

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS): guidance for businesses

How food hygiene ratings work

What the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is, how to read the rating scale and how the rating is given following an inspection of your business.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) helps consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving them clear information about a business's hygiene standards. We run the scheme in partnership with local authorities.

A food safety officer from the local authority inspects your business. They check that it follows food hygiene law so that the food is safe to eat. The officer then gives you a food hygiene rating and the FHRS sticker shortly after the inspection.

The rating scale

The hygiene standards found at the time of inspection are rated on a scale.

Your business will get a rating from 5 to 0:

- 5 – hygiene standards are very good
- 4 – hygiene standards are good
- 3 – hygiene standards are generally satisfactory
- 2 – some improvement is necessary
- 1 – major improvement is necessary
- 0 – urgent improvement is necessary

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

0

1

2

3

4

5

VERY GOOD

Food hygiene inspections

The rating given to you by the local authority food safety officer is a snapshot of the standards of food hygiene found in your business at the time of inspection.

At the inspection, the officer will check the following three elements:

1. How hygienically the food is handled – how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored.
2. The physical condition of your business – including cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation, pest control and other facilities.
3. How you manage ways of keeping food safe, looking at processes, training, and systems to ensure good hygiene is maintained. The officer can then assess the level of confidence in standards being maintained in the future.

Following a food hygiene inspection of your premises, you will be told in writing what your food hygiene rating is and why you were given this rating. This will be either at the time of inspection or within 14 days of it (this includes weekends and public holidays).

The rating shows how well you're doing overall, based on the standards found at the time of inspection. It is your responsibility to follow food hygiene law at all times. This includes:

- handling of food
- how food is stored
- how food is prepared

- cleanliness of facilities
- how food safety is managed

Tips

You can find out [how to prepare for your first inspection](#) in our guidance for new businesses.

Exemptions

There are two groups of exempt businesses which are inspected by the local authority food safety officer but which are not given a food hygiene rating:

- businesses that are low risk to public health and which consumers would not generally recognise as being a food business, for example newsagents, chemist shops or visitor centres selling pre-wrapped goods that do not need refrigeration
- childminders and businesses that offer caring services at home

Frequency of inspections

A new rating is given each time your business is inspected by a food safety officer. Each local authority plans a programme of inspections every year. The frequency of inspections depends on the potential risk to public health.

The assessment of this risk takes account of the following factors:

- type of food handled
- the number and type of customers, for example vulnerable groups
- types of processes carried out before the food is sold or served
- hygiene standards seen on the day of the last inspection

Businesses that pose a higher risk are inspected more often than businesses that pose a lower risk. An example of a lower risk business is a small retailer selling a range of prepacked foods that only need to be refrigerated. The time between inspections varies from six months for the highest risk businesses to two years for lower risk businesses. Some very low risk businesses may not be inspected for longer than two years.

Achieving a higher rating

All businesses should be able to achieve the top rating of 5. To get the top rating, you must do well in all three elements described in the [Food hygiene inspections section](#).

If you don't get the top rating, the local authority food safety officer will explain what you can do to improve your hygiene rating.

We provide [business guidance to help you manage food hygiene](#) in your business.

Businesses with poor ratings

If you are given a low rating, you must make urgent or major improvements to hygiene standards. The local authority food safety officer has [several enforcement options available](#). They will also give you advice and guidance to make sure these improvements are made.

The food safety officer will also tell you how quickly these improvements must be made. This will depend on the type of issue you need to address.

If the officer finds that a business's hygiene standards are very poor and when food may be unsafe to eat, they must act to protect consumers. This could result in stopping part of the business or closing it down completely until it is safe to reopen it.

Food hygiene rating publication and displaying your rating

When and where your food hygiene rating is published, and how to display your rating at premises and online.

Ratings publication

Following a food hygiene inspection in your business, your rating will be uploaded by the local authority so that it is published on the [Food hygiene ratings website](#). Ratings of '5 - very good' will be published as soon as the information is uploaded by your local authority. Ratings of 0 – 4 will be published 3 – 5 weeks after the date of inspection to allow for an appeal to be submitted (see our page on [safeguards](#)).

If you cannot find your rating

If you cannot find your rating on the website, try searching using just the business name or with the first part of the postcode. If your business is registered at a private address (for example you are a home caterer), only the first part of the postcode is published. Searching using parts of the address that are not published will not return any results. If you are still unable to find your rating, you should [contact your local authority](#). The FSA provides the ratings website but what is published on it is supplied by the local authority.

You may give permission for the full address to be published. This must be given in writing to the inspecting local authority.

Publishing the rating early

If your business is in England or Wales, you can request that a rating is published before the end of the appeal period. This request must be made in writing to your local authority. You must include:

- details of who you are
- the name and address of the business
- your contact information
- the date of the inspection
- the rating given

The local authority will review the request and will usually publish the rating early. This option is not available in Northern Ireland.

You can use the relevant form below, email or write to your local authority directly to request early publication of your rating.

England

WORD

[View Form to request early publication of rating \(England\) as Word](#)(Open in a new window)
(73.17 KB)

Wales

WORD

[View Form to request early publication of rating \(Wales\) as Word](#)(Open in a new window) (93.95 KB)

Amending food business details

If the name or address details of your business shown on our food hygiene ratings website are wrong, you should contact the local authority that gave you the rating and ask for the necessary changes to be made.

[Find your local authority food safety team.](#)

Displaying your rating on your premises

England

You can display your rating in your premises' window or door so that customers can see it easily. Putting a hygiene rating on show demonstrates to customers that you take food hygiene seriously.?????

Wales

If your business is based in Wales, you are legally required to display your rating in a visible place at or near each customer entrance, like the front door, entrance or window of the business. Stickers must be displayed where they can be easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

If you supply takeaway food directly to consumers and have a menu or leaflet that shows food for sale, the price and a way of ordering the food without visiting the premises, you must publish a bilingual statement on the materials directing customers to the food hygiene ratings website.

The statement also reminds consumers that they have a legal right to ask the food business for their food hygiene rating when they order.

Northern Ireland

If your business is based in Northern Ireland, you are legally required to display your rating at or near each customer entrance like the front door, entrance or window of the business. Stickers

must be displayed in a location where they can be readily seen and easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

You must provide information on your rating verbally if requested in person or over the phone.

Displaying your rating online

We encourage you to promote your hygiene rating by displaying it on your website or social media pages as well as in your window. To help you get started, we have a [comprehensive guidance with downloadable rating images](#). We aim to help you make the most of your rating by displaying it online.

Tips

How to make the most of your rating

We have a [food hygiene rating scheme toolkit for businesses](#) which gives you ideas and inspiration on how to publicise your food hygiene rating online and offline.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme safeguards for businesses

How we ensure that the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is fair to businesses and how you can make an appeal, use your 'right to reply' and request a re-rating inspection.

There are three safeguards in place to ensure that the scheme is fair to businesses. As a business:

- you can make an appeal
- you have a 'right to reply'
- you can request a re-rating inspection from your local authority when improvements have been made

Appeals

Before making an appeal, you should [contact the local authority food safety officer](#) to understand why the rating was given. This will help you to understand how your rating was worked out and to see if you still want to appeal it. You will be given the contact details for this officer when you are notified about your rating.

If you still think that the rating is unfair or wrong, you can appeal in writing to your local authority. Details on how to do this are included in the notification of rating letter sent to you.

England and Northern Ireland

If you're in England or Northern Ireland, you can appeal by completing a form or you can send a letter or an email. ??????

Wales

If your business is based in Wales, you must use a standard form to appeal your rating.

You should send your completed form, letter or email to your local authority's lead officer for food. You will be given the contact details for this officer when you are notified about your rating.

England

WORD

[View Make an appeal about a Food Hygiene Rating - form \(England\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (73.62 KB)

Wales

WORD

[View Make an appeal about a Food Hygiene Rating - form \(Wales\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (95.27 KB)

Northern Ireland

WORD

[View Make an appeal about a Food Hygiene Rating - form \(Northern Ireland\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (86 KB)

How long you have to appeal

You must make your appeal in writing within 21 days of being notified about your food hygiene rating. This period includes weekends and public holidays.

If you do not appeal within this time, your local authority will publish your food hygiene rating online at food.gov.uk/ratings website.

If you make an appeal, the website will show that your food hygiene rating is 'awaiting publication'.

Review and result of your appeal

Your case will be reviewed by either:

- the lead officer for food or their designated deputy
- the lead officer or their designated deputy in another authority that is also operating the FHRS

The officer that gave the rating will not consider your appeal.

In some circumstances, a further visit to your premises may be required.

You will be notified of the result of the appeal within 21 days from the date that the appeal was received by your local authority.

Once you have been notified of the result of your appeal, your rating will be published at food.gov.uk/ratings.

If you don't agree with the outcome of the appeal

If you think that your local authority has not followed processes properly, you can use the council's complaints procedure. This includes taking the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman in England and Wales and to the Public Services Ombudsman in Northern Ireland. You should be able to find details of how to complain on your local authority's website.

If you don't agree with the outcome of the appeal, you can challenge the local authority's decision by judicial review.

Even if you decide to do this, your rating will still be published at food.gov.uk/ratings.

Right to reply

The right to reply allows you to tell customers how your business has improved its hygiene standards or if there were unusual circumstances at the time of inspection. This response will be published online at rating.food.gov.uk, alongside the rating, by the local authority.

You should send your comments in writing to the food safety officer that inspected your premises. You will be given the contact details for the officer when you are notified about your rating.

You can do this by completing a standard form or you can send a letter or an email.

England

WORD

[View Right to reply - form \(England\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (74.54 KB)

Wales

WORD

[View Right to reply - form \(Wales\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (84.01 KB)

Northern Ireland

WORD

[View Right of reply - form \(Northern Ireland\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (74.93 KB)

How long you have to submit your comments

There is no deadline for this so you can submit your 'right to reply' at any time up until your next inspection when you will get a new food hygiene rating.

Publication of your comments

Your local authority may need to edit comments, for example to remove any offensive, defamatory, clearly inaccurate or irrelevant remarks. Other than that, what you say in your 'right to reply' will then be published online together with your hygiene rating at food.gov.uk/ratings. Your comment will remain on the website until you are given a new rating.

Re-rating inspections

You will automatically be given a new food hygiene rating each time your premises are inspected by your local authority. The frequency of these planned inspections depends on the risk to people's health. The greater the risk, the more often you will be inspected.

If your business did not receive a rating of '5 – very good', you can request a re-rating inspection to get a new rating before the next planned inspection.

You can request a re-rating inspection only if you have accepted the rating and once you have made all the necessary hygiene improvements that the local authority food safety officer recommended at your last planned inspection.

Cost of a re-rating inspection

England

Some local authorities in England charge a fee to recover costs of a re-rating inspection. You will be notified of this in the letter informing you of your rating or when you make your request.

Wales and Northern Ireland

In Wales and Northern Ireland all local authorities charge a fee for the re-rating inspection under their statutory schemes.

You should contact your local authority for information on how to make payment.

Before making a request for a re-rating inspection

Look carefully at the comments that the food safety officer made about the hygiene standards found at your last inspection in the report or letter you were given. Make sure that you have taken appropriate action to address any issues raised. You can discuss anything you are unsure about with your food safety officer or ask for further help on how to make improvements.

Important

During the re-rating inspection the officer will be looking at standards generally – not just at the specific areas you have been working to improve – so your hygiene rating could well go up, down or remain the same.

Number of requests for a re-visit between planned inspections

England

If your local authority does not charge for the re-rating inspection service, you can only have one re-rating inspection between the local authority's planned inspections of your premises. If your local authority does charge for the re-rating inspection service, there is no limit to the number of re-rating inspections you may request. However, to avoid paying for multiple re-rating inspections you should address issues before you submit a request.

Wales and Northern Ireland

The number of requests made for re-rating inspections is not limited but certain conditions must be met before the local authority agrees to it:

- if you have appealed against your rating, this must be resolved before your local authority will agree to a re-rating inspection
- you must be displaying your current food hygiene rating sticker at your premises in a prominent position
- you must agree that the inspector will be given access to carry out an inspection of your premises for the purpose of re-rating

How to request a re-rating inspection

You should put your request in writing to the food safety officer who inspected your premises. You will be given the contact details for this officer when you are notified about your rating.

You can do this by completing a standard form or you can send a letter or an email.

England

WORD

[View Request a re-visit form \(England\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (83.94 KB)

Wales

WORD

[View Request a re-visit form \(Wales\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (207.5 KB)

Northern Ireland

WORD

[View Request a re-visit - form \(Northern Ireland\) as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (83.85 KB)

Where a charge is made for re-rating inspections, your request should be accompanied by the payment.

You must explain what actions you have taken on the issues raised at your last inspection and you should include supporting evidence, for example, receipts or photographs to show that work has been completed. This is important as the local authority could refuse your request if you do not provide sufficient evidence that you resolved the issues raised.

England

If the request is refused, you will be told why. You will be given advice on any action you need to take or evidence you need to provide before your request can be agreed. If you do not agree with the local authority's decision to refuse your request, you can raise the matter with the lead officer for food. If you cannot resolve matters with the lead officer for food, you can use the complaints procedure for your local authority.

Wales and Northern Ireland

When deciding whether to undertake a re-rating inspection, the local authority may consider how the business is complying with the Food Hygiene Rating law. This would include whether the business is displaying a valid rating sticker.

If the request is refused, you will be told why. You will be given advice on what you need to do or evidence you need to provide before your request can be agreed. If you do not agree with the local authority's decision to refuse your request, you can raise the matter with the relevant local authority officer. If you disagree with the decision to decline a request for a re-rating inspection, you can use the local authority's complaints procedure, or ultimately seek judicial review.

How long you have to make your request

There is no deadline for making the request. You can do it at any time after you've made the necessary improvements that were identified at your inspection. You cannot, however, dictate when the re-rating inspection will take place.

How soon the local authority will visit

England

Where the local authority does not charge for the re-rating inspection, it will not usually take place in the first three months following the inspection at which you were given your food hygiene rating. However, your local authority may choose to carry out the requested re-rating inspection sooner than this if you were required only to:

- make structural improvements or repairs
- upgrade equipment

If you make your request during those first three months, you can expect a re-rating inspection within six months of the inspection, but you will not be told a specific date and time.

If you make your request later than three months after your inspection or if your local authority charges for re-rating inspections, you can expect a re-rating inspection within three months but again you will not be told a specific date and time.

If you are still waiting for a re-rating inspection after these times, you can ask the lead officer for food to investigate. If you cannot resolve matters in this way, you can use the complaints procedure for your local authority which will be available on its website.

Wales and Northern Ireland

The re-rating inspection will be made within three months of the date you submit a written request.

You will not be told the specific date or time that the re-rating inspection will be carried out.

The re-rating inspection and its result

At the re-rating inspection, the food safety officer will assess the standards of hygiene at your premises. You will be told in writing what your new food hygiene rating is. It will be either at the time of inspection or within 14 days (this includes weekends and bank holidays). Your rating could stay the same as before, it could go up, or it could down.

As with the original hygiene rating, you can appeal this if you think it is wrong or unfair or you can submit a 'right to reply' for publication online at [food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings).

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