

Gateshead Council Food Sampling Policy

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to state the Council's policy in respect of food sampling.

This Policy has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as part of the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement and the Food Safety Act 1990 Code of Practice.

This Policy has been drawn up in consultation with the Newcastle Public Health Laboratory (now Health Protection Agency)/Local Authority Liaison Group, the Tyne and Wear Food Liaison Group and the Public Analyst appointed by the Council under Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990

When drawing up this Policy account has been taken of the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990 and Regulations made there under, and the Food Safety Act Code of Practice.

This Policy relates to all food samples taken by this Council.

It is recognised that:

- The microbiological sampling and examination of food is an essential part of food safety enforcement which enables authorised officers to gain an insight into the microbiological safety of food and which may reveal shortcomings in its safe handling, preparation and/or storage
- The sampling and analysis of food is an essential part of food standards enforcement, which enables authorised officers to assess chemical quality and safety of food and to determine compliance with food standards, composition, safety and labelling regulations.
- The analysis and/or microbiological examination of complaint samples can assist in the investigation of consumer complaints.

THE POLICY

The Council will maintain a Service Level Agreement with an Official Food Control Laboratory for the microbiological examination of food samples and in accordance with Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990 will appoint a Public Analyst for the chemical analysis of food samples.

In consultation with the Food Examiner and Public Analyst a food sampling programme will be drawn up to detail food sampling priorities. The programme will take into account the number, type and risk rating of food businesses in its area, the Councils Home Authority responsibilities, and the need to ensure that the provisions of food law are adequately enforced.

The food sampling programme will be kept under review to take into account any variation in circumstances.

Food samples may be taken:

- As part of a food poisoning investigation
- When an authorised officer has concerns about the safety or compositional quality of food because of practices or procedures observed during the inspection of food businesses
- As part of a complaint investigation
- As part of the controls exercised under the Home Authority Principle
- In order to verify process monitoring undertaken by a food manufacturer or processor
- As part of a national, regional or local survey organised by the Health Protection Agency (HPA), LACORS, the FSA or Tyne and Wear Food Liaison Group.
- In any other circumstances deemed appropriate by an authorised officer.

All food samples will be taken in accordance with good practice having regard to Food Standards Agency, Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services/Health Protection Agency or other official guidance and any relevant documented food sampling procedures.

All food samples and the result of examination/analysis will be recorded and where sample results are considered to be unsatisfactory the Council will carry out an investigation and take appropriate action in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

It will be regularly reviewed to take into account any changes made by legislation, revised guidance or changed circumstances.

A copy of this policy is available on request from the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Team, Regulatory Services, Gateshead Council, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1HH (telephone number 0191 4333000), or via the Council website www.gateshead.gov.uk