

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD
THE FOOD HYGIENE CAMPAIGN

1. As part of its strategy to reduce food poisoning by 20% by 2006, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) launched a Food Hygiene Campaign on 11 February.
2. Attached for the information of Members is an information note on the Food Hygiene Campaign. It outlines the rationale for the campaign, its aims, the key messages, campaign material / publicity activities and briefly explains how it fits in with the other work which is being undertaken to reduce food poisoning and how the campaign will be evaluated.
3. A more detailed outline of the work to be undertaken to implement the foodborne disease strategy is set out in the paper presented at the Food Standards Agency Board meeting held on 14 November 2001. A further up-date on this work will be presented to the Board at its meeting in May 2002.
4. Claire Boville (FSA Microbiological Safety Division) will present ACM/561 and respond to Members' questions.

Secretariat
March 2002

FOOD HYGIENE CAMPAIGN – POST LAUNCH INFORMATION NOTE

Summary

The Food Standards Agency launched its national Food Hygiene Campaign on 11 February 2002. The Campaign which will have a five year duration is aimed initially at the catering industry and will broaden out to include the general public later in the year. It has been developed to help improve standards of food hygiene in catering premises and in the domestic setting.

Background

1. The Campaign is one of many strands of work being carried out by the Agency as part of its strategy to reduce foodborne illness in the UK by 20% over a five year period. The strategy has three key strands:
 - Reducing microbial contamination of foods;
 - Promoting better food safety management and practice;
 - Promoting hygienic preparation of food commercially and in the home
2. As part of this strategy a broad range of activities is being undertaken, and measures are being put in place to help seek a reduction of contamination of foods during production and processing and for promoting good food hygiene practice in the kitchen, whether commercially or in the home. Some of the key activities include:
 - Reducing exposure to *Campylobacter* and other food poisoning pathogens from the food chain;
 - Reducing food poisoning pathogens in poultry, red meat, milk and dairy products and other food sectors;
 - Increasing HACCP implementation rates throughout the food chain
 - Increasing food hygiene awareness throughout the food chain and in the general public
 - Encouraging the development of mechanisms to analyse the causes of food safety breakdowns and identify corrective action
 - Promoting best practice in relation to the spreading of animal or other wastes on agricultural lands

The Food Hygiene Campaign

3. The Food Hygiene Campaign is the Agency's first major national Campaign. It has been developed to communicate simple hygiene messages to people who work in food businesses and to the public using a variety of media tools including TV, radio, press, PR, web, help line, posters and ad-hoc events.

4. The **campaign aims** to:

- Reduce levels of food poisoning
- Raise the profile of food hygiene issues
- Improve food hygiene awareness and standards
- Increase knowledge about food hygiene and foster a climate which encourages best practice

5. The campaign **key message** is that food poisoning can largely be avoided by taking 4 simple precautionary measures:

- Wash your hands regularly to keep them clean
- Cook food properly – food, especially meat, should be cooked thoroughly
- Chill food properly – perishable foods should be kept cold, and hot foods should be cooled as quickly as possible and then chilled
- Avoid cross-contamination – raw foods should be prevented from cross-contaminating ready-to-eat foods

And that a clean catering business leads to a healthy (i.e. profitable) business.

6. To raise hygiene awareness and standards among consumers as well as caterers we have developed a campaign with two phases. The first burst of activity is aimed at the **catering sector** and runs from 11 February until 14 April 2002, but may be extended depending on the campaign evaluation findings. The focus of this phase of the campaign has been influenced by the following factors:

- The recent Consumer Attitude Survey shows that more than 50% of consumers are concerned about hygiene standards in catering establishments, and that of these 60% stop using outlets they consider to have poor hygiene standards - issues the Agency cannot ignore.
- Data from PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre suggests that the majority of general food poisoning outbreaks are associated with catering businesses.
- The size of the catering industry and the number of meals it serves mean there is considerable potential for improved consumer protection by effective targeting of hygiene messages at this group. Representatives of the catering industry have been consulted throughout the development of our Campaign and are fully on board.
- The highest level of prosecutions taken across the UK in 2001 were against restaurants and that in 53% of cases they were prosecuted for food hygiene offences (*Report on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Activity in the UK, January 2002, FSA/0491/0102*).

The **second part of the Campaign** will be aimed at the consumer, and is expected to be rolled out later this year.

Campaign Materials

7. An information pack has been developed to engage as many caterers as possible. It provides basic food hygiene information and was sent by the Agency to over 250,000 catering businesses across the UK for which it has addresses and to all Environmental Health Departments in the UK. The information pack has been supplemented by more detailed information provided in the form of food safety publications and website material which have been specifically developed for the campaign.
8. The Campaign is supported by a Call Line and the web-site which are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A language link and call back facility for callers whose first language is not English is available in the following languages: Welsh, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. Campaign material has also been translated into these languages and can be accessed via the website.
9. Publicity and publication arrangements are set out in an Annex attached to this note.

Stakeholder Involvement

10. A series of seminars were held with EHOs at regional centres around the country and since November monthly briefing up-dates provided to all Environmental Heads of Service. This was supplemented by briefing updates for Consultants in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) and the local centres of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) who deal with training related matters. Material relating to the Campaign has also been made available to the Foodborne Disease Strategy Consultative Group, PHLS and the Chairman of the ACMSF. In addition stakeholder briefings involving the Chairman and Deputy Chair were held on 6 and 7 February at FSA offices in London

FHC Evaluation

11. The campaign has been developed to facilitate the changes in behaviour and improvements in hygiene standards that we are seeking. A series of measures have been put in place to evaluate the campaign's effectiveness in achieving these goals including both qualitative and quantitative research and telemarketing. Targets for recall, usage and take-up of messages are being finalised.
12. The Campaign was successfully launched in all parts of the UK. Stakeholder response to the Campaign has been very positive, although there have been a few complaints about the teaser mailing (a sick bag). Full evaluation of phase 1 of the Campaign will not be available until June.

13. Initial data relating to use of the call line during February indicates that:

- Over 2,400 calls were made to call centre, of which 75% were from the trade. Top channels for prompting people to use the call line were the mail shot direct to caterers on our database (32%), TV (29%), specialist press (13%).
- 56% of callers were to request copies of the Campaign Information Pack
- The majority of calls were received from catering managers or staff (79%), Food Hygiene trainers (3%), health promotion workers (1.5%) and consumers (1.5%)
- The main trade calls were from the following business types: B&B's (13%), catering outlets for specialist events (16%), catering outlets supplying retailers (13%), hotels (9%), takeaway/cafes (18%)
- Most calls were also from SMES (31% with 1-4 FT staff, 27% with 5 -20 FT staff, 18% with no FT staff) and from businesses with less than 6 months service (18%), 10-20 years (17%) and more 20 years (21%).
- Of the calls from the trade 3% were complaints about the Campaign.

14. Data on media coverage on the Campaign, web site hits and research to assess whether the Campaign has helped to change food hygiene attitudes, knowledge and behaviour is being compiled and will be available shortly.

Contact Points for further information:

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Annex

Publicity Arrangements for Phase 1 of the Campaign **(11 February – 14 April 2002)**

- **Media briefings**

The media were briefed on phase 1 of the Campaign on Monday 11 February. Advertising, web and the Campaign call line went live on Tuesday 12 February.

- **New FSA publications**

Three new publications on food hygiene matters and inspections were available when the Campaign went live. All publications are available in Welsh, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. They are also available in ethnic minority language PDF files on Food Hygiene which can be downloaded from the website.

- **Television**

This channel is being used to communicate mainly with the food handlers, but because the adverts will be shown at times which fit in with shift workers (mornings, afternoons and after 11pm) the adverts can also be expected to be seen by a large section of the general public. The first of the TV adverts were rolled out during February.

- **Radio**

Radio is being used to communicate with the ethnic audience. The English radio advertisements, as well as the Welsh and ethnic language versions (Bengali, Cantonese and Turkish) were released on 12 February to between 25-30 radio stations which cover the areas of the UK with high densities of ethnic communities.

- **National Press**

Adverts appeared in the national press from 13 February until week commencing 4 March.

- **Trade Activity**

Adverts in the trade press, a range of activities with cash and carries and outdoor posters are being used as a channel for communicating with the trade, small businesses and new businesses. A consistent creative approach is being developed for all press and poster advertising.