



Role of the Environmental Health Officer (EHO)

The role of the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) is to protect the health and safety of the public. They are appointed by local authorities throughout the UK. In the hospitality and catering industry, they are responsible for enforcing the laws linked to food safety. They inspect all businesses where food is prepared and served to members of the public, advise on safer ways of working and can act as enforcers if food safety laws are broken.

EHO inspections

The EHO can carry out an inspection of any hospitality and catering premise at any time during business hours – they do not need to make an appointment. During an inspection, the EHO will check to make sure that:

- the premises are clean
- equipment is safe to use
- pest control measures are in place
- waste is disposed properly
- all food handlers have had food hygiene and safety training
- all food is stored and cooked correctly
- all food has best-before and use-by dates
- there is a HACCP plan to control food hazards and risks.

The EHO is allowed to:

- take photographs of the premises
- take food samples for analysis
- check all record books, including fridge and freezer temperatures, cleaning schedules and staff training
- offer advice on improving food hygiene and safety in the business.

EHO and the law

If the EHO discovers problems with the food safety and hygiene in the premise, they are allowed by law to:

- remove any food that may be hazardous so it can't be sold
- tell the owners to improve hygiene and safety within a set time and then come back and re-inspect
- close the premises if there is a risk to health of the public
- give evidence in a court of law if the owners are prosecuted for breaking food hygiene and safety laws.

Complaints by the public

The EHO will immediately investigate any complaints of suspected food poisoning linked to a particular premise.

Hygiene ratings

When an inspection has been carried out, the EHO will give the business a food hygiene rating. The ratings are published on the Food Standards Agency website as well as on stickers displayed at the business. A rating of 5, or very good, represents the highest standard of food hygiene.