



## **Scores on the Doors - Rating Scheme for Food Businesses in the Counties of Worcestershire and Herefordshire**

### **Introduction**

Local authorities have a duty under food safety legislation to inspect food businesses in their areas to ensure that food hygiene standards are maintained. While the legislation is aimed at protecting consumers it does allow businesses to trade except in exceptional circumstances, where there is an imminent risk to customers, irrespective of whether they are judged to be poor or good on inspection. The legislation has previously prevented local authorities from releasing information about inspections to the public. This allowed some businesses to continue trading while consumers were unaware of their poor hygiene practices. Assessment of the business by consumers could only be based upon the 'front of house' areas where poor businesses often spend their money to attract customers.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 has introduced the opportunity for local authorities to provide this information to the public.

### **Aims**

The overall aim of the scheme is to improve food safety and hygiene standards among businesses providing food and drink to consumers living, working or visiting Worcestershire or Herefordshire.

The aims of the proposed 'scores on doors' scheme are:

- To provide consumers with a user-friendly way to access the information they need to make informed choices about where to eat in the County.
- To encourage food businesses where deficiencies are found to improve their standards of food hygiene leading to safer food.
- To ensure that those food businesses achieving consistently high standards of food hygiene are publicly recognised and rewarded.

### **'Scores on doors' – what is it?**

'Scores on doors' is a scheme whereby the hygiene rating of a food business is made known to the public. Currently there is no national scheme or format for publishing this information. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has commissioned research into a range of schemes operated successfully in Denmark, the USA and the UK.

We firmly believe that consumers should be provided with this information. To achieve this we are publishing the results of recent inspections on our internet sites ([www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk](http://www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk) and [www.worcester.gov.uk](http://www.worcester.gov.uk)) and providing a certificate to

premises which they may choose to display showing their rating in the form of a star rating. This document is designed to inform users about the background to the system.

## Consultation

As responsible councils we have consulted to ascertain the views of those groups affected by this scheme.

## Food hygiene inspections

All food businesses are rated for food safety by qualified officers during routine inspections and inspections following complaints, using a national scheme. Each business is scored against 8 main criteria, 3 of which are under the direct control of the business and impact on food safety standards. They are:

1. Food hygiene and safety compliance
2. Compliance with structural requirements
3. Confidence in management/control systems

It is therefore considered reasonable to base any 'scores on doors' scheme on these 3 criteria.

## Rating methods

The scheme provides consumers with a simple, quick and convenient method of identifying the hygiene standards of a food business and is based on the most popular method currently being trialled in the UK.

Score	Level of Compliance	Number of Stars
Up to 5	Excellent	*****
6 - 15	Very Good	****
16 - 25	Good	***
26 - 30	Broadly Compliant	**
31- 45	Poor	*
46 +	Very Poor – major improvements required	none
NYT - Not Yet Rated	Premises awaiting inspection under scheme	Not applicable
AES – Alternative Enforcement Strategy	Premises outside the inspection programme i.e. very low risk premises	Not applicable

## **Legal implications**

There are some legal implications associated with the scheme. The Food Standards Agency advise that such a scheme is legal however no official guidance is available on how it should be devised or implemented.

The publication of ratings could have a very negative impact upon the turnover and profitability of those food businesses with a poor score. However the Council is obliged to disclose information held on any business under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The scheme provides the information in a format which can be simply accessed and interpreted by consumers so that they may make an informed choice about where to purchase food.

## **Re-rating**

We will revise the rating of food premises if appropriate after we visit. Visits may take place for a number of reasons including full inspections, to check compliance with legal notices, on complaint or to carry out a check on food safety management systems. We will always publish the most recent rating. Further information on the frequency of inspection of food businesses and risk rating can be found on the Food Standards Agency website at <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/codeofpracticeeng.pdf>

## **Scope of the scheme**

Ultimately the aim is to apply the scheme to all food businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire with the exception of childminders due to child protection issues. We expect a national scheme to be published in the next year or two and we will revise our scheme to take account of any such scheme when it is published.

## **Need for consistency in inspections**

Any scoring system needs to be fair, robust and consistent. Consistency meetings and exercises take place within each Council and between authorities in Worcestershire / Herefordshire. Consistency will be actively monitored and any problems addressed.

## **Business ownership changes**

A change of ownership may result in standards improving or falling. We will endeavour to only publish scores relating to current owners and to inspect new businesses within 28 days of registering with us, or when changes are brought to our attention. The onus remains with businesses to keep us informed of relevant changes. Businesses can obtain a new registration form by contacting the Food Team on 01905 722233 or from by downloading it from our website:

[http://www.worcester.gov.uk/fileadmin/assets/pdf/Environment/Environmental\\_health/foodregistrationform.pdf](http://www.worcester.gov.uk/fileadmin/assets/pdf/Environment/Environmental_health/foodregistrationform.pdf)

## **Appeals procedure**

Businesses that wish to discuss the results of an inspection are encouraged to do so by contacting Environmental Health Food Team via the Customer Service Centre on 01905 722233. If informal discussion fails to resolve the issue a business may formally appeal their rating by writing to: Mr M Gillies, Environmental Health Manager, Worcester City

Council, The Guildhall, High Street, Worcester WR1 2EY or making contact online at <http://www.worcester.gov.uk/index.php?id=1027> Where the appeal is upheld and the original score is judged incorrect following an investigation, an amended score will be given.

## **Conclusion**

There are many potential benefits in introducing a 'scores on doors' system. These include:

- promoting a thriving local economy
- a more open and transparent system
- reduced cases of food-borne illness
- improved standards and the maintenance of high standards of food hygiene
- more customers and greater profitability for good businesses
- visitors and tourists will feel more confident about eating out in the area
- less frequent regulatory inspections thus releasing local authority resources for preventative and advisory work

## **Comments**

We are interested to hear your views about the scheme as we will periodically review it.

Any comments should be sent to:

Mrs A Fletcher  
Principal Environmental Health Officer (Commercial)  
Worcester City Council  
The Guildhall  
High Street  
Worcester  
WR1 2EY

Emailed to [EHSBusinessSupport@worcester.gov.uk](mailto:EHSBusinessSupport@worcester.gov.uk)

Faxed to 01905 722255

Or submitted via our webpage [www.worcester.gov.uk](http://www.worcester.gov.uk)

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