

## **Food Standards Agency meeting on the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Regulating Our Future on 24th July.**

Peter Brett and Janine Avery attended a workshop to discuss the future of FHRS within the proposed changes in food enforcement under Regulating our Future.

### **Update information from the FSA on the FHRS scheme**

Analysis of the published premises indicates that there are approximately 10% of registered food premises which should have published food hygiene data, but no information has been published. The FSA, following the data cleansing programme, also highlighted a range of businesses that have been excluded or exempted from display, which may be questionable. The most likely explanation is that businesses have been wrongly coded, and the FSA will be sending further requests to LAs to ask them to carry out additional data cleansing checks. LAs are asked to adapt their letters to businesses to state the date that inspection data will appear on the web site, following inspection.

Ratings continue to improve with 95% of food businesses in England having a score of 3 or better. Numbers of 0, 1 and 2 ratings remain fairly flat in number, so most improvement is being seen in businesses with ratings of 3 or 4 achieving improved ratings.

The FSA 's stated ambition is to reduce numbers of rating at 2 or below to 4% by 2019 (Currently 5%), and ratings of 5 at 70%, (currently around 65%).

The FSA is developing a scorecard to include a wide range of activities expected to be undertaken by local authorities, as a means of benchmarking local authority performance in the future.

The FSA now has evidence to demonstrate that unsatisfactory samples are more likely to be found in businesses rated 0-2 with twice the risk of food poisoning from 0-2 rated businesses.

Consumer awareness is around 54% so further work is required. LAs are asked to use the information provided by the FSA to promote the scheme locally. Few people use the web site and most look for the stickers in windows. Display in England for 5 rated businesses is 58%, 33% for 4 rated and 27% for 3-0. This compares with a display rate of over 80% in Wales and NI, where the scheme is mandatory. Wales now give Fixed Penalty Notices for non-display so they believe the actual display rates are higher than that identified in the research.

Display is much more likely if stickers are given out at the inspection, so local authorities are encouraged to do this. The FSA would welcome ideas on how to improve levels of display, but they continue to work towards mandatory display. Realistically this is at least 2 years away and the FSA is looking to obtain ministerial support. One example trialled is to use Twitter to display all 5 rated businesses.

The FSA has reviewed appeals and sometimes there is insufficient information recorded to assess the accuracy of the score and there is some concern about the way appeals are handled. An appeal board has been suggested but is not considered workable. Other means of ensuring consistency and fairness are needed, including cross borough referrals and discussion at liaison groups. Some areas have an FHRS sub group to discuss this.

The FSA will be undertaking its annual national FHRS scoring scenario in autumn.

The FSA is interested to establish if there is merit in publishing other interventions, rather than just the rated inspection date. The group felt that for low risk, it was very unlikely that there would be any interventions to record, but there was merit in considering recording the multiple visits to a non-compliant business, to demonstrate to the public that action was being taken to rectify conditions. The FSA will explore the options for this.

The FSA Code of Practice is out for consultation, with a response date by 27<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Risk Assessment and the Risk Engine**

The FSA is developing a risk engine for businesses to identify the circumstances which are most likely to lead to non-compliance. The initial phase, being use in the registration process, is to identify premises of greatest risk. Registration is planned to commence in March 2019. Phase 2 will move on to create correlation between the Laems feedback and expected compliance and phase 3 will then look to identify individual likelihood of compliance. The team are working with LAs to identify individual pathways, for example there is a clear link to show that proactive registration is much more likely to result in compliance. The aim is to create a culture for businesses to make regular contact and presents the possibility of more premises becoming exempt.

LAs are encouraged to use the Smart Communications network. Contact Sandra Cockill ([sandra.cockell@food.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.cockell@food.gov.uk)) if you find any broken links to support documents.

### **National Inspection Strategies**

The proposal is to work with primary authorities to reach a high level of compliance, which will allow roll over inspections. This will be limited to those businesses who have good, robust standards. Pilot authorities have compared the data following inspections with that of internal reviews and checked if scores are comparable. Most were compatible, a few the LA officer gave a higher rating and in 1, the LA gave a lower rating. The FSA will provide oversight and assurance to maintain the standards and there will remain a percentage of inspections to validate.