

To: Heads of Service in Local Authorities in England
Interested parties on appended list

13 October, 2009

Reference: EPC 251

Dear colleague,

'SCORES ON THE DOORS' (SotD) - TOWARDS A NATIONAL APPROACH

As you will know, we are aiming to keep you informed of progress on the development of the national SotD scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland by publishing regular updates on the enforcement section of our website. The fourth such Progress Update was published today and a copy is enclosed with this letter. I should be grateful if you would draw it to the attention of relevant colleagues.

The August Update sought your views on how the top tier of the national scheme and the concept of 'broad compliance' should be mapped from the numerical score derived from the intervention-rating scheme in the *Food Law Code of Practice*. We are grateful for the comments that we received which helped inform the Agency's subsequent decisions on these difficult issues. These decisions were announced in early September and this latest Progress Update focuses on developments since then.

The Update highlights that the UK-wide SotD Steering Group has endorsed draft guidance on the scope of the national scheme and on 'start-up' issues for local authorities. The guidance should assist local authorities beginning preparatory work towards introducing the national scheme.

It also highlights that the Agency wishes to identify local authorities that wish to take the lead and be early adopters or 'champions' of the national scheme. To help us with this task and to provide support to the 'champions', the Agency is offering two secondment opportunities to Environmental Health Practitioners from local authorities. The Update provides a link to the advertisement for these posts.

Members of my Team and I would be very happy to discuss any of the issues raised in the Progress Update - contact details are given at the end of the Update.

Yours faithfully,

Catriona Stewart
SotD Team
Food Safety: Implementation & Delivery Division



Interested Parties list

Jenny Morris - CIEH
David Lock - LACORS

Which?
Consumer Focus
National Consumer Federation

Alliance of Independent Retailers
Association of Convenience Stores
Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers
Bed and Breakfast association
Brewing, Food & Beverage Industry Association British Beer and Pub Association
British Holiday & Home Parks Association Ltd
British Hospitality Association
British Independent Grocers Association
British Institute of Innkeeping
British Retail Consortium
British Sandwich Association
Chinese Take Away Association
Cinema Exhibitors' Association
Consortium of Caterers & Administrators (in Education)
DDGM media
East of England Regulatory Services Partnership
Federation of Small Businesses
Food and Drink Federation
Food Solutions
Horticultural Trades Association
Hygienewatch
Independent Food Retailers Confederation
Innpacked Training Consultants
Local Authority Caterers Association
London Retail Meat Traders Association
National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners & Caterers
National Association of British Market Authorities
National Childminding Association
National Federation of Fishmongers Ltd
National Federation of Meat and Food Traders
National Market Traders Federation
Nisa Today's
Pizza Pasta and Italian Food Association
Praxis42 Ltd
Regional Development Agencies
Rural Shops Alliance
Transparency Data Ltd
UK Food Safety
Web-labs



TOWARDS A NATIONAL APPROACH: PROGRESS UPDATE 4 (OCTOBER 2009)

Introduction

1. This note updates Agency stakeholders on the development of the national six-tier 'scores on the doors' (SotD) scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It highlights the recent decisions made by the Agency on banding issues. It provides details of guidance on scope and on 'start-up' issues for local authorities that has been endorsed by the UK-wide SotD Steering Group. It also highlights other on-going work and sets out the steps being taken by the Agency to encourage and support local authority adoption of the national scheme.

Scoring and banding issues

2. The last update reported that the Steering Group was unable to reach a consensus position on defining the top tier of the national scheme and mapping the concept of 'broad compliance', and that it had referred these issues back to the Agency. Having now considered these difficult issues very carefully, the Agency decided to opt for a broad top band and for mapping 'broad compliance' to the bottom tier of the top half of the scheme in a position equivalent to three stars. Further information on these decisions can be found at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/banding.pdf>

Guidance on the national scheme

3. The third meeting of the UK-wide SotD Steering Group took place on 30 September (the agenda and papers are published on the Steering Group's page of the Agency's website – see para 10). At the meeting the Steering Group endorsed the recommendations made by the Working Group on Scope and Pre-launch, Launch and Migration Issues. These recommendations were in the form of guidance on the scope of the national scheme (the types of businesses to be included/excluded/exempted) and on key 'start-up' issues for local authorities wishing to adopt/migrate to the national scheme.

4. Copies of the guidance are appended to this update. The guidance is in draft at this stage and is subject to review and revision in the shorter term as other elements of the national scheme are agreed, and also in the longer term as the scheme 'beds in' and local authority experience of operating the national scheme builds up. The intention is that the guidance will be incorporated into a wider document that will aim to provide guidance to local authorities on all aspects of the national six-tier scheme.

5. The guidance is being issued at this stage to assist local authorities beginning preparatory work towards introducing the national scheme.

On-going work

Working Group on Scoring/Banding & Safeguards

6. This Working Group met on 15 September where discussions focused again on banding issues. The Group has started an exercise to describe exactly what standards equate to Annex 5 scores of greater than 5 and these descriptions will inform any recommendations on mapping of scores to the remaining tiers of the scheme. The Group is also drawing up guidance on operation of the appeals process and has had some initial discussions on the mechanism for re-inspection/re-visits for re-scoring purposes. The Group meets next on 2 November.

Working Group on Consistency Issues

7. The Steering Group has agreed to establish a new Working Group to take forward its medium term activities, i.e. the provision of advice and guidance on a consistency framework for the operation of the national scheme. Membership will comprise local authority, industry and FSA representatives.

Agency support for local authorities

8. Since announcing the decisions on the top band and on mapping of 'broad compliance' the Agency has received expressions of interest from a number of local authorities wishing to be early adopters or 'champions' of the national scheme. Details of how the Agency will support these 'champions' are currently being worked out and will be announced soon. In the meantime, any other authorities that are interested in being 'champions' should get in touch with the SotD Team – contact details are provided below.

9. As part of the support, the Agency is aiming to recruit two Environmental Health Practitioners on secondment from local authorities. They will work closely with the early adopters to support them to prepare for the launch of the scheme in their areas. The posts have been advertised on the FSA website at the following link where details and a job application form are provided. The closing date for applications is Tuesday 27 October.
<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/oct/sotdlasecondment>

Further information

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

11. If you require any further information, please contact one of the SotD Team:

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