Notifiable Gastrointestinal Infections 2015*.

Investigation and control of major outbreaks is undertaken in conjunction with the Consultants in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) at UKHSA. Investigation of outbreaks, the establishment of an Outbreak Control Team and control measures are all implemented in accordance with the UKHSA East of England Communicable Diseases Outbreak Management Plan June 2023.

The table below summaries the number of notable cases reported to Ipswich Borough Council in 2023.

Table 5 Gastrointestinal Disease Notifications 2023/24. Source Assure database.

Disease	Number
Campylobacter	137
Salmonella	18
Alleged Food Poisoning	21
E.Coli 0157	6
Cryptosporidium	9
TB	1

12. Food Safety Incidents

Food safety incidents are reported to the food safety team via various external agencies, including FSA, Suffolk Public Health, UKHSA and emergency services. Procedures are in place to action these reports including an out of hours response.

Food alerts issued by the FSA are responded to in accordance with the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice.

13. Liaison with Other Organisations

Officers represent the Council on the Suffolk Food Liaison Group. This group has links to other regional and national groups.

The Group is comprised of lead officers from Suffolk Food Safety teams, Suffolk Trading Standards, FWEM laboratory Colindale, Food Standards Agency, and Field Veterinary Officers.

The Group share information and ensure a coordinated approach to regulate food safety in Suffolk businesses. They also organise low-cost training for food safety officers and participate in consistency exercises to ensure that the food hygiene rating scheme is applied fairly and consistently across Suffolk.

The food safety team liaise regularly with Suffolk County Council Trading Standards and refer food standard complaints to them for investigation. Many of these complaints relate to allergen problems. The officers can also accompany trading standard officers on joint visits to non-compliant businesses.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer is responsible for the Port Health contract and liaises regularly with Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority who provide the service at Ipswich Port. Returns regarding port health activity at Ipswich Port activity are received quarterly and an annual audit is carried out.

Other organisations the food safety team liaise with include:

- FSA
- Health Protection Team
- Suffolk Public Health
- UKHSA Food, Water, & Environmental Microbiology Services
- Other teams at IBC
- Other Local Authorities

14. Food Safety Promotional Work and Other Non-official Control interventions

Food safety promotional work is undertaken where resources and work programmes allow.

The food safety team consult with the communication team at IBC to promote key food safety messages using social media.

15. Resources

15.1 Financial

Details of budgetary provision are included in the financial strategy and medium term financial plan, published on the Council website.

15.2 Allocated Staff Resource

For 2024/27 the Food Safety service establishment is:

- 0.76 fte Principal Environmental Health Officer
- 3.85 fte Environmental Health Officers
- 0.56 fte Regulatory Support Officer

Officers are authorised in accordance with their qualifications, technical knowledge, regulatory experience, and the FSA Competency Framework.

Staff development is undertaken and reviewed in their annual Performance and Development Review to ensure that officers maintain the Continuing Professional Development requirements of the Code of Practice.

15.3 Staff Resource Required To Deliver The Food Safety Service

The current staff allocation is considered sufficient to meet the statutory responsibilities within the service plan, however this will be reviewed in line with updated FSA guidance.

16. Quality assessment and internal monitoring

The Principal Environmental Health Officer monitors the work of the food safety team.

Monitoring arrangements include:

- Internal monitoring procedure
- Review of monthly inspection reports
- Review of post inspection records
- Accompanied interventions with food safety officers
- Regular team meetings and 121's
- Performance and Development Review

17. Review of performance against the Service Plan

The Principal Environmental Health Officer is responsible for regularly reviewing the performance of the team against the workplan and service plan. The Head of Service is regularly updated, and briefings are produced for the Portfolio holder for Communities and Sport.

The key performance indicators (KPI's) have been set to reflect the key objectives of the service plan and are reviewed annually. Progress against the KPI's is reported to members and Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.

The regulatory food work is reported to the FSA on a six-monthly basis via the *temperature checks* reporting system.

121 meetings are carried out every six weeks with staff to review performance against the workplan and service plan. The workplan includes annual targets for interventions, which are also broken down into monthly targets for monitoring throughout the year. Monthly reports are run to monitor unrated businesses and inspections due and completed in the period. Monitoring of reactive work is checked at the same time.

18. Identification Of Any Variation From The Service Plan

The COVID 19 pandemic significantly affected how the food safety team were able to deliver food safety services.

The FSA Recovery Plan, phase 1 & 2, was fully delivered by the team. This plan was adopted as the Service Plan during the covid period and assisted in the planning and prioritisation of food safety services.

19. Areas of Improvement

Ipswich Borough Council will continue to seek service improvement. The requirements of the Framework Agreement and Food Law Code of Practice will be fully considered as part of the process.

The accuracy of the food premises database is acknowledged as a significant tool in ensuring the effective delivery of the service plan. Further work will be undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the database is maintained and/or improved.

The backlog of overdue inspections and unrated establishments will be addressed by ensuring the full range of interventions is considered for each risk category as per the Food Law Code of Practice. Inspections will be prioritised according to risk and due date, and this will be monitored by the Principal Environmental Health Officer. The annual workplan has been produced to provide direction to the team in delivering the inspection programme.

20. Key Performance Indicators

The Operational Plan for Public Protection identifies three Key Performance Indicators for Food Safety:

- % of food hygiene inspections completed against the inspection plan (Cat A-E). Target 100%
- % of food businesses with a food hygiene rating of 3 or above. Target 99%
- % of new food businesses inspected within target. Target 90%

21. Key Objectives

- Deliver a targeted intervention programme to ensure compliance with food safety legislation and the Food Law Code of Practice
- Participate in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Undertake food sampling in accordance with the sampling policy
- Respond to and investigate notifications of infectious disease and outbreaks
- Ensure food placed on the market complies with food safety requirements
- Maintain officer competency by assessments as required by the Food Law Code of Practice

22. Review of Service Plan

This plan will be reviewed in March 2027, unless budgetary constraints or legislative changes mean a more urgent review is required.

Appendix 1 Organisational Structure Chart

