



**WIRRAL
INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE**

JSNA: Food Safety

**Wirral Intelligence Service
and Environmental Health**

June 2018

JSNA: Food Safety

For further information please contact:

Author: Ian Doig, Environmental Health Team Leader, Wirral Council at ianoig@wirral.gov.uk

Wirral Intelligence Service

Email: wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk

Background to JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

What is a JSNA?

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, better known as a JSNA, is intended to be a systematic review of the health and wellbeing needs of the local population, informing local priorities, policies and strategies that in turn informs local commissioning priorities that will improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout the Borough.

Who is involved?

Information from Council, NHS and other partners is collected and collated to inform the JSNA and this reflects the important role that all organisations and sectors have (statutory, voluntary, community and faith) in improving the health and wellbeing of Wirral's residents.

About this document

This JSNA section looks to contain the most relevant information on the topic and provides an overview of those related key aspects

How can you help?

If you have ideas or any suggestions about these issues or topics then please email us at wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk or go to <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/>

Version Number	Date	Authors
1.0	June 2018	Ian Doig, Environmental Health Gareth Hill, Public Health Manager John Highton, Wirral Intelligence Service All at Wirral Council

Key findings

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimate that 600 million, almost 1 in 10 people worldwide, fall ill after eating contaminated food.
- Food can be contaminated with Bacteria, Viruses, Parasites, Chemicals and Physical contaminants
- In the UK one million people suffer a foodborne illness, around 20,000 people receive hospital treatment due to foodborne illness and there are around 500 deaths caused by foodborne illness, costing £1.5billion.
- Within Wirral 327 cases of infectious disease were reported between April 2016 and March 2017.
- During this same period (April 2016 and March 2017) Environmental Health recorded 539 Food complaints relating to either unfit food or unsatisfactory food premises.
- Environmental Health Officers inspect food businesses in order to assess food hygiene and safety within the premises with 982 inspections undertaken during 2016/2017.
- Wirral Council operates the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme which provides businesses with food hygiene scores, and thus consumers can make informed choices about where they eat
- There is limited information on any links between foodborne illnesses and socio-demographics, since the effects of foodborne illness are wide reaching.
- The WHO has highlighted the need for increased controls and interventions in order to improve food security along the food chain to ensure the food reaching consumers is safe.

Contents

What do we know? 5

- Why is this important? 5
 - Introduction 5
 - Foodborne illnesses and Food contamination..... 5
 - Physical contamination 5
- Facts, figures and trends (Wirral and beyond)..... 6
 - Foodborne Illness 6
 - Food Complaints..... 7
 - Food Premises/Businesses..... 8
- Local, Community and Stakeholder views 9
- What are we expecting to achieve? (Targets) 9
- What are we achieving? (Performance) 10

What is this telling us? 11

- Groups most at risk 12
- Key inequalities 12

What are we doing and why? 12

- Current activity and services..... 12
 - Food Safety..... 12

What are the challenges? 14

- Key gaps in knowledge and services..... 14
- What is coming on the horizon? 15
 - Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) 15
- What does the research suggest as further actions?..... 15
 - Foodborne Illness 15
 - Food Hygiene and Safety..... 15
 - Health..... 16

Key content..... 16

- Links 16
- Relevant and related National and local strategies..... 16
 - Legislation..... 16
 - National Strategies and Schemes..... 16
- References 17
- Contact details..... 17

Introduction

The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) \(2015a\)](#) highlights that access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food is essential to sustaining life and promoting good health. Despite this, foodborne disease has been described by the WHO as a 'serious and global problem'. It is estimated by the WHO that 600 million – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – fall ill after eating contaminated food and 420 000 die every year, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years. Whilst foodborne illness is a global issue, in the UK it is also a significant cause of illness.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO in holding their [Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\)](#), (2014), made a number of recommendations which highlighted the importance of food safety, public health and trade and investments. The recommendations highlighted the need for Governments to make food safety a public health priority to ensure that there are effective food safety management systems in place to the supply of safe food to the consumers.

Foodborne illnesses and Food contamination

The WHO describes foodborne illnesses as:

...“Usually infectious or toxic in nature and caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances entering the body through contaminated food or water”...

Contamination of foodstuffs can occur at any point of production and distribution, thus the responsibility lies with food producers, it is however highlighted that a large proportion of foodborne diseases are caused by 'mishandling' at home, in food establishments or markets. Contamination of food can be caused by;

- **Bacterial contamination** – such as salmonella, campylobacter, Escherichia Coli and Listeria.
- **Viruses** – such as Hepatitis A
- **Parasites** – Cryptosporidium, Giardia.
- **Chemical** – including;
 - Naturally occurring toxins e.g. mycotoxins, biotoxins, aflatoxins.
 - Persistent organic pollutants e.g. dioxins
 - Heavy Metals – e.g. lead, cadmium and mercury.

Physical contamination

The contaminants, for example glass, plastic, or hair, whether microbiological, chemical or physical are wide ranging in their health effects. The effects can range from no effect on health, minor injuries to vomiting, diarrhoea to kidney disease, cancer and death

Foodborne Illness

The [Food Standards Agency \(2011\)](#) estimate that, in the UK around one million people suffer a [foodborne illness](#), around 20,000 people receive hospital treatment due to foodborne illness and there are around 500 deaths caused by foodborne illness, costing £1.5billion.

Food Poisoning Background Information

Food poisoning is an illness caused by eating contaminated food. It's not usually serious and most people get better within a few days without treatment. ([Access overview of key aspects here](#))

In most cases of food poisoning, the food is contaminated by bacteria, such as [salmonella](#) or Escherichia coli (E. coli), or a virus, such as the [norovirus](#).

The key aspects when considering food poisoning consist of:

- [Signs and symptoms](#)
- [Treatment](#)
- [Causes of food contamination](#)
- [Types of food poisoning](#)
- [Prevention of food poisoning](#)

[Please access an overview of these key aspects here](#) or consider the information from NHS Choices website [here](#)

Within Wirral during 2016/17 there were;

- 26 notified cases of [Salmonella](#)
- 226 notified cases of [Campylobacter](#)*
- 50 notified cases of [Cryptosporidiosis](#)
- 6 notified cases of [E.Coli 0157](#)
- 4 notified cases of [Shigella spp.](#)
- 5 notified cases of [Giardia Lamblia](#)
- 1 notified cases of [suspected food poisoning](#).
- 2 notified cases of [Legionella](#)
- 1 notified case of [Listeria Monocytogenes](#)
- 1 notified case of Paratyphoid

The notified cases between 2011 and 2016/17 are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Wirral cases of foodborne illness notified to Environmental Health between 2011/12 and 2016/17 (all ages)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Campylobacter	390	317	318	369	250	226
Cryptosporidiosis	5	41	13	19	37	50
Salmonella	28	25	20	31	35	26
Giardia Lamblia	10	7	6	3	6	5
E.Coli 0157	5	3	5	7	5	6
Shigella spp.	5	5	2	4	4	4
Aeromonas	0	2	0	0	3	0
Legionella	2	2	1	2	2	2
Listeria Monocytogenes	0	2	1	0	1	1
Cholera	0	0	0	0	1	0
Suspected food poisoning	3	5	2	2	1	1
Paratyphoid	0	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Wirral Council infectious disease records taken between 1st April and 31st March for each year.

Notes: *Due to changes in the information sharing agreements between Public Health England and local authorities, details of campylobacter cases will no longer be shared and therefore not investigated.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) (2011) highlight that whilst there has been a reduction in the level of foodborne disease, the cost and burden in the UK of foodborne disease remains 'unacceptably high'.

Food Complaints

Environmental Health record and may investigate complaints associated with both unfit food (such as foreign body complaints) and unsatisfactory food premises. The figures are illustrated in Table 2 and Graph 1

Table 2: Wirral recorded Food/Food Premises complaints 1000 premises, all ages: 2011 – 2016

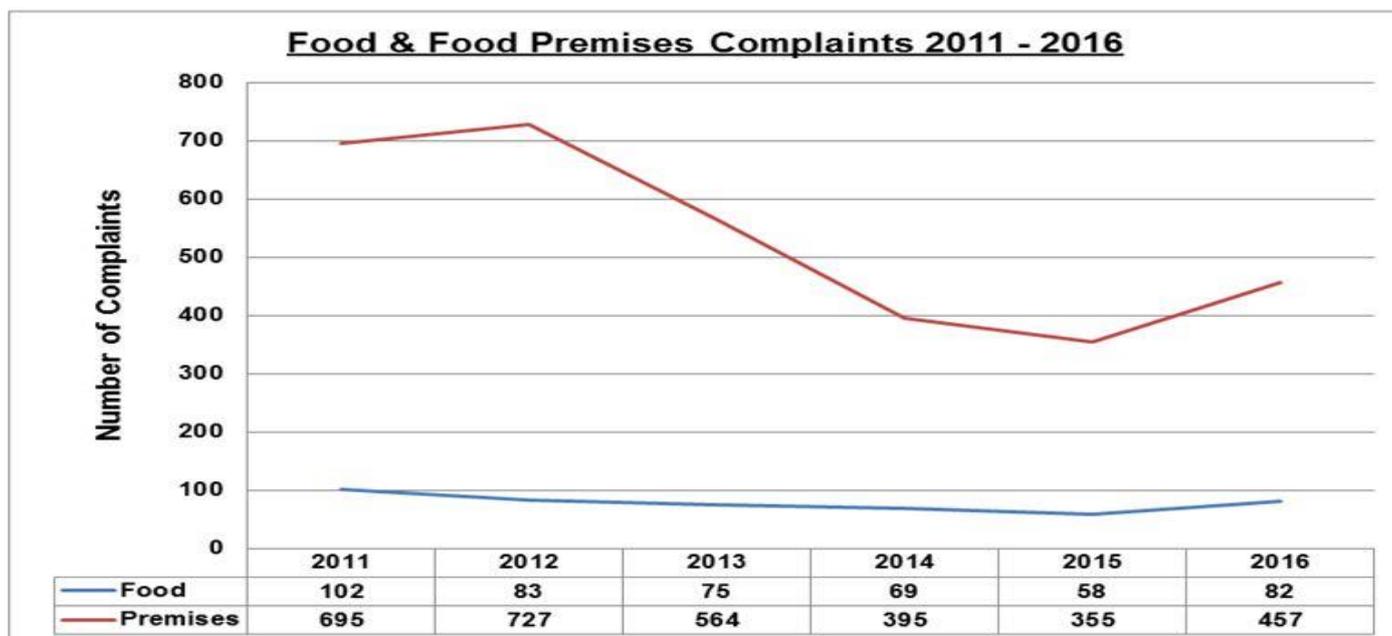
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Food complaints in year	102	83	75	69	55	82
Complaints about Premises	695	727	564	395	356	457
Complaints per 1000 Wirral premises per year	320	319	252	181	157	195

Source: Food/premises complaints data Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems (LAEMS). (LAEMS) at

<https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear>

Notes: Rate for Total Complaints per number of food premises was rounded up to nearest whole number

Figure 1: Wirral recorded Food/Food Premises complaints: 2011 – 2016



Source; Wirral Environmental Health Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems (LAEMS) data

Food Premises/Businesses

The number of food businesses and premises in Wirral has remained relatively gradually increased between 2011 and 2016 as detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Wirral reported number of food businesses between 2011 and 2016

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Premises	2,494	2,542	2,539	2,563	2,619	2,757

Source Food premises data [Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems \(LAEMS\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear). (LAEMS) at <https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear>

In table 4 below the number of food premises per 100,000 population is compared across Cheshire and Merseyside with Warrington having the highest rate at 1,000 local food premises per 100,000 residents and this dropped to almost half, at 514, for Knowsley with Wirral achieving a rate of 858 per 100,000 residents or approaching a total of over 2,750 food premises.

Table 4: Comparison of the number of Food Premises per 100,000 population (2016 – 2017) for Cheshire and Merseyside Local Authorities

Local Authority	Number of premises*	Local Population**	Rate per 100,000 population
Warrington	2,088	208,809	1,000
Cheshire East	3,530	376,695	937
Cheshire West & Chester	3,322	335,680	990
Sefton	2,375	274,261	866
Liverpool	3,844	484,578	793
St Helens	1,392	178,455	780
Halton	1,057	126,903	833
Wirral	2,757	321,238	858
Knowsley	760	147,915	514

Source; *Food premises data [Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems \(LAEMS\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear) (LAEMS) accessed at <https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear> **Population data accessed from Office for National Statistics (2017) available at [via this link](#)

Local, Community and Stakeholder views

Environmental Health engages with a variety of other agencies or authorities who all have an interest in food safety. These include; local authorities, Government bodies, voluntary organisations and local liaison groups – such as Merseyside and Cheshire Chief Officers Food Sub Group, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Branch Meetings, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) and Health Authority, North Wales and Deeside Shellfish Liaison Group, Public Health England, and with other departments within the Authority.

Environmental Health is contacted by local residents via complaints and concerns about food safety, alleged unsatisfactory food premises/food handling practices and suspected food poisoning. Members of the public can use the Authority's website in order to make a food complaint, or they can contact the Department directly via the general Environmental Health email.

Through the investigations of suspected food poisoning complaints or investigations of notifiable infectious diseases, Environmental Health may be able to identify links between cases and through this feedback may undertake interventions at suspect premises in order to identify contributory factors and take action, as necessary, to improve hygiene standards.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme offers food business operators a number of mechanisms to feedback to the local authority including a Right to Reply in order to explain to potential customers any actions that the food business operator has taken to improve hygiene standards at the premises.

The Scheme also allows for food business operators to appeal the hygiene score awarded by a food safety officer, if they disagree with the score or alternatively to apply for a revisit under the scheme whereby improvements have been made in order to improve the food hygiene score. There are specific procedures for this feedback including the use of standard application forms and procedures within the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme on how Local Authority's must respond to the requests.

What are we expecting to achieve? (Targets)

Environmental Health's Food Service Plan highlights the contribution made by food officers in relation to the expectations of the Authority. The Authority's vision for 2020 contains a number of pledges of which food officers contribute to the following;

- Business – Thriving small businesses
- Business- Increase Inward Investment
- Business – Vibrant Tourism Economy
- Environment – Wirral residents live healthier lives

The Authority is also governed by the requirements of the food law code of practice and the [Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement](#). The Agreement applies to local enforcement of all feed and food laws. The Agreement provides for a publicly available local service plans, feed and food law enforcement standards, enhanced monitoring data in relation to inspection outcomes, audit schemes aimed at securing improvements and sharing good practice.

In relation to food hygiene inspections, those businesses that are deemed to be higher risk are prioritised for inspection. Environmental Health aim to complete 100% of the food hygiene inspections for businesses rated in categories A to C, those deemed as the highest risk.

In the financial year 2016/2017 there was:

- 13 category A premises
- 145 category B premises
- 554 category C premises
- 925 category D premises
- 956 category E premises
- 119 unrated premises
- 45 premises (in addition) that are outside the programme but fall within the Trading Standards inspection plan
- **Total of 2,757 premises on the Environmental Health data base.**

There are also four approved premises (premises which require approval to handle products of animal origin under [Regulation 853/2004](#)) and an approved cold store within the Borough. There are six large food manufacturers and multiple large shellfish production areas within the River Dee.

The authority participates in the [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#) administered by the Food Standards Agency whereby each hygiene inspection generates a hygiene score between 0 (major improvement necessary) and 5 (very good). The scheme is high profile with strong branding. The Authority must ensure that they follow the guidance given in the Brand Standard in relation to the administration of the scheme, in order to ensure a consistent approach

What are we achieving? (Performance)

In 2016-2017 food inspectors within Environmental Health achieved 100% category A to C inspections. The total number undertaken in 2016-17, for category A to E, was 982 inspections.

The Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems (LAEMS) requires Authorities to report their food safety interventions each year. The data includes information on those businesses which are deemed to be 'broadly compliant'

Table 5: Comparison of those considered as Broadly Compliant* Food establishments in A to E categories, 2016 – 2017 for Cheshire and Merseyside Local Authorities

Premises	Broadly Compliant* food establishments (%)
Cheshire West	92.21
Warrington	97.89
Cheshire East	91.96
Knowsley	93.39
Sefton	95.33
Wirral	90.12
Halton	94.49
Liverpool	84.21
St Helens	87.36
Av. All Metropolitan Borough Councils	88.95
Av. All Local Authority areas in UK**	90.47

Source: Food premises data [Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems \(LAEMS\)](#). (LAEMS) accessed at <https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear>

Note:

*Establishment defined as 'Broadly compliant' for food hygiene, has an intervention rating score of not more than 10 points under each of the following three criteria: Level of (Current) Compliance – Hygiene; Level of (Current) Compliance – Structure; and Confidence in Management. This is in accordance with [Food Law Code of Practice](#) 2015. In terms of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme this would equate to hygiene score of 3 and upwards

** All Local Authority areas in UK covers 388 areas for District Councils, London Borough Councils, Metropolitan Borough Councils, Northern Ireland Unitary Authorities, Scottish Unitary Authorities Unitary Authorities and Welsh Unitary Authorities.

In addition to local inspections, the Environmental Health Team has recorded 539 food/food premises complaints as reported via the [Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring Systems \(LAEMS\)](#).

Wirral Councils Environmental Health and Public Health teams have joined forces to help tackle obesity and other diet related ill health in Wirral and have successfully launched a number of public health projects together.

[Takeaway for a Change](#)

A two-pronged approach designed to work closely with a) takeaway businesses, to improve the overall healthiness of their products, and b) families, to educate and guide them to make healthier choices.

Interactive and educational workshops for families focussed on guiding them how to reduce fat, sugar and salt levels in their diets. In conjunction with the workshops, a voucher incentive was offered to families to give them the opportunity to try a healthier takeaway meal from their favourite takeaway. These vouchers can only be spent in businesses that have an Eat Well Wirral award (below); this additional income stream supports the business to provide healthier options.

Using the latest National Child Measurement Programme data, 10 primary schools with the highest percentage of child obesity across the borough will be chosen; engaging with the schools gives a direct route to deliver the intervention to families.

[Eat Well Wirral](#)

In March 2015 Environmental Health launched an award to recognise businesses that already offer healthy options, and support others to enable them to offer healthy choices. Eat Well Wirral aims to encourage and support businesses to make very small and easy changes to the way they prepare and cook some foods, the types of ingredients they use and choices they offer to customers in order to make the food they serve healthier.

The Award scheme is open to takeaway businesses only at this stage, e.g. fish and chip shops, Pizza/Kebab houses, Sandwich bars, Chinese and Indian/Bangladeshi takeaways. The award is split into three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Bronze will be awarded to businesses that have made very simple changes such as slightly reducing the salt they use whereas Silver and Gold requires further changes to methods or ingredients. There is a grant available to support businesses in making these changes; successful businesses will be included on the council website, receive a sticker and certificate as well as some other practical 'freebies'.

To date approximately 30 businesses have achieved an Eatwell Wirral award with a further 10 working towards an award.

What is this telling us?

Both local and national statistics and information have demonstrated that there is a reduction in infectious diseases, however the cost and burden associated with it remains high. Renewed strategies are required to further reduce the burden of food borne illness.

The data suggests that there has been a decrease in the number of reported cases of infectious diseases, furthermore when reviewing this data there is no correlation between levels of food poisoning and socio-demographics

It is clear that further measures can be implemented in order to reduce the levels of food borne illness.

It is important, through the food hygiene inspection program that food businesses are encouraged to follow all recommended good practice, particularly in relation to the E Coli guidance. The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme can assist in supporting this effort, by ensuring that businesses are aiming to improve their food hygiene rating.

The partnership working of Environmental Health with the Public Health teams can help to reduce obesity, through the promotion of the Eat Well Wirral and Takeaway for a Change projects.

Groups most at risk

Foodborne illness

Foodborne illnesses can cause significant problems for all in the community; however infants, young children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with an underlying illness are particularly vulnerable.

Food poisoning is wide reaching so in terms of food poisoning levels no correlation has been made with regards to its prevalence and socio-demographic or socially disadvantaged groups.

Through investigations from Environmental Health foodborne illness can emanate from those who have travelled abroad to those who have not adopted satisfactory hygiene practices at home.

Key inequalities

There are a high density of food businesses situated in deprived areas of the Wirral that offer primarily unhealthy meal choices; there is well documented correlation between lower socio economic areas and the constituents who rely on the convenience of fast food for the majority of their families meals (Burgoine, 2014).

Throughout the Takeaway for a Change project it was established that 98% of participants consume takeaway food, at least once a week and 45% reporting twice a week or more.

Furthermore the project team were made aware that many children attended school on an empty stomach and for some, their mid-day meal was likely to be the only one of the day (Pulford, 2015).

What are we doing and why?

Current activity and services

Food Safety

The Environmental Health Food Safety has responsibility for a wide variety of activities, whilst not an exhaustive list includes; undertaking food hygiene inspections, investigating food complaints, responding to national food hazard warnings, providing advice to new and existing businesses, investigation of foodborne illnesses, enforcing smoke-free legislation and co-ordinating and delivering in house projects.

[The Food Law Code of Practice \(England\) \(the code\)](#) issued under section 40 of the [Food Safety Act 1990 \(the Act\)](#) details matters concerning the execution and enforcement of the Act and [regulations](#) made under it.

The Environmental Health service has responsibility for food hygiene enforcement, and the provision of advice and support in relation to all food safety issues both internal and external to the Council.

Food hygiene inspections are part of the regime for ensuring that food meets the requirements of food hygiene and safety law, including microbiological quality; is free from pathogenic micro-organisms, and is safe for human consumption.

Wirral's Environmental Health Division has a food hygiene inspection programme that includes all the businesses for which they as a Food Authority have food hygiene responsibility. The programme is based on a risk based rating system set out by the code, which ensures that the businesses with the potential to cause the most problems are visited the most frequently.

In addition to the inspection regime and where possible food safety officers undertake educational and advisory visits to premises in order to ensure that food business operators are aware of their statutory obligations. In line with the channel shifting principles adopted by the authority, officers make every effort to signpost business and members of the public effectively and share information electronically in order to maximise the effectiveness of subsequent visits.

By supporting and advising over 2,500 both new and existing businesses in the Borough the Environmental Health staff are at the front line of business engagement. Officers executing all aspects of their work will actively support existing and encourage new and prospective businesses. The guidance and advice given will include explaining the most cost effective ways of complying with legislation, assessing plans and explaining new legislation etc.

By taking enforcement against persistent offenders a competitive level playing field is achieved meaning businesses want to invest in the Borough. Tourism which is largely centred on the food industry is safeguarded and publicly viewable hygiene ratings continue to increase.

By reducing the incidence of food borne illness through legislative compliance and epidemiological interventions Wirral residents and visitors ultimately lead healthier and less disease prone lives – coupled with the services ground breaking wider public health interventions, the service will greatly contribute to the lives of Wirral residents and visitors.

All of this work is undertaken in accordance with the Food Safety Act 1990 as amended, The General Food Regulations 2004, The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and any orders or regulations made thereunder or regulations having effect by virtue of the European Communities Act 1972 and all relevant Codes of Practice.

Foodborne Illness

Environmental Health in liaison with Public Health England and the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control work to investigate and control both sporadic cases and outbreaks of food related illnesses.

Public Health England notifies Environmental Health staff of every case of food related illness and any suspected outbreaks. Investigations are then undertaken in order to attempt to identify the source of the illness, prevent further spread of illness, raise awareness of hygiene issues and carry out food hygiene visits or any necessary enforcement action.

For consistency with other Local Authorities, the investigation is undertaken using a standard detailed questionnaire. Officers also offer advice to those involved to help prevent the spread of infections including the provision of information leaflets.

In extreme cases officers may apply to the magistrates court to obtain a court order to exclude ill persons from work or education settings where they pose a risk to the public at large (for example if they work as a food handler whilst infectious).

Two officers from the service act as Infectious Disease Co-ordinators for the Authority and collate all the information gathered liaising where necessary with other relevant organisations such as the Public Health England, Laboratories and other Local Authorities.

At approximately six monthly intervals meetings are arranged between the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), Infection Control Nurses and Environmental Health staff. Local and national infectious disease trends and initiatives are discussed and operating procedures and working practices reviewed to ensure our partnership working is as effective as possible.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards Division sit separately to Environmental Health but under the same senior manager has responsibility for Food Standards as defined in the Code of Practice to the Food Safety Act 1990. In practice this covers:

- a) Food standards inspections and provision of advice to local business.
- b) Sampling and analysis of food for chemical contamination, improper use of additives (taking into account hygiene or public health implications of contamination) and ensuring compliance with compositional criteria.
- c) Investigation of cases of compositional offences, adulteration, misleading claims and food hazard warnings.

The Trading Standards Division is also responsible for the enforcement of a wide range of legislation relating to Weights and Measures, Safety and Fair Trading, which may apply to food premises.

Where appropriate, and subject to practical considerations, the Trading Standards Division will also carry out metrology, safety or fair trading inspections alongside food standards inspections. In particular small food retailers will receive specific advice about preventing the sale of alcohol or tobacco to under eighteen's.

The Trading Standards Division also has responsibility for feed and food standards enforcement.

What are the challenges?

Key gaps in knowledge and services

Both budgetary and time constraints are significant barriers in the enforcement of food safety legislation in Wirral. Whilst Environmental Health achieve 100% category A-C inspections, it is acknowledged that a lesser number Category D premises are inspected. By not inspecting category D premises it is recognised that Wirral Council is in breach of the FSA framework agreement, however with insufficient resources to inspect all premises the above risk based approach will be adopted.

Whilst this may attract attention from the Food Standards Agency firstly in the form of an audit and secondly through sanctions imposed upon us, many local authorities are adopting a similar practice.

Since the change in the risk based scoring for food businesses the number of Category C premises has decreased as these have now dropped into the 'lower risk' Category D, thus increasing further the number of Category D premises which may require inspection.

What is coming on the horizon?

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

The FHRS was launched in late 2010 and local authority uptake following that progressed rapidly such that the scheme is now well bedded in. All but one authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is now operating the scheme and information is available on the [FSA website](#) on over 440,000 food businesses.

The FHRS was put on a statutory footing in Wales in November 2013 to provide for mandatory display of FHRS ratings at food premises. Northern Ireland is set to follow suit with draft legislation introducing mandatory display currently being considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the FSA strategy for 2015 to 2020 highlights that pressing the case to extend this to England is a priority.

What does the research suggest as further actions?

Foodborne Illness

Work is continuing to reduce foodborne disease in the UK, through the work of the [Food Standards Agency \(FSA\)](#) the science and evidence base on the control of foodborne illnesses has been developed and increased. The intervention strategies will continue in pursuit of reducing foodborne illnesses and its sources across the food chain. The FSA will use its evidence base to establish priority organisms, which will include the development of Risk Management Programmes aimed at reducing the levels and severity of disease caused by those pathogens. Locally this may include refreshed food safety focussed, as seen by the new E Coli guidance which food safety officers must have regard to.

Both nationally and locally officers will work to raise awareness of food safety, through inspections, promotion of current guidance, food hygiene training and training/advice visits.

Again, nationally and locally Local Authorities will continue to monitor the levels of foodborne illness and locally take any necessary action to investigate incidents.

Food Hygiene and Safety

As discussed in the previous section if the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is altered to make the displaying of food hygiene scores mandatory then further action will be required to enforce this. Furthermore it would be anticipated that if it becomes mandatory for food businesses to display their food hygiene rating, then businesses may be more inclined to request food hygiene revisits in order to improve their food hygiene score, this will place certain demands on Environmental Health to ensure that it operates to the associated code of practice for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) \(2015a\)](#) have highlighted that further work is required to ensure adequate food systems and infrastructures are in place e.g. laboratories to respond to and manage food safety risks along the food chain, promote multi agency working between public health, animal health and agriculture. The WHO also suggests that food safety is integrated into broader food policies and programmes for example nutrition and food security policies.

WHO highlights the local duties and expectations on food handlers including ensuring that food handlers and consumers become familiar with common food hazards, handle and prepare food safely, operating to current food safety guidance

Health

During the [Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\), \(2014\)](#) a number of recommendations were made in order to improve health and protect the vulnerable, including school feeding programmes, implementing nutritional education and information interventions based on national dietary guidelines.

Key content

Links

Food Standards Agency <http://www.food.gov.uk/>

Local authority enforcement data and LAEMS

<https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems>

Food Standards Agency – Safer Food Better Business Advice

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/sfbb>

NHS Choices – Food Poisoning information

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Food-poisoning/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Wirral Council- Food Hygiene website

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/business/licenses-and-permits/business-and-street-trading/food-business-registration#wgSM-0>

Relevant and related National and local strategies

Legislation

The Food Safety Act 1990: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/16/contents>

Regulation EC 852/2004:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:139:0001:0054:en:PDF>

Food Law Code of Practice <https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/codes-of-practice/food-law-code-of-practice-2015>

National Strategies and Schemes

Foodborne Disease Strategy 2010-15

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/fds2015.pdf>

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme: <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/>

References

Burgoine, T., Forouhi, N. Griffin, S., Wareham, N. and Monsivais, P. (2014) Associations between exposure to takeaway food outlets, takeaway food consumption, and body weight in Cambridgeshire, UK: population based, cross sectional study. *British Medical Journal*. [Online] 348. Available from <http://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g1464>

Food Standards Agency (2011) Food - Foodborne Disease Strategy 2010-15 An FSA Programme For The Reduction Of Foodborne Disease In The UK. Available from <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/fds2015.pdf>

Food Standards Agency (2015). FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME – UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS. Available from: <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa150306.pdf>

Pulford, N (2015) Takeaway for a Change - A pilot project to encourage behavioural change within families by raising awareness of and improving attitudes towards healthier options available at local fast food outlets. Available from http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/Downloads/Download%20for%20a%20Change%20submitted%20report%20%20%20%20%2015.pdf

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (2014). Second International Conference on Nutrition Conference Outcome Document. Framework for Action. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

World Health Organisation (2015a) Fact sheet N° 399 Food safety <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/>

World Health Organisation (2015b) WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases. Available from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/199350/1/9789241565165_eng.pdf?ua=1

Contact details

For further details please contact:

- Ian Doig, Environmental Health Team Leader, Wirral Council at iandoig@wirral.gov.uk
- John Highton, JSNA Programme Lead at johnhighton@wirral.gov.uk

To subscribe to Wirral Intelligence Service Bulletin

- To subscribe to the Bulletin [complete this form](#)

To give us feedback

- Let us know your views or if you need to find out more about a particular topic or subject then go to <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/about-us/contact-us/>