

Local authorities exchange best practice on SFBB

Local authorities and FSA regional teams are sharing best practice and developing Safer food, better business (SFBB) through regional seminars.

SFBB is a key initiative in the FSA regional teams' work with local authorities (LAs).

Over the past year, the teams have supported SFBB, assisting in workshops for enforcement staff around the UK and feeding back suggestions from local food groups to the SFBB team in London.

The regional teams also support local authorities in their regulatory work and promote other key Agency priorities.

The Agency hosted a regional seminar in the south east of England in November to highlight good practice and sustainability in implementing SFBB. Almost 60 officers from over 40 LAs attended.

Topics covered different approaches to projects, the successes and problems. Practical tips were given, such as the value of communicating with businesses via newsletters.

Julian Blackburn, head of the Agency's SFBB Team, provided background and news of its work.

LA representatives discussed in small groups the future sustainability of SFBB. Ideas from the session included: adding SFBB into current food hygiene training programmes of local catering colleges/schools, incorporating SFBB in economic advice through Business Link, and engaging community groups. The delegates said that it was important to keep the SFBB packs free and suggested a central register of coaches with language skills.

The seminar featured presentations from a variety of projects including:



The south east of England seminar discussed sustainable implementation of SFBB

- Gavin Steadman, Medway Council, on SFBB and cultural diversity
 - Adam Spencer, Winchester City Council, and Mark Hewett, chef at the cathedral refectory Winchester Cathedral, on 'A chef's experience'
 - Alex Lisle, Reigate and Banstead, on Delivering SFBB through partnership
- 'This event benefited from some high quality speakers, not only from local authorities but also from a thriving food business,' seminar chair Alan Harvey, FSA South East Regional Co-ordinator, said. The message was that, 'ensuring food safety will always remain a paramount concern for the FSA. It also demonstrated the valuable role local authority colleagues have in relation to SFBB.'

The most recent SFBB seminar, for the East Midlands, was held in Nottingham in December. Forty-five LA delegates looked at delivering SFBB in ways that would meet the needs of local enforcement communities and food businesses.

The speakers included Sarah Cairns, from Mansfield, who shared the experience of targeting ethnic businesses, and Graham Cox and Michelle Rudkin from Rushcliffe, who discussed their project, which is linked to their 'Scores on the Doors' scheme for food establishments.

Owen Green, owner of The London Road Bakery in Bolsover, spoke on SFBB both as a training tool and to ensure compliance with food safety requirements.

Kirstie Trasler, of Highfield Ltd, emphasised the input of participants in a presentation on the company's

coaching work with the Agency.

'We have had 1,580 delegates through the training courses in 26 months, with some absolutely brilliant feedback,' she said.

Julian Blackburn introduced the multi-language SFBB DVD, and adaptations for particular sectors, such as care homes and childminders.

One of the major questions was how SFBB can be sustained after the end of grants. Delegates looked into ways of ensuring that SFBB work was embedded in LAs' approaches to their enforcement responsibilities. There was discussion about alternative resources, such as economic development units and further education colleges.

At the end of the day, Sarah Moule from Nottingham City Council commented: 'I have found a renewed commitment to SFBB and will investigate pooling resources with other LAs in the county to sustain success.'

Commenting on the seminars, Sharon Young of the FSA's regional unit said: 'Inviting to regional events LAs that have not received SFBB grant funding has provided them with an excellent opportunity to find out what others have been developing and delivering.'

'LAs do not always have the resources to deliver training in other languages but working at regional level can provide the economies of scale to make it viable.'

'Such an approach to SFBB is being currently piloted in the north west of England.'



East Midlands' participants discussed how to embed SFBB in enforcement responsibilities



Interactive DVD to complement Safer food, better business

The safer food, better business interactive DVD is nearing completion and is due to be launched in February 2008.

It is designed to be played on a computer or DVD player and is available with voiceovers in 16 languages, common to small catering and retail businesses, reflecting the need to train people from diverse communities.

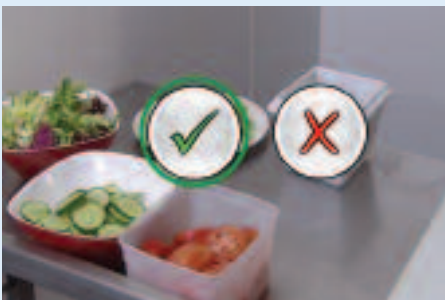
The DVD content will also be available on the web and the videos can be watched live online or downloaded for future use when a connection to the Internet is not available.

The SFBB interactive DVD package consists of an A4 leaflet and a disc with an insert explaining how to use the DVD; these are contained in a wallet that is designed to fit in the SFBB pack.

The A4 leaflet is called 'Working with food? What you need to know before you start'.

It is aimed at staff in catering and retail businesses and is designed to cover personal hygiene basics such as 'How to wash hands'.

The key messages are shown in a strong visual format using minimal text.



Strong visuals stress the main messages



Bristol: local coaches crucial for catering

Training local business leaders in minority ethnic communities has been crucial in implementing SFBB in smaller food establishments across Bristol.

The city's Food Safety Team bid for FSA funding, emphasising the recruitment of C-rated catering businesses and using SFBB to engage with minority ethnic food concerns. The team also wanted to develop capacity to help the project continue once current funding had ended.

Bengali, Urdu, Cantonese, Somali, Turkish and Kurdish are the predominant languages in over two-thirds of C-rated premises.

An experienced contractor took on most of the work with English-speaking businesses. The food safety team then focused on minority ethnic businesses and supporting community partners. Links with community partners were used to tackle high levels of enforcement in businesses serving Chinese, South Asian and Somali cuisines. One team member co-ordinated these parts of the project. All the team and three community participants were trained as SFBB coaches.

Sustaining the project beyond its funding was approached using the Chinese and South Asian packs, and by developing capacity within the team and its community partners, especially through links with the

city's Chinese and Bangladeshi associations.

'Our plan to train members of the local community as coaches has been the key to our success,' said Tony Creasy, Senior Environmental Health Officer in Bristol, who co-ordinated the South Asian and Chinese part of the project. 'Our Bangladeshi coach is a restaurant owner, ex-chair of the local Bangladesh Association, and a food safety trainer. He can speak Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi, and his knowledge of South Asian cuisines and practices has proved invaluable in making SFBB relevant.'

Businesses began completing the safe method sheets in workshops. Some Bangladeshi businesses needed additional coaching to become familiar with the pack, so extra group workshops were arranged between seminars and one-to-one coaching visits.

Tony Creasy added: 'My health promotion experience has made me appreciate the barriers that some businesses experience when dealing with the council. I thought it was important for people to meet me and to be honest about their thoughts on SFBB. I've been encouraged by the response, and my initial impression is that our relationship with the local Chinese, Bengali, and Somali business communities has improved.'



Safer food, better business coach Saleh Ahmed, standing, with, left, Amit Lakhani, one of the owners of the Myristica restaurant in Bristol, at one of the group coaching sessions

Care home diary peeps into future

When North Kesteven District Council's environmental health officers wanted to spread the word about SFBB, a small group of local businesses were invited to lead the way.

Among them was Holmleigh Care Home, which provides residential, respite and day care for 35 people. Holmleigh had followed a diary system for several years but it was in need of an update.

Training on SFBB was delivered in two sessions held at Holmleigh. Hazel Carelton, the home's manager, said: 'Teresa Cross, our chef, and I, were taken through the format, and we were shown the type of things that we should be entering in the diary. By the end of the first session we felt comfortable with the new concept.' Teresa Cross said: 'The support that we have had has been very, very good.'

Voluntary mentoring works well if the LA has the resources to target particular types of catering businesses

Outstanding sections and training records were completed at the second session. 'It saves time and money and it's jargon free,' says Hazel, adding: 'Now there is no excuse for new members of staff to claim that they do not know what goes on in the kitchen.'

Hazel believes that staff training is 'made



Hazel Carelton, left, and Teresa Cross, saving time, money and paper

easier and is less costly in the long run'. It also saves her and Teresa a lot of surplus paperwork as everything is in one place. Hazel calls the whole system her 'kitchen care plan' as 'all the residents require a plan of care – so does the kitchen.'

North Kesteven District Council has asked Hazel to attend roadshows on SFBB targeted at similar enterprises. This voluntary mentoring approach works very

well if the local authority has the resources to target particular types of catering businesses.

The local authority EHO has since shown the staff at Holmleigh the draft version of the additional pages that have been designed specifically for residential care homes and Hazel feels this will 'give a complete picture of how they tackle food safety in a high risk environment'.

Bootle school's shining example

When Bootle High School decided to provide its school meals in-house, catering manager Norma Owens and her team took up the challenge using SFBB.

Norma completed the advanced food hygiene course, demonstrating the underpinning knowledge needed to run a school kitchen.

SFBB gave a structure for assuring safe catering, and Norma found that the toolkit complemented her style of cooking perfectly.

Many of the school's 700 pupils come from socially deprived backgrounds and one in three pupils are on free school meals, so a healthy lunch in the middle of the day is essential.

Norma guarantees this by cooking from scratch. She has developed safe methods for each dish and has used the pack to train her kitchen staff.

'I'm not the brightest bulb in the pack but SFBB is all common sense and so easy to use,' she said.

Karen Beer, Principal Environmental Health Officer at Sefton Council, commented: 'Norma and her team have been really enthusiastic about SFBB. They have implemented it really well and completed the pack and use the diary to manage food safety in their kitchen. I'm really pleased with what they have done and it shows that SFBB really works.'



Norma Owens, above left and in action, has used the SFBB pack to train her kitchen staff

SFBB training – a real catch for Norfolk fish shop

SFBB has led to a major increase in turnover for one Norfolk concern.

Landamore's Fish Shop, in Coltishall, was the first business in Broadland to complete the SFBB evaluation process and to receive a certificate of compliance.

Mark Landamore and his sister, Jane Ballard, run the business – a family concern that started 44 years ago – serving traditional fish and chips to regular local customers and passing trade.

Their time in charge of the shop has not been without incident: among the early setbacks was a gas explosion that demolished the building next door and severely affected their own business.

After attending one of the first seminars on SFBB in 2006, Landamore's became an SFBB Champion Business for the fish and chip sector.

Mark Landamore said: 'Safer food, better business is a simple and highly effective way for small businesses to implement food hygiene regulations and develop best practices.'



Officially certified as an SFBB Champion Business – one piece of paper that won't end up as chip wrapping

He added that they found the subsequent coaching visit very helpful in implementing the SFBB pack.

The Landamores talked about their involvement with SFBB in local papers,

which generated a great deal of interest from the local population and brought new customers to the shop. They estimate that turnover has risen by 20% as a result and they have retained their new customers.

No present like time for fenland caravan park

The SFBB pack has helped one caravan park manager save 30 minutes a day.

Diane Griib opened the Virginia Lake Caravan Park in Norfolk, in 1990. When the site began serving food in the clubhouse in 1996, it was Diane's first experience of running a food business.

She had always kept meticulous daily

records of her fridge and freezer temperatures but was always aware that this was a time-consuming procedure.

Since she started using SFBB earlier this year Diane reckons that she has saved 30 minutes a day on temperature recording alone – or at least 15 hours most months.

Diane uses the pack to ensure that new

members of staff understand the control measures specifically relevant to the food operation at the park. She finds the language of the pack particularly useful as it is in such a plain and straightforward style. Asked if she could find any drawbacks with the pack she said: 'No. I think it's brilliant!'

SFBB pack provides 'refreshment' in tea rooms



Ashwood Nurseries' Tea Room: small shoots of SFBB have blossomed into better teamwork

Implementing SFBB can mean increased confidence in the business's food safety approach, better training and more efficient use of resources.

That is the experience of one of the first businesses successfully to implement SFBB, Ashwood Nurseries' Tea Room in Ashwood, South Staffordshire.

The tea room catering manager, Ruth Cartwright, said that she had worried about complying with the new EU requirement to document food safety management: 'I was concerned about where to start and how long it would take me,' she said.

Her view was changed by support and training provided by South Staffordshire District Council. The council provided

workshops and individual coaching sessions to help businesses to implement SFBB (with a grant of more than £44,000 from the FSA).

The daily diary, used for record-keeping, only takes Ruth a few minutes each day. She and her team enjoyed completing the pack and recommend it to other business operators. 'It is nothing to be frightened of, it has taken a lot of pressure off me and given me the confidence that our systems are working to ensure food safety.'

Ruth had read about the SFBB pack in previous editions of the *Food Safety Newsletter* issued by South Staffordshire District Council. She said it took only a few hours to complete the pack, it encouraged everyone to work as a team and it was very

Training sounded too good to be true

Introducing 'Scores on the Doors' first would have made it easier to implement SFBB, according to a Shropshire food and safety manager.

'I believe it would have been easier to recruit businesses because Scores on the Doors would give caterers the added incentive to improve their performance,' said Ron Muirhead, food and safety manager for Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council.

He was reflecting on the experience of introducing Safer food, better business training to caterers in the northern half of Shropshire.

The initiative is being delivered locally in a joint project between Shrewsbury and Atcham, Oswestry, and North Shropshire councils, all working with Walford and North Shropshire College.

- The college partner was chosen because it:
- specialises in business training solutions
 - uses locally based trainers, which enhances the local skill base
 - used coaches with a catering background
 - already provided food safety training, which could lead on to sustainable training opportunities at the end of the project funding.

The local authority partners provided a database of eligible businesses and the college arranged workshops and coaching visits.

After a good start, the numbers of delegates at workshops fell away. The college had difficulties selling free training because businesses either considered it a marketing ploy or assumed the training it offered would be of poor quality.

Ron Muirhead said: 'Attendance improved with a switch to more desirable venues; then

we went straight to coaching, following agreement with the FSA. Local authorities also contacted businesses to encourage bookings – with some success.'

He outlined some of the other difficulties they had encountered: for example, inevitably, some caterers did not continue to maintain the workbook and they were given further guidance; administration of the project was more time-consuming than anticipated because of the coordination needed with four partners; many businesses postponed coaching visits, causing problems with milestone completion.

All of these difficulties were overcome in the end.

Evaluation of SFBB in coached businesses has shown that they welcomed especially the practical approach from trainers with a catering background.

East Northants: Pizza 2 Go goes 'all the way'

Mr and Mrs Yilmaz, the owners of the Pizza 2 Go takeaway, found out about Safer food, better business when a pack was delivered to their business by an environmental health officer from East Northamptonshire District Council and they had a letter telling them there was a change in the law and offering free training.

They said: 'Small businesses like us can't afford to pay for consultants so we were happy that we could attend a seminar and get coaching at no cost.'

The seminar took about half a day and then they received one-to-one coaching sessions – the first one took place about two months after the seminar and lasted about two hours.

The second visit was a month after this and lasted for about 30 minutes. They consider that the coaching visits were very important, because after the seminar they felt that they understood why they had to implement the

new practices but were not sure how to make it work for their business.

Mr Yilmaz said: 'The seminar was really good as the businesses learnt a lot from each other. It put our minds at rest too as most people were experiencing the same problems so I didn't feel so alone.'

Safer food, better business has been extremely helpful to Pizza 2 Go, as without it they felt it would have been very difficult to comply with the new legislation. Mrs Yilmaz commented: 'It is good that it is all in one pack, as it means you don't have temperature records in one place, suppliers' details in another place and other checks on bits of paper all over the place, and it can be tailored to suit your business.'

Mr Yilmaz said that it has helped his business by 'using the pack as a training tool and knowing that our staff can follow the instructions. The layout of the pack has

really helped us to be more organised.

Previously, it was all in my head, the suppliers, delivery dates and times etc, but now it is written down so that everyone knows what is happening in the business.

Mr and Mrs Yilmaz commented that if Safer food, better business was not available, they would have really struggled to organise themselves and it would have taken a long time for them to comply.

They said they could not have complied fully with the new legislation without it.

They are happy to recommend the pack to other businesses and to advise others to ask their local environmental health teams to support them to fill out the pack.

'Safer food, better business helps you to make sure that you are making food safely and it also helps to protect your business from allegations that you are not cooking your food properly.'

useful for staff training, especially highlighting issues where retraining was necessary.

'SFBB made us think about what we were doing and what changes we could make to improve food safety. Good food safety is vitally important to me and this business, and the pack provided a useful refresher.'

Throughout the year, operators of small to medium-sized catering businesses are being invited to attend an SFBB workshop in South Staffordshire.

At the workshop, participants signed up to the individual follow-up coaching sessions, which take place at each business' premises. At these sessions, the trainer spends up to three hours helping the business to adapt the SFBB pack to cover the particular hazards associated with food preparation and handling processes in that setting.



Catering manager Ruth Cartwright, centre, with pastry chef Steven Walker and head chef Stephen Brinicombe

The professional approach to making SFBB work

Training consultancy CMi has been involved with the national roll-out of SFBB since its development and has worked with more than 150 local authorities (LAs), supporting in excess of 20,000 businesses, writes Julie Munn from CMi.

The CMi team of 140 SFBB coaches provides nationwide cover. The use of coaches who are from a catering background and who do not have enforcement responsibilities provides immense benefits in that businesses tend to be far more open when questioned about their business operations.

One of the biggest challenges faced during the operation of the SFBB grant-funded scheme has been ensuring the required number of businesses attend the SFBB seminars.

We have experienced a large variation in seminar attendance across areas of the country and while business distribution and demographics certainly play a part in this, the better seminar attendance rates have been where local authorities have worked

closely with the company during the business recruitment activities.

Attendance rates have also increased wherever authorities have actively promoted SFBB through local publicity and during routine inspections, have contacted seminar delegates two days before the seminar and have followed up promptly on any 'no-shows'.

What has been found, however, is that once the businesses are at the seminar, 93% of them are signing up for a follow-up coaching session.

Another major factor in increasing the interest in SFBB seminars has been linking the implementation of a documented food safety management system with Scores on the Doors schemes. Those authorities that have launched, or are in the process of launching, their schemes are seeing that an increased star-rating is a powerful driver for seminar attendance.

Some of the local authorities that received funding from the first tranche of grant money

have asked CMi to continue supporting their businesses by providing small, interactive workshops with follow-up coaching or direct coaching visits where required.

As the FSA's contracted framework provider, CMi will continue to be involved in the grant-funded roll-out of SFBB nationally. Additionally, we are running several trials with local authorities whereby businesses can purchase a direct coaching session at subsidised rates. CMi is also embarking on a project with a national pub company, offering coaching support to tenanted houses not only in SFBB but in other areas of catering development.

In January, CMi started a series of seminars and coaching on behalf of Welsh local authorities, funded by FSA Wales.

Further information

For more details contact Julie Munn, tel: 07801 039024; email: julie.munn@cmi-plc.com

Implementation – a trainer's tale

In June 2005, Highfield.co.uk Ltd was awarded a contract by the FSA to provide courses to train environmental health practitioners (EHPs), technicians, trainers and others who might be involved in the coaching of businesses to implement Safer food, better business (SFBB).

Initially, the main content of the course was to give attendees the full picture of why SFBB was needed, the background to this, familiarisation with the content of the packs and, very importantly, how to take a coaching approach to its implementation, writes Kirstie Trasler, lead SFBB trainer from Highfield.

When putting the course materials together it struck me that no matter who you were and what your role was with regards to SFBB, you really could help a business to make a difference in their approach to food safety. Environmental health staff who are regularly inspecting food premises are already using their communication skills to get messages across to food business operators. The course needed to facilitate the attendees to recognise this fact, but also how to channel the skills in a slightly different way in order to 'coach' SFBB.

There was a fair bit of negativity towards the SFBB pack in the beginning from EHPs. The pack was new; it was not known whether it would be successful. Local authorities had to bid for project resources; many did not feel they had the staffing resources to give to the project. There were

many questions raised as to the enforcement of non-compliance in relation to food premises. Many saw the system as a retrograde step to hazard analysis (and its associated paperwork). Did SFBB actually comply with the regulations?

The trainers often felt like target practice! However, using coaching skills, we turned around the concerns with a positive approach. After a few months, as experiences were passed on, and with solid support from the FSA team, the trainers were able to answer questions with positive experiences.

The course has changed over the past two and a half years, primarily in response to feedback from delegates, but also to keep up to date with what EHPs required, as the implementation projects moved on. For example, we were able to provide an evaluation exercise after six months, as this was being carried out by some authorities.

There has also been a huge change of opinion with regards to SFBB and its implementation. This is now very positive; the examples of successful businesses helps everyone to understand why SFBB works. It was written to help food business owners to understand food safety and how they could help themselves to comply in easy steps – with a little help from their environmental health practitioner or coach.

Further information

For more details, go to: www.highfield.co.uk



Above: a trainer working on behalf of training company Hygiene and Safety Management Ltd, takes Bengali speakers through the benefits of SFBB. The company also offers sessions in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Tamil, Cantonese, Mandarin, Polish – and English. For more details go to: www.hsmanagement.co.uk

SFBB to benefit vulnerable groups

The Food Standards Agency is in the process of developing two new Safer food, better business (SFBB) products based on SFBB for caterers – a supplement for care homes and a booklet for childminders.

The 'Safer food, better business for care homes' supplement has been developed with involvement from a working group that included representatives from Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI), the Department of Health (DH) and local authorities.

The supplement includes a revised introduction 'How to use this supplement' and three new safe methods that have been developed specifically for small residential care homes, for older and younger people and those with learning difficulties.

A booklet has also been developed for registered childminders who provide meals and/or snacks for young children and babies in a home environment

The new safe methods cover specific activities that occur in the care home environment. They include:

- Extra care – protecting food from other activities in the care home, for example, cleaning up accidents and laundry
- Gift Food – food from family and friends and donations from supermarkets or charities
- Mini-kitchens – food preparation areas and storage away from the main kitchen.

To ensure these safe methods provide a complete food safety management system,



Older people in residential care should benefit from the hygiene methods outlined in SFBB for Care Homes

they should be used with SFBB for caterers and not on their own.

The 'Safer food, better business for childminders' booklet has been developed with a working group that includes representatives from the National Childminders' Association (NCMA), National Association of Childminders Information Services (NACIS), the Pre-school Learning Alliance, Ofsted, LACORS and local authorities.

The guidance was originally developed for childminders and nurseries, but feedback from the working group strongly indicated the childminders' and nurseries' booklet should be split into two as it was felt the booklet could possibly be overwhelming for childminders and insufficient for nurseries.

The booklet has now been developed specifically for registered childminders who provide meals and/or snacks for young children and babies in a home environment. It is adapted from SFBB for caterers and includes new guidance on:

- Extra care – protecting food from certain child care activities, for example, nappy

changing facilities and pets in the kitchen while food is being prepared

- Foods that need extra care – making sure certain foods receive special attention, for example, infant formula and honey.

The anticipated launch date for the care homes material is spring 2008, with the childminders' booklet following after that.



Smiles all round: looking out for children in care

The FSA website – working for you

The Food Standards Agency is continually developing its websites to ensure that they meet the needs of all stakeholders.

A Safer food, better business page for retailers and caterers can be found on the Agency's www.food.gov.uk website at: www.food.gov.uk/sfbb

The page, see below for more details, provides information of interest to a range of businesses.

Safer food, better business for caterers

This section includes information about the food safety management pack developed to help small catering businesses, such as restaurants, cafés and

takeaways, comply with regulations introduced in January 2006.

Safer food, better business for retailers

This section has details on the safety management pack developed to help retail businesses across the UK comply with new regulations introduced in January 2006.

Bacteria Bite Business

The FSA's Bacteria Bite Business video demonstrates the importance of good food hygiene, focusing on the 4 Cs (Cleaning, Cooking, Chilling and Cross-contamination). This is also available to view online.

Safer food, better business for different cuisines

This section describes Safer food, better business packs adapted for small catering businesses, such as restaurants and takeaways, that serve either Chinese cuisine or Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan cuisines.

Safer food, better business in other languages

Safer food, better business for Chinese cuisine is available in traditional Chinese and both Safer food, better business for caterers and Safer food, better business for retailers have been translated into Welsh.

