

# FOOD SAFETY NEWS

September 2007

## **Scores on the Doors – The Publication of Food Hygiene Inspection Results**

Scores on the Doors is a publication scheme designed to give the public the opportunity to make informed choices about where they buy food from or where they choose to eat. The information the scheme provides relates to the overall food safety standards found at the last food hygiene inspection.

Food businesses will be awarded a **star rating** based on the food safety standards found at the time of the food hygiene inspection. The better the standard, the higher the star rating awarded. The highest star rating that can be obtained is 5 stars. A certificate displaying the star rating is then provided to the food business which can be displayed to show customers how good they are.

Maidstone Borough Council has been selected by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to pilot a scheme here in Maidstone, along with a number of the London Boroughs and Canterbury, Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks Councils in Kent. The scheme that we will be using has already been developed by the London Boroughs and we will be following their protocols and guidance.

### **What does 'scores on the doors' involve?**

'Scores on the doors' involves the publication of three elements of the inspection rating score – Confidence in management; Compliance: hygiene and safety; Compliance: premises structure. The inspection rating scheme is set out in the Food Safety Code of Practice issued by the FSA. The scores are added together to give the star rating. A certificate with the star rating on it will be provided to the Food Business Operator, this will remain the property of Maidstone Borough Council. Details will also be available through the Council's web site [www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk) The table below gives a more detailed explanation.

### **Why introduce the scheme?**

Apart from being part of the FSA pilot scheme, we are introducing the scheme for several reasons. We feel the scheme will give the public information they are legally entitled to receive in a format they can easily understand, such as a star rating and will help drive up food hygiene standards even further.

### **Which businesses will get a star rating?**

All catering and retail businesses that form part of the Council's inspection programme. However, businesses operated from private homes, e.g. childminders and other low risk businesses that are not the subject of an inspection, will not receive a star rating. Businesses that are subject to alternative enforcement strategy and are monitored by questionnaire will be identified as such on the web site.

### **How will a business get a star rating?**

Following a programmed inspection we will score the business based on the inspection rating scheme from the Food Safety Code of Practice. The scores given for hygiene, structure and management will be used to calculate a simple star rating for the business. The star rating will be issued on a certificate and sent to the food business operator to display on the front door or front window of their premises.

### **What does the star rating mean?**

The star rating lets you see at a glance the hygiene standards in the business at the time of inspection. The hygiene rating given to premises on the certificate and on the web site has been based on the latest programmed food hygiene inspection carried out and as such represents the situation as found by the officer on the day of that inspection. Therefore the score may not be representative of the overall, long-term food hygiene standards of the business and should not be relied upon as a guide to food safety or food quality.

### **Can the star rating be changed between inspections?**

No. Premises can only be rated following a programmed inspection. Premises are not rated following revisits. This is in accordance with FSA policy. The rating can only be changed when a full food hygiene inspection is undertaken. These are programmed anytime between 6 months and 3 years depending on the overall inspection frequency of the premises. A food hygiene inspection will only take place when it is due unless a new Food Business Operator takes over a business and submits a food registration form.

### **Who will decide what star rating to give?**

The officer undertaking the inspection. The rating given will be discussed with the Food Business Operator or their representative during the inspection.

### **Do businesses have to display their star rating?**

No. Displaying the certificate is voluntary however if they do wish to display the certificate then it must be visible from the outside of the premises.

### **When will businesses be rated?**

It is proposed that the star rating will be applied to all businesses that have been inspected since 1 July 2007. This coincides with the completion of consistency training for enforcement officers. Therefore the scheme will build up over a period of time.

The inspection due date depends on when the business was last inspected and the hygiene conditions found at the time. The worst performing businesses are inspected more often than the better performing businesses. There are currently approximately 1000 food businesses covered by this scheme in the Borough.

### **When will the scheme be launched?**

It is hoped to launch the scheme in January 2008, with certificates being provided to businesses and the web site going live on that day. The website will be updated on a monthly basis.

### **What if a business disagrees with the star rating?**

The rating is based on a qualified food officer inspection and will not normally be changed. However, if a business believes it has not been treated fairly, the Council's formal complaints procedure can be used and the matter will be investigated. Businesses are also given a right to reply on the website. For example, improvements may have been undertaken since the inspection and the food business may wish the public to know this. All replies are reviewed by the food officer in order to validate the comments.

### **How do I know if the certificate on display is valid and genuine?**

Following a food hygiene inspection the previous certificate will be collected by the inspecting officer and destroyed.

For further information please visit our website [www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk) or telephone the food safety team on 01622 602202.

## Scoring System:

Performance Level	Compliance General Guidance *	Star Rating	Score – total of: Confidence in Management + Compliance: Hygiene & Safety + Compliance: Premises Structure
Excellent	Very high standards of compliance with food safety legislation. Demonstrating best practice in managing and achieving this.	★★★★★ 5 Star	0 to 5
Very Good	High standard of compliance with food safety legislation. Robust food safety management.	★★★★○ 4 Star	10 to 15
Good	Good level of legal compliance. Only minor safety issues not addressed.	★★★○○ 3 Star	20 to 25
Broadly Compliant	Broadly compliant with food safety legislation. An understanding of food safety and standards being maintained or being improved.	★★ ○○○ 2 Star	30
Poor	Some non compliance with food safety legislation – more effort required.	★○○○○ 1 Star	35 to 45
Very Poor	A general failure to comply with legal requirements. Little or no appreciation of food safety.	○○○○○ No Star	50 or more