

BERKSHIRE SAFE FOOD AWARD



GENERAL INFORMATION

❖ What is the Berkshire Safe Food Award?

The scheme is run across all the Berkshire local authorities (Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham District Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council) to highlight those catering businesses that are operating high standards of hygiene and food safety in their premises.

As well as giving recognition to the efforts and commitment of these businesses, the scheme also aims to encourage other caterers operating at lower standards to put in the extra effort required to achieve a higher award.

Consumers will also benefit too, being provided with knowledge about the best places to eat.

❖ Award Enhancements

In addition to an award for safe food, premises can gain additional enhancements for **healthy eating**. This healthy eating enhancement will require the premises to offer healthy foods and healthier alternatives within their menu that are approved by a local health activist or dietician.

A parallel scheme is also in place in some Council areas to provide accreditation for **smoke-free** premises, prior to the introduction of national legislation. Being smoke-free will require the premises to be entirely non-smoking and sign a charter to confirm this commitment. Please check with your local Council for details.

❖ What are the benefits to food businesses?

An award is expected to boost a business's reputation. A certificate will be presented for display on the premises. Publicity will be given to award premises by including their details on the Council's web site, and by the local press being supplied with regular lists of premises, which have gained an award. This allows your customers to have confidence in your standards of hygiene and may attract new customers.

❖ Who is eligible for an Award?

Any catering premises operating within the Councils detailed above. These include:

- restaurants, cafés, takeaways and canteens
- pubs and hotels
- sandwich shops etc (where open food is prepared)
- mobile caterers

❖ Levels of award and period of validity

There are four levels of award: **PASS**, **BRONZE**, **SILVER** and **GOLD** which differentiate between how well the business is complying with the law and achieving increasingly high standards of hygiene.

The **PASS** level is aimed at businesses where the minimum legal requirements are met, but nothing more. It is expected that the vast majority of premises will be achieving this level and demonstrating compliance with the law. Premises failing to achieve the **PASS** level will be subject to action by the local authority in which they are based. By inference, the public will also be able to note that such premises have lower standards of hygiene, which may result in a loss of their custom.

Standards will have to be high to reach any of the remaining 3 levels of award – **BRONZE**, **SILVER** and **GOLD**. Businesses that reach the **BRONZE** or **SILVER** award levels still have the opportunity to achieve a higher level by improving even further by their next assessment inspection.

Providing standards are maintained, an award will normally remain valid until the next routine inspection – for most premises this would be either 18 months or 2 years. If standards fall, the award can be taken back at any time. The award relates to the food premises in the name of the person/s or company running the business and cannot be transferred with a change of ownership of the business.

❖ **What are the standards to be met for each of the award levels?**

A. FOOD HYGIENE TRAINING

Pass Level

1. All food handlers must receive written or verbal instruction in the “Essentials of Food Hygiene” before starting work for the first time. (See Appendix 1)
2. All food handlers must receive more detailed written or verbal “Hygiene Awareness Instruction” within 4 weeks of starting work. (See Appendix 2)
3. All food handlers should receive instruction, training and/or supervision commensurate to their work activities. Food business operators and/or managers need to identify the levels of food hygiene knowledge appropriate to the food handler’s job and ensure that sufficient instruction, training and/or supervision is given to permit the safe handling of food.
4. The food business operator, manager or other person responsible for the standards of hygiene within the business must be appropriately knowledgeable, in order to ensure effective implementation and management of food safety procedures. This knowledge may be obtained through formal training, or other appropriate informal means such as personal study, information campaigns from professional organisations, industry guides to good practice or competent authorities (the local Council Environmental Health Department; the Food Standards Agency). This competent person may be based off-site, but should visit the premises on a frequent basis (as a minimum, at least once per week).

Bronze Level

As for Pass level, but in addition:

5. All open “high risk” food handlers must receive formal training in the “basics” of food hygiene within 3 months of starting work. Formal basic/foundation level training normally involves attendance on a food hygiene course of about 6 hours' duration. (See Appendix 3)
6. The competent person described in item 4 above must be based on site and usually present at all times when food is prepared (or as a minimum, visit at least daily).

7. Training records for all food handlers must be maintained on the premises, either in a written or computer-based format. (For an example staff training record form, see Appendix 4.)

Silver Level

As for Bronze Level, but in addition:

8. All open “high risk” food handlers must receive **refresher** food hygiene training at basic/foundation level at no greater than 3-year intervals. This may be either formal or in-house informal training, but must include records, as required under item 7. above. Informal training arrangements will only be accepted where it can be shown that they take account of the risk & nature of the business and the food handled, also the skill, competence and experience of the individual employees.
9. At least one food handler at supervisor/manager or owner level must have received some form of food safety management training. This may typically involve attendance on a course (eg: Slough’s “Food Safety - the Answer”, Safe Food Better Business, Intermediate Food Hygiene, or an in-house company course) which focuses upon a HACCP-based system of food safety management control. The trained person may not be based on-site, but should visit the premises on a frequent basis, (as a minimum, at least once per week).

Gold Level

As for Silver Level, but in addition:

10. At least one person at supervisor/manager or owner level must have an Intermediate or Advanced (Diploma) level qualification in food hygiene. This person must be based on site and usually present at all times when food is prepared (or as a minimum, visit at least daily).

B. FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM BASED ON HACCP PRINCIPLES

Pass Level

1. The business must have implemented a permanent procedure that is effective in controlling the principal food safety hazards. The business owner or manager will therefore demonstrate a clear and sufficient understanding of hazards, controls and monitoring arrangements in place. (Typical questions that could be asked during the inspection are “Which activities in your business require temperature control, why is this, and what are your control/monitoring arrangements?”) In addition, there will be simplistic documentation of the system together with records appropriate to the size and nature of the business.

These requirements may vary according to the nature and size of the business. In smaller food businesses where there is no, or very simple preparation of food, the implementation of food hygiene controls based on good working practices may be sufficient, provided they are effective and simple records are maintained.

Bronze Level

As for Pass Level, but in addition:

2. Documentation of the food safety system itself may still be fairly simple, but there will be more detailed and regular records of the monitoring carried out, for example temperature

records which detail actual temperatures as opposed to ticks or just non-conformities. The business owner and/or manager will be able to demonstrate a more detailed knowledge and understanding of the critical food safety steps in the business activities.

Silver Level

As for Bronze Level, but in addition:

- The business will have in place a basic but fully documented food safety system that typically identifies hazards, the control precautions and associated monitoring arrangements, critical limits and corrective actions. The record keeping will additionally record additional checks beyond critical control points, such as cleaning schedules, pest control and maintenance. The business owner and/or manager will be able to demonstrate an excellent appreciation of hazards and their controls.

Small food businesses may use generic industry guides to good practice as their documented food safety system provided:

- The guide covers all the significant hazards within the business and has been fully implemented in all relevant aspects. Any additional hazards have been considered and added as appropriate.
- The predetermined critical control points have been checked and accepted as relevant, sufficient and correct in accordance with the actual business activities.
- All relevant controls are carried out and recorded, as recommended by the guide and are verified by management.

Gold Level

As for Silver Level, but in addition:

- Both documentation of the food safety system and record keeping will be very comprehensive and may include hazard analysis and control details for some specific processes and/or foods thought to pose particular risk. The system will be subject to audit, either internal or external, and will have written records of the findings and any action taken as a result.

The use of generic industry guides to good practice for the application of HACCP principles will typically **not** be appropriate at this level. However, generic **corporate** HACCP procedures will typically be acceptable provided the criteria given in (3) above are met.

C. CONFIDENCE IN MANAGEMENT

This part of the award is assessed using a risk rating score given to your business by the inspecting officer.

Risk Rating Score	
30	NO AWARD
20	NO AWARD
10	PASS
10	BRONZE
0 or 5	SILVER
0 or 5	GOLD

Premises scoring a Confidence in Management score of 10 will be eligible for either a PASS or BRONZE level award, and those scoring 0 or 5 will be eligible for either a SILVER or GOLD level award. The actual level of award granted in these cases will therefore be determined by lowest common denominator from the other three sections of the scheme (ie: food hygiene training, food safety system based on HACCP principles and the award criteria).

This risk rating score is based upon a judgement of the likelihood of your business maintaining a satisfactory level of compliance in the future. This judgement may be influenced by the following factors:

- how confident they are in your ability to manage food safety
- your business' previous track record
- your attitude to food safety
- technical knowledge available

Full details of this risk rating scheme may be found within the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice. The document is available on their website at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/codeofpracticeeng.pdf>

If you do not have access to the internet, you should ask your inspecting officer to provide you with a hard copy of the relevant part of this document.

D. ADEQUACY OF PRACTICES AND FACILITIES

A score sheet is used to assess these standards. A minimum score of score of 50% must be achieved for a pass level to be awarded. Thereafter awards will be achieved at the following levels:

65% or over is needed for a Bronze Level award
78% or over is needed for a Silver Level award
90% or over is needed for a Gold Level award

Examples of minimum control precautions, which are expected to be in place for a pass level award to be issued, include:

Practices

- ❖ Temperature control - basic but effective temperature monitoring at all relevant critical control points, eg: the use of integral equipment dials to measure air temps and visual checks at end of cooking.
- ❖ Separation of food and equipment to prevent cross-contamination - adequate physical segregation of raw and cooked foods during storage; combined preparation equipment, but activities effectively separated by time and disinfection.
- ❖ Covering and rotation of stock – basic informal stock rotation system (first in first out) and reference to date marks.
- ❖ Cloth hygiene management – cleaning of reusable cloths from time to time.
- ❖ Personal hygiene - basic clean and protective over-clothing worn and regular, effective hand-washing in place.

- ❖ Management of food waste and general refuse – basic, informal but effective arrangements in place to ensure regular removal of waste from food rooms, appropriate storage of waste in external lidded receptacles and regular collections.
- ❖ Pest control - basic understanding of signs of pest activity and ad-hoc visual checks in place; no evidence of possible entry points.

Facilities

- ❖ Physical condition of the premises - adequate layout of premises in satisfactory structural condition; adequate lighting and drainage; ventilation adequate.
- ❖ General cleanliness - main elements of structure and equipment visually clean; informal but effective cleaning procedures in place; use of appropriate food safe chemicals on contact surfaces and equipment.
- ❖ Adequacy of the facilities - sufficient refrigerated storage capacity; adequate facilities for separate food preparation and equipment washing (may use same sink provided adequate cleaning and disinfection between activities); sufficient equipment in serviceable condition, unlikely to give rise to contamination of food; accessible wash hand basins provided with facilities for hand-washing, including soap and drying facilities such as clean reusable towel, hand dryer; cleaning chemicals stored separate from food.

NOTE: The above are minimum standards necessary to obtain a pass level award. Businesses looking to obtain the higher levels of award (Bronze, Silver and Gold) will therefore require standards in excess of the minimum legal compliance described above.

Appendix 1 - “Essentials of Food Hygiene”

Appendix 2 - “Hygiene Awareness Instruction”

Appendix 3 - Formal basic/foundation level training

Appendix 4 - Staff training record form

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME

General Terms & Conditions

1. The Berkshire Safe Food Award Scheme is based upon a partnership of the Berkshire local authorities, namely Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham District Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council and is administered on behalf of these authorities via the Berkshire Food Liaison Group.
2. The award standards will be uniform across all participating authorities, although minor differences in administration will be necessary due to local issues and different requirements of each individual council (eg: the use of individual council logos and fonts for printed text).
3. As required, changes to the award scheme will need to be discussed and agreed by the Berkshire Food Liaison Group, following where necessary a period of consultation.
4. The types of business eligible for an award may be determined at a local level. Some authorities may wish to run the scheme for catering businesses only, whereas other authorities would wish to consider additional businesses such as retailers or manufacturers.
5. Applications for an award are unnecessary as all relevant premises are automatically assessed under the scheme at each primary routine food hygiene inspection. Inspections are normally done without prior notice (although in some instances prior contact may be made with key personnel to establish when they are likely to be present).
6. The inspecting officer will complete a Safe Food Award Assessment sheet at each primary inspection, to determine whether or not a business has achieved the necessary standards for an award to be issued. In the instance where different award levels are reached in the four sections (A. Food hygiene training; B. food safety system based on HACCP principles; C. confidence in management score and D. award criteria), the level of award obtained shall be determined by the lowest common denominator.
7. Self-certificated premises will not generally qualify for an award. However, if an award is requested by such businesses, one can be issued provided a visit is made to the premises, a Safe Food Award Assessment sheet is completed and the business meets one of the required standards.
8. The Safe Food Award Assessment sheet will not normally be given out to businesses. Where advice is necessary on improvements required to reach an award level, these can be incorporated into the recommendations on the inspection report.
9. Prior to the issue of an award, the food business operator or another person in authority within the business will have to sign a form of agreement with the relevant Council accepting the terms and conditions of the scheme. Where possible, this can be completed on the premises at the time of inspection. The conditions include that:
 - ❖ The award certificate remains the property of the Council at all times, and must be returned to the Council as and when required.
 - ❖ Any business proprietor aggrieved by a refusal to grant an award or the withdrawal of their award can appeal in writing to the nominated person within the local authority within 21 days of the decision, whose decision will be final.

- ❖ Valid certificates must be prominently displayed for customer/public view. Certificates, which are no longer valid, must not be displayed.
 - ❖ Nothing done by the individual Councils in the promotion and administration of this non-statutory scheme can be taken:
 - a) to provide any assurance or guarantee to the general public with regard to any food business which may receive an award from time to time, and
 - b) to restrict in any way the Council's enforcement of food safety and other legislation and the proper exercise of its powers under that legislation.
10. In the instance that a business fails to meet the minimum required standards for a "PASS" level award, action will be taken in accordance with the individual local authority's enforcement policy.
 11. Revisits will not generally be carried out solely for the purposes of re-scoring a business for an award. However, where a premises has only just fallen short of achieving a higher level award (Bronze, Silver and Gold) and prompt action has been taken to make advised improvements, authorities may decide to re-score. Each individual authority's policy as regards such revisits should be stated within their inspection procedure.
 12. Businesses failing to meet the PASS level at a primary inspection should generally not be issued an award following improvements as a result of any enforcement action (formal or informal). Businesses should be able to demonstrate compliance with legal requirements and/or standards for a higher level award on an ongoing basis for a minimum period of 6 months, before an award can be issued.
 13. Businesses subject to legal action resulting in a successful prosecution or the issue of a formal caution will not be considered for an award above pass level for a minimum period of one year from the date of commission of the offence. A pass level award can however be issued, at the discretion of the Council, provided the business has demonstrated compliance with legal requirements on an ongoing basis for a minimum period of 6 months.
 14. The business must have been operating at the premises for at least 6 months without any significant hygiene problems arising in this time. Newly opened premises cannot be considered for an award on the first food hygiene inspection that is carried out. However, once operating for a further 6 months, the business may request an additional visit for the purposes of an award assessment. Where possible such requests will be agreed to.
 15. Once a decision has been taken to issue a business with an award, the award certificate is prepared by entering on the premises details and the date of inspection. The Head of Service or Team Leader of the relevant authority must sign the certificate.
 16. The business will receive the completed certificate which must be displayed on the premises. Their design clearly differentiates between the Gold, Silver, Bronze and Pass levels.
 17. There is no cost to a food business in receiving an award.
 18. Each individual council will put into place procedures for quality monitoring of award assessments. They will also determine and implement their own systems for issuing of award certificates and for the presentation of awards at a ceremony.
 19. Should a business wish not to participate in the scheme or refuses to sign the terms and conditions, an award will not be issued. In such circumstances a certificate will not be

provided and any information posted on the council's website should reflect, where applicable, that the premises have achieved only a PASS level.

20. The award will generally remain in force until the next routine primary inspection of the business, in the absence of any adverse information regarding standards or practices at the premises. If standards are found to have decreased to below award levels in the interim between inspections, the award must be withdrawn and the certificate returned. In certain circumstances a lower level award may be issued.
21. Reassessment of awards will take place at each subsequent routine primary inspection, following which an award will either be re-issued at the same or a different level, or withdrawn. Any details posted on the council's website will also require amendment.
22. The publicity of award winners will be determined on a local basis by each individual authority, with a view to obtaining maximum public exposure, particularly in the case of the highest level award winners.
23. Authorities may not wish to proactively publicise businesses that have obtained only a PASS level award. However, this information should be made easily available to the public in whatever format the authority deems most appropriate (eg: details posted on the council's website).
24. Businesses should note that as public bodies local authorities are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and may be required by law to disclose information relating to this scheme and individual businesses. However the authorities will observe the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.
25. Appeals will generally be dealt with on a local basis, following the procedure described in paragraph 9. Individual authorities will need to determine who precisely will act as their adjudicator in the event of an appeal. Details of appeals and outcomes may wish to be discussed at Berkshire Food Liaison Group meetings where issues arise that may affect the scheme across the county.

“Essentials of Food Hygiene”

This note advises caterers of basic hygiene rules that they need to ensure all their new food handlers are aware of before they start working for them.

They form the basic first stage of food hygiene instructions, which all food handlers are expected to receive. Food business proprietors are legally required to ensure that food handlers are appropriately instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters. **Before** anyone is allowed to start work as a food handler in any premises, they **must** receive written or verbal instruction on the essentials of food hygiene.

- ❖ Keep yourself clean and wear clean clothing.
- ❖ Always wash your hands thoroughly before handling food, after using the toilet, handling raw foods or waste, before starting work, after every break, after blowing your nose.
- ❖ Tell your supervisor, before commencing work, of any skin, nose, throat, stomach or bowel trouble or infected wound. You are breaking the law if you do not.
- ❖ Ensure cuts and sores are covered with a waterproof, high visibility dressing.
- ❖ Avoid unnecessary handling of food.
- ❖ Do not smoke, eat or drink in a food room, and never cough or sneeze over food.
- ❖ If you see something wrong, tell your supervisor.
- ❖ Do not prepare food too far in advance of service.
- ❖ Keep perishable food either refrigerated or piping hot.
- ❖ Keep the preparation of raw and cooked food strictly separate.
- ❖ When reheating food ensure it gets piping hot.
- ❖ Clean as you go. Keep all equipment and surfaces clean.
- ❖ Follow any food safety instructions either on food packaging or from your supervisor.

Some of the above points will not be relevant to all food handlers in all types of food premises, but those which are relevant need to be clearly explained to, and understood by, food handlers involved. Other staff working in food premises but who may not necessarily handle food, eg: cleaners/support staff, should also understand relevant points from the “essentials” list.

Having discussed the items on the list with a new food handler, you may photocopy the attached list and hand it to them before they start work. As well as this you may choose to laminate it for permanent display in the kitchen or on the staff notice board. More detailed advice on further food hygiene instruction/training (particularly for handlers of open high risk foods) is outlined in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

“Hygiene Awareness Instruction”

This note advises caterers of matters in which they need to instruct their staff to ensure they develop knowledge in the basic principles of food hygiene. They need to do this in at least 4 weeks after any new staff start work with them. Food business proprietors are legally required to ensure their food handlers are appropriately instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters relevant to their duties/responsibilities.

The instructions that need to be given should include the following topics (unless it is clear they will not be relevant to their work):

- ❖ The business’s policy – priority given to food hygiene
- ❖ “Germs” – potential to cause illness
- ❖ Personal health and hygiene – need for high standards, reporting illness, rules on smoking
- ❖ Cross-contamination – causes, prevention
- ❖ Food storage – protection, temperature control
- ❖ Waste disposal, cleaning and disinfection – materials, methods, and storage
- ❖ “Foreign body” contamination
- ❖ Awareness of pests

This list is not exhaustive but is meant as an example of the main topic areas that should be covered in catering and associated food trade activities.

It is vitally important that staff are told how to do their particular job hygienically. They **must** also be properly instructed in any specific duties/responsibilities they may have for the control precautions (and/or monitoring arrangements for these) regarding the **critical food safety steps/points in the catering activities**, which the business owner has identified.

The booklet “Hygiene Sense – Hygiene Awareness” can be used for staff instruction. Copies are available from the publisher: Highfield Publications (contact address: “Vue Pointe”, Spinney Hill, Sprotborough, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN5 7LY. Telephone: 0845 2260350. E-mail: info@highfield.co.uk).

Formal basic/foundation level training

Food handlers who **prepare/handle high risk open (unwrapped)** foods must receive specific training (normally on a formal basis by attending a training course) **to develop a level of understanding of the basic principles of food hygiene**. This is a legal requirement and it also applies to managers etc who handle such foods. They should receive this training within not more than 3 months after starting work. They must learn about:

- ❖ Food poisoning micro-organism types and sources
- ❖ Simple microbiology, toxins, spores, growth and death
- ❖ Premises and equipment
- ❖ Common food hazards – physical, chemical, and microbiological
- ❖ Personal Hygiene – basic rules and responsibilities
- ❖ Preventing food contamination
- ❖ Food poisoning, symptoms and causes
- ❖ Cleaning & disinfection
- ❖ Legal obligations
- ❖ Pest control
- ❖ Effective temperature control of food, eg: storage, thawing, reheating and cooking

NB - All food handlers, including those handling only low risk or wrapped foods, must have received verbal or written instructions in the “essentials of food hygiene” (before starting work) and “hygiene awareness instruction” (within 4 weeks of starting work). Details of these are in Appendices 1 and 2.

Training Courses

Although some organisations may themselves be able to provide formal training for their staff, in the majority of smaller organisations/businesses this is not possible. To ensure adequate training is undertaken, it is recommended that staff who handle open high risk food attend a food hygiene course of approximately 6 hours' duration, accredited by an organisation such as:

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	-	0500 009777
The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene	-	020 7580 2731
The Royal Society for the Promotion of Health	-	020 7630 0121
Society of Food Hygiene Technology	-	01590 671979

Your local authority can provide you with details of local and foreign language trainers, where necessary.

Where in-house formal training has been conducted, records should exist detailing the date and content of the course. A method of assessment, such as a test, should also be undertaken to determine that the training has been fully understood.

Example Staff Training Record Form

+Food Business Name and Address:

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Name	Job/Position	Start Date	Essentials of Food Hygiene (date)	Hygiene Awareness Instruction (date)	Basic (Foundation) Level Food Hygiene (date/details)	Basic and other refresher food hygiene (dates/details)	HACCP/Food Safety Management Training (dates/details)	Higher Level Food Hygiene (Intermediate and above) (dates/details)
					postcode:			