

Food Sampling in Rushcliffe

Why do we sample?

We carry out food sampling to check whether businesses are complying with the law. The sampling helps the officers check that food premises are meeting food safety and hygiene requirements and to ensure that food being produced and/or sold in the borough is safe to eat.

When do we sample?

We will carry out sampling:

- as part of routine inspections of food premises or related to concerns identified during inspections
- as a concern over a particular type of food
- as part of a wider survey organised by the Food Standards Agency or other regional organisations
- Following complaints (where sampling is considered necessary).
- Investigation of food contamination and food poisoning incidents.
- Imported food sampling
- Environmental sampling (swabbing) in connection with poor hygiene/sample results.
- Participation in EU co-ordinated control programmes.

Sampling is often used effectively to educate food businesses about the importance of good hygiene practice and training

What food is sampled?

Any food, including drink products, that is produced, handled or sold within the Rushcliffe Borough can be sampled.

In addition environmental samples such as environmental swabs of areas used for food preparation can be taken.

How are food samples taken?

Samples can be obtained in two ways. The first way is for an officer from Environmental Health to purchase the samples as a regular customer, unannounced to the premises.

Alternatively, the officer would identify themselves to the premises before taking the samples. This way allows the officer to obtain further details about the sample and its storage conditions, or collect samples that otherwise would be difficult to collect such as an environmental swab from a food preparation area.

Who tests the samples taken?

The samples are then submitted to a Public Health England (PHE) laboratory, for microbiological examination. Rushcliffe use the PHE laboratory based in York.

They determine if the food is safe to eat, or contains microorganisms at levels which are likely to be harmful to health. The PHE also carries out tests on water samples, surface swabs and items such as dish cloths.

What do the results mean?

Once the food samples have been tested the PHE provide the sampling officer with a report. This details the results of the microbiological testing and the analyst's expert opinion as to whether the food meets relevant safety and legal requirements.

They will usually be graded as follows.

Satisfactory: This test result indicates good microbiological quality

Borderline: This test result is neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory but indicates a higher than expected level of bacteria being found. The proprietor must review systems of work to ensure that safe food is produced.

Unsatisfactory: This indicates problems with food handling procedures. Remedial action is required to ensure that safe food is produced.

Unsatisfactory/Potentially Injurious to Health and/or Unfit for Human Consumption: Consumption of this food may cause illness. Immediate remedial action is required.

Food businesses will be notified of the results. Where necessary, the sampling officer will take appropriate action e.g. visit to the premises to discuss results, hygiene practices and improvements that can be made. In some cases repeated sampling may be carried out or formal enforcement action taken.

Sampling is an important tool for both Rushcliffe and businesses to check the safety of food and food handling practices!

Photos of Officers carrying out environmental swabbing



Photos of analysis in the Lab

