



# Food Complaints

If you have a food complaint, what you should do about it depends on what kind of complaint it is and what kind of result you are expecting. This leaflet explains the different routes to getting your complaint dealt with in the most effective way.

## I want my money back!



There are two different food enforcement bodies concerned with the enforcement of food law but neither can get involved with getting your money back for you.

Under consumer law, if you are sold defective goods (including food) the business must reimburse you or offer you a replacement. If this is your main concern you should take the product back to the shop where you purchased it. If the product is quite obviously defective and they refuse to offer you a replacement or a refund contact Trading Standards (see below).

If you are more concerned to ensure that this problem does not happen again, you will need to contact one of the organizations shown below.

## Trading Standards

The Trading Standards Department of the County Council deal with **quality** and **marketing** issues. More specific details are shown in the box below.

### Trading Standards deal with:

- Composition
- Labelling
- Description and Marketing
- Quality
- Chemical issues – e.g. strange taste
- Weights and Measures



Not much meat in your pie?

Not the right sort of meat?

Labelled as "Suitable for Vegetarians"?

Metallic taste?

Misleading label?

Deliberate fraud?

Short weight?

### Contact details for Essex County Council Trading Standards:

2 Beaufort Road,  
Dukes Park Industrial Estate  
Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6PS

08454 040506

trading.standards@essexcc.gov.uk



# Environmental Health

The Environmental Health Department of the Borough or District Council deal with issues of **food safety** and **hygiene**. More specific details are shown in the box below.

## Environmental Health deal with:

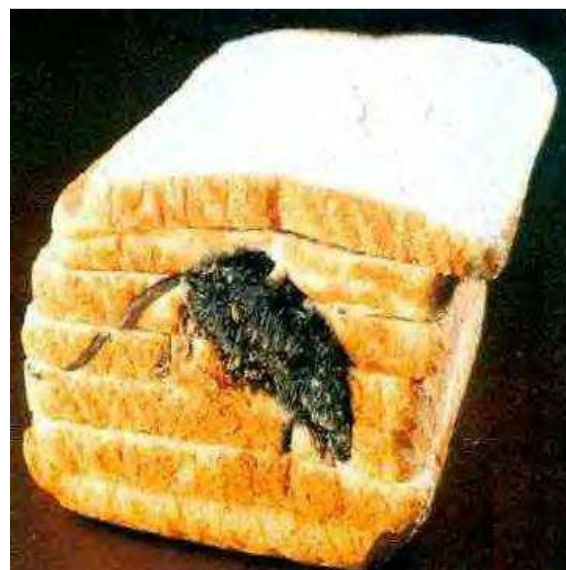
- Food which has made you ill
- Food which is unfit / rotten / mouldy
- Foreign bodies in food (anything that shouldn't be in the food)
- Food sold past its **use-by** date (Note: it is not an offence to sell food past its **best-before** date unless there is something else wrong with it as well)
- Complaints about unhygienic food premises
- Complaints about unhygienic food handlers or practices

## Contact details for Colchester Borough Council Food and Safety Team:

Rowan House, 33 Sheepen Road,  
Colchester CO3 3WG

01206 282581

food.safety@colchester.gov.uk



## I want to make a complaint – what should I do?

- Contact the appropriate organization as soon as possible and provide as much detail as possible to the person who takes the call.
- Provide adequate contact details (e.g. don't just leave your home phone number if you are out at work all day). If you have an e-mail address please give this.
- Keep all wrapping, labels, and proof of purchase.
- If the food is perishable keep it in the fridge or freezer.
- If the complaint is about a foreign body, leave it in situ – don't remove it from the food unless asked to do so.
- If you think the food has made you ill with diarrhoea and/or vomiting, see your doctor before you are completely well again and suggest they take a stool specimen.

Please do not be offended if the investigating officer tells you something you disagree with. Many complaints turn out to be not what they seem at first. The officer will have been fully trained in dealing with these sorts of complaint and will usually have many years experience. They are not trying to “fob you off”.

If they determine that the complaint is valid they will take it up with the seller, manufacturer or importer, as appropriate and inform you of the result.

If the responsible person can show that they have exercised “all due diligence” it may not be possible to take the matter any further but if there is sufficient evidence of negligence or breach of regulations then a prosecution may ensue. If this is likely the officer will need to take a formal statement from you.

In some cases the responsible person offers to contact the complainant to offer an apology or some form of recompense. Your name and address will not be released unless you have agreed to this.