



An Evaluation of a Pilot on the Use of MenuCal within Small and Medium Scottish Food Businesses

Main report

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KANTAR TNS

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Please note that **Annex 1** and **Appendices A-C** are included in a separate document to this main report.

Executive Summary

MenuCal is a free-to-use, web-based calorie calculator and allergen management tool. In March 2016, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) purchased a MenuCal license for Scotland, with the aim of supporting small and medium food business operators (FBOs) in the out of home environment to provide calorie and allergen information on menus. MenuCal can be accessed on the FSS website: <https://menucal.fss.scot>.

FSS, in partnership with the Scottish Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) Diet, Nutrition and Health Working Group, piloted MenuCal in 22 FBOs across 6 local authorities (LAs).

The aims of the pilot were:

- To test the usability of MenuCal
- To identify if MenuCal supports FBOs to provide allergen and calorie labelling
- To investigate any impact of allergen and calorie labelling on the FBOs and their consumers
- To assess delivery of MenuCal and associated resources by Local Authorities (LAs).

Of 22 FBOs recruited to the pilot, 14 completed a telephone interview administered by Kantar TNS, and LA feedback forms were received for all 22 of the FBOs. Eleven of 14 FBOs that completed the interview had registered an account on MenuCal, with 10 of these FBOs inputting recipes.

The results of the pilot indicated that MenuCal was more likely to be used by FBOs for calorie calculations than allergens. Nine FBOs used MenuCal to calculate calories and 7 of these FBOs went on to display this calorie information on their menus. Over the course of the pilot, 8 FBOs made modifications to their menu items to reduce the calorie content, although not all of these FBOs had used MenuCal.

With regards to allergens, 6 FBOs used MenuCal to identify and manage allergens, however only one of these FBOs stated that they had used MenuCal to display this information on their menus.

MenuCal was found to support some FBOs to identify allergens and calculate calories. Some FBOs were motivated to modify menu items to reduce the calorie content. Twelve of the 14 FBOs that completed the telephone interview said they would recommend MenuCal for allergen and calorie labelling. The findings of the pilot identified a number of areas which FSS can take forward to improve the usability of the MenuCal tool.

Responses from both the LAs and FBOs indicated that the delivery of MenuCal to the FBOs via the food enforcement officers within LAs was effective, although the pilot has highlighted that for future delivery, available LA resource would need to be considered.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Scottish Diet

Excess calorie consumption and poor diet contributes to the development of obesity and serious non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer and other health related problems.¹

It has been estimated that food and drink consumed in the out of home (OOH) environment can provide as much as 25% of an adult's energy intake in the UK² and that food and drink choices are skewed towards less healthy options when eating OOH. The term OOH here refers to any food or drink purchased and immediately consumed outside the home in addition to any takeaways or home delivered food.²

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) recommend the provision of information including calorie labelling on menus, in OOH FBOs, as key to supporting consumers to make healthier choices. This may also help drive reformulation of food and drink provided in the OOH environment. FSS recognise that the provision of calorie information, and reformulation, is harder for smaller OOH FBOs.³ FSS have purchased MenuCal with the aim of supporting small and medium FBO operators (FBO) in the OOH environment to provide calorie and allergen information to consumers.

1.2 What is MenuCal?

MenuCal is a free to use web-based calorie calculator and allergen management tool. The tool was developed and validated by the Food Safety Authority Ireland to support FBOs with calorie labelling on menus.⁴ In March 2016, FSS purchased a MenuCal licence for Scotland. MenuCal allows for each user to have their own secure account where all of their recipes, store cupboard ingredients and menus can be stored. There are a number of resources ('Useful Tools') on the website to help users.

The MenuCal licence allows FSS to make amendments to the MenuCal tool to tailor it to the needs of Scottish FBOs. Visit <https://menucal.fss.scot> for detailed information on the functions of MenuCal.

¹ Diet and Nutrition: Proposals for Setting the Direction for the Scottish Diet. Food Standards Scotland, 2016: http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/Diet_and_Nutrition_Proposals_for_setting_the_direction_for_the_Scottish_Diet_1.pdf

² An Assessment of the Out of Home Food and Drink Landscape in Scotland. Food Standards Scotland, 2016: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/an-assessment-of-the-out-of-home-food-and-drink-landscape-in-scotland>

³ Diet and Nutrition: Proposals for Setting the Direction for the Scottish Diet One Year On. Food Standards Scotland, 2017: http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/Board_meeting_-_2017_March_08_-_Diet_and_Nutrition_one_year_on_0.pdf

⁴ Calories on Menus in Ireland – Report on a National Consultation. Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2012: <http://www.fsai.ie/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=11419>

1.3 Current Allergen and Calorie Labelling Regulations

There are 14 substances or products which cause allergies or intolerances which must be identified when present in food.⁵ Since December 2014 it has been mandatory for all providers of **non-prepacked** food (e.g. food served in restaurants, cafes etc) to be able to inform consumers about the presence of allergens in their food.⁶

Providing energy information for **non-prepacked** foods is voluntary, but if this information is provided then it must be displayed in the correct way and must not be misleading to consumers.⁷ However, most **prepacked** foods must provide back of pack nutrition information, which includes calories.⁸

1.4 MenuCal Pilot

FSS, in partnership with the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) Diet, Nutrition and Health Working Group, piloted MenuCal in Scottish FBOs. The pilot included a range of FBOs but was not designed to be a representative sample.

The aims of the pilot were:

- To test the usability of MenuCal e.g. logging on, entering foods, creating recipes
- To identify if the MenuCal tool supports Scottish FBOs to provide allergen and calorie labelling on menus
- To investigate any impact of allergen and calorie labelling on the FBOs (and their consumers) e.g. has it prompted the FBOs to reformulate some of their menu items or prompted any changes in demand or purchasing
- To assess the delivery of MenuCal and associated resources by the Local Authority Environmental Health Departments.

In August 2017, FSS commissioned Kantar TNS, an independent research agency, to carry out an evaluation of the MenuCal pilot by:

- Collecting pilot data from LAs
- Collecting data from the FBOs via a questionnaire
- Analysing the LA and FBO data collected
- Preparing a final evaluation of findings.

This report details the results of the pilot.

⁵ Eggs, Milk, Fish, Crustaceans, Molluscs, Peanuts, Tree nuts, Sesame seeds, Cereals containing gluten, Soya, Celery and Celeriac, Mustard, Lupin and Sulphur dioxide and sulphites.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 for the European Parliament and of the Council. EU FIC, 2014: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02011R1169-20140219&qid=1503402325255&from=EN>

⁷ Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Article 7. EU FIC, 2014: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169&from=EN>

⁸ Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 for the European Parliament and of the Council. EU FIC, 2014: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02011R1169-20140219&qid=1503402325255&from=EN>

2. Method and Sample

2.1 Pilot

Six Local Authorities participated in the pilot through contact with SFELC Diet, Nutrition & Health Working Group. The pilot was initiated in November 2016 and ran until June 2017. The LAs involved in the pilot each recruited 3 to 4 FBOs. The only recruitment criterion was that each FBO had to have achieved a **Pass** rating in their most recent Food Hygiene Inspection.

The role of the LAs during the pilot was to deliver the supporting resources to the FBO, monitor the progress of the FBO in their use of MenuCal, and provide support as required. It was recommended that the LAs visit each FBO 3 times over the course of the pilot.

Resources for the pilot are grouped into 3 types:

- 'Useful tools' present on the MenuCal website
- FSS-developed resources to support FBOs in the pilot
- Forms for LAs to assess participation in the pilot.

FSS developed a number of resources for the pilot:

- A business information letter, explaining why this work was being carried out and what was expected of their involvement in the pilot
- The MenuCal User Guide, pictorial and step-by-step instructions on how to use the MenuCal tool
- Draft Business Guidance on Calorie Labelling on Menus, outlining the principles and practices to be followed when adding calorie labelling to menus.

Each LA completed a 'Business Visit Form' (Appendix A) on the first visit and added further comments at each subsequent visit to record how the FBOs progressed throughout the pilot. A 'Local Authority Feedback Form' (Appendix B) was also used by the LAs to record their own experience of working with the FBOs.

2.2 Evaluation

The evaluation consisted of two phases of research:

1. Collecting and analysing feedback from the LAs that delivered the pilot
2. Conducting telephone interviews with FBOs that took part in the pilot.

Each LA returned their completed forms for each FBO ('Business Visit Form' and 'Local Authority Feedback Form'). To assess the FBO experience of using MenuCal, a 30 minute telephone questionnaire was developed and administered by Kantar TNS (Appendix C). Level of participation was also assessed by looking at registration and use of MenuCal.

2.3 Analysis

Kantar TNS analysed the 'Business Visit Form' and a 'Local Authority Feedback Form' returned by the LAs for each business. The research team read through each form and met to discuss emerging findings and establish an analysis framework, taking into account the original objectives of the research.

The telephone survey questionnaire comprised mainly closed and rating-scale questions. Responses to these questions provides the main insight on usage of, and response to, MenuCal. Open questions were used to provide more detailed follow-up information. The unprompted responses at these questions were grouped into common themes, issues and reasons.

2.4 Limitations

- The small survey sample cannot be considered representative of 'out of home' FBOs in Scotland
- The small sample size reduced the scope for sub-analysis, for example by type of FBO
- Some FBOs that were recruited to the pilot had existing relationships with the LAs, this may therefore have influenced the opinions expressed
- There may be some issues with internal consistency of the telephone interview.

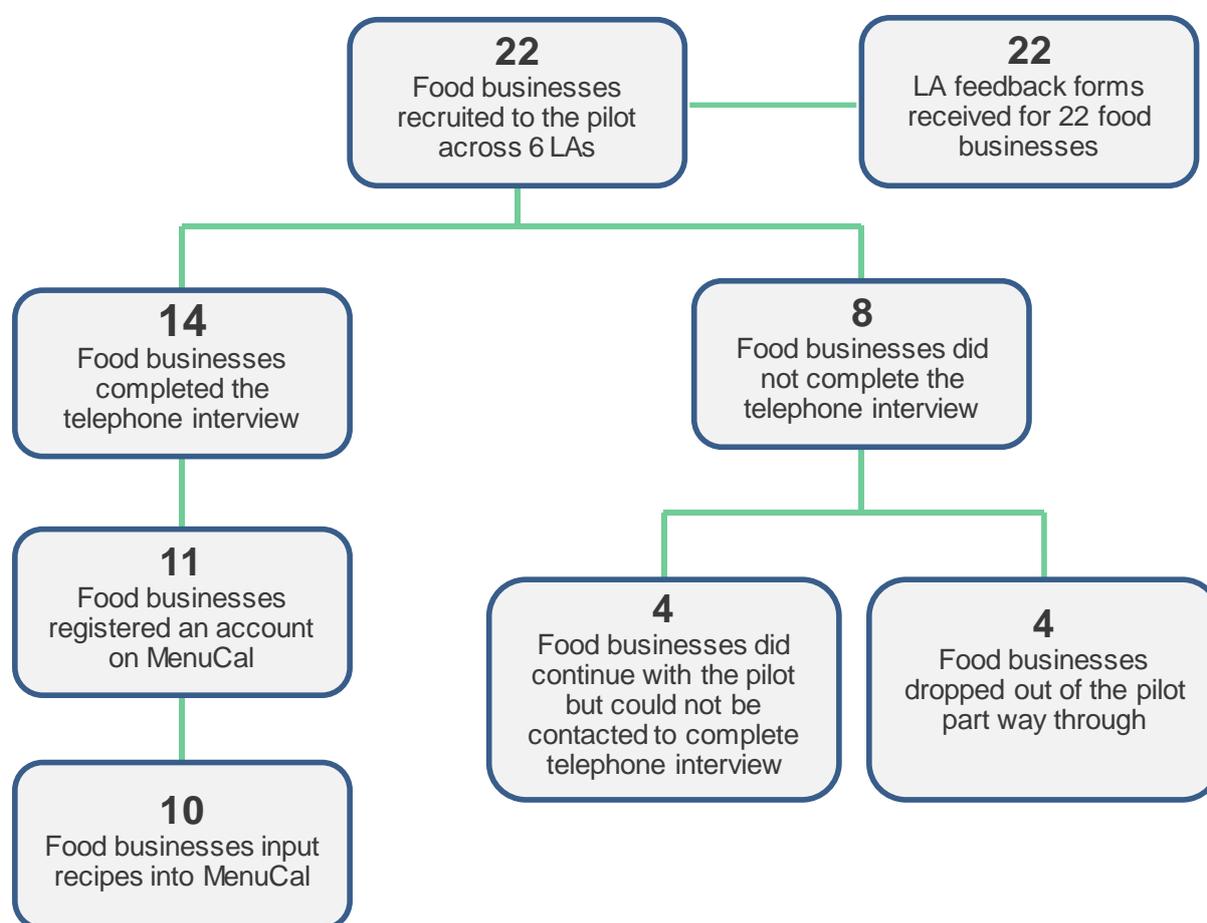
3. Main findings

This section of the report focuses on the main findings of the pilot; more detailed figures can be found in Annex 1. The findings from telephone interviews with 14 FBOs are supported by information gathered by LA Food Enforcement Officers (FEO) for all 22 FBOs recruited to the pilot study.

3.1 Sample

The diagram below provides an overview of participation in the pilot and usage of MenuCal.

Figure 3.1: Summary of MenuCal participation



Of 22 FBOs recruited to take part in the pilot, 14 were interviewed from 30th August – 15th September 2017; a response rate of 64%.⁹

⁹ Of seven LAs who are members of the SFELC Diet, Nutrition and Health Working Group, six LAs participated in the pilot; the remaining LA could not participate due to an internal resourcing issue.

The FBO results of this report are based on the **14 FBOs** that completed a telephone interview with Kantar TNS. The results from the LA feedback forms are based on all **22 FBOs** recruited to the pilot.

The FBO categorisation was reported in the LA feedback forms and was based on Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System Guidance.¹⁰ The FBO types that took part in the pilot, and completed telephone interviews, are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 FBO by type and level of participation in MenuCal Pilot

FBO Type	Total number of FBOs	
	Recruited to pilot	Completed telephone interview
Café	5	4
Café/Restaurant	2	1
Café/Takeaway	2	2
Restaurant	6	4
Restaurant/Takeaway	3	1
Takeaway	1	0
Other	3	2
Total	22	14

All FBOs interviewed were small or medium FBOs employing fewer than 50 employees, with 6 of the 14 FBOs interviewed employing fewer than 10 employees. Nearly all FBOs had one to two outlets, with one FBO in the pilot having 7 outlets.

3.2 Pilot Study Dropout

The LA forms for eight FBOs that did not take part in the telephone interviews revealed that four FBOs dropped out of the pilot part-way through:

- One due to a change of management
- One because the FBO was delayed pending a Food Hygiene Inspection
- Two found the process and tool too time-consuming.

The remaining 4 FBOs that did not participate in the telephone interviews did continue with the pilot, but could not be contacted or a suitable time to conduct the questionnaire could not be arranged.

¹⁰ Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS), FSA 2017.
<https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems>

3.3 Usability

Unless stated otherwise, responses in this section are based on telephone interviews by Kantar TNS with **14 FBOs**.

All 11 FBOs that registered an account on MenuCal rated the registration process as easy and not requiring any improvement. Reasons cited by the three FBOs that did not register included lack of time, or lack of staff awareness and understanding of how to use the tool. Almost all 11 FBOs stated that the tool was easy to use. Twelve of the 14 FBOs that completed the telephone interview said that they would recommend MenuCal to other FBOs for allergen and calorie labelling.

Training Videos

A total of 9 FBOs interviewed said they watched the training videos available on the website and all 9 rated the videos positively. The main reasons given for not watching the training videos were a lack of time and that the website was self-explanatory. The training videos within the MenuCal tool can be accessed without registering an account.

My Recipes

Of the 11 FBOs that registered a MenuCal account, 10 input recipes into the MenuCal tool, using the My Recipes function. One further FBO stated they did not have the time and they did not want to show calories on their menu. The FBOs reported having between 10 and 100 menu items and input between 1 and 120 recipes to MenuCal.

The number of recipes each of these FBOs input, along with the number of items available on their menu, is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: How many recipes did you input into MenuCal?
Base: All those who input recipes into MenuCal (10)

FBO	Number of menu items	Number of recipes input to MenuCal
Café	100	30
Café	40	20
Café	30	49
Café	60	120
Café/Takeaway	50	20
Café/Restaurant	100	20
Restaurant	15	1
Restaurant/Takeaway	10	10
Other	13	40
Other	20	5

The results indicated that some FBOs input more recipes into the tool than available on their menu; this was due to frequently changing menus, offering variations of menu items or different portion sizes.

Store Cupboard and My Menus

The Store Cupboard function on MenuCal allows users to input ingredients that cannot be found in the database or to enter information on the specific branded ingredients that they use; My Menus function allows users to create menu items by combining recipes and store cupboard items. Nine FBOs reported using the Store Cupboard function and 7 reported using My Menus.

Useful Tools

There are a number of resources available within the 'Useful Tools' section of the MenuCal tool. The Allergens Poster and Recipe Sheet (9 reported users each) were the most popular resources. Six FBOs reported using the calorie poster. Several reasons were given for not displaying the poster including the lack of visual appeal of the poster, lack of space to display and not wanting to deter customers from choosing certain dishes.

Suggested Improvements to MenuCal Functions

'My Store Cupboard' was the main area highlighted for improvement but additional comments suggested that the problems mainly arose from the ingredients database. There were problems experienced when inputting recipes if the FBOs had not added the relevant ingredients to My Store Cupboard.

Eight FBOs that selected at least one area for improvement or specified an 'other' area were probed for further details: one FBO stated that they disliked the tips given by the chef, and another suggested that it would be easier if it allowed them to import their own supplier list and to merge this with the list already provided. Additionally, a small number of FBOs indicated that being able to group recipes would have made the 'My Recipes' function more user friendly.

Pilot Resources

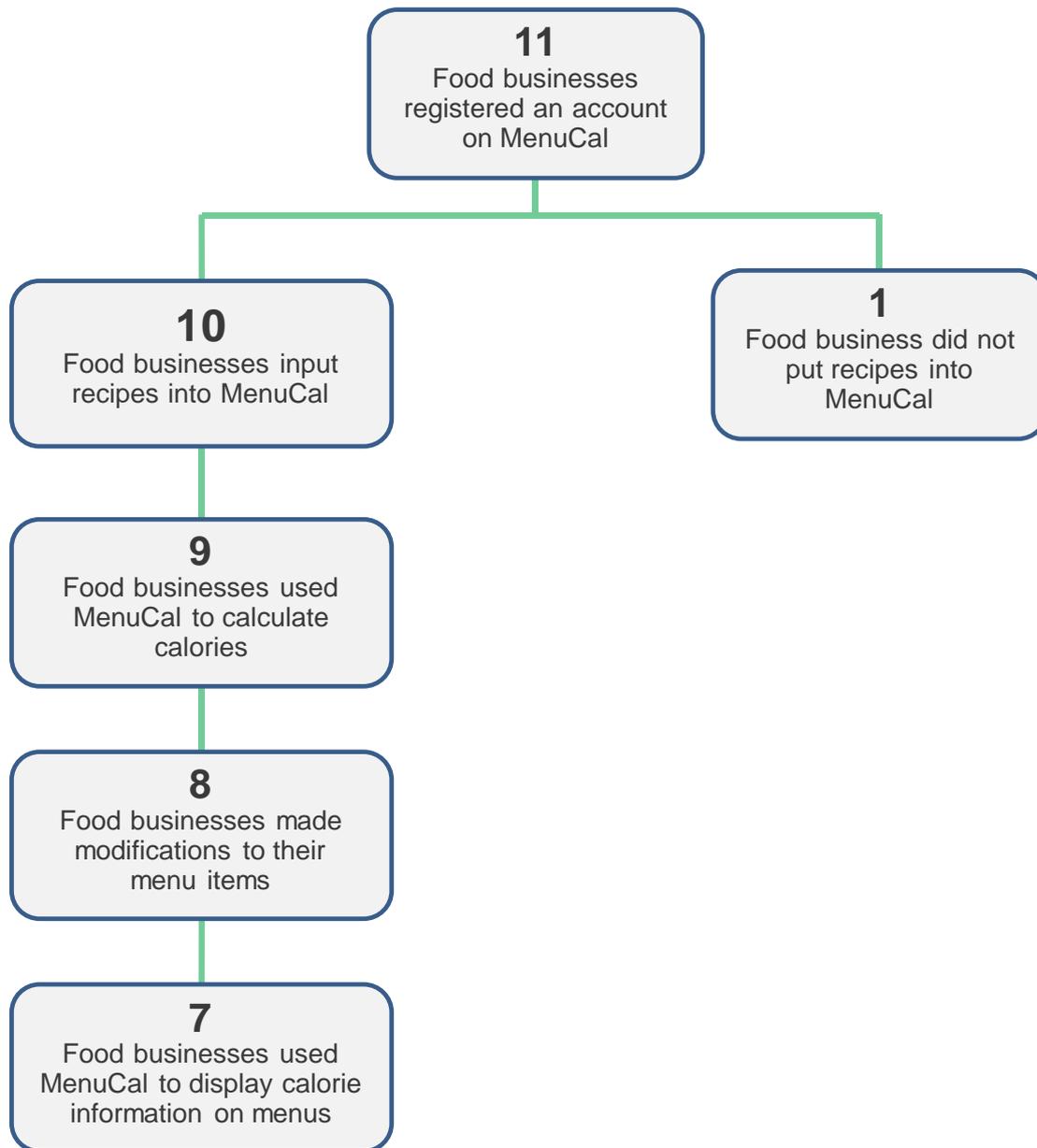
Regarding the FSS-developed resources to support the pilot, 12 FBOs indicated that they received the pilot information letter and 12 FBOs also indicated that they received the 'MenuCal User Guide' from their FEO. The results suggest that the User Guide was a useful resource, however not all the FBOs that received the guide had used it. Nine FBOs used the User Guide to help provide calorie labelling and 2 FBOs used it to help provide allergen labelling.

Ten FBOs reported receiving the 'Draft Business Guidance on Voluntary Calorie labelling in Scotland' and 8 FBOs used it and found it useful.

3.4 MenuCal and Calories

The diagram below summarises usage made of MenuCal for calculating and displaying calories on menus.

Figure 3.2: Summary of MenuCal usage for calculating and displaying calories



Six FBOs stated that prior to the pilot, they were interested in calorie labelling, but none reported actually displaying calorie labelling on menus prior to the pilot (although one restaurant/takeaway business did report already displaying this information on their website).

The use of MenuCal to calculate calories was high, with 9 of the 10 FBOs that input recipes using it for this purpose. One FBO that input recipes but did not calculate calories indicated that this was because they found an easier and more accurate method using their own spreadsheet.

Concerns raised by the FBOs with calculating calories included:

- **Varying accompaniments**

One FBO highlighted that sometimes a meal is accompanied with boiled potatoes, whilst at other times it is accompanied with fried potatoes making it difficult to specify the exact number of calories per dish

- **Varying portion control**

With each chef or server providing different sized portions, this can make it difficult to calculate the number of calories per portion or per dish

- **Customers creating their own bespoke menu items**

Customers sometimes 'build their own' salad or choose their own for filling for a baked potato, for example.

These results highlight that non-standardised portion sizes and chefs cooking the same dish differently can make it difficult for the FBOs to accurately calculate the number of calories. However, one FBO that offered a variety of salad and baked potato fillings managed to counteract this issue by purchasing new spoons to help standardise portions.

Of the 7 FBOs that have started to display calorie information on menus since taking part in the pilot, 4 display it for all menu items and 3 display it on selected menu items. FBOs were not just selecting high calorie or lower calorie items on which to display calories, but a variety of menu items, including home baking, soups, toasties, tray bakes and cake slices.¹¹

FBOs that calculated calories using MenuCal but did not display this information cited 3 different reasons for this, namely:

- too busy
- won't be displaying calorie information until there are other reasons for up-dating the menu
- considered itself to be a 'higher-end' restaurant that is not attracting customers "watching for calories", and is also concerned that customers might be put off from selecting certain dishes.

However, some of these FBOs indicated that they intended to display calorie information in the future.

¹¹ 'Higher calorie' and 'lower calorie' items were not defined in the pilot. The FBOs provided this assessment based on their own judgement.

3.5 Impact of Calorie Labelling?

All FBOs were asked whether they felt responsible for reducing the calories of their menu items and 9 FBOs felt very or quite responsible. However, when FBOs were asked whether their customers had expressed interest in the calorie content of menu items being reduced, 13 out of 14 stated that they had not had any demand from customers for either calories to be lowered on existing menu items or for different menu items with lower calories to be provided.

Eight out of the 14 FBOs stated that they had made some changes to their menu or menu items since the start of the pilot. Six of these FBOs had input their recipes into MenuCal. The modifications by the remaining 2 FBOs were not attributed to using MenuCal but were made during the pilot.

The extent of modification to menu items by each of the 8 FBOs that made changes is summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.3: The number of menu items that have been modified on all / selected menu items by type of FBO
Base: All FBOs that made changes (8)

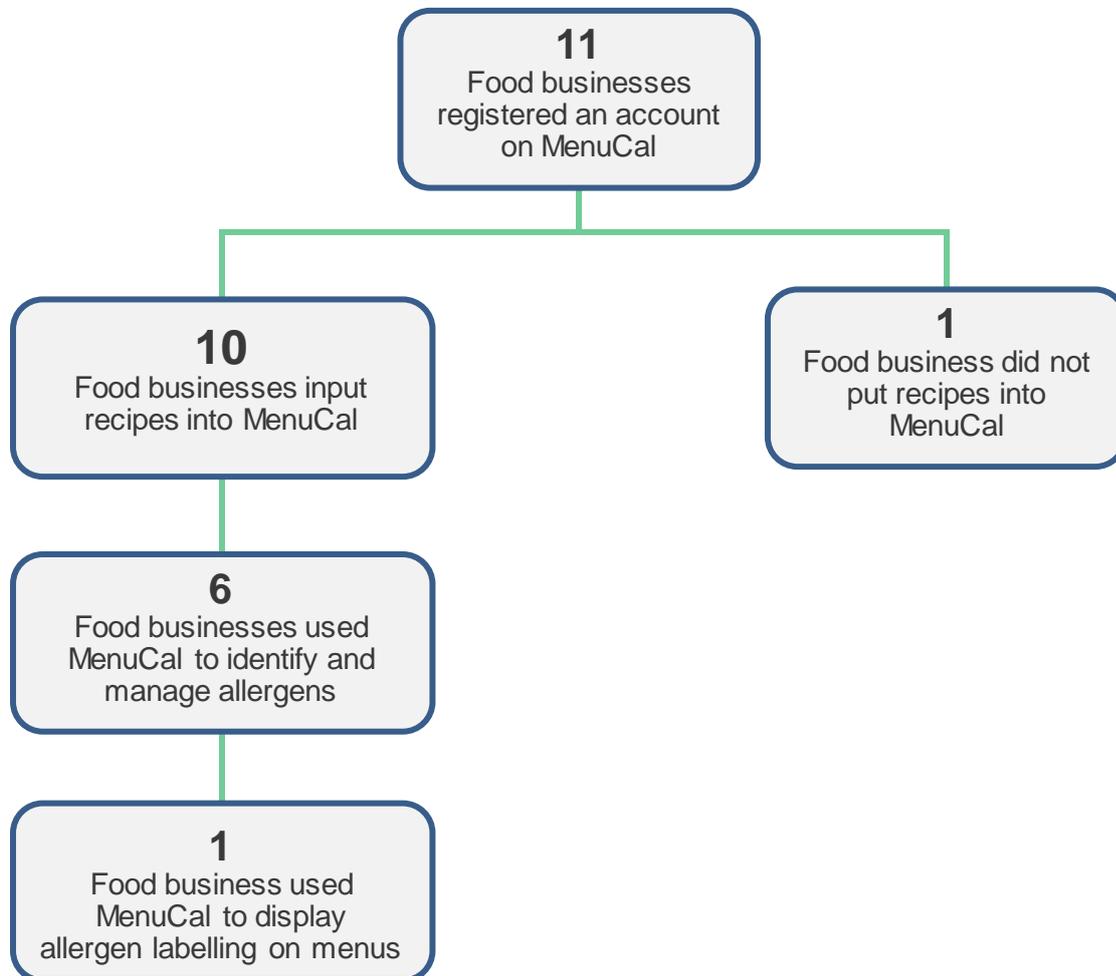
	Made half portions available	Modified existing menu items to reduce the calories	Developed new menu items that were lower in calories	Removed menu items high in calories	Reduced portion sizes
Café	✓				
Café	✓	✓	✓		✓
Café	✓	✓	✓		✓
Café/takeaway	✓				
Restaurant	✓			✓	
Restaurant					✓
Other		✓	✓		
Other		✓	✓	✓	

All of the 8 FBOs that made changes to the menu modified their main meals, whereas only one modified their drinks items. Four FBOs also modified desserts and 4 modified 'lunch items'. Around a third of FBOs (5 out of 14) said that they were planning to make further modifications to their menu items to reduce the calorie content.

3.6 MenuCal and Allergens

The diagram below summarises usage made of MenuCal for identifying, managing and displaying allergens.

Figure 3.3: Summary of MenuCal usage for identifying and managing allergens



Six FBOs registered on MenuCal indicated that they had used MenuCal to identify and manage allergens. The main reason for not using MenuCal to identify allergens on menus was because the FBOs already had a system for recording allergen information. Often this information is provided by suppliers.

Following the pilot, 6 FBOs stated that they were displaying allergen information. Three FBOs had displayed this information previously, one had used MenuCal to identify and display this information and 2 started to display it during the pilot but they had not used MenuCal.

FBOs who did not display allergen information after using MenuCal to identify allergens reported that:

- The information will be included when the FBO decides to re-do/re-print their menus
- They prefer to provide the information verbally in order, for example, to allow the FBO to provide bespoke alternative/converse with customers or to avoid any legal ramifications should an item be accidentally mislabelled.

After taking part in the pilot, interest in allergen labelling generally remained high with 8 FBOs reporting they were very or quite interested. Of those not currently displaying any allergen labelling on their menus, four responded that they did intend to add this. Seven FBOs agreed that allergen labelling should be a legal requirement.

3.7 Delivery of MenuCal by Local Authorities

Feedback from the LAs around the suitability of delivering MenuCal to FBOs via Environmental Health departments within LAs revealed that both the LAs and the FBOs thought that the Food Enforcement Officer was a good person to introduce FBOs to MenuCal.¹² FBO reported during the telephone interviews that Food Enforcement Officers were supportive and that they could not have expected any more support from their FEO. Ten of 11 FBOs that had registered on MenuCal agreed that the FEO had encouraged them to use MenuCal. There were some suggestions that further supportive information would have been more helpful, but this was not explained further.

When asked whether they would have found or used MenuCal if their FEO had not introduced them to it, 9 FBOs that they would not. All 14 FBOs said they would like to hear about it from their FEO, with 12 FBOs also suggesting Food Standards Scotland.

Feedback from the LAs suggests that the Environmental Health Departments are well placed to encourage FBOs to provide allergen and calorie information on menus as they already have rapport and a relationship with the FBOs. It was also mentioned that more time with the FBOs would produce better results and that giving more assistance upfront would prevent interest from waning. One LA did report that they have already incorporated MenuCal into their routine inspections and they discuss it with FBOs at the end of each visit. However, it was noted that the main barrier for FEO delivery of MenuCal is time.

¹² Not all 14 businesses in the survey were able to answer all questions on the Local Authority delivery due to time constraints in the interview, and therefore some results are based on 11, 12 or 13 businesses.

LA feedback forms

Feedback forms were completed by LA Food Enforcement Officers for **all 22 FBOs recruited to the pilot**. Some of the information gathered is repetitious of the telephone interviews and in general it was supportive of the information gathered at the interviews.

The LA feedback indicated that most FBOs found the tool user-friendly and very easy to navigate. The occupation of MenuCal users within the FBOs was a mix of managerial and those preparing the food. Feedback suggested that inputting all the recipes was time consuming and cumbersome, and was particularly onerous for those FBOs that offered a larger menu. Regular changes to menus (such as seasonality) also made it more time consuming and difficult to keep up.

With regards to the database, feedback suggested that not all ingredients were listed. Specific examples included no fresh herbs, potato scone, Lorne sausage, bullion, different types of lettuce or not enough mince options. A small number of FBOs also indicated some confusion as to whether to use 'raw' or 'cooked' ingredients from the database (e.g. onions) as well as some concerns that the ingredients were 'Americanised' or that imported ingredients were not available.

FBOs regarded MenuCal as a valuable and appropriate tool to calculate calories. Moreover, at the time when the FBOs were recruited to take part in the pilot, some FBOs stated that there had not previously been an accessible calorie calculator, with one FBO specifically having heard of MenuCal before but thought that the tool would be expensive (it is actually free to use).

Feedback from the LAs on the recruitment process to the MenuCal pilot indicated that many FBOs wanted to help customers to make healthier choices, and a few FBOs reported that they had been starting to see some demand from customers for healthier options, with a few mentions of Scottish Slimmers or Slimming World.

There was some reluctance from FBOs to reduce portion sizes as there was a belief that customers would not respond well to this, and that it might impact on footfall and therefore sales. Relatively few FBOs removed items high in calories or displayed the calories on the menu; their high calorie menu items tend to be popular choices. For example, one FBO calculated that its portion of macaroni cheese, served with chips and garlic bread, was greater than a woman's daily recommended intake of 2000 calories and therefore did not want this highlighted to their customers.

However, the LA forms also stated that one FBO had received a positive response in sales since they started to provide the calorie information on menus for their soups and had also reduced the portion sizes of tray bakes, which the owner had calculated could increase profits.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Using MenuCal

The results of the pilot indicate that the FBOs that used the MenuCal tool found it easy to use. FBOs that did not use MenuCal cited lack of time or other business reasons. The results of the pilot illustrate that the MenuCal tool was used by FBOs more in relation to calculating calories than identifying allergens.

All FBOs that watched the training videos within the MenuCal tool found them useful. Flagging the short length of the training videos might increase use. With regards to inputting recipes, the need to input a lot of information was often considered a time-consuming and challenging task for FBOs, especially those with extensive and/or frequently changing menus. A number of FBOs also indicated that it would be helpful if there was a function to 'group' recipes.

The time required to input the recipes is probably the main issue that needs addressing in MenuCal. However, as it is unlikely that this is easily solvable, it may be more effective to focus on ensuring that the benefits of using MenuCal are strongly conveyed, and the ease of use is well communicated, so that there is less resistance.

The 9 different supporting materials on MenuCal itself ('Useful Tools') were employed to varying degrees, the most frequently used resources were the Allergen Poster and MenuCal recipe sheet. The calorie poster received some negative feedback from the FBOs, and it was suggested by the LAs that FBOs would prefer to create their own posters. The lack, or very low, use of some of the materials, however, perhaps suggests that this function could be rationalised and improved.

'My Store cupboard', which allows FBOs to enter specific or unique items/ingredients not on the database, was the main area highlighted for improvement. More clarity around its role as a 'store' for items not in the main database may reduce the problems experienced.

With regards to the database itself there were complaints from some FBOs that some specific ingredients were not listed and that some imported ingredients were not available, which further indicate that more guidance needs to be provided on how to add ingredients not available in the database to the store cupboard. There was also some confusion from FBOs on whether to use raw or cooked ingredients, suggesting that more guidance is required on this also.

The supporting resources developed by FSS to assist FBOs in the pilot (the letter, the MenuCal User Guide and the Draft Business Guidance on Voluntary Calorie Labelling in Scotland) were also well used. The positive feedback on the User Guide suggests that this made a useful contribution in aiding the FBOs in using MenuCal, particularly in relation to calculating calories.

4.2 MenuCal and Calories

The increase in the display of calorie information on menus as a result of the pilot suggests that lack of access to a calorie calculator was one reason preventing calorie information from being displayed. The use made of MenuCal in the pilot to calculate calories suggests that some FBOs want this information.

That said, the results of the pilot suggest that calculating calories does not necessarily mean that FBOs will display the calorie information. There are practical barriers, such as the need to re-print/re-do menus, as well as commercial barriers if it is felt that customers will be put off from making certain selections because of their high calorific value. Feedback from the LAs indicated that for one FBO the provision of calories on menus by FBOs to encourage health choices was akin to a 'nanny state' and the FBO was therefore reluctant to take part because of this.

Some of the FBOs that calculated calories subsequently made changes to reduce the number of calories in their menu items, using a variety of methods.

4.3 MenuCal and Allergens

FBOs already have a legal obligation to be able to provide allergen information, although this does not need to be displayed on menus.

The need to reprint menus emerges as a barrier to not displaying allergen information. Additionally, there is some resistance to formalising information on allergens which may stem from the practice of FBOs having customers ask and speak to staff about allergens.

4.4 Delivery of MenuCal to FBOs

Feedback from the FBOs on the FEOs highlights that they have played a major role in supporting and encouraging the FBOs in their use of MenuCal throughout the pilot. No improvements or areas for development in the way in which the FEOs deliver MenuCal were identified. However, it should be acknowledged that most FBOs had existing relationships with their FEOs and that the FEO resource needed for this pilot is unlikely to be replicable on a national basis.

The element of personal engagement between FEO and the FBO to motivate and encourage usage of MenuCal is important. In future identification of effective strategies for dealing with different types of FBOs, and how to best achieve a successful outcome, could be shared within the food enforcement community.

4.5 Final Conclusions

This pilot was based on a very small sample of FBOs. The delivery of the pilot required input from the FEO, a responsibility which is additional to their daily role.

With regards to the aims of the pilot, in general it was found that MenuCal;

- Was relatively user-friendly; 12 of the 14 FBOs that completed the telephone interview said that they would recommend MenuCal to other FBOs for allergen and calorie labelling.
- Supported some FBOs to identify allergens and calculate calories.
- Motivated some FBOs to modify some of their menu items to reduce the calorie content.

However, the pilot identified a number of improvements that need to be made to MenuCal in order to improve the usability and support for users.

In addition, delivery of MenuCal to FBOs via Food Enforcement Officers was found to be effective, but is unlikely that resource required for this approach would be sustainable and further considerations would therefore need to be made.



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