

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 16

meeting date: 7 JUNE 2018
title: FOOD SAFETY - ALLERGENS IN FOOD
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of the work being undertaken by the food safety team in implementing the Food Information Regulations 2014.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley, by supporting food businesses and food manufacturers with advice and technical guidance.
- Corporate Priorities - To help make people's lives safer and healthier, by striving to ensure that food businesses are safe and compliant for residents,
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In the UK, it is estimated that 1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children have a food allergy. This equates to around 2 million people living in the UK with a food Allergy. This figure does not include those with food intolerances. This means the actual number of affected people living with food allergy and/or food intolerance is considerably more.

2.2 An allergic reaction can be produced by a tiny amount of a food ingredient that a person is sensitive to (for example a teaspoon of milk powder, a fragment of peanut or just one or two sesame seeds).

2.3 Symptoms of an allergic reaction can range from mild symptoms such as itching around the mouth and rashes; and can progress to more severe symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, wheezing and on occasion anaphylaxis (shock). **Around ten people in the UK die from allergic reactions to food every year.**

2.4 There is no cure for food allergy. The only way to manage the condition is to avoid food that makes the person ill. This can be achieved by checking ingredients details on labels of prepacked foods and being provided allergen ingredients information for non-prepacked foods. Therefore, it is very important that food businesses provide clear and accurate information about allergenic ingredients in their products

2.5 Food Information Regulations 2014 enable the enforcement in the U.K. of the requirements of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011,

which introduced rules for food businesses relating to the labelling and provision of allergen information.

- 2.6 Whereas most of the enforcement responsibility for this legislation lies with Trading Standards at Lancashire County Council, a portion of the regulations falls to this authority to enforce, namely where the legislation applies to any food business operator (FBO) supplying food to the public or caterers.
- 2.7 In a physical retail environment this is likely to apply to foods which are sold loose from a delicatessen counter (e.g. cold meats, cheeses, quiches, pies and dips), fresh pizza, salad bars, bread sold in bakery shops, meat from butchers, pick and mix confectionery (including individually wrapped sweets and chocolates), etc.
- 2.8 In a catering environment this is likely to apply to foods which are not sold prepacked, for example food from a takeaway, or meals served in a canteen or a restaurant.
- 2.9 It is a requirement that these businesses give information on allergens in food to their customers. This information can be provided in writing and/or orally.

Allergens are:

- cereals containing gluten, such as wheat (including spelt and khorasan wheat), rye, barley and oats
- crustaceans, for example prawns, crabs, lobster, crayfish
- eggs
- fish
- peanuts
- soybeans
- milk (including lactose)
- nuts (ie almonds, hazelnuts, pistachio nuts, pecan nuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts and macadamia or Queensland nuts)
- celery (including celeriac)
- mustard
- sesame seeds
- sulphur dioxide/sulphites, if they are more than 10 milligrams per kilogram or 10 milligrams per litre in the finished product
- lupin, including lupin seeds and flour
- molluscs, for example mussels, oysters, snails and squid

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Following the introduction of this legislation, the enforcement of these requirements has been incorporated into the topics covered by this sections Environmental Health Officers and technician during their scheduled food safety visits.
- 3.2 All officers have received additional training. This has increased the scope and complexity of food safety inspections which have traditionally concentrated on the physical, chemical and biological risks to food.
- 3.3 As a consequence there has been a notable increase in officer time spent at each premises. There has also been a slight increase in investigations of food premises following complaints from the public about their poor control of allergens.

3.4 Following the introduction of the legislation there has been an improvement in the awareness and management of allergens, and it is anticipated that the time allocated to the enforcement of the allergen requirements should diminish over time.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There are no immediate implications but Committee is asked to recognise the ongoing demands on the service.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – There may be legal implications should there be fatalities or serious injury linked an allergen incident. This authority has a statutory duty to ensure that food supplied in its district is safe to consume and that food businesses allergen information is supplied to customers.
- Political – There may be political implications should there be fatalities or serious injury linked to the consumption of food containing undeclared allergens.
- Reputation – There may be implications for the authorities reputation should there be fatalities or serious injury linked to the consumption of food containing undeclared allergens.
- Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Acknowledge the increase resources needed to regulate the control of allergens.

5.2 Support the continued focus on the food sector.

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