

From Emily Miles
Chief Executive

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26 January 2024

Dear Chief Executive,

Food Standards Act 1999 assimilated EU Regulation No. 2017/625 EC

I am writing to you following the Food Standards Agency (FSA) [Board meeting](#) which took place on 13 December 2023. The Board considered a [paper on local authority performance](#) in relation to delivering food official controls and, in the light of current pressures, asked me to write to local authority Chief Executives and Section 151 Officers to highlight the importance of ensuring that teams are appropriately resourced to deliver these statutory functions on food.

As you will know, the official food and animal feed controls delivered by local authorities play a critical part in protecting public health and protecting the interests of consumers.

The agri-food sector employs 4.2 million people (13.4% of GB employment in 2022) and contributed £128.3 billion to national Gross Value Added in 2021, highlighting how vital food being safe, and what it says it is to local communities and the UK economy. Local authorities ensure that businesses are complying with the law on food hygiene, food standards and animal feed and are a vital source of guidance and expertise to many local food businesses. The assessments they make during inspections also provide a much-used source of information for consumers, through the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The work of your teams is vital.

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The FSA has a statutory function to monitor the performance of local authorities and ensure that it meets the minimum standards set out in the [Feed Law Code of Practice](#)¹ and [Food Law Code of Practice](#)². At its December meeting, the Board discussed concerns seen as part of our performance monitoring role, including the inadequate resourcing by many local authorities of food and feed services to deliver official controls.

Resourcing in local authorities was also highlighted in [Our Food 2022](#), the annual review of food standards across the UK, published in November 2023 and how adequate resourcing is vital for ensuring food hygiene rules are upheld. The FSA's analysis of local authority staffing shows there are approximately 14% fewer food safety posts being funded across England, Wales and Northern Ireland compared to a decade ago – and even where these posts do exist, over 13% are vacant. For food standards, over the same period, a drop of 45.1% of allocated posts has been reported. The FSA recognises that funding alone will not solve the problem and we have identified some areas where we can make changes and have set up the local authority resourcing project to address the findings that are directly within the control of the FSA. This will include:

- addressing feedback about our competency framework, to free up resources for delivery,
- consulting with LAs to understand how we can use our limited training budgets to support officer competency or boost the supply of officers,
- reviewing our 'suitable' qualifications to deliver food safety controls, including endorsing the apprenticeship model,
- working with other government departments, relevant professional bodies and interested parties to discuss the findings and shape and influence potential solutions.

We appreciate that many local authorities are facing very significant financial challenges, and we aim to continue to work in partnership to deliver on food and feed safety where possible, for example the rollout and delivery of the new Food Standards model which uses an intelligence led approach to target resources to the areas of highest risk.

When we see problems arising in local authority delivery we will work constructively and supportively with local authority teams, to ensure there is a plan in place to bring performance back to required levels.

¹ issued under Regulation 6(1) of The Official Feed and Food Controls (England) Regulations 2009

² issued under the under Section 40(1) of The Food Safety Act 1990, Regulation 6(1) of The Official Feed and Food Controls (England) Regulations 2009 and Regulation 26(1) of The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013

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I am writing to bring to your attention our concerns so that you can ensure, as you set your budget for the 2024/2025 financial year, that Environmental Health and Trading Standards food and feed teams are resourced appropriately to deliver local authorities' statutory duties.

Should you wish to discuss the content of this letter further, please contact our Local Authority Engagement team – laengagement@food.gov.uk who will direct your question to the most appropriate team.

I'd like to take this opportunity to put on record my gratitude for the work your Environmental Health and Trading Standards food and feed officers do. Their hard work and dedication protects consumers by ensuring that food is safe and what it says it is.

Thank you for your continued support during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Miles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Emily Miles
Chief Executive

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