Food Standards Scotland

For safe food and healthy eating

Guidance for Local Authorities on Service Planning

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At Food Standards Scotland We have a unique role, working independently of Ministers and industry to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data.

Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain which can impact on public health – aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and promote healthy eating

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1. Background

Service plans play an important part in ensuring that national priorities and standards are effectively delivered at a local level. They provide a structured framework for Local Authorities (LAs) to plan, manage, and review their services, while maintaining alignment with corporate and financial planning processes.

Service planning enables LAs to follow the principles of good regulation, focus on key delivery priorities and outcomes, and identify issues that may cross service boundaries. In addition, it provides a consistent basis for managing performance, making comparisons, and communicating service delivery to stakeholders, including businesses and consumers.

Article 11(1) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 requires LAs to make available to the public information concerning the organisation and performance of official controls. Publication of service plans may assist LAs in complying with this requirement and certain obligations under Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

This guidance provides LAs with a service plan template designed to ensure that all areas of official controls are addressed, whilst also allowing scope for locally defined objectives. The template supports LAs in clearly setting out:

- information about the services they provide;
- the means by which they will provide those services;
- the means by which they will meet any relevant performance targets or performance standards;
- a review of performance, in order to address any variance from meeting the requirements of the service plan and identification of areas for improvement.
- This guidance document does not constitute legal advice and should not be taken as an authoritative statement or interpretation of the law, as only the courts have this power.

2. Format of service plan

To support consistency, transparency, and effective oversight, it is recommended that LAs present information on official control activities in a common format.

A service plan template is included in Annex 1, which identifies recommended chapter headings and outlines the type of information that may be included within each section. However, this guidance is not intended to be prescriptive in terms of presentation. LAs retain flexibility to adapt their service plans to reflect local needs, priorities, and corporate requirements, and may include additional material where appropriate.

It is recognised that many LAs already operate established service planning processes and may wish to retain existing corporate formats or templates. In such cases, LAs should ensure that all information relating to official food controls is clearly identifiable within their documentation, regardless of format.

Where services are delivered through shared arrangements between LAs, it is important that the service plan information remains clearly identifiable for each authority and for the service as delivered.

3. Development of service plans

LAs should take account of the Government's Better Regulation agenda and the Scottish Regulators' Strategic Code of Practice when planning and delivering their services.

LAs should ensure that their service plans for official controls include the following key elements:

- service aims and objectives – including how these align with national priorities and statutory duties.
- background – including the profile of the local area and food businesses.
- service delivery – including planned intervention programmes and enforcement approaches
- resources – including staffing, competencies, and financial resources.
- quality assessment – including internal monitoring and performance management arrangements.
- review – including arrangements for evaluating performance and driving continuous improvement

When developing a service plan, authorities should clearly specify the period covered and outline the arrangements in place for regular review and updating to ensure the plan remains relevant, effective, and responsive to change.

4. Local Governance Approval

LAs can choose whether service plans need to be approved at a local governance level. To support transparency and accountability, and to demonstrate alignment with the LAs corporate plan, food service plans and performance reviews should be approved at the appropriate level set by the LA. That may be by members, a member forum, or a suitably delegated senior officer. Records can be maintained to confirm that service plans and annual reviews have been approved appropriately and in a timely way.

5. ANNEX 1: Service Planning Format guidance

1. Service Aims and Objectives	Details
1.1 Aims and Objectives	A statement of the service's aims and objectives.
1.2 Links to corporate objectives and plans	This section should identify how the service plan(s) fit into the LAs corporate planning process and how it plays its part in meeting the LAs objectives. This should include meeting any relevant national indicator. It should also identify any cross linkage with other plans that have been adopted by the LA.

2. Background	Details
2.1 Profile of the Local Authority	This section should include details of the population, size and nature of the LA.
2.2 Organisational Structure	A simple chart showing the council services and committee structure which shows where the food service fits in. The structure should identify the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Manager(s), Lead Food Officers and the Authorised Officer(s) with specialist responsibility for Food Law, and the provision made for specialist services provided, for example, by public analysts, food examiners and agricultural analysts.
2.3 Scope of the Food Service	A brief statement that sets out the scope of the responsibilities and service provided. This should identify where areas of the food service are provided by another organisation e.g. contractors. Any other services that are delivered alongside the food service, e.g. health and safety inspections, can also be described here.
2.4 Demands on Food Service	This section should include a brief outline of the food business establishments profile, reflecting the type of establishments of particular note within the LAs area; any particular local requirements associated with specialist or complex processes, the service delivery points used and times at which the service is available from these points, including any out of hours provision. This section also enables the LA to describe any external factors that may impact on their service. For

	example: the percentage of food establishments that are manufacturing high risk foods, imported or exported food responsibilities, or seasonal activities.
2.5 Enforcement Policy	A brief reference statement to the LAs documented enforcement policy, including date when last reviewed/approved.

3. Service Delivery	**Details**
3.1 Interventions at Food Business Establishment	A statement in relation to the LAs policy on interventions and how they will be selected in individual cases, including details of the programme of interventions for food business establishments to be undertaken. This should include the establishments profile, the numbers of interventions programmed, an estimation of the number of revisits that will be made, and an estimation of resources required e.g. staffing. The plan should also detail any targeted intervention activity that the LA intends to carry out including any extra resources this may require; this could include specific project work. The LA should identify any priorities relating to nationally or locally driven outcomes, such as compliance with new legislation or improved compliance with existing legislation and other central government initiatives. The section should include, where appropriate, the arrangements the LA has made to ensure that they have access to adequate appropriate expertise to enable a competent inspection of any specialised processes identified in Section 2.4 Demands on Food Service above.

3.2 Food Complaints	A statement in relation to the LAs policy regarding the investigation of food complaints including an estimation based on previous years' trends of the likely demand on the service and an estimation of the resources required.
3.3 Home Authority, Originating Authority	A statement in relation to the LAs policy on the Home and/or Originating Authority Principle including an estimation of the resources required in relation to meeting and advising those businesses for whom it acts and responding to enquiries from other enforcing authorities.
3.4 Advice to Business	A statement in relation to the LAs policy regarding advice to business (as part of the overall interventions policy) including an estimation of the number of contacts from business and the resources necessary to provide the service. This section should include, where appropriate, any input the LA has to business partnerships or forums.
3.5 Food Sampling	A statement in relation to the LAs sampling policy including the basis of the sampling programme and an estimate of the numbers of samples that will be taken from establishments, as a result of imported food responsibilities and control arrangements or submitted in relation to complaints, and any relevant resource allocation including staffing. It should also detail the arrangements that the LA has made for the analysis and/or examination of the samples.
3.6 Control and Investigation of foodborne Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease	A statement in relation to the LAs policy on the investigation of food poisoning notifications and outbreak control including an estimation based on previous years' trends of likely demand on the service and an estimation of the resources required.
3.7 Food Law Incidents	A statement in relation to the LAs policy on handling food alerts to confirm that it complies with the relevant Codes of Practice; an estimation of the likely demand on the service and an estimation of the resources required.

3.8 Liaison with Other Organisations	The LA should set out the arrangements it has made to ensure that enforcement action taken in its area is consistent with those of neighbouring LAs. This section should include: • any liaison the LA has with other Authorities; • any arrangements with other official control bodies or other government departments to co-ordinate official controls (where applicable); • any representation on government working groups or committees; • liaison with professional body working groups; • liaison and involvement/participation with food liaison groups and similar or related bodies; • any formal liaison with voluntary groups, agencies and other public sector bodies e.g. Health Authorities; • any formalised liaison with other services within the LA e.g. review of building control applications; • any commitment to local/regional groups.
3.9 Food Law promotional work, and other non-Official Controls interventions	A statement of any promotional work, or information/intelligence gathering work, which the LA intends to carry out in the year and the measures it will use to evaluate its effectiveness, with an estimate of the resource allocation including staffing to undertake this work.
3.10 Food Crime and Fraudulent activities	A statement in relation to the LAs policy on food crime and fraud to confirm that it complies with the relevant Codes of Practice; an estimation of the likely demand on the service and an estimation of the resources required.

4. Finance and Staffing	Details
4.1 Financial Allocation	This section should set out the overall level of expenditure involved in providing the service and examine the trend of growth or reduction in real terms. Detail shall be provided in terms of the non-fixed costs including staffing, travel and subsistence, equipment including investment in IT, sampling budgets and the financial provision made by the LA for any legal action necessary as part of their enforcement function.
4.2 Staffing Allocation	A statement of the number of FTE posts required to deliver the service, and the number of staff working on delivery of official controls and related matters. This should distinguish qualified staff from support staff. These figures should be expressed in terms of levels of competency and authorisation levels with reference to the appropriate Codes of Practice, including support staff.
4.3 Staff Development Plan	A statement in relation to any relevant ongoing training, including that to be provided in-house and externally for authorised and trainee officers in the year ahead.

5. Monitoring	Details
5.1 Quality assessment and internal monitoring	A statement specifying the measures to be taken to assess the quality of the LAs service including any relevant internal or external independent monitoring arrangements developed by the LA to assess performance against the code.

6. Review	Details
6.1 Review against the Service Plan	The LA should set out the process, for reviewing and reporting delivery of the service plan. This should include timescales, structures and information on the previous year's performance against the service plan and any specified performance targets, performance standards and targeted outcomes.
6.2 Areas of Improvement	The LA should set out plans for any relevant improvement or service development identified as necessary by the review or the quality assessment.