



**MALDON**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

# **Food Safety Plan 2025-2028**

## Document Control Sheet

<b>Document title</b>	Food Safety Plan
<b>Summary of purpose</b>	Sets out how the Environmental Health Commercial Team will ensure that food placed on the market for human consumption (which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or purchased within Maldon District), is without risk to public health or the safety of the consumer.
<b>Prepared by</b>	Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)
<b>Status</b>	Draft
<b>Version number</b>	1
<b>Approved by</b>	Strategy and Resources Committee
<b>Approval date</b>	
<b>Date of implementation</b>	
<b>Review frequency</b>	
<b>Next review date</b>	
<b>Circulation</b>	
<b>Published on the Council's website</b>	

## Validity Statement

This document is due for review by the date shown above, after which it may become invalid. Users of the strategy or policy should ensure that they are consulting the currently valid version of the document.

## Contents

SECTION 1 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .....	4
1.1 Service Aims .....	4
1.2 Service Objectives .....	4
SECTION 2 ORGANISATION .....	5
2.1 District Profile .....	5
2.2 Organisational Structure .....	5
2.2.1 Democratic Structure .....	5
2.2.2 Environmental Health (Commercial) Team's structure.....	5
2.2.3 Access to the Service .....	5
2.3 Scope of the Food Safety Service.....	6
2.4 Demands on the Food Safety Service .....	7
2.4.1 Profile of food businesses in the Maldon district .....	7
2.4.2 Inspection Frequency .....	7
2.4.3 Local factors.....	8
SECTION 3 SERVICE DELIVERY .....	8
3.1 Programmed Food Hygiene Inspections.....	8
Intervention Programme.....	8
Intervention Reports.....	9
Intervention Policy.....	9
3.2 Food and Food Premises Complaints.....	9
3.3 Primary Authority .....	10
3.4 Advice to business.....	10
3.5 Food sampling .....	10
3.6 Control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease .....	11
3.7 Food safety incidents.....	11
3.8 National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.....	12
3.9 Liaison with other organisations.....	12
SECTION 4 RESOURCES.....	13
4.1 Financial Allocation.....	13
4.2 Staffing Allocation .....	13
4.2.1 Use of Specialist Contractors .....	13
4.3 Staff Development .....	13
SECTION 5 QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND INTERNAL MONITORING .....	14
SECTION 6 REVIEW PROCESS.....	14

## SECTION 1 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1 Service Aims

The overall aim of the service is to ensure that food placed or intended to be placed on the market for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or purchased within the district of Maldon is without risk to public health or the safety of the consumer. This is fulfilling our statutory duty under the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013. There are several key aims:

- The delivery of a programme of inspections and other interventions in accordance with the Food Standard Agency's Code of Practice
- To respond to complaints and requests for service in accordance with any internal service standards
- To respond to any FSA Food Alerts for Action (FAFA) subject to available resources.

### 1.2 Service Objectives

To achieve our aims, we have implemented key objectives:

- Ensuring by means of education and/or enforcement that food intended for human consumption which is produced and/or sold in district of Maldon is safe to eat and complies with food safety requirements.
- Advising and educating consumers and service users on food safety matters.
- Delivering a programme of inspections and interventions in relation to food businesses, on a risk-based frequency and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.
- Investigating complaints about food and food premises and taking appropriate action.
- Maintaining an accurate register of food businesses within the district.
- Taking enforcement action on a consistent, transparent and proportionate basis in accordance with the Environmental Health's Enforcement Policy and the Enforcement Concordat.
- Programmed and reactive sampling in response to emerging issues and in support of national studies.
- Preventing the spread of specified infectious and food borne diseases.
- Working with stakeholders and customers to improve services delivered to them.
- Engaging in an environmental health apprenticeship scheme.

## SECTION 2 ORGANISATION

### 2.1 District Profile

The District of Maldon comprises a mixture of rural and urban coastal communities with a population of 66,208 ([Nomis - 2021 Census Area Profile - Maldon Local Authority](#)) in an area of 36,000 hectares. Principal population areas include the towns of Maldon, Heybridge and Burnham On Crouch alongside a number of smaller towns and villages. The district has approximately 75 miles of coastline which brings tourism, recreation and economic opportunities.

### 2.2 Organisational Structure

#### 2.2.1 Democratic Structure

The political structure of the Council is based on a committee system with several committees each with a specific area of responsibility.

This Food Safety Plan will be taken for approval to Strategy & Resources Committee.

#### 2.2.2 Environmental Health (Commercial) Team's structure

The food safety service is provided by the Environmental Health (Commercial) Team within the Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action Service which forms part of the Service Delivery Directorate.

Whilst the Environmental Health (Commercial) Team have responsibility for the delivery of the food safety service, they are also responsible for health and safety, infectious disease control, skin piercing registrations and animal welfare licensing, and each officer is allocated a specific geographical area which contains a diverse range of commercial businesses.

The Head of Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action is responsible for the day-to-day operation, and they report to the Assistant Director – Place and Community. The Head of EHWCA is supported by the Lead Food Officer acting as technical expert on food safety related matters.

The Environmental Health (Commercial) team consists of a combination of Environmental Health Officers, an Environmental Health Apprentice and Sampling Officer (a breakdown of the team members is included at section 4.2 of this plan)

Contractors are available where support is required to manage vacancies, such as the current maternity leave and recruitment issues, however this is a short-term measure and not part of a long term strategy.

#### 2.2.3 Access to the Service

The service is based at Maldon District Council, Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 5DL although officers largely adopt a hybrid approach basing themselves between the office, home and food premises.

Customers can contact officers in the following ways:

- In person at the council offices weekdays between 10am - 4pm.
- By telephone on 01621 854477 between 8:30am - 5pm (24-hour answerphone)
- By e-mail [environmentservices.request@maldon.gov.uk](mailto:environmentservices.request@maldon.gov.uk)
- Advice and information about good practice and the service, as well as e-forms for complaints and enquiries are available on the Councils website at [www.maldon.gov.uk](http://www.maldon.gov.uk)

## 2.3 Scope of the Food Safety Service

The Environmental Health (Commercial) Team's food safety responsibilities cover a wide range of regulatory duties including:

- Programmed and intelligence led food hygiene interventions and revisits for non-compliant premises
- Investigating reported cases of food poisonings and potential outbreaks in accordance with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance
- Investigating requests for service regarding the hygiene of food premises, or food safety issues relating to foods purchased or produced in the Maldon district
- Developing and delivering a programme of appropriate interventions for lower risk premises
- Registration of food premises
- Monitoring of existing approved premises as well as granting new approval applications
- Responding to food alerts
- Delivering a food sampling programme in line with local and national programmes
- Provision of advice and support to existing and prospective food business operators and users of the service
- Consideration of planning and licensing applications relating to food premises.
- Implementing projects and campaigns that promote good food hygiene
- Development and maintenance of partnerships and liaisons to the benefit of the Food Service
- Delivering the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- Ensuring that food business operators providing non-prepacked food and food that is 'pre-packed for direct sale' (PPDS) are given appropriate advice on allergens.
- Issuing export certificates to local businesses that export food products
- Imported food control
- Shellfish monitoring and registration documents
- Inspection of fishing vessels
- Providing the FSA with statistical returns

## 2.4 Demands on the Food Safety Service

### 2.4.1 Profile of food businesses in the Maldon district

#### 2.4.1.1 Registered food businesses

On 1 September 2025, there were 631 registered food businesses.

Type	Number of Premises
Distributors	13
Manufacturers /Processors	37
Producers	23
Restaurants and Caterers	465
Retailers	90
Slaughterhouses	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>631</b>

#### 2.4.1.2 Approved Premises

On 1 September 2025, there were 8 Approved premises where products of animal origin are produced/processed.

We currently have:

- 3 x shellfish dispatch / purification establishments
- 2 x fish processors
- 2 x meat processers
- 1 cold store

### 2.4.2 Inspection Frequency

All food establishments are categorised according to their intervention frequency in accordance with the statutory Food Law Code of Practice (England).

On 1 September 2025, the profile of premises within the district was:

Category*	Number	Minimum intervention frequency
A (High Risk)	2	At least every 6 months
B	32	At least every 12 months
C	102	At least every 18 months
D	240	At least every 2 years.
E (Lowest Risk)	255	At least every 3 years. An AES can be used when and where it is deemed to be appropriate due to the low risk nature of the business.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>631</b>	

\*The category is defined by scoring premises around potential hazard associated with the business and food safety compliance, this then relates to the interval between inspections.

### 2.4.3 Local factors

The district is a tourist destination which adds to fluctuations in demand for service. Some businesses are seasonal which can make access for inspecting officers difficult. The high turnover of proprietors and businesses presents a challenge to maintain an accurate food register and certain businesses re-register frequently and require reinspection.

The 75 miles of coastline in the district presents particular challenges for the food safety service, namely:

- Delivering shellfish official food controls is resource intensive covering all aspects of the industry from growing and harvesting to processing for consumption
- Monitoring of the classified shellfish harvesting areas includes 17 representative monitoring points which all require monthly sampling and additional investigation, sampling or temporary closures and downgrades in the event of pollution events or problem sample results.
- Commercial fishing vessels are classed as food businesses and require registration at their Home Port by environmental health and inspections to check good food safety controls and traceability.

## SECTION 3 SERVICE DELIVERY

### 3.1 Programmed Food Hygiene Inspections

#### Intervention Programme

The interventions programme for food premises forms the core activity of the Environmental Health (Commercial) Team.

There were 286 programmed interventions due, as of 1 April 2025, that are required to be inspected by 31 March 2026. This figure does not include inspection of new food businesses.

The following table provides a breakdown of the number of food interventions due in each risk category, including any outstanding food inspections due before 31 March 2025.

Risk Category	Inspections due 2025/26	Carried forward from previous year	Total Programmed 2025/26
A	1	0	1
B	31	0	31
C	53	1	54
D	125	1	126
E	73	1	74
Unrated	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>286</b>

Priority will be given to establishments within risk category A, B, unrated and non-broadly compliant\* C and D.



## Intervention Reports

Check lists are used at each inspection for consistency purposes and are used at the end of the inspection to produce a written report of the officer's findings. An inspection report is left with the food business following each inspection, so it is clear what they have to do within a specified timescale. Where there are a number of serious contraventions, a holding report is left, and a follow up letter is delivered (via email or post).

## Intervention Policy

Intervention Policy Category	Planned Intervention
A (non-compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
B (non-compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
C (non-compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
D (non-compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
	Monitoring / verification / official sampling or education/advice/ coaching
A (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
B (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
C (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
	or
	Monitoring / verification / official sampling
D (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
	monitoring / verification / official sampling or education/advice/ coaching
E (compliant)	Self-assessment questionnaire*
Unrated	Full/Partial inspection/audit

The Food Law Code of Practice allows local authorities to use Alternative Enforcement Strategies (AES) for Category E businesses. The AES approach typically involves the completion of a self-assessment questionnaire by the business which is then reviewed by an officer. Follow up inspections will be carried out if deemed necessary.

All applications to register new food businesses are triaged and prioritised for inspection. Until such time as they are inspected, they receive an '*Awaiting Inspection*' status. Once, inspected, they are provided with a food hygiene rating.

Where an unregistered food business is found trading in the area, then an inspection will be undertaken as soon as it is practical to do so, and the business will be required to complete a registration form.

## 3.2 Food and Food Premises Complaints

These generally fall into one of the following categories:

- Complaints about the food premises themselves (e.g. poor staff hygiene, allegations of pests, poor standards of cleanliness)

- Complaints about the condition or contamination of food (extraneous matter, mould, dirty containers)

Complaints are allocated to officers on an area basis and are prioritised on a risk basis. This approach may mean it is appropriate for the complaint to be dealt with at the next routine intervention or an intelligence led intervention may be required

### **3.3 Primary Authority**

We acknowledge the Primary Authority Principle as applied by the Primary Authority Scheme, and we will comply with the legislation and statutory guidance issued by the Office of Product Safety and Standards.

Currently, the council does not have any primary authority arrangements in place. If resourcing allows in future, and it is in line with corporate priorities to support local businesses in this way, opportunities to undertake a primary authority arrangement would be explored.

### **3.4 Advice to business**

Officers provide information and advice to businesses to help them comply with the law and to encourage the use of best practice. This is achieved through a range of activities including:

- Advice to new businesses
- Advice during inspections and other visits
- Site visits on request - where appropriate and resources allow
- Proactively contacting businesses to comment on plans at the planning application stage
- Proactively contacting businesses to comment on applications for premises and temporary licences
- Participating in Safety Advisory Group
- Maintenance and development of the website with links to the FSA's website
- Key information issued via Council website and social media by the Communications Team

### **3.5 Food sampling**

Sampling is a recognised official food control. UKHSA provides an allocation of credits for analysis of some samples (this does not include shellfish sampling).

Sampling is undertaken by the Sampling Officer and supported by Technical Officers.

All sampling is carried out in accordance with relevant legislation, the Code of Practice issued under the Food Safety Act 1990, guidance on the sampling intervention designed by UKHSA and the departmental Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

The microbiological and physical examination and analysis of food is undertaken based on:

- businesses identified for sampling as part of a nationwide, regional or local schemes

- businesses subject to consumer complaints or outbreak investigations
- during a programmed inspection where the officer deems a sample is necessary.

Currently we are unable to support the nationally co-ordinated food sampling programmes organised by the FSA and the UK Health Security Agency UKHSA (formally known as PHE) Laboratory Services as well as any relevant cross regional surveys co-ordinated by the Food and Water Laboratory.

Samples requiring microbiological examination are collected by a courier service and taken to the accredited Colindale laboratory in London.

Between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 15 food samples were taken for microbiological analysis, and 204 shellfish samples were taken for classification monitoring, 36 shellfish samples were taken for biotoxin monitoring and 54 water samples for phytoplankton were taken.

There is a separate food sampling plan for businesses within the district that are Approved Premises. The Food Standards Agency requires that microbiological testing of locally produced food from 'Approved' premises is undertaken annually.

### **3.6 Control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease**

The Council has appointed the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) from UKHSA as the 'Proper Officer' under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

Officers will investigate food-related infectious disease notifications in accordance with protocols agreed with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC). The general aims of any investigation are to identify the source and cause of the infection and prevent further spread. Weekly notifications of infectious disease are received.

Currently, all infectious disease notifications are followed up by a standard letter, advisory leaflet and questionnaire (where appropriate) to identify possible sources of infection and recommend practices to prevent its spread.

### **3.7 Food safety incidents**

FSA food alerts for action will be dealt with in accordance with:

- the departmental SOP (currently RIAMS procedure)
- the Food Law Code of Practice issued under the Food Safety Act 1990 and
- any instructions issued by the FSA.

Most food alerts are Product Withdrawal Information Notices or Product Recall Information Notices which require little or no action. There are a significant number of allergy alerts but these too require little or no action or are dealt with by Trading Standards Officers (TSOs). Occasionally TSOs may ask for our support. Food Alerts for Action (FAFA) and ad hoc requests for action may have an impact upon programmed work but the numbers are relatively low.

Given the nature of food alerts, it is impossible to predict the likely demands and requisite resources with any accuracy. If a food alert is associated with a business based within Maldon District then officers will be expected to devote more time to that alert than to one which originates elsewhere.

### **3.8 National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme**

We participate in the Food Standards Agency's national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The scheme is designed to provide information about business hygiene standards to members of the public but it is also a useful tool to drive up performance standards of food businesses.

Information gathered at inspection is also used to determine the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) score. The FHRS is operated in accordance with the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme: Guidance for local authorities on implementation and operation - the Brand Standard', June 2023. Businesses can appeal against their rating and can also request a rescoring visit (subject to the payment of a fee) after the inspection upon which their rating was based.

### **3.9 Liaison with other organisations**

The Environmental Health (Commercial) team is committed to sharing data where permissible, learning from the experience of others and endeavouring to secure consistency. This is aided considerably by working in partnership with others to deliver services, some examples are given below:

#### **External Partnerships / Liaisons**

- Essex Food Liaison Group
- Essex Approval Subgroup
- Essex Health Protection Liaison Group
- South East Shellfish Liaison Group
- Cefas
- DEFRA
- Trading Standards, Essex County Council
- UKHSA
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
- Food Standards Agency.

#### **Internal Partnerships**

The importance of partnerships and joint working extends also to contacts within the Council, which includes Building Control, Planning, Development Management & Planning Enforcement, Licensing, Legal Services, Economic Development, Community Safety Unit, CCTV and the Environmental Protection Team within Environmental Health.

## SECTION 4 RESOURCES

### 4.1 Financial Allocation

The budgets for the food safety function are managed by the Head of EHWCA. The majority of the budget is allocated to staffing costs (salary plus on costs including training, professional membership etc.). The remainder is used to fund equipment, sampling and other necessary support services.

### 4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Environmental Health (Commercial) Team currently allocates 1.46 FTE to discharging the food safety functions. This FTE is allocated by role as follows:

Role	FTE	FTE for food safety functions
Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)	0.6	0.2
Environmental Health Officer- 1	0.6	0.4
Environmental Health Officer- 2	1	0.66
Apprentice Environmental Health Officer	1	0.03
Shellfish and Water Sampling Officer	0.2	0.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.46</b>

If necessary (i.e. in the event of an outbreak or major incident) additional resources are available from within the Environmental Protection Team and/ or neighbouring authorities within Essex as part of an informal support network.

#### 4.2.1 Use of Specialist Contractors

We do not routinely use contractors and do not have an allocated budget for their employment.

However, we may employ suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractors on an *ad hoc* basis to assist with the delivery of food safety inspections. Contractors are required to demonstrate compliance with the competency framework in advance of their employment.

### 4.3 Staff Development

The Council places significant importance on the development and training of staff to ensure that quality services are delivered to our customers.

The Food Standards Agency requires that all persons undertaking any food hygiene and/or food standards functions must undertake a minimum of 10 hours work specific CPD each year. The CIEH requires a minimum of 20 hours work specific CPD each year.

All Officers are required to prove competence via the Competency Framework introduced by the Food Standards Agency. Training will be undertaken through in-house training, formal courses and vocational visits as appropriate. The team

undertakes regular training as part of team meetings to ensure that knowledge and interpretation of legislation and guidance is maintained. The team also completes consistency exercises to ensure that food hygiene ratings awarded to businesses are consistent across the team.

Training needs are considered as part of the appraisal process and staff maintain a training and development file containing evidence of formal qualifications and CPD certificates from external and internal course attended, together with details of agreed, planned training for the forthcoming year.

## **SECTION 5 QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND INTERNAL MONITORING**

The work of the Environmental Health (Commercial) Team is subject to scrutiny by Members, Corporate Leadership Team, internal auditors and the Food Standards Agency.

The Food Standards Agency monitor and report on local authority activity and performance regarding the delivery of official food controls.

All officers delivering food law interventions are required to meet a rigid qualification criterion and demonstrate knowledge and competency across a number of skill sets. The competency framework drives personal and team training and development. It is also used to highlight gaps in the team's knowledge and skills.

All officers participate in annual national consistency exercises developed by the Food Standards Agency to review various scenarios and then to determine the hygiene rating awarded.

The following monitoring arrangements are in place to assist in quality assessment:

- Inspection audits including associated paperwork
- Performance and development reviews
- Performance monitoring of target response times
- 1:1 meetings with team members
- Team and department meetings

In our work programme, we will continue to review and improve our documented food procedures required within the Food Standards Agency's Framework Agreement.

## **SECTION 6 REVIEW PROCESS**

The Food Safety Plan will be reviewed each year.