

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 01. What is “Scores On The Doors”?

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“Scores on the doors” is a scheme which allows the public to view the latest hygiene rating following a food hygiene inspection carried out by Food Inspectors. The score will be in the form of a star rating.

Each premises is given a star rating:

<b>5 Stars</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>4 Stars</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>3 Stars</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>2 Stars</b>	<b>Broadly Compliant</b>
<b>1 Star</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>No Star</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>

### 02. Who is it for?

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“Scores on the doors” is for everyone who chooses to eat in Newham, the food and drink businesses in the Borough, but also for Newham’s Food Safety Service.

Consumers will be able to look up their favourite eating place, whether it’s a pub, restaurant or a take-away and make an informed decision on whether they want to visit, based on the published food hygiene standard. This reduces the customer’s risk of getting food poisoning.

Businesses are able to judge where their business is in relation to other businesses in respect of hygiene standards. Some businesses will be content with their star rating, but others will look to or be required to improve their food hygiene standard, and so their star rating. This will provide better assurance to existing and potential customers, reduced visits from Environmental Health teams (allowing them to concentrate on the poorer businesses).

By posting the information on the website, the Food Safety Service in Newham will be able to provide the public with simple to use easily accessible information that could only have previously been obtained under the freedom of information act. It is also hoped that the majority of food businesses will want their standards to rise, allowing the teams to concentrate on the poorer premises.

### 03. Why is Newham introducing the scheme?

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Newham is introducing the scheme for several reasons. We feel the scheme will help raise food hygiene standards further and will give the public information they are legally entitled to receive in a format they readily understand, such as a star rating.

The scheme will allow consumers to make an informed choice about food businesses they use based on the assessments carried out by Food Inspectors, and will let food businesses compare themselves against similar businesses in the Borough and so raise their standards

#### **04. Is this a national scheme?**

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No.

At the moment there is no national rating scheme for scoring food businesses. The Food Standards Agency is considering introducing a scheme but in the meantime the London Councils are piloting this star-rating scheme using the same system. This will reduce the chances of consumers being confused and will make sure that the ratings are applied in a consistent way.

The Food Standards Agency is supporting the London-wide pilot.

#### **05. Which businesses will get a star rating?**

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All business that form part of the council's inspection programme. This will include places like restaurants, takeaways, supermarkets and pubs serving food.

#### **06. Are there any businesses not part of the scheme?**

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Low risk businesses such as grocers not selling high risk food, pubs not serving food and chemists selling sweets are not part of the inspection programme and therefore will not receive a star rating.

#### **07. How will a business get a star rating?**

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After a scheduled inspection the officer will score the business based on a national scoring scheme developed by the Food Standards Agency. Officers are trained and experienced in carrying out inspections and scoring as they have been doing this for years. Although this is the first time, the scores given for hygiene, structure and management will be used to calculate a star rating for the business. A certificate showing the star rating can be displayed on the front door or front window of the premises. The rating will also be available on Newham's website [www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk) and on [www.yourlondon.gov.uk](http://www.yourlondon.gov.uk) along with ratings from other London boroughs.

The score given is based only on what was found on the day of the inspection.

#### **08. Do businesses have to display their star rating?**

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No. Displaying the certificate is voluntary but if they do want to display the certificate then it must be visible from the outside of the premises therefore enabling the public to view the latest hygiene score before deciding to enter. However, we will be displaying the hygiene scores on the Newham Council website.

## **09. Does the scheme reflect at all on the quality of food in an establishment?**

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This scheme is not about what the gastronomic delight of the food you are going to eat. This scheme is about how clean the premises is. If food is not stored, prepared, cooked and served in a clean environment then the greater the risk of food poisoning.

Sadly some businesses invest heavily in the “front-of-house” and neglect the areas customers cannot see. Unfortunately, the problems that are most likely to give rise to food poisoning, such as poor temperature control and cross contamination, are difficult for customers to see. That's why we think the ‘Scores on the Doors’ is so important.

## **10. When will all businesses be rated?**

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The rating for all food premises inspected since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 will be published.

The hygiene rating for food businesses will be given after their next scheduled inspection. The inspection due date depends on when the business was last inspected and the hygiene conditions found at the time. The worst performing businesses posing a greater risk to health are inspected more often than the better performing businesses. There will be almost 2,000 food businesses covered by this scheme in the borough and it is anticipated it will take approximately 2 years to get round to all the businesses.

## **11. How often will the rating change?**

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As soon as a new food inspection has been carried out and the inspection data updated. This information on food hygiene inspection will be displayed our website this will be within 7 days of the inspection.

## **12. Who will decide what star rating to give?**

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The officer undertaking the inspection.

## **13. Is one local authority safer than another in the London?**

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Managers of the Food Safety Services meet regularly to ensure that hygiene standards for food businesses are consistent between local authorities. The Food Standards Agency also audits local authorities on a regular basis to ensure that their Food Safety Services meet the minimum requirements.

## **14. How can I find out what star rating is given to a particular business?**

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You can ask the business directly for their score.

If the food business is not displaying a certificate or you want to eat in a premises in another London borough, you can view the latest list of food businesses inspected and their scores on our website or [www.yourlondon.gov.uk](http://www.yourlondon.gov.uk)

### **15. What do I do if the business is not displaying its certificate?**

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There may be a perfectly good reason for this. The business may be awaiting a inspection or may have been inspected and waiting for a new certificate to be issued.

The business may not have been awarded a certificate as standards were poor at the time of the inspection. Remember: to get a 1 star a fair level of hygiene needs to be achieved!

### **16. How do I know if the certificate on display is valid and genuine?**

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Following a food hygiene inspection the previous certificate will be collected by the inspecting officer and destroyed. If you are in doubt or suspect the certificate on display is not genuine you can phone and speak to anyone in the Food Safety Unit (Housing and Public Protection Service) on 020 8430 3831 or email: [food@newham.gov.uk](mailto:food@newham.gov.uk)

### **17. What if a business disagrees with the star rating?**

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The rating is based on a professional officer's inspection and will not be changed. However, if a business believes it has not been treated fairly the council's formal complaints procedure can be used and the matter will be investigated.

If a business feels that hygiene standards have improved since the inspection they will have "a right to reply", the right to have their comments posted on the council's website as long as they are accurate in the officer's opinion.

However the score will not be changed, as this will happen following the next scheduled food hygiene inspection of the premises, which can be anytime between 6 months and 2 years.

### **18. Are low scores the worst places for food hygiene?**

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It is important to remember that premises with 3 stars are good and 2 star premises will generally comply with the law (but there will be some minor contraventions that require attention).

If a premises scores 0 stars does not mean that the premises is necessarily unsafe. Premises with one star or no stars will require follow up action by the inspector requiring significant work to be carried out to ensure food safety.

Businesses are not re-scored after completing the work; they must maintain the standards until the next inspection.

## **19. Why are there so few places with a maximum score?**

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To get 5 stars, everything needs to be virtually perfect when the inspector calls unannounced. This is hard to achieve in a busy kitchen. Some premises may not be able to achieve 5 stars without substantial investment (for example, if the kitchen is small or the layout is poor. These problems can usually be managed but it is not ideal so they won't get 5 stars).

## **20. Why don't you close down the premises with low scores?**

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Food officers can only close a food business if it represents a serious risk to health.

Some zero star premises may have fallen into this category.

Sometimes caterers will close voluntarily for a short period of time whilst the work is going ahead to put things right, but consumers would not necessarily be aware of the local authority's intervention. If businesses don't respond immediately closure is always an option.

## **21. Who do I contact if I want more information about the scheme?**

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You can phone and speak to anyone in the Food Safety Unit (Housing and Public Protection Service) on **020 8430 3831** or email: [food@newham.gov.uk](mailto:food@newham.gov.uk)