



FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY  
SUPPORTED SCHEME

# LONDON SCORES ON THE DOORS APPEALS PROCEDURE



**ALEHM**  
The Association of London Environmental Health Managers

The London Scores on the Doors scheme is operated by the London Food Co-ordinating Group (LFCG), which is a sub-group of the Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM).

Like all other food authorities, participating London Boroughs carry out food hygiene inspections of food businesses. The purpose of these inspections is, amongst other things, to assess compliance with hygiene regulations, to establish whether food is being handled hygienically and is safe to eat and to establish the level of confidence in the management being able to manage food safety.

After an inspection an Environmental Health Officer or Food Safety Officer will determine a rating for the business using the inspection rating scheme in the Food Law Code of Practice.<sup>1</sup> The inspection rating(s) of a food business should be assessed or reassessed at the conclusion of every primary inspection.<sup>2</sup> This is a scheme that all food authorities are obliged to follow.

Inspection ratings determine the interval that should elapse between one primary inspection of a food business and the next and the priority of the next primary inspection of that business relative to the other businesses in the Food Authority's planned inspection programme.<sup>3</sup>

The London Scores on the Doors scheme uses three elements of the code of practice inspection rating scheme, namely;

- level of current compliance with food safety procedures, including handling practices and temperature control
- level of current compliance with structure, cleanliness, layout and condition, lighting, ventilation, facilities etc.
- confidence in management/control systems

The code of practice scores for these three elements are combined to determine the overall score, which relates to the Scores on the Doors Star Rating.

The star rating therefore gives a relative representation of the level of compliance of the business with the above three elements of the code of practice.

At the conclusion of the inspection, or shortly afterwards, the officer carrying out the inspection will notify the food business operator what star rating has been achieved. This will be determined solely from the findings on the day of the inspection and will not take account of any 'mitigating' circumstances, such as: *"The manager was off sick today, things are not usually like this."* A key driver behind this scheme is that businesses must aim to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> Issued under Section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990

<sup>2</sup> Food Law Code of Practice – Paragraph 4.1.6

<sup>3</sup> Food Law Code of Practice – Paragraph 4.1.6

standards at all times and not simply respond to failures highlighted following an inspection, only for standards to slip back afterwards.

Inspection ratings should not be re-assessed at secondary inspections.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, neither at the request of the business, or following a revisit to check on action taken following a primary inspection will the rating be revised. The rating will remain until the next primary inspection is carried out.

Following the inspection the food business operator will be issued with a certificate, which they are encouraged to display prominently in the window of their premises. At the same time the business will receive a 'Right of Reply' form. If the business wishes to make comments about the findings of the inspection, then they may complete the form and return it to the relevant local authority for the comments to be published on the Scores on the Doors website. This form should be returned within 14 days/weeks of the inspection.

The local authority will vet comments before they are published. Comments must not be defamatory and may be edited by the authority. The prime purpose of this facility is for businesses to let customers know that they have taken some positive action in respect of the findings of the inspection, but is not intended for the business to complain about their rating (simply because they would like a better one) or the conduct of the inspecting officer.

If after the expiry of the period for submitting comments a business wishes to submit further comments, for example because they have since completely refurbished the premises, they may do so by contacting the authority who may publish the comments at their discretion.

#### Complaints/Appeals against star rating

There may be occasions where a business is unhappy with an inspection for any reason, or where they consider the rating applied to the business is not correct because the code of practice inspection rating scheme has not been applied appropriately, because of bias or procedural unfairness.

In the first instance, the food business operator should contact the food team manager at the local authority to discuss their concerns within 14 days. If the food team manager considers it necessary they will discuss the issue with the inspecting officer. Action taken by the authority, including any amendment to the inspection rating (and thus the star rating) applied will be carried out at the discretion of the food team manager. The food business operator will be informed of the result of their complaint.

If, upon being informed of the outcome of their complaint a food business operator is unhappy with the decision, they should then make a formal complaint through the authority's normal formal complaints procedure. The food team manager will advise the food business operator how to do this. Formal complaints procedures may vary between different authorities. The

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<sup>4</sup> Food Law Code of Practice – Paragraph 4.1.6

authority will investigate the complaint in the normal manner and advise the food business operator of the outcome.

The LFCG will convene an independent panel to assist the local authority complaints process if requested by the authority.