

Food safety inspections and enforcement

How to prepare your business for food safety inspections and avoid enforcement action.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws and can inspect your business at any point in the food production and distribution process.

Inspections

Authorised officers from your local council will [visit your premises](#) to check if your business is complying with food law and producing food that is safe to eat. To do this, they will look at:

- your premises
- how you work
- your food safety management system
- the types of food you make and prepare

Authorised officers may visit your premises for several reasons, including:

- food hygiene and food standards inspections
- sampling
- complaint follow-up
- advisory visits

They have the right to enter and inspect your premises at any reasonable time. Authorised officers will usually arrive without making an appointment.

How often your business is routinely inspected will depend on the type of business and its previous record. Some premises might be inspected at least every six months, others much less often. Authorised officers will offer help and advice on [food safety](#). They can take action if they find that your standards of [food hygiene](#) are not good enough. In serious cases, action might include closing the premises or prosecution.

The [Food safety checklist](#) covers the key things you will be inspected on and will help you prepare for a food safety inspection.

Enforcement action

Authorised officers can take enforcement action to protect the public. This can include:

- seizing foods suspected to be unfit for human consumption
- writing you a letter following an inspection or outlining issues with compliance and asking you to correct these
- serving a formal legal notice that sets out certain things you must do or forbidding you from using certain processes, premises or equipment
- recommending a prosecution in serious cases

Authorised officers will allow you enough time to make changes unless there is an immediate risk to public health.

How you can appeal

You can [appeal a decision made by a local authority](#) if you do not agree with the actions the authorised officer has taken.

Remember: When you start a new food business or take over an existing business, you must [register with your local authority](#).