

Food & Safety

BULLETIN

Spring 2019

Welcome

to the 14th edition of our Food & Safety Bulletin, included are articles of interest on food safety that are likely to be relevant to your business.

If you would like any help or advice on any of the articles in this edition please contact a member of the Team on the details below.

Wishing you a successful summer season.

Helen Perkins

- Principal Environmental Health Officer, Community Safety

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Other ways to contact us:

Tel: 01803 208025
www.torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety

It's been a busy 12 months, so far!

You may have seen a recent article in the press naming 33 Councils that had done no food standards sampling tests over the past year. Torbay Council was one of the Council's named in this article. The article itself was somewhat confusing. As a result of Trading Standards Officers (TSO's) relocating from Torbay Council to Devon County Council in May 2017, Torbay Council is no longer responsible for carrying out food standards sampling as this function is one carried out by TSO's. Such sampling includes testing for allergens and authenticity (e.g. fish advertised as cod in a fish and chip shop is indeed cod and not a cheaper alternative). In terms of food hygiene sampling which Torbay Council is responsible for, since 1st April this year we have taken 181 samples, from actual food samples to swabs of food containers. We have also achieved the following since 1st April 2019:

- We have 1987 registered food premises. Out of these 1112 have a food hygiene rating under the Food Standards Agency national rating scheme that we deliver. 1065 of these businesses have a compliant 3 rating or above.
- We have had 278 new food businesses register with us. Each receiving free, clear, impartial advice from us to help them succeed.
- With the equivalent of 5 full time staff, we carried out nearly 600 face to face visits to businesses and nearly seen nearly 100 businesses at our advice events.
- We have produced over 500 written warnings, served 46 legal improvement notices for serious non-compliance and successfully prosecuted 2 businesses for failing to maintain standards.
- We have delivered formal food hygiene training level 2 to nearly 50 people.
- We have supported many fishery related businesses by issuing hundreds of fish export certificates, shellfish movement documents and regularly carried out shellfish and water sampling.
- We have spent many hours at Brixham Fish Market carrying out inspections (including very early in the morning when the market is on!) and offering advice.
- We have taken over 200 food samples ranging from rice to swabs of ovens.
- We have received 70 alleged food poisoning complaints from the public.
- We have received 61 Food Hazard notifications about unsafe food.
- We have had 38 notifications of outbreaks and 216 notifications for infectious diseases.
- There have been over 700 other service requests received relating to issues such as unhygienic food premises, requests for information and advice.
- In addition to food safety we also carry out health and safety inspections and deal with accident investigations with 101 notified to us in the last financial year.

Possible Changes to how the Food Industry is Regulated

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has recently consulted on proposed changes to the way all food businesses are regulated. This can be set in the context of less resources available to carry out routine work such as inspections and the drive towards reducing regulation on safe well managed businesses and targeting limited resources to areas where the risk to public health and poor food safety are greatest. This can be seen as a logical step but one which needs careful consideration.

To put it into context, EHOs operate under a strict code of practice which outlines how to risk rate types of businesses against set criteria. This sets the frequency that they are inspected, every 6 months or every 24 months for example. Some types of processes like smoking, vac packing or manufacturing have a higher weighting applied, as do businesses where customers are more susceptible to illness i.e. hospitals and child nurseries. However, all the research shows that certain types of businesses such as nurseries tend to be better managed and have systems and training in place to mean they present less of a risk to the customer than some cafes/ takeaways. One of the proposals is that this additional weighting is removed.

A second proposed change is that businesses which have dedicated company systems and some type of independent auditing also received a different type of focus. Large national supermarkets often have their own food safety departments and carry out their own audits. In theory this means these businesses present less of a risk. However any problems would result in a larger amount of people being effected than a small local restaurant. It does not mean these businesses do not need to comply with the law, just how the local authority inspects them.

A further proposal is this way that food businesses need to register. A national registration database is being trialled. Currently this is done directly with the local authority. The local authority would still need to keep its own records up to date.

The proposals attempt to balance resources and risk and outline changes that would result in some businesses being inspected far less, if at all, by the local authority. This would allow local authority's to focus more time on new businesses requiring support and advice, and non-compliant businesses that present an unacceptable risk to the customer.

The consultation has closed but if you wanted to read the proposals in more detail www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/regulating-our-future-amendments-to-the-food-law-code-of-practice-england

Or if you were interested in the response provided by this authority, please contact me isobelle.belcher@torbay.gov.uk



Not so smart cross-contamination risk

Over the last few years it has become common place to find smart phones, tablets and other personal electronic devices (PEDs) in kitchen environments for personal and professional use. Some businesses have even moved to recording temperature and other daily checks electronically rather than on paper.

Whilst kitchen staff are often well trained in personal hygiene and hopefully undertake regular hand washing, studies reveal that phones and other PEDs are a hotbed for germs and bacteria. One of the primary reasons is our own behaviour of checking phones approximately every 12 minutes, or 80 times per day. They are likely to accompany us on nearly every activity, perhaps even when we visit the toilet. But hands are capable of collecting enormous amounts of germs. From fingertips to elbow you'll find an average of 2-10 million bacteria. Some of these are going to end up on phones and similar devices.

A second reason that phones and PEDs are so dirty is the heat they produce. Warm environments are where bacteria thrive. It produces its own heat and you add to the warm environment when holding it in your hands or pocket allowing germs to grow and spread.

In recent studies roughly 7,000 types of bacteria were found on 51 smartphone samples including E. coli and Staphylococcus aureus. The typical mobile phone is carrying over 25,000 bacteria per square inch. This is dirtier than a kitchen counter or door handle. Viruses can also spread on phones, such as influenza or norovirus.

So to reduce the risk of contaminating your phone or PED try to follow these simple rules:

- Don't take them into bathrooms (even the gym can be a source of bacteria)
- Don't use them when eating
- Don't keep them in food preparation areas or on work surfaces
- Clean them safely on a regular basis, make sure they are included on your cleaning schedule
- If preparing food, wash hands after touching phones or other PEDs before you continue.

Award Winning Best Bar None Scheme

The Best Bar None scheme in Torquay has gone from strength to strength. The scheme was nominated in its first year for Best New Scheme, coming second at the national awards held at the House of Lords and receiving a special commendation. In its second year, the scheme again was nominated, this time again coming second in the national awards for best overall scheme.

Given this success, the scheme was extended last year to include all of Torbay, with a number of participants from both Paignton and Brixham helping to again achieve nomination and yet a third second place at the national awards.

The scheme is driven by a Steering Group mainly made up of the licensed trade, with support from the Council, Police and Street Pastors. The scheme is chaired by Tracey Pounds from the Green Ginger, with Trevor Staveley (Street Pastor Co-Ordinator) as vice chair.

Best Bar None is a national scheme that aims to drive up standards within licensed premises, improve community safety and most importantly publicly celebrate those businesses who are going above and beyond. Best Bar None is expanding through Torbay with a large number of licensed premises now signed up.

Best Bar None links into the prestigious Purple Flag, which was successfully retained by Torquay in October last year, as a recognition of its safe and vibrant Early Evening and Night Time Economy. This type of recognition and driving up of standards, combined with regular publicity campaigns can only serve to highlight the attraction of the diversity of offering throughout Torbay to both visitors and residents, thereby promoting local businesses.

Successes are recognised and celebrated locally at a glittering awards ceremony in Torquay during the Autumn. To find out more and about Best Bar None and to become part of this success, contact Tracey Pounds at Green Ginger bestbarnone-torbay@outlook.com

‘Ask for Angela’ campaign

Torquay’s Best Bar None group, in partnership with Safer Communities Torbay, is helping to protect any person who may feel frightened during a date or by their partner whilst out in several of its harbour-side licensed premises, by launching a new scheme called ‘Ask for Angela’.

The scheme which was originally set up in Lincolnshire is being led and rolled out in a number of Torquay’s pubs by the local Best Bar None group.

It works by licensed premises displaying an ‘Ask for Angela’ poster or window sticker which signals that the pub, club, restaurant or bar is signed up to the scheme. In those premises staff know to take action if someone approaches the bar and asks if they can speak with ‘Angela’. If that happens the staff will discreetly offer to separate the individual asking for Angela from the person who is causing them discomfort or distress, and ensure that the person is able to leave safely. In any situation where a person becomes aggressive or is making threats to harm an individual or a member of staff, the police will be called immediately.

Obviously an initiative such as this will only be effective if all staff are fully aware of the campaign and have the confidence to act and support the customer if they are approached for help. Poster resources are available on request. Further information on the Ask for Angela campaign and other supportive services for individuals concerned about abuse from intimate partners and family members is available at:

www.areyouok.co.uk

Best Bar None is a nationally accredited scheme that aims to recognise outstanding standards in licensed premises and efforts to reduce crime and improve community safety in an area. The scheme is supported by Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’s Police and Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez along with other key partners.



areyouok?
ask the question - make a difference

HI I'M ANGELA,

ARE YOU ON A DATE THAT ISN'T WORKING OUT?

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE NOT IN A SAFE SITUATION?

IS YOUR TINDER OR POF DATE NOT WHO THEY SAID THEY WERE ON THEIR PROFILE?

DOES IT ALL FEEL A BIT WEIRD?

IF YOU GO TO THE BAR AND ASK FOR 'ANGELA' THE BAR STAFF WILL KNOW YOU NEED SOME HELP GETTING OUT OF YOUR SITUATION AND WILL CALL YOU A TAXI OR HELP YOU OUT DISCREETLY - WITHOUT TOO MUCH FUSS

areyouok?
ask the question - make a difference

For further information and advice about relationship abuse and sexual violence visit www.areyouok.co.uk

@_areyouok

Courtesy of Safer Communities Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership, Lincolnshire. Originators of the 'Ask for Angela' poster campaign part of the #NoMore sexual violence and abuse in Lincolnshire awareness Campaign. www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/nomore

Mandatory HMO licensing

On 1st October 2018, new regulations were published which expanded the mandatory licensing scheme across England. These changes mean properties will require a licence if it:

- Contains five or more people in two or more households as their main address; and
- Contains shared or lacks facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.

Hotels, B&B's and guest houses could require a licence if they ever operate as described above. A HMO licence will NOT prevent you from operating as a commercial business.

If you have 5 or more staff members living onsite that have no other place of residence and share any facilities, you may require a licence.

For further information, please visit:

www.torbay.gov.uk/hmo/

All licence applications should have been submitted before the Order came into force on 1 October 2018. **Failure to apply for a licence will place the landlord and letting agent at risk of being prosecuted and getting a hefty fine.** Alternatively, we can issue a civil penalty notice of up to £30,000 for not having a licence.



Know your meat, even when buying local

The South West has a proud history of promoting good food in addition to those who are passionate about food. “Local beef, lamb and venison” are just a few of the words used to entice consumers in a butchers or on a menu in a restaurant particularly here in Devon.

Food is strictly controlled at each stage of production right from the farm or fishery until the point of sale to the final consumer. The systems in place go barely noticed by consumers from checks on plant crops or slaughter of an animal to ensure that food is safe to eat.

Food crime threat to the UK's £200 billion food and drink industry - so what's going on?

Torbay Council Environmental Health team working in partnership with Devon, Torbay and Somerset Trading Standards Service take samples from businesses to check that food is safe, meets descriptions applied and to verify any claims being made such as production methods or the species of animal.

Farmers are required by law to record any treatments that they give to their animals, particularly including the withdrawal period – the point at which the meat would be safe to eat. This information is checked by the Food Standards Agency at the time of slaughter together with the health of the animal to ensure that only safe food goes on our plate.

Illegal trading which works outside of these checks costs legitimate businesses hundreds of millions of pounds a year. The meat from this illegal trade may well be contaminated and unsafe to eat, the animal may have a disease or medicine withdrawal periods may not have been adhered to.

Monitoring the quality and safety of food here in the South West goes further than protecting consumers, it also ensures they have confidence to purchase from local suppliers and supports the local economy.

Multi agency approach to tackle illegal slaughter

We know that there are groups of people who are taking deer, fish and livestock, slaughtering them illegally and passing the product into the food chain. Their behaviour has caused misery to landowners, causes animal disease risk and a risk to the health of consumers.



Dumped sheep carcasses found last year in Mid Devon

The South West illegal meat group was set up in 2015 to tackle these issues in the South West. The group comprises of Police, National Wildlife Crime Unit, Trading Standards, Food Standards Agency, Environmental Health and a number of rural and agricultural organisations. By working together the organisations share information and combine their powers, knowledge and skills to target and disrupt criminal activity, endeavouring to provide a safe community and level playing field for legitimate businesses.

We are actively involved in tackling food fraud and organised crime, which can be very harmful to public safety, economic development and fair business competition by conducting investigations and working with relevant agencies to target criminals. For example, last year Mid Devon Environmental health successfully prosecuted a slaughterhouse operative for running an illegal slaughterhouse and obtained a Confiscation Order for £40,000 under the Proceeds of Crime Act.



Illegal cutting room preparing unsafe meat in filthy and unhygienic conditions

This document can be made available in other formats. For further information please contact 01803 208025.



Poaching is a serious offence and will be treated as such

What steps you can take to ensure that the food you eat is safe?

With meat and meat products at high prices and in demand there is the potential for businesses to commit food fraud. As a consumer it is essential that you only purchase food from reliable sources and verify any claims being made. If you purchase meat from the butcher or a restaurant, ask about the origin of the food. Any person selling food must by law be registered with Environmental Health so check with the relevant local authority before you buy.

Check labels on foods before you make a purchase. Look for signs of tampering, has the use by date been changed? Does the product appear to meet the description? Foods which are sold frozen will have a best before date or best before end date. Use by dates are used for fresh produce which has a short shelf life. Frozen food with a use by date is likely to have been previously offered for sale as fresh when the trader has decided to freeze the product. Frozen meat and fish are required by law to have a date when the food was frozen.

If you are in the food business do not risk buying and selling food where you cannot guarantee the source.

Any information regarding the sale or supply of illegally slaughtered meat or details of poaching or animal fighting can be reported in strict confidence to the Torbay Council Environmental Health call centre 01803 208025 or via our website <https://forms.torbay.gov.uk/ContactFood>

Meat described as being local when it is not can be reported to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

Alternatively to report poaching or livestock theft contact the police on 101 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or [crimestoppers-uk.org](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)