

Case Study: Information and Advice on Nutritional and Food Allergy/Intolerances for Caterers and other Food businesses

Project Manager:

Alex Beckett- Environmental Health Project Officer, Strategy and Service Support, Ealing Council (Contact: becketta@ealing.gov.uk; 0208 825 5313)

1. Introduction

This project focused on the development and dissemination of information and advice on nutritional and food allergy/intolerances for caterers and other food businesses incorporating recent changes in food labelling laws. The aim of the project was to contribute to the improvement of Ealing's:

- Food Safety

2. Context

In 2003, a multi-agency team in Ealing developed a Food Matters Strategy and Action Plan, with the following objectives:

1. To optimise opportunities for education and employment, increase income, and improve living conditions so that each part of the community is empowered to make their own living choices;
2. To improve physical and economic access to food which will contribute to health and quality of life;
3. To achieve long term improvements in diet and nutrition;
4. To reduce the risk of Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), diabetes, cancers, stroke and obesity and dental caries in the community;
5. To ensure safety, composition, and information about food produced, imported, sold and consumed;
6. To reduce the incidence of food poisoning;
7. To encourage and promote both a sustainable food supply, and food industry; and,
8. To encourage and promote local sourcing and fair trade that minimises adverse environmental impact and addresses consumer concerns.

Details of Ealing's Food Strategy and Action Plan can be found on Ealing Council's website (see:

http://www.ealing.gov.uk/services/council/strategies_and_policies/food_matters_strategy/index.html)

3. Scope and Rationale

This project was given priority as it realised objective 5.

Stakeholder Analysis and engagement

This project focused on producing a comprehensive food allergy/intolerance information resource and its dissemination for caterers and other food businesses. As such the project's envisaged impacts were dependent on and affected the following key stakeholders:

- Ealing Council:
 - Environmental Health Project Officer (Project Manager):
 - Health Inequalities Strategy Coordinator (consultation and resource development);
- Ealing PCT (Project Partner):



- o Community Dieticians

Direct Impacts:

- o Caterers and other food businesses in Ealing

Indirect Impacts:

- o Residents and visitors to Ealing (those being catered for)

Resources

- PC + MS Word software package + Internet access + print capabilities

Research, collation and compilation of data and information, consultation, and publishing the information resource took approximately five days for the project manager.

Activities

Project team members took time to undertake the following tasks:

- Attend meetings
- Perform research
- Collate and compile data/information into an information resource
- Network and consult

4. General Report

There is a wealth of food allergy/intolerance information on the internet. Appropriate information from websites was compiled into an MS Word document. In order to avoid replicating the information available, every effort was made to condense the information into a coherent and relevant information resource.

The information resource presents food allergy/intolerance information in sections with the following titles: Milk; Egg; Peanuts and Sesame Seeds; Tree Nuts; Fish and Shellfish; Soy; Wheat/Gluten. In each section, identification is made of those foods containing trace amounts of the allergic reaction-inducing food (i.e. natural or artificial flavourings may contain tree nuts). Where appropriate, substitutes for particular foods are suggested. It also contains a background and compelling reasons as to why caterers and food businesses should consider providing information about potentially harmful ingredients in their food, making particular reference to compelling business case reasons, including compliance with: the new food labelling rules EC Directive 89/2003, the Food Safety Act 1990 and The General Food Law Regulation 178/2002. The document also provides brief explanations as to what: happens when an allergic reaction to food occurs; anaphylaxis to food is; and, one should do if someone is suffering from an anaphylactic or allergic reaction to food. There is also a reference, sources and more information section.

Comments from a consultation with colleagues, dieticians and health promotion staff on the document were actioned and appropriate amendments made to produce a final draft. The final document was imbedded in Ealing Council's 'Food Matters' webpages under the 'Food Businesses' section on 6th March 2006 to make it accessible for businesses.

5. Conclusion

Comprehensive food allergy/intolerance information and advice is now available for the first time for food businesses in Ealing. Not only does the document indicate which foods businesses should be mindful of, but also how businesses can implement procedures and practices to improve their social responsibility performance and general business performance. It is hoped that all caterers can access this information and act upon it.

