



South Tyneside Council

FOOD & FEED LAW - SERVICE PLAN 2026-2027

**South Tyneside Council
Appendix 1**

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1.0 Introduction

Ensuring the safety of food for human consumption is a long-standing and important public-health role of the Council, delivered through the Environmental Health team.

The Council has a statutory obligation to conduct a range of food and feed enforcement functions in accordance with the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and a range of regulations made under the Act. The Local Authority acts as the 'Competent Food/Feed Authority' as required by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the national regulator for official food and feed controls.ⁱ

Having regard to the legislative changes following exit from the European Union (EU), there have been additional functions and duties afforded to the Food/Feed Authority to oversee and enforce, in relation to maintaining the safety and integrity of the food and feed products entering and leaving the UK. Although much of the existing legislation has been temporarily assimilated, new legislation has been adopted to enable the continued export of food products of animal origin, and high-risk products not of animal origin, to the EU, as well as the trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This has resulted in many new protocols and procedures.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is an independent Government Department responsible for overseeing and working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As part of the national food safety framework agreement, Codes of Practice (CoP) and supporting guidance for Competent Food/Feed Authorities are issued to direct Competent Authorities on how to fulfil their obligations in respect of food and feed official controlsⁱⁱ.

The CoP require that the Council has in place a risk-based intervention programme for food hygiene, food standards and feed enforcement, adequate management systems and procedures for the investigation of food and feed safety incidents and complaints, for the inspection and sampling of foods, for investigation of cases of food-related infectious disease and control of outbreaks, and for the provision of advice and guidance to food and feed businesses.

The Framework Agreement requires the Council to effectively plan the delivery of its service and to have in place a service plan setting out how the official controls will be delivered with the four main goals of ensuring:

- Food is safe
- Food is what it says it is
- Consumers can make informed choices about what to eat
- Consumers have access to an affordable diet, now and in the future.

The Food & Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27 demonstrates South Tyneside Council's commitment to fulfil statutory obligations in an effective and proportionate manner, having regard to the resources available. Work is prioritised on a risk basis and in accordance with regulating bodies' guidance on priorities which are updated annually,ⁱⁱⁱ with inspections targeted at high risk and poor performing businesses, and alternative

interventions used for low-risk businesses where possible. These interventions include questionnaires, sampling visits, monitoring checks and audits completed by other local authority services. The Environmental Health service will endeavour to engage competent and duly authorised contractors to undertake certain elements of the inspection programme, providing additional capacity to tackle backlogs due to changes in operating practices or priorities as a result of new and emerging food safety risks.

This plan aligns with many of the current priorities defined in the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Strategy and Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027 'Food we can Trust' - which focuses on putting the interests of consumers first, and the principles of the Government's 'Better Regulation' agenda, having regard to the Regulators' Code¹ which regulators must follow when developing policies and procedures that guide their regulatory activities. This includes making best use of contacts the service has with local businesses in order to provide help and support, to promote an open and constructive relationship and to signpost to other support networks.

2.0 Service Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aim

The principal aim of the service is to maintain and where possible improve the health and wellbeing of residents, and visitors to South Tyneside by ensuring the safe production, processing, handling, storage, distribution and sale of food and feed in the borough and to deliver on the FSA's main goals of ensuring food is what it says it is, enabling customers to make informed choices based on accurate and reliable information at the point of sale.

2.2 Objectives

- To meet the 'standard' set out in the FSA 'Framework Agreement.'
- To ensure that food is safe to eat and free from extraneous matter.
- To contribute to a reduction in food-borne illness by improving food safety standards throughout the food chain.
- To investigate all notified cases of food-borne illness and outbreaks of food poisoning, in order to minimise risk of spread, through education, advice and exclusion if required.
- To maintain an accurate register of food businesses in South Tyneside.
- To carry out food hygiene inspections in accordance with the minimum inspection frequencies and standards determined by the Food Standards Agency.
- To assess and determine all formal Approval applications for new and existing food establishments wishing to operate in the authority's area, which are placing

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913510/14-705-regulators-code.pdf

products of animal origin on the market and implement a series of risk-based interventions in accordance with the FSA 'Food Law Code of Practice.'

- To keep accurate records of all food/feed safety enforcement activities and produce timely statutory returns as required by the FSA.
- To improve levels of compliance with food safety law within the business community, by targeting advice and enforcement to non-compliant businesses, and through the effective use of intelligence
- To encourage standards of hygiene higher than the minimum acceptable in law by aspiring to have all food premises reach a 4 or 5 rating.
- To provide consumers with information in respect of hygiene standards in food businesses across South Tyneside, thereby enabling them to make informed choices about where they purchase or eat their food.
- To improve food safety practices of businesses and consumer knowledge, through the delivery of educational and promotional activities and the provision of advice, guidance, and signposting to partner agencies.
- To promote honest and informative labelling of food to help consumers make informed choices regarding the food they eat.
- To support business growth.
- To proportionately enforce relevant legislation in accordance with the principles of 'Better Regulation' and having regard to South Tyneside's Food and General Enforcement Policies.
- To respond to food hazards/incidents in accordance with FSA guidance
- To implement the FSA Food Hygiene Rating Scheme for Borough-wide score ratings based on hygiene standards and adopt the Brand standard guidance governing the protocols.
- To support regulatory compliance of food-based delivery services within the Council by offering support and direction as necessary

3.0 Council Objectives and Plans

South Tyneside Council's Vision is:

Our South Tyneside – a place where people live healthy, happy, and fulfilled lives.

The Vision is based on five core 'Ambitions' which provide focus to help deliver the Vision over the next 20 years. These five Ambitions will guide everything we do.

We want all people in South Tyneside to be:

- Financially secure
- Healthy and well
- Connected to jobs
- Part of strong communities

And we want to support our residents by:

- Targeting support to make things fairer

The South Tyneside Strategy sets out what we will do, working closely with our residents and partners, over a three-year period, to contribute to the delivery of our 20 Year Vision and Ambitions.

This includes a clear set of priorities and a high-level action plan for each of the five ambitions.

Delivery of the Food and Feed Law Service Plan 2026-27 supports the Council's ambitions by focusing on the following Council priorities in particular:

Healthy and Well

Priorities: Enable and inspire our residents to live healthier lives. Ensure our communities can live safe from harm and access specialist support if they need it. Empower our residents with choice and independence to live longer, healthier lives in their homes and communities.

We do this by:

- Inspecting food/feed premises in accordance with Food/Feed Law Codes of Practice and guidance.
- Promoting the use of 'Safer Food Better Business' in all food premises.
- Inspecting and sampling food/feed and water to ensure its quality and safety.
- Investigating complaints about food and food premises.
- Investigating reported cases of food poisoning and taking action to prevent the spread of infection.
- Taking appropriate action in response to food incidents
- Promoting key food safety messages (e.g. allergens), through a variety of media, from posting videos and streaming information on the Council's social media and networking platforms to providing support and links via the Commercial Food and Safety team's dedicated Council webpages.

Connected to Jobs

Priority: Open up opportunities for business growth and job creation

We do this by:

- Working with new businesses and event organisers to ensure that they understand and meet their statutory responsibilities before they begin to operate.
- Targeting training on key food safety matters to high-risk businesses.
- Providing food hygiene guidance in languages other than English as required.
- Working with new food business operators to help them understand and meet legal standards.
- Offering advice and guidance as part of routine inspections.
- Providing on-site advisory meetings for Food Business Operators.
- Providing Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rerating visits for Food Business Operators.
- Promoting business achievement through the Council's website (Food Hygiene Rating Scheme).

- Establishing informal agreements with local businesses who export products of animal origin, to support them in their export trading arrangements following an increase in documentary and regulatory requirements, thereby enabling them to maintain trade links with Europe (Export Health Certificates/Attestations).
- Supporting local businesses who export products containing products of animal origin through the issuing of Export Health Certificates to confirm they meet the import requirements of other non-European countries.

Targeting Support to Make Things Fairer

Priority: Establish what inequalities exist and how we are going to address them

We do this by:

Undertaking intelligence-led and targeted interventions, which are both proactive and reactive, to help ensure a comprehensive and reliable food safety service which promotes confidence in regulation for businesses and consumers alike, with specialist and focused support where it is needed most, such as where English may not be a first language.

The Council's priorities underpin the work of the Commercial Food and Safety team and the data, intelligence and insight obtained from consumers and businesses, whilst undertaking regulatory functions, helps to inform future workplans and to target proactive interventions with businesses.

4.0 Background

Profile of South Tyneside - South Tyneside is a place with a rich cultural heritage, spectacular scenery, and a strong community spirit.

The borough includes the towns of South Shields, Hebburn and Jarrow and the villages of Boldon, Cleadon and Whitburn, sitting within the Tyne and Wear conurbation with the River Tyne boundary to the North and North Sea to the East. Further information on local health profiles can be viewed at: [Local Authority Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

5.0 Organisational Structure

The Commercial Food and Safety Team sits within the Council's Environmental Health Service. The Lead Food Officer directly manages all officers currently, reporting to the Service Lead-Environmental Health. The Service Lead, Environmental Health reports to the Council's Assistant Director of Strategic Transport and Environment. The Environmental Health Team is currently supporting four trainee Environmental Health Practitioners through their part-time degree / MSc qualifications, providing some additional competency capacity to help deliver the inspection programmes going forward, as well as succession planning for future staffing needs.

It is recognised that current staffing capacity is insufficient to deliver the existing inspection programmes in full and the service will continue to seek additional funding for a further full-time competent food officer to help meet current service demands.

Service Lead- Environmental Health (1 x FTE)	Environmental Health Officer - responsible for overseeing all work within the team including target setting, monitoring, performance, training, and development.
Operations Manager- Commercial Food and Safety (1 x FTE)	Environmental Health Officer/Lead Food Officer - responsible for service planning on food/feed hygiene, food standards, health & safety, officer competency and quality control requirements.
Environmental Health Officer (1 x FTE)	Responsible for the full range of food safety duties and other statutory functions allocated to the team.
Environmental Health Officer (0.6 FTE)	Responsible for a range of food safety duties and other statutory functions.
Technical Officers (Food Safety) (1.6 x FTE)	Undertake a full range of food safety enforcement duties.
Food Safety Officer/Regulatory Officer (1 FTE)	Responsible for programmed and reactive food and water sampling – located within the Commercial Food and Safety Team.

6.0 Scope of the Food Service

The Food Service is responsible for all aspects of food hygiene and safety and infectious disease control. Responsibilities include:

- Food hygiene and Food Standards inspections and other interventions in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.
- Approval and inspection of food businesses handling food of animal origin covered by assimilated regulation (EC) No 853/2004.
- Maintaining a register of food business establishments.
- Investigation of complaints about food and hygiene at food premises
- Microbiological food and environmental sampling.
- Food sampling for compositional and labelling conformity.
- Investigation of complaints concerning labelling, allergen information and composition of food.
- Investigation and control of sporadic cases of food poisoning and food-borne disease and other relevant infections including the investigation and control of food poisoning outbreaks.
- Imported food control, sampling, and enforcement.
- Issue of Export Health Certificates/Attestations.
- Response to Food alerts (food hazard warnings/incidents) as required.
- Promotion of 'Safer Food Better Business.'
- Promotion and operation of the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme.

- Examination and response to planning and licensing applications and Safety Advisory Group (SAG) consultations in relation to food premises and related food-safety activities in the Borough.

The official controls relating to feed functions, responsibilities and duties are delivered by a range of officers within the Council's regulatory services, reporting to the Lead Feed Officer in Trading Standards. Responsibilities include:

- Feed inspections and other interventions in accordance with the Feed Law Code of Practice.
- Approval and inspection of feed businesses handling feed for non-food producing animals (such as horses) and pets, as well as those businesses selling, processing, and handling feed material for food-producing animals.
- Maintaining a register of feed business establishments for which official interventions are required.
- Investigation of complaints about feed and hygiene at feed premises
- Microbiological feed and environmental sampling.
- Feed sampling for compositional and labelling conformity.
- Investigation of complaints concerning labelling and composition of feed.
- Official controls at the Port for imported feed material and products; sampling and enforcement.

Areas of added value include:

- Food Safety training and advice to support our local existing food businesses, new and proposed food businesses, and consumers on food safety matters where there is a recognised benefit of improvement in compliance with regulatory standards.
- Promotional and educational activities and initiatives based around food safety, food hygiene and food standards as led by the FSA or as part of regional initiatives or topic-based work, where a need has been identified.

As part of the provision of a complete service the team works in conjunction with the following partner organisations:

- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) – provision of Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Services to Local Authorities

Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratory, York
York Biotech Campus, Block 10, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LZ

- The Council's Appointed Public Analyst (Public Analyst Scientific Services) for the examination of food and feed samples and associated labelling and compositional testing

Public Analyst Scientific Services, i54 Business Park, Valiant Way, Wolverhampton, WV9 5GB

- The Animal and Plant Health Agency in Carlisle for queries relating to import/export trading arrangements.
- UK Health Security Agency for Infectious Disease and Food poisoning notifications

North-East Health Protection Team,
Floor 1,
Newcastle Civic Centre,
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH.

7.0 Demands on the Food Service

On 1st April 2026 there were 1079 food premises in South Tyneside in the inspection programme. The number of each type of food business is as follows:

Type of Food Business	Total Number of premises in Category
Producers	12
Manufacturers and Packers	11
Importers / Exporters	2
Distributors / Transporters	13
Retailers	292
Restaurants / Caterers	749
Unrated for hygiene	48
TOTAL	1127

Of these 1127 premises registered in accordance with assimilated Regulation (EC) 852/2004, 6 are approved in accordance with assimilated Regulation (EC) 853/2004. One which was specifically approved by the FSA, has been brought back under local authority control as of February 2024, due to cessation of the raw meat handling operation on site.

The other major food businesses in the borough subject to Approval include two meat preparation manufacturers, one fish processing plant, one ready meal manufacturer, and one cold store.

Most food businesses are involved in catering and have commercial premises from which they trade, but increasingly many businesses in the retail and catering sectors are moving to domestic and on-line services. This means that many of these businesses, which are subject to the same regulatory compliance rules and checks, require greater resource to track and monitor such activities.

Dark kitchens, which are food businesses being carried on from domestic premises and non-registered food premises, operate under the radar of Food Authorities and continue to be a high-risk concern. Any complaints or intelligence identifying the existence of such premises are given high priority for intervention.

Businesses trading under a variety of different names are also regulated effectively by maintaining the Assure database and retaining a single registration and property index for all the trader names.

7.1 Service Delivery

The Environmental Health Service is based at South Shields Town Hall. The reception is open from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm Monday to Friday for public access but service requests and office-based duties are routinely conducted between 9am and 5pm. Many visits are made outside these times, including weekends, as determined by the needs of the service and the trading hours of particular food businesses as required under the Codes of Practice.

In view of the large size of the borough, officers will carry out site visits to take receipt of complaints and to fulfil service requests as necessary.

Out of hours contact is through a 24-hour call centre provided by the Council, issues requiring urgent attention are passed to designated officers for assessment and action as appropriate.

7.2 External Factors

Approximately 97.4% of the population in South Tyneside (based on 2021 census figures) have English as their first language, however there is a significant contingent of Chinese, Turkish, Polish, Bengali, Bangladeshi and Thai Food Business Operators (FBOs) in the Borough. Between 2011 and 2021 census data shows a slight increase in the number of Eastern European/Polish/Punjabi and Portuguese speaking residents in the Borough.^{iv} The service will work with all FBOs to help them comply with food hygiene law, including the provision of guidance interpreted into several languages, the provision of interpreters and facilitating local courses which have been delivered in several different languages.

In particular, the service continues to offer specific Allergen, colourings in food and cross-contamination advisory sessions to the Bengali and Bangladeshi communities to further support compliance with existing and new regulations in this respect.

Officers are kept abreast of emerging food and feed safety risks of imported food using monitoring software (Risk Likelihood Dashboard), through inland imported food checks during routine inspections and as part of the regional food and feed sampling programmes.

Seasonal or occasional food premises inspections include:

- Premises associated with tourism, such as caravan sites, ice cream sales and Bed & Breakfast establishments.
- Farmers markets and food festivals
- Great North Run

- Local events using mobile food traders that are registered outside the Borough.

8.0 Regulation Policy

South Tyneside Council fully supports the approach to good enforcement practice outlined in the Regulators' Code, which came into effect on 6 April 2014 under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. The Council's General Enforcement Policy for Public Protection Services, endorsed by Council in September 2024, aims to deliver improved regulatory outcomes, particularly those related to health, safety, crime reduction, anti-social behaviour, environmental protection, and economic vitality, whilst reducing unnecessary burdens on compliant businesses. A specific Food and Feed Law Enforcement Policy was reviewed and endorsed by Council in September 2024 and takes account of new monetary 'civil sanctions' available to address breaches of relevant offences under some food standards regulations, whilst reinforcing the hierarchical enforcement approach that acknowledges risk, and receptiveness to compliance.

9.0 Service Delivery

9.1 Food Premises Interventions

At inspection, businesses are rated in respect of current adherence to food hygiene and food standards requirements. The Council uses the Food Hygiene Intervention Rating Scheme, as detailed in the Brand Standard for the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and the Food Law Code of Practice, to calculate risk and future inspection frequency.

This ensures that all premises are inspected at an appropriate minimum interval determined by their individual risk rating. This is based on the nature of food handling undertaken, the level of compliance with legal requirements and confidence in food safety management systems. For hygiene matters this frequency ranges from 6 monthly to three yearly, depending on the assessed risk category for the business, and for food standards the range is now 1 month to 120 months:

Figure 1: Food Hygiene Intervention Frequencies

Risk Category	Frequency of Inspection
A	6 months
B	12 months
C	18 months
D	2 years
E	Alternative inspection strategy or every 3 years

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is operated for the benefit of the public purchasing food from premises in South Tyneside to enable them to make an informed choice based on the standard of hygiene.

Ratings of businesses within the scope of the scheme and registered in South Tyneside are given both a risk rating for hygiene inspection frequency and an FHRS rating. The inspection frequency rating is managed via the Environmental Health Information Management system, Assure electronic database, and from this the FHRS ratings are uploaded every 7-14 days onto the National Food Hygiene Rating database which is managed and overseen by the FSA as part of their scheme.^v

Food Premises inspections are carried out according to the Food Standards Agency's Code of Practice. A range of interventions are available to fulfil the competent authority's official controls obligations. The type of intervention depends on the risk category of the food business and is tailored to ensure an adequate assessment of the ongoing risk to food safety, by a competent officer authorised to carry out such assessment. The CoP includes an option to conduct alternative interventions for lower risk premises, verification and surveillance checks as well as non-official interventions such as survey visits or advisory visits.

Self-assessment questionnaires for Category E rated premises are used by South Tyneside Council for very low risk rated food businesses to monitor and gauge food risk activity and to determine whether the business needs to go back into the physical inspection programme. Targeted projects focused on specific business types and inherent food safety risks are conducted in these less frequently inspected premises to assess compliance and to obtain intelligence for future interventions on regulatory compliance. Businesses that fall into this category may be subject to official food controls if intelligence suggests potential non-compliance, or if there is a material change in operating practices suggesting they should no longer be rated 'low risk'.

Authorised Food Officers carry out verification and verification sampling visits as an alternative to full official control inspections for compliant C's and D rated premises as directed by the Lead Food Officer. This approach enables staff resources to be diverted to those higher risk premises not achieving good standards.

In 2023-24, audit based official control inspections for compliant higher risk premises were trialled. It was hoped that the approach would free up officer time on site, whilst maintaining integrity in the intervention programme and allowing a robust assessment of food safety practices for risk rating purposes.

Given the time and complexity of this intervention, it was deemed not suitable in the main and has not formed part of the official intervention programme since.

Similarly, remote interventions were trialled for official hygiene controls during the pandemic and were not deemed appropriate as an alternative to an official on-site food hygiene intervention.

As a result of changes to the Codes of Practice (issued 23rd October 2025) food hygiene and standards official food controls and interventions no longer require a physical site inspection in every case.

Where no physical premises exist for the handling or storage of food - such as online traders, imports, food brokers or those responsible for transport and delivery only - remote hygiene interventions are conducted, alongside remote food standards interventions, by Authorised Food Officers in order to validate compliance with food safety requirements.

From 1st April 2025 initial desktop assessments (previously known as triage assessments) form part of the food standards inspection programme for new food businesses. These assessments must now be undertaken for both food hygiene and food standards separately and determine the timeframe within which the initial official control inspection must be undertaken for each. The initial desktop assessment is conducted by an Authorised Officer who records the inherent risk score profile for food standards based on a mean average score. This determines the anticipated inherent risk for that business and the subsequent initial target date for the full official inspection. Where the target date for food standards is 3 months or less, the official food hygiene inspection will be conducted at the same time. Where the potential food hygiene hazard score suggests the food business is manufacturing food or catering for more than 20 customers/day the initial target date for both the hygiene and food standards official control is brought forward to 28 days.

Anticipated inherent risk	Timescale to undertake initial official control
1 (Serious hazard) or 2 (Significant hazard)	28 days
3 (Minor hazard) or 4 (Low Hazard)	3 months
5 (Very low hazard)	6 months

Figure 2: Official Control timeframe for Food Standards Interventions for New Businesses

Where the anticipated inherent risk indicates a low risk food business, (i.e. food operations which do not involve handling or labelling open food and/ or the hazards associated with the food operations are categorised as very low risk, such that the business only retails or handles a limited range of pre-packed food items), a remote intervention may be considered a suitable official control, negating the need for a physical site inspection. As South Tyneside Council is responsible for regulating both food hygiene and food standards, it is likely that this will only be possible in a very limited number of cases as currently all new food businesses are subject to a physical hygiene inspection. All food safety regulatory compliance is then assessed as part of this risk rating process and provides two risk rating scores, one for hygiene and the other for standards.

Remote official controls have been trialled within the food standards intervention programme for 2025-26. These apply to food businesses that have already been assessed as broadly compliant or better; have been risk rated D or E for food hygiene (as an alternative to an official food inspection); and to new business registrations where no physical premises exist to conduct a hygiene compliance inspection (e.g. Importers, Brokers, online traders only, or distributors). Remote interventions will continue where businesses meet the above criteria and all three criteria set out below:

1. that there is no material change in the food business's operating practices since its last official control that would negatively impact the inherent risk profile score of the business,
2. the business currently falls within the intervention programme of 48 months or above, and is not already due/overdue a food hygiene official control within 6 months and
3. the food business operator is able to provide sufficient evidence of compliance to all relevant food regulations for assessment via electronic means i.e. purchasing invoices can be provided to verify supply chains, menu and allergen information can be uploaded to confirm labelling and compositional standards, staff training records are available etc.

Authorised Officers will determine full compliance and award a new risk rating score based on the remote information obtained. This will then be recorded on the food business record in the MIS, to determine the business's next intervention date based on the inherent risk, and the compliance rating score. See decision matrix (figure 2)

Category E food hygiene rated businesses and those businesses that have obtained a food standards inherent risk and compliance average score of 4 or above, may be subject to alternative enforcement interventions instead of official control rated inspections. At present these take the form of a self-assessment questionnaire which asks the food business operator to furnish the Food Authority with current food safety information and details, reaffirming compliance to relevant food safety requirements. Where low-risk food premises that are in scope to receive a self-assessment questionnaire-, for either food hygiene or standards, and fail to return the completed form, or where a complaint or intelligence suggests food safety concerns are not being adequately controlled on site, then a physical visit or official control inspection will be carried out.

The Environmental Health Management Information system (Assure) is maintained to manage all food and feed premises records, interventions, and other related activities. The software upgrade to Assure is progressing well with all commercial food and safety business activity and service complaints now being logged directly onto the database. On-going functionality and data migration issues are being addressed with the software provider following the latest upgrade. Unfortunately, capability and cost has meant that many of the proposed customer-facing and remote access options are not currently available.

As a result of the latest upgrade in April 2026 to version 25.3.1, statutory returns for the year ending 2025/26 to the FSA, for both food hygiene and food standards, were submitted using the reporting functionality within Assure. The inspection programme

for 2026/27 is scheduled and based on the fully migrated and converted business data using the new intervention schemes.

Some test data was uploaded in early 2025 to assess the potential impact of the changes to the existing programme. The results indicated an increase in high-risk priority businesses, from 2 requiring annual inspections to 15 requiring 6-monthly priority inspections. The number of B-rated food businesses requiring intervention every 24 months also increased, from 280 to 299. However, the changes also brought forward 247 additional food standards interventions, moving C-rated businesses from their original 5 year inspection frequency into the 3- and 4-year inspection programme. The final migrated data has now been completed see 10.2.

Food inspectors will continue to aim to undertake initial contact with new food businesses within 28 days from the trading start date, with likely high-risk caterers or food handlers prioritised. Similarly, where there has been a change in ownership and a likely change in operational practices, higher risk premises will be prioritised for inspection first.

As a result of the new food standards triage process, businesses rated with a 1 or 2 anticipated inherent risk score, will be subject to a full physical hygiene and standards inspection within 28 days of opening wherever possible. This new triage process will over-ride the current hygiene assessment for priority inspection.

Those receiving a triage assessment risk rating of 3 or 4 must be subject to a full inspection within 3 months, and for those low risk rated businesses, which are likely to fall into the low risk category for hygiene too, an initial inspection will be undertaken within 6 months where capacity permits. This will be kept under constant review by the Lead Food Officer

Although the food standards and hygiene intervention programmes are now operating separately and independently, new businesses will not be subject to separate initial official control inspections and will continue to be visited by a duly Authorised Officer who will risk rate both food safety elements at the same time.

To aid monitoring of the food standards initial desk top assessment, all new food registrations will only be processed if a trading date has been confirmed within the forthcoming 8 weeks or if the business is already operating. This is to ensure triage assessments are conducted in a timely manner and in accordance with the timescales specified in the CoP

Following the initial food standards official control intervention/inspection, those businesses identified as requiring a priority intervention will be scheduled further interventions/inspections until broad compliance is achieved. The business will then be assessed based on the decision matrix below and allocated an Intervention frequency of 12 to 120 months.

Businesses can and will now be subject to rescoring and priority rerating following each intervention, but only where the Authorised Officer is satisfied that all relevant regulatory compliance criteria can be sufficiently assessed.

Similarly, if intelligence or information is received that is likely to impact the inherent risk rating score, such as a wet sales pub now offering Sunday carvery meals, this would prompt an earlier intervention resulting in a new risk rating assessment and priority intervention frequency score.

Figure 3: Decision Matrix

Inherent Risk Profile	5	12 Months	24 Months	60 Months	72 Months	120 Months
	4	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	36 Months	48 Months	72 Months
	3	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months	60 Months
	2	Priority Intervention 3 Months	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months
	1	Priority Intervention 1 Month	Priority Intervention 3 Months	Priority Intervention 6 Months	12 Months	24 Months
		1	2	3	4	5
		Compliance Assessment				

9.2 Enforcement Action to Secure Compliance

Food businesses that fail to comply with significant statutory requirements are subject to secondary inspections and appropriate enforcement action in line with the Food Law Enforcement Policy and the General Enforcement Policy. This can include the service of Hygiene Improvement Notices where, for example, work detailed on a previous report has not been completed, or if serious concerns about food safety are identified during an inspection. Where conditions or practices pose an imminent risk to health, on the spot action may be taken, including the immediate closure of premises by the service of a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice.

9.3 Inspection of Specialised (Approved) Premises

These will be undertaken by appropriately trained and authorised officers in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice (England) 23rd October 2025^{vi}. Currently the Lead Food Officer and two Environmental Health Officers are authorised to carry out the statutory functions associated with these food businesses. Any feed businesses requiring approval will be subject to the same process under the direction of the Lead Feed Officer within Trading Standards.

9.4 Food Complaints

Officers assess all complaints received in respect of food produced, stored, distributed, or sold in the South Tyneside area, including contamination, fitness, and durability, as well as food hygiene complaints and reported cases of food poisoning. Feed complaints are managed by the Lead Feed Officer in Trading Standards and allocated to appropriately trained and authorised food officers.

The Council operates an intelligence-led approach to enforcement, and all complaints will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Relevant intelligence is uploaded on to the IDB Intelligence Database to disseminate information to other enforcement agencies and bodies who oversee regulatory functions in other food related fields, trans-border and internationally.

Localised food safety incidents that come to light may have more far-reaching consequences and are reported to the FSA's National Food Crime Unit^{vii} or to the local NFCU Representative. Matters for further action will be investigated in accordance with work instructions and, where appropriate, the Council's Enforcement Policy.

Investigations are usually made in consultation with the local authority with responsibility for the company concerned, the Primary Authority for the national food chain where applicable^{viii}, or the manufacturing premises where the problem may have originated. This approach is intended to ensure that all parties are kept informed, any 'due diligence' defence is identified and that any further action taken is based on investigation findings and information received.

Complaints and requests for the food service appear to be rising t with 244 received in 2025-26 compared to 231 in 2024-25 and 203 in 2023-24

The significant churn in new business registrations continued throughout 2025-26, with operators looking to take on previously closed food businesses but struggling to break into the market and cover the business running costs. Many such premises have changed hands more than twice in the year. The service received 155 new business registration applications and 10 new business advice requests in 2025-26, comparable with the preceding year of 156 new business registrations, and an uplift -of nearly 50% in requests for general food information and advice, from 78 in 2024-25 to 120 in 2025-26. These functions will continue to be met within existing resources but will clearly have an impact on other aspects of service delivery if the trend continues through 2026-27.

9.5 Home and Primary Authority Schemes

The Council is committed to developing good relationships with food businesses in the area and where appropriate establishing Home or Primary Authority Partnership agreements. Although there are currently no formal agreements in place the Council does operate an informal home authority arrangement with a large multi chain retail/catering business whose manufacturing site is in the Borough.

The Council recognises the importance and benefits to all parties and will actively seek opportunities to develop effective partnership agreements as they arise. The Council is also mindful of the potential impact on resources from this work and will endeavour to recover any additional costs through the permitted charging regime.

Officers regularly check the Better Regulation Delivery Office database of existing Primary Authority Partnerships and have regard to any inspection or sampling plans for premises operating in South Tyneside for which they have a duty to consult.

Officers contact the appropriate regulatory authority when considering enforcement action against food businesses outside of the Borough and food officers will also endeavour to meet requests from other local authorities for information or to support investigations in relation to food complaints arising from food produced in South Tyneside. Such matters will be fully investigated in partnership with the business concerned with a view to ascertaining the cause of the complaint and preventing a recurrence. Full reports are provided to the local authorities concerned.

9.6 Food Safety Advice and Training

The team provide advice and support to all food businesses, voluntary groups, charities, and members of the public. The service will target training on key food safety matters to specific groups within the food sector where a need has been identified. The service will also refer food businesses to appropriate training bodies to assist their staff to gain sufficient knowledge to achieve high standards of food hygiene at work, in the community and at home.

The Service regularly undertakes valuable work with food businesses in the borough to educate food business operators and food handlers on their obligations in respect of allergen labelling and controls. The service also aims to raise awareness and to provide suitable information to the public on this important subject.

The new single point of contact for the reporting of allergen complaints and concerns, which was widely publicised in 2025, has not seen any significant impact in reported allergen incidents or complaints thus far. Only 2 such complaints were received via the Customer Contact centre and investigated by the service in 2025-26. The service will continue to investigate all allergen complaints, provide directed support, and take enforcement action as necessary to ensure the ongoing safety of residents and visitors to the Borough.

9.7 Food and Feed Sampling

The Service operates a food/feed sampling and analysis programme to monitor food standards, both compositional and microbiological, in the local food/feed supply and will also assist with national surveillance programmes. The team will investigate food complaints made by the public or received from other intelligence sources as necessary, and food may be examined or analysed, and action taken as appropriate with the producer or retailer.

9.7.1 Informal Microbiological Sampling

Programmed sampling is carried out to:

- determine the microbiological safety of food produced and sold in South Tyneside,
- determine trends in microbiological quality,
- to ascertain whether handling, processing and storage techniques are satisfactory and
- to determine the effectiveness of cleaning and disinfection.

Samples are taken in accordance with agreed sampling parameters under the direction of the testing laboratory and their operating protocols depending on the type of sample, the source of the sample and the conformance criteria to regulatory standards. The sampling programme, which is a live document, is reviewed annually depending on budget allocations and local and national intelligence. It encompasses two elements:

- The South Tyneside sampling programme which comprises the sampling of high-risk food from producers or caterers in the area.
- The 'NE Regional Food Sampling Group' under the direction of the North-East Food Liaison Group and UKHSA's Laboratory in York, establishes a programme of targeted sampling carried out in conjunction with six other local authorities in the region - Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland, and Durham. The regional programme is intelligence-led with sampling focused on environmental factors or food/feed of interest at a national level, for example, new or novel foods coming onto the market, concerns raised about infectious disease and plausible sources of infection, imported food of national interest, or emerging risks identified from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (a European electronic database set up to exchange information about serious risks detected in imported or exported food or feed and a useful intelligence tool to direct resource and attention).

All Microbiological food samples are collected and transported to York for examination by an appointed courier. All costs for this service are currently met from a UKHSA budget using a unit per suite of tests calculation. This is currently being reviewed, as are the unit allocation figures awarded to each Food Authority, which are based on population and food business density.

90% of South Tyneside's allocated units were used in 2025-26, significantly exceeding usage levels in other regional authorities. A substantial proportion of this allocation was used for environmental and food sampling to support the food intervention programme.

Following a review of its service costs, York laboratory has proposed changes to the allocation of local authority sampling units, moving to a credit based system. Previously, units were allocated based on population size and the complexity of each authority's food and water sampling requirements.

The new credit system will reflect the increase in costs of the sample tests now being conducted on routine screening and provide a charging mechanism for training and other services that are currently offered free of charge. This will ensure that Local Authorities utilise their credits more effectively.

The credits will be allocated to each Authority, based on a 5 year average of units spent. It is therefore anticipated that there will be no material impact on the food service's ability to deliver the planned sampling programme in full. Any potential shortfalls, emerging risks, or new food business challenges, where additional credits are required may be reallocated by UKHSA under the direction of the NEFLG. All food and feed samples undergoing analysis for non-microbiological contamination, are collected, and transported to the Metrology Laboratory in Gateshead, as a holding facility, for collection by the Public Analyst courier.

The costs of directed surveillance on specific feed sampling projects are generally funded by the North-East Trading Standards Association via government funding, freeing up the Council budget for local issues of concern. Currently no planned feed sampling programme has been identified for 2026-27 based on the types of feed businesses in the Borough and the national feed and food priorities proposed for 2026-27^{ix}. The Lead Food Officer in conjunction with the Lead Feed Officer will keep this position under review, together with the overall needs of the food sampling programme.

It is expected that successful, local work on allergen enforcement will continue through 2026-27, with officers directed to undertake targeted interventions where there are concerns of poor performing businesses who may pose a risk to consumers.

9.7.2 Formal Examination and Analysis

Formal food samples are collected by an Authorised Officer of the Council and submitted for formal examination by a Food Examiner provided by the UKHSA laboratory at York. The Food Examiner then provides a written report on microbiological safety and compliance with food safety guidelines.

Should the need arise, food/feed samples or items requiring formal analysis in respect of their compositional safety or because of suspected contamination/substitution from a non-microbiological source, may be sampled, taken, or seized by an Authorised Officer and sent for formal testing and examination by the Council's appointed Public Analyst (PA). The PA also issues a report on their findings and confirms whether the sample conforms to legal parameters, directing the Food/Feed Officer's next course of action. Informal and formal samples are taken and handled in accordance with the team's work instructions.

Reasons for analytical sampling are:

- to test for unauthorised constituents in food, or chemical or allergenic ingredient contamination of food, to protect health
- to identify physical contaminants and assess their potential risk factors and advise FBOs accordingly

- confirm speciation, adulteration, and substitution of ingredients with inferior products for financial or market advantage, promoting fair trade and deterring bad practice.
- Ensure that food is labelled and contains mandatory information enabling consumers to make informed choices based on accurate product information
- To assess product safety and food packaging materials in line with specified standards

9.7.3 Water Samples

Water samples of public and school swimming pools are collected in conjunction with South Tyneside Council's Leisure services team. Private commercial pools, hydrotherapy baths and water and ice samples from approved premises are also subject to microbiological examination on a scheduled basis.

All the above sampling activities are met from within existing resources, with the cost of informal food sample analysis funded by a credit system operated by the UKHSA, York laboratory. South Tyneside's current (and consistent) allocation is 10382 credits for 2025-26, with the cost of food, water and environmental samples ranging from 10-35 credits depending on the complexity of the test. The new credit allocations have not yet been publicised, although it is anticipated that local authorities will be submitting samples using the new credit system from 2026-27. 52 pool water quality and hydrotherapy samples were taken in 2025-26 compared to 48 the previous year, including 9 samples of private drinking water including from event catering standpipes, and 22 for water used as an ingredient in food.

9.8 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Cases of Food Related Infectious Disease

The team work closely with the UK Health Security Agency, to investigate sporadic and linked cases of gastrointestinal illness and outbreaks.

In the event of sporadic cases this is usually achieved by completing telephone questionnaires with each case, requesting targeted information to identify the potential source of the infection, and providing advice to prevent further spread within the family household and through the community setting from employment contacts. This screening aims to identify potential outbreaks, helps to promote good hygiene practices, and enables analysis of information gained from the investigation.

Where telephone investigations are not feasible, officers carry out home visits or hospital visits to collect information from the case or close family.

Complex or potentially linked infections are investigated in association with neighbouring Local Authority officers where cases of infection cross local authority boundaries, and in conjunction with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control/Consultant in Health Protection/Regional Epidemiologist/Unit Director at UKHSA, who act as the Council's Proper Officer for the reporting, investigation and overseeing of notifiable diseases.

Outbreak investigations are carried out in accordance with the team's work instructions, UKHSA's Outbreak control guidelines for the specific disease and where appropriate the South of Tyne Outbreak Control Plan. Investigations of outbreaks can be extremely time consuming and take priority over other work.

Historical data indicates that typically 250 cases of gastrointestinal illness are formally notified to South Tyneside Council each year from laboratory test results. However, the food poisoning case numbers are fluctuating year on year with various reasons cited including improved laboratory sampling techniques, changes in peoples eating habits and patterns, access to GPs/hospitals for stool samples submissions and improved reporting.

327 notified Food poisoning infections were received by the service in 2025-26 (including 233 *Campylobacter* infections) compared to 384 in 2024/25 (of which 227 were due to *Campylobacter*). The vast majority of food poisoning related infections are due to *Campylobacter* which is a national concern. The numbers remain relatively constant in the borough year on year. Some previous spikes in infection rates have been subject to more detailed investigation by the service and UKHSA to try to extrapolate point sources of infection, however these further investigations have been unsuccessful.

9.9 Food Safety Incidents

All food safety incidents and food alerts for action, as notified by the FSA are actioned in accordance with standard operating procedures, and the Food Law Practical Guidance (England) issued October 2025.

The team maintain a dedicated mailbox to receive all such notifications; this is regularly monitored during the day. Food Alerts for action are treated as high priority and are responded to within 24 hours, with any required action given priority. Where action is required, this is usually carried out in conjunction with members of the North-East Food Liaison Group to ensure consistency.

It is anticipated that between 1-3 national food safety incidents occur each year, requiring local officer intervention on a large scale to contain and manage product recall and withdrawal of food from various catering and/or retail outlets in the Borough. Again, such incidents will be managed within existing resources. In 2025-26, two alerts for action were received requiring intervention by Authorised Officers. One involved the wide distribution of Dubai chocolate that was not labelled in accordance with GB requirements, with missing allergen ingredient information. Additionally, due to the pistachio content not having undergone appropriate import checks, the products were found to be contaminated with *Salmonella*. Officers were deployed to suspected outlets following intelligence and seized and destroyed any non-compliant products identified.

The second alert related to a growing trend in imported American confectionary and drinks that were found to contain unauthorised additives and colourings, along with labelling deficiencies that hindered effective traceability across supply chains. This led to the seizure and detention of significant quantities of product from a range of retailers and market stallholders across the Borough.

9.10 Liaison with Other Organisations

South Tyneside Council is a member of the NE Food Liaison Group (NEFLG), which meets approximately 5-8 times a year and the North-East Trading Standards Group (NETSA) which meets 4 times a year. These groups provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and new initiatives and to develop a consistent approach to all aspects of food/feed law enforcement and service delivery, as well as the development of guidance and best practice. It also provides a vehicle for liaison with other agencies (such as North-East Trading Standards Intelligence Team, Food Standards Agency, the National Food Crime Unit, UKHSA) and other groups such as the National Food Liaison Group and sub-regional food sampling groups. The NEFLG and NETSA also maintain strong links to other regional county groups in the North of England and national groups.

The Council is also represented on the North-East Public Protection Partnership (NEPPP), which maintains a more strategic overview of public protection in the region.

9.11 Food Safety Promotion and Non-Official Controls

South Tyneside Council having adopted the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme in 2012, continues to promote the benefits of a rating of 3-5 to food business operators and the public, during programmed visits and through promotional activity.

The effectiveness of the scheme is evaluated through periodic monitoring of a proportion of premises in the higher rating bands and promotion of those food businesses in local advertising campaigns. Conversely poor performing food businesses are often highlighted in local news feeds and social media sites outside the control of the Council, which require validation and verification of data.

9.12 Food Officer Competency

The competency of authorised food officers and quality of work undertaken by the Commercial Food and Safety Team are subject to checks and audits in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. Interventions and recorded work of all inspection staff is regularly monitored to ensure conformance with standard operating procedures and Food Law Guidance. Only staff deemed competent and subsequently authorised to undertake official controls are allocated these tasks.

New staff, or those that have been absent for a specific period are subject to supervision until deemed competent. The same applies to duly authorised consultants brought in to deliver aspects of the inspection programme. Competence criteria and additional training needs to ensure staff compliance with the Food Law Code of Practice will continue to be assessed by the Lead Food Officer, who will monitor the staffing requirements necessary to deliver the food law service plan and meet the official control duties laid out in the Food Law Code of Practice.

In-house training sessions, consistency, and peer review exercises, together with 1-2-1 management meetings, provide support and direction to staff on service delivery

and ensures consistency of approach for businesses and customers across the region. Additional formal training is carried out in conjunction with the North-East Food Liaison Group, North-East Public Protection Partnership, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the FSA and their associated training providers. To maintain competency and deliver certain official food/feed controls in accordance with the Codes of Practice, a minimum 20 hours of continued professional development is required, annually, 10 of which must be in the specialist field of service delivery.

In-house training is also provided in relation to information technology, the various electronic databases used by the food/feed team and the M3/Assure Environmental Health Information Management System, as necessary.

9.13 Feed Officer Competency

Training in essential core competencies is maintained through in-house training and in conjunction with various regional partner agencies and external training providers, to ensure authorised officers meet the competency requirements as detailed in the Feed Law CoP

Training for officers undertaking feed hygiene duties is primarily co-ordinated through the North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA). This will continue throughout 2026/2027.

In addition, all feed hygiene enforcement officers have access to up-to-date reference material via dedicated websites, including Knowledge Hub forums and groups, Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the FSA. All officers engaged in feeding stuffs enforcement aim to complete their mandatory 10 hours CPD each year. Officers who have been absent for more than 3 years will be subject to training and supervision until deemed competent in both food and feed duties by their respective Lead Officers.

10.0 Premises Profile

10.1 Number of Food Premises

As of 31st March 2026, there were 1081 food premises on the South Tyneside food database. (13 of which fall outside the inspection programme). The table below shows the number of food businesses in each premises category.

Premises Category	Total number of premises in category
Producers	11(8)
Manufacturers/Packers	17(14)
Importers	2 (2)
Distributors	13 (13)
Retailers	292(293)
Restaurants and Caterers (incl. pubs)	746 (768)
Total	1081(1098)
Unrated	48 (50)

New food business applications	155 (148)
Businesses closed in previous year (incl. data cleansing)	31 (52)

Figures in brackets relate to March 2025 for comparison.

At 31st March 2026, the breakdown of South Tyneside food businesses, by risk rating category was as follows:

Risk rating	Premises category	Premises Score	Frequency of Inspection	Total number of premises in Category	Premises due an intervention in 2026-27
A	High	92 or higher	6 months	0 (1)	0
B	High	72 to 91	12 months	28 (26)	28
C	High	52 to 71	18 months	183(182)	116
D	Low	31 to 51	24 months	382 (381)	181 (207) + 26 overdue from 20253-26
E	Low	0 to 30	Alternative interventions (36 months)	449 (447)	101 AEQs + 8 overdue and 340 official control interventions
Unrated	Other	N/A	New premises within 28 days of registration	39 (50)	36 + approx. 150 new registrations
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	1081	N/A
Outside Programme	Other	N/A	N/A	13 (11)	2

Figures in brackets relate to 2025 for comparison.

*Ongoing data cleansing exercises and targeted administrative interventions during 2025-26, as a result of migration to the Assure database, has ensured more up-to-date details of traders operating in the borough. Due to the complexities of maintaining the database, much of the data cleansing has been conducted by the Lead Food Officer, diverting resources from front line work.

10.2 Food Standards

The FSA has revised the programmed intervention inspection frequency for food standards related activities in food businesses, based on two separate risk elements. This new Food Standards Delivery Model came into effect with the new Codes of Practice issued in June 2023. Interim and phase-in arrangements expired on the 31st March 2025, and Competent Authorities are required to inspect and record inspection intervention frequencies according to the new food standards delivery model from the 1st April 2025.

Interventions for high risk/ high priority rated premises are restricted to inspections, partial inspections and audits, requiring physical inspections under the current and new intervention programme. Lower risk rated / lower priority businesses may be subject to other official interventions such as analytical sampling, monitoring, surveillance or verification checks and remote intervention as part of the due

interventions, and non-official controls such as remote interventions or alternative strategy programmes (such as interim assessment and monitoring of business activity) to ensure the business remains in its appropriate priority risk rating category. Those falling within the medium risk rating will be captured either by conducting targeted interventions as a result of surveillance, intelligence or service requests, or as a joint intervention alongside the due hygiene inspection.

The following table provides the business data converted into the new FSDM rating scheme. This information is based on the old rating scores and an auto- mapping of risk profiles, based on business type as directed by the FSA. There remains some historic records that cannot be converted into the new delivery model format and some ongoing data bugs in the MIS which are preventing accurate mapping of some records into their respective priority rating. As businesses are subjected to food standards interventions, data entries will be updated to provide a more accurate reflection of the inherent risks and compliance scores relevant to each business, allowing better priority focusing of interventions going forward.

Where businesses are visited following requests for service or intelligence, the new CoP allow for rescoring risk rating profiles, further improving the database.

New Scheme Premises Database Profile

Priority	Intervention Frequency	Total Number of Premises in Category as at 1.4.2025	Total Number of Premises in category as of 1.4.2026 and due an intervention in 26-27	Intervention Strategy
High Priority 1	1 month	0	0	Full inspection
High Priority 2	3 month	0	0	Full inspection
High Priority 3	6 month	16	0	Full inspection
Medium Risk 1	12 months	5	11 (10)	Full/Partial/Audit/Remote /
Medium Risk2	24 months	277	288 (160)	Full/partial/audit/Remote
Medium Risk 3	36 months	214	214 (84)	Full/partial/audit/Remote
Low Risk 1	48 months	91	131 (34)	Alternating full and Remote
Low Risk 2	60 months	224	184 (75)	Remote/Alternative
Low Risk 3	72 months	146	161 (42)	Remote/Alternative
Low Risk 4	120 months	0	6 (0)	Remote/Alternative
Unrated/outside programme		13		
Data Mapping issues showing old risk rating			60 (15)	Full inspection

It is expected that officers will aim to use the new remote intervention strategies for those businesses that are deemed suitable, i.e. those already rated low risk and/or not having a physical premises to inspect (counted as an official control) or as an alternative non official control intervention in medium risk rated businesses. Self-assessment/ alternative enforcement strategies may also be undertaken for all low priority rated premises, if additional administrative resource can be secured within the team.

10.3 Feed Premises

Businesses (including primary producers) supplying, handling, selling, transporting and distributing feed products for food animals, are subject to inspection and official controls as defined in the FSA Feed Law Codes of Practice and associated guidance,

in the same way as food for human consumption.^x Interventions and enforcement action are conducted in much the same way by authorised feed officers within the Commercial Food and Safety Team, under the direction of the Lead Feed Officer in the Trading Standards Team.

At 31st March 2026, the breakdown of feed businesses by category, in the area was as follows:

Business Type/Premises category	Total number of premises in Category
R5 Marketing compound feed	1
R6 Manufacturing pet food	1
R7 Manu. & marketing of feed materials	11
R8 Transport	1
R9 Storage	4
R10/11 mixing on farm feed with additives	0
R12 co-products/by-products as feed materials	0
R13 Livestock farms no additives	7 (1 unrated)
R14 Arable farms food/feed	6
Total	31

There are currently no feed businesses in South Tyneside subject to Approval controls for the operation of high-risk feed activities. Based on revisions to the Feed Codes of Practice risk rating and inspection programme, those lower risk rated feed businesses falling into the R13 and R14 categories, which are current members of a recognised assurance scheme, are subject to the national targeted monitoring strategy (NTMS). This means that only a percentage of these inspections are required each year based on the proportion of total premises numbers within these categories in the Borough.

Priority	Premises category risk	Premises Score	Frequency of Inspection	Total number of premises in Category
A	High	147 -200	12 months	0
B	High	122 to 146	24 months*	0
C	Satisfactory	106 to 121	36 months*	0
D	Low	85 to 105	48 months *	2
E	Low	0 to 84	60 months**	29
Unrated	Other	N/A	N/A	1
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	32

*except where Type 1 earned recognition applies

** except where Type 1, Type 2 earned recognition or NTMS applies

Feed inspections and sampling are carried out in conjunction with the national feed surveillance programmes based on priorities identified nationally, emerging risks and intelligence from a variety of sources. Funding for much of the feed inspection programme is supplemented through the North-East Trading Standards Association and central government funding.

Currently there are 8 arable and livestock farms registered with Type 1 recognised assurance schemes within the Borough. Based on the numbers of feed businesses, the priorities of the feed inspection programme in accordance with the Feed Law Codes of Practice, and regional surveillance recommendations, approximately 6 premises are subject to routine official feed inspections/interventions each year.

Food Import Official controls fall to the Port Health Authority to manage and oversee in accordance with the Official Food and Feed Control Regulations. These are managed by Tyne Port Health Authority under the direction of North Tyneside Council.

Inland imported food and feed controls fall to the Authority within whose boundary the food/feed resides when subject to the official control. In the case of Imported Feed coming into the Port of Tyne, the responsibility for official controls rests with the riparian port Authority, which in this case is South Tyneside.

Regular check ins are conducted with the Port's Head of Operations to assess future intentions regarding feed import plans. Incoming ship manifests (forwarded from the shipping agents) are regularly monitored, to check container consignments of feed and potential feed material coming into the Port. No known feed imports requiring official controls have been identified in the last 48 months and therefore there has not been a need for more directed resource to officiate the necessary feed controls. As a result, the service has reverted to importer shipping manifest checks alone as a means of monitoring activity, rather than a combination of both manifest and Destin8 checks (a costed maritime cargo processing electronic database), to assess the nature and volume of imported feed materials/products. This remains the most effective way of checking incoming consignments on container ships into the Port of Tyne.

11.0 Performance Monitoring

11.1 Interventions at Food Establishments 2025/2026

Food Hygiene Interventions undertaken in 2025/26 (by category of premises) are as follows; the figures include all official interventions, but do not include revisits, sampling visits, surveillance checks, electronic remote interventions or advisory visits.

Risk Rating	A	B	C	D	E
Interventions Due	0 (2)	20 (22)	112 (95)	221(168)	104 (100)
% of due official interventions completed	N/A	100%	99%	88%	92%

Figures in brackets relate to completed inspections undertaken in 2024-25 for comparison.

A number of businesses were closed during this period and had not reopened by the end of the accounting year. Any that have reopened and re-registered are put back into the inspection programme. In addition to the programmed inspections, 134 new business inspections were completed this year compared to 108 in the previous year.

11.2 Number of Revisits in 2025/26

49 revisits and 44 hygiene rating assessments were recorded for food hygiene and safety related matters, to check for compliance and to determine the need for more formal intervention, compared to 45 and 32 respectively for 2024/25. The current

charge for a re-rating assessment is £219 (including VAT). Free re-rating assessments are provided for businesses that complete costly structural repairs, as an incentive to aid full compliance. This free assessment relates only to the structural element of the business's hygiene rating score. Officer feedback suggests this has significantly improved business engagement and provides a positive base for further regulatory compliance.

11.3 Requests for Service in 2025/26

Requests for service include concerns regarding the condition of the premises, or food with microbiological or physical contamination. (Figures in brackets relate to service requests for 2024-25 for comparison purposes)

Hygiene of Premises	Food Complaints
160 (57)	103(110)

Figures in brackets relate to 2024-25 for comparison.

11.4 Enforcement Action taken in 2025/26 for Food Hygiene and Standards contraventions

Written Warnings	308
Informal Notices	18
Hygiene Improvement Notices	4
Standards Improvement Notices	2
Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices	0
Remedial Action Notices	0
Seizure, Detention, Voluntary surrender of food	9
Simple Cautions	0
Prosecutions	0

Inspection letters and reports for high-risk premises, provide food business operators with a schedule of works detailing non-conformities witnessed during the intervention and action required to meet full compliance to relevant regulations. These letters are generated for all food business operators following an official food control inspection/intervention. Business operators are given the opportunity to respond to the inspection report and to request further advice by returning an operator's response form, either in a prepaid envelope or electronically. This is considered an effective tool for communication and improving the quality of the service.

11.5 Interventions at Feed Establishments 2025/2026

Feed Hygiene Interventions undertaken in 2025/26 (by category of premises) in accordance with the FSA's national enforcement priorities for animal feed and primary food production and the priority interventions proposed by NETSA are as follows:

Business Type/Premises category	Number of Inspections due 2025/26	Number of inspections completed	Percentage of interventions completed
R09 Feed Stores	2	2	100%
R07 – Surplus food/Supplier of Feed material	2	2	100%
R13 – livestock farms	2	0 (selected farms no longer have livestock)	N/A
R14 – arable farms	2	2	100%

12.0 Priorities for 2026-27

The cost of living and energy crises have compounded the effect of the covid pandemic, with many surviving small caterers and retailers struggling to open or remain viable since 2021/22. The food business landscape, including patterns of trading times, have changed significantly, with increased potential for food fraud and the introduction of shortcuts in food safety processes. Many businesses have ceased to trade on a permanent basis, whilst others have adopted new business models, including providing takeaway and delivery services.

Many more small food businesses are setting up from home or have established online trading platforms, importing direct from overseas and delivering direct to their customer base. Many others have goods white labelled for them or manufactured by third party providers and distribute nationally and internationally. In these scenarios identification of food business operators with a can prove very difficult. Food Authorities still need to conduct official food safety checks on these activities to ensure operators are carrying out the necessary checks on the safety of their goods, are applying the required mandatory labelling information and are not misleading consumers as to the safety or health benefits of their products without substantive scientific evidence. Additionally, many more online food businesses remain unaware of their legal obligations to register the premises with the Food Authority unless they are tracked down by regulators and referred on to their Home Authority

This had led the FSA to consider reviewing the way intelligence about such activity is shared between regulatory bodies and how this should be reflected in the priority inspection programme, leading to the development and implementation of the new food standards delivery model.

As a result of globalisation and easy access to unregulated products internationally, the FSA see that more resource should be directed to dealing with these products inland and have requested that food authorities reprioritise their programmes in line

with the new rating scheme, to try and address growing trends in potentially unsafe products entering the GB market that are not subject to regulatory checks at the border control posts.

As of 18 December 2025, Great Britain introduced an EU wide ban on the personal import of fresh meat, meat products, milk, dairy products, colostrum, colostrum products and certain composite products and animal by-products of ruminant and porcine origin. This measure was implemented in response to multiple disease outbreaks across the EU. The continued high risk associated with non-commercial imports of pork products from African swine fever (ASF) affected areas remains a significant concern. Inspections at ports in Great Britain indicate that some vehicles are illegally transporting pork products from ASF-affected regions of the EU. Food and Feed Officers must therefore remain vigilant during interventions to ensure such products are detained and seized, preventing their entry into the food and feed chain and reducing the risk of introducing this highly pathogenic virus into the GB livestock population.

Currently food standards interventions are generally conducted alongside food hygiene inspections where businesses are due or overdue this type of official control in the existing programme.

Following changes to the CoPs and the rating priorities for some previously lower risk-rated food businesses, the food standards intervention programme has been scaled up considerably.

The New Food Standards delivery model has brought the vast majority of food businesses into the medium risk priority inspection programme, requiring an intervention frequency of 3 years or less. Consequently, a substantial review of migrated data is required to ensure that risk ratings accurately reflect the food safety risks posed and that prioritisation within the programme is robust.

The MIS is unfortunately unable to map the hygiene and food standards programmes together and current staff resources are insufficient to undertake separate and independent interventions at the volume required to meet the Codes of Practice for both programmes. Further direction is awaited from the FSA as to how and what the focus and priority will be over the coming months/years. The FSA is aware of the lack of competent officers to deliver Official Food controls, the pressures on Council budgets to employ staff in this sector, and ongoing recruitment and retention issues nationally. The latest CoP reviews have attempted to free up resources by re-prioritising and re-classifying rating scores and removing the officer competency criteria restrictions for some lower interventions. However, these changes have significantly increased the administrative burden of managing and maintaining the MIS in order to deliver the programmes in accordance with the CoP

The main focus for South Tyneside's Food Service for 2026-27 will be to complete an inspection of all businesses currently unrated and those assigned a medium risk rating of 12 months or less for food standards, and to address any that fall into the priority intervention category during the year.

The service will continue to focus resource on the A-C risk rated hygiene programme and non-compliant D food businesses, alongside High priority and Medium Risk 1 (12 months) rated food standards, conducting dual hygiene and standards interventions where they identify as being due within 3-6 months or are overdue.

Should additional funding be secured to assist delivery, these will be used to clear the running backlog of Ds and Es in the programme. However, the administrative impact of the additional data entry required following completed interventions must also be factored into resource planning.

The FSA's new KPI for new business assessment and intervention times, for initial hygiene and standards official controls, don't currently align in the CoPs. This administrative disparity means that recording them separately on the MIS will create even more confusion. Whilst all reasonable efforts are made to record the due hygiene and standards initial official control on an excel spreadsheet, the focus of resource has been to complete the inspections in person within 3 months, rather than to log the desktop triage assessments on the MIS.

Additional business support is required to assist with the data entry if this is to remain an FSA priority.

In order to address the variation in intervention frequencies for hygiene and standards official controls for new businesses, where a food business has an anticipated hygiene potential hazard score between 30-97, i.e. is likely to be serving high risk food to more than 20 consumers a day, is intending to serve high risk clientele (elderly, vulnerable, under 5 yrs old) or is likely to be undertaking high risk food operations (e.g sous vide, cook chill) in the course of their business, then the official control intervention will be brought forward to 28 days. In all other cases the initial official control will be completed in accordance with the food standards delivery model.

This will enable Authorised Officers to focus attention on the higher risk priority programme for food standards and undertake more targeted projects to deal with illegal imports and removing unsafe food products from the local market.

Similarly, following changes to the CoP there are now opportunities to utilise appropriately trained but unauthorised staff to undertake certain non-official food standards interventions under the direction of the Lead Food Officer. Should additional resource be secured this approach would help to free up qualified Authorised Officers to focus on delivery of the priority inspection and intervention programme, increasing capacity for revisits and other targeted interventions that significantly improve business compliance.

UKHSAs credit allocation for hygiene sampling will continue to be used to support the hygiene intervention programme with the Regulatory Sampling Officer carrying out verification checks on current compliant lower risk rated food businesses, to verify that standards of food safety and hygiene are being maintained year on year. Although resource intensive, this intervention has proved successful in monitoring and maintaining hygiene standards and provides valuable feedback to Officers who are required to then conduct an Official Control off the back of poor sampling results.

Maintaining regular face to face contact with food businesses helps reduce the risk of hygiene and safety standards deteriorating to unacceptable levels, triggering the need for more formal enforcement action. This was clearly evident following the reduction in interventions during and post COVID. The hike in energy costs and minimum wage costs have too seen businesses in the hospitality sector struggle, shifting opening times to evenings and weekends, and a notable drop in overall hygiene compliance standards due to staff turnover and competency of food handlers. It is therefore essential that the service continues to conduct face-to-face interventions to ensure standards don't deteriorate further.

The main priorities of the hygiene intervention programme were met last year with existing staff resource, plus an external consultant employed to deliver 70 interventions over a 3 month period. The added burden of an additional 300+ food standards inspections, required as a result of the new food standards priority intervention programme, will mean that the service will need to significantly review its priorities, unless significant additional resource can be identified, the service will fail to deliver and meet all of its obligations in the framework agreement for 2026-27, in line with the CoP

Many of the Borough's takeaway establishments continue to operate restricted opening times such as evenings only and/or weekends. These new ways of working inevitably impact delivery of the inspection programme as there is no corresponding reduction in demand for services during regular daytime hours.

Food Hygiene rating scores and compliance rates for hygiene are used to provide a benchmark as to whether targeted interventions are having an overall impact on hygiene and food safety standards.

The Food Hygiene rating scheme which rates overall hygiene and food safety compliance has shown an increase in 0-2 rated businesses to 38 from 29 last year with defective structural issues and inadequate allergen controls being the main reason for this increase.

This reflects an increasing trend of officers encountering food businesses that are struggling to maintain the structural fabric of their establishments, often due to a lack of investment in repairs by landlords. At the same time, there has been a rise in operators moving into former retail units following changes to planning use classes, as well as occupying sites not previously used as food establishments in order to avoid the higher costs associated with the commercial rental market. As a result, these premises frequently require significant upgrades – including improved ventilation systems, toilet provision, and other hygiene facilities – to meet food premises standards. This places additional demands on officer time and resources to support and regulate compliance.

Addressing non-compliant and repeat poor performing food businesses will remain the primary focus of staff resources in this years' service plan, with priority given to clearing any backlogs from previous years. Officers will utilise the range of official interventions for better performing businesses, to free up officer time and will look to develop other

appropriate intervention strategies to reduce the burden of written administrative functions within the service. Unfortunately, paper-based inspection records, which must then be individually scanned in and many of the ongoing business communications, have not yet been converted to suitable IT systems. Streamlining communications effectively to free up officer time remains an ongoing commitment.

The numbers of due food hygiene inspections for A-C risk rated businesses remains relatively the same as last year. A large proportion of C rated food businesses were subject to a full inspection on their last intervention which if they met the criteria, could be subject to a reduced verification and surveillance check, freeing up officer time and administration.

The FSA as the Central Competent Authority (CCA) responsible for the delivery of official food and feed controls in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales now require bi-annual statistical returns (April-Sept and Oct-March) for both food hygiene and food standards, to assess appropriate delivery of all official food controls by each Authority, as part of the statutory single data set returns.

Food standards returns are now submitted via five automatically generated reports. These comprise:

- **Establishment Data Report** – providing details of business profiles, risk rating scores, and intervention dates;
- **Interventions Report** – outlining the types of official and non-official controls undertaken;
- **Sampling Report** – detailing food and food material samples taken, including results and any associated follow-up action;
- **Enforcement Report** – detailing the type and level of action taken to secure compliance;
- **Prosecution Extract** – covering legal proceedings; and
- **Service Demand Report** – capturing complaints and food-related incidents, including the relevant area and the outcomes of interventions.

Together, these reports provide a comprehensive overview of food standards activity and performance.

The food standards returns are now by way of 5 automatically generated reports. This includes a full report on Establishment Data detailing business profiles, risk rating scores and dates of interventions ; an Intervention report detailing the type(s) of official and non-official controls carried out; a Sampling report of food and food material samples taken, the outcome and follow up activity associated with the sample, an Enforcement report which covers the type and level of action taken to secure compliance; a Prosecution extract of legal proceedings and finally a Service Demand report on complaints and food related incidents, the area it relates to and the outcome of the intervention taken.

The FSA will analyse the data contained within these reports to assess each Food Authority's ability to deliver Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the following areas:

- Prioritising food safety risks
- Effective use of intelligence

- Effecting a positive change in compliance
- Delivery of local sampling programmes
- Management of risk associated with new food businesses.

It is anticipated that separate KPIs and data returns will be required for food hygiene, together with more frequent reporting as the FSA seeks to introduce more timely and interactive data sharing with local authorities to support closer monitoring of performance. The FSA has shown an interest in establishing league tables to compare Food Authority compliance with the Framework Agreement.

Since the pandemic there has been a large turnover in new businesses starting up and closing in South Tyneside, which is extremely resource intensive to manage.

This position, coupled with operators taking advantage of planning law changes which permit retailer units to be converted to food establishments/cafes without a material change of use, has seen many new businesses open up in unsuitable locations or without appropriate safeguards in place.

National shortages of competent food handlers in the industry, energy cost pressures and a lack of turnover have seen many food businesses close, with the escalating costs of essential repairs and structural maintenance being handed onto new operators hoping to break into the market. Additionally, allergen awareness and information, the opening up of the global food market and variations in food safety requirements from non-EU food supply chains are now factored into the risk rating models which will impact the frequency of official control interventions required in food businesses across the board. These matters will be kept under constant review to ensure services continue to target the highest food safety priorities identified in the Borough.

Standard Priorities are as follows:

- Ensure adequate arrangements are in place to deliver the Food Hygiene Inspection programme for 2026-27, including appropriate interventions to address the backlog of inspections carried forward from 2025-26.
- Deliver the Food Hygiene Inspection Programme for 2025 -26 and include for the delivery of more risk-based, proportionate, targeted, and cost-effective Official Controls in the lower risk rated premises.
- Ensure adequate arrangements are in place to deliver official food controls for food standards for food businesses that have been mapped as High Priority 1, 2, 3 and Medium Risk 1 for 2026-27 and to conduct dual hygiene and standards official controls in those that meet the Medium Priority 2 & 3 categories.
- To conduct priority triaging (now desk top assessments) for all new businesses from 1st April 2025 as required under the CoP in relation to food standards and tailoring the subsequent risk rating inspection for hygiene and standards within the timescales specified.

- Ensure adequate arrangements are in place to deliver the Feed Inspection programme for 2026-27 and ensure staff are given sufficient instruction and training to meet the competency requirements to deliver the required official feed controls in South Tyneside and to take appropriate enforcement action where necessary. Succession planning arrangements are in place for the current Lead Feed Officer, with an existing Fair-Trading Officer undertaking the relevant training module to meet the agricultural competency requirements for the role of Lead Feed Officer once the existing post holder retires.
- Maintain competency to provide Export Health Certification services for businesses exporting to EU and other third Countries. The ongoing training requirements/ assessment criteria afforded to Food Competent Certifying Officers to deliver Official Controls for the export of fish and egg products to Europe, will be kept under regular review against consideration of impact on other priorities for the Food service. Following potential changes to trade agreements with Europe and commitments to realign food safety and quality standards to facilitate this trade, ongoing competency requirements will be maintained until 2026.
- To review and update all food related work instructions / policies following changes to legislation and operating practices.
- To ensure implementation of the requirements of the FSA's revised 'Regulating our Futures' programme to modernise food safety enforcement and ensure it is sustainable for the future.
- To adopt the additional requirements of the FSA competency framework and ensure sufficiently competent and authorised staff are maintained within the food team to deliver the required official controls in accordance with the Codes of Practice.
- To continue to monitor the resource allocated to food Safety enforcement to ensure it is adequate to meet the demands of the service, including carrying out new food business interventions in a timely manner.
- To continue to provide effective food and feed registration interventions, prioritising high-risk and non-compliant premises.
- To continue to carry out follow-up interventions to 0, 1 and 2 food hygiene rated premises to secure long-term improvements in food safety standards.
- To continue to use the full range of enforcement tools available to protect the safety, health and welfare of visitors, residents, and workers within the borough, and to support compliant businesses in accordance with the revised Food and Feed Law Enforcement Policy 2024.
- To continue to participate in the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, conduct FHRS reassessment visits in accordance with the Brand Standard and

maintain the MIS to retain confidence in the accuracy of the Authority's business records held in this national database.

- Improve 'self-help' information available to businesses/public.
- Sampling food, water, and environmental conditions in accordance with the agreed NE Food Liaison Group / UKHSA sampling programmes.
- Investigate notifications of infectious disease/ suspected outbreaks as appropriate.
- Continue working with businesses to promote understanding of the requirements of the Food Information Regulations 2014 and their legal obligations in respect of the provision of allergen information through targeted interventions.
- Maintain provision of food safety training and advice for sector specific food businesses on key food safety matters, including allergens.
- Greater targeting of enforcement at higher risk businesses and those persistently failing to comply.
- Provide reliable and accurate information to consumers on food safety standards in food premises in the Borough via the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Additional priorities for 2026-27

- To utilise any grant funds available to support the food sampling budget in respect of inland imported food, and feedback intelligence to the FSA to enable better future targeting of border control post checks.
- Due to limited staff resource, to re-prioritise delivery of official controls for the food hygiene and standards inspection programme ensuring focus is targeted to maximise impact on improvements in compliance and food safety.
- To keep under review the migrated business datasets in the MIS, following transition to the new food standards delivery model, and continue to develop operating procedures to ensure the reliability and standardisation of data entry.
- To ensure better use of the Intelligence Database to further inform and direct official control interventions and provide useful intelligence to other agencies for action.
- To maintain enhanced monitoring of imported feed activity through the Port to assess the need for more official controls and subsequent intervention.
- To review service delivery processes and utilise the range of existing and new official controls interventions to better manage the service's resource. For

example, increasing the use of 'Alternative Enforcement Strategies,' remote intervention strategies, and non-official controls detailed in the revised CoP for hygiene and food standards interventions.

- To conduct food and environmental sampling/allergen information assessments and hazard spot checks in sector specific premises to ensure the service continues to prioritise and focus service delivery on the types of business that present the highest risks from non-compliance.
- To adopt, implement and maintain compliance with the Food Standards Agency's competency framework ensuring all staff are trained, assessed and authorised according to the specified requirements.
- To maintain the Environmental Health Information Database ensuring reliable and accurate statistical records are provided for freedom of information requests, data returns to enforcement/ reporting agencies, and to internal departments, on the activities of the food/feed law service. This will require ongoing and refresher training to standardise data entry.
- To utilise social media and other information sources to better inform the service of changes in business activities in the Borough and the changing nature of some business operations. Regular integration of HMRC import data, Aggregator platforms, social media advertising of home or remote food and feed operations and engaging and networking with other stakeholders and enforcement agencies, such as the National Food Crime Unit's North-East representative, Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority representatives, the Public Analyst, colleagues from neighbouring Local Authorities will all assist the identification of local businesses/ commercial sectors looking to exploit food/feed opportunities that exist under the regulatory radar.
- To continue to provide educational support and direction using different media, as well as formal enforcement to effect a positive change in compliance.
- To establish a more streamlined method of recording new business desk top assessments on the MIS, to enable effective prioritisation of initial official controls interventions
- To provide bi-annual statutory reports to the FSA on the Council's delivery of the food hygiene and standards programmes, including agreed action plans and to implement the additional reporting criteria within the MIS database, in order to feedback on the revised KPIs for October 2026
- To identify any potential shortfalls in food/feed safety compliance following the FSA's policy focus to realign GB food and feed legislation with current EU rules, ahead of a revised Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) import/export agreement planned for mid-2027
- The Commercial Food and Safety team remains committed to the ongoing development of the Council's website to further improve communication with food businesses and the public, providing easy access to forms and information

electronically where possible. In 2025-26, online forms for self-assessment were set up to facilitate communication and data returns for businesses that fell into the very low risk hygiene and standards intervention programmes. This move from paper based communication to online should significantly reduce the administrative burden in managing this aspect of the service. It is hoped that more business communications can be moved to online format to improve and streamline correspondence.

12.1.1 Programmed Food Hygiene Interventions 2026-27

The following table details the intervention programme as required by the CoP and based on current staff resources and the level of service provision anticipated. Additional service demands in public health, beauty sector regulation, smoke free enforcement in outdoor spaces and Product Promotion legislation may all have a significant impact on Council priorities including hygiene interventions in the coming years. This position will need to be kept under regular review.

Risk Category	Number of Official/Non Official Interventions required	Proposed number of interventions
A	0	0
B	28	28
C	116	116
D	181	181
E	110	110
Unrated new businesses as at 31.3.26 carried over	39	39

It is anticipated that the Service will receive approximately 150 new or amended Food Premises Registrations in 2026-27, as a result of changes to business ownership and new business applications. The service aims to conduct a desktop assessment of the inherent risk of new businesses within 7 days of receiving a valid food registration application and aims to complete any high risk official control risk rating interventions for hygiene and standards within 28 days. Those businesses assessed as medium or low risk, or those having received an advisory visit/intervention prior to opening and deemed low risk/satisfactorily compliant will be scheduled an inspection within 3 months from their initial trading date.

It is estimated that at least 40-50 revisits will be required during 2026-27 based on previous years' activity and approximately 40-50 food hygiene re-rating interventions, with around 10-12 businesses opting for the full re-inspection and re-rating service, which is currently charged out at £219

Visits will also be carried out following receipt of complaints from the public. In 2025-26 approximately 250 service requests were received relating to food premises and feed handling matters. It is expected that a similar number of service requests will be received in 2026-27 and will be met within existing resource.

Demand, in the form of requests for advice, is likely to remain stable in the current year. Business support for new and existing businesses, sign posting, and targeted

advice is provided free, electronically. Businesses requesting a more detailed consultancy service can book an advisory visit, which is a paid for service. This can cover a range of food/feed safety/hygiene related matters, as well as nutritional/labelling/compositional standards matters.

Routine food safety interventions are used as an opportunity to raise awareness of health issues in relation to food to promote healthier food choices for consumers and encourage the use of sustainable and locally sourced food supplies.

Focused 'hygiene audit' interventions were trialled as an alternative to full inspections in line with the CoPs in 2024-25. Again, the time taken to undertake these interventions effectively was not considered a sustainable use of officer time and resource, such that these interventions are now not being considered as part of the official intervention programme for 2026-27. Other intervention strategies will be considered to help deliver the new food standards programme. These will be sector specific and based on intelligence received regarding illegal import activity, fraudulent claims or the use of adulterated or substituted products in the market and their likely trading vehicle. These interventions will be conducted in addition to the already scheduled high priority inspection programme for 2026-27.

It has been some 18 years since 'Safer Food Better Business' was implemented as a means of assisting business compliance with legal obligations in relation to HACCP- (a complex set of food safety requirements) and remains the most effective tool for smaller and lower risk catering operations to demonstrate due diligence in this respect. Officers will continue to use this and informal agreements to address allergen information inadequacies as a first stage to regulatory enforcement.

Food sampling and test purchasing allergen free meals has been used to identify non-conformance and potential high-risk activities requiring formal action. As a result, improved awareness and compliance has been observed in the targeted premises. As a consequence, the service will continue to use this regulatory enforcement approach to further drive-up compliance rates in respect of allergen hazards.

The food service provides a detailed sampling plan for the year ahead based on the previous year's findings and local intelligence sources which include co-ordinated project work from the 12 regional LAs as part of the Compositional and Microbiological Food Group and national priorities based on the FSA's annual report detailing National Enforcement Priorities for animal food and feed. The service continues to provide much needed face to face contact with businesses and continuation of this contact type is a major consideration in the development and prioritisation of future food standards intervention projects.

As well as resampling following unsatisfactory test results, sampling produce from our Approved food manufacturing sites, and undertaking water quality checks at leisure and hydrotherapy pools, the additional focus for the first quarter of 2026-27 will be to continue monitoring the microbiological quality of ice cream from vendors and retailers in the Borough. The service will also contribute to regional studies focusing on hygiene controls, specifically the risks of *Bacillus cereus* in pre-cooked rice, pasta and noodle dishes, and *Listeria* in raw ready-to-eat fish and sushi dishes. The outcomes of these studies will help shape future guidance for businesses and regulators alike.

As the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) sector grows in South Tyneside, more and more volunteer groups are now operating on a regular basis providing hot food to school children during holiday periods. There are currently upwards of 60+ HAF operators with approximately half now reportedly operating on a regular basis, thus requiring food registration. Work is ongoing to develop a shared database of HAF operators to ensure those that need to be registered do so and sites/premises are inspected to ensure compliance with relevant food safety and hygiene regulations.

12.1.2 Programmed Food Standards Interventions 2026-27

Following the MIS upgrade to the new food standards delivery model, 63 food businesses have yet to be fully migrated. Of these, 16 are expected to be inspected in the coming year, with the remainder assessed as high risk and requiring an urgent intervention.

Based on staffing capacity and review of the new food standards programme, targeted interventions in low risk rated convenience stores is again proposed this year given the large circulation of unauthorised colourings and additives being found in imported confectionery. The following figures are based on the database's externally converted data and not from the MIS. This remains the only reliable source of food standards information currently, due to ongoing data migration issues with the Council's recently upgraded software installation.

Risk Rating <2025 Intervention Model	Total number of premises in Category	Premises due/overdue an intervention for 2026- 27	Proposed interventions
		11	11
		10	10
Risk Rating Intervention Frequency	TBC		
High Priority 1	0	N/A	N/A
High Priority 2	0	N/A	N/A
High Priority 3	0	N/A	N/A
High Priority 4 (12 months)	46	46	46
Medium Priority 1 (24 months)	287	189	25
Medium Priority 2 (36 months)	383	204	25
Low Risk Priority 3 (48 months)	199	45	5
Low Risk priority 60 months	17	AEQ	TBC
Low Risk Priority 72 months	32	AEQ	TBC
Low Risk Priority 120 months	6	AEQ	TBC
Unrated	13	13	13

A compositional food and feed sampling budget has been allocated to the service, to cover purchase costs and analysis fees for food and feed standards. This has remained static, around £10k, for the last 8 years. In 2023-24 additional temporary resource to assist with administrative functions allowed the dedicated sampling officer to undertake a full sampling programme, utilising the budget fully and identifying key areas for regulatory enforcement. Unfortunately, the contract and funding for this temporary administrative resource expired in August 2024 and as a consequence, fewer analytical samples were achieved in 2025-26, and the resultant underspend used to upgrade the service's old freezer and chilled storage equipment. The significant uplift in analytical costs is also expected to impact on the number of samples that can be taken in 2026-27.

A joint bid testing for milk proteins in dairy free meals, declared creatine levels in gummy based food supplements and sodium benzoate and colours in Asian Pickles- identified as non-permitted contaminants in GB food products- is being submitted by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, for FSA grant funding. South Tyneside has committed to this joint bid and will seek to ensure that at least three formal samples are submitted by the September 2026 deadline.

Permanent and dedicated administrative support for the team has been highlighted as a service need to support this essential element of the service and to assist with the additional administrative burdens associated with the new food standards and hygiene delivery programmes. Unfortunately, proposals for additional staffing as part of service restructuring, to help address previous reductions have not progressed due to wider Council budget constraints. Given the ongoing requirement to cut costs, it is expected that the compositional sampling element of the service will be curtailed further as existing staff are redirected to support the Hygiene Intervention programme.

12.1.3 Programmed Feed Interventions 2026-27

The FSA, working in conjunction with the Trading Standards Institute, coordinates a national project to deliver a feed intervention programme. As part of a collaborative approach, the North-East Trading Standards Association (NETSA) has been awarded funding to deliver interventions to priority feed premises for 2026/27, through collaborative working. South Tyneside's share of the funding is approximately £2009 and is to be used for the purposes of targeted intervention visits. This work will be undertaken at a mix of farm and non-farm premises. Non-farm premises include supermarkets that provide surplus food into the feed chain and any business that transports feed and feed products.

Business Type/Premises category	Number of Inspections due 2026/27
R07 (surplus food)	3
R09 (Stores)	1
R13 (livestock farm)	1
(R6) Pet food manufacturer	1

Annual check-ins with the Port's Operations Manager are also undertaken to assess current and potential future activity in relation to food/feed imports/exports. An informal

agreement has been established with North Tyneside Port Health that will ensure that all feed imports through the port are initially actioned by Port Health as part of the 'Import of products, animals, food and feed system' (IPAFFS) pre-notification process, before referring them to South Tyneside for official intervention where necessary. This arrangement will remain in place until such time as a need for increased official control monitoring is identified and required by South Tyneside Food Authority.

Currently the ship manifests are still subject to monitoring by Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers to assess container imports of feed. No consignments were identified in 2025-26, indicating that this Port is unlikely to become a significant import hub for this material such that there would be a need to upscale the staffing resource for Official Feed controls in this area.

Quarterly visits to the Port are no longer undertaken as funding for de-minimus port functions was withdrawn by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2022. Informal arrangements remain in place to maintain contact with the Port's Operations Manager for the determination of any potential activity that will require the undertaking of official controls by South Tyneside Council. ^{xi}

Following BREXIT, DEFRA had anticipated that activity at North Tyneside's Port would increase significantly, potentially impacting on the Port of Tyne in South Tyneside, and as such, commissioned a structural upgrade of the facilities in North Tyneside to an official Border Control Post (BCP Port Health oversees all associated official checks and controls for high/medium risk food commodities, products of animal origin, high risk food not of animal origin (imports of tea in the main) and plastic food materials from China through the BCP, north and south of the Port (Container Terminal at the South Bank of the Port)). These sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks include physical examination of consignments, sampling and documentary checks of all imported high risk products of animal origin and are carried out by Veterinary Officials authorised and contracted to deliver this service for the Port Health Authority. Port Health Officers conduct a percentage check of medium risk commodities which involves identification and documentary checks of imports that have been pre-notified on the IPAFFS system. Passenger checks and consignments through the Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) ferry terminal remain under the control of the Official Veterinary Officers who conduct checks of live animal imports/pet passport checks and plant/germinal produce.

South Tyneside Council along with the other Riparian Authorities contribute to the provision of the service, South Tyneside's contribution is currently set at 33% of its operating costs.

From 31st January 2024 imported products of animal origin (POAO) must be accompanied by a health certificate from the Country of Origin and be pre notified on the government's IPAFFS system. The BTOM establishes the level of official control and frequency rate depending on the risk category of the consignment.

- high risk commodities will be inspected every time the product is imported (inspection rate 100%)

- medium risk commodities will be inspected at a rate between 1% and 30% - read [further information on the inspection frequency rates of medium risk commodities](#)
- low risk commodities will not be subject to routine inspection, but they may be subject to non-routine or intelligence-led checks

The South Terminal of the Port of Tyne is not a Border Control Post, and so only containerised or bulk feed materials are likely to enter the south side of the port. Based on manifest checks and regular contact with the Port, no feed imports have been identified for 8 years. However recent climate conditions have affected the production of grain in the UK, and the impact of global markets has reduced the potential cost of grain imports. As a consequence, there may be more interest in grain importation for animal feed in the coming years and so this situation will be kept under constant review.

Based on Port Health's Annual Review in June 2025 which details activity through the ferry terminal for 2024, 24 Medium risk consignments of products of animal origin were identified through the manifest entries and 14 low risk POAO.

Reduced entries of high-risk commodities, managed by DEFRA and the official veterinary service provider *Eville and Jones*, also saw a reduction in the number of animal and plant consignments coming through the BCP. Port Health will continue to monitor and review the activity to ensure costs of managing and maintaining the BCP and Port Health service are covered.

It is anticipated, with the proposed realignment with EU legislation for food and feed regulations planned for 2027, that sanitary and phytosanitary official control checks of incoming and outgoing food and feed consignments, may be reduced further at the port/BCP. This may prompt a further review of Port Health's duties and responsibilities, the costs in running this service and subsequently South Tyneside's contribution to the Port Tyne Health Authority.

12.2 Resources

12.2.1 Financial Allocation

Total expenditure on the food service is relatively stable however it is acknowledged that additional resources will be required to deliver the heavy intervention programme for D and E risk rated premises for 2026-27, and the backlog carried forward, as officers aim to meet the existing statutory official controls functions of the hygiene and now heavier food standards programme .

The increased complexity of managing and maintaining two separate programme delivery models for hygiene and standards, including data cleansing and implementing the new food standards delivery model into the MIS, has significantly impacted front line service provision and delivery.

Although the migrated food standards business data is now mapped in the database, the high uplift in those businesses now requiring more frequent standards

interventions means greater planning and strategic forethought is needed on how best to deliver the programmes in accordance with the revised Codes of Practice.

Although some non-official interventions can now be carried out by non-authorised personnel under the direction of the Lead Food Officer, additional staffing resource is still required in order to take advantage of the relaxation in competency criteria.

12.2.2 Staffing Allocation 2025-26

In 2025-26 the staffing allocation for food safety matters comprised:

5.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Authorised Food Officers to deliver the Food Law Service. This included some shared resources of qualified officers who wished to maintain their competency in food related functions and the Trainee Apprentice, who was a dedicated member of the team for the financial year. A 0.04 FTE consultant was also employed to help address the significant backlog of low-risk interventions.

12.2.3 Staffing Allocation 2026-27

5.0 FTE Authorised Officers remain employed in the commercial food team, but the team no longer has the support of shared staff or the 2nd year Apprentice who are now fully utilised in delivering statutory functions in other parts of the Environmental Health service. Competency criteria limitations are likely to prevent them being utilised in the future without significant retraining.

It is proposed that a staffing proposal will be put forward by the Environmental Health and Public Protection Teams, for a shared, dedicated business/technical support post (1 x FTE). This post is required to support the vast and complex administrative functions of the team, which require specialist working knowledge of the existing and new Management Information Databases to support full migration of Public Protection teams and to support their statutory data recording and management requirements. It is likely that the postholder will be contracted on a fixed-term basis, due to budget availability. This will unfortunately prevent further enhancement of the MIS system but will ensure all services are effectively migrated into a single database.

The wider Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams are currently supporting 6 specialist apprentices on professional career pathways. One Trading Standards apprentice is working to complete the food and agricultural paper of the Diploma in Consumer Affairs, which will meet the baseline competency criteria to deliver official feed enforcement activities. This will hopefully provide succession planning for the Lead Feed Officer in due course.

It was hoped that one or more of the trainee Environmental Health Practitioner apprentices, once qualified, would provide support for Commercial Food and Safety team members currently working part-time or on phased retirement. However, significant resource pressures across the service have limited capacity to do so, and reliance on external consultancy services will again need to be considered in 2026-27 to help address inspection backlogs and meet the increasing demands of the hygiene and standards intervention programmes.

Funding was secured for additional consultant support to help with the hygiene programme for 25-26, however this placed additional administrative burdens on the Lead Food Officer. The use of consultants to help deliver some of the lower risk food standards interventions has been considered but the availability of competent consultants in this field is limited and would again place administrative burdens on existing front line staff, taking them away from higher priority interventions/activity.

Without a clearer steer from the FSA on the priorities of the two inspection programmes, Food Safety Officers will be directed into delivering the higher priority food standards interventions, whilst maintaining a focus on the high priority food hygiene intervention programme and new business inspections. This will result in a significant shortfall in inspection numbers of lower risk rated food businesses in the coming year and beyond.

The FSA requested a priority plan of action to address the backlog/carry over of lower risk (D rated) inspections from 2024-25. Staffing resource has been redirected to address this shortfall as a priority for the 1st quarter of 2026-27 and the future staffing FTEs allocated to delivering the two inspection programmes have been amended to reflect a reprioritisation of 0.15 FTE from the hygiene programme to the standards programme. However, it should be noted that without additional technical/business support to manage the MIS data, a significant proportion of the Lead Food Officer's time will continue to be diverted to this function.

Reference List

ⁱ Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products

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- ii The Food Law Code of Practice (England) (the Code) is issued under Section 40(1) of The Food Safety Act 1990, Regulation 6(1) of The Official Feed and Food Controls (England) Regulations 2009 and Regulation 26(1) of The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013,
- iii <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/national-enforcement-priorities-for-animal-feed-and-food-hygiene>
- iv [Main language detailed - Census Maps, ONS](#)
- v [Search for ratings | Food Hygiene Ratings](#)
- vi [Food and Feed Codes of Practice | Food Standards Agency](#)
- vii [Report a food crime | Food Standards Agency](#)
- viii <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-regulation-primary-authority>
- ix [National Enforcement Priorities for animal feed and food hygiene | Food Standards Agency](#)
- x <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/food-and-feed-codes-of-practice>
- xi The Official Food and Feed Control (England) Regulations 2009