

Summary of Service Delivery for Maidstone Environmental Health April 2015 – March 2016

1. Staffing

During the year we have seen the appointment of a new EHO to the Food and Safety Team from Tunbridge Wells B C and a Food & Safety Officer qualify and gain registration to undertake food hygiene inspections following a two year training and professional competency programme. This has strengthened the overall resilience of the team and helped to deliver the service outcomes below.

2. Food Safety

2.1. Food Premises Profile

Food premises in the borough range from manufacturers, restaurants to retailers and low risk food businesses like home registered cake makers or child minders.

Each business is risk rated from A to E with A being businesses presenting the highest risk to public health and E the lowest. Some element of the risk is inherent in the type of business (due to vulnerable clients like nursing homes). But all businesses can manage risk by demonstrating good management practices, staff training and good structural conditions. Recognition of good standards is displayed to the public via the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Table 1 identifies the profile of food businesses in Maidstone based on their risk assessment by officers.

Risk Rating at 31 March	2014/15	2015/16
A	2	1
B	25	24
C	211	143
D	405	504
E	565	522
Total	1208	1194

Table 1: Premises Profile by risk rating

2.2. Programmed Work

The work of the team involves a range of measures to protect public health including; advice & guidance, audits & inspections, verification and surveillance visits, sampling visits, and information and intelligence gathering. This work is generally programmed throughout the year and determined by the risk rating of the businesses based on officers' last visit to the premises. Table 2 provides an overview of the work carried out within Maidstone and compares the work to 2014/15.

	14/15	15/16
Total Number of Food Premises within Maidstone	1,248	1,248
Number of Food Interventions Achieved ¹	699	933
Number of Food Interventions Due	778	938
Inspections achieved as percentage	90%	99%

Table 2: Programmed Food Interventions

If we assess this range of interventions further this it shows that the most common intervention is the inspection and audit of food businesses (Table 3). The increase in information gathering interventions between 2014/15 and 2015/16 is due to a project to contact all registered low risk food businesses and ascertain if they are still operating and entering this information onto the database. This work has been undertaken by admin and overseen by the team leader and officers.

Intervention	2014/15	2015/16
Inspection & Audit	528	511
Verification	16	32
Sampling	0	17
Advice and Education	23	38
Information gathering	132	335

Table 3: Interventions by Type

Unfortunately there will always be a few businesses that cannot be inspected due to seasonal working, opening times or volume of reactive or enforcement workload. The percentage of outstanding interventions for Maidstone does not suggest poor performance compared with Kent or national figures and has seen a significant improvement form 2014/15 to 2015/16.

Premise Risk Rating	2014/15		2015/16	
	Achieved	Outstanding	Achieved	Outstanding
A	5		7	
B	37	1	53	
C	237	10	204	
D	152	15	219	2
E	109	53	252	3
Unrated ²	159		198	
Outside Programme			0	
Total	699	79	933	5

Table 3: Interventions Achieved by risk rating

¹ Food Interventions are visits for advice & guidance, audits & inspections, verification and surveillance visits, sampling visits, and information and intelligence gathering. The categories are defined in the Local Authority Enforcement Management System returns to the FSA.

² Unrated premises are new businesses not previously risk rated

2.3. Reactive Work

Complaints about the hygiene standards at a food premises or concerns about the food purchased by consumers in Maidstone are proportionately small to the number of food businesses and food consumed, but it is an important means of food intelligence for the team. All complaints are assessed and allocated to officers by the Team Leader. We discourage anonymous requests from the public to enable us to investigate and respond back to complainants following the investigation of allegations.

	14/15	15/16
Food Complaints (complaints of foreign bodies, mould etc)	67	65
Food Hygiene Complaints (associated with a food business)	35	29
Total Number	102	94

Table 4: Food Complaints and Service Requests

2.4. Enforcement Outcomes

Intervention outcomes reflect our Enforcement Policy of having a stepped the By far the greatest outcome for food businesses remains a positive report of inspection with recommendations being made to the businesses for improvements. Written warnings are in effect letters which identify contraventions of the law, what needs to be done to remedy this and the timescale for its completion. Escalating the matter further would be reflected in serving improvement notices.

During the 2015/16 food was seized and taken before the magistrate for condemnation. This was due to potential cross contamination of raw to cooked ready to eat food on sale at a retail shop. The Magistrates confirmed the notice served by the officers and the food was destroyed. Costs for the destruction were charged to the retailer. The voluntary closure recorded in 2014/15 has led to a successful prosecution of a butchers shop in 2016.

	2014/15	2015/16
Written Warnings	172	114
Hygiene Improvement Notice	1	4
Seizure and Detention	1	1
Voluntary Closure	1	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Table 5: Enforcement outcomes by type

3. Health & Safety

- 3.1. Health and safety enforcement is divided between the HSE and local authorities. We have responsibility for health and safety within the service, and leisure industries, in general. Each year the HSE produce guidance on the inspection programmes for local authorities based on intelligence and analysis of data from accidents and incidents. During 2015-16 no Kent wide proactive health and safety projects were undertaken.
- 3.2. Maidstone received a number of accident notifications through the HSE RIDDOR website, the official method for businesses to notify authorities of accident, incidents and dangerous occurrences. Some accidents may be reported by businesses which do not necessarily require reporting (for example they may involve a member of the public or no work activity is associated with the accident), these incidents are considered to be non reportable and are recorded but may not warrant investigation.

	14/15	15/16
Accident Reports Received	120	138
Non Reportable Accidents	41	46
H&S Advice Requests	15	6
Complaints of H&S	16	9
LOLER notifications	3	6
Asbestos Advice	0	1
Total Number	195	206

Table 6: Reactive health and safety work in Maidstone

4. Tattoo Hygiene Rating Scheme

In December 2015 as part of a Kent wide initiative to encourage high standards in the tattooing industry within the county, Mid Kent Environmental Health launched a Tattoo Rating Scheme. Similar to the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme it is based on Welsh Chartered Institution of Environmental Health criteria, which need to be achieved before the award can be issued. A Maidstone tattoo business, Stainless Steve achieved the first Level 4 award, the best award possible, within the shared service and remains one of the few across Kent to achieve this high standard.

5. Infectious Disease Control

The officers in the Food & Safety team work closely with Public Health England to follow up cases of notifiable disease, such as Campylobacter, E.coli or Legionella reported through the medical notification from a GP.

Cases are investigated to control the spread of infection or prevent further cases of food poisoning.

6. Environmental Protection

The Environmental Protection team focuses on identifying means of preventing future problems occurring or carrying out specialist inspection regime work under the pollution prevention and control scheme, air quality, contaminated land and the private water supply legislation. The Environmental Enforcement team deal with the reactive work and complaints about noise and other nuisances (bonfires, pests, fly tipping, dogs) which relate to domestic and commercial premises.

6.1. Private Water Supplies

There are six private water supplies in the Maidstone area. These are a mix of private residences, commercial sites and combined commercial and residential systems. The scheme we operate under is strictly controlled by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. We are required to carry out a risk assessment every five years on each supply to ensure the system and water quality is satisfactory. We also carry out a number of water samples each year for each supply.

6.2. Pollution Prevention Control

This is a DEFRA lead management scheme for the control of various potentially polluting industrial/commercial processes. We issue permits with conditions to ensure the businesses achieve the required environmental standards. We inspect these processes under a risk based scheme which produces an annual inspection programme.

Maidstone have 42 premises with permits under this scheme, which range from complex processes associated with Vinters Park Crematorium to more straight forward controls at petrol stations and dry cleaners. During 2015/16 31 inspections were undertaken by officers.

Across the shared service, the PPC scheme was contracted out at Swale and Tunbridge Wells. But during 2015/16 through a range of training programmes and using the expertise and knowledge from Maidstone's officers, the whole scheme will be brought in house from 1 April 2016.

6.3. Air Quality

Maidstone have a duty to monitor the air quality within the district for pollutants which are potentially harmful to public health, this includes nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. We fulfil this duty

through our continuous monitoring stations at Detling and Fairmeadow in the town centre (currently being relocated due to town centre road works) and using 54 NOx tubes throughout the district. The 2015 Updating & Screening Assessment Report was submitted to and approved by Defra it is published at www.kentair.org.uk this report contains the verified monitoring data collected during the year.

We continue to work to the Air Quality Action Plan 2010 submitted and approved by DEFRA, but we are in the process of reviewing and updating this.

6.4. Contaminated Land

In March 2016 the reviewed Contaminated Land Strategy was approved by Communities, Housing and Environment Committee. This was necessary to reflect changes in DEFRA guidance, and the economic climate of central and local government. The strategy still reflects the statutory duties placed on the authority and its commitment to improving the level of information it holds on possible sites and the mitigation of contaminated land through development control processes. This was approved at the meeting in March 2016.

6.5. Planning Consultations

A large part of the work of the team relates to providing the Development Management teams with consultation responses on air quality, noise, potentially contaminated land and lighting. This work is important to resolve current and future environmental issues through design or mitigation controls.

	2014/15	2015/16
Planning Consultations	469	656
Planning Appeals	21	34
Contaminated Land Enquiries	69	48
Private Water Enquiries	3	5
Total	562	743

Table 7: Consultation and reactive work undertaken by Environmental Protection in Maidstone.

Average Number of Days Spent per Planning Consultations					
	Annual	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2014/15	13.96	16.5	21.23	9.3	12.14
2015/16	9.01	9.32	10.9	7.4	7.7

Table 8: Average number of days per planning consultation response to Planning Support

7. Better Business for All

As a regulatory service the work of many environmental health officers take them into businesses. Much of our work is about providing advice and guidance to make sure businesses comply with regulation and ensuring that there is a level playing field between businesses through consistent and transparent enforcement.

Kent and Medway regulators (environmental health, trading standards, fire and rescue services, environment agency and others) have worked with the government's Regulatory Office (and its former iteration LBRO) to develop a website www.bbfa.biz and a start up pack for businesses trying to navigate through the complex world of regulation.

All officers within the service have attended training delivered for regulators in Kent to raise awareness of how we can be perceived by businesses and to understand the world of business a little more clearly. The Mid Kent Environmental Health has clear service objectives which consider how we can improve our communications with businesses to ensure compliance rather than a more heavy handed enforcement approach. This has been the underlying rationale in updating the enforcement policy during 2015 and other initiatives implemented. This work continues.

8. Future Development and Changes in Regulation

During a sequence of seminars across the UK the Food Standards Agency has indicated that they are considering a review of how food safety enforcement is delivered. To date we have not been informed what form this may take but they consider that the current system is not sustainable.

With regard to Air Quality, the Defra review of the guidance provided to local authorities didn't in the end deliver the changes to monitoring responsibly we anticipated. It does mean that we will no longer have to complete complex three yearly Updating Screening and Assessment reports but will in future complete a short and less detailed Annual Status Report.