



Food Safety and Health & Safety Service Plan

Community and Place Delivery

2025-2026

Produced for the period:	2025-2026
Review and update due:	01/06/2026
Approved by:	Robin Ray
Author:	Gheorghe Nafornta Food, Health and Safety Team Manager

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	Aims and Objectives	2
1.2	Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans	4
2	BACKGROUND	4
2.1	Profile of the Authority	5
2.2	Organisational Structure	5
2.3	Service delivery points and times available	6
SECTION 1, FOOD SAFETY LAW ENFORCEMENT		7
FOOD SAFETY SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES		7
3	Scope of the Food Service	7
4	Service Delivery	8
4.1	Demands on the Food Service	8
4.2	Food Hygiene Interventions at Food Establishments	9
4.3	Food Inspections	11
4.4	Food Complaints	13
4.5	National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)	14
5	Advice and Home Authority	15
5.1	Advice to businesses	15
5.2	Primary Authority Principle	15
6	Chargeable Services:	16
6.1	Business Mentoring scheme	16
6.2	Issuing Food Export Health Certification	17
7	Food Inspection & Sampling	18
8	Control & Investigation of Outbreaks of Infectious Disease	19
9	Food Safety Incidents/Alerts	19
10	Liaison with Other Organisations	20
10.1	Food Safety Promotion	20
SECTION 2 HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW ENFORCEMENT		20
Health & Safety service aims and objectives		20
11.1	Aims	20
11.2	Objectives	21
12	Partnership & Joint Working	22

13 Health & Safety Service Delivery	23
14 Health & Safety Complaints	24
14.1 Accident/Incident Investigation	24
14.2 Asbestos Notifications	25
14.3 Health & Safety Advice and Promotion Initiatives	25
14.4 Safety Advice Group (SAG) Participation	25
15 Statement of Commitment	26
SECTION 3 Resources	27
16.1 Service Budget	27
16.2 Staffing Allocation	27
16.3 Staff Development Plan	28
16.4 Internal Quality Assessment	29
16.5 External Quality Assessment	29
17 Review against the Service Plan	30
Areas of Improvement:	30

1 INTRODUCTION

St Albans City and District Council is required to prepare an annual food law service plan in line with the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Framework Agreement on Food Law Enforcement.

This service plan sets out how St Albans City and District Council intends to deliver official food controls in 2025-26.

The Commercial Regulatory Team are responsible for the delivery of the statutory food and health & safety service, which is part of Regulatory Services within the Community and Place Delivery directorate.

To help to ensure local transparency and accountability, and to show their contribution to the authority's corporate plan, the current food service plan has been approved with Members with subsequent plans approved by a senior officer level.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The key aim of the service is to protect public safety by ensuring that food and drink produced, stored, distributed, handled or purchased within the district is without risk to health and safety of the consumer. The service carries out the following actions, contributing to the overall aim of the provision of safe food (Health and Safety aims and objectives are covered in section 2 of the Plan).

- To deliver an inspection and intervention programme in line with the Food standards Agency Code of Practice and guidance documents¹, taking relevant follow up action including formal enforcement action where there is a serious risk to human health or flagrant disregard.
- To deliver an inspection and intervention programme in line with the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice and guidance documents, taking relevant follow up action including formal enforcement action where there is a serious risk to human health or flagrant disregard.
- To respond to complaints, allegations and requests for service in a risk-based manner, utilising existing and emerging intelligence to determine appropriate follow up action.
- To respond to food alerts for action notified by the Food Standards Agency where relevant.
- To provide clear information, guidance and advice to help food business operators meet their legal responsibilities and requirements.
- To provide a consistent approach to the interpretation, implementation and enforcement of legislation and guidance.
- To promote the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme² (FHRS), enabling members of the public to make an informed choice as to those businesses they choose to purchase food from, and to encourage food business operators to improve and maintain hygiene standards.
- To respond to cases of food poisoning and food borne illness including allergenic reactions, advising on appropriate control measures and taking appropriate follow up action to protect public health.

¹ <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/food-and-feed-codes-of-practice>

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-hygiene-ratings-for-businesses>

- To provide advice to businesses and members of the public on food safety matters.
- To take food samples and arrange for the testing of foods and feed produced and/or on sale within the borough, including imported food.
- To ensure all staff involved in the delivery of the food, food standards and feed service are properly qualified and competent to enable them to undertake their work, providing the necessary equipment and facilities and contracting out relevant duties where required.

The Regulatory Services including the Food, Health and Safety Team follows an enforcement policy that embraces the principles of the Regulators' Code and Crown Prosecution Guidelines and is available on the Council's website and is cited in formal correspondence with businesses.

1.2 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

The service aims to support and implement the Council's vision and to contribute to a high quality life for all residents by delivering outstanding services, by working with the Community, County, Town and Parish Councils.

The Council Plan 2025-2030 sets out the Councils' vision and commitments and also how the Council will serve its residents, businesses, voluntary groups and other customers over the next 5 years. The four key priorities, designed to deliver a viable, happy, inclusive and sustainable community, are to:

- Support great communities.
- Improve social housing provision.
- Make the environment a priority in all our decisions.
- Treat everyone with fairness.

Food Safety & Health & Safety Laws Enforcement Service Plan sets out how the Council complies with its statutory duties and the teams' contribution to the corporate objectives.

Individual Performance Appraisal Scheme sets out how each member of staff contributes to the service plans and Council objectives.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Authority

St Albans City and District Council serves a district of approximately 148,200 people in Southwest Hertfordshire. The council is currently led by a Liberal Democrat administration and consists of 56 elected councillors.

The district itself is known for its historic environment and Green Belt land, comprising 81% of the area. It includes the city of St Albans and several towns and villages such as Harpenden, Wheathampstead, and London Colney. Popular attractions in the district include the St Albans Cathedral, Roman remains, award-winning museums, Heartwood Forest, and the ancient charter market.

The district boasts high levels of satisfaction among residents, strong civic and cultural traditions, and a robust economy with strengths in green technology, independent retail, visitor economy, and professional services. Due to close proximity to London and rail and transport connection, around 20% of the residents' commute to London for work.

- **Education:** The district boasts high educational attainment levels, with a large percentage of residents holding higher education qualifications.
- **Income:** St Albans is one of the more affluent areas in the UK, with average household incomes above the national average.
- **Housing:** The area has a mix of housing types, with a notable proportion of owner-occupied homes
- **Health:** Residents of St Albans generally enjoy good health, with life expectancy rates above the national average 2.
- **Deprivation:** The district has relatively low levels of income deprivation compared to other areas.

2.2 Organisational Structure

The Food, Health and Safety Team sits within the Regulatory Services Section, and is part of the Community and Place Delivery Directorate.

The Strategic Director of Community and Place Delivery has overall responsibility for the service and the implementation of the food control service and health, and

safety enforcement service lies with the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial), who reports to the Assistant Director for Regulatory and Compliance

The structure of the Food, Health and Safety Team is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Organisational Structure



The Environmental Health Manager is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the team and has lead officer responsibility. There are currently 4 full time equivalent officers that are allocated to deliver the food hygiene programme and health and safety enforcing work. This is including a 0.5 FTE post which currently is being recruited for. There is an approximate 0.25 FTE of administrative resource provided to the team by an administrative officer within Customer Services.

2.3 Service delivery points and times available

The Service is located in the Civic Centre Offices in the centre of St Albans, visits by businesses and members of the public must be made in advance to ensure officers are available in the office.

Personal visits can be made between:

Monday: 9.00 to 5.00pm

Tuesday: 9.00am to 1:00 pm

Wednesday: 9.00am to 5.00pm

Thursday: 9.00am to 1:00pm

Friday: 9.00am to 3.00pm

By e-mail: [name]@stalbans.gov.uk (individual officer) or
environmental@stalbans.gov.uk or www.stalbans.gov.uk

SECTION 1, FOOD SAFETY LAW ENFORCEMENT

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3 Scope of the Food Service

The Food, Health & Safety Team undertakes the following areas of food hygiene and food safety related activity:

- The registration of new food premises.
- Food hygiene and food safety interventions at registered food premises, which includes fixed and mobile premises and public events.
- The maintenance, updating and promotion of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).
- The investigation of food hygiene and food safety complaints.
- The investigation of food poisoning allegations and outbreaks including allergen related incidents.
- Responding to food alerts.
- Inspecting foods and the issuing export health certificates for the exportation of foods to third countries.
- Consultation on planning, building control and licensing applications.
- Implementation of annual sampling plan for food hygiene and food standards.
- The provision of guidance and advice to businesses and members of the public.

- The approval of food premises manufacturing certain products covered by Regulation (EC) 853/2004 e.g. meat product manufacturers and approved cold stores.

The team is also responsible for delivering the following statutory functions outside the scope of part 1 of this plan:

- Health and safety inspection and enforcement. (Section 2 of the current plan)
- Accident investigations.
- Investigation of health & safety complaints.
- Enforcement of smoke free legislation and provision of advice/consultation to businesses.
- Attendance at the council's safety advisory group (SAG) for food safety and health and safety related matters.
- Following up notifications of infectious diseases (NOIDS) by investigating the source(s) and implementing in place control measures aimed at stopping the infections transmission.
- During the pandemic, responsibility for inspection and enforcement of Covid regulations.

4 Service Delivery

4.1 Demands on the Food Service

- There are currently approximately 1350 food premises on the council's food premises register/database.
- Food premises within the district are divided into the following categories as defined by the Food Standards Agency

Figure 2: Profile of Food Businesses

Type of premises	Number
Primary Producer	12
Pub/Club	140
Restaurant/Café/Canteen	263
Restaurant/Caterers- Other	168
Retailer/Other	56
School/College	76
Caring premises	240
Distributor/Transporter	26
Hotel/Guest House	17
Importer/Exporter	12
Manufacturer/Packer	9
Mobile Food Unit	87
Small Retailer	151
Supermarket/Hypermarket	25
Takeaway	85
Total	1367

To note, the table above includes 3 premises within the district approved under product specific food legislation, Regulation (EC) 853/2004.

EC Approved premises must meet higher food safety standards and follow a specific approval and inspection process. Approval can be withdrawn if non-compliant. These premises typically include food manufacturers handling animal and fishery products, involved in manufacturing, storage, and distribution nationally and internationally.

4.2 Food Hygiene Interventions at Food Establishments

The Food Law Code of Practice states that food businesses should receive an intervention in accordance with the minimum frequency as set out below.

Figure 3: Food Hygiene Minimum Interventions Frequency

Category of Premises	Score	Minimum Intervention Frequency
A	92 or higher	At least every six months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	52 to 71	At least every 18 months

D	31 to 51	at least every 24 months
E	0 to 30	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every three years

Figure 4a: Types of Food Control Interventions

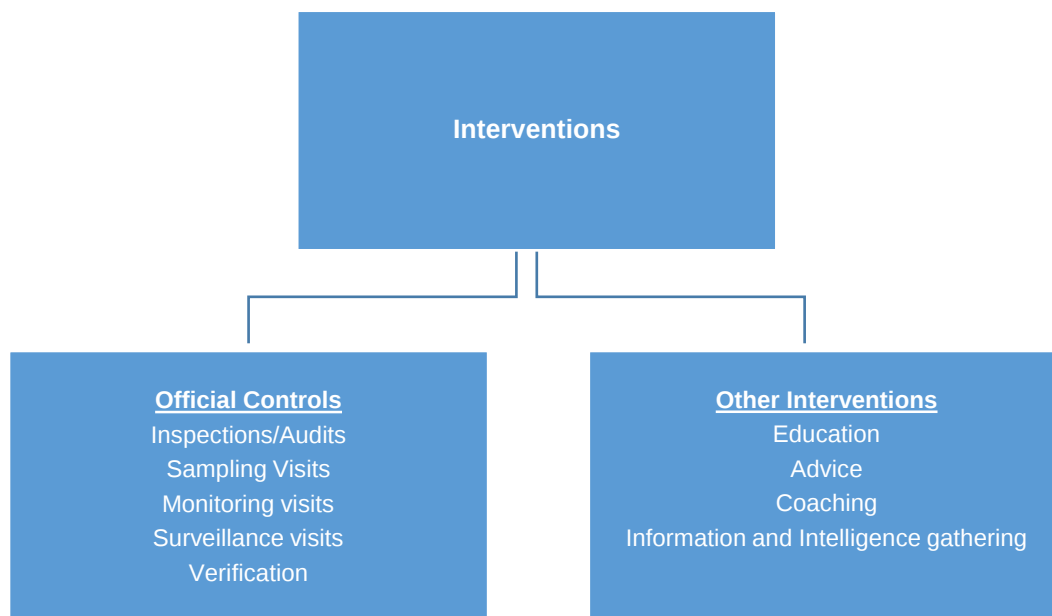


Figure 4b: Internal and external factors influencing upon the Intervention mix

DEMAND DRIVEN	INSPECTION DRIVEN
Requests for Service Food Complaints Food Registrations Primary Authority Principle Investigation of Food Poisoning Notifications and Outbreak Control Food Alerts Hospitality sector compliance Public Health interventions with respect to Covid 19 and other infectious diseases.	Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Sampling Programme
EDUCATION DRIVEN	INTELLIGENCE DRIVEN

Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Home Authority principle Food Hygiene Training Public Awareness Campaigns Partnerships	History of compliance Sampling Scientific and Technical Development Inspection Programme Targeted Inspections Home Authority Principle Food Poisoning Notifications Food Complaints Food Alerts Liaison and Partnership Working
---	--

4.3 Food Inspections

It is St Albans policy as competent authority (Food Authority) to follow the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Practice Guidance Intervention Strategy. Food Authorities are responsible for official controls and related activities in most food establishments in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These activities ensure compliance with food laws and include inspections, audits, surveillance, sampling, and other interventions focused on food hygiene.

The Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 mandates regular, risk-based official controls with appropriate frequency. Some controls are specified in legislation, while others are recommended by FSA guidance.

Food Authorities must undertake all prescribed official controls and activities, as well as those recommended by FSA guidance, and meet the Food Laws Codes of Practice requirements.

Inspections are generally unannounced and scheduled at suitable times, including out-of-hours visits when necessary. If appointments are made in advance, the reasons are recorded.

Inspections are programmed monthly using a computer database to ensure they occur within 28 days of the due date. Premises are allocated to officers based on competence levels, the highest risk premises being allocated to the most experienced officers, with progress monitored and rescheduling for missed inspections due to unforeseen circumstances. The goal is to inspect food businesses within 28 days of their due inspection date.

Figure 5: Number of establishments in each risk category for food hygiene on 31st March 2025

Hygiene Risk Categories	Number
A-rated total	6

B-rated total	62
C-rated total	259
D-rated total	487
E-rated total	268
Not yet rated total	6
Outside the programme total	81

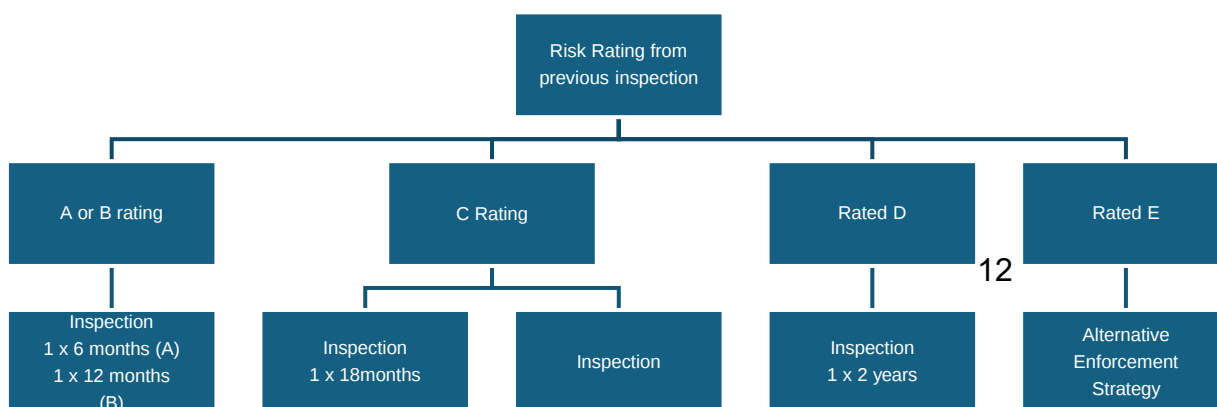
Figure 6: Interventions & Related Activities for 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025

Interventions/Activities	Number
Inspections /Audits	706
Verification /Surveillance	1
New premises registered and inspected	221
Sampling visits	24
Advice/Education	33
Voluntary Closures	11
Written Warnings	487
Improvement Notices	54

Figure 7: Estimated food inspection visits for 2025/2026

Risk Rating	Number
A	5
B	47
C	164
D	202
E	91
New Premises visits Estimate	200
Revisits estimate	85
Total	794

Figure 8: Interventions strategy



Using the information from Figure 7, and the Intervention Strategy outlined in Figure 8; it is envisaged that Food Businesses rated A and B plus C-rated and D-rated non-compliant premises will receive an inspection in 2023/24. D and C-rated broadly compliant premises will receive an inspection if they fall outside of the alternative strategy programme, otherwise they can be subjected to the alternative enforcement strategy. E-rated premises would be subjected to the Alternative Enforcement Strategy in accordance with the enforcement expectations set in the Food Law Code of Practice.

Using statistics from previous years it is estimated that the above programme will result in approx. 80 revisits, depending upon the risk categories. Also, it is estimated that there could be approximately 200 newly registered premises that would need to be inspected during the qualified period.

All officers undertaking inspections, investigating complaints, giving advice and taking samples meet the qualifications and experience detailed in the Practice Guidance.

There is a procedure in place for the verification of officer's qualifications and achievement of continuing professional development.

Secondary inspections (for example revisits) are carried out in accordance with Practice Guidance.

The staffing resource required to carry out food safety enforcement work with the main objective to achieve 100% completion rate of inspections (risk category A – D) is 4.56 FTE.

An alternative enforcement strategy for low risk food premises (E-rated), could involve a triage- assessment by the Regulatory Support Officer and assessment by a suitably qualified Environmental Health Officer.

4.4 Food Complaints

Complaints which are investigated by the service, receive a first response within 48 hours, and normally are as a result of the following:

- food stuff (contaminated)
- complaints about food businesses (hygiene)
- complaints about food handling (food handlers)

Food stuff complaints are investigated in accordance with *"The Food Complaints procedure"*.

Complaints relating to food businesses or food handling are investigated in accordance with *The Procedure for Dealing with Complaints/Enquires*.

Figure 9: Number of complaints for previous years

21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
99	74	75	171

The team dealt with 171 food complaints in 2024/25 which is more than double the complaints received in each of the previous years.

4.5 National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

The council delivers the Food Standards Agency National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) which provides a food hygiene rating to food businesses based on their level of compliance during food control interventions. This is giving food operators and consumers clear information on food hygiene and standards noted at the time of inspection.

Some businesses such as manufacturers or those premises not traditionally thought of as high street food businesses, such as pharmacies are exempt from the scheme.

Figure 10: Food Hygiene Rating Scheme - establishments in each risk rated category on 31 March 2025:

Rating	Establishments
5	797
4	144
3	58
2	16
1	14
0	1

There are 1222 Food Premises within scope for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. All premises within the scope of Food Hygiene Rating Scheme which is subject to an official control is given one of six ratings between 0 and 5.

The top rating of '5' means that the business was found to have 'very good' standards of hygiene. Any business should be able to reach the top rating.

The rating is calculated using three elements of the risk rating assigned at the end of a programmed inspection. The elements are as follows:

- **Hygiene** - how hygienically the food is handled and what measures are taken to prevent food from becoming contaminated with bacteria.
- **Structure** - the structure of the establishment- cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and equipment.
- **Confidence in management** - management controls in place including attitude and the presence of a documented management system.

Food business operators have a right of appeal and can request a revisit subject to certain conditions. Further information is published on the council's website www.stalbans.gov.uk and www.food.gov.uk.

To encourage businesses to apply for a re-rating revisit, providing information how to request a revisit.

5 Advice and Home Authority

5.1 Advice to businesses

The food businesses are being provided with advice during routine inspections and visits, also, the advice is available on the Council's website for new starters and direct businesses to resources like the Food Standards Agency website, CIEH, and training providers. This helps businesses succeed, comply with the law, and adopt good practices (paragraph 6.1).

5.2 Primary Authority Principle

St Albans supports the Primary Authority Principle "Commitment to Primary Authority Procedure".

The Business Compliance Team actively works with businesses to help them comply with the law and encourage improvements in the following ways:

- the provision of advice leaflets
- letters to businesses where major changes in procedures/legislation is expected
- lists of available leaflets and order forms are available online
- responding to enquiries
- dialogue with businesses through customer satisfaction surveys.
- advice issued during inspections and other visits.
- Advice given during planning consultation processes.
- Advice available on the Council website.
- Newsletters to businesses
- Participation in the Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme.

6 Chargeable Services:

Our fees and charges for all services are available on St Albans City and District Council website. Discretionary paid for services are made in accordance with our policy and the FLCOP.

Any terms and conditions applicable to the provision of the service are discussed together with any conflicts of interest and that where applicable that other providers of the service are available. These services are separate to official controls or other official activities. This includes:

- **Mentoring scheme for business provision:** (6 businesses were provided with such advice in 2024/2025).
- **Food export certification service:** Arranging sampling on request and issuing food export health certificates (11 food export health certificates were issued in 2024/2025).
- **Additional visits outside of programmed inspections:** For the purpose of improving food hygiene rating scores (32 rescoring visits were carried out in 2024/2025).

6.1 Business Mentoring scheme

In addition to the advice provided during routine inspections and on Council's website, the team has developed and is offering the Food Business Mentoring Service.

Key Initiatives under the scheme:

- **Food Business Mentoring Scheme:** A cost recovery paid service offering tailored food safety advice to improve compliance and Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) scores.
- **Coaching and providing the Hertfordshire Safe Food Pack:** Developed by St Albans Council officers, this Food Safety Management System offers practical food safety management and is available as part Food Business Mentoring Scheme service.

Practical Approach to Food Safety Management:

- **Training and Mentoring:** Businesses using the system receive comprehensive support.
- **Hazard Identification:** Helps businesses identify key hazards and establish critical controls to ensure food safety.
- **Compliance:** Assists businesses in meeting legislative requirements, approved codes of practice, and industry guidance.
- **Detailing Requirements:** Tailored to the size, nature, and key risks of the food operation.
- **Legal Compliance:** Ensures businesses demonstrate effective control of critical points (HACCP principles), including validation and verification as per Article 5 EC 852/2004.

6.2 Issuing Food Export Health Certification

The Food Health and Safety Team provides Export Health Certification (EHC) Services for certain foods i.e fishery products, live bivalve molluscs and composite products exclusively containing fish & egg products and also foods that are not of animal origin FNOAO. In 2024 the service was extended to include High-Risk Food Not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO) food which presents a risk to human health due to contamination by aflatoxins, pesticides, salmonella or dioxins.

The service is a non-statutory function and cost recovery charges apply. There are 4 officers within the team trained and authorised as Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs) for issuing food certification as necessary.

The level of service and the actions required will depend on the nature of the food being exported and the legislative requirements relevant to that particular food. For example, High-Risk Food Not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO) food which presents a risk to human health will be subject to a site visit and sampling while other foods may only require a documentary check before issue of an Export Health Certificate. Once

samples are taken, they are sent to an official UKAS accredited laboratory for analysis and the health certification issued or not based on the test results.

It is important to note that the chargeable services have been provided using existing staff resources, in addition to the statutory workload carried out by officers. These services have generated approximately £15,000 in income for the Council during the year.

There is potential to expand and diversify the chargeable services offered by the team. However, this would only be feasible with additional staff resources, such as extra administrative support from Customer Services and/or improvements to the inspection process through the digitalisation of inspection reporting.

7 Food Inspection & Sampling

Food sampling is an important contribution to the protection of public health and the food law enforcement function. It is used to gather information about the safety, quality and possible presence of harmful micro-organisms enabling appropriate follow action to be taken to protect the consumer.

Food authorities are required to prepare and publish a food sampling policy in accordance with its Food Service Plan and make it available to businesses and consumers in accordance with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Law Code of Practice June 2023 and Food Law Practice Guidance April 2018, and to meet the standard laid down in the FSA Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities.

The food control service will sample from and submit for microbiological analysis:

- All manufacturers within the district - food and water supplies
- Product specific premises food and water
- Premises targeted as local initiatives
- Premises targeted for national UKHSA surveys
- Premises in conjunction with food incidents
- Imported foods

Sampling is carried out in accordance “St Albans City and District Food Sampling Policy” in conjunction with the sampling programme. Figure 11 shows the number of food samples taken in the previous 4 years.

Figure 11: Number of Food Samples

20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
18	131	74	153	155

The sampling programme for the service involves the participation in of other stakeholders when these arise:

- FSA's Imported Food Office
- UK Health Security Agency
- Herts and Beds Food Survey

8 Control & Investigation of Outbreaks of Infectious Disease

The food control service investigates all food related infectious disease. The investigations are carried out in accordance with *"The Procedure: The Investigation of Infectious Diseases"*. A 24-hour response time applies to all notification of illness. Consultation with the Consultant in Communicable Disease occurs in all cases of E-coli 0157 and Typhoid Para typhi and where multiple cases occur. The investigation of outbreaks is in accordance with the outbreak control plan as agreed by the Hertfordshire Control of Infection Committee.

Figure 12: Number of Infectious Diseases Notifications

20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
39	8	5	30	70

According to figure 12 the number of infectious diseases notification more than doubled in the previous year. The increase is attributed to UKHSA changing the notification process to include notifying about cases of low and medium risk GI infections such as Salmonellosis, also Shigella and Giardia infections.

9 Food Safety Incidents/Alerts

The council will respond to Food Alerts in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. These are notifications received from the Food Standards Agency relating to potentially harmful foodstuffs that are on sale for human consumption. The alerts set out the urgent actions councils are expected to undertake.

Food alerts are transmitted electronically via a designated secure e-mail link. On receipt of the Alert the responsible officer will ensure it is distributed electronically as appropriate to other council services, the council's communications team, Home Authority businesses who have requested food alert details and the Trading Standards Service. All actions taken will be in line with the advice given in the alert. Given the nature of food alerts, it is impossible to predict the likely demands and requisite resources with any accuracy. If a food alert is associated with a business based within the District, then officers will be expected to devote more time to that alert than to one which originates elsewhere.

10 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Council is committed to ensuring that enforcement action is transparent, and consistent with those of neighbouring authorities.

Liaison and dialogue on enforcement issues takes place via the following groups:

- Herts and Beds Food Group
- Hertfordshire Health Protection Team
- UK Health Security Agency
- Health & Safety Executive
- Care Quality Commission
- Planning and Building Control
- Food Standards Agency
- LGA
- DEFRA
- Hertfordshire County Council Trading Standards
- St Albans Market Management Team

The participation in these groups has resulted in valuable partnerships which contribute to the corporate vision, aims and commitments, and local area agreements.

10.1 Food Safety Promotion

Promotional work is being undertaken by officers within the Food, Health and Safety Team every year. The Team is committed to promoting initiatives which impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the borough. In 2025/26 the service will contribute to the following projects:

- Developing further and providing food business mentoring services.
- Promoting the Hertfordshire Safe Food Pack for businesses.
- Offer advice and assistance to food exporters to third countries/EU and promote the export health certification services.
- Provide advice and raise awareness of Allergen information.
- Promoting FHRS scheme to consumers and businesses.

SECTION 2 HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW ENFORCEMENT

Health & Safety service aims and objectives

11.1 Aims

The aim of the health and safety service is to protect the health and safety of those working within the district in workplaces where we are the enforcing authority. We also aim to protect members of the public and others who may be harmed by the work practices of those businesses.

Enforcement is shared with the Health and Safety Executive, with the Council being responsible for workplaces such as offices, shops, hotels, restaurants, nurseries, pubs, wholesale distribution and warehousing.

The range of interventions/activities include:

- Health & Safety Inspections
- Investigation of accidents
- Investigation of workplace complaints
- Advice to businesses
- Workplace project work

11.2 Objectives

- To comply with all legislative requirements imposed on the Authority regarding the enforcement of Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. This also includes any relevant guidance, codes of practice, etc., published by the HSE.
- To ensure authorised officers within the Food Health and Safety Team complete a competency framework for Health and Safety.
- To actively participate in selected national/regional projects along with other Hertfordshire LAs and HSE.
- To respond to health and Safety Service request within 10 days.
- To carry out a review of all reported accidents and decide on a course of investigation guided by HSE Criteria set out on incident selection.
- To provide advice, information and training to consumers, employees and operators of businesses.
- To promote safety and participate in local and national campaigns.
- To provide efficient, effective and quality services.
- To provide services which are accessible, open and equitable to all.
- To respond promptly and courteously, in accordance with good customer care practice, to all recipients of our services.

The specific objectives and targets for 2025/26 for the Team in Health & Safety enforcement context are:

- to carry out Health & Safety Interventions in line with HSE guidelines by prioritising inspections of higher risk premises and project work. The H&S enforcement areas identified for implementing health and safety intervention projects in 2025/26 being as follows:
- to provide high quality, services and strive for excellence through continuous improvement.
- engage with and ensure our services are easily accessible to all, paying particular attention to minority groups, people with disabilities and other people with specific needs.
- work in partnership with other voluntary, statutory, commercial and community organisations to meet the needs of the whole community.
- help people to feel safe and be safe whilst living in, working in the district.
- improve services, facilities and opportunities which provide a healthy environment and healthier lifestyles for all local residents.
- constantly review methods of operation to ensure that best practice and modern processes are adopted and maintained.

12 Partnership & Joint Working

The Business Compliance Team has active links with many other external organisations and SADC services and is actively seeking to find new ways of joint working. Established links include:

- Herts Business Guidance Group
- Herts & Beds Health & Safety Group
- Health and Safety Executive
- Environmental Compliance Team (also in Regulatory Services)
- Building Control
- Planning
- Licensing/Street Trading (also within Regulatory Services)
- Chief Executive and Policy
- Legal Section
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Business Support

The service has links with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and all the Hertfordshire Health and Safety Teams.

13 Health & Safety Service Delivery

Programmed Health and Safety Inspections - Regular inspection of all our commercial premises, rated in the "A" category to check on health and safety standards to promote safe practices and secure compliance with the law, whilst having regard to the national/regional priority programmes. Commercial premises rated "B1", "B2" or "C" categories, will not form part of the planned inspection programme. However, these category premises will be subject to other "Intervention strategies" such as planned, local or national campaigns/initiatives on topic-based issues (e.g. gas/electrical safety initiative). The inspections are carried out in accordance with the adopted Health and Safety Inspection Procedure. Enforcement is focused on hazards or sectors where the greatest action will be necessary, to contribute to the HSE's overall strategy.

During the financial year 2024-2025 there was total of 46 health and safety enforcement interventions carried out

Revisits are carried out to premises to check if specific action has been taken to remedy faults found at a previous inspection/visit.

Special/Other Health and Safety Interventions – To undertake visits as necessary having regard to the priority programmes within HSE's Strategy, focusing our enforcement on particular hazards or sectors where the greatest action will be necessary. This may come to light having analysed trends in official accident notifications.

Taking into account the characteristics of the LA enforced sector, the HSE has decided that it will be necessary for Councils to prioritise certain hazards. Based on this list the following hazards are a priority for us:

Carry out Inspections of all "A" Risk premises and prioritise the following in other settings:

- Premises with Cooling Towers and evaporative Condensers;
(premises will be subject to a full inspection on an annual basis, however the last Cooling Towers in the District have been decommissioned the previous year)
- Open Farms/Animal Visitor Attractions;
(Guidance on infection control issued to businesses followed up either by an inspection or a self-assessment questionnaire) currently, there aren't any open farms/animal visitors businesses registered within district, however

there are 3-4 such establishments are visiting events taking place in the district each year.)

Priority areas in other premises as a result of complaints, accidents or incidents:

- Leisure centre/gym hazards
- Working at height
- Inflatable structures
- Asbestos/respirable silica
- Chemical hazards
- Catering hazards

14 Health & Safety Complaints

Investigation of complaints relating to health and safety received from employers, employees, and the public.

The investigation of some complaints can be a lengthy process, it is expected that officers will ensure a first response within 6-days of the complaint being received. It is also recognised that certain issues will require a quick response, and a duty officer rota is in place during office hours to ensure this.

The depth and scope of investigation required will depend on the nature of the complaint and whether the complaint arose within premises for which the Council has health and safety enforcement responsibility.

During 2024/2025 the team has investigated 37 health and safety complaints.

14.1 Accident/Incident Investigation

The table shows the RIDDOR notifications received in the last 4 years

Year	No. of Notifiable Accidents
2021-2022	68
2022-2023	49
2023-2024	74
2024-2025	48

Investigation of accident notifications received via the RIDDOR notification online system. This system is managed by the HSE. The Environmental Health Manager or the officer on duty checks the database 2 to 3 times a week. Accidents are investigated in accordance with the adopted Accident Investigation Procedure.

The depth and scope of investigation required will depend on factors such as the nature and seriousness of the accident and whether the accident arose within premises for which the Council has health and safety enforcement responsibility.

14.2 Asbestos Notifications

Asbestos notifications are received via a portal on the Health and Safety Executive's website. Contractors and others are required by law to notify the relevant enforcing authority of their intention to carry out both licensed and unlicensed work on asbestos. The Environmental Health Manager or the officer on duty checks the database 2 times a week.

14.3 Health & Safety Advice and Promotion Initiatives

We recognise that most businesses seek to comply with the law and for 2024/25 we are planning to provide such advice and assistance as may be necessary subject to resource availability. This includes:

- Developing and providing business free information sheets, leaflets, practical information, and other guides as necessary to simplify legislation and aid compliance with specific health and safety legislation.
- Providing on the spot free advice during routine visits and inspections.
- Provision of free telephone advice.
- Provision of information through the Council's social media pages.
- Signposting to the Health and Safety Executives website.
- We would endeavour to participate in local and national initiatives.

14.4 Safety Advice Group (SAG) Participation

The team is a core member of the SAG group and is expected to be represented at every SAG meeting. We provide specialist Health and Safety advice, including Food Safety, to Event Organisers, private/public landowners, and venue owners who plan to deliver public events within St Albans City & District. Before each SAG meeting, the team scrutinises the safety compliance documents submitted by businesses to ensure there are adequate arrangements to meet food safety and health and safety

objectives. Where necessary, the team conducts pre-event or event visits to uphold standards of public safety and ensure safe events within the District.

During the period of 2024/25, as a SAG member, the Food Health and Safety Team has provided advice and assistance for approximately 65 events throughout the year. This helps to maintain high standards of public safety and ensure safe events take place within the District.

15 Statement of Commitment

Councils are responsible for enforcement of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) to the extent as set out in the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998.

Section 18 (4) of the HSW Act requires us to perform our duties in accordance with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The guidance is given effect by the National Local Authorities Enforcement Code The "Section 18 Guidance" is contained is therefore mandatory.

Councils are required to:

- Make adequate arrangements for the enforcement within their area of the relevant statutory provisions; and
- To perform the duty imposed on them by (a) above and any other functions confirmed on them by any of the relevant statutory provisions in accordance with such guidance as the (Health and Safety) commission may give them,(now superseded by the HSE).

The HSE considers the following elements are essential for a LA to adequately discharge its duty as an Enforcing Authority:

- A clear published statement of enforcement policy and practice.
- A system for prioritised planned inspection activity according to the hazard and risk, and consistent with any advice given by the HSE/HELA and a Service Plan detailing the LA's priorities and its aims and objectives for the enforcement of health and safety;
- i) The capacity to investigate workplace accidents and to respond to complaints by employees and others against allegations of health and safety failures;
- ii) Arrangements for benchmarking performance with peer LAs;
- iii) Provision of a trained and competent inspectorate; and
- iv) Arrangements for liaison and co-operation in respect of the Primary Authority Partnership Schemes.

The Council need to ensure that there are sufficient resources for health and safety enforcement to comply with our duties under section 18 (4). HSE will take a view on the performance of LA enforcement and promotional activities, in accordance with its strategy using information supplied by authorities as requested. This information is normally provided through an annual return to HSE (LAE1).

If a Council fails to meet its legal obligation under Section 18 of the HSW Act, the Secretary of State may, after considering a report submitted by the HSE, cause a local enquiry to be held.

SECTION 3 Resources

16.1 Service Budget

The service budget is contained within Food Safety and Health and Safety budget costs centres, for this reason the figures for the current and previous year are for both functions. The allocation of costs between Food Safety and Health& Safety functions is divided at the ratio- 80% to 20%.

Here is the updated table with an additional column for the year 2025/26.

Figure 13: Service Budget

Category	2024/25 (£)	2025/26 (£)
Salaries	416,970	375,280
Car Allowances	9,290	7,670
Central Accommodation	16,470	15,720
Equipment	480	490

16.2 Staffing Allocation

All food enforcement activities are carried out by suitably qualified Environmental Health Officers within the Business Compliance Team, administrative support is shared with Environmental Compliance Team.

Figure 14: Staffing Profile for all officers carrying out food law enforcement work:

Environmental Health Practitioner (Chartered)	3.04
Environmental Health Practitioner	1.99

Authorised Officers FTE Total	5.5
-------------------------------	-----

Staffing resources detailed in Figure 14 shows that a total of 4.00 FTE is required for food safety enforcement related activities; 1.00 FTE is required for Health and Safety enforcement work and 0.53 FTE for other duties detailed in the service plan. The existing establishment is 5.53 FTE. The above figures do not include the administration/ regulatory support which equals to appr 0.25 FTE.

16.3 Staff Development Plan

The service ensures officers are appropriately qualified and receive regular training and refresher training, in order that they may carry out their statutory duties. During 2025/26 all officers will each have access to the equivalent of 20 hours training, 10 hours of which is specific to food. (N.B. Officers (5) who have “Chartered Practitioner” status require a total of 30 hours training each year in order to maintain the chartership.)

The training programme includes:

- Evidence of formal qualifications (i.e. originals shown and verified with awarding body).
- The completion of a competency matrix detailing specific courses and dates.
- Competency checking (auditing skills and inspection techniques).
- Identification of training needs during annual Staff Development and Review Scheme.
- Food Standards Agency Training courses, ABC on-line training and other courses.

The staff development plan is closely aligned with the staff performance appraisal scheme. During performance meetings, training and development needs are identified and included in individual action plans.

As part of the staff development strategy, officers are encouraged to develop advanced expertise in specialist areas such as the control of infectious diseases, food export/import, approved premises etc. Additionally, officers are supported to lead projects and initiatives in their specialist areas, such as leading the FSA’s bid for sampling imported high-risk food of non-animal origin. Officers are also encouraged to deputise for the manager, take on some lead officer functions, and represent the Council at multidisciplinary meetings and forums.

Some of the external courses planned for the year:

- Consistency training – Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme
- Approved establishments enforcement training

- Sampling Courses
- Interviewing Skills (PACE)
- Imported Food Training
- FSA Enforcement Sanctions
- FSA HACCP

16.4 Internal Quality Assessment

Quality is assessed throughout the year in respect of each officer, by means of the following techniques:

- Training and competence, officers are sufficiently trained, competent and experts in their field.
- Operating procedures internal procedures exist to cover food safety work, they are followed by all officers to ensure a consistent approach.
- Peer review professional scrutiny of inspection documents and letters.
- Review by Lead Food Officer of post inspection paperwork including computer input and risk assessment:
- **Team meetings** are held every two weeks.
- **Performance Review** - The annual and quarterly reviews of performance give management and individual officers the opportunity to discuss the performance, identifying areas for improvement and put in place mechanisms to address development needs.
- **Performance indicators** - Computer audit reports are generated at regular intervals to indicate the extent to which responses comply with time requirements.
- **Progress Monitoring** - A system has been adopted that allows the Environmental Health Manager to review the progress of the inspection programme on a monthly basis.
- **Quarterly performance** and **target review** are carried out by Regulatory Services management team.
- **Feedback** on customer complaints or customer praise is discussed at team meetings and with individual officers.

16.5 External Quality Assessment

The Food Standards Agency expects that all local authorities undergo an audit of their management of health and safety law enforcement at least once every 5 years.

Third party assessments may be provided by both The Food Standards Agency and by Council's participation in an inter-authority audit co-ordinated through the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Health and Safety Group. An inter-authority audit of the Food Safety service was last carried out in 2015.

17 Review against the Service Plan

- The performance indicators are reviewed on a quarterly basis. Any significant variations are reported together with explanations and remedial action to the Environmental Health Manager and Director of Community and Place Delivery
- The Health and Safety elements of this plan will be reviewed by the Environmental Health Manager in line with the Corporate Planning timetable.

Areas of Improvement:

The areas of improvement that have been identified are:

- The continued improvement of the relatively newly upgraded environmental health and information management system to improve reporting, data accuracy and online services for customers.
- Continuing to update Standard Operating Procedures
- Movement to a digital inspection system, with an app integrated/linked to the environmental health information management system continues to be under development and when possible, it will be trialled to seek further efficiencies.