

Preparing for your first food hygiene inspection

This page provides information on what a food hygiene inspection may involve. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

As a new food business serving or supplying food direct to the public, the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme will apply to you.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme gives businesses a rating ranging from 0 to 5 so that consumers can make informed choices about where to buy and eat food.

Here's what the ratings mean:

- 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 required

Your rating will be based on what is found on the day of an inspection. This will be carried out by authorised officers from the Food Safety team at your local authority. An authorised officer is usually a Food Safety Officer or an Environmental Health Officer from your local council, not the Food Standards Agency. They will inspect your premises to check if your business is complying with food law and producing food that is safe to eat.

Please see our [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRS\): guidance for businesses pages](#) for more info about the scheme.

Our [Starting your food business safely page](#) has information on good food hygiene practices you can use in your business. We also have a range of [Safer food, better business information packs](#) to help support businesses in England and Wales with food safety management. Businesses in Northern Ireland should refer to our [Safe Catering guidance](#).

Arranging a food hygiene inspection

When you register with your local authority as a food business, your local food safety team will automatically be notified. You do not need to contact them as an inspection will be arranged if required. Please note - higher risk businesses will be prioritised over low-risk businesses, and in some cases it may be several months until your business receives their first inspection.

Unannounced food hygiene inspections

Authorised officers from your local authority will usually arrive without making an appointment.

They have the right to enter and inspect your premises at any reasonable time. They must show you identification before they start carrying out the inspection.

For food businesses working from a home address, an authorised officer will make arrangements to visit your home to conduct a food hygiene inspection.

What a food hygiene inspection involves

As part of the food hygiene inspection, authorised officers will look at:

- your premises
- how hygienically you handle food
- your food safety management system

As well as looking at your records and procedures, food samples can be taken or photographed.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme does not cover:

- the quality of your food
- customer service
- presentation and culinary skill

Inspectors are not visiting to find faults or to shut down your business. The reason for inspection is to support you in providing safe food. They will provide guidance and feedback and suggest corrective action to help you get it right, if you are not complying with food law. Remember, all businesses should be able to achieve the top rating of 5.

Our [Food hygiene ratings for businesses pages](#) have more info on inspections and exemptions.

For more insights into what officers do during an inspection, please see our blogs:

- [What to expect from an inspection - a Food Safety Officer tells us](#)
- [What happens during a food business inspection? We asked an Environmental Health Practitioner](#)
- [What can you expect during a food business inspection? An Environmental Health Officer explains](#)

You may also want to [watch this video from Westminster City Council on a typical inspection.](#)

What happens after an inspection

You will receive a confirmation letter outlining any necessary improvements you may need to make. If you do need to make some changes to how you operate, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make the relevant adjustments. This is unless there's an immediate risk to public health.

Please see our [Food hygiene ratings for businesses pages](#) for more information including:

- when, where and who publishes your food hygiene rating
- requesting a re-rating inspection
- how often premises are inspected
- displaying your food hygiene rating