

A Guide To Food Safety Complaints

The Food and Health & Safety Team will investigate complaints about food purchased and made within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The level of investigation will depend upon the nature of the complaint, the risk posed to health, the professional judgement of the investigating officer and previous knowledge of similar complaints.

If you allow us to investigate your complaint we will not be able to return the food to you and we cannot get a refund for your food. It is your decision as to whether to pursue the food complaint through our Team or to return it to the place of purchase for the supplier to carry out an investigation.

An investigation may range from visual examination and identification of a foreign object to in-depth analysis of the food. Deciding whether the complaint requires further investigation is based on the risk to health and need for public protection.

The Investigation process is split into three stages:

Stage 1 – The investigating officer will collect and examine the food to confirm the nature of the complaint. It may be necessary to get the opinion of other experts such as a Public Analyst. This can provide valuable information such as the type and likely origin of foreign bodies, e.g. glass fragments.

Stage 2 – The officer will decide whether further investigation is warranted and will update you. The officer may contact the manufacturer and local enforcement authority to find out about the manufacturing process and establish as part of the investigation whether there is a history of complaints or if a serious manufacturing problem exists.

Stage 3 – Once the investigating officer has received sufficient information the officer will decide what form of action to take.

Informal Action – some complaints are dealt with informally because the evidence received is not sufficient to satisfy a court of law ‘beyond all reasonable doubt’ or the offender has a ‘due diligence’ defence or it is deemed not to be in the public interest to prosecute.

Formal Action – if the investigating officer is confident that an offence has been committed, appropriate evidence is available and the company does not appear to have a ‘due diligence’ defence, formal action will be considered, such as the issuing of a Formal Caution or instigating legal proceedings, having regard to the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Enforcement Policy, which is available on our internet website.

Time scales – Food complaint investigation can take several months to resolve especially if formal action is being considered. The investigating officer will aim to keep you updated on a monthly basis.