

Milton Keynes Council Scores on the Doors Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Operation of the scheme for the publication of Food Hygiene Scores on the Internet.

PURPOSE

Outline the scheme for the posting of food hygiene inspection rating information on the Internet as a food hygiene star system (Scores on the Doors)

TARGET AUDIENCE

Members of the Public, Food Business Operators, Enforcement Officers

LEGISLATION

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Environmental Information Regulations 2004
Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 Article 3

REFERENCES

Food Law Code of Practice Annex 5

AIMS OF THE SCHEME

The main aim is to raise the standards of food hygiene for consumers. The scheme gives the public the opportunity to make informed choices about where they choose to eat or buy food based on food hygiene standards. It gives the public information that they are legally entitled to receive in a format that is easy to understand.

The scheme serves as a good advertisement for high standards of hygiene, which may improve turnover and reward businesses for their efforts.

It is not a legal requirement for Local Authorities or Food Business Operators to publicise the results of food hygiene inspections but there is public demand for this type of information. Milton Keynes Council has chosen to implement a scheme based on the Food Standards Agency's risk rating system, contained in the Food Law Code of Practice Annex 5. The risk scores will be used as the basis for a star-rating scheme. The number of stars given to each premises will be posted on an Internet web site and Food Business Operators will be given a Certificate and window sticker for display on their premises.

OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

Businesses included in the scheme

The scheme will include Registered Food Establishments within the Milton Keynes Council area which form part of the inspection programme.

Initially the scheme will be restricted to restaurants and catering premises including hotels, public houses, takeaways, cafes, staff canteens, schools, hospitals, residential and nursing homes.

Other types of food business may be included at a later stage such as supermarkets, butchers, bakeries and other food retail shops.

Lower risk retail premises where no open food is handled such as newsagents and grocers that are subject to an alternative method of enforcement may be excluded from the scheme. Also food mobiles, facilities used by several businesses and some small scale catering operations carried out at the Food Business Operators home and food manufacturers may be excluded from the scheme.

Some larger premises such as department stores which have several catering outlets may only have one rating for the whole premises and this will have been calculated for the highest risk food handling activity on the site. Other stores may have two ratings if, for example, a café within the store is operated by a contract caterer.

The scheme will be reviewed at regular intervals as the aim is to include as many businesses in the Milton Keynes area as possible.

How the star rating is calculated

The star rating will be derived from the scores given for Hygiene and Safety, Structure of the Establishment and Confidence in Management in line with the inspection rating system in Annex 5 of the Food Law Code of Practice issued by the Food Standards Agency. Annex 5 is a national scoring system used by most Local Authorities for assessing premises.

These criteria include the following factors:-

- Hygiene and Safety, including food handling practices/procedures and temperature control.
- Structure of the Establishment, including cleanliness, layout, condition of the structure, lighting, ventilation etc.
- Confidence in Management, evidence of satisfactory documented food safety management procedures, whether there is a good history of complying with food law and acting on previous advice and the attitude of the management towards hygiene and food safety.

The scoring system in the Code of Practice is below. A lower score indicates better compliance than a higher score.

Compliance	Excellent					Poor
Hygiene and Safety	0	5	10	15	20	25
Structure of the Establishment	0	5	10	15	20	25
Confidence in Management	0	5	10		20	30

Premises within Milton Keynes area will then be given a number of stars based on the total of these points. The higher the standard of food hygiene the more stars will be awarded.

Points	Definition	Stars
0 - 5	Excellent	5 Stars
10 - 15	Very Good	4 Stars
20 - 25	Good	3 Stars
30 - 35	Fair	2 Stars
40 - 45	Poor	1 Star
> 45 points	Major improvements required	No stars

These scores will only be assessed at the time of a routine inspection (referred to as a primary inspection) and this is the score that will be publicised on the Internet. No subsequent visits will be undertaken with a view to modifying the scores given, or re-scoring premises even if remedial works have been completed. The score will remain until the next primary inspection is carried out. Primary inspections will normally be unannounced and may be carried out at any time that the business is open for trading. However, prior notification may be given as long as legal compliance and public protection are not compromised.

Initial implementation of the scheme in September 2007

The Council identified restaurants and catering premises in its area to be included in the scheme. Food Business Operators were notified of how to access their score either on the website or by phoning the Council before the information was posted. Businesses were able to access this information on the system before the Civic Launch of the website on 17th September 2007.

Existing businesses Registered with the Council had the score from their last routine inspection converted into the star rating.

Updating of the star rating

The website will be updated as primary inspections (as defined by the Food Law Code of Practice) are carried out in line with the inspection rating system in Annex 5 of the Code of Practice. Transfer of data from the Council database to the website will be done following validation. This will be undertaken at the start of the month following the month that the inspection was carried out so there will be a delay in posting the information.

If a business changes ownership or there are substantial changes in the food handling operation the Council may choose to inspect the premises (a form for the Registration of Food Business Establishment should be submitted by the Food Business Operator). Once this inspection is carried out the star rating will be calculated and displayed.

Should a Council Officer be made aware of serious hygiene defects in premises the next primary inspection could be brought forward (as per Section 4 Chapter 4.1.7 of the Food Law Code of Practice). If at this primary inspection the score changes the records will be updated with the amended score posted on the Internet.

Procedure after primary inspection

Food Business Operators will be notified of their score in writing following the primary inspection and will be sent a window sticker and Certificate with the relevant number of stars. These should be displayed on the premises. These materials remain the property of Milton Keynes Council and must not be tampered with and must be surrendered on request. Officers will be taking window stickers and Certificates from premises if the star rating has changed.

Procedure for newly Registered Businesses

New premises will not receive a rating until they have been visited and assessed by a Food Enforcement Officer. Between Registration of the establishment with the Council and the first inspection the premises will be identified on the website as 'Not Yet Rated'. The primary inspection will be programmed into the Officers normal work load and will be carried out in due course.

'Right to Reply' and Appeals procedure

The Internet web page will include a "Right to Reply" section for use by Food Business Operators. If the Operator feels that standards have improved since the last inspection this facility can be used. The Environmental Health Team Leader (Food & Safety) will check comments before they are uploaded on to the website. The comments could appear verbatim to members of the public on the website. In general comments must be legal, decent, honest and true and should not include personal remarks aimed at individuals. Milton Keynes Council reserve the right to refuse to post comments that are considered to be unacceptable.

Milton Keynes Council will make every effort to ensure consistency in the allocation of scores by Officers. This will include issuing Officers with written guidance; peer reviews; accompanied inspections; review of documents and records and internal audits.

The rating is based on a professional officer's inspection and will not normally be changed. If you believe that you have been treated unfairly or strongly disagree with the rating and your premises has been incorrectly scored representations can be made to a senior manager. Contact the Environmental Health Team Leader (Food & Safety) on 01908 252050 or email mary.millard@milton-keynes.gov.uk or jane.don@milton-keynes.gov.uk setting out the reasons for the disagreement. The matter will be investigated and a decision made by the Environmental Health Team Leader (Food & Safety).

If you are not happy with the decision of the Environmental Health Team Leader (Food & Safety) a complaint can be made through the Councils Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.

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