

Appendix 1

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL CITY & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES DEPARTMENT SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT 2025 - 2026

This service plan for food law enforcement describes the techniques and approaches to be taken by Belfast City Council during 2025 – 2026 to ensure food is safe and food is what it says it is. The Council will mix and balance the four common approaches to enforcement:

- Demand driven
- Education driven
- Inspection driven
- Intelligence driven

Food safety is a priority for the Council's regulatory service, with staff in Food Safety, Port Health and Business Support providing the majority of the service.

1 – Service Aims and Objectives

1.1 Aims and objectives

The key aims and objectives of the food service are to:

1. Protect consumers and ensure food produced, imported through or sold in Belfast is safe to eat and meets the necessary legal standards
2. Support the local economy, including the regeneration and investment in the City Centre by minimising the cost of food related illness and supporting individual businesses through clear advice, guidance and good regulation which are effective, risk based and proportionate.
3. Respond to all complaints or service requests within target response times and meet the needs of local people through effective delivery of quality and customer centric services.
4. Help consumers and businesses understand about safe food and help to ensure that consumers have the information they need to make informed choices.

1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans

The Belfast Agenda 2024 sets out the vision for Belfast to become a City which will drive a successful economy, a magnet for investment and a great place to live for everyone. It reflects the priorities of community planning partners and the public.

The Food Safety Service has an important contribution to make to the achievement of the city's priorities, particularly by supporting the economy and creating a safe city. The service also helps the Council in its efforts to stimulate the local economy, supporting other key strategies including the Bolder Vision for Belfast which aims to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city.

In promoting food safety the Food Safety Service also contributes to delivering the cross-government Food Strategy, published in June 2022, setting out a joint vision for the UK food system in 2030 and the Food Standards Agency's Strategy for 2022-2027.

The Service, by improving food safety in the City, plays an important role in promoting Belfast to visitors and tourists.

2. Background

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

The Council is the largest of the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland with almost 3000 employees. The Council has 60 Councillors over 10 election wards. It serves a population of 348,000 (with a daytime population of over 400,000). The area is predominantly urban in nature with the Council offices being located in the city centre. The city is the major centre for both employment and entertainment with two thirds of the population of Northern Ireland being within 50 km of the city.

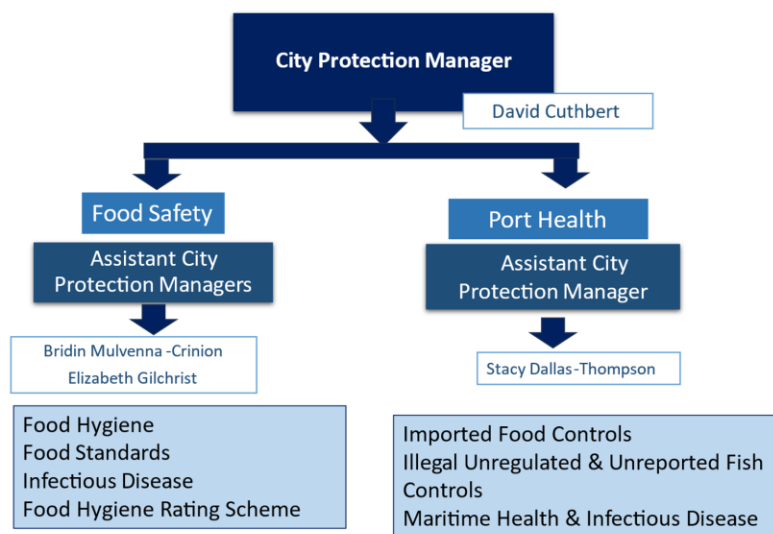
Within the city boundary is the Port of Belfast, a significant port within the United Kingdom. Around two thirds of Northern Ireland's seaborne trade, and a quarter of that for Ireland as a whole, is handled at the port.

2.2 Organisational Structure



City Services

Business Portfolio



City Services

2.2.1 Appointed laboratories for analysis

The Northern Ireland Public Health Laboratory based at Belfast City Hospital, provides specialist services in food microbiology and pathology. The Council has appointed Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd as Public Analysts to provide specialist analysis and advice on food composition, labelling and chemical and physical contaminants of food. The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute at Newforge Lane, Belfast, is employed for the identification of pests associated with food and food premises.

2.3 Scope of the Food Service

Belfast City Council carries out all functions relating to food safety and food standards matters, including the following:

- Registration and approval of food premises
- Inspection of food premises including manufacturing, catering and retail premises in accordance with a range of legislation and guidance, and taking into consideration the Council's Regulation and Enforcement Policy
- Implementation of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme including publication of food hygiene inspection results on the national website
- Dealing with potential food hazards including food alerts
- Inspection of foodstuffs and the formulation and implementation of sampling programmes for analysis in relation to composition and labelling and/or microbiological examination.

- Investigation of complaints relating to food and hygiene of food premises and investigation of cases of suspected food poisoning
- Providing advice and information on food safety matters
- The provision of specialist food safety education programmes, and signposting to other commercially available training services
- Food safety promotional activities
- Provision of practical food safety and port health training to environmental health students
- Investigation of incidents of statutorily notifiable food and water related illnesses on behalf of the Director of Public Health of the Public Health Agency
- Inspection of third country (non-EU) imported food of non-animal origin
- In partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs the operation of the Port of Belfast Border Inspection Post and the inspection of Products of Animal Origin.
- Enhanced screening of Maritime Declaration of Health documents for all vessels arriving in Belfast.
- Inspection of vessels (ships – including passenger ferries) arriving at the Port to ensure compliance with International and United Kingdom health and hygiene requirements including food safety and control of infectious diseases and to issue Ship Sanitation Certificates as required.
- Enforcement of legislation relating to import control of Organic products
- Enforcement of legislation to control illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in order to ensure food safety and protect marine ecosystems
- The issuing of attestations and export health certificates required for the export of consignments of non-animal foods and fish from NI to third countries

The service is currently provided by members of staff employed by Belfast City Council. All staff involved in the inspection of food and food premises meet the qualification and competency requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice and the FSA competency framework.

2.4 Demands on the Food Service

2.4.1. Food Safety Service

Belfast City Council has 3540 food businesses within the City.

A profile of premises classified in accordance with the FSA monitoring returns are given below.

TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT	NO. OF PREMISES
Primary Producers	16
Manufacturers & Packers	168
Importers/Exporters	41 (including shipping agents)
Distributors/Transporters	74
Retailers	730
Restaurant/Caterers	2511

11 manufacturing premises and 7 cold stores in the city are approved under EC Reg 853/2004.

The majority of food premises in the city are caterers or retailers reflecting the fact that Belfast is a major regional centre for shopping, entertainment, business and tourism. However, within the City there are a number of major manufacturers including 2 major bakeries, 2 flour mills, 7 cold stores, 5 meat preparations and other meat products premises, an animal fat rendering plant, and 5 fish processors approved under EC Regulations which manufacture and process food for distribution throughout Northern Ireland and Great Britain and export to the Republic of Ireland.

An External Temporary Storage Facility (ETSF formerly known as Enhanced Remote Transit Shed – ERTS) is a warehouse designated by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), where goods are temporarily stored pending clearance by HMRC, and prior to release into free circulation. ETSFs are periodically examined to ascertain if foods are stored.

As shown above there are a large number of distribution centres located in the city many of which distribute across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Seven of these premises specialise in ethnic foods of non-EU origin and are monitored to ensure imported food controls are being adhered to.

It is estimated that over 5% of Belfast's food businesses, across a range of business types, are owned by people whose first language is not English. Whilst this adds significantly to diversity and customer choice, it requires particular effort from the service to ensure equal access to advice and information, including the facility for the translation of documents and provision of interpreters for on-site visits and meetings.

The Council's food safety services are delivered from the Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast, usually between the hours of 0830 and 1700, Monday to Thursday, and between 0830 and 1630 on Fridays. The Port Health services are delivered from the Port Health Unit at Corry Place, Belfast Harbour Estate, delivering the import food control service on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis.

Out of hours work is undertaken as necessary, such as for businesses that only open late at night and/or at weekends and for additional Port health work such as ship inspections.

An Environmental Health Officer is on standby outside normal office hours, to deal with urgent notifications from the FSA and also infectious disease incidents at the discretion of the Public Health Agency (PHA). A Port Health Officer is on standby out of office hours to deal with issues arising in the Port. This service extends 24 hours per day for 365 days per year.

Historically there has been a continued increase in the number of large outdoor events which have significant catering facilities associated with them, such as farmers' and continental markets, festivals and concerts. These events sometimes require evening, weekend and Bank Holiday visits to monitor food hygiene standards. We will continue to strengthen relationships with promoters and organisers this year in order to ensure that adequate attention is given to planning for food safety. Significant events this year include the Christmas Continental Market, St Patricks Day, Feile, Orangefest, Mela, Belsonic and Vital music festivals, among others.

2.4.2. Port Health Service

The Port Health service operates a 24-hour service to deliver the additional responsibilities resulting from the UK's exit from the EU for imported food checks on some foods arriving from

UK. Windsor Framework arrangements agreed by the UK Government commenced from 1st October 2023, and the Council is working alongside our partners in DAERA, DEFRA and FSA to apply the relevant statutory requirements. In May 2025, the UK and EU Governments announced their intention to negotiate a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. Once agreed, this will reduce the need for some checks, however in the meantime, the UK and EU have committed to full implementation of the existing arrangements.

The Port Health team comprises 4 shift-based teams who operate a 24/7 service, in addition to a small team of 4 daytime officers deliver imported food controls for goods arriving from other 3rd countries, ship sanitation inspections, infectious disease duties, public health nuisances and some food hygiene work within the Port.

It is intended that a further review of the Port Health function will be undertaken once the operating and funding models for delivery of Windsor Framework obligations and any future SPS agreement are clarified and progressed in the coming years. An appropriate and sustainable longer term service model, including sustainable financing arrangements is required and we continue to advocate for this with key partners, including FSA, DAERA and DEFRA.

The Port Health Unit is currently located in office and inspection facilities at 5 Corry Place within the harbour estate. These facilities were approved in January 2010 by the Food Standards Agency on behalf of the European Union as a Designated Point of Entry into the EU for the carrying out of official controls on high-risk products of non-animal origin imported from outside the EU. The facility is also approved as a Border Inspection Post for the examination, sampling and clearance of third country imports of products of animal origin and is operated by the Council in conjunction with DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs). It is also approved as a First Point of Introduction for certain food contact materials. Whilst the Corry Place facility was sufficient for the Council's service requirements up until December 2020, following introduction of the Windsor Framework, capacity limitations at the facility mean that delivery of increased inspection workloads will require additional purpose-built inspection accommodation in the future. DEFRA are currently constructing a new purpose-built inspection facility at Belfast Port which is expected to be completed and operational in summer 2025.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

The Council has prepared a Regulation and Enforcement Policy which was formally adopted by the Council in December 2011. The purpose of this policy is to secure an efficient and effective approach to all regulatory and enforcement activities carried out by Belfast City Council. The policy is consistent with the principles set out in the Government's Better Regulation Agenda and with the principles of the Enforcement Concordat and it is also intended to improve compliance with legislation while minimising the burden on businesses, individuals, organisations and the Council. The policy sets out the principles which will enable the Service to ensure consistent and open enforcement and is considered when determining appropriate enforcement action. Management controls are in place to ensure that all decisions on enforcement are consistent with this policy.

In preparing the Policy, the Council has considered the Regulator's Compliance Code and the "Statement of Intent" between the Local Better Regulation Office, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, and District Councils.

The Regulation and Enforcement Policy is available on the Council's website and can be accessed at www.belfastcity.gov.uk. Businesses are advised of the existence of the policy

together with how it can be obtained on all standard letters and reports left following the inspection of premises.

3. Service Delivery

3.1 Food Premises Interventions

The Council plans and delivers a risk-based Food Premises Intervention Programme based on the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice. The frequency and type of intervention planned aims to concentrate resources on the worst offenders and higher risk businesses whilst at the same time reducing the burden on the better businesses.

There are 1253 premises due a food hygiene intervention plus a backlog of 543 from previous years. At the start of April 2025 there were 279 premises due a food standards intervention plus a backlog of 42 from 2024-2025.

3.2 Food Hygiene Intervention Strategy

As per the Food Law Code of Practice the following premises have been prioritised for inspection in 2025-2026:

Risk category	Inspection planned
A	4
B	130
C	534
D	421
E	116
Unrated at 1 st April 2025	48
Backlog C	1
Backlog D	371
Backlog E	171

3.3 Food Standards Intervention Strategy

As per the Food law code of practice the following premises have been prioritised for inspection at the start of April 2025 in 2025-2026:

Risk category	Inspection planned
A	22
B	116
C	93
Unrated at 1 st April 2025	48
Backlog B	42

Food Standards Delivery Model

On 22 May the food service upgraded their MIS database to incorporate the new FSA Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM). The introduction of FSDM has amended the food standards risk categories as well as the food standards inspection frequencies. As of 22 May 2025 there are now 724 premises due a food standards intervention plus 446 now identified as outstanding a food standards intervention. This gives a total of 1170 premises due a FSDM intervention compared to a total of 321 premises due standards intervention at start of April 2025. Due to the significant increase in premises now due a standards intervention it is unlikely that the food service will be able to complete all interventions within 2025-2026 and therefore it is anticipated that there will be a further backlog of food standards interventions at the end of the year. Interventions will be carried out on a risk based and intelligence led approach based on available resources as per FSA guidelines.

Total FSDM interventions due 2025-2026 including backlog:

Risk Category	Inspection planned
PI1	1
PI2	62
PI3	8
MR1	53
MR2	589
MR3	199
LR1	64
LR2	12
LR3	0

3.4 Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES)

Normally those food businesses which present the lowest risk to public health will be subject to an alternative approach to inspection. This AES consists of a Food Safety Hygiene and Standards Self-Assessment Questionnaire which is posted out to the businesses along with tailored advice and information. Completed questionnaires are reviewed to monitor compliance and confirm that there have been no significant changes to the business or a change in ownership. Premises that do not provide the necessary information or indicate a significant change to their activities may be subject to an inspection.

The introduction of FSDM has reduced the number of premises eligible for food standards AES.

3.5 Revisits

In line with the statutory Food Law Code of Practice all food businesses that fail to comply with significant statutory requirements shall be subject to appropriate enforcement action and revisit to verify compliance. As a minimum they will receive a written warning letter. It is anticipated that approximately 200 revisits following food hygiene inspections shall be completed and approximately 120 revisits following food standards inspections.

3.6 Revisits for FHRS rerating

Under the requirements of the Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 additional revisits will be carried out on request to 're-rate' an establishment, subject to criteria being met and a fee of £150 being paid. Approximately 70 rerating inspections are anticipated for 2025-2026.

3.7 Food Complaints

The Council will investigate food complaints received from members of the public or food businesses in line with the service's response times for urgent and non-urgent service requests. In determining the appropriate course of action, the Council will take into consideration any reports received from the Home, Originating or Primary Authorities and the food business identified as the cause of the complaint and will have regard to the Council's Regulatory and Enforcement Policy. For 2025/26 the Council estimates that it will receive approximately 560 complaints relating to food or the hygiene of food premises.

3.8 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme

The Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme is not a legal requirement in NI. We will take cognisance of any relevant advice given by the Home or Primary Authority.

While the Council does not enter into formal written home authority partnerships with any business, it has established a close liaison with the majority of businesses, including the Education Authority, for whom it informally acts as a Home Authority on behalf of the other 11 District Councils. Our remit extends to providing advice, guidance and the follow up of non-compliances in relation to policy or procedures identified by our own officers or by officers from the other District Councils. Advice is also provided during programmed inspections and other visits.

On request the Council will investigate all matters referred to it by other local authorities and where appropriate will provide a written response to requests for information. For 2025/2026 the Council estimates that it will receive over 200 requests for information from other Local Authorities.

The Council liaise closely with the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and carry out work on their behalf under a number of MOU's and SLA's. This includes work relating to egg, beef and poultry meat labelling and traceability and the issuing of export health certificates and attestations for trade to non-EC countries.

3.9 Advice to Business

The Council is committed to the improvement of standards in food businesses and advice to businesses is an important dimension of that strategy. Advice is given through site-visits, provision of compliance tools such as the Butchers' HACCP Pack, and the Safe Catering (HACCP) Pack, the Council's website, dealing with enquiries and requests for advice, through correspondence, meetings with trade groups, distribution of printed materials, and educational and online training programmes. The service will continue to support all businesses with the implementation and maintenance of Food Safety Management Systems based on HACCP principles, in conjunction with a graduated approach to enforcement.

In order to promote a positive image and promote the reputation of the Council the unit publishes articles in City matters and interlink.

It is estimated that 500 new businesses will receive advice in the year.

Our system of recording service requests, response times and actions help plan, improve and monitor this part of the service. It is estimated that in addition to complaints relating to food or premises a further 1200 requests for service will be received this year.

The Port Health Service is an active member of the local shipping community, having extensive business contacts with the Maritime Coastguard Agency, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, N.I. importers, customs, clearance agents, hauliers, shipping companies, ferry operators and stevedores. Advice is given on Port Health related matters, including food safety, to the shipping community on a regular basis and when requested help and advice is given to local importers and members of the general public on the importation of third country foodstuffs including products of animal origin. The Port Health service has also engaged together with DAERA, FSA and other Councils with trade and businesses to provide advice and assistance in relation to additional requirements following Brexit, and the service continues to receive requests for information and advice in this regard.

3.10 Food Sampling

The Food Safety Unit has prepared a Food Sampling Policy outlining its general approach to chemical and microbiological sampling as well its approach in specific situations. This approach recognises the important role of sampling in protecting public health and product quality, detecting fraudulent activities and unhygienic practices and to ensure that food standards are maintained.

Food sampling programmes are produced annually for both chemical and microbiological samples, after consultation with the Public Analyst and the Food Examiner. The programme has regard to national, regional and local co-ordinated sampling surveys.

Several areas of intelligence are used to identify priority sampling and premises. Such intelligence may include Incident reports sent to FSA, Food Alerts, FSA Annual Incident report, RASFFs, Food standards complaints; UK Food Surveillance System annual reports, FSA Imported Food Annual Reports & Food Fraud Database bulletins.

In 2025/2026 we aim to sample 300 for chemical analysis and 1000 products for microbiological examination.

3.11 Port Health – Imported food inspections and sampling

The Unit receives up to 15 manifests for containerised shipping cargoes per day and also for up to 77 roll on-roll off ferry sailing arrivals at Belfast Port each week. From these manifests Council officers identify vessels and their cargoes. Cargo manifests are scrutinised, and all third country imported foodstuffs are identified to ensure compliance with import processes and food safety legislation.

Documentary, identity and physical checks, including sampling, are carried out on all third country products of animal origin in accordance with the EC veterinary checks regime. Following introduction of the NI Protocol and Windsor Framework, this has extended to relevant food products arriving from GB (red lane).

EU legislation requires that specified import conditions will apply to certain imported consignments of third country products of non-animal origin. These products all require a documentary check, and a proportion will be subject to identity and physical checks (including

sampling) at a level laid down in the legislation. Products not subject to the specific legislation will be risk assessed and appropriate checks, including sampling, carried out to ensure compliance with relevant imported food legislation. When possible, the Unit carries out imported food sampling programmes devised by the Food Standards Agency or the E.U.

A sampling plan for this year is based on trade volumes and commodities. Samples taken will include mandatory samples required by imported food legislation as well as surveillance samples guided by the UK's National Monitoring Plan. We anticipate the numbers of samples to be taken from imported food consignments in 2025/2026 to be in the region of:

- Microbiological 45
- Chemical 250

The International Health Regulations (2005) require that all ships must be inspected at an authorised port such as Belfast and where necessary a Ship Sanitation Certificate issued for the prevention and control of public health risks. The unit also responds to Ship Sanitation inspection requests from ships that operate out of Larne Port. Certificates are valid for a period of 6 months. As the number of inspections are dependent upon requests from Ships Agents, the volume of inspections vary each year. In 2024/2025 we carried out 103 ship sanitation inspections, which is an increase from the previous year in which 85 ship sanitation inspections were completed.

Food hygiene and food standards inspections of Passenger Ferries registered with and operating out of Belfast are undertaken. Some of these ferries are large food businesses producing up to 7500 meals per day. We will inspect between 2 and 4 ferries in 2025-2026.

The unit also regularly inspect External Temporary Storage Facilities (formerly known as ERTS), fishing vessels operating out of Belfast and other vessels in dry dock for repair. Food Hygiene and Standards inspections are also carried out at George Best City Airport as well as ensuring the safety of water delivered to aircraft.

3.12 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related and other Infectious Disease

The Council will attempt to investigate all notifications of infectious disease received from the Public Health Agency (PHA), within one working day of receipt. Specifically trained and competent environmental health officers within the Food Safety and Port Health Unit are authorised by the PHA for the investigation of notifications.

Investigation of outbreaks of food related infectious disease is conducted in liaison with the Consultant in Public Health Medicine of the PHA, and in accordance with the existing Outbreak Control Plans and protocols.

The Council estimates that it will receive 150 notifications of food related infectious disease during the year, with an additional 100 alleged food poisoning complaints from the public.

The Port Health Division will respond immediately it is notified of any complaint or incident of food poisoning or food related infectious disease occurring on board a ship or premises within the Port of Belfast or relating to a passenger using Belfast City Airport.

3.13 Food Safety Incidents

The FSA receives and issues information about foods within the supply chain which have been found to be unsafe or do not meet legal requirements. These include notifications about Product Withdrawals, Product Recalls and Allergy Alerts. Where necessary, the FSA will issue direction to councils to take specific action to protect consumers.

All notifications that require action are recorded on our database with details of the actions taken recorded against the relevant premises.

The Council estimates that it will receive 100 notifications from the FSA during the year that will require investigation and further action to protect public safety.

3.14 Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food (RASFF).

With EU Exit, the UK has lost access to certain EU information systems including full access to the RASFF. As a result, the Food Standards Agency has developed the Risk Likelihood Dashboard to create a platform to enable more efficient and effective collation and sharing of relevant data for stakeholders involved in protecting public health in relation to imported food and feed. The Risk Likelihood Dashboard provides intelligence from consolidated data sources including historic TRACES data, RASFF Portal, refusals from other 3rd countries. Local Authorities can still create RASFF notifications but have view only of RASFF notifications. Belfast City Council have access to the Risk Likelihood Dashboard and use it routinely to identify potential risks with imported foods and target surveillance accordingly.

If a consignment/product is to be rejected or destroyed due to a direct or indirect risk to human health, an incident report and rapid alert notification must be completed and forwarded to the FSA Food Incident Branch after consultation with FSA Northern Ireland for onward notification to the European Commission. It is likely that 5-10 notifications will be generated in 2025/2026.

3.15 Liaisons with Other Organisations

The Food Safety and Port Health Unit has extensive liaison in place with a wide range of other organisations:

- Food Standards Agency NI (FSANI) through enforcement stakeholder meetings, the Northern Ireland Food Managers Groups (NIFMG), and numerous other formal and informal meetings.
- The Public Health Agency (MOU exists) in relation to the investigation of sporadic cases and outbreaks of food related infectious disease.
- NIFMG reporting to Environmental Health NI
- Association of Port Health Authorities. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Port Health) is a member Port Health Liaison Network.
- The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to the operation of the Border Inspection Post.
- Merchant Navy Welfare Board (NI)
- HM Customs and Excise nationally and locally in relation to imported food controls.
- Planning Service to review related applications.
- Department for Infrastructure Water Quality Liaison Group.
- Safe Food through projects and working groups on the Island of Ireland
- The Northern Ireland Area Medical Advisory Committee - Infectious Disease Sub-Group.
- Belfast Resilience-Harbour Working Group

- Maritime Coastguard Agency
- Belfast Harbour Commissioners
- The Education Authority for NI School Meals Service
- NI Takeaway association

Close liaison is maintained with the Council's Building Control Service, Pest Control and Waste Management Service, as well as with the other regulatory units.

3.16 Promotion of Food Safety

The Council carries out educational and promotional activities as an integral part of its food safety duties. In addition to this, specialist promotional activities are carried by the Food Safety Unit.

Educational and promotional activities planned for 2025/2026 include the following:

Promotional Activity	Estimated Resources
Maintain and promote and manage the Food Hygiene Rating scheme	30 hours
To provide an Imported Food/Port Health training day and recruitment promotional sessions for year 3 and 4 students on Environmental Health and other food related courses.	50 hours
To publish at least one article in City Matters	5 hours
To develop relevant advice / information for businesses to assist them to comply with enforcement / legislative requirements	30 hours
Promote EH as a profession within local schools	10 hours

4.0 Resources

4.1 Financial allocation

Details of the budget for the delivery of the Council's food service in 2025-2026 are within the City and Neighbourhood Service's revenue estimates and were approved by Council in February 2025.

4.2 Staffing allocation

4.2.1 Food Safety and Port Health Unit

The full staffing compliment in the Food Safety & Port Health Unit has the equivalent of 19 full-time staff engaged in food safety work. All officers hold specific qualifications and are assessed for competencies as required by the Code of Practice and are authorised for duties in accordance with the Council's documented procedure. (See table below).

Position	Hours (Full or Part Time)	Authorisation	FTE
Food Safety			
City Protection Manager	FT	None	0.1
Assistant City Protection Manager	FT	Full including Approvals	0.7
Assistant City Protection Manager	FT	Full including Approvals	0.7
Senior EHO	PT	Full including Approvals	0.8
Senior EHO	PT	Full including Approvals	0.8
Senior EHO	FT	Full including Approvals	1
Senior EHO	FT	Full including Approvals	1
Senior EHO	FT	Full including Approvals	1
EHO *	FT	Full including Coldstore Approvals	1.0
EHO	FT	Full	1.0
EHO	FT	Full	1.0
EHO	FT	Full	1.0
EHO	FT	Full	1.0
EHO	FT	Partial	1.0
EHO	PT	Full	0.5
EHO	FT	Partial	1.0
EHO	FT	Vacant (career break)	1.0
Technical Officer	PT	Full	0.8
Technical Officer	FT	Full	1.0
Technical Officer	FT	Full	1.0
Technical Officer	FT	Full	1.0
Senior EHO	1	Vacant (seconded to Port Health)	1
		Total FTE	19.4
		Total Allocated FTE hours**	28091.20
		Total Occupied FTE (minus vacancies & long term absence) (16.9 FTE)	24471.20

*1 EHO has been off long term for over 3 months in 25-26

**FTE = 200 working days @ 7.24 hr per working day = 1448 hours per FTE

Port Health/Imported food			
City Protection Manager	FT	None	0.1
Assistant City Protection Manager PORT (daytime)	FT	Full with Approvals inc Port Health	0.7
Senior EHO PORT (daytime)	FT	Full inc Port Health	0.7
Senior EHO PORT (daytime)	FT	Full inc Port Health	1.0
EHO PORT (daytime)	FT	Full with approvals inc Port Health	1.0
Team Leader EHOs x4 (shift based)	FT	Port health	4.0
EHOs x10 (shift based)	FT	Port Health – 2 posts vacant	10.0

Technical Support Officer x8 (shift based)	FT	1 post vacant Limited to regulatory support activities	8.0
Port Health Support Assistants (shift based)	FT	2 posts vacant	8.0

Current short-term vacancies that cannot be covered by temporary contracts are on occasion covered by agency staff.

The Port Health shift-based staff (including Team Leader Environmental Health Officers, Environmental Health Officers, Technical Support Officers and Port Health Support Assistants) are employed on a temporary basis for Port Health to carry out required official controls on goods from GB following temporary funding from FSA.

*Full Authorisation: authorised by Belfast City Council to enforce the provisions of The Food Safety Order (Northern Ireland) 1991 and any Orders or Regulations made thereunder or relating to the foregoing or having effect by virtue of the European Communities Act 1972.

4.2.1a Estimate of Resource (Time) Requirements

Food Hygiene/Food Standards

Activity	No Tasks	Time/task	Total Hours
Cat A inspections Hygiene	4	5.5	22
Cat B inspections Hygiene	130	5	650
Cat C inspections Hygiene including backlog	535	4	2140
Cat D inspections Hygiene including backlog	792	4	3168
Cat E inspections Hygiene including backlog	187	1.5	280.5
AES Category E Hygiene	100	0.5	50
Unrated and unplanned events (Hygiene)	500	5	2500
PI1 1 month	1	5	5
PI2 3 months	62	5	310
PI3 6 months	8	5	40
MR1 12 months	53	4	212
MR2 24 months	589	4	2356
MR3 36 months	199	2.5	497.5
LR1 48 months	64	2	128
LR2 60 months	12	1	12
AES Standards	50	0.5	25
Unrated and unplanned events (Standards)	500	5	2500
Revisits	320	1	320
Advisory and other visits	75	1	75
Micro sampling	1000	1	1000

Chemical sampling	300	2	600
Food Complaints	560	7	3920
ID investigations	150	2.5	300
Food Alerts For action	100	2	200
Prosecutions	5	74	370
Other Service Requests	800	7	5600
Staff Development	19	30	570
Working groups and initiatives with other external partners and stakeholders including NIFMG and Sub-Groups, FSA, APHA	-	-	200
Management of service and staff	-	-	2,500
Staff meetings	-	-	240
Projects e.g., web development, procedures, campaigns	-	-	50
Mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme	-	-	30
		Total activity hours	30871

There are 28091.20 FTE Hours allocated to the service however due to current vacancies & long-term absence the actual FTE hours available are 24471.20. The anticipated activity hours are 30871. This identifies that even if the total allocated FTE was available, the service would not have sufficient FTE resources to deliver the food safety service. The occupied FTE available is not capable of meeting all necessary demands on the service for 2025-2026. This also shows the significant impact of the changes to inspection frequencies of the food standards delivery model. Food Safety service will continue to prioritise activities to maximise the most efficient and effective service delivery. It should also be noted that in-year changes to risk ratings may result in multiple inspections for same premises in one year. Such changes are not always possible to predict.

Port Health

Activity	No Tasks	Time/task	Total Hours
Inspect all shipping and ferry Manifests	4300	0.5	2150
To screen Maritime Declaration of health documentation to monitor compliance with International Health Regulations and infectious disease	2000	0.5	1000
To inspect vessels for the issue of Ship Sanitation Certificates.	140	6.00	840
Documentary & phys. checks, including sampling, of foodstuffs imported from outside EU.	* (Estimated 40,000)	* (varies depending on task)	

*This estimate reflects documentary, identity and physical checks on products of animal origin (fish and fish products), high risk food not of animal origin, plastic kitchenware, organic products and IUU Catch Certificates undertaken in 2024/25 and is likely to be subject to further development and resource planning in 2025/26 as statutory requirements, systems and processes are further developed/updated, and businesses adjust to the new arrangements. The duration of tasks and degree of officer time varies according to commodity types and is under regular review with partners including FSA and DAERA as part of the annual resource allocation arrangements that are currently in place.

4.3 Staff Development Plan

The development needs of the Food Safety and Port Health Unit are identified as part of the Council's business planning process, competency assessment and through personal development planning. Relevant local training is identified by the Northern Ireland Food Managers Group and subgroups, the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Public Health Agency. Training needs are also reviewed during the year to take into account staff changes and other issues identified. In-house briefing sessions are delivered regularly as part of monthly Unit meetings.

Competency requirements required by the Food Law Code of Practice are re assessed for all Officers annually and all deficiencies addressed in year.

Food Safety Training Plan 2025-2026

The priority training areas agreed between NIFMG and FSA and shall be provided as low-cost training. The key areas have been identified as follows:

- FHRS National Consistency Exercise
- Evidence Gathering
- Interview Skills and Tasking & Making Statements
- Root Cause Analysis
- Changes to international incident reporting & RASFF since EU Exit
- Food Standards Delivery Model
- Food Crime Intelligence
- Approvals
- Public analyst training on food sampling
- Nutrition and Health Claims on Food Supplements
- Microbiology sampling for food officers

There is also access to online courses provided by the FSA, Safefood, as well as refresher training via ABC Food Law. Port Health staff also avail of training on imported food controls via the Better Training for Safer Food programme.

5.0 Quality Assessment

The following arrangements are in place to ensure the quality of services provided by the Food Safety and Port Health Unit:

5.1 Internal Monitoring Arrangements

Procedures have been drawn up and implemented to monitor the quality of work of officers assigned to the Food Safety & Port Health Unit which cover all aspects of the Standard and help ensure procedures are fully implemented. Current procedures include:

- Regular individual meetings with lead officers
- Use of procedure notes
- Use of standardised inspection report forms, letters and phrases
- Review of post-inspection paperwork
- Monitoring of inspections, visits and actions by documentation checks and accompanied visits
- Post complaint investigation monitoring
- Approved premises file review and monitoring
- Internal auditing of adherence to procedures
- Monthly meetings of the Food Safety Teams
- Seminars / exercises and training as required

5.2 External monitoring and verification

The Border Inspection Post is audited annually by DAERA, and the food service is periodically subject to both FSA and EU audits.

The inland food safety team are subject to audit internally and externally.

6.0 Review

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

Performance against the unit's business plan is reviewed periodically. This includes a quarterly review by the Unit Management Team. Summary performance information on the previous years' service plan will be reported with each Food Service Delivery Plan. The report shall also identify any variance together with areas of improvement.

Performance report on Food Service Delivery Plan for 2023-2024

1. Departmental Plan Targets

Performance Indicator	Target 2024-2025	Achieved 2024-2025
% Premises deemed broadly compliant	95%	97%

2. Other relevant performance Information update for 23/24

Performance Indicator	Target 2024/25	Achieved % 2024/25	Explanation of variance and improvements for 2024/25
% Of the food hygiene programme	100%	73%	Priority inspections due in 2024/25 were completed, and progress made in

complete (including backlog from previous year)			addressing backlog, variance due to large number of premises in backlog remaining due from previous years. Continuous prioritisation of inspections and working to reduce backlog from Covid pandemic. Almost 80% of backlog was completed.
% of the food standards programme complete	100%	91%	Continuing to prioritise higher risk standards inspections. With 95% of backlog completed
% Of food complaints resolved within 8 weeks	75%	96%	Target exceeded
Micro Samples Taken	1000	95% (950 samples)	Year on Year increase since Covid Pandemic; using available resources
Chemical Samples Taken	300	133% (399 samples)	Target Exceeded
% Of urgent food complaints responded to within target (1 working day)	100%	97%	slight decrease due to additional pressures on service
To investigate notifications of gastrointestinal illness within 24 hours and report to PHA within 24 hours.	90% returned within target	100%	Exceeded Target
	90% contacted within target	100%	Exceeded Target
% Of manifests examined for imported food stuffs	100%	100%	Target Met
Number of imported food consignments examined	This target was reported in the Food Service Delivery Plan in previous years, however volumes since 2021/22 have fluctuated significantly and are expected to change further as the Windsor Framework is implemented (final phase from 1st July 2025). We will work with FSA and partners to identify suitable targets as the systems and processes, and trade volumes become established, and the operations at newly constructed inspection facilities bed in after summer 2025.		