

**10<sup>th</sup> London Local Authorities Bill**  
**Clause 10 – display of food hygiene information**  
**Tay Potier, London Regional Policy Officer, Chartered Institute of**  
**Environmental Health**

**1. Statement of Tay Potier**

I am a chartered environmental health practitioner, holding a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Health from the University of the West of England. I have specialised in food law for over 10 years at both an operational and management level in London and in Kent. I have been employed as the London Regional Policy Officer at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) since September 2007.

**2. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health**

Founded in 1883, the CIEH is a professional and education body, dedicated to the promotion of environmental health and to encouraging the highest possible standards in the training and the work of environmental health professionals. The CIEH accredits degrees in environmental health, both on an undergraduate and postgraduate level as full and part time courses. This academic study is reinforced through work based learning and completed through professional examinations leading to the designation of environmental health practitioner.

The CIEH's charitable aim is to "promote Environmental Health for the benefit of the public"; to this end, the CIEH seeks, among other things, to support and represent the interests of those, wherever they work, engaged in the practice of Environmental Health.

As a campaigning organisation, the CIEH aims to promote improvements in environmental and public health policy. It is based in the UK with offices in London, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The CIEH has approximately 9,500 members, most of who work for local authorities (LAs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The trading arm of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health is a wholly owned trading subsidiary which is charged with promoting the mission of the CIEH through its trading activities and its profits are gift-aided to the CIEH to support its charitable objectives. It organises conferences, seminars and produces a comprehensive range of public health publications.

It also provides over 50 certification training programmes which include food safety, health and safety, environmental awareness through a network of over 10,000 registered trainers and 6,000 registered training centres across the UK.

### **3. Why is the CIEH giving evidence?**

The CIEH is giving evidence in its capacity as a professional organisation, and through the London Regional Policy Officer who acts to support and promote environmental health within London. The London Regional Policy Officer provides a focus for engagement and development of strategic partnerships within London and has been involved in the Steering (and subsequent Implementation) Group responsible for the London *Scores on the Doors* scheme from inception.

### **4. What does the CIEH do?**

The CIEH provides [information, evidence and policy advice](#) to local and national government and environmental and public health practitioners in the public and private sectors. As an awarding body, the CIEH provides [qualifications](#), events, and support materials on topics relevant to health, wellbeing and safety to develop workplace skills and best practice.

### **5. Why are we supporting this scheme?**

Under current legislative provisions, display of information from *Scores on the Doors* schemes operating in the UK is voluntary. This means that only the highest scoring premises chose to do so. The CIEH has previously made clear its support for the principle of *Scores on the Doors* schemes as they allow the public to make more informed choices about where to eat, recognise businesses which do maintain high standards and highlight those which do not.

The CIEH considers that the compulsory display of information is essential to ensure that the benefits, for both businesses and consumers, are recognised to their maximum potential. Compulsory display will mean that all businesses have to display this information, including those which do not maintain good standards of food hygiene.

The CIEH sees display as key to improving the standards of food safety within London as a world class capital city and in particular, in ensuring the highest possible level of compliance with food hygiene laws as an Olympic host city.

There is already some evidence that standards in the capital have improved since the launch of the London scheme, but we believe that with compulsory display, the types of improvements seen in other cities can also be recognised in London.

### **6. How will it work?**

Businesses located in the participating boroughs operating the London *Scores on the Doors* scheme and covered by the London Local Authorities Bill will need to display their most recent food hygiene documents. The window sticker will need to be at or near an entrance to the premises for customers; and in a place where they are capable of being

read by customers before they enter when it is open for business. The certificate will then be displayed inside the premises.

## **7. What is the position in other parts of the world?**

There are a number of Scores on the Doors schemes operating across the world, notably in the United States, Canada, Denmark and New Zealand.

In the United States, all jurisdictions provide information about restaurant inspections on request, and a number post information on websites (as is currently done in London). In addition, some states require businesses to display summary reports on the premises and these include New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, which use a letter grade system of A to C.

In Canada, Toronto has adopted a 'Dine Safe' coloured card system based on "traffic lights". Green is a pass, yellow is a conditional pass and red means that the premises are closed. Again, inspection notices are available online and inspection reports are required to be posted on the premises.

At present, the only European Union member state to publish full inspection details is Denmark. Details are provided via a website and a summary displayed at the premises by a range of smiley face symbols – from an elite smiley (happy smiley's at last four inspections) to sad. There are a four different smiley's, plus the new elite. From March 2008, it has been a legal requirement to display the smiley at the entrance to the premises and on the homepage if the premises have a website.

## **8. What benefits have they found?**

There is much anecdotal evidence of improvements in compliance standards since the introduction of schemes. Consumers welcome the information and support publication schemes.

## **9. What is the evidence?**

An evaluation in the Los Angeles area found that hygiene grade cards caused restaurants to increase hygiene standards by about five percent. They showed that grade cards caused an increase in food hygiene scores and that they caused consumers to become sensitised to restaurant hygiene (Jin and Leslie, 2003, p. 28). This research also found that grade cards caused a decrease in hospital admissions with food related illness, which is not fully explained by consumers switching from bad to good restaurants (Jin and Leslie, 2003, p27).

In Toronto, the 'Dine Safe' scheme showed that one year after introduction, 98 percent of the public and 82 percent of food businesses supported the scheme and 71 percent of the food businesses reported that inspectors were either fair or impartial (Busrur, 2003).

A review of a disclosure scheme for food hygiene inspections in Toronto concluded that there had been “increased compliance and continuous improvement in food safety” as a result of the programme (Basrur, 2003).

In New York after six months of operating a scheme the figure for routine inspections being satisfactory on the first visit increased from 21 percent to 63 percent (Spear, 2006) – check research for result as seems high.

Research into the Danish scheme in 2007 shows that 99.8 percent of consumers are aware of the scheme and 97 percent thought it was a good idea. It has helped consumers make more informed choices, with 67 percent turning down a restaurant with a bad smiley, and 59 percent choosing another because of a bad smiley.

88 percent of food businesses in Denmark think the scheme is a good idea and 19 percent had carried out improvements to avoid a poor score (communication from FDVK, 2008). Overall, the Danish food authority asserts that compliance levels have improved and that the scheme has been an outstanding success.

## **10. What is happening in London under the voluntary scheme?**

Businesses are being provided with a sticker and certificate showing their star rating. Display is voluntary and all information provided to businesses makes it clear that this is the case. It has therefore been found that only the better scoring premises are choosing to display.

Consumers are therefore not aware of the standards within many food premises and are not able to make a fully informed choice before entering. The full potential of the scheme to raise standards in London is not being recognised.

## **11. Why should we have compulsory display in London?**

London is our capital city and as such, must strive to lead the way. It has over 7.5million residents and is also twinned with a number of cities including New York (which has shown excellent results through introducing compulsory display).

In 2006, there were over 15.2million overseas visitors to London and over 10million domestic visitors, who spent of over £9.5bn. It remains the number one city destination in the world (Bidwell, 2007).

The London *Scores on the Doors* scheme is the single largest scheme operating in the UK, covering over 80,000 food premises. Compulsory display is needed for the following reasons:

- It allows for informed choices

Compulsory display in London means that all consumers entering relevant premises will be able to make informed choices about the level of compliance with food hygiene laws

in the premises. Information will be clear and easy to understand and will compliment that which is available on the "yourlondon" website.

Internet access in the UK currently stands at 61 percent of households, meaning that not all the population is able to access the information. Compulsory display will mean that everyone is able to view the information and those who do not have access are not disadvantaged.

- Educating consumers will help raise standards.

By empowering and informing consumers about food hygiene, research has shown that standards rise. Early indications from the London scheme are that the web based system has helped improve standards and compulsory display will help drive compliance levels even higher.

- Compulsory display provides incentive for food premises to improve standards and most importantly recognises those which do well.

Food premises with good reports should be able to benefit fully from the potential for increased trade by highlighting their achievements.

- Compulsory display will help with a greater understanding of the inspection process by food business operators and make it clear that the responsibility for maintenance of standards in the business rests with the operator.

*Scores on the Doors* is about allowing the public to make informed choices about where to eat and providing the information at the entrance to the premises allows everyone to receive information relating to food hygiene without the need to check a website first.

We also recognise that levels of compliance with food hygiene law will occur and we think that these increased levels will add to our Olympic legacy

## **12. What are the benefits and what is the evidence?**

Consumers want this information and believe that it should be made available.

A recent survey (Worsfold, 2008) indicated that respondents were unanimous (91 percent) in their belief that the result of the hygiene inspection should be displayed in the food premise. Earlier research has indicated that the preferred method of viewing information on hygiene standards is to view certificates displayed in food premises (Worsfold, 2006b). Hygiene information on a respected website can and will be used by a proportion of consumers, but it should be an aid, not a substitute for disclosure at the premises (Spear, 2006).

It is hoped that the benefits seen from other parts of the world where display is compulsory can be realised here in the UK through the facilitation of informed choices and improved levels of compliance with food hygiene legislation.

## References

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