

Environmental health: Food Safety

Why is this important?

Poor food safety places a significant burden on the UK economy, in addition to personal suffering in terms of morbidity, mortality and economic loss. Poor food safety practices greatly increases the risk of contaminating food, and presents a risk of food poisoning. The exact agents vary, but where food safety does not adhere to guidelines the risk is real and present. In addition, commercial operations not adhering to safe practices are placing customers at risk.

Food safety in the home is as equally as important as food safety in a commercial setting. Food borne diseases originate from a variety of foods, and can be caused by many pathogenic organisms (for example bacteria or viruses). Accordingly, there is a need to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food (including risks caused by the way in which it is produced or supplied), and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

Strategic Context

In order to ensure food safety, national guidance, and legislation details how food businesses (including charities) should operate. The Local Authority is statutorily bound to inspect food businesses. Local officers inspect food businesses against these standards and areas of concern are addressed, including via formal enforcement if necessary. Such actions and decisions are based on the Food Safety Agency's guidance and the local Enforcement Policy. Cases of food poisoning are often investigated, and advice and guidance is provided to domestic premises.

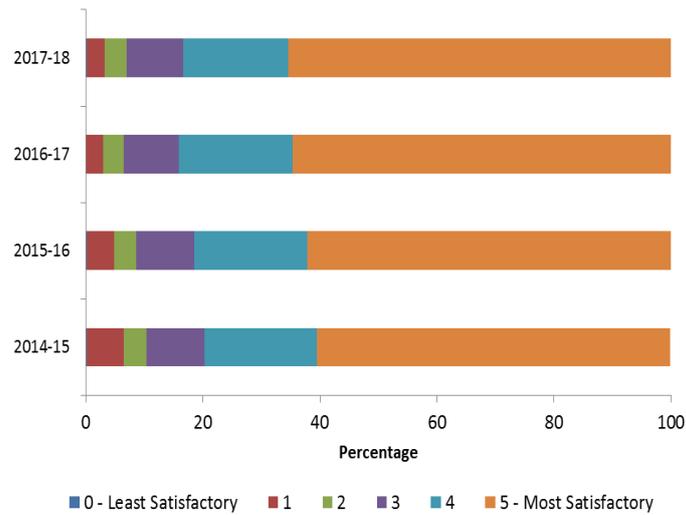
In its [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#), the Food Safety Agency outlines its objectives in protecting public health. This includes regulation for food producers, commercial food premises and home food users.

What do we know?

As of the 1st April 2018, **93% of food businesses** rated under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) were **generally satisfactory**, with 7% of businesses requiring some improvements. However, we fall short of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) target of 96% of premises having a rating of 3 or above.

Notifications of communicable diseases in Bradford District have fallen over the last three years, but suspected food poisoning, Campylobacter, Salmonella, Cryptosporidium and Giardia continue to be a problem. The need to engage with Food Safety Agency campaigns on educating the public on how to reduce the incidence of such cases is important in reducing the cases further. In 2018/18, Environmental Health dealt with **494 notifications** – 420 of these were for food poisoning or suspected food poisoning. There were 24 notifications of Giardia, 204 Campylobacter and 77 cases of Salmonella.

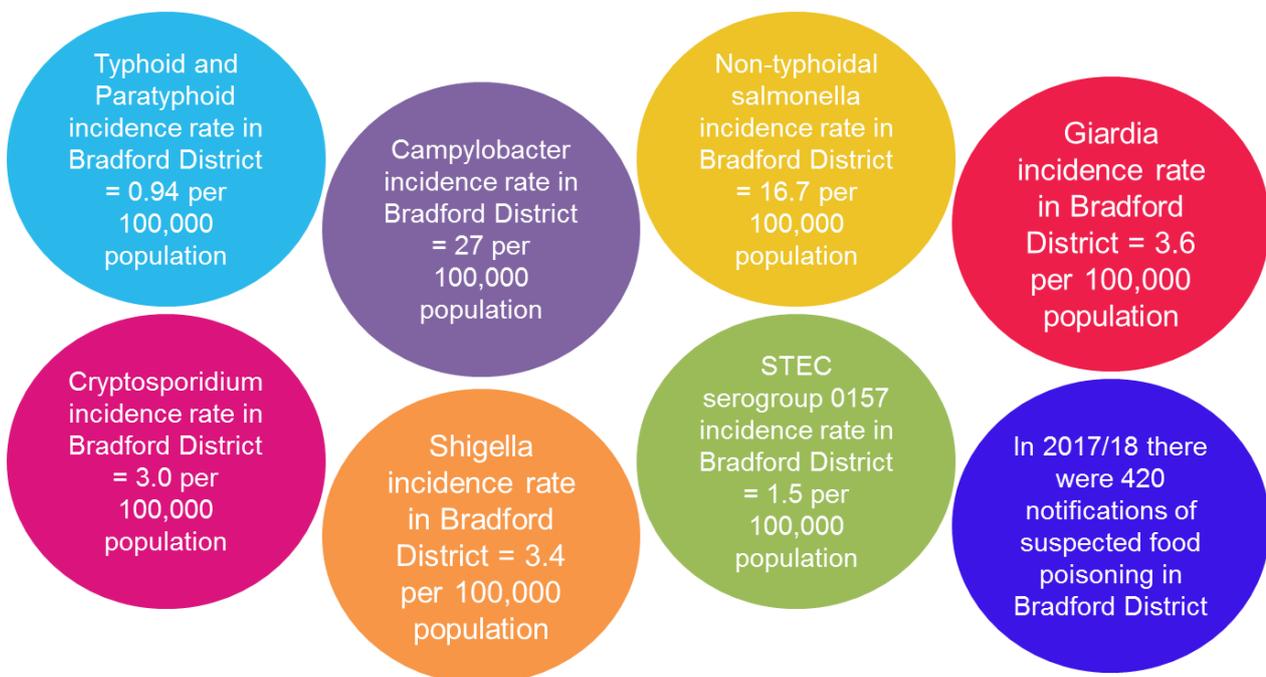
Figure 1: Distribution of rates premises under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme



Source: Food Standards Agency

Within Bradford District the incidence rate for Typhoid and Paratyphoid in 2017 was 0.94 per 100,000 population. This is a decrease on previous years however it is still higher than the rate for England on average. On the other hand, the Campylobacter incidence rate in Bradford District in 2017 was 27 per 100,000 population which is lower than the England average of 97 per 100,000 population.

Figure 2: Reported cases of food borne disease in Bradford District



Source: Public Health England

The incidence rate of Giardia and Cryptosporidium was also lower in Bradford District than England. Non-Typhoidal salmonella incidence rates in Bradford District has increased since 2015 from 11.3 per 100,000 population and is now higher than the England average for the first time in 3 years.

What Assets do we have?

The Department of Health and Wellbeing: Food Safety Service Plan 2018/19 details the Department's planned work activities and arrangements for fulfilling statutory duties. The aims of the Plan are as follows:

- To ensure that all food produced and sold in Bradford District is safe to eat.
- To increase the awareness of food safety amongst the residents of Bradford District.
- To support the role of Public Health England in relation to communicable disease control with Bradford District.
- To assist in the delivery of the relevant outcomes within the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

Other relevant strategies include:

- Food Standards Agency Strategic Plan 2015-20
- Food Law Code of Practice
- West Yorkshire Gastro-Intestinal Disease Management Protocol (January 2014): this details the agreed response and timescales for investigation of communicable diseases

Gaps / challenges / opportunities

Bradford District has a wide variety of food businesses. The Food Safety Intervention Programme undertaken by the local authority operates in accordance with the FSA's statutory Local Authority Framework Agreement and Food Safety Code of Practice (CoP). The CoP sets out a range of interventions that local authorities may adopt in addition to food safety inspections. These are official controls that include inspections, audits, sampling, monitoring and verification; non-official controls include advice, coaching, education and training and questionnaires.

Priority is given to the inspection of high risk and approved premises over low risk businesses. This means priority is given to the inspection of highest risk premises, (categories A-C). All registered food businesses receive an intervention in the form of Feeders Digest, our annual newsletter. Low risk businesses (D-E) that fall within the scope of the FHRS website will however receive an inspection when resources facilitate this.

A food intervention programme was developed by the West Yorkshire Food Officers Group and ratified by the West Yorkshire Chief Officers Group. This aimed to provide the best use of resources and seek a consistent approach across West Yorkshire.

Bradford District does have a number of importers, meat product premises and on farm dairies that can create significant problems/ challenges. Illegal meat cutting plants have been identified, and these premises will obviously increase risks to health.

Responses from customer satisfaction surveys of these statutory inspections provide positive feedback on the value of inspections to food businesses as a means of giving advice and education. In excess of 90% state that they are fairly or highly satisfied with inspection services.

Table 1: Categories of Food Businesses

FSA Category	Number
Primary producers	4 (601 farms)
Manufacturers and packers	117
Importers/Exporters	6
Distributors / transporters	98
Supermarket/ hypermarket	96
Small retailer	771
Retailer – other	193
Restaurant/café/canteen	721
Hotel/guest House	56
Pub/club	474
Take-away	709
Caring premises	633
School /college	239
Mobile Food Unit	126
Restaurants / caterers – other	234
Total	4477 (5078)

Source: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

What are we doing about it and what does the information presented mean for commissioners?

- To deliver an annual programme of food hygiene interventions, this includes inspections, audits, and alternative intervention strategies.
- Promote best practice in food production and sale in Bradford District through the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Provide support and advice to local businesses, so they can comply with legal requirements and best practice.
- Publicise food safety issues, by working with partners, through a number of activities as part of local and national campaigns.
- Act as Primary Authority for our partner businesses and deal with enquiries referred on by other authorities and agencies.
- Investigate food poisoning notifications and outbreaks in association with the Consultant for Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), based within Public Health England.
- Investigate complaints about food and food premises.
- Implement an annual sampling programme to include participation in national and regional sampling surveys.
- Approve and register special high risk food premises as required by law.
- Enforce food legislation and take proportionate action to secure compliance.

- Take prompt and effective action in response to food alerts and other threats to food safety in Bradford District.
- Provide training and development opportunities for staff to ensure they are competent, professional and fair.

Supporting resources

Food Safety Service plan 2018/19

Food Law Code of Practice

Food Standards Agency Strategic Plan 2015-20