



**Scores on the doors: Consumer and business views
Report for the Food Standards Agency**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Reasons for award schemes

A series of articles and studies (see below and section 1.13) have indicated that publicly displaying information on the food hygiene standards of food businesses would help consumers to exercise choice over where to eat and provide an incentive for food businesses to improve food safety standards and facilitate consumer choice. As expressed by Jenny Morris of the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health (CIEH press release 14 September 2004) “Armed with this basic information, UK consumers would be able to exercise choice about where they eat, not only based on menus but also knowing how conscientious restaurants are at maintaining good food hygiene”. Similarly, the Chair of the Food Standards Agency expressed the view that there may be merit in such a scheme as it encourages improvement through competitive advantage rather than legislation (quoted in Environmental Health Journal, December 2001). It has also been suggested that improved hygiene within establishments would reduce inspection times and allow time for other inspection activities.

There are two key types of scheme in operation:

- **Food hygiene award schemes** – these are intended to assess and reward food businesses that exceed minimum compliance standards. Participation in the scheme is generally voluntary with higher awards for better performance. The names of businesses holding awards may be posted on a website;
- **‘Scores on the doors’ schemes** – these are intended to assess all food businesses against legal compliance. The score given to the business during a routine hygiene inspection (e.g. by a local authority inspector) is displayed in a standard format certificate on the window or door of the premises. Display of certificates may be voluntary or mandatory.

Existing schemes in the UK are generally food hygiene awards and cover restaurants, pubs, hotels and takeaways who achieve a certain standard in inspections carried out by Environmental Health Officers. The schemes are not widespread and the display of awards is voluntary. The Chartered Institute for Environmental Health were reported to have called for wider adoption of ‘scores on the doors’ schemes (public display of the results of all food hygiene inspections) at a September 2004 conference and praised the Greenwich London Borough Council scheme. Taking the Greenwich scheme as an example, if a business passes an inspection, their details are posted on the council’s website. If a business does not qualify for an award, this too is noted on the site.

This report is part of a wider research study by Greenstreet Berman on how to encourage organisations to improve food safety and hygiene. The first stage of ongoing research by Greenstreet Berman for the Food Standards Agency found that:

- Customers tend to neither complain nor praise proprietors; instead simply do not return to an establishment and perhaps communicating their disquiet to friends and family by word of mouth;
- Customers may read local press articles about local food businesses;

- Customers would welcome more information on the food safety performance of a business, such as a score on the doors scheme.

The first stage of work also noted that there is no publicly available database of offenders (food businesses subject to enforcement, or data on food inspection results) in the UK, unlike Eire. Therefore, an award scheme could provide such information to customers in a readily accessible manner (i.e. on the 'door'). Research completed by Leach (undated) found that the standards of food hygiene and cleanliness are an important influence on consumers. In addition, whilst customers may expect food hygiene standards to be high, and take them for granted, if they see something that upsets them, this will have an effect. As with our own research, Leach found that customers are unlikely to complain, instead leaving and not returning. This has the additional consequence that the proprietor is not appraised of perceived deficiencies.

Indeed, there is some evidence from overseas (schemes are widely used across USA, parts of Canada, Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore) does suggest that award schemes can lead to improved standards of food safety, and better sales amongst award winners as well as being welcomed by customers. For example:

- Vance (2005) quotes US data that compliance scores improved from 21% to 63% after introduction of a New York scheme.
- FSA Scotland working paper cites a review of the Canadian Toronto DineSafe Scheme, for which it is reported that the evaluation of the Toronto scheme provided strong evidence that consumers valued such schemes and that high levels of compliance were attained. They also reported that the scheme operated with statutory force and that information was provided at the point of sale.

This is consistent with the findings of Greenstreet Berman's first stage of research for the FSA (reference) which found that businesses are sensitive to their reputation. Indeed, the concern about reputation and maintaining customer confidence was cited as the single greatest driver for maintaining food safety standards. Therefore, it follows that a scheme that informed customers of their performance could act as a business incentive.

It has also been suggested by Yapp (2004) that 'carrots' work better than 'sticks', hence rewarding good performance through an award may be preferable to 'naming and shaming' alone. 'Research' reported in the Eat Safe newsletter (Issue 3, 2004) found that 92% of caterers at the IFEX exhibition agree that Eat Safe is a positive initiative.

The FSA is committed to examining the best mix of regulatory and non-regulatory means of improving standards of food safety and enabling informed consumer choice, including increasing transparency of food hygiene for customers. Good information helps consumers make choices and readier to complain, putting business under pressure to improve. Thus, hygiene award schemes are cited as a potentially effective means of informing consumers of the food safety performance of food businesses, thereby enabling informed choice and providing a business incentive to the proprietors.

1.1.2 Types of schemes

As noted above, there are two key types of scheme, food hygiene award schemes and ‘scores on the doors’ schemes. There is already significant interest in food hygiene award schemes in the UK. Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and some English local authorities have set up food hygiene award schemes. However, a national scheme has not been initiated in the UK. The existing schemes vary in design and operation although they tend to focus on management, structural hygiene and hygiene practices. This does provide the advantage, from a research perspective, of providing a range of schemes that can be compared. The methods these schemes use for scoring or awarding businesses include:

- Yes – no schemes, where the establishment either receives an award or not – such as the Northern Ireland and Scottish Eat safe scheme and some English authorities;
- Multi-level schemes including:
 - Gold, silver, bronze (Wales and some English authorities);
 - Excellent, Very Good, Good (Sheffield);
 - Star rating, * = Good, ** = Very good, *** = Excellent (Camden and Norwich).

Other grading schemes have been applied overseas. For example:

- Denmark uses a ‘smiley’ face where:
 - Very happy smiley face – inspectors had no remarks
 - Happy smiley face – Certain rules must be obeyed
 - Neutral face – An injunction or prohibition order has been given
 - Frowning face – Enterprise has been fined, reported to police or approval withdrawn
- USA (Alaska) uses words and scores:
 - Excellent (100 out of 100)
 - Good (90 to 99)
 - Acceptable (85 to 89)
 - Marginal (70 to 84)
 - Unacceptable (<70)
- USA (Georgia) uses a colour grading:
 - Green (general maintenance)
 - Yellow (emerging hazard)
 - Red (immediate hazard)
- New Zealand – uses an alphabetical scale of A to E

The grading categories proposed in 2005 by the FSA Scotland working party for a pilot scheme are EAT safe Award standard, pass and Improvement required.

Appendix A provides details of a range of UK and overseas food hygiene award and 'scores on the doors' schemes.

It is pertinent to note that UK schemes focus on standards of safety and/or compliance with law rather than using terms expressing risk to the public which some overseas schemes use (e.g. Emerging Hazard, Immediate Hazard). It appears that UK preference is for a compliance/standards based award, especially if the scheme is non-statutory (voluntary) as businesses would otherwise reject the scheme.

1.1.3 Evaluations of food hygiene award and 'scores on the doors' schemes

There have been some evaluations of existing schemes, as summarised below.

Sheffield City Council, April 2005 Stakeholder consultation - Food Hygiene award scheme

The Sheffield City scheme was introduced in June 2003 and had around 500 businesses issued with an award around April 2005. It is thought that this includes all high risk (registered) businesses have been assessed for the award. All high risk and category D business are assessed free of charge at the time of the routine inspection. Premises that are not due to be inspected are offered an assessment at £40. Award holders are issued with a certificate to display and are listed on City Council website. The schemes launch included events and press coverage.

A consultation exercise¹ with 323 respondents was run between October 2004 and March 2005 (49% response rate). It included:

- 159 existing award holders (51% response rate) and 3 multiple award holders
- 29 award not issued (24% response rate);
- 24 ethnic business without an award;
- 21 members of a citizens panel and 69 members of public (85% response rate);
- 7 EHOs and 9 community groups.

It found:

- The scheme has been well received – 97% thought the scheme a good idea, and 88% of businesses have or would have displayed the award;
- There is overwhelming support for it to continue;
- The scheme has encouraged (81% of) businesses that responded to improve hygiene standards;
- There is a definite public interest in hygiene standards with 97% stating that awareness of standards would influence their decision to eat in a particular establishment;

In addition:

- Interest amongst the public (82% of the public respondents) for awards to be issued to retailers and low risk businesses;

¹ David Fenn, Health Protection Service, Sheffield City Council, Stakeholder consultation, April 2005.

- There was support for listing non-achievers (64% of respondents) and prosecutions (77% of respondents) on the website.

They conclude that there was little need to alter the scheme or information provided, with the exception of changing the term 'satisfactory'. However:

- There was support (75%) for the introduction of a simplified 'Community hygiene award';
- 46% prefer the grades gold, silver and bronze (43% of businesses preferred gold, silver bronze, whilst only 14% disagreed).
- There was a need to further publicise the award scheme and website;
- A need to provide translated material for ethnic businesses (65% of ethnic businesses).

As regards public awareness:

- Whilst the award listings on the Health Protection Service Website get 1500 hits per month, only 9% of respondents had looked at the food hygiene awards on the website (10% of businesses and 4% of the public). The citizens' panel felt there was more interest in awards being displayed on the premise than on a website.
- Only 25% of public respondents were aware of the scheme.

The authors of this report interpret these findings as indicating that the current scheme does appear to motivate and reward business, and is supported by the public, there is less clear evidence about awareness and actual usage by the public.

Welsh food hygiene award scheme

An evaluation report is available for the Welsh scheme for the period March 2002 to March 2003 (All Wales Food Safety technical Panel, September 2004). The Welsh scheme was formally launched on 1st March 2002, and uses the Gold, Silver, Bronze format. Awards are given at the discretion of the Local Authority (22 in Wales of which 21 had a scheme at this time) following an unannounced food hygiene inspection (against Code of Practice 9 Food Hygiene Inspections). Only premises that achieve a minimum compliance score are eligible for an award, at which point they may achieve Gold, Silver or Bronze. A certificate (with FSA Wales logo) can be displayed at the premises, and some authorities list some or all premises on their websites.

The evaluation included checking factual information on numbers (798 at that time) and types of awards issued, obtaining views of food businesses in receipt of an award, covering 16 of the Local Authorities.

The evaluation (at an early stage of the scheme) found:

- The scheme does achieve its intended outcome of recognising good food hygiene standards;
- That the scheme is a benefit to business and Local Authorities.

This includes 15 out of 16 authorities feeling it was a useful tool for food hygiene, with several saying that business were asking what they needed to do to get a higher award, and few expressing resource concerns about the scheme.

The 317 business respondents (a 62.4% response rate) found:

- 99.5% were pleased to receive the award;

- 89.8% had displayed the award;
- 67.4% said customers had commented on the award;
- 90.4% thought the award scheme would result in improved food hygiene;
- 11% felt the scheme had resulted in increased business;
- 92.1% wanted to see a list of award winners on the local authority website, and 90.4% on the FSA website.

Businesses also suggested the scheme is given greater publicity and that the criteria for an award are clarified.

Eat Safe Award Scheme – Scotland

An evaluation of the Eat Safe scheme was published by the FSA in June 2006. The scheme was launched in January 2005 to provide an incentive to caterers to strive for standards beyond those required by law. It also aims to help consumers make informed choices by providing a recognisable standard.

The evaluation was very limited as it only involved the participating Local Authorities and did not talk to businesses or consumers. The research found that the scheme generally had a low profile with little demand from business. Scheme participation was linked to funding for HACCP projects and that local authorities indicated that future funding was uncertain and future participation may depend on resources. There was also a perception amongst Local Authorities that the scheme does little more than reflect legal requirements. With no evaluation of the views of businesses and consumers, it is not possible to determine if the scheme is fulfilling its aims.

Hygiene grade cards – Los Angeles County, California

Research by Zhe Jin and Leslie (2003) examined the effect of a sudden policy change in Los Angeles County in which restaurants were required to publicly display hygiene grade cards resulting from Department of Health Services (DHS) hygiene inspections. Inspections had been in place for many years but results now had to be displayed to consumers via a standard format grade card in the window of the restaurant. The research found that the introduction of the grade cards increased hygiene quality, demonstrated by:

- An increase in inspection scores;
- An increase in consumer sensitivity to restaurant hygiene;
- A 20% decrease in the number of hospitalisations caused by food borne illness.

They conclude that, “Providing people with better information causes them to change their purchase decisions and causes firms to modify their behaviour, leading to improved health for people.” One concern of the research was that changes in the behaviour of inspectors (i.e. the grades they award) might undermine the usefulness of the scheme in the longer term. The standard format display was found to be important in getting restaurants to display the information.

Other research

In addition, previous research, such as Leach (2001), Yapp and Fairman (2003) have highlighted a series of issues, including:

Concerns about scoring methods

- What if the food businesses believe the report is unfair or disagree with a score (which could affect their ability to trade) given?
- How might it affect the relationship with the inspector, especially if the food businesses think the score is unfair?
- Should the award be based on compliance with the law (only) or include matters beyond compliance? There is concern that the standards required by the law are minimal and that award schemes need to encourage higher standards especially if they are to be meaningful to the public.
- More generally, what criteria provide the most meaningful assessment of food hygiene/safety?
- Concerns about the quantitative rating of a food business, including whether the assessed factors link to food safety risk and inconsistencies between inspectors;
- Local authorities record data differently.
- Inspections are a snap shot in time.

Concerns about consumer comprehension and acceptance

- If the score is based on food hygiene inspections, will the award scheme be understood and used by members of the public? Would customers be interested in all parts of a food hygiene inspection or just parts such as compliance?
- Would the public recognise the awarding body? If customers do not recognise the awarding body, they may not trust the award.
- How often would customers think inspection occur?
- Would customers understand a score?

Discussion about different types of grading

- Do consumers need to know the score, or just a 'simplified' rating or just to know that it has been inspected and 'passed' by the regulator?
- Should a visual image be used (e.g. a smiley face) to communicate the standard achieved with consumers?
- Is a single level (yes/no) or multi level award scheme best? Previous research has suggested that multi levels provide business with an incentive for further progress but is obviously more complex than a simple yes/no award scheme.

Concerns about businesses yet to be assessed or with out of date certificates

- How would businesses that have not yet been assessed, be treated by consumers?
- How long should an award be valid for, and what would be the process for withdrawing awards during this period (for food hygiene failures)?

- If the certificate is 'old' or out of date, it can suggest the premises are no longer meeting standards.

Safefood - Ireland

There is also some research that raises the issue of consumer awareness. A review of the Irish scheme (safefood, May 2005 safetrak 4 consumer tracking research) found that 1 in 3 people spontaneously mentioned safefood as the organisation responsible for providing information on food hygiene, whilst 9% mentioned the Q mark quality assurance sign and 4% the safefood symbol. The East Safe newsletter quoted evaluation that found 9% of consumers recognised the Eat Safe Award.

Some work (Leach, 2001) has raised the question of whether consumer perceptions / concerns match those covered by food hygiene inspections. Customers may include 'aesthetics' within their perception of hygiene. In addition, some schemes cover smoking and others covers 'healthy' food within their award scheme. This raises the point that the consumer may view food hygiene/safety, healthy food and the safety of the environment (i.e. is there smoking) as a single issue, whereas food hygiene schemes cover just one aspect.

Where should the score of a business be displayed?

Many award schemes list awarded businesses on websites, including Northern Ireland, Scotland, many Welsh Local Authorities and English Local Authorities. Indeed, previous reviews have also suggested that information should be centralised so that it is easy for people to find, possibly such as the web based search facility available for Scotland and Northern Ireland. This does raise the question of whether food hygiene scores should be posted on front doors and/or websites. Which option is most likely to achieve goals of enabling consumers to make use of the scheme?

1.2 Aims of this work

The aim of the work covered by this report is to carry out some preliminary work to investigate the views of businesses and consumers on the most effective way to develop a 'scores on the doors' scheme to increase consumer choice and improve food safety standards in the UK food industry. One of the key elements was considering possible designs for the 'scores on the doors' certificates.

2 APPROACH TO THE WORK

2.1 Method

The work included the following approaches:

- Running a set of focus groups with consumers and businesses, each using a range of ‘mocked up’ schemes and exploring issues such as:
 - what information is required by consumers;
 - the reaction and behaviour of consumers and businesses to different information and presentation formats;
 - how best to encourage businesses to participate during the pilot;
 - the influence of existing LA schemes on consumer and business reactions to ‘scores on the doors’ ideas;
 - where /how best to display the scheme results;
 - the scope of the issues incorporated into the scores scheme and how best to communicate this to both businesses and consumers;
 - potential impact of language, cultural and socio-economic factors.
- A postal survey of businesses – questions to elicit the views of business on a ‘scores on the doors scheme’ were included in a broader survey of business attitudes to food safety.

2.2 Focus groups

2.2.1 Focus group structure

The focus group work involved six consumer groups and two business groups. The aim was to test views in an area with an existing scheme, where people might be familiar with seeing certificates, and in an area without an existing scheme. The areas with an existing scheme were selected in discussion with the FSA and were chosen, primarily, based on the style of certificate used (e.g. Gold/silver/bronze) rather than the type of scheme (ie. food hygiene award or ‘scores on the doors’). The consumer groups were also arranged to determine if there were any significant differences in attitudes and opinions between rural and urban communities or geographically between the north and south of the UK. The findings of the focus groups are presented in section 3.

Consumer groups

Of the 6 consumer groups, 2 were in areas where food hygiene award schemes are currently operating and 4 were in areas with no award schemes.

In areas where there is an award schemes:

- one group was in an urban area (Cardiff)
- one group was in a rural area (Trehafod, near Pontypridd, south Wales)

The 4 groups in areas with no award schemes included:

- one group in an urban area in the south (Bristol)
- one group in a rural area in the south (Blagdon, Somerset)
- one group in an urban area in the north (Leeds)
- one group in a rural area in the north (Bramhope, Yorkshire)

All 6 groups included a range of socio-economic and ethnic groups, age & gender.

Business groups

- One group for businesses participating in an existing scheme (there is a scheme in Wales so businesses were recruited from participants in the scheme in Cardiff)
- One group for businesses in an area where there is no existing scheme (businesses were recruited in Bristol)

The aim was to recruit up to 10 owners/managers of (mostly small) food related businesses and try to include the following:

- at least 2 food retail businesses with catering sections/outlets
- at least 2 restaurants
- at least 2 takeaway or fast food businesses
- at least 1 pub or hotel
- at least 1 cafe
- have a maximum of 3 'chain' or franchise businesses (e.g. with 1 fast food, 1 restaurant)

Recruitment of the business groups proved difficult so this exact combination was not possible for both groups.

Recruitment for the focus groups was carried out by market research company Wood Holmes Group. To elicit an unbiased view, participants were not told that the discussions were about food hygiene award schemes when they were recruited.

2.2.2 Key questions for focus groups

The questions posed in the focus groups are summarised below.

Consumers

- We are now going to show you a series of documents. Can you please tell us what you think they mean and how you might respond to one if you saw it
- What information do you require about the hygiene and food safety of a food business?
- How might you make use of such information? How useful do you think it might be?
- What types of food hygiene and safety issues do you think the certificate should cover?
- How likely are you to visit a local authority run or national website to see a report on a food business?
- Do you think a hygiene award is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?
- How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?

Additional questions for consumers in areas with a scheme were:

- Are you aware of any scheme like this running in your area? If yes, what's it called? What do you think of it? Have you made any use of it?

Business focus groups

- We are now going to show you a series of documents. Can you please tell us what you think they mean and how you might respond to one if you saw it.
- What types of food hygiene and safety issues do you think the certificate should cover?
- What types of concerns or questions might you have about a food hygiene award scheme run by the FSA or a local authority?
- Do you think a hygiene award is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?
- What types of food hygiene and safety issues do you think the certificate should cover?
- How do you think businesses could be best encouraged to participate during a pilot of this type of scheme?
- How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?

Additional questions for businesses participating in a scheme were:

- Why did you participate?
- How has it impacted your business? Have you changed food hygiene/safety practices? Have you improved sales, increased costs etc?
- Do you have any concerns or issues with the scheme?
- How do you think the scheme could be improved?

2.3 Business survey

A postal survey of a sample of 6993 UK food businesses was completed in spring 2006, securing 565 responses. The survey was completed as part of a wider project on how to improve food safety and hygiene. The opportunity was taken to include a small set of questions about food hygiene 'scores on door' schemes to explore:

- Self reported interest in voluntarily participating in a 'scores on the door' scheme;
- Perceived impact of a 'scores on the door' scheme;
- How responses vary between sizes and types of food businesses.

The sample size was designed to provide a reasonable level of statistical power and confidence. Care must be taken in interpreting differences between sub-samples as the reduction in the size of sub-samples leads to lower power and therefore lower confidence.

The findings of the business survey are presented in section 4.

3 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report provides a summary of key points raised by participants. Complete transcripts from each of the groups are provided in Appendix B.

3.2 Responses of consumer groups

3.2.1 Certificate appearance

Comments on the appearance of the certificates indicated that participants would prefer them to be “more official looking”. In most groups, it was suggested that the FSA logo should be larger and at the top of the certificate to make the fact that it was an official government scheme more obvious. It was also suggested that there should be security features, such as watermarking, embossing, or holograms. There were some suggestions that the font and colouring could also be changed, as there were views that the font looked “too playful” and the colours did not stand out.

3.2.2 Rating system

The most favoured rating system for the mock certificates that were shown to the groups was a star rating system. Many suggested that it would need to be a rating out of five stars rather than three as a five star system was a standard rating system that people recognised (e.g., hotel and food quality ratings etc.). There were some suggestions that there could be confusion as to what the rating was for and that this would need to be made clear (either by clearly specifying this on the certificate or using a symbol that could be associated with food hygiene rather than stars).

The second most favoured rating system was the use of a gold standard (an award of either gold, silver, or bronze). Some thought that this was a recognised system that needed no further explanation (although one person noted that with this system it was unclear as to whether there was a platinum rating or if gold was the highest award. There were mixed views on the other rating schemes that used words (e.g., ‘excellent’) or a combination of words and numbers (e.g., ‘95 – Good’).

The rating system that was least liked was clearly that which used ‘Smiley’ faces to indicate food hygiene standards. Most people thought that the faces looked childish, with some suggestions that they would not be appropriate for use in food hygiene scheme as they trivialise the issue. Some people also had trouble distinguishing between different faces.

In several of the groups, it was suggested that it would be better to have a simple pass or fail rating, and there was a lot of support for this idea.

3.2.3 What areas should be covered by the scheme?

Amongst the groups a range of areas that were expected to be considered in a food hygiene scheme were identified:

- Cleanliness of the kitchen

- Personal hygiene of the employees.
- Food storage (including where different things are kept and the temperature at which they are stored)
- Freshness of food.
- Food preparation
- Vermin

In addition, there were suggestions for other areas that a scheme might include, such as training of individual staff, the source of produce used and supply chain information. While some were happy to have other areas, outside of food hygiene (e.g., whether food is locally sourced, food quality, standard of service), covered, others suggested that it would be better to “keep it simple” and that a food hygiene scheme by itself was reassuring and would avoid confusion.

3.2.4 Provision of additional information

There were various suggestions for what extra information should be made available to consumers about a food hygiene scheme (alongside the certificate or available elsewhere). The following were the most frequently suggested:

- A list of food hygiene areas covered by the scheme (i.e., what does the inspector check?);
- A breakdown of scores in different areas (although some said they would not be interested in seeing information at this level of detail);
- A list of “things to look out for” when eating out that would provide indicators of the likely level of food hygiene;
- Contact information for reporting of food hygiene issues.

3.2.5 Advertising the scheme

Many conventional methods were suggested for advertising a food hygiene scheme. For example, television, radio and newspaper articles were all mentioned, along with advertising at point of sale, billboards, posters, information leaflets available on request, and websites. The chip and pin Valentine day advertising campaign was mentioned in two of the focus groups, with the suggestion that this type of campaign (with a specified date of introduction of a scheme) is effective at raising awareness. Involvement of celebrities (such as Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsay) was also suggested by several people and one person proposed that educating children at school would be a good way of promoting awareness for a long-term scheme.

Indication of food hygiene ratings (or pass/fail) in restaurant advertising was also proposed as a method of increasing awareness of food hygiene scores. There were even suggestions that it should be compulsory for restaurants to display their rating in advertisements, and that there could be an official logo that could be used for this purpose (similar to CORGI registration).

3.2.6 Making use of a food hygiene scheme

Responses in all groups indicated a lack of keen interest in a food hygiene scheme.

Many said that they did not pay any attention to certificates in food establishments, and while a few people said that they might consider the certificates when making decisions about eating out, food hygiene was clearly not a priority. Higher priorities when deciding where to eat were things such as the price of the food, the menu, food quality, and type of cuisine. Even when considering hygiene people seemed content to trust their own judgement of the appearance of the interior and popularity of the venue.

Some people suggested that they might consider a food hygiene rating when planning for an important event (e.g., family celebration), however most people stated that previous experiences or recommendations from others would still be more a more important factor in making a decision of where to eat.

A recurring comment throughout the focus groups was that “if a place is open it must be safe”. That is, there was an expectation that if there were significant food hygiene problems at a restaurant, that the environmental health inspectors would observe this and arrange to have the restaurant shut down. In fact, several participants suggested that rather than having a rating scheme it would be better if food businesses were given a simple pass or fail for food hygiene. Consumers felt that this was a simple way of reassuring them that the place where they were eating had satisfied the legal hygiene requirements that are required to serve food. There was strong support for this idea with comments suggesting that consumers think that food hygiene is a black and white issue (a place is either clean or it isn't) and that detailed ratings are less important than that an establishment has “passed” and is therefore a safe place to eat.

Two of the consumer groups were in areas where there was an existing scheme (the Welsh Food Hygiene Award); however, no one was aware of this scheme, so there was no use of it.

Using the internet to search for food hygiene scores

When consumers were asked whether they would make use of a website listing food hygiene scores responses indicated that some might use such a website only under certain circumstances:

- When planning ahead;
- When planning a holiday;
- If at work and easily able to use the internet before lunchtime.

Consumers expressed a preference for looking for food quality information, consumer comments and reviews rather than food hygiene information. However, if food hygiene ratings were available on the internet, with a search function, they would prefer to be able to search by fields such as location, type of cuisine, price, and special dietary requirements. Location and cuisine type appeared to be the most important search parameters and there was a desire to create a short list with these searches before searching by food hygiene score.

3.2.7 Consumer Concerns

Various concerns regarding a proposed scheme were identified:

- Poor scorers would not display their certificates, leading to suggestions that a scheme would not work unless it was compulsory;

- Cost to consumers - with some people questioning whether council tax would rise with the introduction of a scheme. Some expressed a preference for money to be spent on more inspectors and more frequent inspections, or to raise awareness of the current scheme rather than on creation of a new scheme;
- The impact on businesses, including whether different types of business (e.g., a burger van, restaurant, takeaway, pub that serves food) could be fairly rated using the same criteria, or whether there would need to be different schemes for different business types;

3.3 Responses of business Groups

3.3.1 Certificate appearance and rating system

Comments concerning the mock certificates were quite similar to those made by consumer groups (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). That is, there were suggestions that the certificate should be made to look more official and the ‘smiley’ rating system was the least favoured. The most favoured rating system was less clearly defined although the star rating and gold standard appeared to be slightly more popular than other systems.

3.3.2 Participation in an existing scheme

One of the business groups comprised individuals from businesses that were participating in the Welsh Food Hygiene Award scheme. It was revealed that no one in this group knew what the scheme was called. In fact, there was no real knowledge of the scheme at all as it was just the case that when environmental health officers turned up they would sometimes award a certificate.

Some of those in the group had bronze awards and they explained that they were unable to achieve a higher award because of the criteria (e.g., non-smoking establishment, a level of training that it is not feasible for small businesses to obtain).

3.3.3 Participating in a new food hygiene scheme

Those belonging to the group located where there was no existing scheme all responded that they would participate in a food hygiene scheme if one were introduced.

There was a comment that consumers would not use businesses that did not participate. If only a small number of restaurants had been assessed, there was a feeling that there may still be a benefit to participation, depending on whether other similar businesses in the area were participating.

3.3.4 Business concerns

The concerns included:

- Those participating in the Welsh Food Hygiene Award that had received a bronze award noted that this is a very good rating but that consumers do not realise this. One person had even taken their award down after getting customers asking, “what do you have to have to do to get gold?”

- Frequency of inspections. Several suggestions for inspection frequency were given. Those businesses that had contractors performing inspections were usually inspected quarterly, and under the Welsh Food Hygiene Award, the frequency of Environmental Health inspections was dependent on award (i.e., less frequent inspections if you have an award).
- While businesses were willing to participate in a food hygiene scheme and thought it would inspire higher standards, many thought that consumers would not really be interested in such a scheme.
- There was concern about difficulty in implementing the scheme due to the sheer size of such a project. Of particular concern was how the scheme would cover all of the different types of food businesses and whether they should be rated in the same way. There was one suggestion that the same basic standards should apply to all businesses but that the risk factors for each business should also be worked into the scheme. It was thought that any scheme should be compulsory.

4 RESULTS OF THE BUSINESS SURVEY

4.1 Profile of respondents

The questionnaire asked that it be completed by the person responsible for food safety in their organisation. Hence, the survey is of 'decision makers' in the organisations. All contact details were selected randomly using a structured sample frame from a publicly available database (Dunn and Bradstreet).

Table 1 and Table 2 provide a profile of the respondents, indicating that they:

- Are representative of a range of types of food business;
- The sample is representative of each size of organisation;
- The majority (69%) of responding organisations had been in business for over 20 years that indicates that newer businesses are underrepresented.

As each respondent could cite more than one type of business activity, the total number of businesses exceeds the number of respondents in Table 1. Table 1 presents the size of organisations in each category of business type. Table 2 presents organisation size for the sample as a whole.

Table 1: Size and type of business of respondents

Business activity (n means number of responses)	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	Total
Food Producers (n = 64)	14%	27%	30%	25%	5%	100%
Primary Food Processors (n = 170)	5%	14%	42%	25%	14%	100%
Wholesalers (n = 96)	9%	21%	38%	22%	10%	100%
Distribution / haulage (n = 74)	5%	14%	39%	22%	20%	100%
Importer (n = 67)	6%	21%	42%	19%	12%	100%
Secondary food processor (n = 201)	2%	23%	31%	26%	18%	100%
Caterer (n = 159)	10%	28%	27%	20%	15%	100%
Retailer (n = 88)	6%	34%	27%	19%	14%	100%
Chain/franchise (n = 63)	2%	27%	27%	25%	19%	100%

Table 2: Size of responding organisations

Number of employees	Total	%
Micro (<10)	47	8
Small (10 to 50)	151	27
Medium (51 to 250)	182	32
Large (250 to 1000)	118	21
Very large (>10000)	67	12

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Current reporting of hygiene awards

As part of the survey, we asked whether responding organisations already possessed a food hygiene award from a local authority. As shown in Table 3 only a minority did. This is in accordance with expectations given that most local authorities do not operate an award scheme, and those that do have a scheme, often do not cover the full spectrum of food businesses. The highest level of participation is amongst caterers and retailers. This is consistent with the focus of current schemes upon high street food businesses. However, the numbers stating that they have awards is quite high considering the number of schemes in the UK; this suggests there may be an element of self-selection. The table also shows a significant minority of 'unsure' responses, suggesting some organisations are unfamiliar with this issue.

Table 3: Does your company have a food hygiene award from the Local Authority?

Hygiene award	Yes	No	Unsure
Caterer (n = 152)	34%	43%	23%
Retailer (n = 87)	30%	46%	24%
Wholesalers (n = 90)	28%	49%	23%
Secondary food processor (n = 191)	27%	54%	18%
Food Producers (n = 63)	21%	60%	19%
Chain/franchise (n = 60)	18%	53%	28%
Primary Food Processors (n = 161)	15%	62%	23%
Distribution/haulage (n = 73)	11%	71%	18%
Importer (n = 64)	11%	70%	19%

4.2.2 Interest in voluntary participation

The questionnaire asked:

“Would you voluntarily display a certificate reporting a score from a food hygiene inspection carried out by the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer during their routine inspection of your business? E.g. a certificate that graded your standards of hygiene as Gold (excellent), Silver (good) or Bronze (satisfactory), with all food businesses inspected at specified intervals by the Environmental Health Officer”

Table 4 shows the responses split by size of organisation, with the total for those responding probably yes and definitely yes. It is clear that the majority of respondents (over 77%) say that they would probably or definitely voluntarily display a certificate for all sizes of organisation. Micro organisations provide a smaller majority saying ‘yes’, with a greater proportion saying ‘unsure’. This suggests some uncertainty on the part of micro organisations.

A small minority (11%) of respondents say probably or definitely ‘no’.

Table 4: Percentage who would voluntarily display a food hygiene score certificate, by organisation size

	Would you voluntarily display a certificate reporting a score from a food hygiene inspection carried out by the LA EHO during their routine inspection of your business?					
	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	All
Definitely Not	2%	1%	2%	3%	6%	2.5%
Probably not	13%	9%	8%	6%	7%	8.23%
Unsure	21%	10%	11%	9%	12%	11.45%
Probably yes	51%	56%	57%	58%	64%	57.42%
Definitely yes	13%	24%	21%	24%	10%	20.39%
Total yes (probably and definitely)	64%	80%	78%	82%	74%	77.82%

The following tables (Table 5 and Table 6, and Figure 2) explore whether willingness to display a certificate varies between types of respondents. They indicate that:

- Participation in existing schemes (Table 5, shown as a chart in Figure 1) such as farm assurance or trade association accreditation scheme does not appear to alter the level of interest greatly, with possibly some more interest amongst respondents who already work in partnership with Local Authorities;
- Responses are very similar for organisations that do and do not already have a food hygiene award (Table 6);

- Responses are very similar for each type of food business, with a slight fall in the numbers saying ‘yes’ amongst food producers (Figure 2). Figure 2 summed probable and definite responses.

It is also pertinent to note that over 80% of organisations with a food hygiene award would voluntarily display a certificate with just 9% saying ‘no’, i.e. past experience of similar schemes does not deter participation.

Table 5: Percentage who would voluntarily display a food hygiene score certificate, by involvement in the following schemes:

	Farm assurance scheme	Industry or TA scheme	Business customer scheme	Partnership with LA EH dept
Definitely not	1%	2%	5%	1%
Probably not	8%	5%	5%	6%
Unsure	9%	10%	11%	8%
Definitely Yes	19%	25%	19%	33%
Probably Yes	64%	58%	60%	53%

Figure 1: Percentage who would voluntarily display a score certificate by organisation size

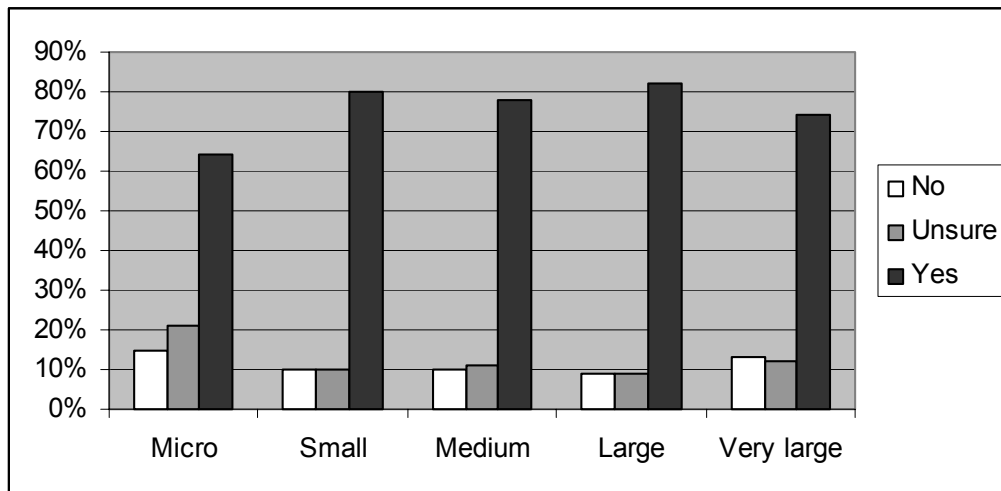
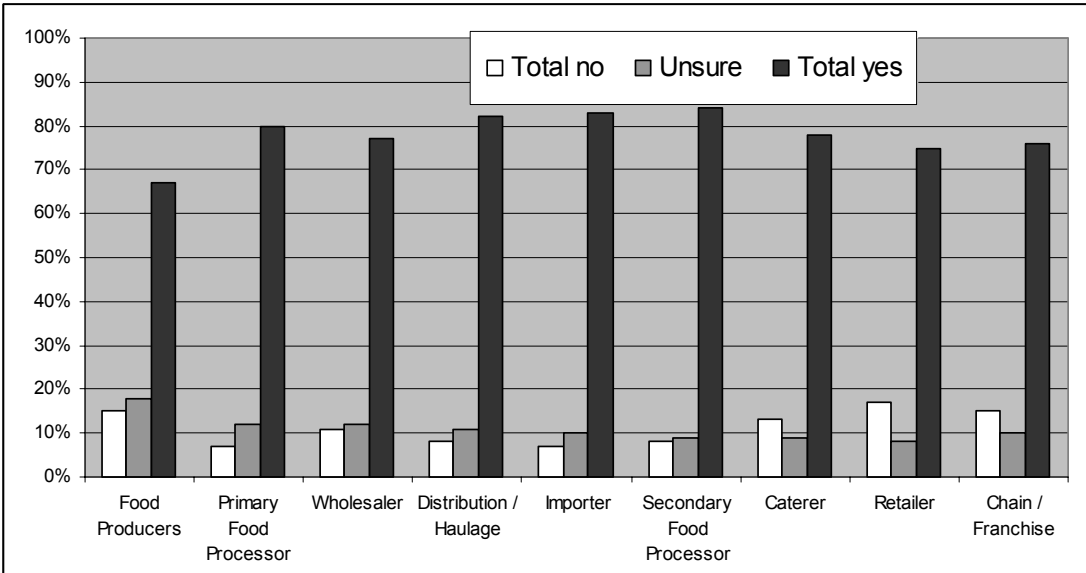


Table 6: Percentage who would voluntarily display a food hygiene score certificate, by those currently with / without hygiene awards or who are unsure

	Hygiene award Yes	Hygiene award No	Unsure
Definitely Not	3%	2%	3%
Probably Not	6%	5%	8%
Unsure	7%	13%	11%
Probably Yes	58%	64%	57%
Definitely Yes	26%	17%	21%

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who would voluntarily display a score certificate by type of food business



4.2.3 Perceived impact of hygiene 'scores on doors' scheme

Table 7 presents the proportion of respondents by organisation size that agree or strongly agree with the statements given. It shows that:

- The vast majority (72%) of respondents think that the score certificate would be of interest to customers and would (66%) motivate them to improve standards of food hygiene;
- A small minority think it would be a waste of time;
- A large minority think it would help attract customers.

There is some association with size, with fewer micro organisations thinking it would be of interest to customers and more thinking it would be a waste of time.

Table 7: Respondents' views on the results of displaying a food hygiene certificate, by business size

To what extent do you agree that displaying a certificate that reports your food hygiene score would..?	% who Agree / Strongly Agree - by size of business					
	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	All
Be a waste of time	44%	17%	14%	9%	17%	16%
Be of interest to customers	60%	75%	72%	77%	67%	72%
Motivate you to improve standards of food hygiene	53%	68%	71%	63%	59%	66%
Help attract more customers	37%	46%	40%	34%	27%	39%

Table 8 presents responses to the same questions by type of food business. Whilst the overall results are similar, there are some differences amongst the types of business, including:

- More producers think it would be a waste of time, fewer of them think it would motivate them to improve food hygiene standards;
- Fewer caterers and retailers think it would be a waste of time; more of them think it would help attract customers.

Thus, organisations that have more direct contact with members of the public rate possible impact more positively than organisations with less direct contact with members of the public.

Table 8: Respondents' views on the results of displaying a food hygiene certificate, by business type

	% who Agree / Strongly Agree - by type of business								
	Food Producers	Primary Food Processor	Wholesaler	Distribution / Haulage	Importer	Secondary Food Processor	Caterer	Retailer	Chain / Franchise
Be a waste of time	28%	19%	17%	15%	15%	13%	11%	9%	12%
Be of interest to customers	73%	66%	70%	76%	74%	74%	76%	69%	73%
Motivate to improve standards of food hygiene	51%	59%	60%	68%	58%	65%	78%	65%	70%
Help attract more customers	26%	29%	35%	43%	35%	37%	51%	43%	43%

Table 9 illustrates how the perceived impact of displaying a score certificate varies according to participation in other schemes. It would appear that organisations that are already working in partnership with Local Authorities rate the impact more positively.

Table 10 illustrates how the perceived impact of displaying a score certificate varies according to possession of a food hygiene award. The responses are very similar for organisations that do and do not have a food hygiene award.

Table 9: Percentage who Agree/Strongly Agree that these would be the results of displaying a food hygiene certificate, by participation in schemes / partnerships

To what extent do you agree that displaying a certificate that reports your food hygiene score would..?	% who Agree / Strongly Agree			
	Farm assurance scheme	Industry or TA scheme	Business customer scheme	Partnership with LA EH dept
Be a waste of time	22%	15%	23%	11%
Be of interest to customers	75%	70%	59%	78%
Motivate you to improve standards of food hygiene	55%	64%	46%	76%
Help attract more customers	32%	37%	24%	47%

Table 10: Impact of having a food hygiene certificate

To what extent do you agree that displaying a certificate that reports your food hygiene score would...?			
	Hygiene award Yes	Hygiene award No	Unsure
Be a waste of time	18%	18%	10%
Be of interest to customers	76%	70%	75%
Motivate you to improve standards of food hygiene	70%	63%	72%
Help attract more customers	43%	38%	33%

4.2.4 Ranking of ways to motivate food businesses

As part of the questionnaire, organisations were given a list of 33 potential ways of motivating businesses to improve food safety. Respondents were asked to rate how effective they thought each method would be in motivating their food business to improve food safety. Each option was on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Very ineffective and 5 = Very effective. Table 11 shows the average of the scores given for the top 10 options, the table is ranked from the top rated to the lower rated. The option of “A requirement to inform customers of your food safety performance, e.g. display of a food hygiene award in your shop window or website” was ranked fourth out of the 33 options.

It is pertinent to note that the public display option:

- Is the top ranked incentive outside of simpler regulations and more advice, i.e. it is the top ranked non-regulatory incentive;
- Other ‘incentives’ such as cheaper insurance, offenders databases, publicity, victims seeking compensation, receive lower rankings.

Table 11: Rating of ways to motivate food businesses (Ranked by All)

	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	All
Simpler regulations	4.29	4.10	4.07	3.95	3.67	4.02
More training, advice & support for employers on how to manage food safety	3.60	3.95	3.98	3.72	3.48	3.83
More consistent pragmatic & fairer enforcement	3.63	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.81
<i>Requirement to inform customers of food safety performance e.g. display food hygiene award</i>	<i>3.41</i>	<i>4.01</i>	<i>3.72</i>	<i>3.86</i>	<i>3.57</i>	<i>3.78</i>
More pressure from business customers to improve food safety standards	3.35	3.74	3.73	3.93	3.88	3.76
Monitoring of food poisoning outbreaks to detect the repeat offenders	3.70	3.96	3.73	3.68	3.48	3.75
More incentives e.g cheaper insurance	3.71	3.64	3.77	3.77	3.77	3.73
Focus enforcement on high risk premises & allow self-assessment of low risk premises	3.78	3.80	3.76	3.59	3.62	3.72
Creation of partnership between business, regulators & training/advisory orgs	3.24	3.75	3.74	3.72	3.84	3.71
Local/national newspaper reporting food incidents in business	4.29	4.10	4.07	3.95	3.67	4.02

4.3 Discussion

The survey indicates that the majority of respondents (over 77%) would voluntarily display a certificate reporting the score from hygiene inspection carried out by the LA EHO and think that this would motivate them to improve standards and be of interest to their customers. This is consistent across most sizes of organisations and most types of products, with slightly less interest amongst micro organisations and food producers. Whilst the majority of respondents think that it would be of interest to customers and motivate organisation to improve standards, only 39% think it would attract more customers.

These responses can be placed in the context of responses to some of the other questions in the survey. When asked how a serious food safety incident could impact the organisation, the most common response, cited by around 90% of respondents, is loss of sales. This is related to serious damage to reputation/ brand. About 75% of respondents indicated they have a well-known brand. In addition, satisfying customer expectations is rated as the top motivator for improving food safety, with avoiding poor/bad publicity second. Thus, there does appear to be a logical connection that food business are, on the one hand, concerned about satisfying customers and their reputation, and on the other hand thinking that the public display of a hygiene score would be of interest to customers and motivational for the business.

The survey gives an indication of the attitudes of businesses to displaying food hygiene scores but there may be a difference between what they say they would do and what they actually do. The survey did not ask whether they would be willing to display a poor score.

It is also pertinent to note that the vast majority of respondents (94%) agree with the statement that they are as good at food safety/hygiene as most organisations in their sector, with a small minority (16%) indicating that they could do more to improve food safety. This does raise the question of whether a food hygiene score would help organisations judge whether they are as good as most organisations.

The wider questionnaire also explored the role and level of interest in partnerships. Partnerships are seen as a way of getting advice and support. This can be contrasted with the view that 'scores on the doors' are a motivational tool for business that informs customers. Thus, in combination 'scores on the doors' may provide a motivational mechanism whilst partnerships provide support and advice. In combination, the two schemes address key needs of food businesses.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Business interest in 'scores on the doors'

The main conclusions include:

- Focus group feedback from food businesses that currently participate in food hygiene award schemes indicates that the schemes do motivate them to improve food hygiene;
- The survey suggests that the majority (over 77%) of food businesses that responded do appear interested in participating and gaining recognition for their 'good' food hygiene standards;
- Interest in participating in a scheme is greatest amongst retailers and caterers, with slightly less interest amongst micro organisations and food producers.

The interest in 'scores on the doors' is consistent with the survey finding that satisfying customers and maintaining a reputation are the main motivators for food safety and hygiene. 'Scores on the doors' may provide a way for food businesses to get 'credit' for their performance whilst also informing customers of their performance. It is the fourth ranked option from a list of 33, suggesting that it may deserve prioritisation within initiatives to improve food safety and hygiene.

The survey finding that the majority of food businesses think they are as good at food safety/hygiene as most organisations in their sector, when combined with the finding that 'scores on the doors' would motivate business to improve food hygiene, suggests that the scheme could influence standards. That is, it may help them judge if their standards really are as good as most other organisations in their sector.

Business would prefer a scheme that provides credit for progress and improvement. However, smaller organisations query schemes that have requirements which only larger organisation need or are able to achieve.

Businesses express a preference for a more formal looking award with a prominent FSA logo and either a star or gold, silver bronze scale. The Danish smiley face scheme is the least popular.

5.2 Consumer attitudes to 'scores on the doors'

The feedback from members of the public is less positive.

The consumer focus groups indicate that the public have little awareness of existing schemes and suggest they might not make much use of such schemes due to lack of attention to certificates and the priority of other considerations (such as recommendations from friends) when choosing places to eat.

The consumers express a preference for simple pass or fail certificates for food hygiene, giving them a simple way of establishing that a food business has satisfied the legal hygiene requirements that are required to serve food. If a scale is used, there is a preference for a more formal looking award with a prominent FSA logo and either a star or gold, silver bronze scale. The Danish smiley face scheme is the least popular.

5.3 Business versus members of the public

There are two key contrasting findings:

- Businesses think ‘scores on the doors’ schemes would be of interest to customers, whilst our focus groups cast doubt on the level of public interest.
- There is some evidence that the use of a rating scale may be more important to businesses, to give them a motivation and recognition to improve, whilst consumers are possibly satisfied by a simpler certificate that shows the establishment has passed an inspection.

5.4 Potential further work

These findings do suggest a number of points for further investigation, including:

- How can customer interest be achieved, such as through publicity and raising awareness of the scheme?
- How can a balance be struck between business preference for a progressive scale and customer preference for a simpler scheme?

It should also be noted that focus groups involve relatively small numbers of people. It is possible that a larger scale consultation with members of the public may provide a different view of their interest in such a scheme. In addition, the current level of interest may be a measure of current awareness rather than a measure of the potential level of customer interest. Feedback from the focus groups revealed low levels of awareness of the schemes even amongst participating businesses. Thus, customer interest may increase with greater publicity of the schemes. Again, this could usefully be explored in further work.

It is also important to recognise that responses to questionnaire surveys can be skewed, especially where the survey is voluntary as in this case. In addition, the expressed willingness of business respondents to display a certificate is obviously a judgement of future behaviour. Therefore, evaluation of actual participation and changes in business and customer behaviour in a pilot scheme may provide additional and more empirical evidence of the impact of such schemes.

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APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF 'SCORES ON THE DOORS' AND FOOD HYGIENE AWARD SCHEMES

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
Wales	Gold Award Silver Award Bronze Award	✓		1. HACCP Compliance (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) 2. Risk rating based on: Compliance with food hygiene and safety regulations; compliance with structure regulations; confidence in management 3. Food Hygiene Training	✓ (and advertised locally)	✓	✓			Award may be withdrawn at any time but the reasons for this must be explained Recipients have a right of appeal Award is valid until the next routine Food Hygiene Inspection A change of Proprietor invalidates the award.
New Zealand	Grade A – high level of compliance with regulations		✓	Food premises are inspected against a list of criteria. Each criterion is marked off as satisfactory, marginal, non-complying or		✓ (compulsory)		✓		

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
	<p>Grade B – moderate level of compliance with regulations</p> <p>Grade D – not satisfactory level of compliance and/or repeated faults from previous inspection</p> <p>Grade E – serious deficiencies in level of compliance – remedial work required to bring up to an acceptable standard</p>			<p>critical.</p> <p>The assessment is based on the Food Hygiene Regulations 1974, and examines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the physical condition of the premises the conduct of the operator and staff cleaning and sanitising of the premises training of staff. 						
Denmark	<p>Smiley Faces</p> <p> The inspector had no remarks</p> <p> Certain rules must</p>		✓	Inspectors look at compliance with regulations relating to aspects such as in-house check systems, labelling and contamination/	✓	✓ (compulsory)	✓			Different aspects of the regulations are monitored at each inspection but all regulations are monitored regularly.

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
	be obeyed  An injunction or prohibitory order has been given to the enterprise  The Enterprise has received an administrative fine, been reported to the police or approval has been withdrawn			pollution.						If an enterprise is given a less than favourable Smiley, it is possible to request a new inspection when the matters of concern have been corrected to comply with the regulations. The enterprise has to pay for this extra inspection
Alaska	Score out of 100 100 = Excellent 90-99 = Good 85-89 = Acceptable 70-84 = Marginal		✓	Points are subtracted from total score of 100 where there are health code violations.	✓	?			✓	

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
	<70 = Unacceptable									
Sheffield	Excellent Very Good Good	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety management or hazard analysis • Training • Adequate and up-to-date monitoring records (e.g., temperature control) • Cleanliness, structure, facilities, pest and refuse disposal methods (a limit is placed on the number of minor infringements allowed) 	✓	✓	✓			Award is valid until the next inspection.
Camden	Star Rankings 3 stars – Excellent , 2 stars – Very Good 1 star – Good – in the top 50% of businesses No stars – Some major		✓	Performance is assessed in each category according to compliance with laws and industry codes.	✓				✓	The frequency of food safety inspection is specified in a national code of practice and is determined by the risk the business poses. A high-risk food business would be inspected every

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
	improvements needed Rankings are given for each of three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in management • Compliance - Hygiene and Safety • Compliance – Structure 									six months whereas a restaurant or café of high hygiene standards will only be inspected once every 18 months.
Norwich	Star Ratings – 5 stars, 4 stars, 3 stars, 2 stars, 1 star, no stars		✓	The award reflects how well the premises complies with the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations. The rating is based on inspection criteria including food hygiene and safety, structure and cleaning, and management. ‘No stars awarded’ means that the business	✓	✓			✓	Inspections take place every 6-18 months. The frequency will depend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the business • The number of customers • The conditions at the last visit

Scheme	Rating System	Award or Overall Rating?*		Criteria for Rating	Display of Certificate/Report		Inspection Type			Notes
		Award	Rating		Internet	Premises	Surprise	Scheduled	D/K	
				has failed to satisfy the criteria in one or more areas. Environmental health may also be considering formal action. One star demonstrates a basic compliance with the law whereas four or five stars are meeting or exceeding the industry standard.						

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS OF FOCUS GROUPS

Responses from consumer focus groups in areas with no scheme: Rural

SECTION A: Response to mock score certificates

1. We are now going to show you a series of documents. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?

GROUP 1 (Blagdon, Somerset):

- Would like to know out of how many possible ratings – this is specified on the certificate but it's not immediately obvious.
- Doesn't look official enough – the smiley face looks like it could've been done by children.
- The 'excellent' rating grabs you – spells out the level of achievement in one word – you need to be able to read to understand it though.
- Star ratings are a generally accepted system (e.g., hotel ratings) but most would expect to see a rating out of 5 rather than 3 stars.
- The < symbol on the numbered system could be confusing for some.
- Numbers look as if they've scientifically determined which is good.
- Took a while to notice the FSA symbol – maybe the certificate should be headed by the official FSA logo.
- Need more options for some of the systems – 5 stars, add a platinum category to the medal standards.
- Is it something that businesses would be required to display? One person said he would feel sorry for a business if it had to display a poor rating with a negative wording (e.g., 'fair')
- How important would a certificate be to the decision to dine? It wouldn't be paramount to the decision – if a business received a poor score there wouldn't be an automatic 'no' decision.
- One person said they would look for certificates for the individual people working there as well as a certificated out of 5 stars for the business.
- What is the basis for the star system? – e.g., a business might get one star for hygiene but a 5 star hygiene rating.
- The certificates need to look more official – more official font and FSA header.

GROUP 2 (Bramhope, Yorkshire):

- It's a scoring table in various forms for food.
- I like the stars or gold standard but not the smiles. Need five stars for the star rating.
- Smiles are childish – like they'd be used at McDonalds or a childrens' restaurant – they trivialise the issue.
- Stars ratings are associated with other things (hotels etc.)

- Could get confused between food quality and food hygiene with the star ratings. Whatever scheme you use you'd need to distinguish that it's about food hygiene.
- I don't like the number-word combination.
- The FSA logo should be larger and at the top of the certificate.
- Usually I go for food quality and menu – if I go to a decent restaurant, I'd expect a minimum rating of 3 or 4 stars.
- It's like public liability insurance – I'd expect that they'd have it but I wouldn't look for a certificate on the wall.
- There is a disclaimer saying that the certificate only applies for the time of inspection – it could be like a greasy spoon a few weeks later.
- Spot checks make you feel a bit better about food hygiene.
- There should have to be a number of inspections over a period of time to grant an award.
- If you knew there was going to be an inspection you'd clean up.
- The colours of the certificate don't particularly stand out. It needs to be bright.
- More important than colours is that you have to display the certificate and where you have to display it.
- The problem is that they need something that doesn't need any explanation (e.g., with the gold standard is gold the highest rating or is there a platinum?)
- Smiley faces would be okay for a childrens'/fast food restaurant
- The certificates should look more official – the FSA logo should be more prominent and there should be a watermark, hologram, or other security features.

2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?

GROUP 1:

- 4-5 like stars (accepted system); 2 like the word - 'excellent' (self explanatory); 1 likes numbers (scientifically determined scores)
- One person thought either the stars, or the gold standard (with a platinum category added, as you need to have enough categories to give a proper range) were best.

GROUP 2:

- 3 people liked the stars and the gold standard, 1 person liked the number-word combination.

3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?**GROUP 1:**

- Smiley faces – look childish, not official enough.

GROUP 2:

- Smiley faces
- 1 person disliked the ‘excellent’ system.

SECTION B: General response to schemes**4. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?****GROUP 1:**

- Cleanliness of kitchen, food storage, environmental health.
- One person said they would be wary about the what the ratings were about.

GROUP 2:

- Everything from personal hygiene to how they cook things
- The cleanliness of everything
- Food storage – temperature etc.
- Freshness of produce – dating of products
- The temperature that food is served at.

5. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (e.g. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)**GROUP 1:**

- Floors, toilets
- Personal hygiene standards of individual staff (e.g., hair and nails)
- Whether people wear gloves.

GROUP 2:

- Make sure that individual staff have passed exams. Everyone should have a level of training that they have to achieve before they can take up a particular position.
- Vermin
- Air vents, room location, toilets etc. (but perhaps would come under different regulations?)

6. If the scheme only covered food hygiene would you still make use of it?**GROUP 1:**

- A food hygiene scheme by itself is reassuring.
- If you were going to cover many things you would need separate ratings for each area.

GROUP 2:

- Including other areas would mean that the certificate would have to be changed – it's not a food hygiene certificate anymore.
- You take it for granted that the food will be okay.
- If you start adding other areas to the certificate it will be harder to understand → Keep it simple.
- A lot of food hygiene areas are hidden (in the kitchen) which is why you'd want to know this information.

7. What additional information would you want to see displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?**GROUP 1:**

- What food hygiene means isn't clear.
- Are people wearing gloves when handling food?
- Would like to know if food has been washed (e.g., veggies)
- Suggestion for an information brochure on request.
- Food hygiene ratings for all areas up until food is on the plate with a mark for each area.
- A breakdown of the numbers and what they mean
- Website details – the website could explain the award criteria – what the award covers and others' award ratings.
- How is the certificate different to an environmental health inspection?

GROUP 2:

- What do the ratings mean? (e.g., does no stars mean that it's unacceptable?) This should be included, but I probably wouldn't be bothered reading it.
- Perhaps explain the ratings in a TV campaign and on the web – have a list of things that are included in the certificate rating.
- Perhaps a breakdown of where they scored high or low.
- A hygiene award is peripheral – it's not the be all and end all. I go out to enjoy my food.
- The only time when I consider hygiene issues is when I feel sick afterwards.

8. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?

GROUP 1:

- People shouldn't be told when they'll be inspected. An example was given of bank inspections
- when forewarned businesses will clean up especially (anecdotal evidence that extra cleaning occurs before a known inspection).

GROUP 2:

- Inspections should be unannounced.
- They would need to be totally by surprise – through the back door.

9. Should the scheme be based on the business achieving the legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

GROUP 1:

- If a business is above the legal limit but has only just scraped through it's fair to let the consumer know. High scoring businesses should be able to celebrate this – this inspires high standards.
- Is it fair to compare standards at Wetherspoons with those of a burger van? – some thought that everyone should be rated in the same way. Others liked the idea of having sub categories which varied depending on the type of business.

GROUP 2:

- Grading should start at the bottom.
- With food hygiene, it's either good or bad – there aren't different grades of good. It black and white and grading isn't necessary. Maybe there should just be a pass or fail rating.
- If a 3 star place is not as clean as a 5 star place then I won't go near it
- Some people agree with this other people 'kind of' agree and some say it depends on the details.
- If it was just greasy walls I probably wouldn't care.
- You're not going to expect a high rating for a greasy spoon but you would expect it from a posh restaurant. You can't compare the two (this was a point of contention among several of the group)
- Some places should be shut down but there's no one out there doing it.

10. Do you think a food hygiene score is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?

GROUP 1:

- Window or door – would want to see the certificate before going in. If you needed to ask someone where the certificate was they might get annoyed or pretend that they can't find it.
- Having a rating solely on a website would disadvantage those without internet access, but

could put ratings on a website as well as a certificate on the premises. Websites are good for researching when travelling.

- One suggestion was that it was tacky to display a certificate on the door and that it would fade and also make the shop people narky. Perhaps have the certificate inside (or one inside and one on the window).

GROUP 2:

- It should be next to the menu if displayed outside.
- But I don't look at the menu before I go in - it would be better if it was on the door.
- The door was generally accepted as a good place to hang a certificate.

11. What would you think of food businesses that lack a certificate?

GROUP 1:

- If the scheme wasn't compulsory and the business lacked a certificate would wonder about why it wasn't displayed
- There was a view that it should be compulsory to display the certificate.
- One person noted that it would be an expensive scheme to implement and there was concern about the impact that it would have on businesses. For example, if the rating was once a year, a poor rating would mean that a lot of business would be lost over the whole year – businesses shouldn't have to live or die by it.
- One person was not bothered by the schemes – wouldn't take any notice of the certificates and would decide for himself instead.

GROUP 2:

- If it's compulsory why wouldn't they display it? I'd be suspicious.
- If the scheme I was optional I might still wonder about it.

12. How much attention might you give the food hygiene score scheme if only a small number of restaurants have been assessed?

GROUP 1:

- If the scheme wasn't across the board how would the public know about it?
- The certificates show that a business is proud of its achievements, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't go the place if it didn't have any certificates.
- For large food chains like McDonalds each individual store should be rated.

GROUP 2:

- I'd probably think it was a fail if there was no certificate up.

13. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is a favourite of yours?**GROUP 1:**

- A favourite restaurant with a poor score would put some people off but not everyone – if it happens to you [i.e., if you get sick] then you wouldn't go there again.
- Suggestion that low scorers should be able to be re-tested.
- One person said they would want to find out why the restaurant got a poor score – if it was only because of a broken tile then it wouldn't matter to them.

GROUP 2:

- Various people said they would continue going to the restaurant.
- If you went there regularly you might ask them more about it – what's the problem? (it may only be minor); What are they doing about it?

14. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is unfamiliar to you?**GROUP 1**

- Would choose by looking inside and seeing how full it was – a reliance more on common sense than looking purely at the certificates.
- One person noted that every department would be under attack for giving poor scores and that businesses would hate to have to pay for retesting.
- One person said that it would be sad to wander down the street and be choosing by certificates – most people trust in the laws and assume that if a restaurant is open that it must be safe.
- The general view was that a certificate might be a factor taken into account but not a swaying factor. – would like to see a score but it wouldn't be a decider.

GROUP 2

- I'd look at where the locals were going. The certificate is something you might consider if there were 2 identical restaurants.

15. How might you respond differently to a scheme certificate if you were, for example:

- Getting a takeaway on the way home**
- Having a snack whilst out and about**
- Going out for a celebratory meal with family/friends planned a few weeks in advance**
- On holiday or visiting a place you don't know**

GROUP 1:

- One person thought the scores would be very useful for takeaways.
- Another thought that it would make no difference.
- Another person said in some respects they would respond differently (e.g., better for takeaways but for restaurants tended to rely more on how they look and prior experience or friends' recommendations).
- After a few beers less likely to care about food quality but still want it to be safe.
- Might be more reassuring when visiting another country – would tourists understand the scores? Is it an internationally recognised standard? How many language would the certificate be in?
- There is a danger of having too many certificates and confusing people.
- One person said that 'to me, food hygiene doesn't mean a lot'
- Can you compare the food hygiene practices of different cultures?
- One person suggested that Food hygiene is essentially a pass or fail – not interested in the finer details.
- Suggestion that the ratings would be less clinical if you broke them into groups (e.g., hotels, B&Bs, other types of businesses...)

GROUP 2:

- Would it be compulsory for any food outlet?
- If I was out at night and drinking I wouldn't bother with it.
- If it was big family event you'd grin and bear it [if you found a poor hygiene score]
- I wouldn't risk taking the whole family.
- I might find out the rating beforehand if I was planning ahead.
- If I'd been going there regularly and it only had one star then I'd still go there.
- Recommendations are a more important factor in decision making.
- If it was a new place with only one star and I had a few recommendations I would perhaps wait rather than go straight away.
- Expectations of hygiene vary.

16. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?**GROUP 1:**

- Television Advertisements
- 30 min television documentary
- national news article
- ongoing campaign explaining the criteria etc. – publicising the launch

- Stick ads on tills at supermarkets
- Make it controversial and it'll be on news at 10
- Website
- Leaflets (with links to website)
- Library
- Inform the media (press release) before launch
- Have a trial run in an area first.
- If it was a long term scheme you should teach the kids about it at school (e.g., general studies class, Jamie Oliver promotion)

GROUP 2:

- Put it on the TV (like Jamie Oliver's speech at Christmas) and follow it up in the newspapers
- I find the Christmas turkey advertisement annoying – it needs to be something serious.
- Leaflets in a restaurant – for if you want to read up on the scheme in more detail.
- The government should know how to advertise these things already (e.g., MOT ad scheme)
- A celebrity (e.g., Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsay) could be involved in the advertising.
- Behind the bar for a pub serving food.
- A website.
- In the toilets/urinal

17. Apart from in a restaurant or café window, where else might you look for information on restaurant/café hygiene standards?**GROUP 1:**

- Web, Library

GROUP 2:

- Local newspaper
- Billboards
- Yellow pages

SECTION C: Web based information**18. When eating out, do you plan your trip and choose restaurant in advance or chose one when you walk down the street (and hence make use of a shop front score)?****GROUP 1:**

- One person never thought about looking at food hygiene certificates but might now.
- In general people walk down the street and look at things like menu, price etc. but not food hygiene. People don't plan in advance unless it's somewhere they've been before or if they're going by word of mouth.

GROUP 2:

- In some places you need to plan or you won't get in.
- It depends on the situation and type of establishment (e.g., if you're out at lunchtime you'd just walk around until you find somewhere but in the evening I don't risk not planning)
- I wander around, have a look at the inside to see what it's like – certificate might be useful in this situation, when you can't see many people inside the restaurant.

19. Would you visit a local authority or national website to find a report on the hygiene of a food business before you went there?**GROUP 1:**

- One person said they would visit a website if they were going out for something special.
- On person said they might look at a guidebook (doesn't use the internet). Comparison of places in a guidebook might sway their decision of where to go,
- One person brang up the idea of having a sliding scale for different rating aspects and the desire to have customer feedback included.
- Again the suggestion that it's not really practical to try and cover all businesses.
- Burger bars and takeaways are just as important as hotels (particularly as these are places where people take their children)

GROUP 2:

- Personally I wouldn't.

20. Would you make use of a website listing businesses in your home town that have score certificates?**GROUP 1:**

- Yes might make use of it (e.g., in lunch hour; retrospectively to check out a restaurant that they found was no good)
- Would want details of someone that could be contacted in the event that a well-rated business

was not up to scratch (e.g., 5 stars but filthy).

- Would want to know what would happen, for example, if someone was poisoned – how did the business get 5 stars.

GROUP 2:

- I might if I was going out for lunch – it's easy to check the internet from work but I'm less likely to check from home.
- I might have a look

21. If you were away from home do you think you would make use of a website listing businesses in the area that have score certificates?

GROUP 1:

- Would be of more use when travelling internationally.
- One person said they would look at it but would look more to general restaurant ratings sites (rather than food hygiene specific) - there would be no harm in putting it on the web though.

GROUP 2:

- I tend to ask someone (e.g., at the hotel) – I just want to know what places are in the area.
- Just because the food hygiene score isn't high it doesn't mean that it doesn't have a good reputation.

22. If you were to use a web site how would you prefer to carry out your search? E.g. by area, type of outlet, score etc?

GROUP 1:

- Town (especially if in a new town would need to select by location then business type etc.), postcode, business name, chain, type of food (maybe the most important), sorting by rating (gives businesses a motivation to score well)

GROUP 2:

- By post code – search within 5 miles of the area.
- Type of cuisine.
- Cost
- Not by hygiene score – that would be well down the list. Presumably, if they hadn't passed they wouldn't be on the FSA website.

23. If you saw a restaurant had a poor score would you ‘cross it off your list’ or might you go back and check in the future to see if it had improved?

GROUP 1:

- Would recheck if the business was under new management or if there had been a horror story about the business (i.e., if there was some special interest reason), but otherwise might just cross poor scorers off the list.
- If ranked on a list (search by score) and you were looking at it, then you would see if it had gone up anyway.

GROUP 2:

- I might write it off – if a place has a bad reputation it’s difficult to get rid of it.
- I would have to find out more about the situation.

COMMENTS:

GROUP 1:

- One person was concerned about business reputations and also ability of the FSA to take on such a huge task.
- Someone noted that they might look at certificates while waiting in a takeaway.
- Question as to whether the scheme would be run by the government or a private company.
- Would be a good idea for the FSA to raise its profile.

GROUP 2:

- You’re playing Russian roulette with your health → but if you’ve going to a place for many years and it had a bad rating you might still go.
- Businesses should be rated as either pass or fail.
- Standardise, Simplify, Specialise – keep it simple and raise the bar for passing.
- I don’t know what you get passed or failed for.
- If there was a minor hygiene problem at a place I wouldn’t care. If it was something major I would → it’s hard to be absolute – it depends on the regulations and how high the standards are.
- Is the government saying that they’re doing something wrong at the moment, or that they’re doing the right thing but that they want to ‘tart it up’?
- Knowledge is good – it’s good to have this information.
- Is food hygiene something that’s under control or is it a real concern? How much will all of this cost? There should be a cost-benefit analysis done to see if it’s worth it.
- It depends on the circumstances as to how much attention to pay to a certificate.
- One benefit of the scheme is that it could create more jobs (e.g., inspectors).

- Why not advertise the current system instead – make it compulsory to display hygiene the current hygiene certificate/report – simplify it as a pass or fail.
- Is there a problem? What’s the point of the scheme? If there’s a problem why aren’t more places closed down? If there’s no problem then why introduce a new scheme?
- If a place has got a good rating it’s no guarantee that you won’t get sick.
- Everyone should have training – certificates for individuals are more important than a certificate for the business. It’s the people that make the restaurant.
- A scheme will force restaurants to spend more money on facilities but won’t cost the government much. I’m cynical because the government is making out that it would be doing something lovely for the consumer.
- Consumers already know that if a place is below standard it would be closed down – a scheme would be a waste of money. I’m just happy knowing that this is done (i.e., either a pass or fail rating).
- Food hygiene issues would be more important to me if I were to go abroad.
- Star ratings could correspond to the level of training – the downside to this is the cost to businesses.
- There is a presumption that even if a place doesn’t display a pass certificate right in front of your face that they still have one.
- If I had only a 2 star rating I’d hide it. A scheme wouldn’t work unless it was compulsory.

Responses from consumer focus groups in areas with no scheme: Urban

SECTION A: Response to mock score certificates

1. We are now going to show you a series of documents. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?

GROUP 1 (Bristol):

- The certificate isn’t bright enough.
- With the rating out of 3 stars, most people would assume that it would be out of 5 stars.
- The smiley faces look too similar and wouldn’t be taken seriously (except in a greasy spoon)
- The faces don’t have any meaning.
- 95-Good: would expect 100 to be good – don’t look at the bottom explanations for ratings.
- 95-Good sounds like a school report.
- Is it legal requirement to display the certificate? Otherwise poor ratings won’t be displayed.
- Would expect a place with a poor rating to shut down.
- Would still think a bronze rating was quite good.
- The letter gradings and 5 star system are recognised standards
- The word ‘excellent’ stands out

- Might take notice of a scheme like this if it was across various locations. Inspections and updating of awards should be regular.

GROUP 2 (Leeds):

- Anyone who had a bad rating wouldn't show it.
- We recognise the star scheme and associated it with food quality (e.g., Michelin star scheme). Haven't seen the rest of the rating systems.
- What is food hygiene – a clean place or clean food.
- The stars are familiar to people
- I like the gold standard.
- If you saw the smiley faces you'd think it meant friendly service.
- The smiley faces are childish.
- With a rating of 'good' you'd think it was just an average place – the number/word system isn't clear.
- The gold standard is self explanatory (don't need an explanation at the bottom).
- For the stars you would need an explanation that it's out of 3 stars at the top (5 stars is better)
- 'excellent' Is self explanatory but lower rankings might need explaining.
- Don't need the address of the premises (you know where you are)
- The certificate needs to look more official.
- Certificate looks too busy and the FSA logo should be at the top.
- The Disclaimer at the bottom is an 'American cop-out clause'
- I wouldn't read it
- You get that sort of thing everywhere – they can't give a guarantee
- They could [give a guarantee] if they did random inspections.
- The smiley face logo makes me want to have a biscuit.
- Can't tell the difference between the last two smiley faces – maybe if you had a number in the circle it would be better.

2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?

GROUP 1:

- Overall the gold standard and stars were most popular (recognised standards) and some also like the word ('excellent')

GROUP 2:

- The stars – but would need to be out of 5 stars as this is a familiar system. Maybe the gold standard (self explanatory).

3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?

GROUP 1:

- Smiley faces look too similar and wouldn't be taken seriously.

GROUP 2:

- Smiley faces – childish, would associate with friendly service rather than hygiene

SECTION B: General response to schemes

4. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?

GROUP 1:

- Cleanliness rather than quality of food.
- Preparation and storage of food in the kitchen.
- Places that the consumer doesn't see.
- Cleanliness of the kitchen.

GROUP 2:

- Food preparation areas – raw food etc.
- Upkeep of different kitchen areas.
- Storage – things should be kept in the right place and at the right temperature.
- General cleanliness – floors etc.
- Tiles – They have to have stainless splashbacks or special paint.
- No mice running around.

5. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (eg. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)

GROUP 1:

- The service you get – speed of service, how the food is brought to you (broader customer service)
- The type of food – where it came from (would be hard to monitor but it would be useful to knowing how fresh it is)
- Food temperature
- Cleanliness of the staff – personal hygiene (e.g., hair tied back)
- Delivery service
- How to dispose of waste

GROUP 2:

- The personal hygiene of workers
- Should be all encompassing – including the standard of food
- Other things e.g., healthy eating, vegetarian etc. are already explained on the menu in many cases
- Knowing the source of food would not be useful – ‘you could go on forever’ (i.e., would need to keep changing the certificate as the source of foods changes every week)
- Knowing if the food is organic might be useful.

6. If the scheme only covered food hygiene would you still make use of it?**GROUP 1:**

- It would be useful but could be misleading (e.g., a business could advertise a gold award but not tell you what it includes). The certificate needs to state what it is for.

GROUP 2:

- Businesses are already governed in hygiene areas so it's irrelevant.
- Lots of places are closed down and then they fix the place up and reopen the next day. Businesses should be given 2 or 3 warnings and then closed down for good.

7. What additional information would you want to see displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?**GROUP 1:**

- The top 10 most important things that they checked in the inspection (on another piece of paper next to the certificate)
- A breakdown of scores for each category and an overall average score.
- Contact details so that if you don't think a place is up to standard you can call and get a spot check.
- Publicity about the scheme and what it's doing (e.g., ‘every restaurant will have one of these...etc.’)

GROUP 2:

- Two people said ‘I wouldn't even look at the certificates anyway’.
- I don't even look at the prices. I just look at the menu and walk in.
- Why not say that a restaurant has to get a certain standard otherwise it will be shut down. Perhaps set the standard a bit higher – then there would be no need for certificates.
- No real interest in provision of further information.

- Should just display whether they pass or fail – a place is either clean or not clean.
- Should distinguish between different types of business.
- Hygiene should just mean that a place is either open or closed.
- For certificates there should only be an award of either 3 stars (open) or no stars (closed).
- It's not clear what areas the certificate includes – does it mean that they was the lettuce?
 - Shouldn't be called 'food hygiene' should be called 'kitchen hygiene' or something like that
 - There should be a list of areas that are covered in the inspection.

8. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?

GROUP 1:

- There should be spot checks – this would mean they would have to take the time to train staff properly.
- Should have a mystery shopper system – it would be like a customer's first visit.

GROUP 2:

- Visits should be unannounced with unannounced revisits within a couple of weeks to see if problems have been fixed.
- There's no point in warning businesses – they'll just clean up in preparation.
- Takeaways should be targeted more frequently.

9. Should the scheme be based on the business achieving the legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

GROUP 1:

- It should be a pass or a fail – if you fail then you should be shut down. Places should have to display a pass or fail certificate to expose businesses that are below the board.
- Awards should start out a little bit above the minimum standard. An award is not just a pass.

GROUP 2:

- It's either a pass or a fail – you're playing with people's health.
- What does a food hygiene scheme mean to us? That we can have a specific grade of food poisoning?
- I'd only look at something like that if I was abroad.

10. Do you think a food hygiene score is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?**GROUP 1:**

- Window – if displaying a menu in a window a business should have to put a certificate in the window.
- If unable to display in the window then should have to put it in the reception area.
- The web is useful for those who have access (but not everyone will be able to look). If a business has a web site or is in a guide book, it should have to display the certificate.

GROUP 2:

- The certificate needs to be in the window – anyone who has passed would be quite happy to put it up.
- Near the till
- In the reception area.
I'm sure some people would look on the internet.
- People tend to go to restaurants on recommendations and word of mouth.
- The certificate would need to be placed somewhere that sticks out.
- I wouldn't notice it on the back of the door.

11. What would you think of food businesses that lack a certificate?**GROUP 1:**

- Don't always think to look for a certificate
- Would only start looking if the scheme was compulsory – there are so many certificates on the walls already.
- There are other things that you take into account (e.g., décor, clean cutlery) – you make your own assessment of the place.
- Normally read reviews or take recommendations. If the scheme was compulsory reviewers might start including the scores in their reviews and then I would take notice.
- Food hygiene is not the be all and end all of deciding on a place – especially after a few drinks.
- How long would it take to check everyones' certificate

GROUP 2:

- I would be suspicious – it wouldn't be very good.
- But if someone had recommended I would still go.
- If it's open it must have a certificate so it must be okay.
- I'm happier when there's an open kitchen. If there was no open kitchen, no certificate and no recommendation then I wouldn't go in.

12. How much attention might you give the food hygiene score scheme if only a small number of restaurants have been assessed?**GROUP 1:**

- If 2 restaurants were next to each other I would choose the one with the certificate, but I would only really take notice of a scheme if it was compulsory.
- People go by menu/price/chain, mostly.
- It's no good giving McDonalds a score has a whole business – need to score each location separately.
- I can't remember any time when I've looked for a certificate.
- There was a general view that if a place is open it must be safe.

GROUP 2:

- I would go on the look of the place – cutlery, how quickly plates are cleared, cleanliness etc.
- I wouldn't take notice of the certificates anyway.
- If I saw one in the window I might look at it but if there wasn't one there I wouldn't notice.

13. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is a favourite of yours?**GROUP 1:**

- 4 people – it would put me off
- 3 people – it wouldn't put me off (unless I'd gotten sick from eating there myself)
- 1 person – I'd ask my friends (they might've been ill even if I hadn't) – it would make me think twice and ask around.

GROUP 2:

- It would be a bit disappointing but I'd still go there.
- Environmental Officers can be very petty and take out their bad moods on the businesses.
- I don't know if I would still go there.
- The place would still be legal so it can't be dangerous.
- I might look around and consider going to other places.
- If you got food poisoning the people who gave the star ratings would be sued.

14. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is unfamiliar to you?**GROUP 1:**

- Would react differently – wouldn't want to eat there.

GROUP 2:

- You'd walk past and look at the place to see how busy it is and also ask locals what they thought.
- I wouldn't think of a food hygiene rating.
- It wouldn't make a big difference.

15. How might you respond differently to a scheme certificate if you were, for example:

- **Getting a takeaway on the way home**
- **Having a snack whilst out and about**
- **Going out for a celebratory meal with family/friends planned a few weeks in advance**
- **On holiday or visiting a place you don't know**

GROUP 1:

- You take more care when you're planning ahead and less when you've been out drinking. You plan more when you're going out in a group.
- Don't care so much with takeaways – takeaways are more about being local and convenient. It would depend on how many options you had.
- If ordering food from a menu might take more notice.
- With kebab vans you can see them preparing the food so you can see how clean it is (but that's only one aspect of hygiene though)

GROUP 2:

- If it was a special event that required planning:
 - If it's somewhere I've been before and I was impressed then I'd go back again
 - Or I'd go to somewhere on a recommendation
 - Wouldn't pay attention to the score.
- If it didn't pass it wouldn't be open.

16. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?**GROUP 1:**

- Television and radio advertisements
- Getting papers that write review to include the certificate rating.
- Business advertisements should have to include the rating.
- Magazines and flyers.
- Those rated highly would be happy to advertise information about the scheme.

GROUP 2:

- Advertisements in newspapers, television and radio.
- Internet
- Restaurant menus
- Encourage people to complain when they have bad food experiences – report bad places (e.g., where the toilets aren't clean) – have a number for someone you can report to.

17. Apart from in a restaurant or café window, where else might you look for information on restaurant/café hygiene standards?**GROUP 1:**

- On restaurant advertisements in any media (including the yellow pages)
- On a website although a site just for certificates would be a bit boring (but some people would take the time to look at it).
- Guidebooks – e.g., the good food guide

GROUP 2:

- Internet – I look here when I'm going away for the weekend.
- Could put a rating in the corner of yellow pages ads – like the CORGI registration symbol.

SECTION C: Web based information**18. When eating out, do you plan your trip and choose restaurant in advance or chose one when you walk down the street (and hence make use of a shop front score)?****GROUP 1:**

- Look in the window when out an about.
- Some people plan, but more so when it's a group and you need to book in advance.
- People go by recommendations.
- If you're going out of town you might do some research on the web to check out the type of food.
- If you doing planning beforehand then a score on the door isn't enough.

GROUP 2:

- I go mostly by recommendations and the type of food I like (e.g., Chinese, Indian)
- I like to try things that are different. To find new places to go to I sometimes look at reviews in the newspaper.

- I look on the internet if I'm going away.
- I'm spontaneous – if I'm hungry I just look for somewhere and choose the congested place.

19. Would you visit a local authority or national website to find a report on the hygiene of a food business before you went there?

GROUP 1:

- No
- Wouldn't just look up food hygiene.
- If the scheme was well advertised it might be drummed into people and then they might check.

GROUP 2:

- Some people would look at a local scheme – others would not.
- There should be a link to customer comments like there is on Ebay – I would trust customer views.
- One person said they would look at a site run by the FSA if it was divided up by area.
- I don't have a computer.
- I wouldn't really trust a website – experiences at a place will vary from day to day.

20. Would you make use of a website listing businesses in your home town that have score certificates?

GROUP 1:

- More likely to use when out of time.
- If I'd had a bad meal I might check it out afterwards out of curiosity.
- I might check out kebab vans for humour value.
- Check favourites out of interest but unsure if I would do anything with the information I found.

GROUP 2:

- ---

21. If you were away from home do you think you would make use of a website listing businesses in the area that have score certificates?

GROUP 1:

- I'd be more likely to. Perhaps you could advertise the scheme in Bristol tourist information.
- Don't do it now but might make use of it if a system was in place.

GROUP 2:

- If going somewhere else I hadn't been to before I would look on restaurant websites rather than council sites

22. If you were to use a web site how would you prefer to carry out your search? Eg. by area, type of outlet, score etc?**GROUP 1:**

- Would choose the restaurant first and then search by business name.
- Type of food – Italian, Chinese etc.
- Price range
- Area (location)
- I'd search restaurants + Bristol and then narrow it down by typing in more search terms.
- There should be a link to dated reviews by customers
- Searching by hygiene score would be further down on the list of priorities.

GROUP 2:

- This is difficult as we're all individuals.
- I wouldn't bother searching.
- Sort by score (e.g., 1 to 5 stars)
- Search by the nearest place – area, postcode
- An overall rating – including service, hygiene, quality of food.
- Type of food.
- An overall rating would be better than just a hygiene score – it gives a better indication of whether it will be a good experience. I won't go back to a place if there's poor service, no matter how clean the place is.

23. If you saw a restaurant had a poor score would you 'cross it off your list' or might you go back and check in the future to see if it had improved?**GROUP 1:**

- First impressions are important – if hygiene score was the only thing you had to go on then you'd cross it off (especially if the rating was worded 'poor').
- I'd look at recommendations by others (but would take more notice of the hygiene score if taking grandmother/children.)
- If a low rating was still acceptable enough for the place to stay open then it wouldn't matter.
- Depends on whether or not you're familiar with the place and whether it's been recommended.

GROUP 2:

- This would depend on word of mouth.
- At the end of the day people are more interested in food quality.
- If the web rating was the only information that you had to go on then you would cross it off.

COMMENTS:**GROUP 1:**

- Will there be different certificates for different types of food (i.e., different types and levels of risks)? Need a standardised certificate that's judged in different ways (e.g., a 5 star rating for cold food production)
- Perhaps there could be a tick box for they type of food preparation that is covered.
- Could look at simplifying the system so that they can all be judged in the same way (e.g., main things like is the place clean enough? Is the food at the right temperature?)
- The certificates must be more about bringing standards up rather than shutting businesses down (comparison made with schools).
- Could make it so that all advertisements have to include the rating (like including Corgi registration) – that way the only way to get out of displaying the rating would be not to advertise which would result in a loss of business.
- How much increase in council tax will there be. Worry about cost to consumers. Restaurants should pay a compulsory subscription fee.
- Or could use fines to pay for the scheme.
- I will keep going somewhere if the food is consistently great.
- At chains/pubs I wouldn't necessarily expect a great hygiene score (students are only working there for a few weeks – high staff turnover). If it was a posh restaurant I wouldn't go there if it had the same rating as a pub – if you were paying more you'd expect a better hygiene standard.
- The scheme would have to be compulsory or it wouldn't be worth it.
- I don't get Chinese take out because I assume that the hygiene is poor, but If it had really good rating then I might start getting it.
- I don't really care is places get cleaner – our immune systems are suppressed because of things being too clean.

GROUP 2:

- It's a good idea for cafes and takeaways. These are small enclosed places and you read things around you. I would pay less attention in a restaurant.
- If you've got a good rating it's up to you to put it somewhere where customers will notice.
- If you don't like the place you'll walk out/not pay/ not go there again.
- Foreigners have different standards of hygiene and need to be educated to the UK standards when opening up a business over here.

- There should just be something to say whether a place has passed or failed.
- The FSA has to be a lot more stringent. There should be a pass or fail system and a lot more unannounced inspections – you’re playing with peoples’ health.
- Who pays for these schemes? Council taxes will go up for more frequent inspections.
- Bribery comes into it as well – This would be a concern – I’d lose trust in the scheme.
- A mystery shopper campaign could be good – we don’t do it enough.
- A place could be fine when inspected, but filthy later.
- Inviting people to go into the kitchen or having open plan kitchens is a good idea
- I don’t want people going into the kitchen.
- If the FSA/EHOs were doing a better job I wouldn’t have to think about the cleanliness of the place.
- There shouldn’t be an award scheme for hygiene – it should just be a pass or fail. There should be award schemes for other things like service or quality.
- There should be more frequent inspections

Responses from consumer focus groups in areas with an existing scheme: Urban (Cardiff)

SECTION A: Response to mock certificates

1. We are now going to show you a series of document. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?

- This is just for hygiene, not the quality of the food?
- I would be quite reassured by it to be honest – it fit was very visible. The gold standard would leap out at me.
- Would they have to display the certificate if they had a bronze or ungraded award?
- Wouldn’t take the smileys seriously (but one person liked the faces and thought they were funny)
- A couple of people liked the stars and a couple liked the gold standard.
- The star ratings could be confused with other star schemes.
- The star looks like a sheriff’s badge. There could be a food symbol instead of stars (e.g., a plate with a knife and fork or the FSA logo) – but the symbol would need to represent hygiene (e.g., a dishcloth).
- One person preferred the idea of just having a pass or fail.
- If someone had a rating of 95 I would wonder why it wasn’t 100 – was there a mouse? I would be less suspicious if it was just a pass or fail grade.
- The FSA logo needs to be bigger and at the top and the restaurant name should be smaller.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate needs to look more official. • There is too much information – I wouldn't bother reading it. Maybe just have the grading • Not sure if I could recognise a genuine certificate, so I'd be suspicious. • The certificates look home made – they need to look more official.
<p>2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stars were most popular and the gold standard was second most popular. There was mixed reaction for the numbers. • Stars are more positive – 1 star sounds better than a 50% grade.
<p>3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smileys.

<p>SECTION B: Response to existing scheme</p>
<p>4. Are you aware of any scheme like this running in your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one is aware of the scheme. • How would you know about it If it's not compulsory to display it?
<p>5. If yes, do you know what's it called? Have you made any use of it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
<p>6. Where/how did you hear about the scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
<p>7. What are your views on the existing scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the public doesn't know or care about it then there's no incentive for businesses to display awards or improve.

<p>SECTION C: General response to schemes</p>
<p>8. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food storage • Freshness of food • Cleanliness of staff • Clean floors, work surfaces • Food preparation processes • Layout of kitchen and storage facilities • No rats
<p>9. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (eg. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether food has come from a reputable source • Indication of chain of supply of food (i.e., not from a dodgy butcher). • Temperature that food is kept at. • Whether food is sourced locally – personally I wouldn't be too fussed but other people might be.
<p>10. If the scheme only covered food hygiene would you still make use of it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ---
<p>11. What additional information would you want to see displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for the award – if it was all on one certificate it's a lot of information, but there should be details for going somewhere else to find out. • How often were they inspected? Was the inspection unannounced? • List of things to look out for to see if a place is hygienic – people struggle with the definition of hygiene. • Contact details for if you have concerns or complaints. • Information on things that you can't see in the restaurant.
<p>12. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visits should be unannounced, although one person thought it was a bit mean to go in when a business was really busy.

13. Should the scheme be based on the business achieving the legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

- A simple pass or fail system would be better.
- The certificate should state if they've passed and then give an award score on top of that if warranted. This way people won't be put off going to place if it doesn't have an award.
- A merit scheme gives businesses something to aim for.
- Hygiene should be a higher legal requirement ie. Pass or fail – there was a lot of support for this idea.
- The most important thing is to have in big print that business has passed (then any other awards if necessary).
- There is assumption that if the place is open it's okay and people are more concerned about décor, ambience etc.
- One person said they didn't assume that a place would be hygienic.

14. Do you think a food hygiene score is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?

- Where people have to wait – it depends on the type of business.
- Outside next to the menu – if inside people wouldn't want to appear rude by leaving.
- A sticker on the front door with food hygiene and a tick beside it and the certificate inside. (still want to see a logo)

15. What would you think of food businesses that lack a certificate?

- At the moment it doesn't matter as people don't know about the scheme.
- It's not a legal requirement to being open so it wouldn't stop me from going there.

16. How much attention might you give the food hygiene scheme if only a small number of restaurants have been assessed?

- I wouldn't trust the certificates anyway – some certificates mean nothing. I might think 'you've just had a lucky day'.

17. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is a favourite of yours?

- Don't know – might make me think twice, I'm not sure.
- I wouldn't be bothered as long as I liked the food.
- I might wonder why but I would still keep going and eating there.
- The British are a bit anal when it comes to hygiene.
- When you see chefs smoking that puts you off.

18. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is unfamiliar to you?

- It still passed I so would be happy to eat there.
- Once the scheme is more well known and widespread I might consider the score more.
- There was concern of the affect ratings would have on a business (if it got poor ratings).
- Do you need the choice of how good they are as long as they meet the minimum requirement? As long as they're legal I'm happy.
- A modern new kitchen could get a better score than an old one.
- When you go to a restaurant you want to relax and you have a lot to think about already without worrying about hygiene.
- Ratings may discriminate against small businesses.

19. How might you respond differently to a scheme certificate if you were, for example:

- **Getting a takeaway on the way home**
- **Having a snack whilst out and about**
- **Going out for a celebratory meal with family/friends planned a few weeks in advance**
- **On holiday or visiting a place you don't know**

- If you're going for a kebab it won't matter.
- Wouldn't take notice when getting takeaways, although it's where you should take notice)
- When planning something you might think about it a bit more.
- The public shouldn't have to worry about hygiene – that's what the standards are there for.
- Would take more notice depending on who you were with (e.g., grandmother).
- Even if planning I'd be more worried about other things (e.g., service, food quality etc.).
- People tend to follow their previous experiences.
- Because of a lack of publicity about the award it hasn't really entered my thinking.

20. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?

- Do we need to know about it? People already know about environmental health.
- Local radio, press, television, public service advertisements
- If using a sticker it should have a weblink so people can go there for information.
- It would take a lot of publicity to make people aware.
- Is the scheme necessary at all? Places should be hygienic anyway.
- If it's a new scheme it would need lots of publicity but less when it's established.
- Customers are best at policing hygiene – should raise awareness of this.
- Could put a sticker on the front window for a few months and then put it inside.
- Restaurants could hold an information pack and give it out on request.

21. Apart from in a restaurant or café window, where else might you look for information on restaurant/café hygiene standards?

- Toilets,
- Websites (fairly accessible for everyone)
- On the menu

SECTION D: Web based information

22. When eating out, do you plan your trip and choose restaurant in advance or chose one when you walk down the street (and hence make use of a shop front display)?

- It depends on the occasion (e.g., plan ahead for a birthday or eating out with the family)
- Friends recommendations, experience.
- When visiting somewhere I don't plan I just go by the look of the place.
- You could include hygiene information in tourist information (e.g., guidebooks).

23. Have you used the local authority website listing businesses in your area/town who have score awards/certificates?

- ---

24. If you were away from home do you think you would make use of a website listing businesses in the area who have score awards/certificates?

- Perhaps.
- It's best to plan if away from home.

25. If you were to use a web site how would you prefer to carry out your search? Eg. by area, type of outlet, score etc?

- Area, type of food, price ("definitely that one").

26. If you saw a restaurant had a poor score would you 'cross it off your list' or might you go back and check in the future to see if it had improved?

- If you didn't know much about the area crossing it off the list could help to short list.
- Price would be more of a factor.

COMMENTS:

- What would be the reason for bringing in the scheme?
- It might be useful for the business but it's not much use for the customers.
- Views changed during the session – by the end they just wanted to be reassured by a pass or fail grade.
- Needs to be compulsory to show a pass/fail rating. If I wanted to be able to find out more I should be able to access it (from the restaurant).
- A scoring scheme would be unfair to smaller/poorer businesses.
- A logo outside the restaurant for reassurance purposes is good.
- Perhaps a place with good food should also have to have good hygiene to get a good rating in the Good Food Guide.
- As a customer I don't really care about the certificates – it's more useful for businesses.
- People become desensitized to certificates – I don't read them.
- A spotless kitchen might have a really dirty member of staff – when a system is too formulaic it doesn't reflect real life.
- Perhaps our lack of interest is a problem? There must be a reason why they're thinking of bringing the system in?
- Where's the money coming from to fund this?
- I haven't really given any thought about it but now I think it would be useful.

**Questions for consumer focus groups in areas with an existing scheme:
Rural (Trehafod, nr Pontypridd, Wales)**

SECTION A: Response to mock certificates

1. We are now going to show you a series of document. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?

- If they were rated as being unacceptable would they display the certificate?
- Do the places know when they'll be inspected?
- 95-Good – this doesn't mean much – it needs to be something where it's immediately obvious what it means.
- With the number-word system people would need to know about the system for it to make sense.
- The stars look like a border pattern – they don't mean anything – the gold means more.
- Stars are used frequently in other areas so they would be understood as long as you knew what the top rating was (i.e., out of how many stars)
- I don't like the font. It's too playful. It's not something you'd associate with awards – it's not official enough.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wouldn't read very much of it • The date and the FSA logo are important and should be bigger. The logo should be embossed (to prevent counterfeiting) and it should be at the top. • If you had a shiny gold standard it would be harder to counterfeit. • One person like the 'excellent' rating and the stars (if they were in a different colour to black). • I worked in an office for many years and I was always being given certificates that meant nothing, so I'm wary of what they mean. • Most people got to restaurants by word of mouth. • I would want to know what each of the ratings mean. • You would think of a bronze rating as the lowest rating. • If someone got a silver rating I'd be wondering 'why not gold?'
<p>2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gold standard and stars.
<p>3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smiley face (childish) and number-word combination (not immediately obvious what it means).

SECTION B: Response to existing scheme
<p>4. Are you aware of any scheme like this running in your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all of the places in Pontypridd there's a yellow thing that says they've been awarded something – not sure what it is – perhaps it's something to do with training for a certain level of food hygiene.
<p>5. If yes, do you know what's it called? Have you made any use of it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one aware of the Welsh Food Hygiene Scheme.
<p>6. Where/how did you hear about the scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
<p>7. What are your views on the existing scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

SECTION C: General response to schemes
<p>8. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing hands • Not mixing cooked and raw meat • Clean place and staff • Food storage • Knowledge of food hygiene practices – training and exams, keeping up to date • Businesses would have passed regular reviews and inspections.
<p>9. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (eg. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The source of food – are the suppliers hygienic? • Nutrition shouldn't be covered under a hygiene scheme – it's better to keep it purely as hygiene. • Nutrition is common sense and doesn't come under food hygiene – you make nutritional choices for yourself.
<p>10. If the scheme only covered food hygiene would you still make use of it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -----
<p>11. What additional information would you want to see displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does silver mean – does that mean that there'll be a bit of dirt in the food? • It's difficult because I've never really thought about it. • If I see a certificate I'd like to know what's covered – what's been checked? • Is the FSA government run? • There should be information on the premises so that if you wanted to know more you get information on request. • I wouldn't pay any attention to a certificate unless I was bored.
<p>12. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should be totally unannounced.

13. Should the scheme be based on the business achieving the legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

- Personally, if I saw a bronze award I'd think it was at the bottom.
- If you got a bronze medal in the Duke of Edinburgh then you'd be doing pretty well.
- Maybe you should put it in the small print that the bronze standard already exceeds the legal limit.
- Maybe if it was a bronze award instead of a bronze standard it would make the level of achievement more obvious.
- Lower scorers that were ungraded wouldn't want to display the certificate. For the lower scorers there should be something saying 'this place has passed the legal hygiene limits' – this doesn't sound bad and people wouldn't mind displaying it.
- You could have a thermometer system.

14. Do you think a food hygiene score is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?

- Behind the till
- On the door or on the menu (so you can see it before you go in) – this gives restaurants an incentive to get a good score.
- Putting it on a website is a good idea – if I was already out the front of the place I wouldn't care but if I was planning ahead putting it on the web might sway me.

15. What would you think of food businesses that lack a certificate?

- You wouldn't care if you'd been driving around looking for a place for a long time.

16. How much attention might you give the food hygiene scheme if only a small number of restaurants have been assessed?

- The scheme would be a bit meaningless.

17. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is a favourite of yours?

- I wouldn't carry on eating there – it wouldn't change anything.

18. How might you respond to a poor score if the restaurant is unfamiliar to you?

- It might depend on what I'm eating (seafood vs pizza – I'm very careful about seafood).
- I might take a bit more notice if was an unfamiliar place, but only if I was aware of the scheme and there were other places with ratings to compare with.

19. How might you respond differently to a scheme certificate if you were, for example:

- Getting a takeaway on the way home
- Having a snack whilst out and about
- Going out for a celebratory meal with family/friends planned a few weeks in advance
- On holiday or visiting a place you don't know
- If it's a really special occasion and you're planning ahead you may pay more attention, but I think I'd go more by word of mouth.
- My decision is more related to the food type, whether you are able to take children in and the friendliness of the place.
- Hygiene wouldn't be a priority, priorities are:

Atmosphere

Quality of food

Type of food

Parking availability

Ability to cater for numbers

Being able to take children in etc.

- I'm more put off by places by word of mouth and newspaper reports of places that have been temporarily shut down.
- A certificate only covers a certain amount of time and they may have had an unlucky day.

20. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?

- Television advertisements – there have been a few environmental ads lately that I've noticed.
- Website – but I'm not sure how people would come across it.
- If a restaurant had a website it could put the certificate on there and have a link to an explanatory website
- radio
- Leaflets from restaurants and other public places like libraries.
- Billboards and posters
- The back of placemats could explain what each standard means.

21. Apart from in a restaurant or café window, where else might you look for information on restaurant/café hygiene standards?

- I think people wouldn't look for it – that's why the publicity needs to be highly visible.
- If I wanted to know the first thing I'd do is Google it.
- There should be somewhere where people can make comments on restaurants – this would be of much more use to me - but this would be open to abuse – it would need to be implemented

on a large scale (like Ebay).

- Placemats

SECTION D: Web based information

22. When eating out, do you plan your trip and choose restaurant in advance or chose one when you walk down the street (and hence make use of a shop front display)?

- Yeah, sometimes
- I have to organise babysitters – I don't plan where we're going though.
- Occasionally.
- You need to plan ahead if you need to book (especially with groups of people).
- I plan for special occasions.

23. Have you used the local authority website listing businesses in your area/town who have score awards/certificates?

- no

24. If you were away from home do you think you would make use of a website listing businesses in the area who have score awards/certificates?

- Some thought they would and other thought they wouldn't. They would probably be more interested now after this discussion.
- If they did look on a website they'd be more looking to find out whether the food was good – if a place is open you assume it's okay.
- You tend to go by word of mouth (from the locals).

25. If you were to use a web site how would you prefer to carry out your search? E.g. by area, type of outlet, score etc?

- Type of food and area are most important.
- Dietary things – special requirements and the amount of choice.
- Price bracket.
- Not by award grading – maybe you'd look at this within all of your other parameters.
- The things I'd want to know about are not the things they'd put on the website.

26. If you saw a restaurant had a poor score would you 'cross it off your list' or might you go back and check in the future to see if it had improved?

- One person said yes.
- One person said no as hygiene is not related to how good the food tastes.

COMMENTS:

- I think there needs to be something in place – certification and inspections – but I’m not interested. I just assume that they’re doing their jobs.
- How much is such a scheme going to cost me?
- I’d rather it if they spent the money on having inspections twice as often.
- A place is either clean or it isn’t – I can’t see how there could be different standards.
- I don’t think about hygiene – I assume it’s okay.
- I like it if you can see what’s happening (i.e., an open kitchen) – one person said they didn’t like this.
- I do presume things go on e.g., dropping things and then washing and reusing them. I put it in the back of my mind.
- I think it would be more useful to know whether they’ve passed the basic level of hygiene – but I’ll assume if a place is open that it’s passed.
- Perhaps businesses should be able to place an FSA gold standard on their ads.
- How nice the food is will always be a priority.
- If you have stuff that’s too clean you can’t build up a good immune system.
- I think it might be an avenue for more complaints if food isn’t as good at a gold standard place you might complain. A high award raises expectations of food quality (even though it’s actually about food hygiene).
- Even if it had a gold standard I wouldn’t eat at a McDonalds or KFC.
- It’s not right to disadvantage small businesses.
- More detailed information on the inspections can be maintained by Environmental Health.
- If a place is open then it’s assumed to be safe as long it doesn’t look terrible or have a bad reputation.

Responses from business focus group in area with no scheme (Leeds)**SECTION A: Response to mock score certificates****1. We are now going to show you a series of document. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?**

- Stars and smiles are the best – they stand out
- Some prefer stars and gold standard, others prefer numbers and word.
- Everyone is clear what the ratings mean
- If someone had a bad rating they wouldn’t put it up.
- The FSA logo should be bigger (or the certificate might not look official enough)
- The certificate should specify how many people work at the establishment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person didn't like the faces – they are too easily confused. The gold standard is a recognised rating. • The number ratings have obvious meanings – perhaps it would be better if it was just the number (without the word) and a percentage rating might be better. • The certificate needs to be easily readable from a distance.
<p>2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gold standard and stars were most popular (recognised rating systems)
<p>3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The smiley faces (not easy to distinguish between faces) • The number – doesn't stand out; is 95 good or part of the a range of values that are good? – not obvious what this means

<p>SECTION B: General response to schemes</p>
<p>4. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freezers – keeping food at the right temperature in the right position (food storage) • Personal hygiene • Cleanliness of everything • How food is prepared • Whether staff are wearing gloves • Cleaning equipment (e.g., mops, cleaning products-chemicals) • Pest control • Staff Training • You should never eat in a kitchen.
<p>5. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (eg. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other areas (e.g., if food is organic) shouldn't be mixed in with a hygiene scheme – keep hygiene to itself

6. What additional information do you think should be displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?

- General view that customers would not be interested in a food hygiene award scheme – people are more interested in reputation.
- Certificates may make a difference if you're looking at a row of restaurants but generally not.
- The certificates should have a weblink to a site where the reports are kept, so that people can do internet research.
- Factors such as what's on the menu and how much food costs are probably what attracts customers.
- A certificate is always 'nice to see' but you're already in the restaurant by that point.

7. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?

- Unannounced inspections are a true reflection of the premises for the customer and the inspector.
- Businesses are unlucky if the inspectors happen to arrive on a bad day.
- One person suggested that inspectors 'shouldn't arrive at lunchtime when the business is too busy' – one person suggests that they do this on purpose and another says that the inspectors are understanding of these circumstances.

8. Should the scheme be based on achieving legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

- Unless you're of a certain standard you shouldn't be able to get an award.
- One person likes the idea of a graded standard so that those that go the extra mile are recognised.
- A suggestion that there be a percentage rating where 50% is a minimum pass (but the public would need to understand this system)
- A couple of people thought that if you got a poor rating you should be shut down.

9. Do you think a food hygiene scheme is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?

- A suggestion to put a small version of the certificate on the menu - but will need to put it on the front door before people go in.
- Suggestion to place on the front window. There's no real value in a certificate if people have to hunt for it.
- Should be displayed alongside other certificates.
- Not everyone has internet access.

10. What might consumers think of food businesses that lacked a certificate?

- That would depend on whether they know anything about the scheme – it would need to be advertised.
- If it was well advertised then the absence of a certificate would raise questions as to why the business doesn't have one.

11. Would your business participate if there was a scheme in your area?

- Yes (from all)

Businesses were:

- 2 pub/bar that serves food
- 1 baguette bar
- 1 fire brigade kitchen
- 1 pizza/pasta restaurant
- 1 English restaurant/take-away
- The public won't use a non participating business.

12. Do you think a scheme should be local (e.g. run by the LA) or national (e.g. run by the FSA)?

- A national scheme run by the FSA would be better for reasons of consistency. Wherever you went the scheme would be judged by the same standards.
- Local Councils have different standards and look for different things.

13. Would you participate in a scheme if only a small number of restaurants had been assessed?

- It might be of benefit to participate. It would depend on whether other similar businesses in the area were participating.
- If it was a national scheme and consumers knew about it this would be a driver for involvement.

14. What types of concerns or questions might you have about a food hygiene score scheme run by the FSA or a local authority?

- How frequent would inspections be? How long would the certificates last? A year later a place might have different staff.
- What about if the chef is away sick and standards are uncharacteristically bad?
- How are they reissued?
- Is it connected to the environmental health inspections? What if you have really bad environmental health but just beforehand were issued with a high standard certificate? The

scheme needs to be tied in with environmental health – the more groups you tie into the scheme, the more benefit.

- Need to be clear about the standards and how are they marked. Businesses need to know what's going to be checked.
- Is the rating a true reflection of food hygiene.
- There were concerns about how the scheme would be enforced.

15. In the event that your business received a poor score, would this encourage you to improve your food hygiene standards?

- Yes this would be an incentive to improve – it's an issue of pride.

16. In the event that your business received a good score, would this be an incentive to maintain high food hygiene standards?

- Yes

17. In the event that your business received a poor score, what form of redress would you want? E.g. quick re-inspection, appeal. Would you be willing to pay for a re-inspection?

- Would like to know why a poor score was received – what was wrong and how it might be addressed.
- Need to have an opportunity for recovery (e.g., a two week buffer period to put things right).
- Some businesses hired companies to do inspections of their premises and these have an appeal process where you can explain why there was a problem (which may or may not make a difference to the final decision).
- Would you be willing to pay?
- Depends on whether the problems that they found were valid.
- Paying for re-inspection would be open to corruption. They might give businesses poorer marks to force them to pay for re-inspections. There needs to be a booklet of written standards to spell it all out.
- Some said you should have to pay for a quick re-inspection – it gives an incentive to get it right the first time.

18. How frequently should businesses be inspected?

- 1 person suggested Twice a year
- 2 people suggested quarterly – although man power / time are obviously issues that need to be factored in.
- A lot of companies use external consultants that perform inspections quarterly.

19. What do you think should happen if there is a complaint against a business or an outbreak of food poisoning?

- Traceability (of the source of the illness) is an issue. There needs to be an investigation and if that proves that you are at fault then you should lose your rating.
- How much meaning would this have if a business could get their rating back in the next quarter?

20. If you were a new business, would you want an inspection before or after opening?

- Yes – there should be a special pre-opening check to see if they have the right things (but wouldn't necessarily give them a certificate at this stage).
- Perhaps it could be a requirement that before you're allowed to try and go for the certificate/open a business you need to have one of these checks.

21. How do you think businesses could best be encouraged to participate in this type of scheme?

- The public won't use a non-participating business
- There should be publicity for good achievements (e.g., an FSA guide)
- Make it more likely to get a visit from the EHO if a business isn't participating.
- A couple of people didn't think it would work as a mandatory system. If not mandatory then bad businesses wouldn't participate (and they won't be driven out of business through lack of participation).
- The scheme needs to be transparent.
- The advertising of the scheme had to make people want to participate.
- It would be a nightmare to try and force businesses to participate.
- Could piggy back the scheme onto other licensing schemes.

22. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?

- Television advertisements
- Newspapers
- Leaflets in the restaurant (but a suggestion that these would usually just be thrown away)
- Local radio
- Magazine articles
- Bus Stops – something like the Valentine PIN campaign which created high levels of awareness.

SECTION C: Web based information
<p>23. Do you think businesses that have scores/certificates should be listed on a website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes this would be useful.
<p>24. What other information do you think should be available on a website listing of businesses who have scores/certificates?(e.g inspection reports)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How scores are calculated. • Breaking down businesses into different score bands (a searchable database – I only want to be able to see businesses that get over 95%) • It would be a lot of work to put whole reports on the internet – not worth it. The public don't need to see a report – a brief breakdown would be more useful.
<p>25. If you were listed on a web site, how would you think consumers would prefer to carry out a search? E.g. by area, type of outlet, score etc?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores/award type • This would give high scorers free advertising and be an incentive for places to get their score up.
<p>26. What do you think might be the problems with displaying scores on a website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of trade. • Keeping the site regularly updated – would need daily updating (There would be a large initial outlay although technology should allow for easy updating). Cost of updating? • Concern over hackers changing scores → abuse of the system.
<p>27. Do you think there should be a method for notifying consumers if the scores for a business change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's up to the business itself – this is a worry. • Should put the previous score on the certificate so that people can see if standards have raised or declined.
<p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could they scale businesses properly (e.g., a burger van vs a restaurant) • Some serious doubt over whether a scheme would work – might need to have different award standards for different types of businesses (e.g., burger van, front house kitchen, pubs, old peoples' homes etc. would all be run under different schemes). But one person says the same standards should apply – they're all serving food to the public. • All the basic standards need to be there whatever the business. But risk factors need to be

worked into the scheme (e.g., a very high standard burger van, but it also a high level of risk associated with it).

- A scheme would be good for those who are concerned about food hygiene although not everyone would be concerned about this and the system wouldn't mean anything to them.
- It's a great idea – I can't believe it hasn't been done before
- If it's a mandatory scheme it will force up the minimum standard for food hygiene.
- High public awareness is important.

Responses from business focus group in area with an existing scheme (Cardiff)

SECTION A: Response to mock certificates

1. We are now going to show you a series of document. What you think they mean and how might you respond if you saw one?

- What do they mean? Absolutely nothing – poorly set up e.g., 'excellent means nothing'
- The gold standard rating is familiar.
- A person with a bronze award noted that a bronze award is seen as the lowest score – people ask 'what do you have to do to get gold?'
- An award scheme would need to be something that customers would understand.
- Some customers might identify with the smiley face, others wouldn't.
- If the certificate was framed it would seem more important and wouldn't be filed away.

2. Which score level symbol (star, smiley face, word, colour) do you think is most appropriate/easiest to understand and why?

- Stars/excellent/number – straightforward, easy to explain structure
- The star system is already understood by people.
- The level of improvement is clearer for the numbers system.

3. Which score level symbol do you think is least appropriate/easiest to understand and why?

- Smiley faces.

SECTION B: Response to existing scheme

4. Are you aware of a scheme like this running in your area?

- Everyone is familiar with it.

<p>5. If yes, do you know what's it called?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental health? No one has any knowledge of an official title. It's just a visit and if you meet certain requirements you'll get an award. They don't say 'this is for the Welsh food hygiene score'.
<p>6. Where/how did you hear about the scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EHOs just turn up
<p>7. Are you participating in the scheme? If so, why? If not, why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes people are participating the scheme but it's just something that happens – they don't choose to be in it. • One person says that they are proud to have a bronze certificate. They don't have the resources to get a silver or gold award (you need better qualifications, no smoking etc. for this) but consider that they doing just as well as a wealthy chain that gets awarded a gold standard.
<p>8. If you are participating, how has it impacted your business?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An award is an excuse to party – pride at receiving an award. • Have you changed food hygiene/safety practices? Don't really change hygiene practices. One person got bronze – did heaps of work to try and upgrade and was still awarded a bronze – they weren't aware that they couldn't get higher than a bronze and were gutted with the results. • Some people weren't aware that they couldn't get higher than a bronze until the meeting today – they weren't aware of the criteria or the value of the criteria. • A couple people have adjusted some practises – filling out forms to keep up with paperwork. • You do things automatically – clean is clean. • Have you improved sales, increased costs etc? • No improved sales or increased cost. Bronze award winners get asked 'what do you have to do to get gold?'. They have taken the certificate out of the window as it's not good for business. • There would be an extra cost if they were to get staff trained up if they wanted to get a higher award (but if the business is growing you need to get more qualified people anyway). • The EHO inspector didn't focus on the food. They were more concerned about the painting etc. – H&S bits and bobs – that's what the rating was based on. It should be based more on hygiene. If they know that you're clean they start to look at other areas.
<p>9. What are your views on the existing scheme? How do you think the scheme could be improved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If everyone has a certificate and it's compulsory to display it in the window then it would work better – it's the only way to change attitudes. • If the scheme was compulsory you'd need to give poor scorers two weeks to sort out problems

and then re-grade them.

- There's not a great deal of enthusiasm for the scheme – the EHO stinks – they are arrogant and make you put your guard up.
- The EHO attitude should change – this would give people enthusiasm and something to aim for.
- Some were keen on someone else other than the EHO doing inspections (i.e., an ex-industry person).
- The guidelines are very broad and open to interpretation. There needs to be consistency of inspections.

SECTION C: General response to schemes

10. What issues do you think are covered by a food hygiene scheme?

- Cleanliness, temperatures, storage, personal hygiene (clothing etc.), Health and safety.

11. What issues do you think the scheme should cover? (e.g. food hygiene, environment, source of food, healthy eating)

- H&S painting, edges on cupboards, asking management questions on where they are with food hygiene.
- Everyone in the trade should have basic hygiene training but intermediate training isn't necessarily useful – there shouldn't be advanced training required to get higher awards. A couple of people thought it should be required when you're working for a larger company.
- It's not fair that small business who can't afford higher training can't get silver/gold awards. The government should pay for courses as an incentive to get higher ratings.

12. What additional information do you think should be displayed in alongside the certificate or available elsewhere?

- One person can't see anything.
- Should have the FSA logo bigger on the certificate.
- Explain more about what the ratings mean (e.g., bronze for a smaller business is just as good as a silver/gold for a larger business)
- It's more about media exposure than what's on the certificate.

13. To what extent should the scores be based on unannounced visits?

- Should be based on unannounced visits but there needs to be guidelines for when they come in – it's impractical to be inspected when there's a stadium full of people wanting food.

14. Should the score be based on achieving legal minimum standards or exceeding minimum standards?

- A pass or fail rating is simple enough for the public – that’s all they want to know about.
- There’s really no point in scoring – the public don’t care.
- If there was a grading scheme it would need to be fair for all business types (a different scheme for small businesses). A guest house and a hotel both get star ratings but they are different systems. It should be the same with food (i.e., different system for takeaways, restaurants, cafes etc.).

15. Do you think a food hygiene score is best (1) posted on shop window, (2) available on request from the manager, (3) placed on a website or made available in some other way?

- On the wall – ‘get them in first’
- A little window sticker.
- A website – more for visitors/foreigners

16. What might consumers think of food businesses that lacked a certificate?

- They wouldn’t care – they’d look at the place and decide for themselves.

17. Do you think a scheme should be local (eg. run by the LA) or national (eg. run by the FSA)?

- Local – local people know the establishments better. Should be locally run but a national scheme.

18. Would you participate in a scheme if only a small number of restaurants had been assessed?

- If the award looked nice.

19. What types of concerns or questions might you have about a food hygiene score scheme run by the FSA or a local authority?

- Industry and regulators need to work together to develop criteria for awards.
- Inspectors need to know the industry.

20. In the event that your business received a poor score, would this encourage you to improve you food hygiene standards?

- Yes

<p>21. In the event that your business received a good score, would this be an incentive to maintain high food hygiene standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes – it's a reward for what you've done.
<p>22. In the event that your business received a poor score, what form of redress would you want? Eg. quick re-inspection, appeal. Would you be willing to pay for a re-inspection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A quick re-inspection opportunity is very important but wouldn't want to pay for it.• It's unfair for small businesses that can't afford it – a re-inspection should be free.
<p>23. How frequently should businesses be inspected?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The good thing about the current scheme is that inspections are only every 18 months. They are scaled so that if you get a poor score inspections will be more frequent.
<p>24. What do you think should happen if there is a complaint against a business or an outbreak of food poisoning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It happens – there is need to investigate (people automatically assume that it's food poisoning).• There is a stigma if a place is closed down because one person said they got food poisoning.• They would be re-inspected regularly if there was incident and re-rated regularly.
<p>25. If you were a new business, would you want an inspection before or after opening?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ----
<p>26. How do you think businesses could best be encouraged to participate in this type of scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make the scheme compulsory.• Make the scheme known to businesses – use trade associations to promote it.• 90% of encouragement comes from yourself.
<p>27. How do you think such a scheme can best be publicised to consumers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicity and advertising.• An ad similar to the M&S ads.• TV, national press, radio – across the main forms of media.• Mention of the Valentine Day chip and pin ad campaign and having a set date for introduction of the scheme.• Point of sale advertising.

SECTION D: Web based information
<p>28. Do you think businesses that have scores/certificates should be listed on a website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Doesn’t matter to me’ • You’d be a pretty poor sort if you were looking at that on the web. • Having a whole report on the website is too much information.
<p>29. What other information do you think should be available on a website listing of businesses that have scores/certificates? (e.g. hygiene certificates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for businesses.
<p>30. If you were listed on a web site, how would you think consumers would prefer to carry out a search? E.g. by area, type of outlet, score etc?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t think that people would search it – they go more on recommendations. • Area and type of food are the major deciding categories.
<p>31. What do you think might be the problems with displaying scores on a website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People wouldn’t use it – they might look up the quality of food but not hygiene.
<p>32. Do you think there should be a method for notifying consumers if the scores for a business change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ----
<p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suggestion that the amount of training required should depend on the amount of staff you employ. • Some people are concerned with the fact that smaller businesses can’t afford to get a higher rating than a bronze.