

INFORMATION SHEET ON FOOD COMPLAINTS

Your food complaint will be dealt with by Environmental Health normally when:

It is physically contaminated by foreign material
e.g. an insect, glass or metal.

or, The food is spoiled in some way e.g. mouldy,
bad odour, bad taste, or caused illness.

Where the complaint relates to quality, such as misleading or wrongful description, added substances (e.g. watered milk), or insufficient quantity, it is normally dealt with by the Trading Standards Department at Norfolk County Council. In these cases, your complaint will be passed onto them by the investigating officer and you will be informed of this.

The reasons for the Council investigating food complaints can be summarised as follows:

- To resolve problems which pose a risk to public health.
- To provide information to the food industry in order to raise and maintain standards.
- To fulfil the duty of enforcement placed on the Council.
- To provide a service to the public.
- To prevent future similar complaints occurring in the future

Food complaints are investigated according to how serious they are. Any enforcement action taken will be proportionate to the degree of risk to the public, the severity of the complaint, and the need to minimise future complaints. Your complaint will be dealt with promptly, in a consistent manner, and in accordance with relevant legislation and codes of practice. Sometimes complaints take a while to resolve while we contact and obtain reports from other local authorities, manufacturers, importers, etc. However, in these instances, you will be kept up to date of progress.

The following points may be relevant, in whole or in part, to the investigation of your complaint:

1. It will be investigated with such action as necessary or as indicated on the Council's Food Complaint Form, for example, where you are not willing to provide a witness statement (see note 4.)
2. Any foodstuff, packaging, receipt or similar handed over are surrendered on the understanding that they are disposed of in such a manner as the Council decide.
3. Compensation or redress in respect of the complaint will not be sought or negotiated by the Council.
4. When you are willing to:
 - (a) provide a written witness statement;
 - (b) give evidence in Court if necessary;and (c) allow your name and address to be given to the vendor/supplier, manufacturer or importer,

a full investigation of the complaint can take place. This may result in formal action, such as a formal caution or legal proceedings, against those responsible. Where any of (a). (b) or (c) above cannot be applied, then a full investigation is not possible. The matter can then only be dealt with informally, normally verbally or by sending a letter to those responsible.

5. When the Council consider formal action is necessary you will be notified. If a decision is made to issue a Formal Caution, or take legal proceedings against those responsible, then your name and address would then normally be released to them.
6. Where no formal action is to be taken your name and address would then only be released if:
 - (a) You had given authority for them to be released,and (b) they had been requested by the vendor/supplier, manufacturer or importer.
7. A food complaint is investigated on your behalf by the Council on the understanding that you are willing to abide by the decision on action it takes.
8. Knowingly giving any false information to the Council in connection with the investigation of the food complaint could lead to action being taken against you.