

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Food Complaints Policy

It is the policy of the Councils to investigate food complaints from members of the public wherever there is a significant risk to their health, or if the nature of the complaint indicates serious failings in food safety control.

1. Food complaints where there is a significant risk to health or sustainable evidence of serious failings in food safety controls
 - 1.1 Such complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Food Complaints Procedure ES/FS-004.
2. Food complaints where there is no significant risk to health, or the standard of evidence is insufficient to justify further action.
 - 2.1 Depending on the nature of the complaint these may be either:
 - a) Dealt with immediately over the telephone or face to face with the complainant
 - b) Referred directly to the manufacturer and originating authority where appropriate, with no further action by the Council
 - 2.2 Complaints which will be dealt with by verbal advice only will include items of natural or expected occurrence in foodstuffs which do not constitute a risk to health. Examples of these are cod worms, struvite crystals, vegetable fibres and small quantities of lead shot in game. The nature of the foreign body will be explained, and no further action taken.
 - 2.3 Complaints which will be routinely dealt with by referral to the manufacturer and originating authority include the following non-exhaustive examples:
 - Non-hazardous foreign bodies such as minor plastic and cardboard contamination that does not pose a risk of injury, either externally or internally (particularly in products manufactured at sites subject to third party audit)
 - Insects and molluscs in pre-packed fruit and vegetables
 - Mould growth in products where the contamination is not serious and cold chain maintenance to time of discovery cannot be established

This category will also include more serious complaints where, in the officer's assessment, there is a significant probability that the hazard arose through some default or action after purchase – for example when a foreign body is discovered 'on the plate'. Decisions on whether to proceed or not with such investigations will be agreed with the Corporate Manager for Food & Safety, or with the Lead Food Safety Officer.
 - 2.4 Sufficient information regarding the nature of the product, production codes and so forth must be taken to enable referral of the complaint, but the foodstuff and/or foreign body should remain in the ownership of the complainant. The officer must also establish if the complainant will consent to their details to be passed on to the manufacturer, so that they may be contacted directly. The standard letter in Proactive should be used to refer the complaint to the manufacturer and originating authority where appropriate. The reason(s) why a full food complaint investigation has not been carried out must be recorded on Proactive.
 - 2.5 Persistent food complaints in Category 2 from a single premises and/or large company with multiple outlets should also be referred to the Home Authority.

Any complainant who feels aggrieved by this procedure will be referred to the Senior Food & Safety Officer or to the Lead Food Safety Officer, and if still not satisfied they may make a final appeal to the Corporate Manager for Food & Safety.