



**Evaluation of Scores On The Doors
Final Main Report for the Food Standards Agency
GSB Ref: CL984**

© Greenstreet Berman Ltd March 2008

All rights reserved. No parts of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of Greenstreet Berman Ltd.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this document are those of Greenstreet Berman Ltd and its contractors and not necessarily those of the Food Standards Agency.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of all of the Local Authorities that attended the workshops and completed the online questionnaires. We would particularly like to thank Winchester, Coventry, Halton, Torridge, Stoke, Leicester, Fife, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Renfrewshire, Stratford, Hull, Wakefield, Wellingborough, Derby, Slough, Cambridgeshire, Banbridge, Salisbury, Cotswolds, Kirklees, Luton, Hertsmere, Broxbourne, East Herts, Stevenage, Watford, who provided before and after hygiene inspection data for their business. We would also like to thank the FSA for their support in achieving this evaluation, and Transparency Data who provided a contact list of businesses as part of the postal survey. Finally, thanks to Tay Potier, David Barclay Rhodes and Tracy Dodds for consulting with us on the evaluation method.

Greenstreet Berman Ltd

<p>Fulcrum House, 5 Southern Court South Street Reading RG1 4QS,</p> <p>T: 0118 938-7700 F: 0118 938-7729</p>	<p>10 Fitzroy Square London, W1T 5HP</p> <p>T: 020-7874-1570 F: 020-7874-1585</p>
---	---

E: info@greenstreet.co.uk

www.greenstreet.co.uk



Evaluation of Scores On The Doors
Final Main Report for the Food Standards Agency
GSB Ref: CL984

Title	Evaluation of scores on the doors: Main Report	
Reference	CL 984 R3 ADCR I2	12 th March 2008
Status	Final report	
Previous version	CL 984 R3 Final Draft Report I1	
Revisions made	Addition of frequency table of before and after inspection scores and updating of conclusions	
Author (s)	Michael Wright, Rachel Smith, Rachel Evans, Nina Williams and Paul Leach	
Reviewer	Rachel Evans	
Distribution	Philip Flaherty	

Executive summary

Scores on the doors' (SOTD) schemes are intended to assess food businesses against legal compliance. This is commonly an assessment against three parts of the Inspection Rating Scheme, namely, hygiene compliance, confidence in management/control systems and structural hygiene. A certificate is given to the business after a routine hygiene inspection and displayed on the window, door or a public access area of the premise. The ultimate aim of the evaluation was to inform FSA decisions on a national SOTD scheme. This evaluation provided information from the period to end of 2007 of current schemes regarding:

- Impact on Local Authorities and businesses;
- Rates of display amongst businesses;
- Level of awareness and comprehension amongst consumers and businesses;
- Whether consumers will take account of the award (or lack of one) in their consumption behaviour;
- Whether it prompts improved food hygiene standards amongst food businesses.

The evaluation included:

- A postal survey of businesses that had received a SOTD certificate or letter;
- A telephone survey of SOTD businesses to acquire more open ended feedback;
- A series of workshops with Local Authorities (LAs) operating SOTD to acquire their subjective feedback on the aims, design, impact and experience of schemes;
- Online questionnaires for Local Authorities operating SOTD to indicate their aims, the design of the schemes, their impact on the authority and their opinion of the scheme;
- An assessment of hygiene inspection data provided by local authorities from before and after certification, along with the inspectors judgement of change in standards and observation of certificate display;
- A consumer study by Continental Research to (1) to quantitatively gauge the level of consumer awareness and usage of schemes and (2) and quantitative and qualitative reactions to pilot certificates/ schemes.

Key findings

Costs and benefits

Overall, the costs (which are borne mainly by LAs) were considered acceptable by LAs, whilst benefits accrued to businesses, LAs and customers. Whilst most LAs identified significant costs (time and expenses) in launching and, less so, in operating SOTD schemes, these did not hinder other food safety enforcement work and the resources required to operate schemes were less than expected, in most cases. Key demand on LAs included designing and launching a scheme, and producing websites. These costs would be reduced if a national scheme was introduced.

The immediate cost to businesses was minimal, in the form of posting a certificate. Hygiene improvements were aimed at achieving higher scores, and hence were required to improve compliance and so were not exclusively required by SOTD schemes.

There was evidence that SOTD schemes encouraged businesses to improve hygiene standards and may have led to measurable improvements in hygiene inspection scores. The evidence included:

- The subjective opinions of businesses (who quoted examples of improvements attributed to SOTD) and inspectors;
- Statistically significant improvements in hygiene inspection scores in SOTD businesses between the period before and after implementation of SOTD, although we cannot certainly attribute these improvements to SOTD;
- Evaluations of similar schemes overseas have shown a direct link between SOTD and improved standards in business.

Businesses provided a series of positive reasons for displaying certificates, including increasing customer confidence and their reputation.

There was less evidence of an impact on UK consumers. Both businesses and consumers reported low levels of consumer awareness of current schemes, with little impact on the number of customers. Also the rate of display of certificates reported by inspectors was low. The researchers' opinion is that the relatively low level of awareness reflected the short duration of schemes and the limits of LA publicity. LAs and some businesses advocated a larger scale national advertising campaign to raise awareness. Some LAs advocated compulsory display of certificates.

Consumers did indicate that they would in the future make use of certificates in choosing food venues, in the event that a certificate was on display.

LAs also reported benefits to them, over and above better hygiene standards. These included a more positive attitude to compliance amongst businesses, improved profile of food safety activities and a reduction in high risk category businesses (which reduces inspection workload).

Grading broadly compliant

All sources queried how 'broadly compliant' is presented. The researchers suggest that 'broadly compliant' businesses should be 'happy' to display a certificate. The evaluation found that:

- Many LAs assume businesses will not display below 3 stars (in 0 to 5 star schemes);
- The business postal survey indicates that there is a sharp drop in the rate of display below 3 stars (again for 0 to 5 star schemes);
- Consumers express reluctance to use venues with less than 3 stars (except for the 0 to 3 star scheme). Of schemes tested, consumers tended to express reluctance to use outlets with a rating below the midpoint (in the case of an odd point scheme), or in the bottom half of the scale (in the case of an even point scheme).
- There was some evidence that businesses, on the whole, displayed certificates with words such as Acceptable, as well as Pass;
- Businesses want a range of grades to provide recognition of their performance and an incentive to improve, citing a need for more than 2 or 3 grades.

These findings suggested a 0 to 3 grade system as this may avoid consumers wrongly assuming that middle or lower grades (i.e. tier 2 on a 6 point scale) are unacceptable whilst still providing a progressive scale with more than 2 grades. These points also suggested that the grading and certificate design needs to facilitate display and comprehension of broadly compliant scores. It is very important to have a key so that consumers understand what the scale is actually out of. An option is to always display the scale and to use words to unambiguously communicate grades, such as Acceptable, whether or not symbols are used. In respect of lower grades, an option is to use 'positive' words, as far as possible, to describe lower grades to facilitate their display and to convey their meaning to consumers.

Certificate design

The feedback from the consumer research completed by Continental Research indicated:

- The Coventry/hybrid 3 star scheme achieved the highest overall rating (easiest to understand, having a clear rating scale and other positive features);
- The perceived top score for the London sticker was 4 stars by 39% of people, with bottom score perceived to be 1 by 43% of people (the London sticker does not provide blank stars or the entire scale);
- Pass – Improvement Required had a low rating on clarity of the grading scale;
- The Smilesafe symbols rated lowest.

The consumer research also indicated that the certificate or sticker needs to be easy to understand, clearly noticeable, provides sufficient detail and up to date information.

Communicating with and supporting business

Whilst a minority of LAs do not offer advice and explanation of the scheme during inspections, the majority do. This was considered important to engage business and help them make improvements.

There was a clear policy divide between LAs, with some providing support to business (with SOTD as part of a wider initiative), and others viewing SOTD as a way of publicising scores (and arguing against workload of supporting business). Nonetheless most LAs promoted SFBB in parallel to SOTD. Therefore, there appeared to be little reason to not offer SFBB support alongside SOTD schemes, especially as some LAs found that SOTD prompted interest in SFBB.

Revisits

Whilst some LAs express concern about the workload and principle of revisits this evaluation indicated that:

- Businesses regard the option of a revisit as essential– although they are reluctant to pay for them unless they desire a better grade;
- To date LAs have reported few requests for revisits;
- Some LAs regard revisits as essential to secure business engagement with the scheme and to provide support to business hygiene improvements.

Therefore, it was concluded that the workload concerns may not be realised, whilst offering revisits meets a key business requirement.

Websites

Given that the majority of businesses do not display certificates, especially low grades, it appeared essential to have scores available online for the sake of consumer access and Freedom of Information, despite limited reported use by consumers in the consumer research.

Recommendations

A national SOTD scheme could be recommended on the grounds that:

- 97% of consumers support the idea, as do the majority of businesses and most LAs operating SOTD express satisfaction with them;
- A national scheme may have the presence to increase awareness and hence impact, and a national scheme, with national advertising, would reduce reliance on LAs resources;
- There was some evidence that SOTD could encourage improved food hygiene and facilitate self compliance amongst business due to the incentive offered by certificates as well as provide a basis for businesses to be positively engaged with LAs.

The evidence available to this evaluation provides a basis to offer some recommendations on features of a scheme, including:

- **Name of the scheme**– the scheme and title on the certificate should express the purpose of the scheme, such as food hygiene inspection score, rather than a colloquial phrase;
- **Content of certificates** - Certificates should boldly state that the certificate relates to food hygiene, include previous rating, provide the rating scale, a summary line to highlight any issues, date (and result of) of previous and next inspection, the contact details for the LA and inspector, FSA logo and signatures, Certificate reference number;
- **Grading system** – a progressive 0 to 3 star scheme with words to define the grades. Some options on the definition of these grades are given below:
 - As business did not display ‘fail’ grades, there appeared to be little value in having multiple ‘fail’ grades or in awarding a star for a ‘fail’ grade. One option was to define 1 star ‘positively’ such as Acceptable (with conditions) where the standard achieved does not need enforcement but improvement is needed to be broadly compliant. This follows the example of some US systems that use terms such as ‘Conditional Pass’ for businesses that are ‘close’ to compliance. 0 stars could be used for businesses where standards are clearly unacceptable, such as where enforcement action is needed. This could be defined as (for example) ‘Unacceptable’ or ‘Unacceptable enforcement recommended’;
 - Businesses express a wish for a progressive scale to recognise their achievement and to provide an incentive for further progress. An option is to define grades 1 to 3 positively, such as 1 = Acceptable (with conditions), 2 = Satisfactory and 3 = Good (or Acceptable, Good and Very Good).

This evaluation does not provide a firm basis for determining the specific words used to define grades but does indicate the principles, as noted above.

Some concern was expressed about having multiple grades above broadly compliant (defined as 30 points). The concern was that this could create overly tight bands of scores that may be difficult to define, communicate and defend. For example, if broad compliance is 30 points, the bands above this would be (say) 0 to 10 and 15 to 25. If broad compliance is 25 to 30, then two superior grades would be even tighter.

Drawing these points together suggests that grade 2 is used for 'broadly compliant', grade 3 is for 'above broadly compliant', grade 1 is used for 'conditionally' acceptable and 0 is for businesses where enforcement is recommended.

- **Revisits** – these could be recommended on the grounds that businesses view them as very important, whilst few actually ask for a revisit. Payment in the region of £25 to £100 (say £50) could be required where the revisit is for a broadly compliant or above broadly compliant business that would not normally have a revisit for enforcement reasons. Revisits for businesses below broad compliance are likely to be made for routine enforcement and follow up reasons and so may not justify a charge;
- Inclusion of **complaints** within a general LA complaints process but a dedicated **appeals process**;
- **Advice to businesses**- Provision of advice and encouragement to businesses during inspections is recommended to ensure fairness and engender positive business engagement with the scheme, with additional support for businesses an option for LAs;
- **Publicity and stakeholder engagement**: a substantive publicity and engagement exercise is needed prior to launch of schemes, to alert and advice businesses and consumers;
- A dedicated **website(s)** with search functions by type of business, area, grade and name of business. It is uncertain whether a national or regional website is preferable.

Many respondents advocate a compulsory system. The low rate of display found to date could be interpreted to mean that compulsion is necessary. However, it is uncertain whether a national scheme with a high level of publicity would achieve a higher level of awareness of schemes and display of certificates. Therefore, an option is to launch a national scheme and monitor implementation, reviewing the question of compulsion at a later date.

Impact of introducing a new scheme

The evaluation indicates that:

- Business and consumers have a low awareness of current schemes;
- The majority of Local Authorities have not yet adopted a scheme;
- Some LAs have previously changed from one scheme to another.

Therefore, there is some evidence that a transition to a different scheme, whilst rendering the work completed by a significant minority of Local Authorities redundant, would not cause public communications problems or transition problems for most LAs.



Evaluation of Scores On The Doors

Final Main Report for the Food Standards Agency

GSB Ref: CL984

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	iii-vii
-------------------------------	----------------

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aims	3
1.3 Method	4
1.3.1 Overview.....	4
1.3.2 Local authority workshops, online questionnaire respondents	5
1.3.3 Postal survey of businesses	5
1.3.4 Businesses telephone survey	7
1.3.5 Consumer research	9
1.3.6 Inspection score data.....	10
2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Scheme profiles.....	13
2.2.1 Aims of schemes	13
2.2.2 Scheme design	14
2.2.3 Grading processes.....	16
2.2.4 Publicity and business engagement	21
2.3 Impact on local authorities.....	22
2.3.1 Resourcing and workloads	22
2.3.2 Litigation, complaints etc	24
2.3.3 Benefits to local authorities.....	25
2.3.4 Local authority lessons learnt	25
2.4 Business reaction to schemes.....	25
2.4.1 Expressed support for schemes	25
2.4.2 Business comments on grading system and certificates	26
2.4.3 Display of certificates.....	28
2.4.4 Inspectors' advice	34
2.4.5 Ability and interest in getting a higher score	35
2.4.6 Expressed support for re-visits	37

2.5	Impact on businesses.....	38
2.5.1	Impact on businesses	38
2.5.2	Impact on customers: business perception	38
2.5.3	Comparison with consumer research findings.....	39
2.6	Impact on food hygiene standards	40
2.6.1	Subjective self assessment of impact.....	40
2.6.2	Inspectors' judgement of improvements in hygiene.....	42
2.6.3	Changes in inspection scores	43
3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	52
3.1	Costs, benefits and impacts of Scores on the doors	52
3.2	Key features of schemes.....	53
3.2.1	Overview.....	53
3.2.2	Publicising and consulting	53
3.2.3	Issuing first certificate	54
3.2.4	Communicating, supporting and revisits.....	54
3.2.5	Complaints and appeals	55
3.2.6	Certificates design and content	55
3.2.7	Grading	57
3.2.8	Alignment of scores to grades	59
4 RECOMMENDATIONS	61
4.1	Recommendation of a national SOTD scheme	61
4.2	Key features	61
4.3	Impact of introducing a new scheme.....	62
4.4	Further evaluation needed	63
5 REFERENCES	64
	Appendix A: Local Authority workshop summary	
	Appendix B: Local Authority scheme profiles	
	Appendix C: Local Authority feedback on quarterly reports	
	Appendix D: Business postal questionnaire survey	
	Appendix E: Business telephone survey	
	Appendix F: Analysis of changes in hygiene inspection scores	
	The appendices are provided in a separate document.	

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A series of articles and studies have indicated that a food hygiene certificate display scheme (Scores On The Doors schemes - SOTD) would help consumers to exercise choice over where to eat and provide an incentive for food businesses to improve food safety standards. Scores on the doors' schemes are intended to assess all food businesses against legal compliance. This is commonly an assessment against three parts of the Inspection Rating Scheme, namely, hygiene compliance, confidence in management/control systems and structural hygiene – where a lower score reflects a higher standard. The score given to the business during a routine hygiene inspection (e.g. by a local authority inspector) is displayed in a standard format certificate on the window or door of the premises. Display of certificates may be voluntary or mandatory.

There has been some limited evaluation of SOTD schemes in the UK.

Greenstreet Berman Ltd (McMahon, Wright and Hopcroft, 2006) completed a series of focus groups and a survey of UK food businesses in 2006 for the Food Standards Agency that found:

- 74% of businesses agreed (64% probably and 10% definitely) they would voluntarily display a certificate reporting a score from hygiene inspection carried out by the LA EHO. This was consistent across all sizes of organisations and most types of products.
- Business respondents judged that it would be of interest to customers (72%) and motivate organisations to improve standards (66%), but only 39% thought it would attract more customers.

An evaluation (Fenn, 2005) of the Sheffield City scheme, introduced in June 2003, found that:

- The scheme has been well received – 97% thought the scheme a good idea, and 88% of businesses have or would have displayed the award;
- The scheme has encouraged (81%) of businesses that responded to improve hygiene standards;
- There is a definite public interest in hygiene standards with 97% stating that awareness of standards would influence their decision to eat in a particular establishment;
- 46% prefer the grades gold, silver and bronze (43% of businesses preferred gold, silver and bronze, whilst only 14% disagreed);
- There was a need to further publicise the award scheme and website;
- Only 9% of respondents had looked at the food hygiene awards on the website and only 25% of public respondents were aware of the scheme.

The authors of this report interpret these findings as indicating that the current scheme does appear to motivate and reward business, and is supported by the public, there is less clear evidence about awareness and actual usage by the public.

An assessment (Burton, 2007) of the Norwich City Council's 'Safer food award' (a 0 to 5 star scheme) found that there was a clear improvement in the stars awarded between the first and second inspection which it was suggested was of a magnitude that probably reflected the impact of the scheme.

Evidence from overseas (schemes are widely used across USA, parts of Canada, Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore) suggests that SOTD schemes can lead to improved standards of food safety, and better sales as well as being welcomed by customers. For example,

- The Toronto Board of Health review of the Canadian Dinesafe scheme (compulsory display of Pass, Conditional Pass or Closed) concluded that there had been “increased compliance and continuous improvement in food safety in Toronto as a result of the program” (compliance rose from 78% to 88%), and that it was associated with a decrease in foodborne illness (Thompson et al 2005, Serapiglia, undated, Toronto Public Health 2002);
- Research into the Danish “smiley scheme” found that 19% of catering managers had initiated improvements in hygiene standards and 79% of consumers would be influenced by the results when choosing an outlet (reported by J. Morris of the CIEH, 2005);
- The evaluation of the Los Angeles County (grading cards A for 90 to 100%, B for 80 to 90%, C for 70 to 79% or the actual score if less than 70%) scheme (Jin and Leslie) caused restaurant health inspection scores to increase, consumer demand to become sensitive to hygiene quality and the number of foodborne illness to decrease by 20%;
- Vance (2005) quotes US data that compliance scores improved from 21% to 63% after introduction of a New York scheme;
- An evaluation reported by Boehnke and Graham (2000) found that a scheme in Pasco County in the US was followed by a reduction in food borne illness.

As businesses are sensitive to their reputation, a scheme that informed customers of their performance could act as a business incentive. It has also been suggested that ‘carrots’ work better than ‘sticks’; hence rewarding good performance through public display of an improved score may be preferable to ‘naming and shaming’ alone.

However, the aforementioned consumer focus groups for the FSA in 2006 indicated that consumer interest in SOTD was limited. The consumer focus groups found:

- “Many said that they did not pay any attention to certificates in food establishments, and while a few people said that they might consider the certificates when making decisions about eating out, food hygiene was clearly not a priority. Higher priorities when deciding where to eat were things such as the price of the food, the menu, food quality, and type of cuisine. Even when considering hygiene people seemed content to trust their own judgement of the appearance of the interior and popularity of the venue.
- The consumer focus groups indicate that the public have little awareness of existing schemes and suggest they might not make much use of such schemes due to lack of attention to certificates and the priority of other considerations (such as recommendations from friends) when choosing places to eat.
- The consumers express a preference for simple pass or fail certificates for food hygiene, giving them a simple way of establishing that a food business has satisfied the legal hygiene requirements that are required to serve food. If a scale is used, there is a preference for a more formal looking award with a prominent FSA logo and either a star or gold, silver and bronze scale. The Danish smiley face scheme is the least popular.”

The consumer focus groups also provided many conclusions regarding the appearance and design of certificates, the rating schemes and what areas should be covered by the certificates.

Also, a review of the Irish scheme (safefood, May 2005 safetrak 4 consumer tracking research) found that 1 in 3 people spontaneously mentioned safefood as the organisation responsible for providing information on food hygiene, whilst 9% mentioned the Q mark quality assurance sign and 4% the safefood symbol. The East Safe newsletter quoted evaluation that found 9% of consumers recognised the Eat Safe Award.

Other previous work, summarised in McMahon, Wright and Hopcroft (2006), has also identified concerns, such as:

- Inconsistency in scoring (by inspectors) – or at least business concerns about the potential for inconsistency;
- How would businesses that have not yet been assessed, be treated by consumers?
- How long should a certificate be valid for, and what would be the process for withdrawing certificates during this period (for food hygiene failures)?
- How will the rating process affect the relationship with inspectors (especially if they fail a business)?
- What if the business judges the inspection (and lack of award) to be unfair?
- If customers do not recognise the inspecting body they may not trust the certificate.
- If the certificate is 'old' or out of date it can suggest the premises are no longer meeting standards.

From 2005 a series of schemes were launched in the UK by local authorities and the Scottish FSA. This provided the advantage, from a research perspective, of providing a range of schemes that can be evaluated. It is pertinent to note that UK schemes focus on standards of safety and/or compliance with law rather than using terms expressing risk to the public which some overseas schemes use (e.g. Emerging Hazard, Immediate Hazard).

1.2 Aims

The FSA needs evidence on which to consider how best to increase transparency of food safety for consumers, in particular;

- Evidence about whether SOTD achieve transparency for consumer and motivate food safety amongst businesses;
- Evidence about which type of SOTD scheme is most cost-effective, in the event that a decision is taken to adopt a national scheme;
- Evidence about the role that SOTD schemes play within a wider food safety enforcement strategy.

For a SODS scheme to be said to make a significant contribution to FSA strategy, it could be argued that this requires:

- A reasonable level of uptake amongst businesses;
- A reasonable level of awareness and comprehension amongst consumers and businesses;
- Evidence that consumers will take account of the award (or lack of one) in their consumption behaviour;

- Evidence that it does prompt sustained achievement of desired food hygiene standards amongst food businesses;
- Reduction in foodborne disease;
- An ability to reduce or redirect finite inspection resources to higher risk or 'sub-standard' premises.

This study did not attempt to examine foodborne illness due to limited data and the limited evaluation period. It did aim to address the other issues noted above.

1.3 Method

1.3.1 Overview

The evaluation comprised of a number of key elements, including:

- A postal survey of businesses that had received a certificate or letter as part of SOTD schemes, to gauge their reaction to the schemes and their impact;
- A telephone survey of businesses to acquire more open ended feedback from businesses that had received a certificate or letter as part of SOTD schemes, to gauge their reaction to the schemes and their impact;
- A series of workshops with Local Authorities to acquire their subjective feedback on the aims, design, impact and experience of SOTD schemes;
- Online questionnaires for Local Authorities operating SOTD to indicate their aims, the design of the schemes, their impact on the authority and their opinion of the scheme;
- An assessment of hygiene inspection data provided by local authorities from before and after certification, along with the inspectors judgement of change in standards;
- The postal and telephone surveys and the inspectors all provided data on whether the certificates were on display;
- A consumer study by Continental Research to (1) to quantitatively gauge the level of consumer awareness and usage of schemes and (2) and quantitative and qualitative reactions to pilot certificates/ schemes.

The latter consumer research was completed by Continental Research for the FSA via Central Office of Information.

The aim was to combine subjective and objective evidence of impact of schemes and identify the attributes of schemes that help achieve SOTD objectives.

The evaluation was designed and launched as a two year study to match the two year period of the FSA SOTD pilot from summer 2007 to summer 2009. After launching the evaluation, the period was reduced to 6 months to December 2007. This reduced the time series of inspection data available for businesses after award of a certificate and limited the sample sizes for inspection data. Therefore, the evaluation of inspection hygiene ratings was re-focused to provide an assessment of SOTD as a whole, with far less emphasis on comparing hygiene ratings across schemes.

1.3.2 Local authority workshops, online questionnaire respondents

Workshops

Ten workshops were run in July – August 2007 (4 in London, 2 in Bristol, 2 in Birmingham and 2 in Scotland). These were attended by almost 100 LAs representing all types of schemes. The workshops explored the aims of schemes, their design and lessons learnt so far.

Scheme profiles

A total of 46 LAs (representing all schemes) completed the online scheme profile, which also asked for self assessment of the scheme, lessons learnt and advice for future SOTD schemes.

Quarterly online reports of LA activity and impacts

An online questionnaire asked LAs to report on workload, impacts and business/consumer enquiries etc per quarter, with the intent of tracking these over a two year period. On shortening the evaluation period nearly all LAs that launched schemes in the autumn of 2007 opted out of this element of the evaluation.

There were 24 quarterly reports submitted covering 0 to 5 star, pass-improvement required, Coventry's 0 to 3 stars scheme, Halton's 0 to 3 stars schemes, traffic lights, Smilesafe, A to E and words based schemes.

With the shortening of the evaluation period, all but two of the LAs were able to provide only one quarterly report. This prevented any analysis of changes in Freedom of Information requests or other trends in workload or impacts on LAs. The analysis was limited to impacts in the first quarter of schemes and during the launch of schemes.

1.3.3 Postal survey of businesses

The questionnaire was distributed primarily by inspectors direct to businesses and then returned direct to Greenstreet Berman Ltd using a business reply facility. In addition, 2000 0 to 5 star questionnaires were posted to businesses listed on the Transparency Data site (333 per grade), for which Transparency Data provided addresses.

The results have been shown for:

- All respondents;
- Businesses in Scottish authorities running a Pass – Improvement required scheme;
- Businesses with a 0 to 5 star scheme;
- Businesses with 'Other' scores on the doors scheme.

Whilst the 'Other' scores on the doors schemes (including ticks, A to E, Smiley faces, 0 to 9 stars, traffic lights, words, Gold Silver Bronze and 0 to 3 stars) differ quite markedly, the sample sizes for each scheme are too small to present separately.

It should be noted that:

- The sample size for 'All' respondents is (999 responses) large enough to mean the margin of error is small, less than 3%;

- The sample sizes for the three sub-sets of respondents have larger margins of error;
- The sample sizes for the three sub-sets of data are not large enough to allow ‘small’ differences between the responses to be identified with appropriate level of statistical power but can allow detection of larger differences such as over 5%.

Therefore, care must be taken in interpreting the results, particularly in avoiding strict comparisons between the three sub-sets of responses.

As shown in Table 1 to Table 3 the respondents were:

- Primarily private limited companies or sole traders, with a minority of public sector organisations and few public limited companies;
- Most were single outlets;
- About half were micro businesses (less than 10 employees), with 88% being small (less than 50 employees).

This is judged by the researchers to be typical of food businesses.

Table 1: Type of business (private vs. public)

	All (n = 925)	Scotland (n =244)	Other (n = 320)	0 to 5 stars (n = 361)
Privately limited company	43.0%	52.0%	37.8%	41.6%
Public limited company	7.6%	7.0%	9.1%	6.6%
Sole trader	36.9%	34.4%	37.2%	38.2%
Public sector (government)	12.5%	6.6%	15.9%	13.6%

Table 2: Type of business (outlets)

A single outlet	715	75%
Many outlets	147	15%
National	63	7%
International	26	3%

Table 3: Number of employees

	All	Scotland	Other	0 to 5 stars
N =	981	258	342	381
None	7.8%	5.8%	8.5%	8.7%
Under 10	46.6%	45.3%	48.5%	45.7%
10 to 50	30.6%	32.9%	31.0%	28.6%
51 to 250	8.7%	10.1%	5.6%	10.5%
251 to 1000	2.2%	1.6%	2.3%	2.6%
1001 to 10000	2.1%	1.6%	2.3%	2.4%
Over 10000	1.9%	2.7%	1.8%	1.6%

1.3.4 Businesses telephone survey

A telephone survey of business inspected as part of SOTDs was completed in November to mid December 2007 for the following schemes and areas:

- Poor, satisfactory, excellent (Winchester);
- 0 to 3 star (Coventry);
- 1 to 3 star (Halton);
- Traffic lights (Leicester);
- Pass/improvement required (Fife);
- Gold, silver and bronze (Stratford on Avon);
- A to E (Hull);
- 0 to 5 stars (Wakefield, Wellingborough, Banbridge, Salisbury, Cotswolds, Kirklees and Brighton);
- Smiley face (Leicester).

It should be noted that:

- The sample size for 'All' respondents was large (486) enough to mean the margin of error was small, less than 3%;
- The sample sizes for the sub-sets of respondents had larger margins of error;
- The sample sizes for the sub-sets of data were not large enough to allow 'small' differences between the responses to be identified with appropriate level of statistical power;
- For a number of questions "no answer" made up a significant proportion of responses. In these cases the "no answer" response was removed to avoid distortion in the results.

Therefore, care must be taken in interpreting the results, particularly in avoiding drawing strict comparisons between the sub-sets of responses.

The sample was designed to enable the results as a whole to be scrutinised, and for subjective comparisons between schemes.

Business type, size and years in business

As shown in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 respondents were:

- Primarily restaurants, wine/pubs; care providers and educational institutes;
- Mainly micro and small businesses;
- In business less than 5 years – although a substantial proportion of businesses had been in business between 5 and 50 years.

It should be noted that some schemes had initially focused on restaurants, take aways and cafes.

Figure 1 Business type for all respondents (% of responses)

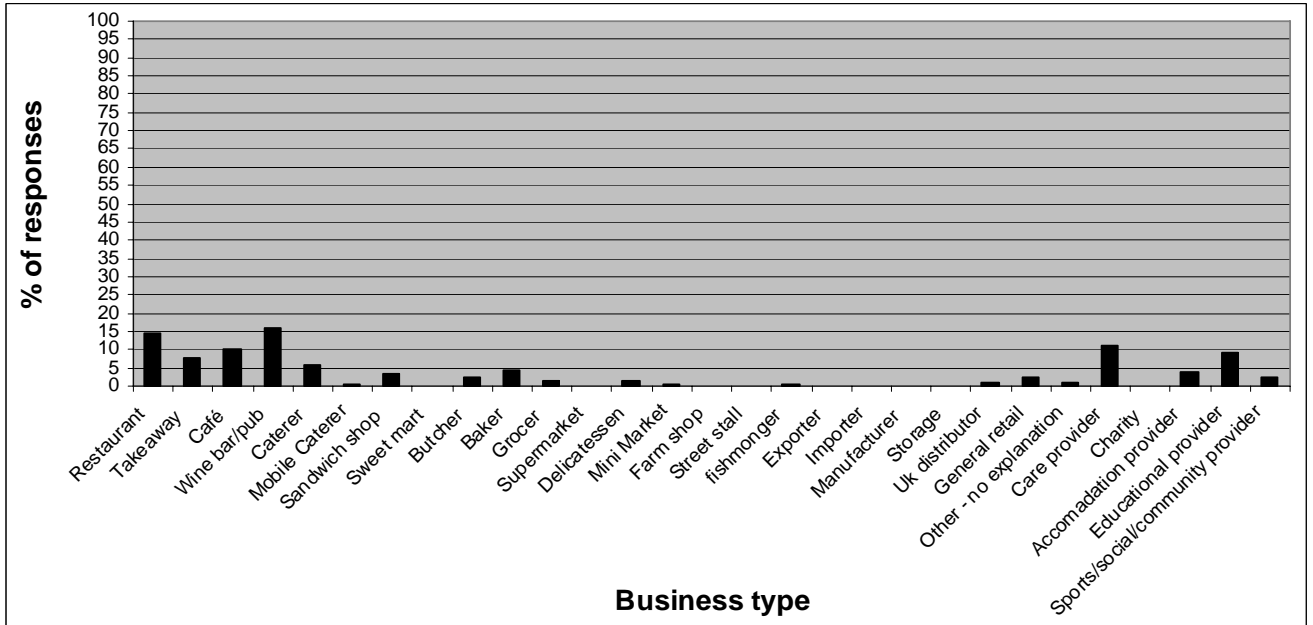


Figure 2 Size of business for all respondents (% of responses)

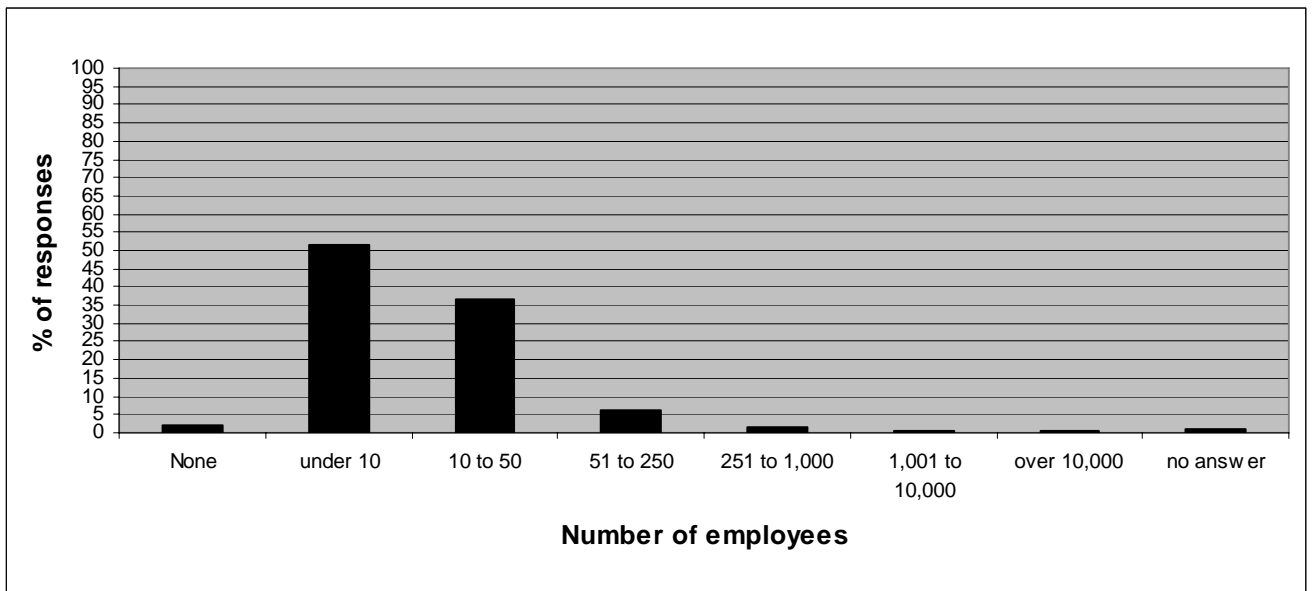
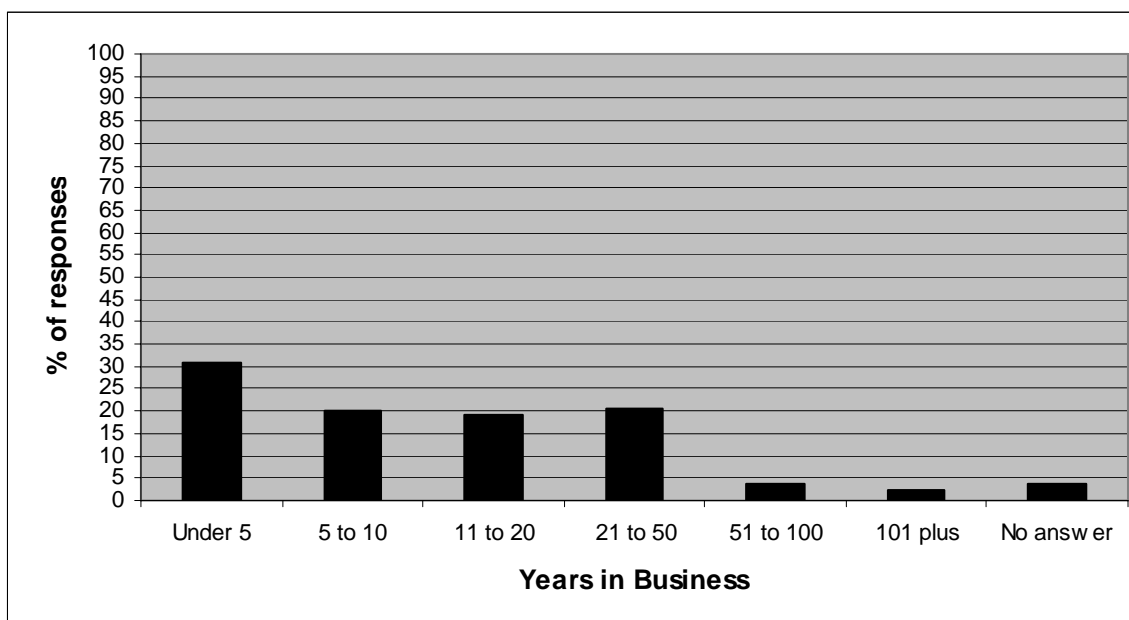


Figure 3 Years in business for all respondents (% of responses)



1.3.5 Consumer research

The aims of the consumer research included:

Awareness

- Have consumers heard of the scheme?
- Where did they hear about the scheme?
- Did they notice the certificates when they were displayed?

Usage and claimed behavioural change

- Are consumers using the scheme? Reasons?
- Do consumers claim the scheme has had any effect on their behaviour in terms of where they buy food?
- Do consumers believe that the scheme will have any effect on their behaviour in the future?

Accessing food hygiene ratings online

- Awareness, usage and interest in accessing food hygiene information online

Understanding

- Do consumers understand the schemes?
- Could the schemes be improved upon in terms of understanding?

Preference

- Which of the schemes is preferred and seen as most effective? Reasons?

- What are the most important elements of the certificates for consumers?
- How does each certificate perform in terms of the key elements?

The consumer research comprised four main elements:

- Qualitative (8) group research to review in detail 8 schemes and develop a hybrid option;
- Street and exit interview survey of awareness and use of schemes in Coventry and Leicester (480 respondents);
- Street interviews (620 in total) in scheme areas (Leicester, Coventry, Derby, Scotland, Belfast, Hull) from food outlets (with certificates on display) regarding potential use of certificates;
- Hall tests (357 people) in areas where schemes not launched of real and a hybrid certificates (London, Hull, Coventry, Leicester, Scotland and the Hybrid).

1.3.6 Inspection score data

Aims

A sample of Local Authorities operating scores on the doors scheme provided hygiene inspection scores for food businesses from before the launch of the schemes (a baseline) and for inspections after award of a certificate. The aim was to assess the difference in scores:

- Between the pre-SOTD inspections and the post –SOTD inspections;
- Compare trends between the different SOTD schemes.

Data was acquired for all hygiene ratings factors, as well as the total of hygiene, confidence in management and structural hygiene. The latter score corresponds to that used for the award of certificates and hence may be sensitive to the impact of the schemes. We also acquired and assessed the overall inspection score, inclusive of the hazard rating and additional risk rating.

The original evaluation plan included collecting data both retrospectively (for the pre-SOTD scores) and for businesses within existing SOTD schemes, and during the period 2007-2009. The aim was to acquire data for a series of post SOTD inspections, to explore if scores change after the first, second and third etc inspection. Noting that D risk premises are only inspected every 2 years, the sample was skewed intentionally to A, B and C risk businesses. Sample sizes were designed to achieve robust samples sizes for each scheme, to support comparison between schemes. Inspectors could also provide hygiene ratings for any re-visits in between primary inspections.

The evaluation period (after launch of the 2 year evaluation process) was revised to the last 6 months of 2007. All Local Authorities that launched schemes after July 2007 were advised that their participation was no longer required. This had the effect of:

- Reducing the number of Local Authorities that could provide post-SOTD data by at least 50%;
- Reducing the post-SOTD data set to mostly the first post-SOTD inspection, with some second inspections and few third or fourth inspections;
- Reducing the number of post-SOTD inspections from Authorities already running schemes (as fewer inspections for B and C risk premises had been achieved in the reduced evaluation period).

Due to the reduction in the sample sizes the evaluation was re-focused to:

- Assess if inspection scores improve after start of the schemes, treating all responses as a whole;
- Comparing the extent of change in the evaluation data set with that found in FSA monitoring data, using the FSA data as a form of 'control'.

The majority of the schemes operated from 2006, and provided inspection scores for the period 2006 to 2007. FSA monitoring data was available for the period up to 2006 but not 2007. Therefore, the evaluation was only able to assess if the change in SOTD businesses in 2006-2007 differed from FSA monitoring data for 2005-2006. This limited the validity of the comparison of changes in scores.

Inspectors were also asked to:

- Report on whether SOTD certificates were on display at the time of the inspection (also noting if a certificate has not been sent);
- Provide a judgement of whether food hygiene standards have changed for better or worse since previous inspection.

Samples sizes

The data was processed so as to:

- Produce matched sets of scores, where the baseline and first visit (post SOTD) scores for a business are matched, as are the baseline and second scores, baseline and third score etc;
- Businesses with incomplete data were deleted.

Table 4 presents the sample sizes for inspection scores. Thus, for example, in total there were 1698 businesses for which we received the baseline inspection score and an inspection score awarded at the first visit after issue of a certificate or SOTD letter. There were also 251 businesses for which there was a baseline score and a second visit score.

It should be noted that in some cases there was a baseline and second inspection score but no first visit score. Also as some authorities presented their data in a different format, or only provided total inspection scores, these data had to be assessed separately.

As expected with the curtailment of the evaluation period, the sample sizes were less than planned (planned to be 550 per scheme). A sample size in the order of 550 is sought in order to reliably detect small differences between any two sets of results. Smaller sample sizes can be used to detect larger differences between any two sets of data. Therefore, the data could be used to:

- Assess differences between the baseline and the first visit scores for all schemes grouped together;
- Assess large differences (if they exist) between the second or third inspection scores and the baseline.

Table 4 : Sample sizes for inspection scores

Schemes	LA	First visits	Second visits	Third visits	Forth visits	Fifth visits	Sixth visits	Seventh visits
0 to 5 stars	Wakefield	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Banbridge	80	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Cambridgeshire	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Cotswold	88	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Derby	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Slough	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Wellingborough	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Salisbury	15	5	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	244	6	0	0	0	0	0
Herts and beds 0-5*	Broxbourne	30	4		0	0	0	0
	East Herts	55	2	0	0	0	0	0
	Luton	189	23	4	0	0	0	0
	Stevenage	80	8	0	0	0	0	0
	Hertsmere	51	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Watford	114	10	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	519	47	4	0	0	0	0
Scottish – pass-improvement required	Aberdeen	107	43	15	8	5	2	1
	Edinburgh	103	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Fife	95	17	6	0	0	0	0
	Renfrewshire	102	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	393	54	19	8	4	2	1
Smiley face	Leicester	50	48	8	0	0	0	0
Colours	Torrige	77	49	20	6	0	0	0
	Stratford	281						
	Stoke	0	47					
	Total	358	49	20	6	0	0	0
0-3*	Coventry	9	12					
	Halton	58	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	67	13	0	0	0	0	0
Words	Hull	67	34	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total		1698	251	51	14	4	2	1

2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1 Introduction

Detailed study findings are provided in the Appendix. The consumer research findings are separately reported.

This section of the report provides a synthesis of findings.

2.2 Scheme profiles

The feedback from workshops and the online Local Authority questionnaire is summarised below. Approximately 100 Local Authorities attended the workshops with 46 completing the online scheme profile questionnaire and 24 quarterly reports completed.

2.2.1 Aims of schemes

The feedback from workshops and online Local Authority questionnaires indicated that:

1. The main aims included:
 - Improving providing businesses with a positive incentive and recognition (91% say definitely);
 - Informing customers (with 85% of questionnaire respondents agreeing with this);
 - Food hygiene standards (with 72% of questionnaire respondents 'somewhat' agreeing with this);
 - Reducing Freedom of Information (FOI) enquiries, and;
 - Alternative enforcement amongst businesses and raising profile of Environmental Health Professional work.
2. The extent to which the scheme is intended to lead to improve hygiene varies, with some schemes operated as part of a wider initiative aimed at encouraging and enabling business improvement whilst others aimed primarily at consumers.
3. Some workshop delegates indicated that the extent to which the scheme operates alongside and as part of business support activities is as important a difference between schemes as the difference in the type of scale and symbols used.

Thus, the schemes taken as a whole aimed equally to enable consumer choice and promote improved hygiene amongst business, with other objectives being important but somewhat less so. The Scottish Pass-Improvement Required scheme was said to be primarily aimed at informing customers and not to be aimed at improving food hygiene amongst businesses. All other schemes aimed to both inform customers and motivate businesses to varying degrees.

The majority of responding Local Authorities also promoted Safer Food Better Business and offer food hygiene training for businesses. Thus, the SOTD schemes were rarely operated in isolation of other activities.

2.2.2 Scheme design

Some key aspects of the design of schemes reported by Local Authorities included:

- **Awarding the first certificate** - The schemes were split between those that award the first certificate on the basis of the last primary inspection and those that award on the basis of current primary inspection as part of a rolling programme;

Both approaches were thought to offer advantages. Issuing certificates en mass and using previous scores achieved mass coverage and helps build critical mass quickly, but has the risk of grades being based on 'out of date' inspections. Issuing certificates after a current inspection means they are more current and hence valid scores, and inspectors can explain the scheme at the inspection, but means that it takes years for all businesses to receive a certificate.

- **Issuing letters to businesses before award of first certificate:** Many LAs wrote to businesses to advise them of the scheme and their grade (if based on past inspection). The feedback from LAs was that this was an effective way of securing business support.
- **Prioritisation of certification** - There was little prioritisation of businesses by risk category or their involvement in SFBB, especially if certificates are issued en mass. If the first certificates are issued at ongoing inspections most LAs retain the normal inspection programme. A few prioritised restaurants and take aways.

Some LAs expressed concern about including all types of food businesses in the scheme. In particular, there was concern that including businesses such as chemists and newsagents would reduce public confidence as they may not perceive these to be food businesses in lay person's terms.

- **Issuing low grade certificates** - A third did not issue certificates to low grades on the assumption that businesses would not display them. In particular some 0 to 5 star authorities do not issue any certificates below 3 stars (they receive a letter advising them of their score instead). In some non-0 to 5 star schemes low grade certificates were not issued, such as certificates stating 'un acceptable'.
- **Explaining scheme to businesses** - 86% of respondents indicated that their inspectors are asked to explain the scheme during routine inspection to businesses they inspect;
- **Revisits** - 37 (82%) of the Local Authorities that completed the online questionnaire indicated that businesses would not be offered revisits for the sake of regrading.

Some LAs argued that re-visits are essential to secure business engagement, to mentor low grade businesses and to motivate businesses with prospect of a better grade, especially where the time between primary inspections can be up to 2 years. They also argued that low grade businesses will probably receive a re-visit anyway, due to the need to follow up enforcement actions.

Some LAs argued that revisits cannot be allowed due to the workload and to ensure that SOTD does not 'drive' their inspection programme. Some also argued that if SOTD is aimed primarily at consumers then there is no case for revisits for the sake of engaging businesses. These LAs offer a 'right to reply' facility on websites listing their scores.

- **Certificate logo's** - Whilst 93% of schemes used the Local Authority logo, only 30% include one of the FSA logos (FSA, FSA Wales or FSA Scotland);

- **Information on the certificate** - Other than the certificate grade, most contained the date of inspection and contact points for the scheme, but only 48% provide the inspection score and 11% sub-factor scores, 9% the period of validity, 1% previous inspection scores and 11% gave inspection observations;
- **Certificate title:** Some LAs put the word Hygiene onto the certificate to ensure it is not confused with quality marks.
- **Websites** - The design of websites varied greatly, with some reliant on pdfs and others using interactive databases, but with all primarily showing certificate grade, name and inspection date. There were concerns expressed about providing inspection letters or reports on the website, due to the workload and because the length of reports may not reflect standards.

A searchable website was seen as an important facility by workshop delegates, with a filter to allow search by area, type of business and grade. A regional website was judged to be preferable to a LA specific site on the assumption it corresponds to consumer behaviour. It was also argued that a dedicated website is important, to ease accessibility, and avoid consumers having to navigate through Local Authority or other websites.

LAs report a high rate of website 'hits'. This is supported by the quarterly reports of website activity (averaging at 23,891 hits per quarter per authority).

Most of the responding LAs operating schemes had a dedicated food safety team, averaging 6.6, Food safety inspectors with an average of 245 businesses per inspector. 38% completed 'a lot' of training of their inspectors for SOTD, 45% did 'some' training, typically on design of the scheme and consistency.

Business support

On the one hand:

- Some LAs indicated that the provision of support to businesses was an integral part of their schemes;
- Most would encourage better hygiene as part of their schemes,
- 57% use SFBB as a means of helping businesses to get a better score;
- 74% would provide verbal advice during inspections (12% would not).

On the other hand:

- Only 10% allow re-visits in between primary inspections for sake of re-certification;
- 14% definitely offer coaching visits and 19% offer seminars in support of the scheme.

Thus, the main form of business support was during routine inspections.

Quality control

As regards quality control:

- The majority did not plan to compare scores between inspectors or other authorities to check for consistency;
- Some would carry checks on inspections to assure consistency and check with businesses on their satisfaction with the score;
- Some would check if enforcement is enacted at premises with low scores, but 48% would not.

The workshops indicated that inspectors tended to exert a higher level of diligence in the rating of premises due to the higher level of public transparency and accountability associated with SOTD.

Complaints and appeals processes

Respondents indicated that:

- The vast majority provide a contact point for queries or complaints;
- About a third have a dedicated complaints process for their schemes;
- Two thirds have a published appeals process;
- The vast majority have a process for members of the public to dispute scores;
- Two thirds indicate they would re-score businesses in the event of a substantiated customer complaint.

2.2.3 Grading processes

The schemes differ greatly in their design (as per Table 5), and LA delegates at workshops expressed diametrically opposing opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme. The key issues regarding scales include:

- The type of symbol used;
- The number of grades (2, 3, 4 or 6);
- Whether to have a single overall score or one for each of hygiene compliance, structural compliance and confidence in management;
- The alignment of scores to the certificate grade.

LAs provided feedback at workshops and on the online questionnaire regarding the reasons for their scheme design.

0 to 5 star schemes

0 to 5 star schemes were the most common. It is important to note that the meaning of the grades varied between schemes, as summarised on Table 5. These schemes were adopted for the following reasons:

- A view that customers are familiar with 5 star rating schemes, as per the quality rating scheme for hotels, and so will understand it;
- Only a few percentages of businesses get 5 stars and so it is motivational;
- A wish for the scheme to be recognisable alongside other schemes and be consistent with neighbouring LAs;
- Consumer consultation by LAs indicating a preference for a 5 star scheme;
- Six grades provide a better and truer representation of the range of performance amongst businesses - if you have fewer grades, e.g. 3 grades, the middle grade can encompass a very wide range of standards, and is not discriminating enough;
- If you have fewer grades, e.g. 3 grades, businesses may need to make substantial improvements before they can move up a grade, whilst with a 6 grade system they can achieve a higher grade more rapidly and so are more motivated to do so.

Some schemes only award stars (1+) to compliant businesses (e.g. Herts and Beds), whilst the ‘London’ scheme awards 2 stars to broadly compliant (0 to 1 for non compliant).

In addition, some schemes display empty stars (e.g. 3 full and 2 blank stars) in order to ensure people understand that it is 3 out of 5. The concern is that if only 3 stars are on display (with no blanks) people may not realise that the business can achieve more than 3 stars.

The following reasons for not using a 0 to 5 star scheme were given:

- Concern that it is difficult to qualitatively describe the difference between six grades;
- A view that customers may confuse it with other 5 star rating schemes, e.g. for hotels;
- Hotelier feedback stated that they do not want another 5 star rating scheme;
- Consumer consultation by LAs indicating a preference for other schemes;
- It is difficult for small businesses and family businesses to achieve 5 stars, skewing the scheme against small businesses, and some ‘very good’ premises do not get 5 stars;
- Some LAs do not issue certificates for 0, 1 or 2 stars on the assumption they will not be displayed – undermining the public information objective of the scheme; In particular, a 2 star grade is not displayed, as it is perceived by the business that 2 out of 5 is ‘poor’ despite it equating to broadly compliant¹ - thus a 0 to 5 star scheme may not fairly represent ‘broadly compliant’ businesses;
- A six stage scheme is sensitive (a small change in score leads to a change in grade), which raises concern about the legal defensibility of the scores;
- A 6 star scheme may lead to regulatory creep, promoting beyond compliance, especially if the LAs or inspector interprets the code of practice to mean that external auditing is needed for the 5 star grade;
- A 0 to 5 star scheme rewards poor performers, who get 1 or 2 stars, instead of being awarded the bottom grade on a 3 grade scheme.

Other schemes

The reasons cited for other schemes include:

- Smiley faces match the needs of a multi-lingual population;
- Gold silver and bronze is simple and avoids confusion with other star ‘quality’ schemes;
- A to E rating allows progression;
- Traffic lights build on public recognition and comprehension of nutrition signpost, as well as avoiding another star scheme.

Some schemes add words, such as ‘poor’, as they are thought to help consumers understand the meaning of the symbol, as well as helping people with colour blindness.

Three grade schemes were argued for on grounds that:

- They are easier to defend, as it is less sensitive;

¹ 2 out of 5 is ‘broadly compliant’ in the London 0 to 5 star scheme. Other 0 to 5 star schemes use slightly different alignments of scores to stars.

- They allow progression beyond ‘broadly compliant’;
- They avoid regulatory creep.

Two grade schemes (pass-improvement required) were argued for on the grounds that:

- It fulfils the needs of customers to be advised that the business has been inspected and ‘passed’ as safe;
- It is simple;
- It does not represent or reward graduated failure, i.e. businesses that fall below ‘broadly compliant’ are treated as a single category rather than splitting grades of ‘failure’.






The Pass-Improvement Required gradation was advocated where the aim of SOTD is primarily one of informing customers rather than improving hygiene standards. In addition, the pass-improvement required scheme operates in Scotland at the same time as award schemes that recognise beyond regulatory standards.

The Coventry scheme awards stars for each of hygiene compliance, structural compliance and confidence in management, as well as a single overall grade. This is argued for due to a wish to indicate performance in each area. A 3 grade scale is used in those cases where stars are awarded for each of the 3 components, to avoid overcomplicating the certificate. Other LAs expressed a concern that having three scales may be too complex for members of the public.

Table 5: Summary of grading systems (common examples)

Area	Grades	Comments
London pilot (London, Belfast, Swansea, Brighton, Derby, Kirklees and others)	5 stars, 4 stars, 3 stars, 2 stars, 1 star, no stars	5 = 0 to 5 4 = 10 to 15 3 = 20 to 25 2 = 30 to 35 1 = 40 to 45 0 = >45 2 is ‘broadly compliant’. No caveats.
Herts and Beds (Watford, Luton, Hertsmere, Stevenage, East Hertfordshire, Broxbourne, Mid Bedfordshire)	5 stars, Excellent 4 stars, Very good 3 stars, Good 2 stars, Satisfactory 1 star, Fair no stars - poor	Designed so that only businesses compliant with the law get a star. 5 = 0 to 5 4 = 10 to 15 3 = 20 2 = 25 to 30 1 = 35 0 = >36

Area	Grades	Comments
South Cambridgeshire and others	5 stars, Excellent 4 stars, Very good 3 stars, Good 2 stars, Fair 1 star, Poor no stars – Major improvements needed	5 = Up to 5 4 = Up to 15 3 = Up to 25 2 = Up to 35 1 = Up to 45 0 = >46 2 is 'broadly compliant'
Norwich City Council	5 stars, 4 stars, 3 stars, 2 stars, 1 star, no stars	5 = 0 to 5 4 = 6 to 15 3 = 16 to 25 2 = 26 to 35 1 = 36 to 40 (basic compliance, as defined by Norwich) 0 = >41 No stars awarded if 20+ for any of factor.
Coventry	3 sets of stars plus overall star rating 3 stars: High standard 2 stars: Satisfactory 1 star: Some major non compliance 0 star: Poor	Stars are awarded to each of the three factors hygiene, confidence in management and structural hygiene, along with an overall star rating.
Camden	Star Rankings 3 stars – Excellent 2 stars – Very Good 1 star – Good No stars – Some major	Rankings are given for each of three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in management • Compliance - Hygiene and Safety • Compliance – Structure
Halton	3 stars - Excellent 2 stars Broadly compliant 1 star – Some improvements required 0 star – General failure to satisfy legal requirements	Only the overall star rating is shown. 3 stars = exceeding legal requirements (0 to 20 points) 2 stars = broadly compliant (20 to 30 points) 1 = improvements needed (35 to 50 points) 0 = non compliant (50+)

Area	Grades	Comments
Scottish FSA (Aberdeen, Fife, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire)	Pass Improvement Required	As the scheme is aimed at consumers, it provides a simple reassurance of compliance only. Pass allows for minor non-compliances. Businesses can also achieve an Eatsafe award.
Leicester	Smiley Faces 	Each of the three factors are scored. The lowest score determines the grade.  = 0 and 5  = 10  = 15  = 20 or 25 for compliance, or 20 on management
Stratford on Avon	Gold Award Silver Award Bronze Award Unacceptable	Gold Award = 10 or less Silver Award = 11 to 20 Bronze Award= 21 to 35 Unacceptable= >36
Winchester group	Excellent Satisfactory Unsatisfactory	The number of points needed per grade varies according to the hazard rating, such that compliance must be higher for businesses with more risk (lower hazard rating scores). For example, a score of 35 is satisfactory for hazard rating of 10 but unsatisfactory for hazard ratings of 80.
Torridge	Green - pass Amber – Minor improvement needed Red – enforcement action in progress	Green = 0 to 30 Amber = 20 in management, 15 or 20 in hygiene and structural compliance Red = 30 in management, 25 in hygiene and structural compliance
Hull	A Excellent B: Good C; Acceptable D: Poor E: Very poor	

2.2.4 Publicity and business engagement

Plans and activities

Effectively all Local Authorities operating schemes had a publicity plan. These were focused on businesses, with most LAs definitely encouraging business display of certificates, with less publicity directed to consumers. For example, 78% of the LAs that completed the online questionnaire leafleted businesses but only 21% leafleted residents, although 36% also placed adverts in local papers and 57% used LA newsletters. Many examples of ambient advertising were offered, such as a bus campaign.

70% of LAs advised businesses during routine inspections of the scheme, with many sending letters to businesses to alert them to the scheme and their likely score. About 40% also engaged with local trade associations.

It was also noted that there was often local media attention. Indeed, many LAs sought to engage the local media in positive news stories as part of the promotion of the schemes. In some cases it was noted that there was a high level of 'free' media reporting of the schemes.

As regards ongoing publicity:

- A small minority of LAs reported ongoing leafleting of businesses or householders, adverts or engage with local business associations;
- The majority continued with advising businesses during routine inspections.

Thus, the ongoing publicity work was focused on direct inspector to business contact.

Lessons learnt

Workshop delegates indicated that local media attention can play an effective role in alerting businesses and the media to the scheme and helps to encourage business participation. Positive media attention includes news stories of high scoring businesses. LAs noted that they can help generate positive media attention by, for example, liaising with media and highlighting high scoring businesses. It was also suggested that engaging with press and business stakeholders early on helps to avoid negative publicity.

However, media attention can be negative such as 'name and shame', and this can occur regardless of the LAs actions.

It was also noted that it is imperative to consult businesses and give them notice of their impending scores, to avoid adverse feedback upon launching a scheme. Some 'tips' on engaging businesses included saying that:

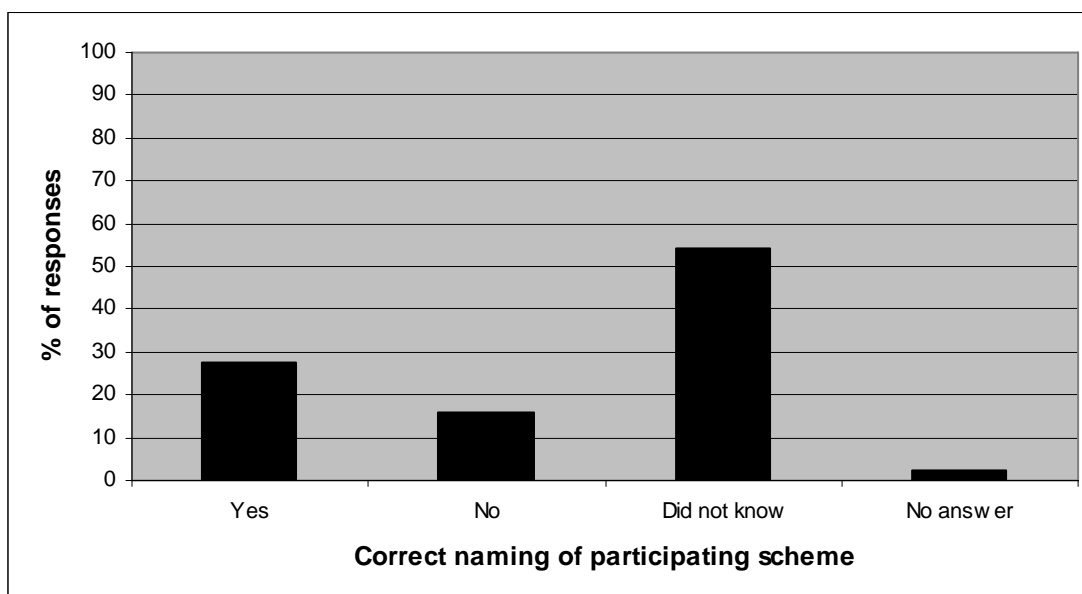
- The certificate may help to attract customers;
- The certificate may help show they are better than their competitors;
- They will obtain respect from customers;
- Listing on the website will help advertise their business.

Business participation was encouraged on an ongoing basis primarily through face to face contact at inspections.

Telephone survey business awareness of SOTD schemes

As part of the telephone survey of businesses (all of whom had been sent a letter or certificate as part of SOTD) we asked respondents to name the scheme operating in their area. As shown in Figure 4 only just under one third (28%) could name their scheme, with 54% saying they did not know the name and 16% stating a wrong name. The sample sizes per scheme were small; however, the Hull (A to E) scheme and the 0 to 5 star schemes had higher rates of recollection (at 62% and 46% respectively).

Figure 4: Proportion of businesses able to name their local SOTD scheme



We also asked if respondents were aware of a scheme in their area. 73% claimed to be aware of such schemes, including 100% of businesses in Hull and Leicester. The validity of these responses was supported by respondents subsequently being able to discuss the design of the certificate.

Thus, it appears that whilst businesses were aware of the schemes, awareness of the 'brand' (catchphrase) was low.

2.3 Impact on local authorities

2.3.1 Resourcing and workloads

The impact on Local Authorities was explored at the workshops and through both the first online questionnaire and a 'quarterly' update LA questionnaire that explored ongoing impact of the scheme. This provided feedback on the impact of launching and then operating a scheme.

It is clear that in the majority of cases that the launch and the operation of the schemes have had little impact on LA resourcing or their ability to maintain their normal inspection programme.

For example, as regards the impact of the launch of the scheme:

- 73% disagreed that launch of the scheme had hindered other important food hygiene enforcement work;

- 88% agreed they could maintain their normal schedule of primary inspections, 11% disagreed that they could;
- 95% were happy with the balance of LA costs and benefits of their scheme;
- 96% said their scheme was ease to use and apply.

There were some exceptions, with 15% indicating (on the scheme profile questionnaire) that they were thinking about halting their schemes. In addition, some LAs at the workshops indicated that any increase in their workloads, however small, was a problem.

It was indicated that the launch of the schemes was associated with a burst of activity that required devotion of staff time. However, once the scheme was launched the resource demand diminished. The launch activity focused on tasks such as stakeholder engagement, designing their schemes, developing websites, producing up to date business databases and consistency training. The vast majority of LAs indicated that no additional visits to businesses were needed to launch the scheme.

As regards ongoing costs for the quarters reported operating the schemes:

- 78% of respondents indicated that they carried out no additional visits to business in the reported period due to the scheme. A few LAs carried out up to 10 additional visits, and one reported up to 20, due to the scheme, such as for new food businesses and re-evaluating a score.
- As regards days devoted to engaging businesses, half reported no additional time spent engaging with business, with some reporting up to 10 days required to engage with business;
- 78% reported no additional advertising expenses during the reported quarter, with some reporting printing and websites costs of <£1000, and two reporting website costs of >£1000;
- On average there were 8 requests for re-visits from businesses in the reported quarter, noting that not all LAs respond to these requests.

The free text feedback from quarterly reports included examples of needing to explain the scheme and scores to businesses. Some quotes regarding the impact of the scheme include:

“Minimal” – “Minor impact to date” – “In fact very little. The scheme did not generate the expected number of queries and complaints have been minimal...”

“Initial bad press for no star/one star generated increase in service requests...” – “Food section has spent very little time with smoking bad”- “The programmed inspections took a hit and had to employ a contractor more than we would have done otherwise.

The most serious impact was indicated to be “We have abandoned our Category C inspection programme...to accommodate the extra inspections generated by targeting specific food sectors”. It should be noted that the impact was due to the targeting of some food sectors as part of the scheme.

Thus, the additional time and cost needed to engage or visit businesses during the reported period was minimal in most but not all cases. The main impact is associated with designing/launching the scheme and handling subsequent queries from businesses.

The LAs also report that over the reported quarters they have been operating the schemes (a small sample of 26) that:

- 83% agree that they could maintain their normal schedule of inspections, only 2 (8% disagree);
- 42% agree that the scheme has hindered other important food hygiene enforcement, versus 54% who disagree it has;

- 83% agree that they are happy with the costs and benefits of the scheme, none disagree;
- 96% agree that their scheme has been easy to apply and use.

Thus, responding Local Authorities were, on the whole, happy with their schemes and felt they had little impact on their ongoing workload. There were again some exceptions with 5 respondents (out of 24) indicating (in the quarterly report) they were thinking of halting their schemes, namely Leicester, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, Stratford on Avon and Brighton. These cover 0 to 5, Smile face and gold silver bronze schemes. No reasons were provided by the LAs.

Freedom of Information queries

The workshop delegates reported that there had been a reduction in the number of Freedom of Information requests due to the SOTD schemes.

As the evaluation period was reduced we were unable to track and report FOI queries to verify the delegates' feedback.

2.3.2 Litigation, complaints etc

Whilst 62% of the LAs who completed a quarterly report said that 'some' businesses had objected to the scheme, only a small number of LAs (17) reported on the number of business enquiries and complaints. They indicated that in the reported period there were on average per quarter:

- 2 business objections to the scheme;
- 6 requests for re-inspections as part of the scheme;
- 2 appeals;
- 1 change in score on appeal;
- 3 business complaints about the scheme;
- 1 cases of customers suggesting the scores are too high;
- 14 public and 23 business enquiries about the scheme.

These results match the workshop feedback where delegates indicated that contrary to expectations that there were very few appeals and complaints. Only one delegate cited a case of litigation being threatened.

In those cases where businesses queried their scores, workshop delegates indicated that once the scoring scheme and the reasons for their score were explained, businesses tend to accept the rating. The exceptions included:

- Where the manager was not present at the time of the inspection;
- The hygiene problems have been resolved.

The telephone survey of businesses supports these findings, with most respondents happy with their score. The exceptions were:

- Where the low score was due to 'technicalities' such as paper work;
- The score was due to structural hygiene issues that, in the opinion of the businesses were related to the age of the building.

2.3.3 Benefits to local authorities

The main benefits to LAs (other than improved food hygiene standards), cited by LAs, included:

- Change in inspection frequencies, with a reduction in category A and B risk businesses;
- An increased in community awareness of the work of EHOs;
- An increased awareness amongst members of the work of EHOs;
- Reduction in workload involved in responding to Freedom of Information queries;
- Positive business engagement with EHO to improve standards, and get registered.

2.3.4 Local authority lessons learnt

Some of the lessons learnt included:

- Operating the SOTD schemes together with an award scheme did not work well;
- There is a need to complete preparatory work early, especially with IT;
- Providing businesses with early warnings of their score before the scheme is launched, to allow time for business awareness to develop;
- Achieving more publicity and business consultation.

Some aspects that were thought to have not worked well included:

- Publicity – due to adverse media attention;
- A drop off in publicity;
- LA specific websites being ‘basic’.

2.4 Business reaction to schemes

2.4.1 Expressed support for schemes

There was consistent positive feedback about business reaction to the SOTD schemes, with the exception of some low scoring businesses. The positive feedback applied to all schemes and came from LAs and from surveyed businesses.

Local Authority feedback

Some Local Authority quotes included:

- “Businesses are now contacting us to tell us they have completed the works required and are attending SFBB surgeries and workshops for help”
- “..I have been in food safety enforcement for 10 years. I have never seen such motivation to get work done and to maintain good standards”.
- “Many are more interested in increasing their published score than in complying with the law”.
- “..many ask what they need to improve about their food operation in order to increase the number of stars”.

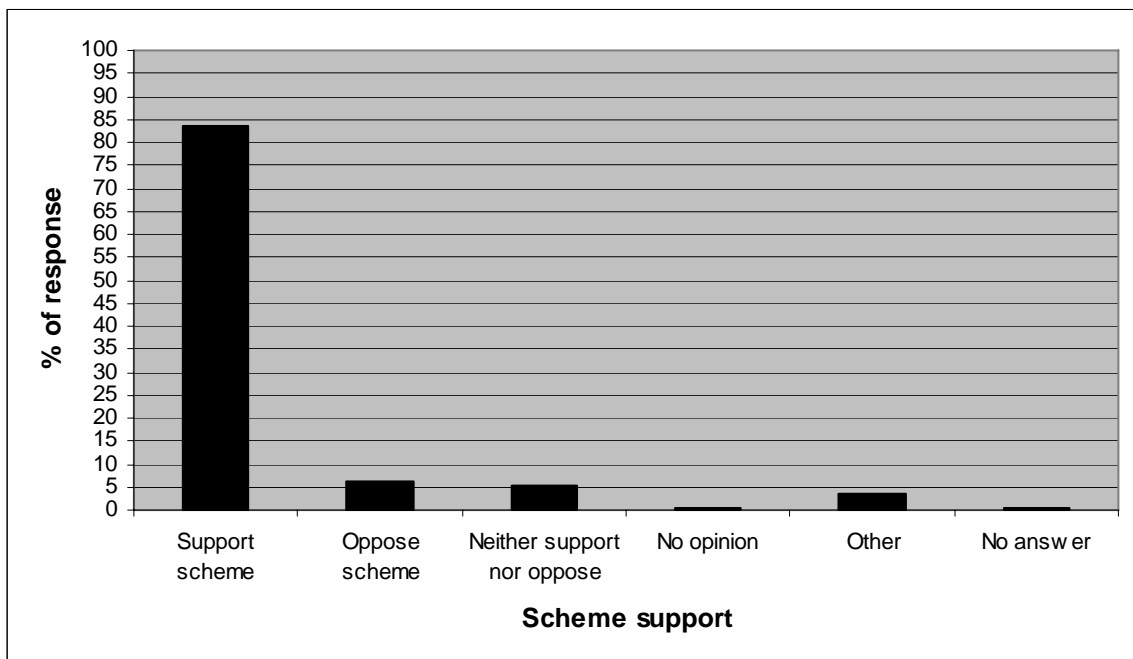
- “I think those that want to comply are in favour of the scheme whilst overall those that are 0 rated are indifferent or are negative to the scheme”.
- “Most appreciate the scheme, only the hard case poor performers object”.

It was pertinent to note that the LA feedback in response to a question about ‘what is going well?’ focuses on positive business reaction rather than consumer feedback.

Business survey feedback

Figure 5 shows the proportion of businesses in the telephone survey that expressed support for their scheme, a clear majority. A high level of support was expressed for all of the schemes survey on the grounds that they ‘were good for customers and businesses’ and ‘encourages food hygiene’. The minority that oppose heir scheme do so on the grounds of perceived unfairness (scheme is ambiguous or inspectors are inconsistent) or irrelevance (e.g. customers not aware of it).

Figure 5: Telephone survey business respondents support for the scheme



2.4.2 Business comments on grading system and certificates

Businesses in the telephone survey were asked for their opinion about the certificate design, scoring process and number of grades.

Design of the certificates

The design of all of the certificates were assessed as ‘good’ or ‘okay’ in the vast majority of cases for all schemes. Positive remarks related to certificates being:

- Clear;
- Noticeable;

- Straightforward;
- Well laid out.

Adverse comments related to:

- Not being professional looking;
- Need to look more official;
- No signature or date;
- Bland.

Scoring process

The scoring processes were assessed as 'good' or 'okay' in the vast majority of cases for all schemes. Notwithstanding the small sample sizes, fewer businesses said the scoring system was poor for the Halton, Coventry and Winchester schemes. Positive remarks included:

- Its simple;
- Fair;
- Comprehensive.

Adverse comments related to:

- Needs to be amended to take account of small businesses;
- Need to differentiate between types of business;
- Unfair if overall score is based on lowest score awarded to each factor.

Grades

Again the majority of businesses thought the grades were okay or good (80%) for all schemes. Notwithstanding the small sample size the Pass-Improvement required grades had the largest number of businesses saying it was a poor grading process. Also, the Halton 1 to 3 star process and the Winchester grades were said to need more grades, but not the Coventry grades.

It is pertinent to note that businesses spontaneously conceived of the Coventry scheme as having 0 to 9 stars, not 0 to 3, as stars are awarded and shown for each of the three inspection factors.

The feedback again highlighted the need for simplicity.

The adverse feedback related to:

- Vagueness, e.g. the Smilesafe grades;
- A fear that people will assume that 0 to 3 stars is actually 0 to 5 and so assume 3 is 3 out of 5;
- Pass and improvement required needs a merit grade;
- More grades for Winchester (5 not 3).

The adverse comments tend to ask for more rather than fewer grades.

Suggested improvements from businesses

Businesses in the telephone survey were asked how they would improve the scheme.

This open ended question led to three main responses, namely:

- Improving fairness of the system, such as different rules for different businesses, reducing paper work and make allowance for small businesses;
- Improving public awareness of the scheme and the meaning of the grades;
- Implementing stricter rules and spot checks.

Businesses also spontaneously suggested that there should be a national scheme.

2.4.3 Display of certificates

The findings and feedback regarding the display of certificates is consistent in some respects, but inconsistent in others.

The findings were consistent in that:

- Low scoring businesses are reluctant to display their certificates;
- Most LAs perceive that display of certificates is skewed towards those businesses that get good scores.

The reported levels of display of certificates were inconsistent across our sources. Whilst the postal and telephone surveys reported a high rate of display, LAs and inspectors do not. It was our opinion that the voluntary postal and telephone surveys provide a skewed measure of the rate of display, and that the LAs and inspector observations provide a far more valid measure of the rate of display.

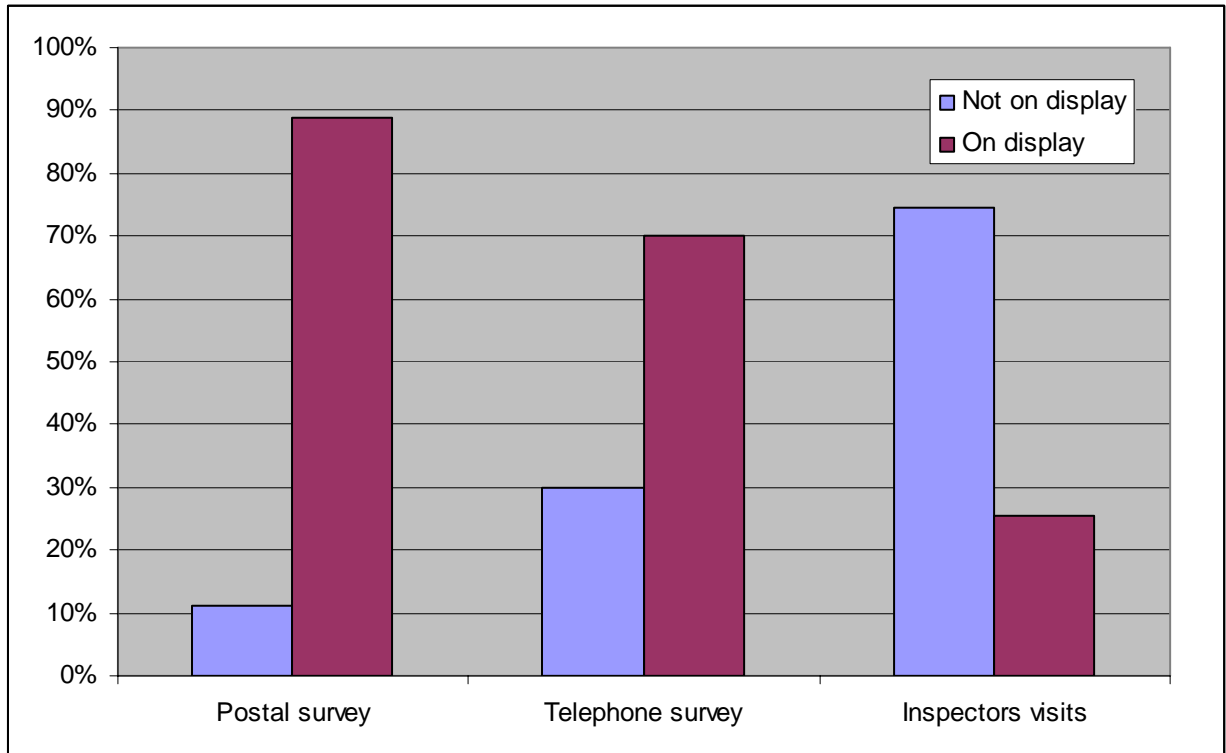
Rate of display

The subjective feedback from the LA quarterly reports were that:

- “Displaying certificates could be better”;
- “The displaying of ambers and reds (is not going well) as it is not a mandatory scheme...”

This is consistent with the reported rate of display observed by inspectors during primary inspections and revisits. As noted in Figure 6 the observed rate of display (for all responding LAs) was 26% after excluding businesses that were not sent a certificate.

Figure 6: Rate of reported display of certificates (excluding none received)



Reasons for displaying certificates

The postal survey listed a series of reasons why businesses may display a certificate, with respondents able to select more than one reason. The telephone survey asked an open ended question to which respondents could offer a ‘free’ response. They tended to offer a single reason. The telephone responses were categorised, as below.

The main reason is clearly for the sake of communicating with customers that they have been inspected/have a certificate. Being proud of the score and motivating staff also figure highly.

A significant proportion displays it on the incorrect belief that it is a requirement, including 16% of the postal survey respondents. 23% of postal survey respondents also selected ‘The food safety officer asked me to’.

Table 6: Reasons for display of certificates (% of respondents displaying)

Telephone survey (N = 417)	Postal survey (top 4 scores N = 749)
59% - So customers can see it	75% To show we have been inspected
26% - It is a requirement	72% We are proud of the score
15% - Proud of the score	57% It motivates our staff to be hygienic
	39% To attract more customers

There were no marked differences in the responses between the schemes on the telephone survey. In the case of the postal survey, the results suggested that:

- Fewer of the Scottish pass-improvement required respondents display it because it motivates our staff to be hygienic;
- More Scottish respondents display it because it is compulsory.

Certificates were displayed mostly on front door/window or a public access area according to the postal survey.

Reasons for non display cited by respondents

The aforementioned workshop feedback from Local Authorities was that businesses will not display low scores, underlining the LA practice of not issuing certificates for grades under 3 stars (for 0 to 5 star schemes) for example. One Local Authority indicated that the London bandings “make compliant businesses look poor”, where 2 stars is broadly compliant.

The two surveys suggested a different set of reasons. The telephone survey picks up on situational factors such as “certificates do not go up in that nursing home”, “the layout and design of the certificate and our building do not compliment”, “in the process of refurbishment”.

The telephone and postal survey both report ‘poor scores’ as a reason, with quotes such as “It’s only a bronze and that’s nothing to shout about”. It should be noted that most respondents received a reasonable score and that most agreed with their score in this survey. Poor scores may feature as a greater proportion of responses if a survey captured a larger proportion of low grade businesses. Also many LAs do not issue certificates below a 3 or ones stating words such as Unacceptable. This may also reduce the proportion who would cite not liking the score as a reason for non-display.

‘Not relevant’ included issues such as proprietors disliking the entire scheme.

Table 7: Reasons for not displaying certificates (% of respondents not displaying)

Telephone survey (N = 54)	Postal survey (top 4 scores, N = 195)
47%.....- Situational factors stopping display	32% Other (no stated)
33% - Not relevant	18% I do not agree with the score
12% - Poor score	15% You do not like the scoring system
8% ... - Not a requirement	15% The certificate may stop customers from using us

In the case of the telephone survey we also asked what would prompt businesses (that do not display a certificate) to display one. Getting a better score (such as 3 stars) and it being the law were the top reason.

Score, display of certificates and agreement with score

Noting that the display (or lack of it) was related to agreement with the score, an analysis was completed of the factors that influenced agreement with the score. It was clear that:

- Businesses are far more likely to agree with a score when their score is higher – with the telephone survey finding moderate correlations of ~0.5;

- In the postal survey there was a strong correlation of 0.737 between perceived fairness of the score and the score amongst 0 to 5 star businesses.

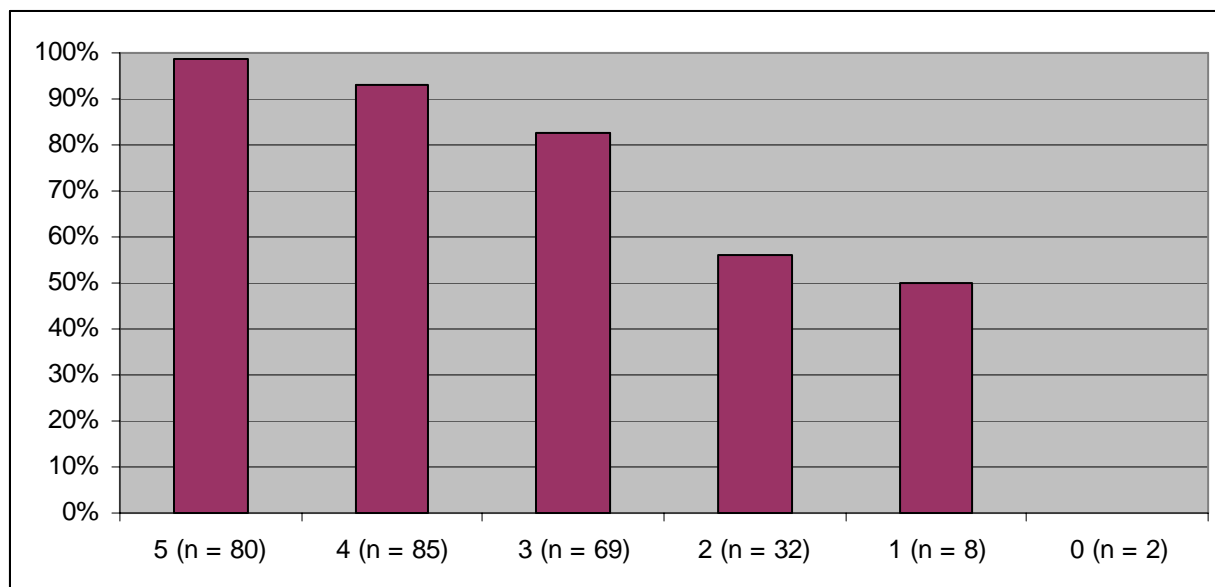
Thus, the perceived fairness, rate of display and agreement with scores were all correlated.

An analysis was completed of the rate of reported display for each grade of certificate, using the postal survey, for 0 to 5 star respondents. As per Table 8 and Figure 7, there was a clear trend between grade and display of certificates. The rate of display appeared to tail off below 3 stars, i.e. businesses were reluctant to display 2 stars (despite this being broadly compliant) or below (where 0 or 1 is non compliant). The analyses excluded businesses that had not received a certificate.

Table 8: Proportion of certificates reported as on display per grade (for 0 to 5 star postal survey respondents)

Stars	N (sample size)	Not displayed	Displayed
5	80	1%	99%
4	85	7%	93%
3	69	17%	83%
2	32	44%	56%
1	8	50%	50%
0	2	100%	0%

Figure 7: Proportion of certificates reported as on display per grade (for 0 to 5 star postal survey respondents)



An analysis of the Scottish responses to the postal survey found that 6% (n = 247) of the passes reported that they did not display the certificate along with 44% (n = 16) of the Improvement Required, with 56% of Improvement Required reporting that they displayed the certificate.

The proportions reported as not on display, excluding not received, are shown in Table 9. The small sample sizes make interpretation of the data difficult. In the case of the larger samples, such as excellent vs. Satisfactory/good, it was again clear that there were lower rates of reported display for the lower grades. Results for other schemes are not shown due to the very small number of responses.

The rate of non display for Satisfactory/good was 23% and 21% for Bronze. Notwithstanding the small sample sizes, this could indicate that certificates that clearly indicate the meaning of the (broadly compliant) grade were more likely to be displayed than 2 star certificates (which are also broadly compliant).

Table 9: Proportion of certificates reported as not on display for other schemes (business postal survey)

Scheme grade	Sample size (N)	% not on display
Big smile	6	0%
Smile	7	14%
Neutral	3	0%
Gold tick	9	0%
Green tick	11	9%
Amber tick	6	0%
Red tick	1	100%
A	2	50%
B	9	0%
C	12	33%
D	1	100%
E	1	0%
Excellent	108	4%
Satisfactory/good	31	23%
Gold	12	8%
Silver	26	8%
Bronze	14	21%

The consumer research explored the impact of grade on consumers' willingness to buy food from outlets. Key findings, as per Table 10, were that:

- People are far less likely to buy food from outlets with less than 3 stars, graded as poor or unsatisfactory or improvement required, or with 1 star in the Coventry scheme.

It was pertinent to note that consumers were willing to buy from a 2 star outlet in the Coventry 0 to 3 star scheme, but far less so in the 0 to 5 star scheme despite 2 stars being broadly compliant (30 to 35 points).

These findings are consistent with the business fear that less than 3 stars (on a 0 to 5 star scheme) may deter customers.

Table 10: Consumer willingness to buy food from outlets by grade (taken from Continental Research consumer survey)

Belfast	Top score (five stars)	Four stars	Three stars	Two stars	One star	No stars
Belfast (Exit)	76%	79%	73%	34%	17%	10%
Derby	Top score (five stars)	Four stars	Three stars	Two stars	Once star	No stars
Derby (Exit)	98%	98%	72%	23%	8%	5%
Hull	Top score (excellent)	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor	
Hull (Exit)	95%	94%	64%	9%	4%	
Leicester	Top score	Satisfactory	Un-satisfactory	Highly un-satisfactory		
Leicester (Street)	92%	71%	9%	7%		
Coventry	Top score (3 stars)	2 stars	1 star	0 stars		
Coventry (Street)	85%	78%	27%	14%		
Scotland	Top score (pass)	Improvement required				
Scotland (Exit)	88%	33%				

Display at first and subsequent inspections

The rate of display did not appear to change greatly between the first and third visits by inspectors after award of a certificate, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Rate of display (all LAs) for first and subsequent visits after award of a certificate (as reported by inspectors)

	First	Second	Third	Fourth
N	824	233	48	6
Not on display	74%	70%	79%	67%
On display	26%	30%	21%	33%

Display by scheme

The reported rate of non-display, excluding no certificate received, is shown in Table 12 for the postal survey. The rate of non-display did not differ markedly between the schemes. The responses for all 'non 0 to 5 star and non Scottish schemes' were merged due to the small sample sizes for individual schemes.

Table 12: Rate of non display of certificates (postal survey)

	All	Scotland (pass-improvement required)	Other	0 to 5 stars
N = sample size	848	242	307	299
Not on display	12%	10%	11%	14%

There did appear to be variation in the rate of reported display between schemes for the telephone survey. Care must be exercised in reviewing these differences due to the small size of some of the samples. Nonetheless, from the telephone survey it was noticeable that 90% reported display of a certificate for the Scottish 'Pass-Improvement required' scheme, compared to 30% for all telephone survey respondents. It was considered reasonable to assume, by the researchers, that this may be due to the scheme providing a non-contentious pass to over 90% of businesses, where as other schemes provide a 'fail' or low grade certificate to a higher proportion of businesses.

The rate of display for 'All schemes' and for each scheme is shown in Table 13. The sample size for 'All' does not match the totals of the others as any small sample was not shown for the individual schemes. The results for some schemes are not shown at all due to small number of responses. Care must be exercised in comparing results between schemes due to the small samples sizes. Nonetheless, there is some indication that:

- There is a higher rate of display amongst the Scottish Pass-Improvement required visits;
- The rates of display for the schemes NOT using 0 to 5 stars or pass-improvement required may be lower, although the small samples sizes for these other schemes mean this is uncertain.

Table 13: Rate of display (reported by inspectors) by scheme for first, second and third visits after award of a certificate

	First	Second	Third
All	26% (N = 824)	30% (N = 233)	21% (N=48)
Scottish	54% (N = 187)	38% (N = 40)	-
0 to 5 stars	23% (N = 368)	29% (N =38)	-
Leicester (Smilesafe)	4% (N = 49)	12% (N = 49)	-
Hull (A to E)	11% (N = 117)	-	-
Stoke (ticks)	-	57% (N = 47)	-
Torridge (traffic lights)	8% (N = 98)	16% (N = 55)	24% (N =21)

The rate of display was examined for LAs in the Herts and Beds scheme (Stevenage, Watford, Luton, Broxbourne, East Herts, Hertsmere). It was 24% (n – 299). This is not different to the sample as a whole or from the results for all 0 to 5 star schemes.

2.4.4 Inspectors' advice

Both the telephone and postal surveys found that the majority of businesses reported that inspectors explained the scheme (75% and 79% respectively) and in the case of the telephone survey, how to get a better score (60%). There was some evidence of differences in the provision of advice by inspectors from the telephone survey, with more advice reported by Leicester (Smilesafe) and Coventry respondents, and least by Scottish and Winchester respondents.

It was also apparent that fewer Scottish respondents to the postal survey asked inspectors how to get a better score. However, as over 90% receive a pass there is little scope for improvement, as witnessed by 41% of Scottish respondents thinking they cannot get a better score.

There was limited evidence of an association between the receipt of advice and business perceptions of the scheme. There was a low correlation between the postal survey score and whether the inspector explained the scheme. The telephone survey did not find any significant correlation between the advice given and encouragement to improve food hygiene, although as most got a high score correlations will be low.

2.4.5 Ability and interest in getting a higher score

With regard to the postal survey:

- The vast majority expressed a wish to get a better score (85%);
- 61% thought they could get a better score (most had a high score already).

With regard to the telephone survey:

- 88% thought they could definitely or possibly get the top score, with 15% either saying impossible or unlikely.

The main (62%) reason for thinking they could get the top score was by making improvements, with 22% already having the top score.

Very few thought it was impossible to get the top score due to the scheme being unfair (4%) with more (7%) saying it was impossible due to the nature of the business (e.g. no restaurants getting gold).

Analysis of 0 to 5 star scores on Transparency data website

Table 14 shows the proportion of businesses that received 0 to 5 stars by type of business. The data was taken off the Scores on the Doors website run by Transparency Data for many of the Local Authorities operating a 0 to 5 star scheme. It indicates that:

- Institutional food establishments, such as hospitals, schools and nurseries are top ranked;
- Manufacturers and supermarkets are middle ranked;
- High street food outlets such as takeaways and restaurants are ranked bottom.

Thus, there appeared to be a tendency for the more institutional types of establishment to receive higher scores.

It can also be noted that:

- 11% of all of the businesses receive 0 or 1 star (below the level defined as broadly compliant);
- 50% got 2 or 3 stars;
- 39% got 4 or 5 stars;
- Some businesses in **all** categories received the top score of 5 stars, indicating that it is possible for all business types to achieve this.

Thus, a small minority of the businesses were graded as below broadly compliant. A large proportion of all types of businesses were graded as below broadly compliant.

In addition 31% receive 0, 1 or 2 stars. This is considered important as some Local Authorities judge that businesses only display certificates if they receive 3 or more stars. Thus, it is possible that one third of food business receive certificates that they may not wish to display.

Table 14: Scores by type of business (ranked by average score)

Business type	% of business receiving each grade						Average score	Number of businesses
	0	1	2	3	4	5		
Hospital Kitchen	0%	0%	7%	23%	34%	36%	4.0	267
School/College Kitchen	0%	1%	9%	24%	44%	22%	3.8	3,590
Day Nursery/Playgroup	0%	1%	10%	27%	42%	19%	3.7	1,589
Canteen/Kitchens	1%	2%	11%	23%	42%	20%	3.6	1,223
Nursing/Care Home Kitchen	0%	2%	11%	28%	41%	18%	3.6	3,109
Warehouse & Distribution of Food	2%	3%	9%	31%	33%	21%	3.5	306
Community Hall	1%	2%	11%	31%	42%	14%	3.5	1,040
Home Catering	1%	3%	14%	30%	39%	13%	3.4	579
Food Importer	0%	0%	26%	21%	37%	16%	3.4	19
Supermarket	1%	5%	14%	30%	35%	14%	3.4	1,486
Hotel/Guest House	2%	4%	15%	30%	34%	14%	3.3	1,715
Food Manufacturer	4%	5%	16%	25%	32%	18%	3.3	547
Leisure Facility Catering	1%	5%	19%	32%	32%	11%	3.2	961
Private Members Club	1%	4%	19%	36%	32%	7%	3.1	806
Specialist Food Sale	3%	6%	16%	35%	29%	10%	3.1	526
Market	2%	4%	18%	42%	27%	7%	3.1	307
Food Manufacturer & On-Site Shop	2%	9%	18%	29%	31%	11%	3.1	355
General Retailer with Food	2%	7%	20%	32%	29%	10%	3.1	4,906
Butcher	4%	7%	21%	31%	29%	8%	3.0	932
Mobile Catering Service	3%	7%	23%	33%	27%	7%	3.0	1,514
Prison Kitchen	4%	12%	21%	33%	15%	15%	2.9	78
Café	4%	10%	22%	30%	25%	8%	2.9	4,830
Restaurant	4%	10%	24%	31%	24%	7%	2.8	9,067
Public House	4%	10%	27%	34%	22%	4%	2.7	5,403
Take Away	9%	17%	25%	28%	17%	5%	2.4	7,147
Overall Totals	3%	8%	20%	30%	29%	10%	3.0	52,302

2.4.6 Expressed support for re-visits

As previously mentioned, some LAs indicated that re-visits is important to encourage businesses (with an average of 8 requests for re-visits per quarter from respondents), whilst other LAs argued against re-visits on grounds such as workload and the scheme focusing on consumers.

The telephone survey of businesses explored views of re-visits. Some points were very clear, including:

- The vast majority think it is important or very important to have the option of revisits – in all schemes surveyed;
- The main reason for re-visits being important is so a business can improve its score (87%);
- Only a minority of businesses in LAs that offer revisits actually ask for a re-visit (to improve their score) (19% of the telephone survey respondents in Leicester, Torridge and Scotland) – the majority do not ask for a revisit because they are happy with their score or because they were being re-inspected anyway;
- The majority (63%) of businesses are ‘unlikely’ to pay for a revisit (all schemes), with the minority willing to pay (in region of £25 to £100) so as to get a better score.

Some quotes illustrating the sentiment include:

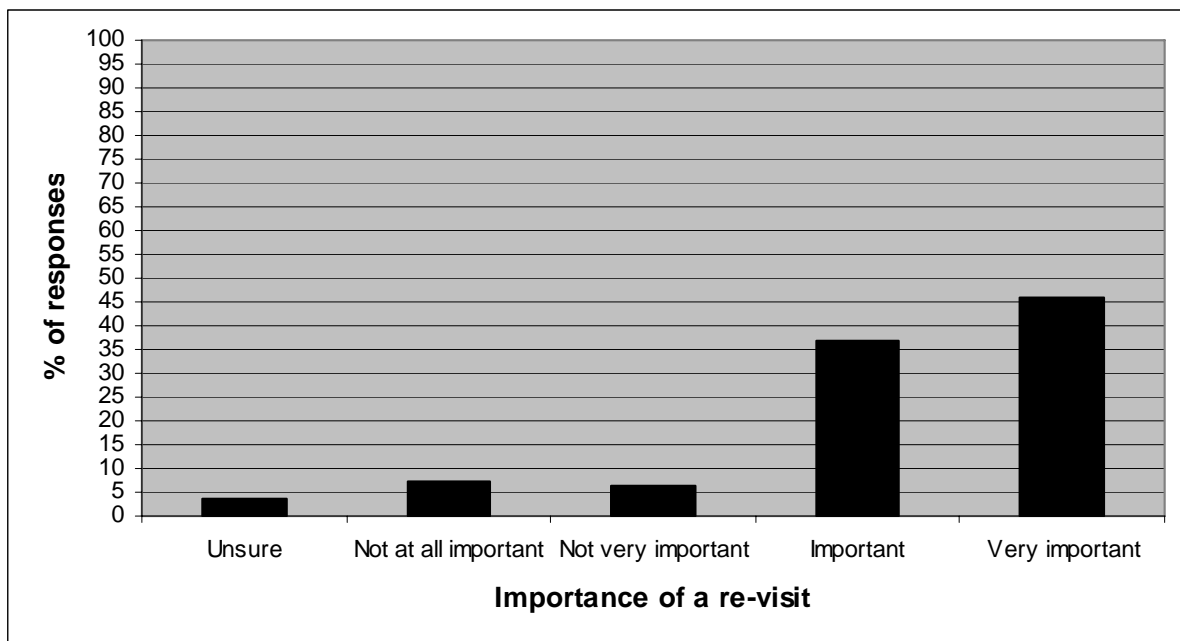
“If they have gone to the trouble to improve then inspectors should come out”;

“Chance to prove you have done better”.

In the case of no need for re-visits businesses said “They are visited on an annual basis anyway” for example.

Thus, there was a general view that re-visits are important to allow businesses to receive a new score having made improvements.

Figure 8: Businesses perceived importance of re-visits (% of telephone survey respondents)



2.5 Impact on businesses

2.5.1 Impact on businesses

Impact on business

The telephone business respondents indicated that:

- The certificate had no impact on their businesses in 80% of cases;
- 18% reported a positive impact, including more customers and better reputation;
- Only 2% reported a negative impact.

There was no apparent difference in impact between the schemes, but the sample sizes are small.

Impact on staff

The telephone survey asked how the certificate has impacted staff. Whilst a third indicated that it had no impact on staff, only 4% reported a negative impact with the majority reporting a positive impact on staff in respect of:

- Morale;
- Pride in the businesses;
- Awareness of food hygiene.

Quotes included staff “got notice for their job” and “Motivation to make sure everything is right”.

Those that reported adverse staff impacts said this related to staff feeling unfairly treated and insulted because they got a poor score due to paperwork.

2.5.2 Impact on customers: business perception

Whilst the two surveys were consistent in that the majority of business do not think that the certificate had any impact on their customers, the postal and telephone survey differ somewhat in their response regarding impact on customers.

Postal survey

The postal survey indicated that only 8% of businesses felt that ‘Most’ or ‘Almost all’ of customers asked about the certificate, with 49% saying none do and 34% saying very few do. The postal survey also reported that 83% felt that the certificate has had no impact on the number of customers, with 16% saying they had more customers (only 1% said less). These findings were consistent across the schemes, although the proportion reporting that no customers asked about the certificate may have been higher for Scotland at 58%.

Telephone survey

Whilst 37% of telephone respondents reported that none of their customers were aware of their certificate, the majority reported that customers had ‘some’ or ‘a lot’ of awareness.

70% reported that the scheme had no impact on their customers, with 28% citing a positive impact. The positive impacts included increased consumer confidence. Negative impacts related to low scores discouraging customers.

93% of respondents indicated no affect on the number of customers, with 6% saying a ‘few more’.

2.5.3 Comparison with consumer research findings

These findings are consistent with the consumer research. For example, the consumer research in Coventry and Leicester found:

- Only 7% of people in street interviews were aware (unprompted) of any new food hygiene schemes in Coventry/Leicester, although 57% said they knew that you could get information on the food hygiene status of outlets;
- 66% were not aware of the food hygiene schemes in Coventry or Leicester when prompted by use of scheme names etc;
- 24% were aware that “some Local Authorities have launched a scheme to provide the public with simplified information about food outlets with regards to food hygiene”;
- Only 1% had used websites to check for outlet food hygiene status;
- 16% had seen a food hygiene certificate.

In addition, in exit interviews (in Scotland, Leicester, Hull, Derby, Coventry, Belfast) only 29% noticed the certificates and only 26% knew of the rating for the outlet before ‘today’ (usually from a previous visit).

The research also explored self reported usage and behaviour change. The street survey in Coventry and Leicester found that 12% reported some or a great deal of usage of hygiene rating schemes.

Thus, overall there was evidence that to date SOTD schemes have had little impact on consumers in the surveyed areas.

However, consumers do argue that they would make use of the information in the future, especially for lunch/dinner (as opposed to buying food on way/from work). In particular:

- 72% of the Coventry and Leicester respondents said they were very or fairly likely to use the information to influence where they would eat, with 57% claiming they would check the hygiene status in the future and 76% claiming they would look for the certificate in the future;
- 79% of the street survey in other areas said they were very or fairly likely to use the information to influence where they would eat;
- 19% claimed they would use the internet to check hygiene status in the future.

This could suggest that with increased awareness of the schemes, consumers may make more use of the information.

2.6 Impact on food hygiene standards

2.6.1 Subjective self assessment of impact

As summarised below, whilst few businesses spontaneously attributed changes in food hygiene to SOTD, many do report being prompted or encouraged to make improvements due to SOTD and cite examples of specific changes when directly asked about the impact of SOTD.

Changes in practices and reasons for these (unprompted)

The telephone survey also asked businesses, at the outset of interviews, to self assess the extent of change in hygiene practices over the last year, and to then say what prompted them to make these changes. The purpose of the survey had not yet been mentioned and respondents were not prompted by words such as scores on the doors. The aim was to acquire an unprompted self-attribution of reasons for changes in food hygiene practices.

72% of respondents making 'A little' or 'A lot' of changes, with 27% saying no change. The main reasons for these were:

- A food safety audit (not by a council inspector) – 34%
- Safer food better business (15%)
- Inspector's advice (14%)
- Customer complaint (5%).

It should be noted that only 108 out of the 486 respondents could articulate what prompted them to make changes. In many (146) cases the reasons was 'to improve the business'

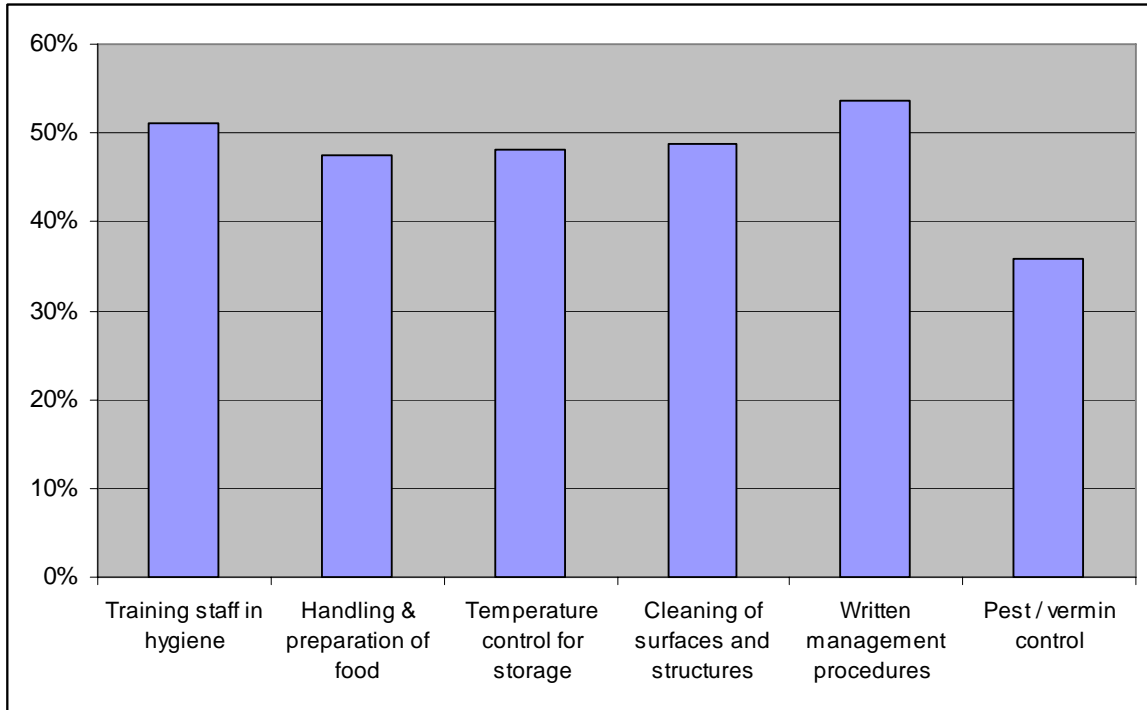
Prompted questions about impact of SOTD

The postal and telephone surveys are consistent in reporting a positive impact of certificates on businesses subjective view of hygiene improvements.

Postal survey

Postal survey respondents were asked "How has the certificate affected how you do each of the following". The results were consistent across the schemes, with the results for all schemes shown in **Figure 9**. About half attribute improvements in hygiene practices to the certificate, with one third in the case of pest / vermin control. The remaining postal survey respondents report no change in hygiene practices.

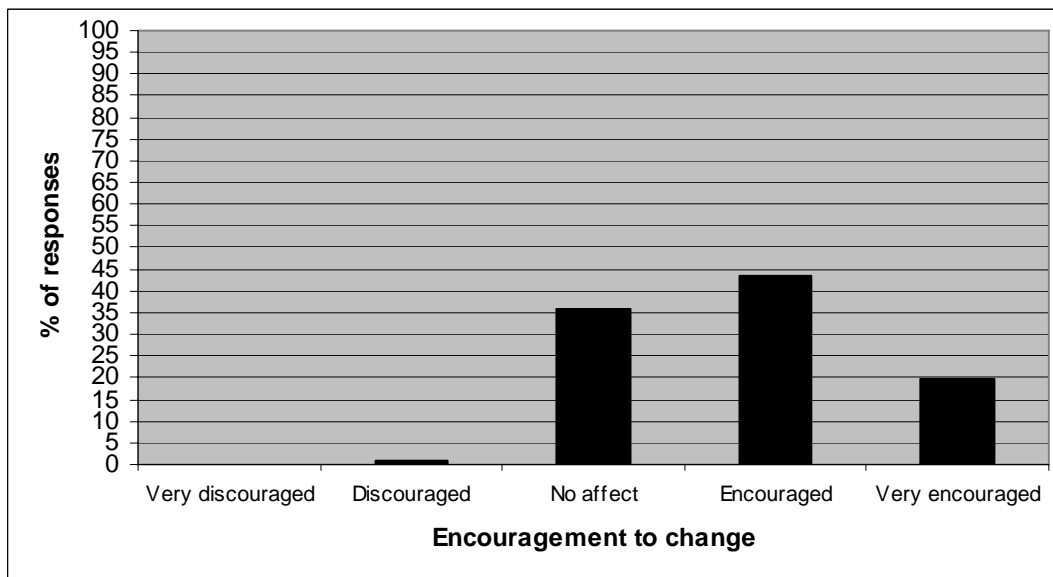
Figure 9: Business postal survey opinion on whether certificate led to better hygiene practice (% who agree or strongly agree)



Telephone survey

The telephone survey asked whether the SOTD scheme encouraged or discouraged businesses to make improvements to food hygiene. A clear majority said it encouraged improvements, with a third saying no affect (only 1% said discouraged). This was consistent across all schemes.

Figure 10: Telephone survey perception of certificates encouragement



The main reason for being encouraged included ‘Trying to improve and maintain scores’. The main reason for no affect was that businesses already had good practices in place; with some saying the process was irrelevant.

Examples of changes made

The telephone survey asked respondents to cite examples of improvements made due to the scheme and the amount of time and money spent on these. They indicated that:

- 42% reported spending money on improvements to get a better score, typically a few hundred to a few thousand pounds on new equipment, washing facilities or cleaning.
- 53% reported spending time on improvements, such as training, staff meetings, cleaning and refurbishment.

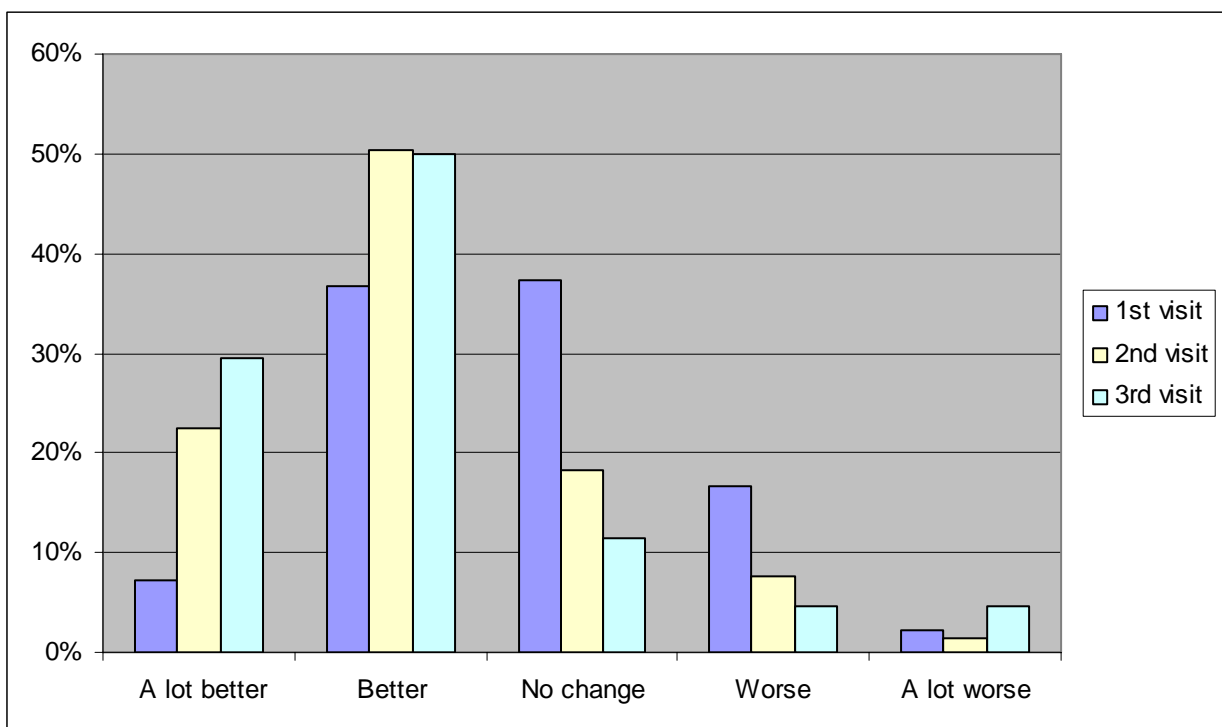
These responses were consistent across most schemes.

2.6.2 Inspectors’ judgement of improvements in hygiene

Figure 11 presents the inspectors’ judgement of change in hygiene standards since the previous visit to a business. It is apparent that:

- Far more judge that standards improve than decline;
- The degree of improvement is greater for the second (n = 143) and third (n = 44) visit than the first (n = 759), although the small sample sizes for the subsequent visits needs to be noted here.

Figure 11: Inspectors judgement of change in standards



2.6.3 Changes in inspection scores

Overview

Twenty five LAs provided hygiene inspection scores for food business. They provided scores for the inspection prior to when businesses received a SOTD certificate or letter, or before their first inspection as part of SOTD schemes. These scores formed a 'before' baseline. They also provided inspection scores for visits after award of the first SOTD certificate/letter. These provided a post SOTD series of scores. Whilst most scores were for the first post SOTD visit (1698 visits), there were 251 second visits and 51 third visits. In all cases we matched the baseline to the post SOTD scores, so that there were matched sets of before and after scores for businesses.

The aim was to assess the extent of change in inspection scores. Due to the reduction in sample sizes achieved in the reduced evaluation period, the assessment focused on the extent of improvement in scores for all schemes rather than a comparison between schemes.

Data was available on the businesses hygiene inspection scores (hygiene compliance, confidence in management and structural hygiene compliance) and the overall risk scores which includes the hazard rating and any additional risk. The data provided by LAs was not always complete and in some cases they provided certificate grades rather than hygiene inspection scores. Therefore, the analyses presented below do not equal the total count of data.

In the case of the risk category, FSA monitoring data was available to allow a comparison between changes in the SOTD data set with changes in the FSA monitoring data. However, as the SOTD data set mostly covers 2006-2007, and the FSA monitoring data is for the period to 2006, the comparison of trends is imperfect.

As shown below it was apparent that:

- Hygiene inspection scores improved after the SOTD scheme;
- Scores improved more for businesses with a poorer before score;
- The change in risk categories (from B to C risk) amongst the SOTD sample far exceeded any trend in the FSA monitoring data.

Even allowing for the mismatch of the reporting periods for the FSA monitoring data and the SOTD data, the magnitude of the difference in the trends was indicative of a SOTD affect.

It should be noted that there was uncertainty in the attribution of any change in scores to SOTD. In particular:

- The type of business in the FSA monitoring data cannot be matched to that in the SOTD data set (skewed towards restaurants and take aways);
- Most LAs promoted SFBB and ran hygiene seminars for businesses in parallel to SOTD, and in some cases as an integrated process;
- 66% of the postal survey businesses reported having a SFBB pack and 55% had completed one, although only 20% had attended a SFBB seminar;
- In the aforementioned telephone survey businesses did not attribute hygiene improvements to SOTD until they were directly asked about the impact of SOTD.

Therefore, whilst there was evidence of a change in SOTD hygiene scores that appears greater than that for the FSA monitoring data, it cannot be attributed to SOTD with certainty.

Hygiene inspection scores

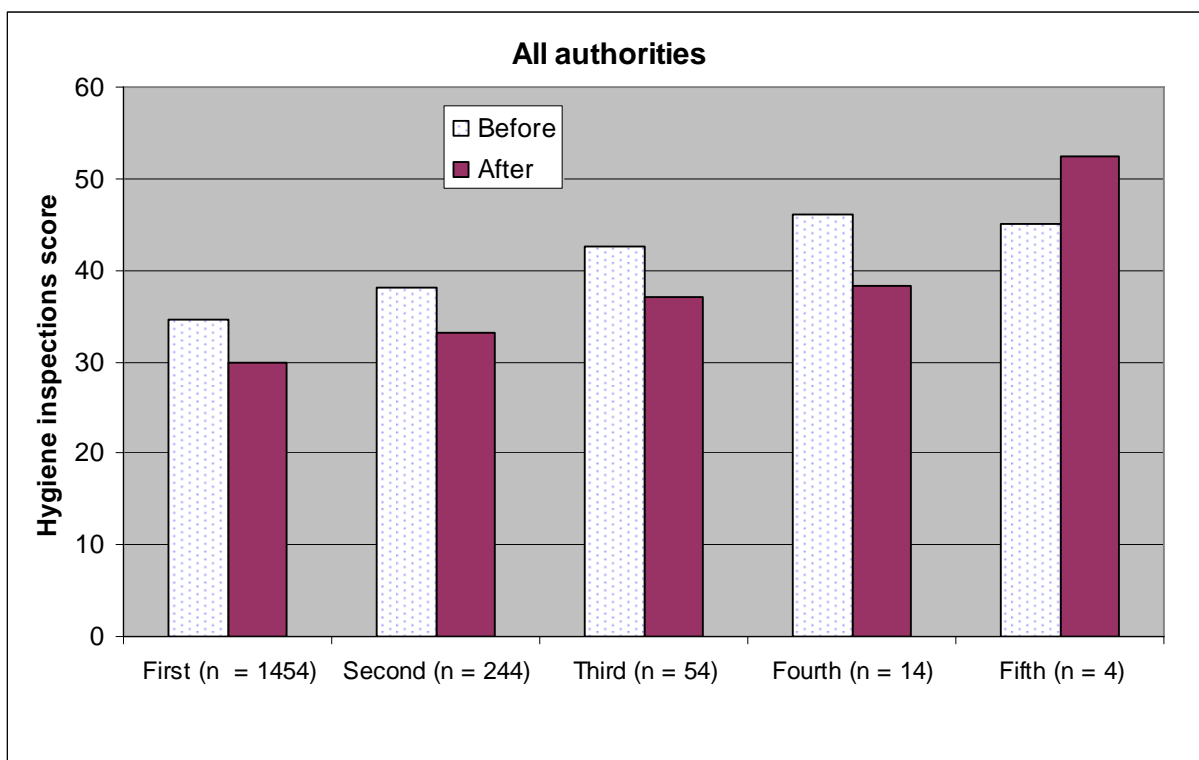
The total of the hygiene, structural hygiene and confidence in management scores were calculated for each inspection to give a total hygiene inspection score. As a first step the differences between the baseline before scores and the scores awarded at subsequent visits were examined. Thus, the difference between the baseline and the first inspection after the business was assessed as parts of the SOTD were compared. Then the same baseline score was compared with the inspection score given at the second inspection after the business was assessed as part of SOTD.

Figure 12 presents the before and after scores for the responding businesses. For example, the difference between the baseline before score and the first inspection score was -4.69, an improvement. T tests were completed of the significance of the differences, with those that are significant at $p < 0.05$ shown in bold and italics. It can be noted that:

- The difference between the baseline and both the first and second visit scores were statistically significant;
- The magnitude of the differences were greater for the subsequent visits but cannot be declared as significant due to the smaller sample sizes.

Thus, there was a suggestion that the improvement in scores was greater for the subsequent visits. A longer evaluation period acquiring more data is required to further test this possibility.

Figure 12: Before and after hygiene inspection scores for all responding SOTD authorities



The differences between the before and the first after score were examined for each scheme. The small sample sizes limited the possibility of comparing changes in scores between schemes. The Herts and Beds scheme (which had 492 usable data points) had a -4.36 reduction in scores between the before and first after visit, which was very close to the reduction for the sample as a whole.

Correlation between before and after hygiene scores

The before hygiene scores were correlated with the amount of change between the before score and the first, and then with the change in the second and then the change in the third after scores. This was a test of whether the scores changed more in those businesses that had a higher before score. The results are shown in Table 15. Only the first correlation was significant at $p < 0.02$. The other two correlations were not significant. The strong correlation between the before score and the amount of change between the before and first after scores indicated that businesses with high before scores (i.e. poorer scores) had greater reductions (i.e. improved more) in their after scores but that this trend lessens with by the time of the second and third inspection.

Table 15: Correlation between change in scores and before score

N = 1520	N = 257	N = 57
-0.63	0.05	0.10

This could be interpreted as suggesting a relationship between SOTD and degree of improvement, as all business did not uniformly improve. However, the improvement could also be attributed to other initiatives such as SFBB that may have been skewed towards poorer performing businesses.

Table 16 gives the change in scores for business between their before and after. The results are split for each before score. For example, 19% of those businesses that had a score of 0 before SOTD, did not change, whilst the score increased by 5 points for 13% of these businesses. Amongst businesses that had a before score of 30, 28% had a score that was 10 to 15 points lower (i.e. better) afterwards.

Table 16: Percentage of businesses with differences between before and after total hygiene scores

Before score	Better					No change	Worse					Average difference	Modal difference
	-40 plus	-35 to -30	-25 to -20	-15 to -10	-5	0	5	10 to 15	20 to 25	30 to 35	40 plus		
0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%	13%	13%	6%	35%	13%	21.3	30
5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	27%	18%	27%	9%	9%	16.4	5
10	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	39%	24%	9%	9%	6%	0%	5.6	0
15	0%	0%	0%	13%	4%	28%	19%	27%	5%	4%	1%	5.5	0
20	0%	0%	1%	10%	22%	27%	14%	18%	6%	2%	0%	2.3	0
25	0%	0%	4%	20%	19%	20%	12%	17%	6%	2%	0%	0.8	0
30	0%	0%	6%	28%	12%	26%	9%	10%	8%	2%	0%	-1.3	0
35 to 45	1%	3%	13%	33%	13%	15%	10%	10%	2%	0%	0%	-2.6	0
50 plus	4%	34%	16%	17%	9%	14%	2%	3%	1%	0%	0%	-12.9	-10

The pattern of changes is illustrated in Figure 13 to Figure 15. The three figures show how many businesses that start with, for example, 10 points receive a score that is (say) 5 points higher (poorer) or lower (better) in the first inspection after the start of SOTD.

- Figure 13 shows the change in scores for those businesses that had a before score of 0, 5 or 10. It shows that they tended to receive poorer scores in the first inspection after start of SOTD. For example 35% of businesses with a before score of 0 had an after score of between 30 to 35.
- Figure 14 shows the change in scores for business with a before score of 15, 20 and 25 points. It indicates that whilst they tend to receive poorer scores afterwards, some receive better scores.
- Figure 15 shows the change in scores for business with a before score of 30, 35 to 45 and 50+. It indicates that these businesses tend to receive a better score after the start of SOTD.

Thus, businesses that had better scores before SOTD tend to receive poorer scores afterwards, whilst those with poorer scores before tend to receive better scores afterwards.

Figure 13: Differences between before (0-10) and after total hygiene score

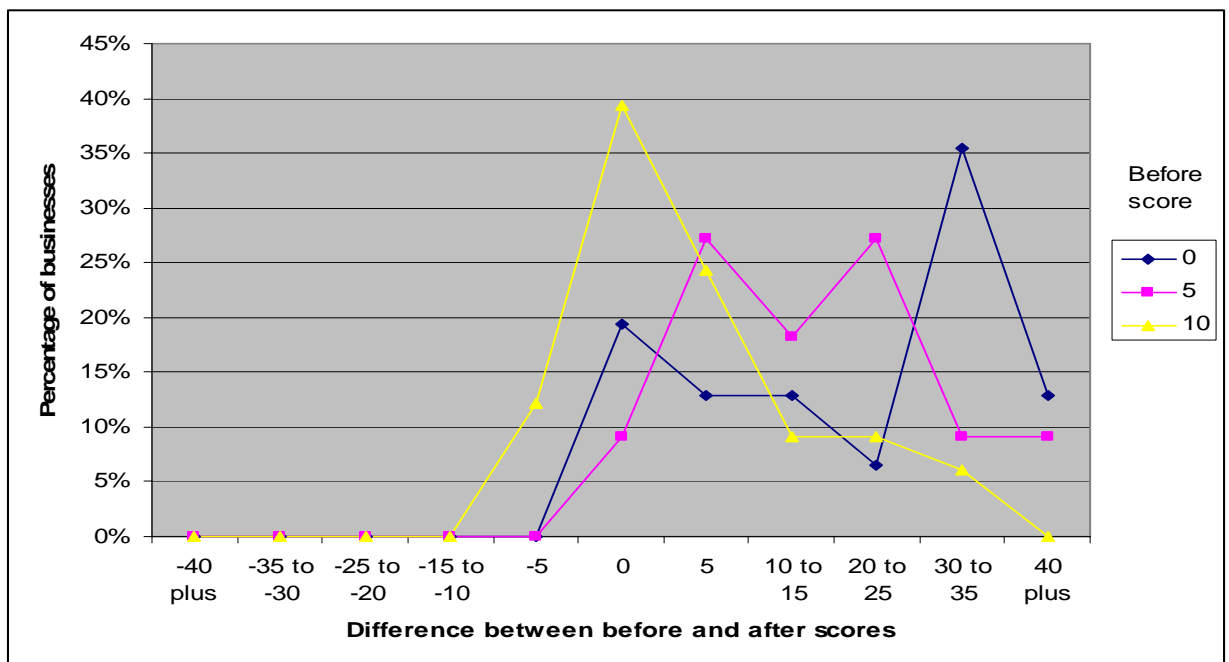


Figure 14: Difference between before (15-25) and after total hygiene scores

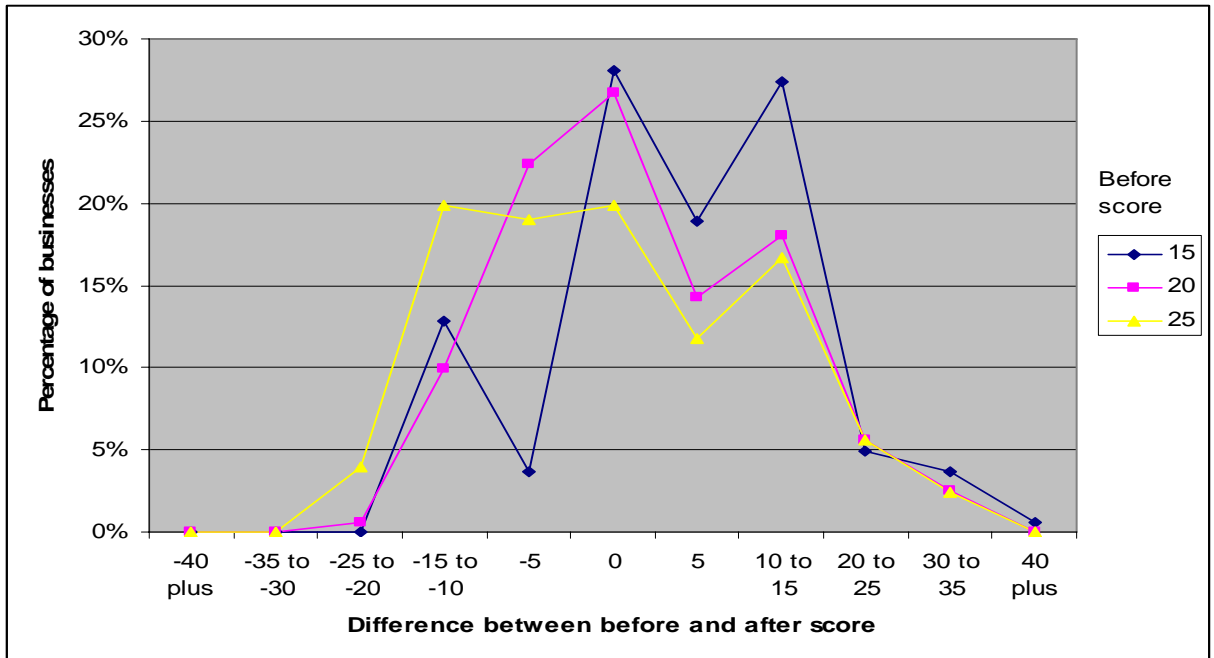
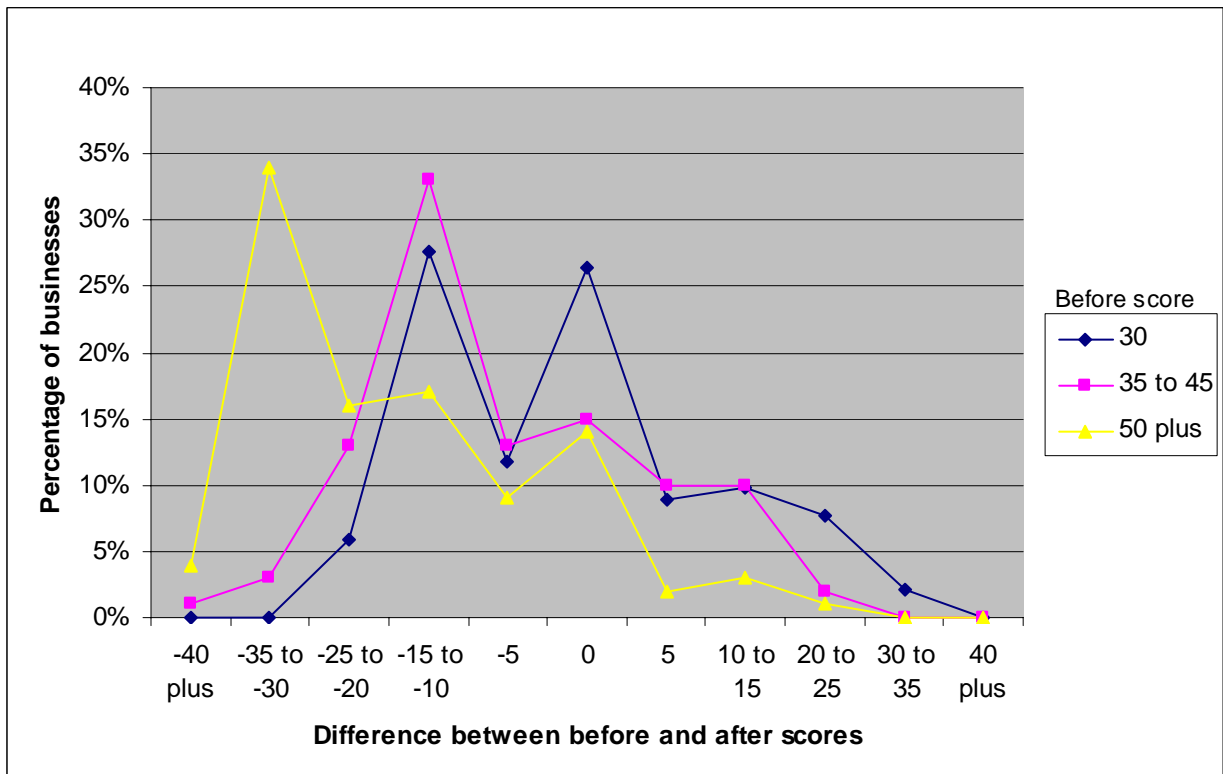


Figure 15: Difference between before (30 – 50 plus) and after total hygiene scores



Comparison of changes in SOTD hygiene scores and FSA monitoring data

The FSA provided data on the number of premises with each score for each of hygiene compliance, structural compliance and confidence in management for the 2005 and 2006. The change between 2006 and 2005 in the number of premises with each score was calculated to see whether scores had increased or reduced for each factor. There was a:

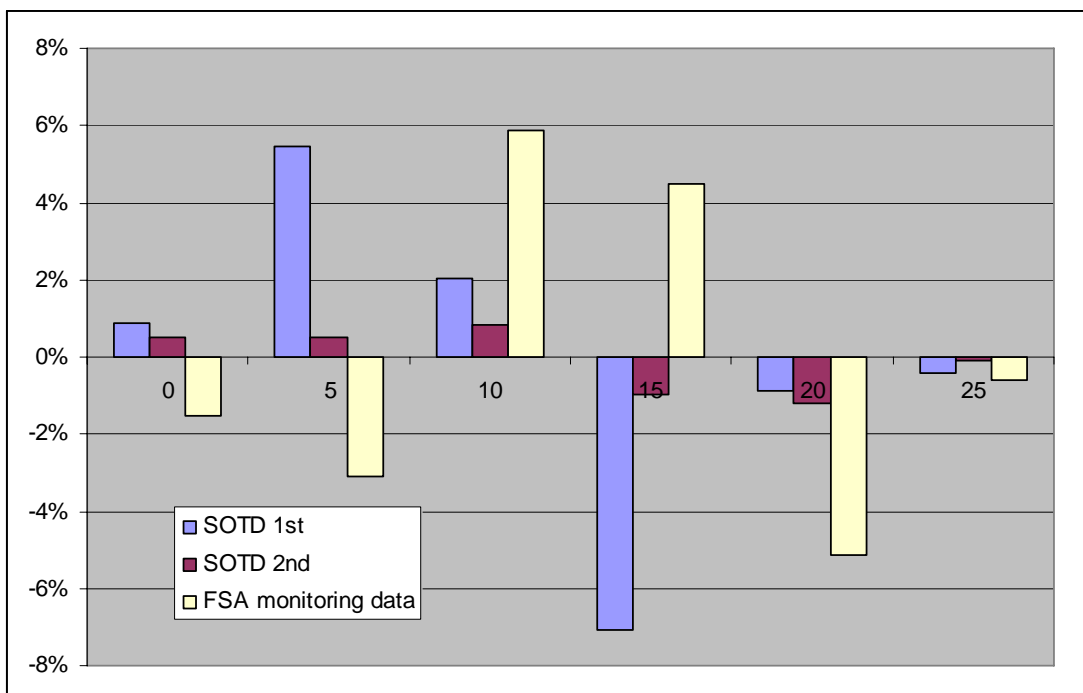
- Reduction in business scoring 10 for confidence in management, with an increase in those scoring 20;
- Reduction in businesses scoring 0, 5 and 20 for hygiene, with an increase in 10 and 15;
- Reduction in 10 and increase in those scoring 15 for structural hygiene.

Thus, on the whole there were fewer ‘good’ scores and more ‘poor’ scores in the FSA monitoring data for these factors.

The opposite trend was apparent in the SOTD data between the before and after data. That is, there were more 0, 5 and 10 scores and fewer 15 and 20’s. Hygiene compliance scores appear to have changed more than the confidence in management and structural compliance scores for SOTD businesses. Figure 16 presents the comparison of the change in the number of businesses receiving each score for the SOTD and FSA monitoring data. For example, there was a 5% increase in the number of businesses receiving 5 points and 7% fewer receiving 15 points between the before and 1st after SOTD inspection. There was a 3% decrease in businesses receiving 5 points and a 4.5% increase in those receiving 15 points between 2005 and 2006 for the FSA monitoring data.

The two samples are not matched with respect to the type of businesses. The FSA monitoring data covers all businesses. The SOTD data is skewed to higher risk businesses. Also the FSA data relates to 2005 to 2006, whilst the SOTD data relates to 2006 to 2007 on the whole. Nonetheless the trends are opposing, suggesting that the SOTD businesses display a different trend to businesses as a whole.

Figure 16: Comparison of change in hygiene compliance ratings between SOTD and FSA monitoring data



Risk category scores

The hazard rating and any additional risk scores were added to the hygiene scores to give an overall risk score per business, as per the scores used to produce the A to F risk categories.

As before the 'before' and 'after' risk categories were compared. It was apparent that:

- There was a shift from B to C, D and E risk categories between the baseline and the first post SOTD inspection;
- There was a shift from A and B risk categories to the C, D and E risk categories after the second and third post SOTD inspections.

The FSA collect and report the number of businesses categorised as A to F for each reporting Local and Unitary Authority. These have been used as a point of comparison with the risk categories for the businesses in the SOTD schemes. In particular, the amount of change in the FSA risk categories between 2005 and 2006 was compared with the amount of change in risk categories for the SOTD businesses (mostly 2006-2007). This was an imperfect comparison due to the lack of FSA data for 2007 and the impossibility of matching the type of businesses in the two populations of data.

Also the businesses assessed under SOTD for this evaluation were intentionally skewed towards A to C risk categories, for the purpose of acquiring follow on inspection scores in the two year evaluation period. Therefore, a simple comparison of the change in the proportion of business in each risk category might not be valid. Two comparisons were carried out, with the second confirming the results from the first analysis.

First, the FSA data was reduced to those classed as A, B or C for the years 2005 and 2006. The proportion of businesses in each category was calculated for 2005 and 2006. Then the change in the proportions was calculated. Similarly, the proportion of business included in the SOTD baseline that were classed as A, B or C were counted, and the proportions of each calculated before calculating the difference in the proportion of A, B and C risk premises for the post SOTD visits.

Figure 17 and Figure 18 show the change in the proportions of A, B and C risk premises for both the FSA monitoring data and the SOTD data. Thus, for example, the proportion of SOTD businesses in category A increased by 0.1% between the baseline and the first post SOTD inspection, and fell by 1.5% between the baseline and the second SOTD inspection. The figures indicate that:

- There was a large shift of businesses from category B to C between the SOTD baseline and the first post SOTD inspection, which is not reflected in the FSA monitoring data;
- There was a large shift of business from categories A and B to C between the SOTD baseline and the second post SOTD inspection, which again is not reflected in the FSA monitoring data.

This suggests that there was a greater change in the risk categories amongst the SOTD businesses than those in the FSA monitoring data. Table 17 shows the proportion of A to C risk businesses in each of the categories A to C. It shows that there has not been a major shift from B to C risk premises. This suggests that the change in the split of SOTD businesses does not follow a trend within the FSA monitoring data.

Table 17: FSA monitoring data – Proportion of A to C risk businesses in each category

	A	B	C
2006	2.1%	19.1%	78.8%
2005	2.4%	18.7%	78.9%
2004	2.9%	18.9%	78.2%
2003	3.4%	19.9%	76.7%
2002	4.1%	20.7%	75.1%
2001	6.5%	22.3%	71.2%

Figure 17: Change in proportion of businesses in each risk category (A to C) for FSA monitoring data and SOTD businesses

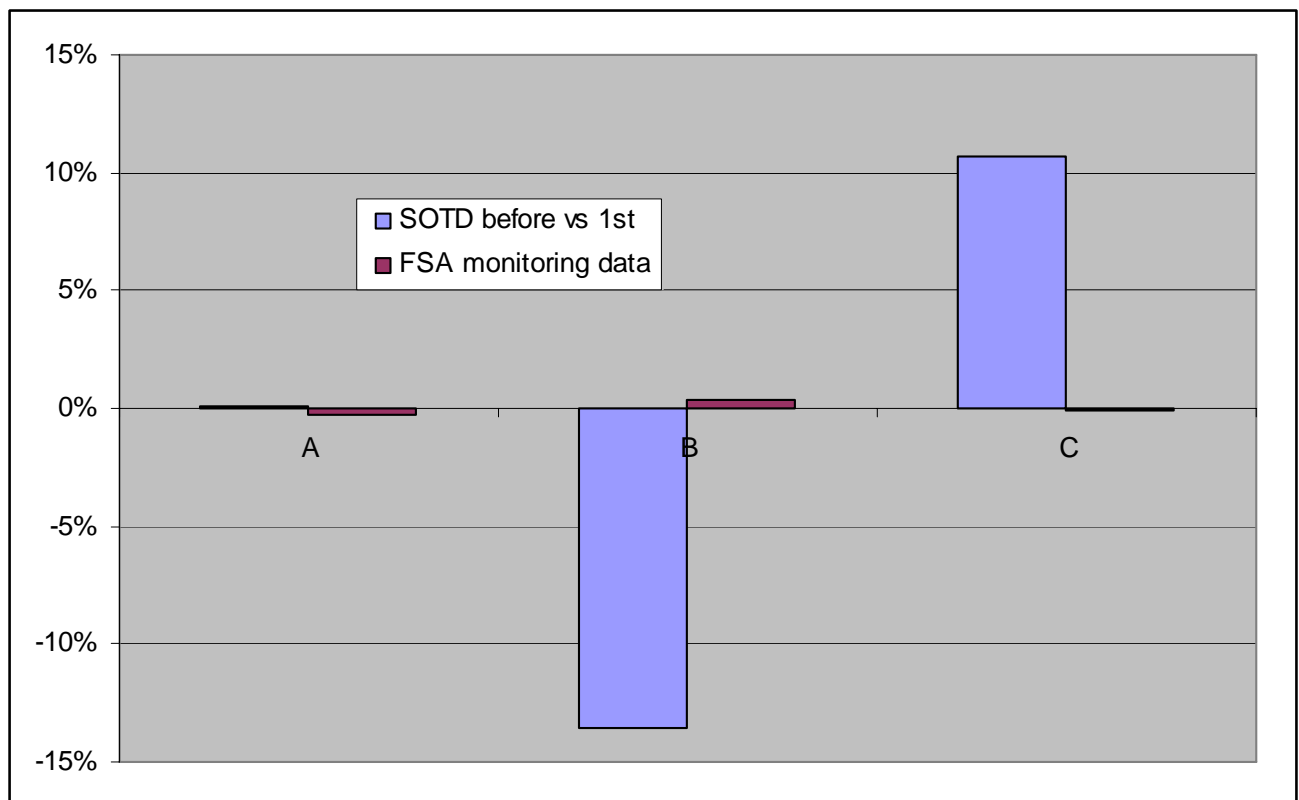
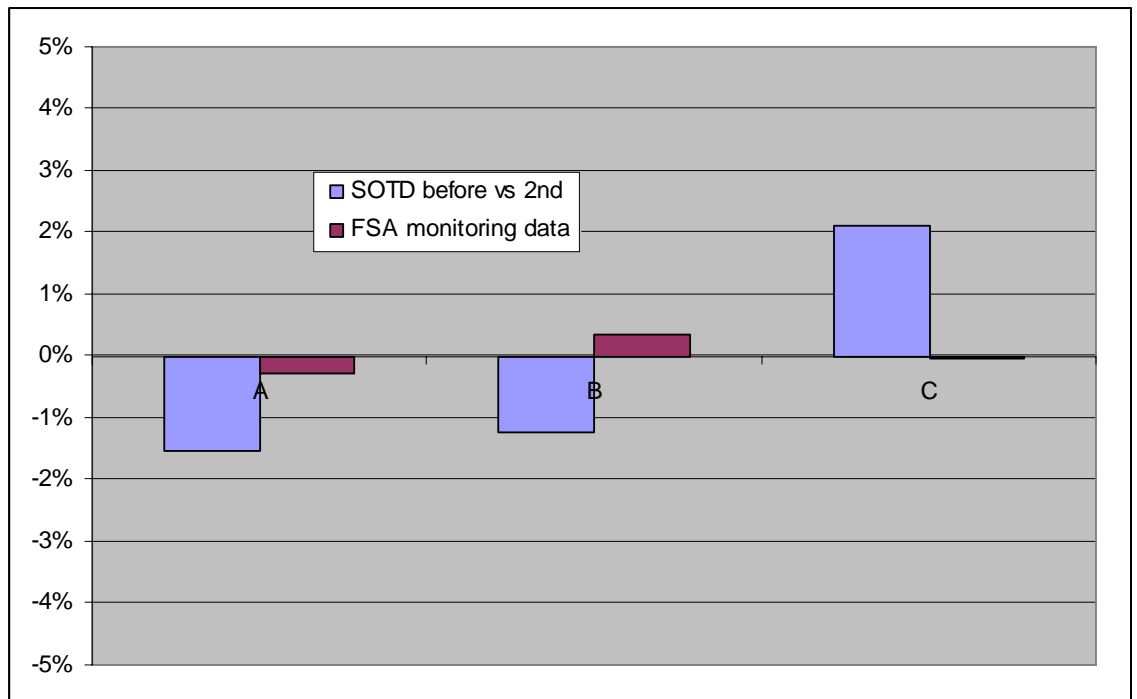


Figure 18: Change in proportion of businesses in each risk category (A to C) for FSA monitoring data and SOTD businesses



3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Costs, benefits and impacts of Scores on the doors

Overall, as discussed below, the costs (which are borne mainly by LAs) were considered acceptable by LAs, whilst benefits were thought to accrue to businesses, LAs and customers.

Costs

The results indicated that most Local Authorities identified significant costs (time and expenses) in launching and, less so, in operating SOTD schemes. However, in most cases these did not hinder other food safety enforcement work and the resources required to operate schemes were less than expected in most cases. Local Authorities were on the whole 'happy' with the balance of costs and benefits of their schemes. They experienced few complaints and requests for revisits and had to complete a small number of additional visits to businesses due to the schemes.

A key source of demand on LA resources was the task of designing and launching a SOTD scheme, and producing websites. These costs would be reduced in the event of a national scheme being introduced, thereby eliminating the need for individual LAs to develop their own schemes and websites. Also national advertising (perhaps led by the FSA) and shared website would reduce the reliance on LAs to carry out publicity.

The immediate cost to businesses was minimal, in the form of posting a certificate. Some businesses did report time and expense related to making hygiene improvements. These improvements though were aimed at achieving higher scores, and hence were required to improve compliance and so were not exclusively required by SOTD schemes.

Benefits and impacts

There was evidence that SOTD schemes encouraged businesses to improve hygiene standards and may have led to measurable improvements in hygiene inspection scores. The evidence included:

- The subjective opinions of businesses (who quoted examples of improvements attributed to SOTD) and inspectors;
- Statistically significant improvements in hygiene inspection scores in SOTD businesses between the period before and after implementation of SOTD, although we cannot certainly attribute these improvements to SOTD;
- Evaluations of similar schemes overseas have shown a direct link between SOTD and improved standards in business.

Businesses provided a series of positive reasons for displaying certificates, including increasing customer confidence and their reputation.

To date, there was less evidence of an impact on UK consumers. Both the survey of businesses and consumers reported low levels of consumer awareness of current schemes, with little impact on the number of customers. At the same time the reported rate of display of certificates (as reported by the inspectors) tended to be low, and much of the LA publicity focuses on businesses with a tendency for less general publicity aimed at consumers. The researchers' opinion is that the relatively low level of awareness to date reflected the short duration of some schemes and the limits of LA publicity. LAs and some businesses advocated a larger scale national advertising campaign to raise general awareness of the schemes. Some LAs advocate a compulsory scheme whereby businesses must display their certificates.

Consumers did indicate that they would in the future make use of certificates in choosing food venues, in the event that a certificate was on display.

LAs also reported benefits to them, over and above better hygiene standards. These included a more positive attitude to compliance amongst businesses with some improving compliance without the need for inspections, improved profile of food safety activities and a reduction in high risk category businesses (which reduces inspection workload).

Support for SOTD

The majority of responding LAs, businesses and public expressed support for SOTD. Indeed, the vast majority of responding businesses cited support for the schemes as did 97% of surveyed members of the public on the grounds it is fair and helps them make informed choices.

A minority of LAs expressed concern about their schemes, with some citing workload as a problem. The majority of LAs operating schemes regarded them to be easy to apply and to offer a positive balance of benefits to costs.

As previously mentioned, there was also expressed support for a national scheme amongst businesses and LAs. In addition, 95% of members of the public supported a compulsory scheme.

Thus, there was a broad consensus that SOTD were a cost-effective approach to promoting better food hygiene and informing consumers, with support from all types of stakeholders. The cost effectiveness would be enhanced by implementation of a national scheme.

3.2 Key features of schemes

3.2.1 Overview

Whilst the scale of the evaluation limits the ability to compare current schemes, it did provide information on which to identify and consider key attributes of schemes. The discussion below draws together the evaluation findings into a discussion of features of a potential national scheme.

3.2.2 Publicising and consulting

The feedback from LAs indicates that it is essential to engage with businesses prior to the launch of schemes in order to secure their positive engagement with the schemes and avoid business concerns about fairness. This can involve:

- Stakeholder consultation with business groups, such as local trade associations;
- Advising in writing individual businesses of their impending score (if the first certificate is issued using the last inspection);
- Alerting in writing individual businesses of the impending launch of a scheme.

It is also apparent that ambient advertising is important to generate awareness amongst businesses and the public, such:

- Engaging with local media to secure (as far as is possible) positive media reporting;
- Advertises on buses and in local press/newsletters.

Ongoing activity tends to comprise inspectors encouraging display of certificates during routine inspections.

The evidence suggests that whilst essential, these activities have yet to secure high levels of awareness of schemes or display of certificates. It is possible that this reflects the limit of LA publicity and/or the recency of most schemes. Some feedback has argued for a national advertising campaign to raise and maintain awareness, with some suggestions from LAs for a compulsory scheme that is less reliant on persuasion. It was also suggested by some LAs that a national scheme would have more 'presence' and hence greater awareness.

3.2.3 Issuing first certificate

There is no hard evidence to discriminate between the two ways of issuing the first certificate. As previously stated:

- Issuing certificates using past inspections allows a mass issue that may achieve a critical mass of certificates quickly, but risks using scores perceived as old by businesses;
- Issuing certificates using current inspection in a rolling programme ensure scores are perceived as up to date and enables inspectors to provide face to face encouragement, but requires years to achieve high levels of distribution of certificates if conducted as part of ongoing primary inspection programmes.

The choice between these options may depend on the policy decision on the speed of implementation required.

3.2.4 Communicating, supporting and revisits

Communicating with business

The majority of LAs do offer advice and explanation of the scheme during inspections, with only a minority not doing so. This was considered important to engage businesses and help them make improvements.

Supporting businesses

There was a clear policy divide between LAs, with some providing support to business (with SOTD as part of a wider initiative), and others viewing SOTD narrowly as a way of publicising scores (and arguing against workload of supporting business). Nonetheless most LAs promoted SFBB in parallel to SOTD.

Therefore, there appeared to be little reason to not offer SFBB support alongside SOTD schemes, especially as some LAs found that SOTD prompted interest in SFBB.

Revisits

Whilst some LAs express concern about the workload and principle of revisits this evaluation indicated that:

- Businesses regard the option of a revisit as essential, so as to allow receipt of a better certificate if they make improvements – although they are reluctant to pay for them unless they desire a better grade;
- To date LAs have reported few requests for revisits;
- Some LAs regard revisits as essential to secure business engagement with the scheme and to provide support to business hygiene improvements.

Therefore, it was concluded that the workload concerns may not be realised, whilst offering revisits meet a key business requirement.

Websites

Given that the majority of businesses do not display certificates, especially low grades, it appeared essential to have scores available online for the sake of consumer access and Freedom of Information, despite limited reported use by consumers in the consumer research. Indeed only 1% of consumers reported (in the consumer research) use of a website to find information on outlet hygiene.

The feedback from LAs indicates that:

- Basic lists, particularly pdf's, were considered inadequate;
- Interactive searchable websites with filters for type of business, area and grade, as well as name, are important;
- There have been a large number of website hits;
- The use of a website provides an easy route for Freedom of Information requests;
- Businesses can have a right of reply on the website;
- Regional websites are preferred on the assumption they match consumer behaviour;
- A dedicated website is needed (or direct access from a home page) to avoid consumers having to navigate through multi pages to find the search facility.

LAs have to date provided scores, business name and inspection dates on websites (along with explanation of schemes) to avoid information over load.

3.2.5 Complaints and appeals

As the number of complaints to date appears to have been low, it was not certain that a dedicated complaints process for SOTD was required.

Whilst there were also few appeals against scores, this is considered essential for fairness and due process.

3.2.6 Certificates design and content

The business surveys found that most businesses felt the design of their certificates were 'okay' or 'good'. This means that the business feedback did not provide a basis on which to clearly discriminate between the symbols. Businesses highlighted a series of features that they admired, including:

- Clear;

- Noticeable;
- Straightforward;
- Well laid out.

There was some feedback from LAs that hotels object to a star based scheme as it may be confused with the hotel star rating scheme.

Consumer research

The feedback from the consumer research completed by Continental Research was more definitive, including:

- The Coventry/hybrid 3 star scheme achieved the highest overall rating (easiest to understand, having a clear rating scale and other positive features);
- The star ratings scales were easiest to understand (except the London sticker);
- The perceived top score for the London sticker was 4 stars by 39% of people, with bottom score perceived to be 1 by 43% of people (the London sticker does not provide blank stars or the entire scale);
- Pass – improvement required had low rating on clarity of the grading scale;
- The Smilesafe symbols rated lowest.

The consumer research found that “When a key is shown for star rating schemes that include a zero star score, including Coventry and the Hybrid, there is still some confusion about the lowest score possible. This is no doubt due to people’s familiarity with other star rating schemes that do not include zero stars as part of the scale. It could also be partly due to the small font of the key shown on these certificates.”

However, the Consumer Research found that:

- There was little differentiation between the top five certificates (all excluding Leicester) in terms of the number of consumers ranking it as the most effective certificate (with scores ranging from 16% for the Hybrid to 23% for Coventry);
- Many of the certificates achieved similar scores on several of the attributes they were rated on;
- While Coventry did achieve the highest rating of the certificates it was not rated as the best certificate on all attributes.

Therefore they concluded that an ideal certificate/sticker would be a combination of particular elements of several of the certificates, including:

- A positive rating system, ideally combining elements of star schemes and colours:
 - A cross or a ‘poor’ rating is perceived as tantamount to condemnation and thus the perception that the outlet should be closed instantly;
- Boldly state that the certificate related to food hygiene;
- Include previous rating;
- Brief breakdown/ key to the rating system;
- Summary line to highlight any issues;
- Clearly state date of previous and next inspection;

- Include FSA logo and signatures;
- Sticker with rating, accompanied by a more detailed certificate.

There was some evidence that, in the case of star schemes, that blank stars should be shown at all times to ensure people are aware that it is (for example) 4 out of 5 rather than 4 out of 4. Thus it is essential to display a key for the grading system.

Whilst specific suggestions on the name of the scheme were not explored in depth, there was some suggestion of terms such as 'Hygiene inspection scores' rather than 'scores on the doors'.

3.2.7 Grading

Grading – broadly compliant

All sources of evaluation raise queries regarding how 'broadly compliant' is displayed.

The researchers suggest that it is reasonable to suppose that broadly compliant businesses should be happy to display a certificate that indicates their status.

In the case of the 'London' 0 to 5 star schemes, 2 stars equates to broadly compliant, where as 3 is broadly compliant in some other 0 to 5 star schemes

The evaluation found that:

- Many LAs assume businesses will not display below 3 stars (in 0 to 5 star schemes);
- The business postal survey indicates that there is a sharp drop in the rate of display below 3 stars (again for 0 to 5 star schemes);
- Consumers express reluctance to use venues with less than 3 stars (except for the 0 to 3 star scheme). Of schemes tested, consumers tended to express reluctance to use outlets with a rating below the midpoint (in the case of an odd point scheme), or in the bottom half of the scale (in the case of an even point scheme).
- There was some evidence that businesses, on the whole, displayed certificates with words such as Acceptable, as well as Pass;
- Businesses want a range of grades to provide recognition of their performance and an incentive to improve, citing a need for more than 2 or 3 grades.

One option is to use words to clearly and unambiguously communicate the meaning of grades, such as Acceptable, with or without a symbol. The consumer research indicates that people are willing to use venues with such labels. This could be achieved within all schemes by stating the words simultaneous to the symbol. For example:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Very poor	Poor	Acceptable/Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

Another option is to alter the grading structure so that the ‘acceptability’ of a broadly compliant symbol is clearer. In the following example, award of even 1 star is a positive result. This is consistent with the grading of hotels, where award of even 1 star is superior to an unrated hotel. It is also similar to the Norwich City Council scheme where 1 star is used for compliant businesses, with 2 or more for higher grades.

0	1	2	3	4
Unacceptable	Acceptable/Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

Unacceptable grades

It is clear from the business surveys that they are unwilling to voluntarily display any certificate that indicates ‘failure’. This raises the question of the utility of having more than one ‘failure’ grade. An option is to adopt a single ‘failure’ grade.

It also argues against the option of having 0 to 2 (on a 0 to 5 scale) representing grades of non-compliance, as this involves 3 ‘fail’ grades.

Above broadly compliant grades

There is mixed evidence regarding the number of above compliance grades.

The business feedback tends to favour many grades in order to provide recognition for high standards and scope for improvement. Whilst business respondents argued for more grades in most schemes, this was particularly so for the two grade Pass-Improvement required scheme.

On the other hand, consumers expressed in hall tests a preference for a 0 to 3 star scheme, namely the Coventry and hybrid versions.

An option is presented below, which provides two above broadly compliant grades. This option has the features of even 1 star being positive, matching consumers’ preferences and having two above broadly compliant grades for businesses to aim at. Limiting the scale to 4 points also removes the need to identify words that distinguish between ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’. This option is similar to the grading system used by Camden Council, although they use different words (Some major non compliance, Good, Very Good and Excellent).

0	1	2	3
Unacceptable	Acceptable/ Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

These findings and options suggested a 0 to 3 grade system as this may avoid consumers wrongly assuming that middle or lower grades (i.e. tier 2 on a 6 point scale) are unacceptable whilst still providing a progressive scale with more than 2 grades. The option of a 4 grade scheme (0 to 3), perhaps using stars, is also consistent with the consumer research that found that consumers are willing to buy from 2 star outlets in a 0 to 3 star scheme. However, they were far less likely to buy from a 1 star outlet, which indicates a need to communicate the meaning of 1 star (if it equates to an 'acceptable' grade) more clearly.

3.2.8 Alignment of scores to grades

The schemes vary in the alignment of scores to grades. Businesses clearly seek a process that is perceived by them as fair.

Some options are noted below in Table 18. Words have been used to indicate the scale, although symbols could also be used. Many current schemes require that none of the three scores exceed 10, so that broadly compliant is based on satisfactory records/some non-compliance in all cases. Some schemes allow some major non-compliance in factors.

The researchers would suggest that with a 4 band scheme, widening the range of scores for the top band (excellent) makes the second band tight (option 3 or 4). Therefore, whilst allowing some scope for improvement in the top band avoids the risk of 'regulatory creep' or 'gold plating', the range should perhaps not be so great as to tighten the lower bands.

A small number of businesses criticised their scores where they felt their hygiene standard was high but that their 'paperwork' was weak, considering this to be a technicality. This would argue for allowing a score of 20 for 'Confidence in management/control systems' (option 5). However, it should be noted that only a few businesses made this point.

As few (11% of Transparency data records) businesses receive 0 or 1 stars, to date, the need to facilitate a positive rating for very low scoring businesses (option 6) does not appear to be great.

These options can, to some extent, be combined. For example, the options could be combined such as:

- 0 grade = >50 (unacceptable),
- Grade 1 = 35 to 45 (Acceptable),
- Grade 2 = 25 to 30 (Good),
- Grade 3 = <25 (Very good).

This combination combines scope for improvement in the top grade, varying record for management in the acceptable grade, whilst avoiding overly tight bands for the 'good' grades. Clearly the precise cut off for each grade may differ from the example given above.

Table 18: Some options for aligning scores to grades

Option	Grade	Score	Comments
Option 1	Very good	0 to 20	This option simply adds up scores from three indicators but allows for total non-compliance in an indicator, e.g. 25 + 5 + 0 = 30, or some major non compliance on two indicators.
	Good	25 or 30	
	Acceptable	35 to 45	
	Fail/poor	50+	
Option 2	Very good	0 to 20	This option is based on broad compliance on all three factors.
	Good	25 to 30 (and no more than 10 on any indicator)	
	Acceptable	35 to 45	
	Fail/poor	50+ (or >10 on any one indicator)	
	Good	10 to 25 (or 15 to 25)	
Option 3	Very good	0 to 15	This option tightens the range of scores within the top grade but makes the Good grade wider.
	Good	20 to 30	
Option 4	Good	20 in confidence in management, and 10 in hygiene and structural compliance	This option emphasises hygiene practices and allows varying record of compliance in management control systems that might match expectations of small firms.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Recommendation of a national SOTD scheme

A national SOTD scheme could be recommended on the grounds that:

- 97% of consumers support the idea, as do the majority of businesses and most LAs express satisfaction with their schemes;
- Some LAs and business, and most consumers support a national scheme;
- A national scheme may have the presence to increase awareness and hence impact;
- A national scheme, with national advertising, would reduce reliance on LAs resources to design and launch schemes;
- There is some evidence that SOTD encourages improved food hygiene, facilitates self compliance amongst business due to the incentive offered by certificates and provides a basis for businesses to be positively engaged with LAs.

4.2 Key features

On balance the evidence available to this evaluation provides a basis to offer some recommendations on features of a scheme, including:

- **Name of the scheme**– the scheme and title on the certificate should express the purpose of the scheme, such as food hygiene inspection score, rather than a colloquial phrase;
- **Content of certificates** - certificates to boldly state that the certificate relates to food hygiene, include previous rating, provide the rating scale, a summary line to highlight any issues, date of previous and next inspection, the contact details for the LA and inspector, FSA logo and signatures, Certificate reference number;
- **Grading system** – a 0 to 3 star scheme with words to define the grades (e.g. unacceptable, acceptable, good, and very good). Grade 2 would be used for ‘broadly compliant’, grade 3 for ‘above broadly compliant’, grade 1 used for ‘conditionally’ acceptable and 0 for businesses where enforcement is recommended. This is due to a multiple of findings:
 - As business did not display ‘fail’ grades, there appeared to be little value in having multiple ‘fail’ grades or in awarding a star for a ‘fail’ grade. One option was to define 1 star ‘positively’ such as Acceptable (with conditions) where the standard achieved does not need enforcement but improvement is needed to be broadly compliant. This follows the example of some US systems that use terms such as ‘Conditional Pass’ for businesses that are ‘close’ to compliance. 0 stars could be used for businesses where standards are clearly unacceptable, such as where enforcement action is needed. This could be defined as (for example) ‘Unacceptable’ or ‘Unacceptable enforcement recommended’;
 - Businesses express a wish for a progressive scale to recognise their achievement and to provide an incentive for further progress. An option is to define grades 1 to 3 positively, such as 1 = Acceptable (with conditions), 2 = Satisfactory and 3 = Good (or Acceptable, Good and Very Good).

Scoring system – the top grade could be defined as 0 to 10 to allow scope for improvement (and avoid perceptions of ‘gold plating’). The broadly compliant grade could be either 30 (with no one score >10) or 40 to allow for a poorer management score in small businesses. This is a policy question for which the evaluation does not provide definitive results. Some concern was expressed about having multiple grades above broadly compliant (defined as 30 points). The concern was that this could create overly tight bands of scores that may be difficult to define, communicate and defend. For example, if broad compliance is 30 points, the bands above this would be (say) 0 to 10 and 15 to 25. If broad compliance is 25 to 30, then two superior grades would be even tighter.

- **Revisits** – these could be recommended on the grounds that businesses view them as very important, whilst few actually ask for a revisit. Payment in the region of £25 to £100 (say £50) could be required (to cover costs and to help ensure businesses are committed to making changes) where the revisit is for a broadly compliant or above broadly compliant business that would not normally have a revisit for enforcement reasons, and scheduled for at least 4 weeks after the inspection to ensure due time for improvements to be made;
- Inclusion of **complaints** within general LA complaints process but a dedicated **appeals process**;
- **Advice to businesses**- provision of advice and encouragement to businesses during inspections is recommended to ensure fairness and engender positive business engagement with the scheme, with additional support an option for LAs;
- **Publicity and stakeholder engagement**: a substantive publicity and engagement exercise is needed prior to launch of schemes, to alert and advise businesses and consumers to the schemes. This should include advising businesses of their scores (if a retrospective approach is adopted).
- A dedicated **website(s)** is operated with search functions by type of business, area, grade and name of business. It is uncertain whether a national or regional website is preferable.

Many respondents advocate a compulsory system. The low rate of display found to date could be interpreted to mean that compulsion is necessary. However, it is uncertain whether a national scheme with a high level of publicity would achieve a higher level of awareness of schemes and display of certificates. Therefore, an option is to launch a national scheme and monitor implementation, reviewing the question of compulsion at a later date.

No recommendation is offered regarding the process of issuing the first certificate. The choice between an en mass certification using past inspection or a rolling current inspection programme is considered to be a policy option based on the required speed of implementation.

4.3 Impact of introducing a new scheme

A significant number (approximately a quarter) of Local Authorities have introduced and publicised their schemes, with 0 to 5 stars the most common. The implementation of a new scheme that differs from these would obviously make this activity redundant.

On the other hand, the evaluation indicates that:

- Business have a low awareness of the ‘brand’ name of current schemes;
- There is a low public awareness of the schemes;
- The majority of Local Authorities have not yet adopted a scheme;

- Many of the LAs that adopted the 0 to 5 star scheme did so in order to ‘fit in’ with other LAs;
- Some LAs have previously changed from one scheme to another without any significant concern.

Therefore, there is some evidence that a transition to a different scheme, whilst causing some redundant effort, would not cause great public communications problems or transition problems for most LAs.

4.4 Further evaluation needed

It is possible to identify some areas for further evaluation to bolster the findings developed to date, including:

- The evaluation of impact on food hygiene performance would be supported by tracking inspection scores over a longer period and by comparing them with a comparable control group;
- The impact on LA resources could be tracked for longer, to explore if business queries and complaints etc increase or decrease as people become more aware of schemes;
- Reviewing whether a national or regional websites is preferable.

Finally, the evaluation does not provide a firm basis on which to recommend the specific words used to define each grade, such as very good or excellent. It is recommended that the specific words used to define grades is consulted on and tested with businesses and consumers.

5 REFERENCES

- Boehnke R.H and Graham C. International survey on public posting of relevant inspection reports and/or grade cards posting schemes based upon health inspections. www.foodsafetynetwork.ca
- Burton, Y. An assessment of Norwich City Council's Safer Food Award. Project for University Diploma in Food Safety and Food Legislation, Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Birmingham, June 2007.
- David Fenn, Health Protection Service, Sheffield City Council, Stakeholder consultation, April 2005
- Jin G.Z and Leslie P. The case in support of restaurant hygiene grade cards. In Choices, 2nd Quarter 2005 20(2), p 97-102.
- Jin G. and Leslie P. The effect of information on product quality; Evidence from restaurant hygiene grade cards. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 118(2), 409-51, 2003.
- Morris, J. Publication of hygiene inspection information. February 2005. Available from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.
- Parkinson T. and Page A. Scores on the doors. Continental Research PowerPoint presentation for the FSA, 2008.
- Scores on doors. EHP Journal, p 8-10, June 2006.
- Serapiglia T. Association of food premises inspection and disclosure program with retail-acquired foodborne illness and operator non-compliance in Toronto. Available from www.thefreelibrary.com
- Thompson, S, Burger R and Kadri O. The Toronto food inspection and disclosure system: A case study. British Food Journal, Vol 107, Issue 3, p 140-149, 2005.
- Toronto Public Health (2002). Food premises inspection and disclosure program: Evaluation report. Toronto, Ontario.
- Vance, R. Internal paper for the Food Standards Agency, July 2005.