

Sampling Policy 2007/2008

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rossendale Borough Council recognises the important contribution food sampling makes to the protection of Public Health and the Food Law Enforcement functions of the Authority and commits to providing the resources necessary to carry out its sampling programme

The Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement requires every food authority to set up and maintain and implement a documented sampling policy and programme. The Food Sampling Policy shall be published, the sampling programme shall not.

- 1.2 Food Safety Officers from the Environmental Health Section will be responsible for undertaking the food sampling functions of the Council and the sampling will consist of both sampling as part of surveillance and monitoring as part of National, Regional and local surveys and sampling carried out under the Food Safety Act 1990 , Food Hygiene(England) Regulations 2006 and the Food Safety (Sampling and Qualifications) Regulations 1990, which are carried out with a view to pursuing legal action if the results show that an offence has been committed. All sampling shall be carried out in accordance with the above regulations, Code of Practice and Practice Guidance, LACORS "Guidance on Food Sampling for Microbiological Examination (Jan 2002) and local guidance issued by the Preston Microbiological service and the Council's procedure on Food Sampling.

- 1.3 Consideration will be given to food sampling in the following specific situations

- National, Regional and Locally co-ordinated surveys/programs
- Raw Milk Sampling
- Approved premises sampling – Meat products and Approved Dairies
- During or following food premises Inspections
- Locally produced high risk food not from Approved Premises
- Imported foods being sold locally
- Following Complaints about a food or food premises
- Process monitoring

2. Food Sampling Surveys

- 2.1 Rossendale Borough Council will make provision to co-operate and, where possible, participate in all food sampling surveys. However, some surveys may involve foods or food premises which are either in short supply or not available in Rossendale, in which case a reduced number of samples or no samples will be submitted to the laboratory. Priority will be given to locally produced items of Animal Origin to ensure minimum sampling frequencies are achieved

2.2 National Surveys

- 2.2.1 National surveys may be organised through the Food Standards Agency as part of the EC co-ordinated sampling program.
- 2.2.2 The Local Authority Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards (LACORS) and Preston Microbiology Services, also arrange National Surveys each year.

2.3 Regional /Local Sampling Survey

2.3.1 A Survey Sub-committee comprising officers from the Preston, the Lancashire Food Officer Group and the Greater Manchester Food Liaison Group are responsible for drawing up and distributing a sampling program every four months. This program determines the number of samples required and the sampling frequency. Each four weekly sampling program includes one week for local initiatives. These "free" weeks shall be used to sample from all Approved premises as detailed in the annual sampling program

2.4 Local Sampling Program

A local survey may be generated following a food poisoning incident or as a follow-up survey following a local sampling initiative.

A local sampling program shall be determined by April each year and will be included in the overall sampling plan for the year .

3 Food Complaints

3.1 Samples of food received as a food complaint may require microbiological examination or chemical analysis. The Laboratory in Preston will undertake all microbiological examinations and the County Analyst at the County Laboratory in Preston, is used for any samples which require analysis.

3.2 All food complaints are taken seriously and the results of an examination or analysis may generate the need for more controlled sampling of the food product or from the food premises.

3.3 Consideration will be given to the sampling of locally produced high risk foods including, cooked pies, meat products, cream and custard filled products, prepared salads etc. At times samples which are not considered high risk may be taken as part of the local or national co-ordinated sampling program.

4. Process Monitoring

4.1 Process monitoring will not normally be undertaken as a matter of routine. However following consultations with food safety colleagues from other Lancashire Authorities and the PHLS, process monitoring will be carried out from on-farm pasteurisers to ensure that food safety is maintained.

5. Inspections

5.1 Food sampling will not normally be undertaken as a constituent part of food safety inspections unless the premises are Approved under Regulation 853/2004. However, it will be left to the inspecting officer's discretion whether to recommend to the Principal EHO(Food) that food samples should be taken for monitoring purposes following or during any other inspection.

6. Special Investigations

6.1 Special circumstances may arise during a year which will require samples to be taken. These samples will most likely be generated during the investigation of food poisoning incidents. Samples may include environmental samples in addition to food samples.

7. Imported Foods

7.1 At present there are no companies or businesses in Rossendale that regularly import foods. Therefore, no routine planned sampling of imported foods will be undertaken. If, however, circumstances change this Policy will be reviewed in the light of future developments.