

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2016/17



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council

# **CONTENTS**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Single Integrated Plan, Corporate Plan, Aims and Priorities
- 1.2 Food Service Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Links to Single Integrated and Corporate Plans.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Profile of the Local Authority
- 2.2 Organisational Structure
- 2.3 Scope of the Food Service
- 2.4 Links to Other Services
- 2.5 Demands on the Food Service
- 2.6 Enforcement Policy

## **3. Service Delivery**

- 3.1 Food Hygiene and Food Standards Interventions
- 3.2 Food Complaints
- 3.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme
- 3.4 Advice to Business
- 3.5 Food Sampling
- 3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease
- 3.7 Food Safety Incidents
- 3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations
- 3.9 Food Safety Promotion

## **4. Resources**

- 4.1 Financial Allocation
- 4.2 Staffing Allocation
- 4.3 Staff Development Plan

## **5. Quality Assessment**

## **6. Review**

- 6.1 Review against the Service Plan
- 6.2 Identification of variances.
- 6.3 Areas of improvement

## **7. Appendices**

- 1 Organisational structure of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- 2 Organisational structure of Environmental Health Department
- 3 Sampling plan
- 4 Shopping basket 13 (amended)
- 5 Notification disease investigation procedure

## 1. Introduction

This service delivery plan describes the Food Service provided by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

The plan has been produced in accordance with guidance issued to Local Authorities by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the Framework Agreement. The plan is intended to inform residents and the business community about the arrangements MTCBC has in place to regulate and improve both food safety and food standards within the Borough.

In terms of food law enforcement the plan is an important tool for ensuring that national and local priorities are addressed and delivered within the Borough.

### 1.1 Single Integrated Plan, Corporate Plan Aims and Priorities

#### The Single Integrated Plan (SIP) 2014/17

The SIP signalled a new approach to partnership working in Merthyr Tydfil. It replaced the four previous plans:

- The Community Plan
- The Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- The Children and Young People's Plan
- The Community Safety Plan.

The SIP was developed using a robust evidence base in the form of a Unified Needs Assessment. A series of engagement events were also held with key partners and stakeholders, including individual events with the Third Sector, children, young people and Councillors.

The Local Service Board brings together our public service leaders and is at the heart of multi-agency working. It is responsible for leading and overseeing the delivery of the SIP. The Plan identifies clear outcomes we want to achieve that will have a positive impact for people. It is reviewed annually.

#### The Corporate Plan 2013-17

Our priority areas and our ambition represent local need and the key projects represent the capacity of the council to address them. The Corporate Plan also correlates and supports the vision and priority outcomes identified for Merthyr Tydfil's communities within the Local Service Board's [Single Integrated Plan](#).

The Corporate Plan does not cover all services delivered by the council. The council has a statutory obligation to provide a whole range of services; however, this plan focuses on identified priority areas.

#### Vision

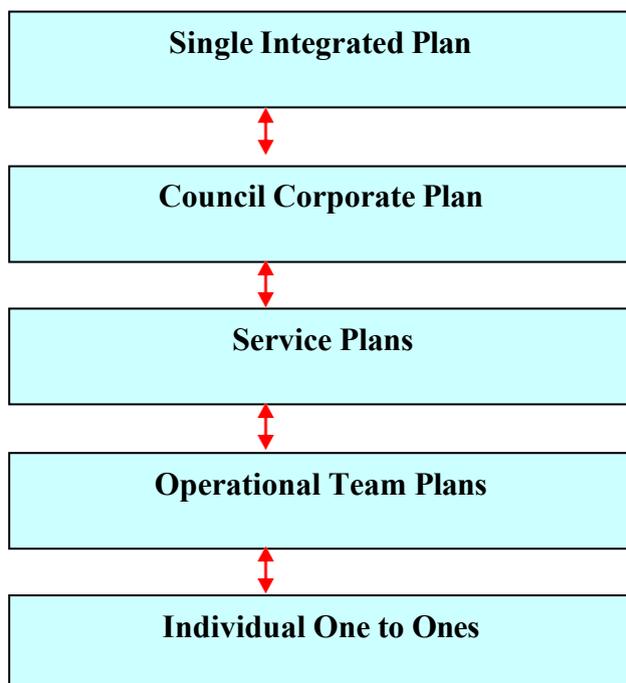
To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil's position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys, and be a place to be proud of where:

- People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions
- People live, work, have a safe, healthy and fulfilled life

- People visit, enjoy and return

## Priority Outcomes

- People in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills to maximise their potential.
- People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy.
- People, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil, are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life.
- People enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable place in which to live, work, play and visit.



## 1.2 Food Service Aims and Objectives

It is the aim of the Council to ensure the safety of the food chain in the Borough so that all food, which is supplied for human consumption that is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed is safe to eat.

In order to achieve this aim, we will:-

- Comply with “The Standard” outlined in the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement.
- Undertake food hygiene and food standards interventions in food premises within the Borough having regard to the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice (Wales).
- Investigate complaints about food and food premises.
- Develop home, originating and primary authority partnerships with local businesses.

- Respond to all enquiries for service within a target time of 3 working days.
- Take appropriate enforcement action in accordance with our Compliance and Enforcement Policy against businesses, or individuals, who break Food Laws.
- Undertake a food sampling programme to monitor the microbiological quality of ready to eat food either manufactured or sold within the Borough on the basis of risk and in conjunction with regional and national initiatives.
- Undertake food standards surveillance programme to ensure that food is:
  - of acceptable nature, substance and quality;
  - is not potentially injurious to the consumer's health or safety;
  - is not falsely described or labelled so as to mislead the consumer;
- Respond promptly and appropriately to all food alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency. Liaise with other food authorities and professional bodies to ensure consistency of food enforcement.
- Ensure that all staff involved in food law enforcement are properly qualified and competent to undertake their duties.
- To work in collaboration with other Local Authorities and Organisations to maximise public health outcomes and financial efficiencies.

### **1.3 Links to Single Integrated and Corporate Plan**

The Environmental Health Departments Public Health team who are tasked with delivering the front line food safety service, has not been formally identified as having a specific role in achieving the priority outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan or Single Integrated Plan. However the services do have an important contribution to make in delivering of the overall vision and the following priority outcomes.

#### **People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy:**

- Providing advice and support to new businesses thereby encouraging them to locate within the Borough, and allow them to develop in the initial stages without making costly mistakes.
- Commenting on planning applications to ensure new businesses comply with the law from the outset.
- Provide advice and support to existing businesses as they expand their product ranges and distribution network.
- Education of food business operators as part of inspections, through formal seminars and coaching sessions.
- Provision of free, expert advice through the Local Authority website, leaflets and in person.
- Encouraging food businesses to go beyond the legal minimum, adopt best practice and obtain the best possible scores under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Ensuring a level playing field for food businesses operators through the provision of advice and consistency of enforcement.

## **People, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life:**

- Working with other agencies to promote food safety to the public, young and old, through initiatives such as National Food Safety Week.
- Ensuring water supplies are sound and wholesome.
- Implementation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme to facilitate consumer choice
- Publication of information on the Councils website and via social media.
- Talks to community groups on food safety issues
- Investigation of cases of food poisoning and provision of advice to cases and contacts.
- Investigating complaints about food or food premises.
- Taking enforcement action to remove risks to public health.
- Promotion of healthy eating

## **People enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable place in which to live, work, play and visit:**

- Improve standards of food hygiene and cleanliness in food premises thereby contributing to a positive perception of the Borough as a whole. Improved standards will also mean more customers thereby enhancing the local economy.
- As the Authority strives to increase leisure opportunities, the public health team has a role to ensure residents and visitors to the Borough can enjoy these facilities without the fear of contracting food poisoning or other infectious diseases.
- Ensure businesses dispose of food waste responsibly e.g. oils, fats grease, and animal by products.
- Ensure responsible storage of waste by food businesses to prevent pest infestations.
- Carry out routine interventions in food businesses to ensure they meet the minimum legal standards for food hygiene and standards.
- Undertaking microbiological and food standards (the latter dependent on external funding) sampling surveys of foodstuffs produced or sold within the Borough and investigating where samples are found to be unsatisfactory.
- Working closely with our partners to identify and resolve cross border food safety risks.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Profile of the Local Authority**

Merthyr Tydfil is situated in the Heads of the Valleys Region and is the smallest local authority in Wales with an area of around 11,100 hectares. Approximately one fifth of the County Borough lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north, leaving some 8,668 hectares of land under the planning control of the County Borough Council. The County Borough's other neighbouring authorities are Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to the west and Caerphilly County Borough Council to the east and south.

Merthyr Tydfil has a population of approximately 59,065 of which, approximately 44,000 reside in the main town of Merthyr Tydfil which functions as the main commercial, retail and service centre of the County Borough and the Heads of the Valleys Region. As such, the main town of Merthyr Tydfil contains administrative headquarters (e.g. the County Borough Council), the primary shopping areas, the majority of employment opportunities, a hospital, and many other higher order services and facilities which serve surrounding settlements. The remainder of the population is distributed amongst eight interdependent settlements situated further south along the Taff and Taff Bargoed river valleys. These settlements contain more limited job opportunities and a range of lower order services and facilities serving local needs.

Merthyr Tydfil fulfils a key strategic role at the centre of the Heads of the Valleys region, benefiting from high levels of accessibility through its location at the intersection of the A470 (T) and A465 (T) strategic transport corridors in the north, and the A470 (T) and A472 strategic transport corridors in the south. The County Borough lies just 25 minutes north of Cardiff and the M4 corridor. Currently 1,499,5471 people and 679,4002 jobs are within the South East Wales Region.

## 2.2 Organisational Structure

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is composed of 33 Councillors who are elected every 4 years as democratic representatives to the constituents in each of the eleven wards.

Labour currently hold the political majority with 25 members. The remaining seats are taken by the Independent Group (7), Merthyr Independent (1). These elected Councillors are nominated into the decision making process which operates under a Cabinet system with individual portfolios. All decisions made by the Cabinet are subject to full Council approval and scrutiny review.

As a result of financial pressures the Local Authority is undertaking a programme of restructuring. A diagram showing the Local Authority's current organisational structure is attached at Appendix 1.

The Council is divided into 2 directorates: -

- i. People and Performance.
- ii. Place and Transformation.

The Environmental Health Service currently sits within Public Protection and Housing Division within the Place and Transformation Directorate. A chart showing the departmental structure is contained at Appendix 2.

The food safety service is delivered by a team of 5 officers made up of 2 full time, 2 part-time Environmental Health Officers and 1 Occupational Health Technical Officer who are also responsible for the enforcement of Health & Safety laws.

The Environmental Health Public Health Team is directly responsible to the Environmental Health Manager who acts as the lead officer for food safety and is also responsible for the day to day running of all Environmental Health functions. An Environmental Health Officer from the food safety team has been nominated to act as the lead for food safety in the Environmental Health Managers absence.

Officers are authorised under the Council's Constitution to a level, which is commensurate with their qualifications and experience in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice.

## 2.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Councils Public Health Team undertakes a wide range of activities in order to provide a comprehensive service to its customers combining enforcement, educational and advisory elements. The team will: -

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<sup>1</sup> 2014 Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Source: ONS annual population survey [Oct 2014-Sep 2015] Note: numbers are for those aged 16 and over, % are for those aged 16-64

- Carry out food hygiene/standards interventions in food premises within the Borough.
- Implement microbiological and standards food sampling programmes.
- Investigate complaints about food purchased within the Borough, and liaise with the Originating, Home or Primary Authority where food is manufactured outside the Borough. We will request EHO colleagues in other areas to visit premises that may be the source of a problem identified in Merthyr Tydfil where necessary.
- Maintain a register of food premises.
- Issue approvals to relevant businesses.
- Investigate actual and alleged cases of food and water-borne illnesses.
- React promptly and appropriately to food alerts and incidents.
- Provide advice to business and the wider community on food / infectious disease matters.
- Implement the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Undertake special projects, surveys etc. as the need arises and when resources permit.
- Examining and responding to planning and licensing applications in relation to food establishments.
- Provision of education, training and advice

## 2.4 Links to Other Services

### Specialist Services

The County Borough has appointed Mr Alistair Low of Alastair Low, B.Sc.(Hons), M.Sc., M.Chem.A., C.Chem Minton, Treharne & Davies (MTD).Merton House, Croescadarn Close, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8HF to act as Public Analyst to the Authority, as required by Section 27 of the Food Safety Act 1990. There is a charge to the Local Authority for the use of this service.

The Authority also has an agreement with the Public Health Wales who provide a microbiological analysis and an advice service, which is based at the Microbiology Department, Llandough Hospital, Penlan Road, Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan. The service is subject to a formal Service Level Agreement (SLA) that determines the funding allocated to the LA and the types of samples that can be submitted as a part of that allocation.

The Local Authority is a member of Campden BRI based in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire who provides advice on various specialist food matters, as necessary. Analytical services are also available and there is a charge for each sample submitted.

## 2.5 Demands on the Food Service

a) The Public:

We serve 3 'types' of customer:

- The 59,065 residents of the Borough,
- An unknown number of consumers who live outside the Borough but who shop/eat in the Borough,
- An unknown number of consumers who live outside of the Borough but who have purchased food that is manufactured at premises located within the Borough.

b) Businesses:

At 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the Borough had a total of food premises registered on its database. All of the businesses are subject to a programme of risk-based interventions determined in accordance with by the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice (Wales).

Tables 1 and 2 below provide a profile of the food premises within the Borough and how these have changed over a 3 year period.

<b>TABLE 1</b>			
<b>PROFILE OF FOOD PREMISES BY TYPE</b>			
<b>TYPE OF PREMISES</b>	<b>Number of Premises</b>	<b>Number of Premises</b>	<b>Number of Premises</b>
	<b>2014/2015</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Distributors	10	9	9
Manufacturers/Packers	10	3	5
Manufacturer selling by retail	0	0	0
Producers	39	38	36
Restaurants	21	20	26
Retailers	36	34	33
Slaughterhouses	1	1	1
Supermarket/hypermarket	6	7	8
Small retailers	72	74	71
Retailers others	16	20	21
Restaurant/café/canteen	52	60	26
Hostel/guest house	9	9	11
Pub/club	85	82	79
Take-a-way	52	54	55
Caring establishment	65	58	60
School/college	35	36	35
Mobile food unit	35	31	26
Restaurant/caterer – others	40	38	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>575</b>

**Approved Premises**

The Authority currently has one approved premise which is a stand-alone cold store.

**TABLE 2**

**PROFILE OF FOOD PREMISES BY FOOD HYGIENE RISK RATING**

CATEGORY	Number of Premises	Number of Premises	Number of Premises
	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/17
Risk Rating A	7	1	5
Risk Rating B	50	34	32
Risk Rating C	257	265	257
Risk Rating D	67	54	50
Risk Rating E	138	164	181
Not categorised	0	0	0
Unrated (inc new premises)	64	55	57
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>582</b>

The tables show that the profile of the premises within the Borough over the last 3 years.

**Service delivery points**

The service operates out of one conveniently located central point i.e. the Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil. The Civic Centre is accessible to our customers by road, rail and bus services. Normal office hours are 8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am – 4.30pm on Friday.

**Out of Hours Service**

The service primarily operates office hours from Monday to Friday. However, increasingly businesses are open outside these hours and officers regularly carry out routine inspections during evenings and weekends.

There is currently no formal out of hour's emergency service although informal arrangements have allowed the service to respond to emergency situations in the past with officers attending on a good-will basis. The service has entered into an arrangement with neighbouring Rhondda Cynon Taff Council to provide reciprocal cover if officers are unavailable from either authority during an out of hours emergency situation.

**Other demands on the service**

**Financial** - The continuing financial difficulties faced by all local authorities has required implementation of remedial measures to offset budgetary deficits. This has had an impact on the department over the last few years by the deletion of The Principal Environmental Health Officers and Head of Public Health posts. Routine overtime payments have been removed impacting on the capacity of the service. Furthermore efficiency savings which have been realised in the Trading Standards Department resulting in the food standards function being transferred to the Environmental Health Service with no additional resource. In addition there is no longer a budget for food standards sampling since being accepted as an efficiency saving. Sampling for food standards is therefore dependent on bids for funding to the Food Standards

Agency. We have in previous years been successful in securing funds from the Food Standards Agency to undertake Food Standards sampling.

**Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013** – this legislation became law in November 2013. It requires all relevant food businesses to display their food hygiene rating sticker and also requires all local authorities in Wales to implement the Act. In order to receive a rating a business must receive an inspection.

An additional demand on the service is the increase in the number of inspections as businesses are able to apply for a re-rating under the Scheme. The department is also responsible for policing the scheme so that its credibility is maintained.

The scheme is being extended in November 2016 to include regulation of promotional material such as takeaway menus and flyers which will place an additional burden on the department.

**Transfer of Food Standards function to Environmental Health-** In April 2014 a transitional period commenced whereby responsibility for food standards enforcement was transferred from the Trading Standards Service to the Environmental Health Service. No increase in resources has been made available to the Environmental Health Department to carry out this additional function.

This has put an additional strain on capacity and has also necessitated additional training for officers. This continues to be an ongoing issue.

**Implementation of new Tascomi information management system-** The department is participating in the development of and implementation of the Public Protection Cymru Software Solution. The department is moving from using M3 as their information management system to Tascomi which is due to go live on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The authority is one of 5 Local Authorities (Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Wrexham, Denbighshire and Merthyr Tydfil) who are early adopters of the new public protection software. The project is aiming to have a single consistent operating platform for Public Protection Services which will provide greater service resilience, support agile/flexible working and will improve consistency in service delivery, whilst offering better opportunities to stakeholders in engaging with and accessing services. This initiative will not undermine the sovereignty of Merthyr Tydfil Council as a responsible regulatory authority. In the short term however there are implications for officer time spent on developing and implementing the new system.

## **2.6 Compliance and Enforcement Policy**

The Authority has formally adopted a Compliance and Enforcement Policy. The Policy adopted reflects the principles of proportionality, targeting, consistency, transparency and accountability. The policy sets out our current approach to law enforcement and is based upon the principles espoused by, the Regulators Code and has regard to current government guidance. The policy is available on the Authority's website and also in hard copy from the Environmental Health Department, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil.

## **3. Service Delivery**

### **3.1 Food Hygiene/Standards Interventions**

The Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) allows a flexible approach to food law enforcement whereby Local Authorities can use a range of interventions to monitor, support and increase business compliance. It is the policy of Merthyr Tydfil's Food Service to ensure that all food

businesses within the Borough receive interventions in accordance with The Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) and Practice Guidance.

## **Food Hygiene**

Interventions consist of official and non-official controls:

### **Official Controls**

- Inspections
- Monitoring
- Surveillance
- Verification
- Audit
- Sampling where analysis is to be carried out by an official laboratory

### **Non-Official Controls**

- Education, advice and coaching
- Information and intelligence gathering (including sampling where the analysis or examination is not to be carried out by an official laboratory).

Interventions will be applied on a risk-based approach such that more intensive regulation can be directed at those food businesses that present the greatest risk to public health.

The Code of Practice requires that the highest risk rated premises be subject to a full or part inspection, or audit. The service is committed to carrying out full inspections in our highest risk premises categorised as A or B rated at intervals specified in the Code.

There is an opportunity for the service to alternate between one or more interventions comprising official controls in category C premises if the premise is deemed to be broadly compliant, rather than carrying out a full inspection, partial inspection or audit. Our experience has shown us that in the current economic climate businesses are increasingly willing to cut corners or branch out into new markets or processes to make ends meet. We believe that shortfalls in food hygiene are more likely to be identified as a result of a thorough inspection and we will continue to use a full, partial inspection or audit as our chosen method of intervention in these premises. Conducting full, partial inspections or audits of Category C businesses also means that the interval between award of a food hygiene rating will not be more than 18 months. Leaving long periods between re ratings has the potential to undermine the Scheme.

Category D premises can be subject to interventions, which alternate between interventions that are official and non-official controls. The team currently has a policy of carrying out official controls in D rated businesses.

Low risk premises in category E will continue to be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy which will mean: -

- i. We will carry out an inspection when they are subject of a complaint.
- ii. When we become aware of a significant change in the nature of the business, which is likely to alter the risk rating e.g. through planning applications, local knowledge, requests for advice from the proprietor etc. we will carry out an inspection.
- iii. We will identify and target specific groups of premises for food safety initiatives.

- iv. We will make contact with all low risk premises at least once every 3 years to ascertain their status.

In practice contact with low risk premises will continue to be achieved by the administration of a simple checklist during a site visit or telephone call from a technical officer. The officer will also ensure that the food business operator completes a new food premises registration form at every visit so that the details held on the M3 database can be updated as necessary. Where changes are identified which will potentially alter the risk rating of a premises the business will be subject to an inspection.

**Table 3 Total Food Premises Breakdown for 2012-2017**

Risk Category	Frequency of intervention	No. of high risk Interventions Due				
		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
A	6 months	11	2	7	1	5
B	12 months	67	50	50	34	32
C	18 months	137	134	179	165	168
High Risk total		215	186	236	200	205
Achievement (FSA data)		100%	100%	100%	100%	

A summary of the planned inspection workload at the beginning of the year is contained in the table below.

**Table 4 Summary of Work Programme for 20016/17 based on risk, inspection due dates and previous years workload**

Risk Category	No of visits Planned	Type of Visit
A	5	Full inspection
B	32	Full inspection
C	168	Full inspection
D	30	Official intervention
E	60	Alternative Strategy
New premises	84 (approx. based on last years figures)	
Revisits to all categories	80 (approx. based on last years figures)	Revisit to check compliance
Rescores requested under the FHRS	10 (approx. based on last years figures)	Full inspection
<b>Total no of planned visits</b>	<b>469</b>	

## Food Standards

Trading Standards have traditionally enforced food standards legislation including composition, labelling claims, allergens, chemical contamination, compositional standards, additives genetically modified ingredients and foods, and articles that come into contact with food such as plastics. However the function has largely been transferred to the Environmental Health Service.

Primary producers are the initial growers and manufacturers of food commodities and must register their business. These businesses will continue to remain the responsibility of the Trading Standards Service.

Over the last 18 months the service has migrated risk ratings for food standards from LACORS risk assessment model to the Food Law Code of Practice risk rating scheme. This double risk rating is necessary because the two enforcement sections look at different aspects of food safety and good compliance in area does not necessarily imply good compliance in another. The LACORS risk assessment model also covers a whole raft of non-food related functions e.g. under age sales, weights and measures etc. which will continue to be enforced by Trading Standards.

The frequency of food standards interventions will in the majority of cases follow the food hygiene rating which has been given as this will usually be more frequent than a scheduled standards inspection. This will ensure that only one visit is undertaken where hygiene and standards inspections are undertaken at the same time. Our customer survey results show that businesses value enforcement visits and want coordination of Council functions to reduce the burden on their business.

**Table 6 Number of Food Standards Interventions Due 2016/17**

Category	Inspection Frequency	Number of Inspection Due 2016/17
A High risk	Once every year	1
B Medium risk	Once every 2 years	19
C Low risk	Once every 5 years	3
TOTAL		23

## **New Businesses**

The service will continue to proactively identify new businesses by a variety of methods i.e. routine arrangements with other Local Authority departments such as Planning, Business Rates and Trading Standards. Routine surveillance of local publications, yellow pages, websites etc. will continue to be conducted by the Business Support Unit, as well as local intelligence. All new businesses are recorded on the new premises and M3 databases. New food business operators are sent a food premises registration form and food safety enforcement questionnaire as a matter of course.

It is impossible to predict how many new businesses will open but our experience over the last 2-3 years is that there has been a significant increase in the turnover of businesses which has resulted in a strain on resources. Last year a total of 84 new businesses were identified.

It is also worth noting that many of the new business setting up go straight in at the top of the food hygiene risk ratings and also fail within their first year of trading. Mobile premises continue to present a particular problem, a lot of investment made in these businesses by the service but this is not reflected in the end of year statistics as many fail to remain in business for more than a few months.

In addition the Food Law Practice Guidance (Wales) stipulates that all new food businesses should receive an inspection within 28 days of opening or registering. With a high turnover of premises this has been and continues to be a challenge to achieve. The Food Law Practice Guidance states that “where the establishment is believed to be undertaking high risk food activities the Authority should undertake an initial inspection within 28 days of commencement of operations”. The service will continue to prioritise inspections of new businesses on the basis of the information provided on the food premises registration form, food safety enforcement

questionnaire and/or local knowledge, with those that potentially pose the greatest risk being inspected first.

## Revisits

We firmly believe that revisits are an essential part of any effective intervention programme. They ensure that any shortfalls identified during an initial intervention are resolved thereby protecting public health.

- **Food Hygiene-** The service has adopted a policy in relation to revisits as a minimum all businesses that are found not to be broadly compliant on receiving an intervention will be revisited. The timing of the revisit is at the discretion of the inspecting officer and will be dependent on the nature of the food safety contraventions identified. Where necessary further enforcement visits, coupled with legal action in some cases, may be undertaken. It is difficult to give an exact number of revisits but historical data allows us to predict that approximately 80 food hygiene revisits will be required.
- **Food Standards-** Where significant breaches of food standards legislation are identified revisits and follow up enforcement action will be taken. Traditionally very few revisits have been required and breaches have primarily involved the sale of foreign cans and foodstuffs offered for sale past their use by date.

## Imported Food Control

Although Merthyr Tydfil is an inland LA the service still has an important role to play in monitoring food imports to ensure they meet food safety requirements.

During the inspection of food premises, officers consider the origin of imported foods. Any indications that food may not have been subject to correct import controls are investigated and, where necessary, the food is removed from the food chain.

## Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The service is committed to the Food Hygiene Risk-rating Scheme (FHRS) which aims to promote consumer choice. The service began uploading risk-rating scores for individual premises onto the FSA food ratings website in October 2010. . The display of ratings became compulsory in Wales from November 2013. The number of appeals against the rating awarded has been low with only one being received in 2015/16. The scheme has resulted in an increased workload as a result of requests for re ratings and also policing the scheme to ensure ratings are correctly displayed. Currently monies received from fixed penalties for enforcing the scheme are repaid to Welsh Government. .

## Out of Hours Inspections

Officers will continue to inspect premises out of normal working hours wherever this is deemed necessary.

## 3.2 Food Complaints

Investigation of food complaints is an important part of the Environmental Health Food Service. It is the policy of the service to investigate every food complaint brought to its attention, in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales).

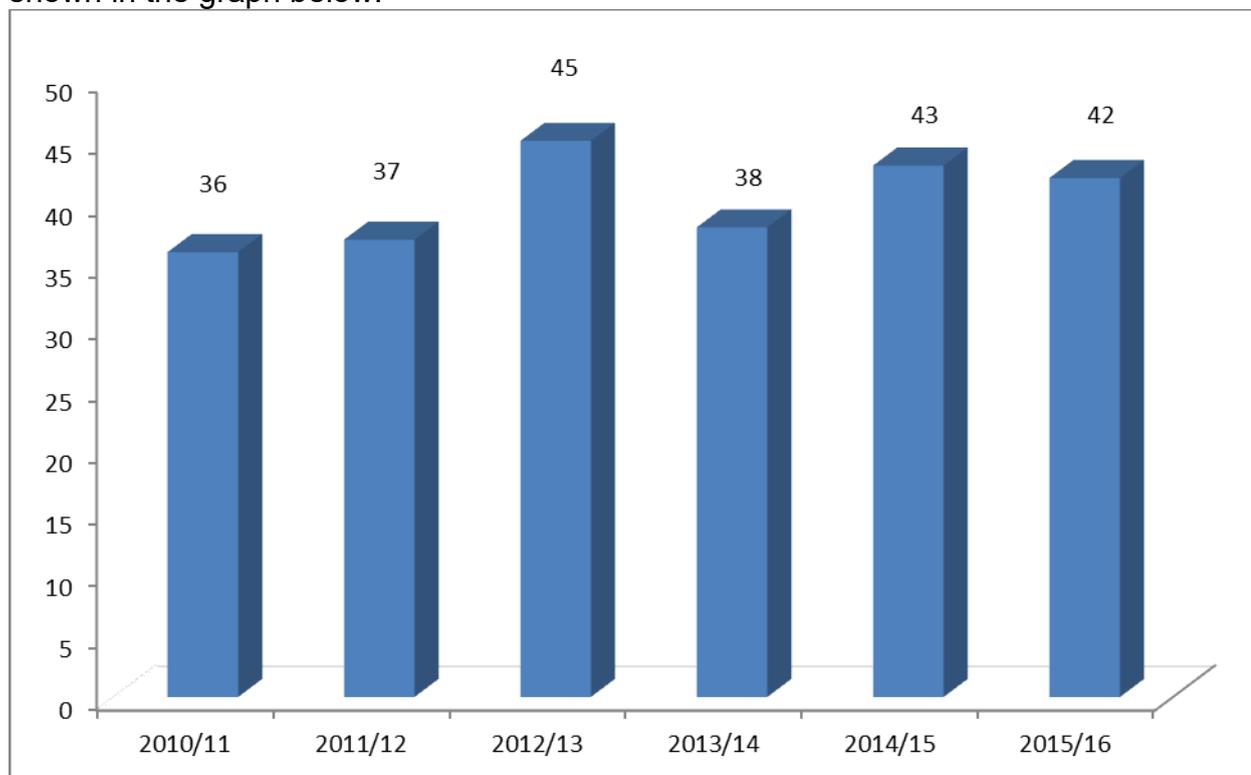
In practice this means that all food complaints will be assessed by an officer upon receipt and the most appropriate course of action determined.

In circumstances when the food, which is the subject of complaint, was manufactured outside the County Borough, details of the complaint are also referred to the Originating, Home and/or Primary Authority. When a resident of the Borough has purchased food in another Local Authority's area the food is collected and referred to the appropriate Local Authority for investigation.

Merthyr County Borough is the originating Authority for 2 manufacturers who distribute their product nationally, 1 of which also exports. The food service investigates all complaints, which are brought to its attention often on behalf of other Local Authorities in whose area the food was purchased.

The investigation of food complaints does have a resource implication in that some food complaints can be protracted especially when they have been referred to another Local Authority for investigation, or originate from outside the United Kingdom. On rare occasions it may be necessary to visit factories outside of the Borough to pursue the investigation. When the investigating officer is not familiar with manufacturer's process this can involve considerable time spent on research. The investigation of complaints may also involve microbiological or chemical analysis being undertaken and this has a financial implication for the service.

The number of complaints received has remained fairly consistent for a number of years as shown in the graph below.

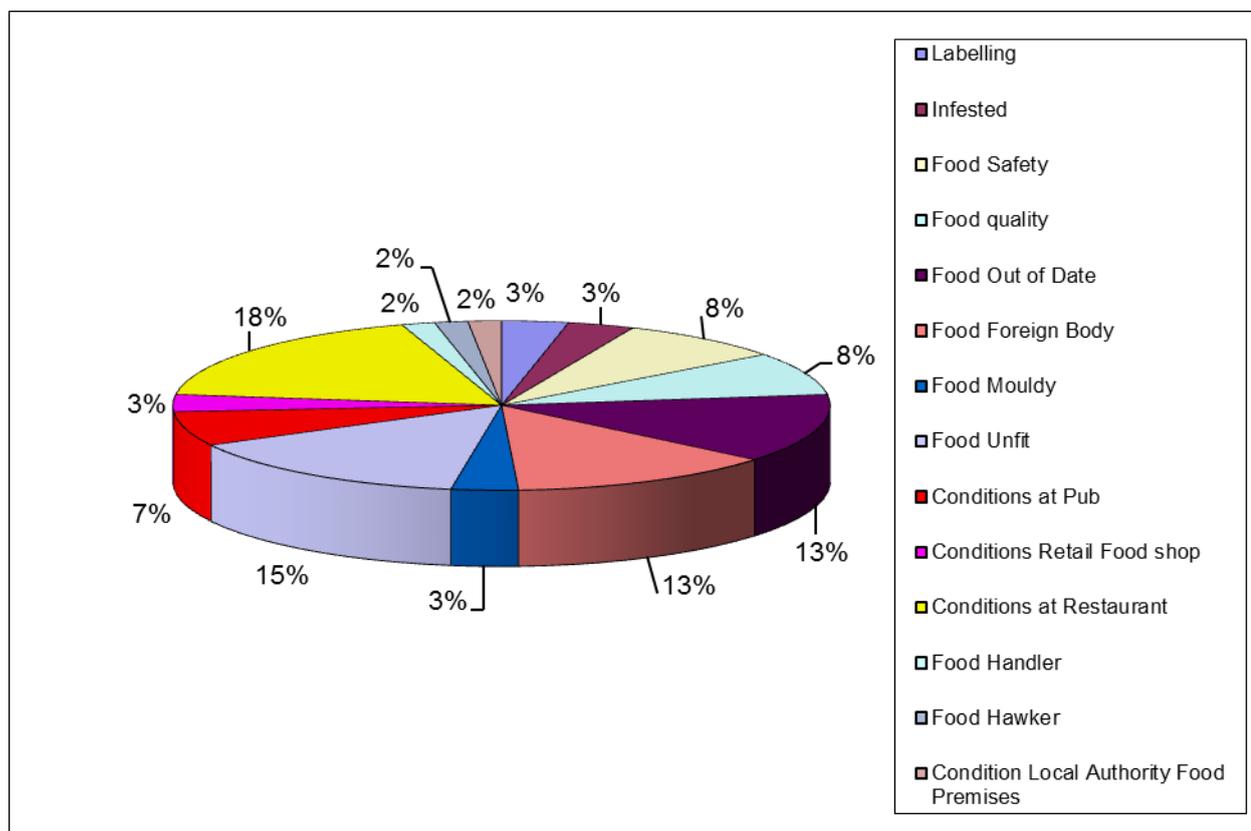


### **Total Number of Food Hygiene Complaints Received 2010-2016**

In addition to the above a further 21 complaints were received about the condition of food premises or poor food hygiene practices being carried on which represents a continued improvement on previous years. All of these complaints were investigated and enforcement action taken in accordance with the LA's food safety enforcement policy.

The charts below show a breakdown of the types of food complaints received during 2015/16.

## Breakdown of Food Complaints for 2015/16



## Home Authority Principle/Primary Authority Scheme

### Home Authority Principle

The Home Authority Principle applies to businesses that have their 'decision making' base within the Borough and whose decisions have national or international impact. The principle provides a mechanism for efficient liaison between Authorities with multiple-site businesses and it is the policy of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to operate the Home Authority Principle in accordance with guidance issued. The Local Authority has no formal arrangements with the manufacturers located within the Borough. However, the food service always endeavours to provide advice and reasonable assistance on request, including visits when necessary and in this respect the food service operates informal Home Authority 'Agreements'. Furthermore the service will:-

- Provide advice to all Home Authority businesses on matters relating to food, either when requested, or in response to a referral from another Local Authority.
- Have regard to any information or advice it has received as a result of liaison with home and/or originating Authorities.
- Having initiated liaison with any home and/ or originating Authority, notify that Authority of the outcome.

### Primary Authority Scheme

The Primary Authority scheme was introduced by the Regulatory and Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008. It builds on and formalises the concept of the Home Authority Principle.

The aim of the scheme is to offer Local Authorities the opportunity to develop a formal partnership with a multi-site business with a view to delivering reliable advice and coordinated consistent enforcement for the business. Where businesses enter into a formal partnership with a Local Authority the service must have regard to the scheme and carry out any enforcement activity in accordance with the guidance issued by the Local Better Regulation Delivery Office. The service will:

- Consult with the Primary Authority where the service has concerns about compliance of a multi-site business operating in the Borough.
- Have regard to any advice or inspection plan issued by a Primary Authority.
- Notify the Primary Authority of any proposed enforcement action.

The Service does not have a Primary Authority relationship with any business in Merthyr Tydfil.

### **3.4 Advice to Business**

The Food Safety Service has an ongoing policy of responding to all requests for advice on food hygiene matters. The service remains free of charge. There were a total of 121 food safety/standards requests recorded last year.

In addition we aim to assist businesses wherever possible by providing food safety advice through a variety of channels, such as:-

- Advice provided as part of the intervention process;
- A variety of information leaflets are available
- The provision of training and seminars;
- Participation in national events, such as Food Safety Week;
- Providing advice to organisers of events;
- Advice in response to planning applications and on receipt of Temporary Events Notices where applicable.
- When new legislation or guidance is issued information is provided by the most effective means to appropriate target groups e.g. mail shot, workshops/seminars.
- Bespoke coaching sessions for new businesses and businesses with poor food hygiene ratings.
- Council website and social media.

### **3.5 Food Sampling**

The Local Authority recognises that sampling makes an important contribution to the protection of Public Health and the Food Law enforcement function.

The Local Authority's Food Service will therefore continue its policy of taking food samples in the following situations: -

- To participate in National, Regional and locally co-ordinated surveys/programmes.
- From local food producers.
- Home/originating Authority samples
- In response to complaints

- In order to monitor processes
- As part of a special investigations
- During inspections
- To assess durability of products
- For surveillance/screening processes

In order to carry out the above the food service will:-

- a) Comply with the requirements of the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice (Wales).
- b) Have regard to guidance issued by Food Standards Agency and industry guides.
- c) Resources permitting take part in regional and national sampling initiatives put forward by the Food Standards Agency, Welsh Food Microbiological Forum, Public Health Wales and the Food Safety Task Groups.
- d) When microbiological examination is required submit samples to Public Health Wales based in Llandough Hospital, Penarth who will provide the services of a formal food examiner.
- e) When samples require analysis for extraneous matter, chemical contamination etc. submitted samples to the Public Analyst appointed by the Local Authority who is based at County Scientific Services, Croft Street, Cardiff or other appropriate laboratory.
- f) Produce a sampling programme for both food hygiene and food standards, which is contained at Appendix 3. The food hygiene programme is a “live document” and is updated on a monthly basis in consultation with Public Health Wales.

Microbiological samples will normally be collected weekly and food standards in blocks as part of a targeted programme. However samples taken in connection with complaints, alleged outbreaks of food poisoning etc. may be submitted at any time.

Proprietors will always be advised when samples produce an unsatisfactory result. Action will then be taken to identify the reason for the unsatisfactory result and follow up samples will be taken as necessary.

### **3.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**

The Wales Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan lays out the approach to managing all communicable disease outbreaks with public health implications across Wales. The Plan is overseen by the Welsh Government and prescribes the manner in which outbreaks are identified, managed and controlled.

The Consultant in Communicable Disease has been appointed by the Local Authority as the proper officer for the purposes of the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2008. Environmental Health Officers have also been appointed as proper officers for the purpose of power of entry.

It is the policy of the Public Health Team to investigate all reported cases of confirmed and suspected food and water borne illness including food poisoning in accordance with the procedure listed at Appendix 5.

Reports of illness may originate from a number of sources: -

- Public Health Wales (PHW) laboratories
- Medical Practitioners
- Patients
- Employers
- Other Local Authorities

All cases are investigated wherever possible by direct contact with the case via telephone and/or visit as appropriate. The purpose of this is to: -

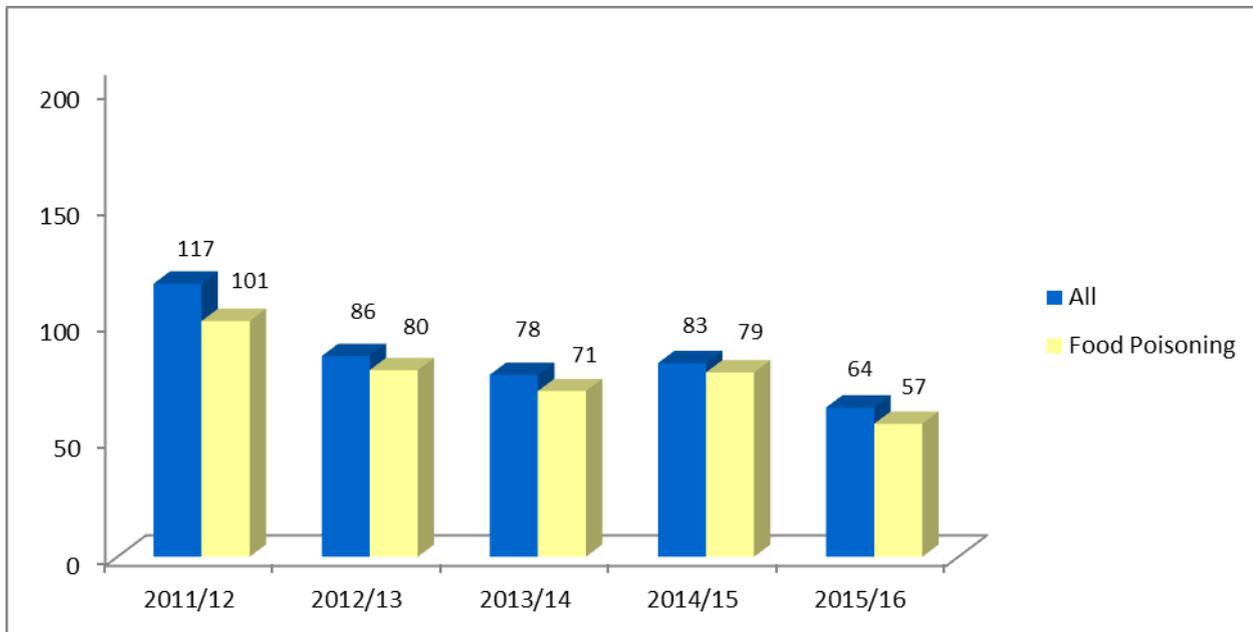
- Determine the cause;
- Prevent the spread of infection;
- Provide infection control advice to households;
- To trace carriers and cases;
- Detect outbreaks/clusters of disease;
- Assist surveillance systems;
- Determine whether criminal offences have been committed.

The nature of communicable disease control means that the Public Health Team has a number of partners with whom it works to deliver communicable disease function:-

- Public Health Wales who provide specialist services to the Local Authority.
- PHW Consultant in Microbiology – all faeces, food and environmental samples obtained in connection with a food poisoning investigation are submitted to the Microbiology Department based at Llandough Hospital, Cardiff.
- Regional Epidemiologist – The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC)
- is part of the PHW and has a specific responsibility for co-ordinating the national response to communicable disease.
- CDSC provides advice and information to Local Authorities through the regional Epidemiologist when dealing with problematical communicable diseases, in outbreaks where more than one Local Authority is involved, or when there are national/international implications.
- The Local Authority is represented on the South East Wales Communicable Disease Task Group and the South East Wales Communicable Disease Liaison Group.

It is difficult to predict the number of communicable disease notifications that will be received in any given year and hence the resource that will be required to undertake appropriate investigations. However the LA undertakes to provide sufficient resources to investigating and controlling outbreaks of communicable disease by sacrificing routine work and if necessary by utilising reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring LA's where necessary.

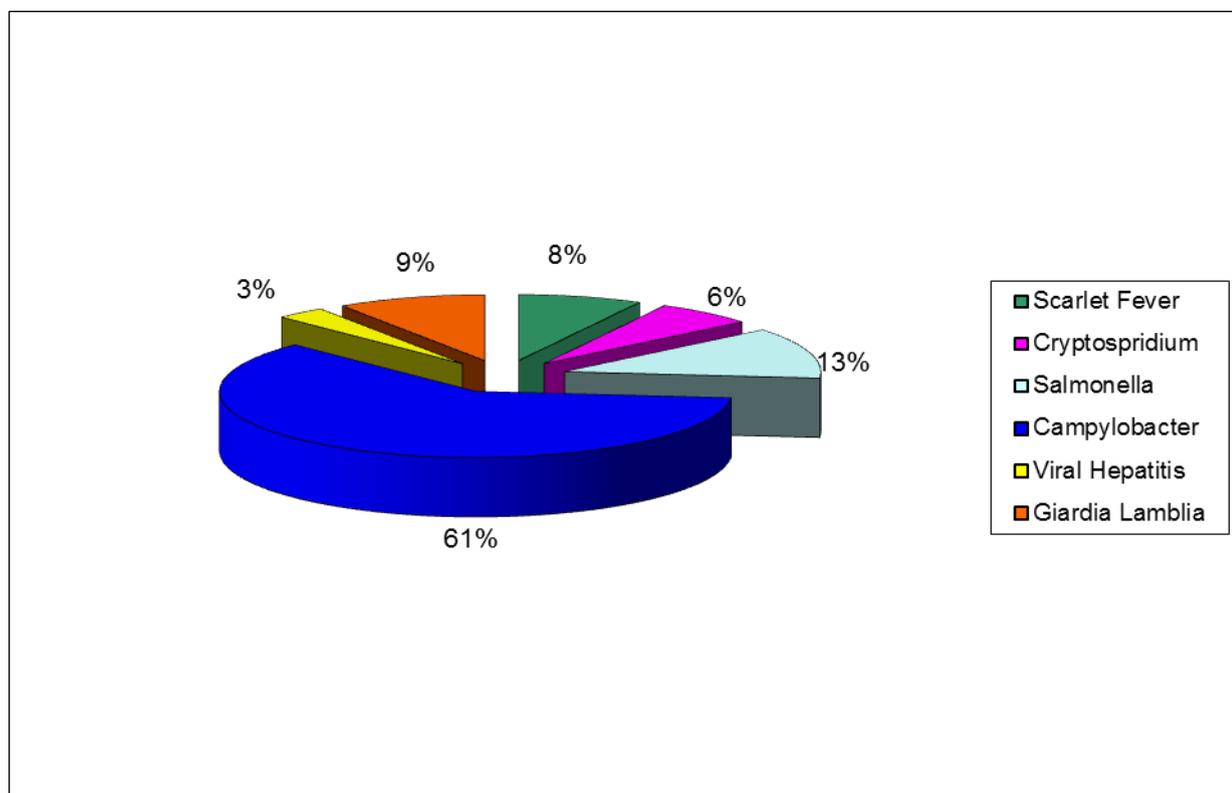
The graph below shows the number of notifications that have been received between April 2011 and March 2016.



**Number of Communicable Disease Notifications Received Between 2011 – 2016**

The graph above shows a steady decline in the number of food poisoning notifications received.

**Chart Showing Types of Communicable Diseases Notifications Received During 2015/16**



### 3.7 Food Safety Incidents

The Public Health Team will on receipt of any food alert respond in accordance with the Food Safety Act Food Law Code and Practice and Practice Guidance and the Food Standards

Agency. The level of action required is determined by the Category assigned to the alert and its relevance to premises, and the food offered for sale, etc. within the County Borough.

A Product Withdrawal Information Notice or a Product Recall Information Notice is issued where a solution to the problem has been put in place – the product has been, or is being, withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers, for example. A Food Alert for Action is issued where intervention by enforcement authorities is required.

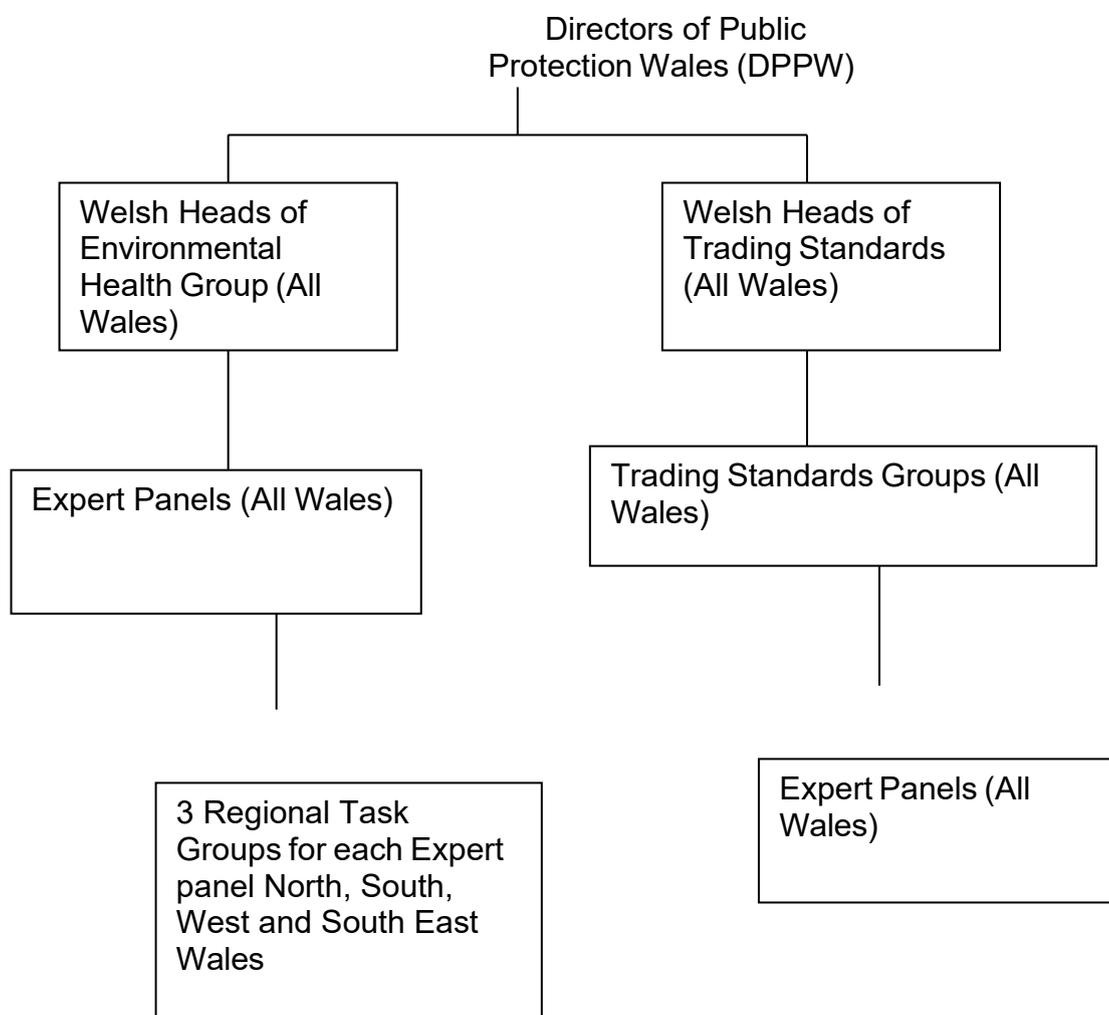
Alerts requiring substantial reactive action will occur occasionally and irregularly. Sufficient resources will be allocated to deal with each warning as it arises, although this may require diversion from the planned programme of inspection.

Given the nature of food alerts it is impossible to predict with any accuracy the likely activity and resources that will be required. Alerts requiring substantial reactive action will occur occasionally and irregularly. In the same vein as the management of outbreaks of communicable diseases sufficient resources will be allocated to deal with each alert as it arises and by necessity this may require a diversion from the planned work programme.

### 3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Environmental Health Food Service endeavours to ensure that its actions are consistent with those of neighbouring Local Authorities.

Liaison between the Local Authorities is facilitated through a number of groups and panels:



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is represented on the Food and Infectious Disease Regional Task Groups, the Food Safety Expert Panel, Welsh Heads of Environmental Health and DPPW meetings.

Close liaison is also maintained with the following bodies: -

- Food Standards Agency;
- Public Health Wales;
- Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre;
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, The Royal Society of Health, and the Royal Institute of Public Health & Hygiene;
- Liaison with other Council Services, such as Planning, Building Control, Education, School Meals Service, Social Services, Regeneration, PProcurement;
- Welsh Government;
- Welsh Food Microbiological Forum;
- H M Revenue and Customs;
- Home Office;
- Liaison with and commitment to Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO).
- Glamorgan Food Standards Group

### **3.9 Food Safety Promotion**

The Public Health Team is committed to promoting a positive food safety culture through a variety of channels.

- Provision of advice and information to businesses and members of the public through inspections, complaints and notifications;
- Provision of Food Hygiene training courses;
- Provision of training courses in other languages based on local need;
- Leaflets in different languages covering food issues;
- Participation in national events such as Food Safety Week;
- Promotion of Food Hygiene Rating Scheme;
- Guidance to assist businesses in particular sectors such as childminders, and mobile traders;
- Advice through Council's website and social media including links to other sources of information;
- Targeted education, advice and seminars;
- Newspaper Publications such as Contact magazine which is distributed quarterly to every household in the Borough;
- Working with other departments such as Regeneration to promote food safety.

The service has successfully bid for funding from the FSA for a number of years and undertaken a number of projects to promote food safety. These have included:

- Providing training on food safety management systems including individual business coaching sessions in English, Chinese, Bengali and Turkish languages.
- Delivering level 2 food hygiene courses in Mandarin, Cantonese and Polish.
- Providing advice and coaching and level 2 training to new businesses to get them off to the best possible start.
- Targeting poor performing businesses rated 0-2 under the FHRS and giving advice, support and coaching to help these businesses improve.

- Translation of E Coli Guidance factsheet into Mandarin, Cantonese and Polish languages.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of cleaning procedures using ATP swabbing.

## 4. Resources

### 4.1 Financial Allocation

	Food Safety Cost Centre: 4077	
	Budget 2016/17 £	
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>		
-		
<u>Employee Costs</u>		
Salaries	162,710	
Training	750	
<u>Premises Related Expenditure</u>		
Fuel, Light & Cleaning		
-		
<u>Transport Related Expenditure</u>		
Car Allowances	920	
Travel & Subsistence		
Petrol & Oil		
Repair & Maintenance		
<u>Supplies &amp; Services</u>		
Equipment	490	
Printing ,Stationery & Advertising	880	
Subscriptions		
Professional Fees	1,390	
Postage and Telephones	210	
Protective Clothing & Uniforms		
Court Costs		
Boarding Fees		
Analysis Fees	750	
Notification Fees	170	
Default Works		
Adjustment for Roundings		
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	168,270	0
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
Fees & Charges		
Court Costs	2,200	
Search Fees		
<b>Gross Income</b>	2,200	0
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	166,070	0

## 4.2 Staffing Allocation

The Department has been subject to significant challenges in terms of a reduction in capacity over the last 3 years. In particular:

- The Environmental Health Department was subject to a significant restructuring exercise in April 2011 resulting in the loss of the Principal Officer post covering for food safety/health and safety/infectious disease. A further corporate restructure commenced in 2014 and is ongoing.
- In 2013 a moratorium on overtime payments was introduced and this has also had the effect of reducing capacity.
- As a consequence of efficiencies in the Trading Standards Department and to reduce the burden on businesses the Food Standards function was transferred to the Environmental Health Department with no additional resource during 2014/15.

As far as possible front line service delivery has been protected but some risks to service delivery have been identified and these are being monitored through the self-evaluation process.

It is difficult to estimate the number of full time equivalent (FTE) officers employed compared to the number that are necessary to perform a particular function as the team is multi-disciplinary and resources are continuously being vired between functions to respond to demand for front line service delivery.

Prior to the transfer of food standards to the Environmental Health Department a study was carried out by Human Resources in 2013 which identified a shortfall of 0.5 FTE. The department has invested in additional training for the Occupational Health Technical Officer who completed the Higher Certificate in Food Inspection in 2014 to mitigate this shortfall. However this investment has now been absorbed by the additional food standards function.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Qualification</u>	<u>FTE (approximate)</u>
Public Protection and Housing Manager	Management of Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing, Home to School Transport, Housing Services, Community Safety, Registrars	Trading Standards Officer	0
Environmental Health Manager	Environmental Health includes Food Safety, infectious Disease, Health and Safety, Private Sector Housing, Pollution, Pest Control, Dog Warden	Environmental Health Officer (EHRB registered, competent to carry out interventions and enforcement in all categories)	0.1
Environmental	Food Safety, Food	Environmental	2.1

Health Officer	Standards Infectious Disease, Health and Safety	Health Officer (EHRB registered, competent to carry out food hygiene interventions and enforcement in all categories. Competent carry out food standards interventions in category A-C establishments.	
Occupational Health Technical Officer	Food Safety, Food Standards, Health and Safety	Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection with endorsement to carry out food standards	0.5

### Use of Contractors

Where a shortfall in capacity is identified the Council has, and will continue to appoint suitably qualified and competent contractors to assist in carrying out interventions in food establishments.

### 4.3 Staff Development Plan

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council attaches significant importance to the development and training of its staff to meet the needs of its customers.

At service level the Local Authority endeavours to provide support for all employees to fulfil their identified training needs.

The Environmental Health Manager undertakes an annual review of individual training needs in addition to the corporately required Annual Performance Development Review and regular One to Ones. Officers are only authorised to act on behalf of the Local Authority in accordance with their established level of training and competency. Any identified training need is addressed during the year by way of internal and external training courses.

Continuing professional development is actively encouraged, monitored and recorded to ensure that every officer attains the minimum number of points required by the statutory Food Law Code of Practice and for membership of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

Regular team meetings also take place to give officers the opportunity to discuss inspection and enforcement issues, promote consistency of enforcement and to be kept up to date on food safety enforcement issues.

### 5. Quality Assessment

There are, at present, no formally recognised quality management systems in place. However the service recognises the need to measure effectiveness and strongly supports the ethos of continuous improvement.

The Service therefore participates and undertakes a number of activities to ensure that work is of a high standard and opportunities to identify and implement improvements are taken.

## **Documented Procedures**

To ensure the quality and consistency of our activities The Public Protection and Housing Department review of all its policies and procedures relating to food safety/standards annually. These are contained in the Quality Manual which is read only and available to all staff electronically.

## **Assessment and audits**

The monitoring of the quality of our policies and procedures is assessed in a number of ways, namely:-

- Internal audit of documented procedures
- Audits undertaken by the Food Standards Agency.
- Customer consultation and feedback;
- Review of corporate complaints and compliments about the service.

In addition the actions are implemented:

- The Environmental Health Manager (EHM) or other nominated senior officer reviews a selection of correspondence.
- The EHM or other nominated senior officer conducts a minimum of 1 peer audit with each officer per year.
- The EHM or other nominated senior officer audits a selection of inspections, complaints, and investigations on a risk based approach.
- Team meetings are held at regular intervals and action notes kept.
- Consistency exercises are undertaken.

## **Customer consultation and feedback**

We are committed to involving customers in the continuous improvement of services and recognise the need to have structured methods of obtaining service users views and perception of the service. These include:-

- A customer satisfaction questionnaire is sent to all food businesses operators following an inspection .This can be returned using the reply paid envelope or completed online. The questionnaires are regularly analysed and results disseminated to staff with a view to driving service improvements;
- Corporate complaints and compliments.

## **6. Review**

### **6.1 Review against the service plan**

In order to ensure continuous improvement it is essential that performance is regularly monitored. The following actions are taken:

- The Council has developed its Service Improvement Framework (SIF), a simplified and more outcome focussed approach to performance management and self-assessment. The SIF sets out the key components of the Council's improvement

planning process from the Single Integrated Plan to individual performance appraisals. It also outlines the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability. The framework places self-evaluation at its heart and mechanisms have been established to facilitate this, namely line of inquiry meetings and challenge sessions.

- Cabinet approves this Service Plan which sets out the work programme for the service and reviews performance against the programme via the self-evaluation process.
- Elements of the service plan form part of the Public Protection and Housing Strategic Plan which is monitored on a quarterly basis and subject to member scrutiny;
- Monthly meetings are held between the Public Protection and Housing Manager and the EHM on how the service is performing day to day;
- Quarterly business planning meetings are held with the Public Protection and Housing Manager to discuss performance against the Public Protection and Housing Strategic Plan and food safety service plan, to ascertain whether the service is on schedule to meet any specified targets, performance standards, and targeted outcomes stipulated in both plans;
- Overall performance of the service and individual performance is monitored monthly when inspections are allocated;
- Performance is reviewed at team meetings
- Performance of individuals is managed through staff meetings and one to ones.

Any significant shortfalls in the service will be reported to the Senior Management Board together with recommendations for appropriate remedial action.

## **6.2 Identification of Variances**

The mechanisms in place to review performance enable remedial action to be put in place should any shortfalls against targets or plans occur during the year. Consideration will be given to the various factors that may contribute to any shortfalls and whether additional resources, re-allocation of staff resources or re-prioritisation of workload is required to resolve any problems. Any issues that may not have been resolved at the end of the year will be included in the service Plan for the following year.

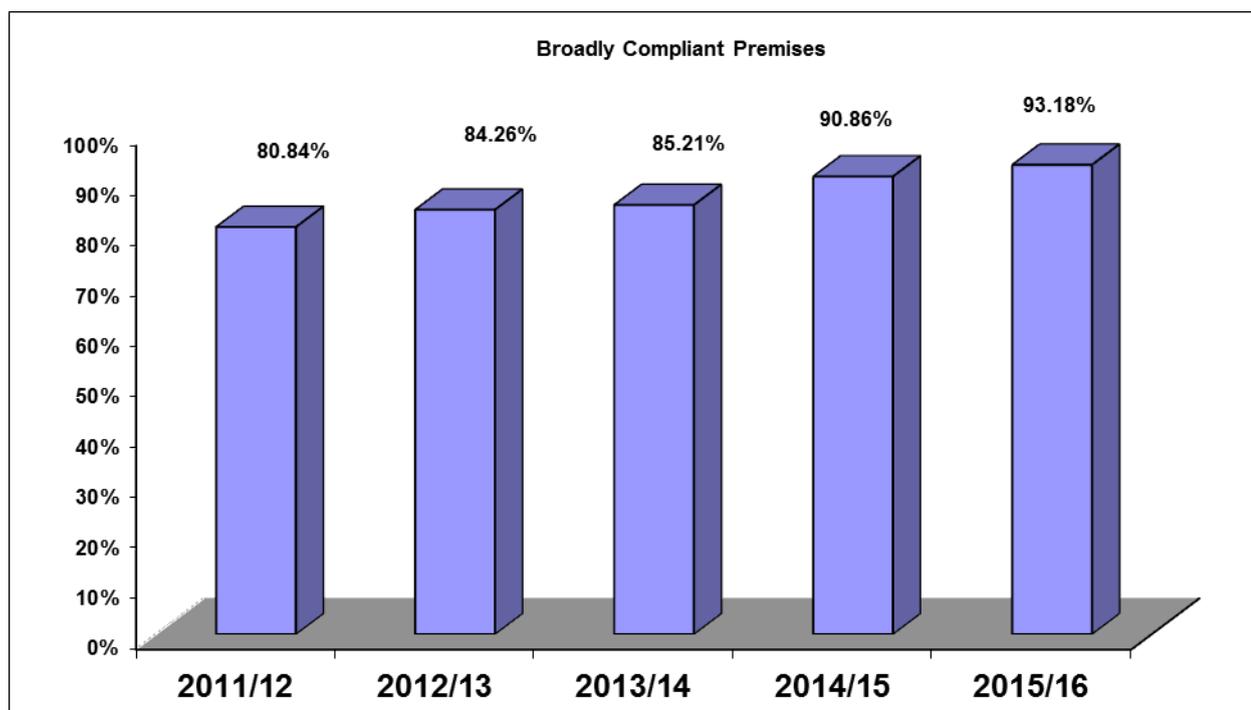
### **Measuring Performance**

National strategic indicators (NSI), Performance Accountability Measures (PAM) and Service Improvement Data Indicators (SID) have been developed by Welsh Government in order to assist LA's in planning and delivering improved services. The only current Welsh Government performance indicator relevant to Food Safety is PPN/009; however other performance indicators previously used by Welsh Government have been retained and are reported on internally via the self-evaluation process.

## Food Hygiene

**PAM PPN/009** is the percentage of premises which are “broadly compliant” with food hygiene standards. Currently within Merthyr Tydfil an average of 93.38% businesses are deemed to be broadly compliant. We have made significant progress in driving up performance against this particular indicator over the last few years by:

- Implementation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme which facilitates consumer choice
- Focussing attention on new businesses and poor performing businesses rated 0-2 under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. This has been achieved by bidding for funding from the Food Standards Agency to carry out project work over and above our normal enforcement activity.
- Introduction of a corporate policy on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.



**Graph Showing Number of Broadly Compliant Premises**

**SID PPN/001ii** this service improvement data performance indicator relates to “The percentage of high risk businesses (category A-C) that were liable to programmed inspections that were inspected or food hygiene”.

Although the Food Safety Team faced a considerable number of challenges due to staffing problems an inspection rate of 100% was attained. This was achieved by diverting resources away from other areas of planned activity e.g. delaying the inspection of low risk new businesses on a risk assessed basis, not achieving inspection with 28 days of the due inspection date and allocating less resources to health and safety activity, and employing a temporary member of staff to undertake Food Safety Management Project work and inspections.

The service has consistently achieved 100% of its high risk inspections over the last 4 years (Table 3 of the plan).

**SID PPN/008ii** this service improvement data performance indicator relates to “The percentage of new businesses identified which were subject to a risk assessment visit or returned a self-assessment questionnaire during the year for Food Hygiene”. Last year the service visited and

risk assessed 8675. % of the new businesses that opened up, which is a decrease on the previous year when a figure of 93.48% was achieved.

### **Other Planned Food Hygiene Inspections (Risk Category D)**

Official controls were carried out in all D rated premises.

### **Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES)**

All e rated premises were subject to alternative enforcement to check whether there had been any changes to the business or subject to an official control.

### **Food Standards**

100% of planned programmed interventions were achieved.

### **28 Day Rule**

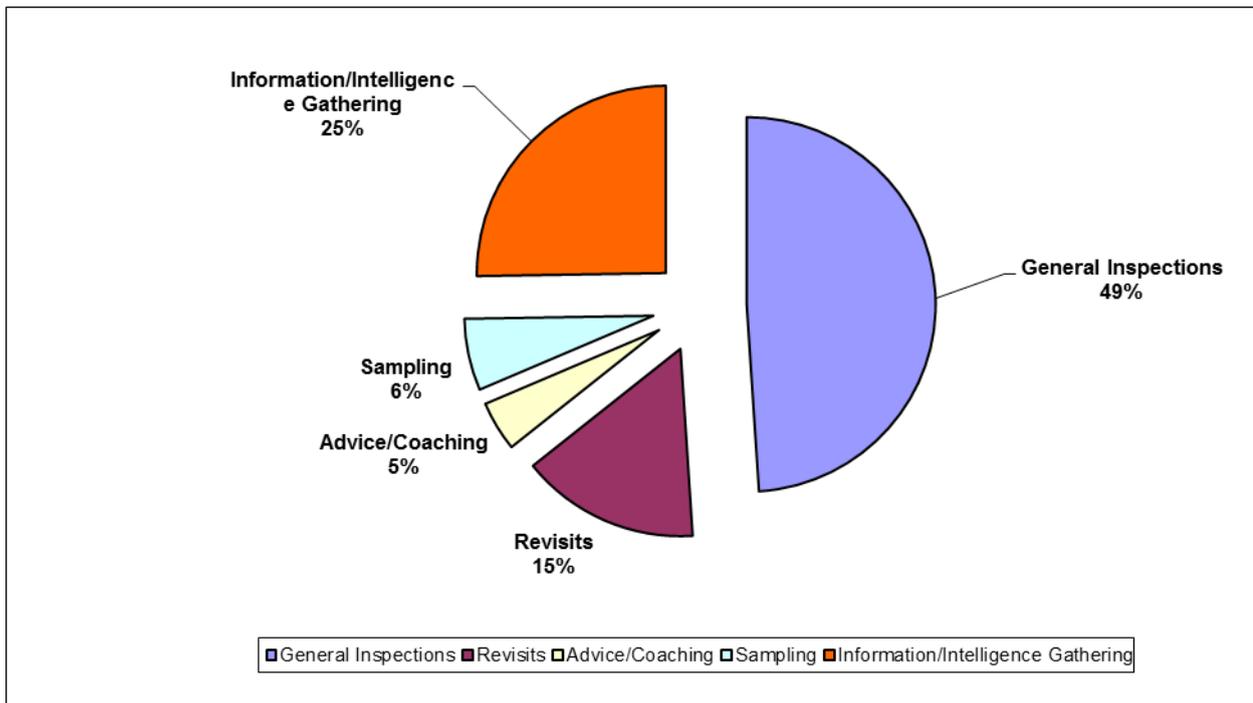
The service continually struggles to inspect businesses within 28 days of their due date which is a requirement stipulated in the Food Law Code of Practice. In 2015/16 92% of high risk premises were inspected within 28 days of their due date. Which is a significant improvement on the previous year when only 78.4% were carried out within the 28 day time frame

In comparison there has been a decline in performance relating to new businesses from 40.74% of new businesses being inspected within 28 days of us becoming aware of them trading in 2014/15 to 31.25% in 2015/16. As explained on p18 inspections of new businesses are undertaken on a risk managed basis and, although they may not have received an inspection within 28 days 52.09% of these businesses received an intervention such as bespoke coaching or training to help them get off to the best possible start.

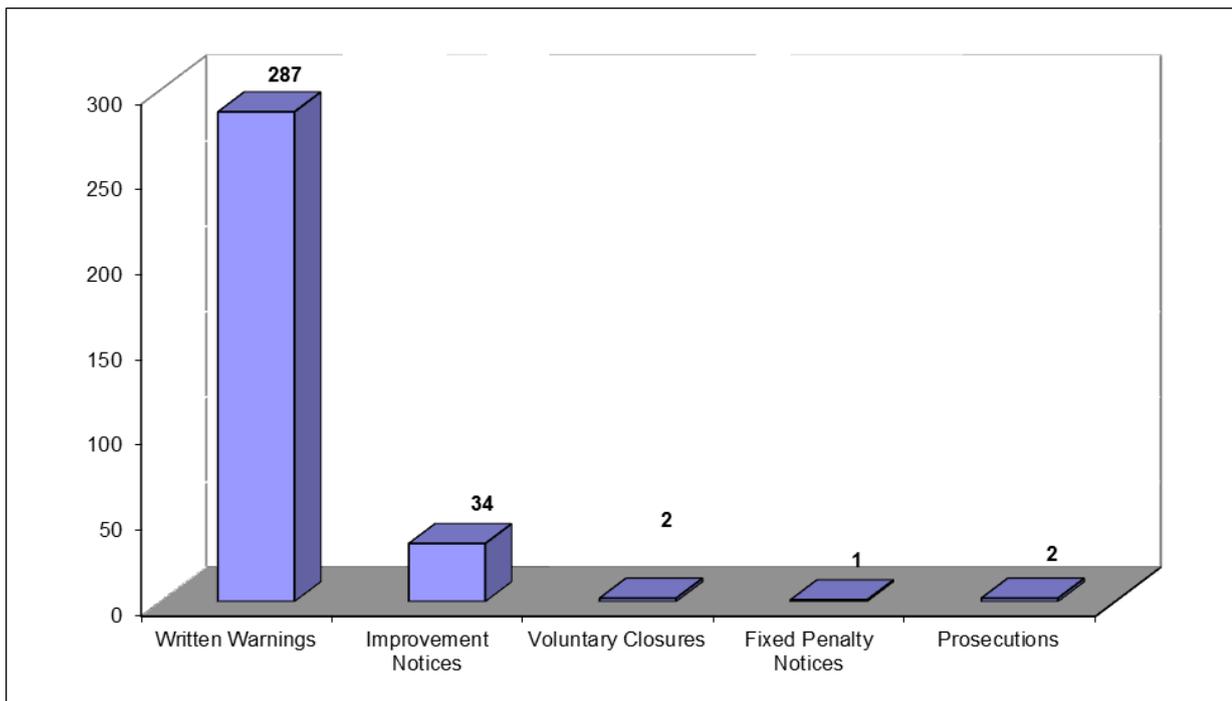
### **Summary of Activities and Enforcement Action**

The service collects a substantial amount of data each year which is used to analyse performance and improve service delivery and outcomes. The following charts summarise the food hygiene interventions undertaken and subsequent enforcement actions taken during 2015/16:

## Food Hygiene Interventions Undertaken during 2015/16



## Number of Different Food Hygiene Enforcement Actions during 2015/16



## Externally funded Initiatives

Last year the Environmental Health Service made another successful bid for funding from the FSA for £2480.44 to assist local food businesses in the implementation of their food safety management systems. A total of 34 visits were carried out to local businesses that were either new or poor performing. Officers conducted ATP swabbing to assess the effectiveness of their cleaning systems with a view to reducing the risk of cross contamination and gave advice on how to improve.

## Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 the FHRS was introduced in Merthyr Tydfil. As premises have been inspected they have received a hygiene rating. The following chart shows that the overall standard of hygiene in premises within the Borough has improved since the introduction of the Scheme with fewer businesses being rated 0-3 and an increasing number scoring a 4 or 5 rating.

### Number of Food Establishments Scoring 0-5 Rating

	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2015/2016	0.4%	7.1%	3.5%	20.2%	34.0%	34.8%	282
2014/2015	0.6%	4.7%	7.7%	21.7%	30.0%	35.3%	337
2013/2014	0.4%	12.9%	12.6%	24.8%	24.1%	25.2%	278
2012/2013	1.4%	11.1%	13.6%	23.2%	24.3%	26.4%	280
2011/2012	0.7%	22.9%	11.1%	26.6%	22.6%	16.2%	297

## 6.3 Areas for Improvement

As part of the annual review process, any areas for improvement will be identified and included in the Plan with such improvement encompassing areas such as :-

- Improvements to working practices;
- New projects or initiatives;
- Greater partnership working;
- Improvements in efficiency and effectiveness;
- Promotion of food issues;  
Greater focus on outcomes.

The Department was subject to 2 external audits during 2013/14 namely:

### 1. Wales Audit Office

Between November 2013 and April 2014, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) completed a review in all councils looking at how they are managing to deliver with less, considering the impact of cuts

in resources on the ability of council environmental health services to deliver their statutory obligations.

The national report, published in October 2014 contained five recommendations relevant to all Welsh Councils. An individual report was also produced which concluded:

“The Council is delivering environmental health services at above minimum levels and whilst it has increased expenditure and marginally reduced staff numbers, stakeholders have a mixed view of the management and performance of the service. The Council will find it difficult to take on new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment.”

2. Food Standards Agency (February 2014) who conducted two focussed audits:

- Response of Local Government in Wales to the Recommendations of the Public Inquiry into the September 2005 Outbreak of *E. coli* O157 in South Wales and;
- Local Authority Management of Interventions at New Food Businesses

The findings of the FSA audit were very positive with only minor areas for improvement identified. Recommendations for improvement have been implemented.

The FSA are due to conduct a full 5 day audit in May 2016

The Department has an ongoing customer satisfaction survey to identify how customers perceive our food safety service. Food businesses receiving an intervention are left a questionnaire and a prepaid envelope at every visit and the survey can also be completed on line at: <http://survey.merthyr.gov.uk/environmental-health-questionnaire/english.htm> .The results of this survey are routinely evaluated and used to improve service standards.

The Service monitors the number of businesses that are deemed to be broadly compliant and has shown continuous improvement over the last few years successfully driving up compliance by utilising a number of focussed strategies. This year's plan proposes to continue this approach.

## **7. Service Plan Appendices.**

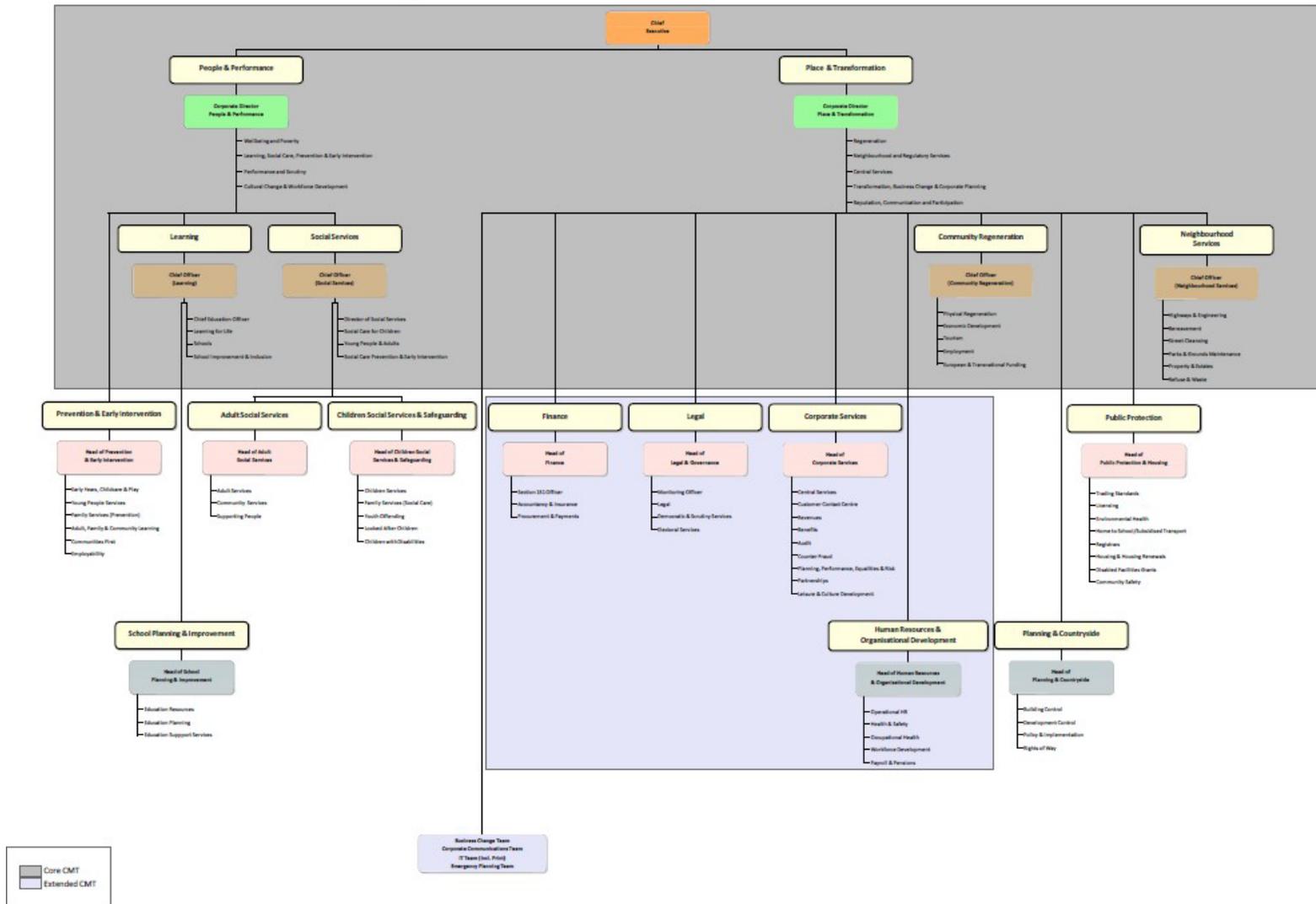
**Appendix 1** Organisation structure of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

**Appendix 2** Structure of Environmental Health Department

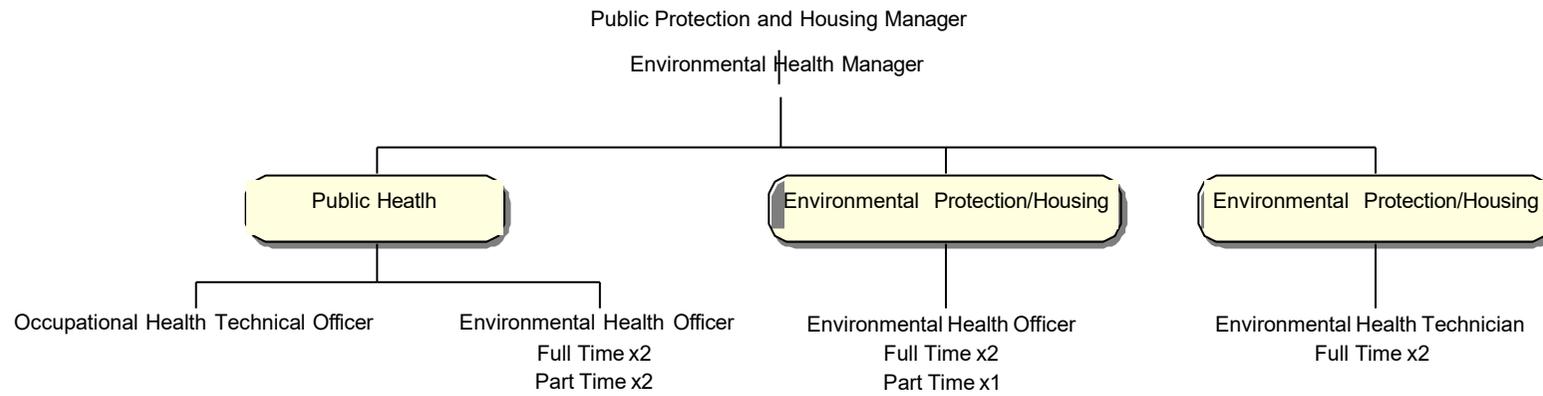
**Appendix 3** Sampling Plan

**Appendix 4** Shopping basket

**Appendix 5** Infectious disease investigation procedure



# Environmental Health Department



## SAMPLING PLAN

Last year a total of 101 food samples were submitted for microbiological analysis. Of these samples 7 were unsatisfactory and 18 borderline which required follow up action. The number of samples submitted represents a drop on previous years. This was necessary so that food standards samples could also be submitted. A total of 41 samples were submitted for food standards 2 of which had significant breaches and required follow up action.

All of the samples were taken as part of local and national initiatives, in response to complaints, and as part of a routine inspection programme.

### **Food Safety**

The number and type of samples collected for analysis varies year on year. This is partly due to the availability of human resource to collect the samples and deliver them to the laboratories and also on unpredictable events such as outbreaks of food poisoning. Samples that give rise to poor results will also have to be followed up as part of an investigation as to how the failure occurred. Since the producer or manufacturer of the food will often be located outside the Borough this will necessitate liaison with other Local Authorities.

In terms of samples submitted for microbiological testing the Authority has a sample allowance, which is contained within the service level agreement between the Local Authority and Public Health Wales. The Local Authority must resource samples taken in excess of this allowance unless they are specifically associated with an outbreak investigation. The sampling allowance for 2016-2017 is £6,044.

Samples requiring chemical analysis or identification of foreign matter, are usually associated with complaints and are submitted to the Public Analyst appointed by the Local Authority and are paid for on an individual basis.

Bids for additional funding to carry out local or collaborative sampling projects will also be made when monies are available.

The local authority is required to produce a sampling plan, which must be drawn up in consultation with Public Health Wales. It has been agreed that samples will be taken in the following circumstances:

As part of a routine surveillance programme

As part of a structured sampling programme

As a result of a legitimate complaint that has the potential to adversely affect public health

During investigation of an outbreak

During the course of an inspection

Samples are normally collected on a routine basis once per week. The sampling programme is based on a risk-based approach and only samples with public health significance will be taken. The planned programme of sampling will include: -

- Welsh Food Microbiological Forum (WFMF) shopping basket survey, which is an ongoing routine surveillance programme, but is suspended, when specific targeted WFMF surveys are taking place. The current basket is contained at Appendix 4.
- Participation in proactive structured sampling programmes coordinated through WFMF, FSA, Health Protection Agency surveys and Local Government Regulation.
- Samples taken during a food poisoning investigation.
- Samples taken in response to local need which will include food and environmental samples taken during inspections, following complaints.

At the start of the year it is not possible to stipulate exactly how many samples will be taken from each of the above categories.

Other non-food samples that will be taken include:

- Drinking water samples as a result of a complaint or as part of an inspection.
- Private water supplies
- Swimming pool waters for verification purposes
- Recreational waters
- Environmental samples e.g. swabs of equipment, surfaces etc. taken as part of an investigation.

At the start of 2016/17 sampling activities which will be undertaken as part of WFMF surveys are yet to be finalised. The timing and number of samples is approximate and may vary from the plan. Additional surveys and sampling according to local need will be undertaken throughout the year.

### Table Showing Summary of Sampling Activity

	Sampling Survey- Food Safety	Number of Samples (approx)
Quarter 1	WFMF Shopping basket survey	25
Quarter 2	WFMF Shopping Basket WFMF Swabbing of surfaces	10 20
Quarter 3	WFMF Shopping Basket WFMF Swabbing of surfaces	10 20
Quarter 4	WFMF Shopping Basket WFMF Swabbing of surfaces  Private water supplies	10 20  2

## Food Standards

As part of the Councils efficiency programme there is no longer a specific budget allocated for sampling. Sampling will only be undertaken where local intelligence suggests there is a need including response to complaints, or where external funding can be secured to participate in targeted surveys.

Subject to receiving FSA funding the following surveillance will be carried out by Merthyr Tydfil as part of the Glamorgan Group or Cwm Taf collaborative region to fulfil FSA national strategic priorities (NP) and locally identified priorities (LP). The programme will be agreed with the Public Analyst.

**Table Showing Summary of Sampling Activity**

	Sampling Surveys- Food Standards	Number of Samples
Quarter 1	Glamorgan Group Surveys: to be decided	
Quarter 2	Glamorgan Group Surveys: to be decided	
Quarter 3	Glamorgan Group Surveys: to be decided	
Quarter 4	Glamorgan Group Surveys: to be decided	

As for microbiological sampling activities the timing of the sampling programme may vary.

**Welsh Food Microbiological Forum****Food Codes****Basket 13 (Amended)**

(November 2011- July 12)  
 Recommencing January 2014

The *Food Code* should be entered on the Food Examination Request Form for WMFM *Shopping Basket* items only.

<b>FOOD CODE</b>	<b>FOOD DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>CAKES</b>	Cakes containing fresh cream
<b>DESSERT</b>	Dairy desserts other than cakes
<b>SALAD</b>	Mixed commodity salad meals containing raw vegetables (NOT bags of leaves)
<b>DELI</b>	Loose delicatessen food not pre wrapped and excluding sliced meats
<b>SUSHI</b>	Real fish Sushi
<b>SFCOOKED</b>	Cooked, refrigerated shrimps, prawns, and other shellfish out of shell (no frozen, tinned or bottled)
<b>HERB</b>	Fresh, bagged herbs (not in pots) marked <i>washed and ready to eat</i>
<b>FISHC</b>	RTE <b>cold</b> smoked fish (e.g. smoked salmon)
<b>FISHH</b>	RTE <b>hot</b> smoked fish (e.g. mackerel)
<b>CHEESE</b>	Loose delicatessen cheeses (not pre wrapped)

**Infectious Disease Investigation Procedure**

