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NCASS Guide to the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

What is the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)?

The national FHRS is an initiative overseen by the Food Standards Agency and local authorities. It applies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides information about the hygiene standards and compliance levels within food businesses at the time they are inspected. There are six different ratings which can be awarded to businesses; 0 (the worst) to 5 (the best).

The purpose of the scheme is to allow customers to make informed decisions about the places that they buy food from or where they eat out. It also encourages businesses to improve their hygiene standards with the overall aim to reduce incidents of food borne illness and the harm that this can cause.

It applies to all places where food is supplied, sold or consumed, for example:

- restaurants, pubs, cafes and hotels
- takeaways, mobile food vans and market stalls
- staff/student canteens and hotels
- supermarkets, convenience stores and health food shops
- schools, hospitals and care homes

How are food hygiene ratings determined?

Your routine food safety inspection will result in a food hygiene rating which will appear on the Food Hygiene Rating website [Search for ratings | Food Standards Agency](#).

The Environmental Health Officer who inspects your business will check how well the business is meeting the law in the following areas:

1. **Food Safety and Hygiene Procedures** – This focuses on how hygienically food is handled, as well as how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored. Scores awarded are 0/5/10/15/20/25.
2. **Structural Requirements** – This focuses on the condition of the structure of building(s), as well as the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other amenities. Scores awarded are 0/5/10/15/20/25.
3. **Confidence in Management Procedures** – This focuses on how a business manages and records what it does to make sure food is safe as well as its' compliance history/track record. Scores awarded are 0/5/10/20/30.

The scoring criteria for each of the three areas is outlined in detailed guidance known as The Food Hygiene Rating Brand Standard. Officers use this guidance to ensure consistency in how they score.

The total numerical score is then mapped across the six food hygiene ratings ranging from 0 (the worst) to 5 (the best). A summary of the scoring criteria is detailed in Table 1; Food Hygiene Rating Scoring Chart on page 4.

Food safety and hygiene procedures + Structural requirements + Confidence in management procedures = Total Intervention FHSR score.

The rating depends on the total intervention rating score for the three areas but also takes into account the highest of the three scores; this is called the additional scoring factor. Where an individual scoring factor exceeds an additional scoring factor, the food hygiene rating will drop down to the rating where it no longer exceeds the additional scoring factor.

This is detailed further in Table 2: Mapping of Numerical Scores on page 6.

To get the highest rating the business must do well in all three areas. The lower the overall score the better the rating.

The information surrounding the food hygiene rating scheme can be dense and hard to understand. Our comprehensive guide, which includes a useful scoring chart and mapping table, can be referred to multiple times to support your understanding. We have also included further details on how the food hygiene rating score is calculated. Remember: the lower the score the better!








Table 1: Food Hygiene Rating Scoring Chart

Score	Food Safety and Hygiene	Structural Requirements	Confidence in Management
30	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of food safety management/documentated procedures. • Significant hazards not understood and no effective controls in place. • Staff not suitably supervised, instructed and/or trained and no appreciation of food hazards or controls. • Poor track record. • Management likely not to recognise or accept need for food safety hygiene and controls.
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost total non-compliance with legal requirements. • Very poor food hygiene practices, serious food contamination risks, inadequate temperature control for high-risk foods and major improvement needed in all areas. • Failure to apply any (i.e. all) of the control measures required to prevent cross-contamination. • Almost total non-compliance with requirements for safe food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling or storage of food identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost total non-compliance with structural requirements. • Insufficient space in which to operate safely. • Evidence of widespread pest infestation or totally unsatisfactory waste disposal provision. 	Not applicable.
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor standard of hygienic food handling, temperature control and staff personal hygiene and major improvements required. • Inadequate implementation of many of the control measures required to prevent cross-contamination. • Major and widespread non-compliance with requirements for safe food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling or storage of food identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major and widespread non-compliance with structural requirements. • Poor design layout that is likely to lead to cross-contamination and to food safety being compromised. • Evidence of pest infestation or inadequate waste disposal provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety management/ documented procedures inappropriate or inadequate. • Significant hazards not fully understood and not all controls in place. • Significant improvements in food safety procedures/ implementation of controls required. • Some staff not suitably supervised, instructed and/or trained. • Varying track record • Management likely to show some reluctance to recognise and accept need for food safety and hygiene controls.

Score	Food Safety and Hygiene	Structural Requirements	Confidence in Management
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate implementation of some of the control measures required to prevent cross-contamination. • Some major non-compliance with requirements for safe food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling or storage of food identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant improvements needed in standard of structure and equipment cleaning, maintenance and repair, and in hand and equipment washing facilities. • Poor design layout potentially leading to cross-contamination and to food safety being compromised. • Major non-compliance with structural requirements (e.g. may be some damaged work surfaces, some significant dirt.) • Evidence of pest infestation/activity or inadequate waste disposal provision. 	Not applicable.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards being maintained or improving. • Some lapses in food hygiene and safety procedures. • Adequate control measures in place to prevent cross-contamination. • Generally satisfactory food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling and storage of food demonstrated but some lapses may be evident over short periods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally satisfactory standard of structural and equipment cleaning. Fairly well maintained and in reasonable repair. • Appropriate facilities provided with some issues of non-compliance. • Standards being maintained or improving. • Some repairs may be required. • Evidence of satisfactory pest control. • Evidence of satisfactory waste disposal provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally satisfactory food safety controls in place. • All significant hazards understood and controls in place. • Food safety management records appropriate and are generally maintained but some deficiencies/gaps identified. • Staff generally suitably supervised, instructed and/or trained but there may be some minor issues. • Satisfactory track record.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only minor lapses in food hygiene and safety procedures. • All necessary control measures in place to prevent cross-contamination. • Safe food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling and storage of food demonstrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only minor repairs required. • Evidence of adequate pest control. • Evidence of adequate waste disposal provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety management/procedures in place. • Hazards understood, properly controlled, managed and reviewed. • Food safety management records appropriate and are generally maintained. • Staff suitably supervised, instructed and/or trained with good general staff knowledge and new staff receiving induction training. • Good track record.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All necessary control measures in place to prevent cross-contamination. • Safe food preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling and storage of food demonstrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No repairs required and no potential improvements identified, or robust procedures in place for ongoing rectification of minor repairs. • Premises and equipment clean and in good condition. • Evidence of effective pest control and waste disposal provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety management/procedures in place. • Hazards understood, properly controlled, managed and reviewed. • Food safety management records appropriate and maintained. • All staff suitably supervised, instructed and/or trained. • Excellent track record.

Table 2: Mapping of Numerical Scores

Total Intervention Rating Scores	Additional Scoring factor	Food Hygiene Rating	Descriptor	Window Sticker
0 to 15	No individual score greater than 5	5	Very Good	
20	No individual score greater than 10	4	Good	
25 to 30	No individual score greater than 10	3	Generally Satisfactory	
35 to 40	No individual score greater than 15	2	Improvement Necessary	
45 to 50	No individual score greater than 20	1	Major Improvement Necessary	
>50	-	0	Urgent Improvement Necessary	

A breakdown of an example food hygiene rating is detailed below:

Food Safety Procedures = 5

Structural requirements = 15

Confidence in Management = 10

Total Intervention Scoring = 30

You will receive an overall food hygiene rating of 2 – Improvement Necessary. This is because the score for Structural Requirements exceeds the additional scoring factor for a rating of 3, which drops the rating down the scale to a 2.

When will the food hygiene rating be issued and how will I find out?

Your food hygiene rating will be awarded following a routine food safety inspection. A food hygiene rating will not be issued when a revisit or a spot check has been carried out, as this usually only involves looking at part of the business or a particular process.

The frequency of the routine inspection varies depending on the type of business.

Food businesses are scored from A-E in line with the Food Law Code of Practice, depends on whether they're considered low or high risk by the nature of the foods they prepare, the activities they undertake and their compliance with food safety regulations.

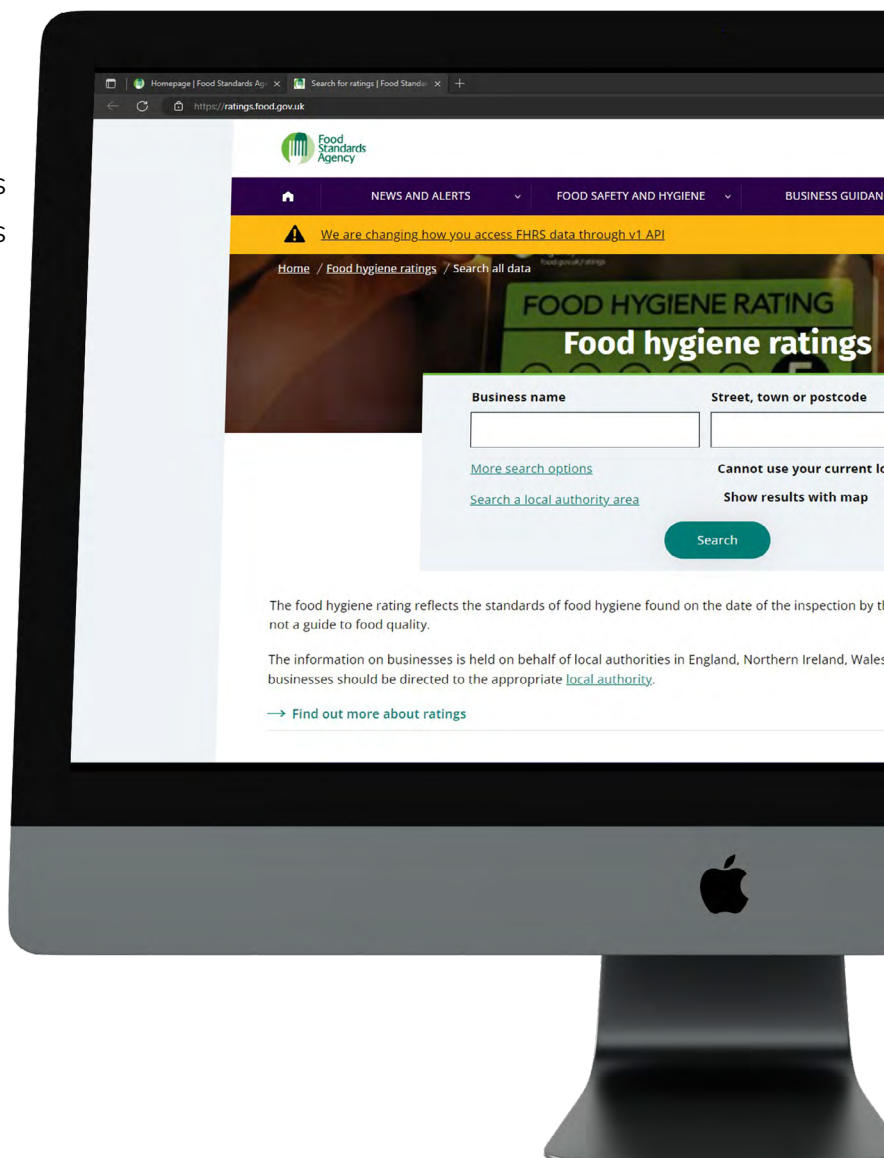
- A = inspection at least every 6 months
- B = inspection at least every 12 months
- C = inspection at least every 18 months
- D = inspection at least every 2 years
- E = inspection at least every 3 years

The Environmental Health Officer who undertakes your food hygiene inspection will always try and advise you of the food hygiene rating score that you have been awarded, at the end of the visit and provide you with your new window sticker.

However, there may be occasions when they need to consult the food hygiene rating brand standard guidance and so cannot give you your rating there and then.

The officer must then notify you in writing of your score within 14 days of your inspection and provide you with your new window sticker. Your food hygiene rating should be clearly outlined on the written inspection report. It should also highlight which risk category your business falls in to.

If you are unsure about this information contact your Environmental Health Officer to clarify this further.



Example of how the food hygiene rating may be reported:

	Annex 5 score
Compliance with Food Hygiene and Safety Procedures: Some major non-compliance with statutory obligations.	15
Compliance with Structural Requirements: Some major non-compliance with statutory obligations.	15
Confidence in management/control procedures: Significant improvements in food safety procedures/implementation of controls required.	20
Total Score	50
Food Hygiene Rating	

How should I inform customers of my food hygiene rating?

Ensure that you display your food hygiene window sticker at the entrance of the business, at the service counter or in a prominent place.

You may want to refer to it on menus and on promotional leaflets. There is nothing to stop you approaching the local press and asking if they will help you to highlight your new rating or produce some advertising for your business. The Food Standards Agency have put together some guidance on how to display your hygiene rating online and on social media here: ([Food Hygiene Rating Scheme online display guidance | Food Standards Agency](#))

If you are in Wales or Northern Ireland, it is a mandatory requirement to display the

food hygiene rating window sticker in a prominent place.

Previous rating stickers must be destroyed as only the most recent rating should be displayed. If your food hygiene rating drops then make sure you remove any old food hygiene rating window stickers from display and update menus that reference the old score. Leaving them in use can be misleading and the continued display of a previous rating may result in a complaint to Trading Standards which could constitute an offence under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations.

In Wales it is actually an offence under the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013 will be dealt with by the Environmental Health Dept via a fixed penalty notice (£200 reduced to £150 if paid within 14 days) in the first instance.

The food hygiene rating will be published on the national rating website [Search for ratings | Food Standards Agency](#). If you receive a rating of 5 then this will go live on the website shortly after the inspection. If you receive a lower score then this will be published 35 days after the inspection. This is to allow for the notification and appeal of the rating. The 35 days is broken down into 14 days for notification of the rating + 21 days for appeal.

Can I ask for my food hygiene rating to 'go live' on the website early?

There may be circumstances where you don't want to wait for the 35 days to expire before the rating can go live on the website. For example if the rating has improved from a 2 to a 4 and you need to demonstrate the new rating in order to trade at a public event or to enrol on a food delivery platform.

You can ask your inspecting officer to make arrangements for the early publication of your food hygiene rating. This request normally has to be made in writing e.g. in an email or via an online request form.

If I don't agree with the food hygiene rating that I receive what can I do?

If you think that the rating is wrong, unfair or that does not reflect the hygiene standards at the time of your inspection, then there are steps that you can take to appeal. There are safeguards in place under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme including an appeals procedure, a request for a re-rating inspection or the opportunity to post a 'Right to Reply' comment. Your inspecting officer should be able to explain all of this to you but there should also be sufficient detail either within the inspection report or on the council's website to explain the procedures involved.

How can I appeal the rating?

First, contact the inspecting officer whose contact details should be outlined on the

inspection report. Discuss the matters on the report that you disagree with and listen carefully to how they came to justify the scoring that was awarded. If following this discussion you still do not agree with the food hygiene rating awarded then you have the right to formally appeal.

You will have 21 days from the date of your inspection report to appeal. Check your inspection report which should contain details of the specific steps that your local authority require you to follow in order to appeal. There will usually be a specific online form that you will need to complete or it may be that you can submit your comments in an email.

Your appeal will be considered by the lead food officer at the local authority, usually the Environmental Health Manager; it is not for the inspecting officer to determine the fairness of the inspection. You will then be notified of their decision to amend or uphold the food hygiene rating within 21 days of you submitting the appeal. During the appeal period the food hygiene rating will not go live on the website and you will not have to display the window sticker.

How can I use the 'Right to Reply' to explain the rating to customers?

If you have completed the requirements outlined in your inspection report and have improved the hygiene standards or if there were unusual circumstances at the time of your inspection that did not reflect your normal standards, then you have the option to explain this to customers.

You can provide comments explaining the situation or confirming the improvements that have been made, that will be uploaded to your rating page on the website [Search for ratings | Food Standards Agency](#).

The comments will first be checked and approved by the Environmental Health

Manager. They may be edited to remove offensive or defamatory comments. Your customers will then see these comments when they check your rating online.

You can also check your inspection report or local authority website for details on the 'Right to Reply' process for your local authority.

How can I request a re-rating inspection to improve my rating?

If you have made all of the necessary improvements then it is worthwhile requesting a revisit to get a new rating (referred to as a re-rating inspection).

An Environmental Health Officer will come back and carry out a full food safety inspection again. A new food hygiene rating will be issued to reflect the standards found at the time of the inspection.

The request must usually be submitted in writing either by submitting a specific form or in an email to the Environmental Health Manager. You can expect to get confirmation of your request and for the re-rating inspection to be out carried within 3 months. It will likely be an unannounced inspection and carried out in the same way as a usual routine food safety inspection.

Some local authorities charge for this inspection in order to cover the costs of carrying out an additional inspection of your business. This cost will need to be paid at the time of making the request and can range from £100 to £250.

How do I achieve a hygiene rating of 5 – Very Good?

We want all members to aim for a hygiene rating of 5 – Very Good.

In order to get a 5 you must have an accurate understanding of the basics of each of the three criteria and ensure that this is well documented.

The key things are:

- Having safe methods in place for all stages of your food production processes e.g. food storage, cooking, cooling
- Being able to evidence your food safety controls through your checks and records
- Making sure staff are trained on your food safety procedures and clearly demonstrate them when asked
- Having a clean, well maintained and pest free food premises throughout
- Having clean and hygienic equipment and being able to demonstrate your cleaning and maintenance procedures
- Consistently maintaining a good track record of compliance

Consider the criteria outlined in Table 1 Food Hygiene Rating Scoring Chart shown on page 4 earlier in this guide and see how your practices compare.

You can also use our [NCASS inspection checklist](#) which will help you make sure you've got everything in place for your next inspection! Work through the list to be as prepared as you can be.

For more information on the scheme, you can visit [Food hygiene ratings for businesses | Food Standards Agency](#)



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