

To: District Council Chief EHOs
Group Chief EHOs
NIFLG Members
Cc: CIEH NI Centre
LACORS

23 August 2010

Reference: ENF/NI/10/029

Dear colleague,

The 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' – the national approach

Since we last wrote to you in late February, progress on the development of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) has continued at pace and we are now looking forward to 'early adopters' rolling the scheme out from the autumn. We are impressed with the enthusiasm of these 'early adopters' for getting the scheme up and running and you can see what they are saying about the scheme in the enclosed Progress Update. This Update provides details of what has been happening and what the next steps are. I would be grateful if you would draw it to the attention of relevant colleagues.

The agreement earlier in the summer of guidance on consistency measures marks the completion of the work by the UK-wide Steering Group on the underpinning framework for the scheme. This is a major achievement for the Group and we believe that this framework provides a legally robust and sustainable scheme.

The branding for the scheme has also been agreed and we are extremely pleased with the look and feel that this gives. It reflects the findings of independent research with consumers and we believe provides the best means of making it easy for consumers to understand and use food hygiene ratings.

Our work now is focusing on drawing up guidance on use of the FHRS branding, on data requirements, and on the formal 'sign up' process for participating local authorities - we aim to finalise this guidance at the end of the month. Development of the IT platform continues and we are now in the testing phase with the system scheduled to go live in mid-September.

We remain conscious that the success of the scheme depends on local authority participation and we are continuing to add to the support package for

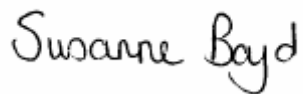
them. We have updated resource materials, we are developing a 'Communications Toolkit' and we have launched a second round of grant funding for 'early adopters'.

We are on schedule for local launches of the scheme in the autumn and are looking forward to working with 'early adopters' to help ensure these go smoothly.

The scheme is a key element for the Agency in meeting its strategic objective to improve food safety and we would like to re-emphasise our commitment to it – not just now in getting it set up but also in the future and working in partnership with local authorities and with the food industry to ensure its long term success.

If you have any questions about any of the issues in this letter or in the Progress Update, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susanne Boyd". The script is cursive and fluid.

Susanne Boyd
Head of Food Hygiene, Standards and Incidents
Food Standards Agency in Northern

FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME: PROGRESS UPDATE 7 (AUGUST 2010)

Introduction

1. Progress on the development of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) has continued apace since Update 6 in late February. We now have a name for the scheme and we have agreed the symbols and descriptors that will be used for the different ratings as well as all the elements of the underpinning framework. We are now working on the final areas of guidance needed for participating local authorities, we are testing the IT platform, we are adding to the local authority support package and we are providing a further round of grant funding for 'early adopters'.

2. We are on schedule for local launches of the FHRS in the autumn and are very much looking forward to working with 'early adopters' to help ensure these go smoothly. We are impressed with the enthusiasm of these 'early adopters' for getting the scheme up and running – see what they are saying at para 19. The scheme is a key element for the Agency in meeting its strategic objective to improve food safety and we would like to re-emphasise our commitment to it – not just now in getting it set up but also in the future and working in partnership with local authorities and with the food industry to ensure its long term success.

FHRS branding

3. The branding that has been designed for the scheme is based in the findings of independent research with consumers.¹ This was qualitative research that was designed to gain a thorough understanding of consumer opinion. The main findings showed that consumers preferred the name of the initiative to say exactly what it does and that they liked the ratings shown on a simple numeric scale with associated descriptors. In light of this, and taking account of the views of the UK-wide Steering Group, it has been decided that the national scheme will be called the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' and that the tiers will be represented as shown below.

¹ The report of this research is published at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2010/jun/research>

Rating	0	1	2	3	4	5
Descriptor	Urgent improvement necessary	Major improvement necessary	Improvement necessary	Generally satisfactory	Good	Very Good

4. Branding for the scheme in the form of logos, certificates and stickers etc. (both English and bilingual Welsh/English versions) has been developed to reflect these decisions. The full range of materials is being published on our website at the link below but some examples are appended. Guidance on use of the branding is being developed – see para 9 below.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/hyg/scoresonthedoors/hygienscoresresources/>

5. **Certificates** - These will be generated from the IT platform or the local authority's own Information Management System and printed onto branded template paper and will include the logos of both the Agency and the local authority.

6. **Stickers** – Two options will be available:

Option 1 - these show the Agency's logo and include a statement 'this scheme is operated in partnership with your local authority; and

Option 2 – these show the Agency's logo and have a space for the local authority logo.

7. The Agency will cover the costs of certificate template paper and, subject to gaining Cabinet Office approval (required given current spending restrictions), proposes to also cover the costs of Option 1 stickers and part cover costs for Option 2 stickers. Information about how to obtain/order materials will be made available as soon as plans have been confirmed.

Guidance on implementation and operation of the scheme.

8. The UK-wide Steering Group has continued its work on developing guidance on implementation and operation of the scheme. In June, the Group endorsed **guidance on establishing and operating a consistency framework**. This provides local authorities with the flexibility to base their consistency framework on existing mechanisms. The Guidance is published on our website at the link below. This marks completion of work on the underpinning framework for the scheme and is a major achievement for the Steering Group.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enfcomm/scoresdoorssteeringgroup/sotdguidance/>

9. The Group is now considering proposals for guidance on **use of FHRS branding** and on **use of the national database/public-facing website**. This is needed to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the scheme is maintained and to safeguard the reputations of the scheme's partners – the

Agency, participating local authorities and businesses covered by the scheme. The Steering Group is also considering revised proposals on the process for **formal 'sign up'** to the scheme. This will be based on an agreement between the Agency and each participating local authority that will set out their respective responsibilities. The three sets of proposals being considered by the Steering Group are available at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/hyg/scoresonthedoors/hygienescoresresources/>

10. Once these proposals are finalised, the guidance on all aspects of the scheme will be drawn together in one **single consolidated guidance document**. This consolidated guidance will, in effect, constitute the 'brand standard' for the FHRs. This is scheduled to be issued in mid-September.

11. The question of **charging for re-inspections/re-visits** is still being considered within the Agency. It is anticipated that the matter will be discussed further by the Steering Group at its September meeting and stakeholders will be kept up-to-date with the position on this.

IT platform

12. Development of the IT platform (which comprises a local authority portal, a central database and a public-facing website) is well underway and User Acceptance Testing and consumer testing is scheduled to take place in the second half of August. The development work has been informed by the discussions held with the Local Authority IT Advisory Group which met in April and June.² Members of this Group are also assisting with system testing in the first half of September. The system is scheduled to go live in mid-September in time for 'early adopters' to start roll out the scheme in their areas in the autumn.

13. Guidance on FHRs data requirements will be included in the consolidated guidance document on all aspects of the scheme – see paras 9 and 10 above. Separate user documentation for local authorities covering technical issues and practical aspects of using the IT platform is being prepared.

Local authority support

14. **Grant funding for 'early adopters'** - The Agency announced a second round of grant funding for local authorities intending to be 'early adopters' of the FHRs. This followed the success of the funding scheme run earlier this year and was in response to the feedback received from local

² The agenda and papers for these meetings and the minutes/draft minutes are on our website at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enfcomm/scoresdoorssteeringgroup/sotdlaitag/laitagmeet/>

authorities about the type of support they need. The funding is being provided to support 'start up' activities that will be key to a successful launch or roll out of the scheme and is for projects taking place between 1 October 2010 and 31 March 2011. The funding is primarily for local authorities that did not receive grants in the previous round, with bids from authorities that are involved with the 2012 Olympics being particularly encouraged. Consideration will also be given to awarding a local authority a second grant for new or different activities where this is justified. Local authorities must apply by Friday 27 August 2010. Full details are available at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2010/jul/lagrants>

15. **Consistency training** – The Agency is organising and funding a programme of consistency training for local authorities based on guidance developed by the Steering Group on application of Annex 5 of the Code of Practice. Pilot courses took place earlier this year and the training material will be amended to take account of the feedback we received. The training is for all local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and it is anticipated that each authority will have two places and that the training will then be cascaded as appropriate. Courses for 'early adopters' have been commissioned and, in England, will take place in October through to December – we will be in touch with relevant local authorities on this once we have confirmed dates, locations and venues. Courses for other authorities will be commissioned shortly and will run during 2011.

16. **Resource materials** - The Agency has developed a number of resource materials to help local authorities that intend to adopt the national scheme. We are updating these to reflect the progress that has been made on development of the scheme and the decisions that have been made on the name and on the symbols and descriptors etc. The materials include template briefings and presentations for informing elected members about the national scheme, and template letters and presentations for businesses telling them that the scheme is coming. The materials are on the website at the following link:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/hyg/scoresonthedoors/hygienescoresresources/>

17. **Communications Toolkit** – The Agency's Communications Team is currently developing this. It will include materials to help local authorities promote the FHRS locally such as template press releases. It will also provide advice and guidance on building partnerships with local organisations and bodies that will help promote the scheme. The Toolkit will be available for distribution by mid-September and will be updated regularly, for example, with case studies on successful communications activity.

18. In the meantime the Agency is keen to support local authorities in communicating the scheme and has set up a dedicated email address for communications related enquiries - fhres.enquiries@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk. Our Communications Team is particularly keen to speak to the local authority

communications teams in 'early adopters' areas to see what plans are in place and where the Agency may be able to help, We would encourage those responsible for communications to get in touch with us as early as possible via the email address The Agency's Communications Team is also continuing to develop a strategy for regional and national promotion of the scheme and is in particular investigating opportunities for low cost/no cost activity.

FHRS roll out

19. As highlighted, we are on schedule for local launches of the FHRS to begin in the autumn. All 22 local authorities in Wales are planning to roll out the scheme from 1 October and we are really pleased that there will be a truly national scheme for the country.

In welcoming the forthcoming implementation of the FHRS, Emlyn Jones, Food and Health and Safety Manager, Denbighshire County Council, said, "It will help consumers to decide where to eat or buy food and they will be able to easily compare one business with another locally and further afield."

A number of local authorities in the South West are also planning early roll out and we are looking forward to working with them through our Regional Presence Team there, looking in particular at how we can work with regional partners in this important tourist area.

Phil Park, Commercial Services Manager, at Stroud District Council told us "We have opted to migrate to the Agency's Food Hygiene Rating Scheme because for us consistency is absolutely essential - consumers and businesses have a right to expect that hygiene ratings mean the same thing wherever they are eating out or shopping for food. Our current scheme has worked very well but the prospect of a single scheme which is recognisable nation-wide is well worth supporting and really quite exciting."

There are a number of 'early adopters' in the East and South East regions including Norwich City Council which has been involved with 'scores on the doors' since the beginning, and some in the Midlands.

Jaan Stanton, Food Safety Team Manager at Norwich said, "Norwich has run its own very successful food hygiene rating scheme since the spring of 2005. We are going to change it! We recognise the country needs a single national scheme and are pleased to be working in partnership with the FSA. We are looking forward to our local launch of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme during September."

Amber Valley Borough Council's Regulation Manager, Steve Haslam, told us "The Council supports the FSA scheme and welcomes the support provided - both the grant and supporting documents. The branding matches consumer expectations and means that we will not be rewarding non-compliant premises with stars."

Further information

20. Detailed information on the Steering Group is available on the FSA website at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enfcomm/scoresdoorssteeringgroup/>

FHRS branding

Details of suppliers of the materials will be provided in the FHRS Communications Toolkit that is being developed

There are English versions and Welsh/English bilingual versions for use by local authorities in Wales.

Logos



Stickers

Examples for the rating of '3', '5' and 'awaiting inspection' are used

There are two options for stickers: 1) FSA logo plus statement that scheme is operated in partnership with the local authority; and 2) FSA logo and space for the local authority logo to be added.





This scheme is operated
in partnership with your
local authority

FOOD HYGIENE RATING



VERY GOOD



This scheme is operated
in partnership with your
local authority

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

AWAITING INSPECTION



FOOD HYGIENE RATING




VERY GOOD

Certificates

Examples for the rating of '3' and 'awaiting inspection' are used

FOOD HYGIENE RATING



GENERALLY SATISFACTORY


NAME OF BUSINESS
ADDRESS OF BUSINESS

.....


<p>Date of hygiene rating</p> <p>4 JUNE 2010</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Authorising signature</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>Contact details</p> <p>FILL IN DETAILS HERE</p> <p>FILL IN DETAILS HERE</p> <p>FILL IN DETAILS HERE</p> <p>FILL IN DETAILS HERE</p> <p>.....</p>
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For more information about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme visit food.gov.uk/ratings

The food hygiene rating shown above reflects the standards found on the date of inspection or visit by the local authority. Ratings are given on a scale from 0 (urgent improvement necessary) up to 5 (very good). The rating is not a guide to food quality.



CITY OF
LOCAL AUTHORITY
COUNCIL



Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk/ratings

This certificate remains the property of the local authority which reserves the right to remove it at any time.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

AWAITING INSPECTION

NAME OF BUSINESS
ADDRESS OF BUSINESS

.....

Authorising signature

4 JUNE 2010

Date issued

.....

Contact details

FILL IN DETAILS HERE
FILL IN DETAILS HERE
FILL IN DETAILS HERE
FILL IN DETAILS HERE

.....

For more information about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme visit food.gov.uk/ratings

The business named above will be given a food hygiene rating when it is next inspected by the local authority. Ratings are given on a scale from 0 (urgent improvement necessary) up to 5 (very good). The rating is not a guide to food quality.



This certificate remains the property of the local authority which reserves the right to remove it at any time.