

# Food Complaints

How we deal with your Food Complaints





**No matter how good a manufacturer, or supplier of food is, there will be occasions when something goes wrong and the food sold is not acceptable to the customer.**

**The Councils Food Safety Team receives complaints about food every year. Alongside Staffordshire County Councils Trading Standards team, we can take action depending on the type of complaint.**



## Common Food Complaints that may not be Investigated

It can be unpleasant to find something wrong with your food, however, not all issues are hazardous to health. See some examples below:

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**Fruit Flies and Green Flies in Fruit and Vegetables** - Small flies can be found amongst fruit (fruit flies) or vegetables (greenflies). These are not harmful to health and do not carry diseases.

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**Crystals in Canned Fish** - These naturally occurring crystals are known as struvite and they do not pose a health risk if swallowed. You can check to see whether they are glass by placing them in vinegar and heating them gently. If they dissolve they are struvite, if they do not then they are possibly glass, and you may want to put in a food complaint to the food safety team about this.

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**Crystals in sweet and chocolates** - Sugar Crystals are not harmful. You can double check it is not glass by placing it in hot water, as sugar crystals will dissolve.

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**Chocolate Mould** - Mould is very rare on chocolate, but light coloured specs of 'bloom' may resemble mould. These occur at high temperatures.

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**Caterpillars and Maggots** - Found in tins of vegetables, these are killed and sterilised by the canning process and are not harmful.

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**Codworm in white fish** - Some small, yellow-brown coloured worms can be found in white fish, these are killed by cooking and are not harmful.

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**Small stones and soil in fruit and vegetables** - Small stones from the soil attached to fruit and vegetables are relatively common. Wash the item thoroughly before consumption.

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**Bakery char in bakery products** - Overcooked dough may resemble rodent droppings, but this is not harmful.

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**Carbonised grease in bakery products** - Parts of the product may appear greasy, but this is from the machinery used to produce the goods and is not harmful.

## What we will investigate

In some minor cases, a complaint can be dealt with by returning the food to the store it was purchased from, though please note the Food & Safety Team will not get involved in any compensation claims. Compensation claims are a civil matter that you must take up with the manufacturer and, if necessary, through the courts.

Some food safety complaints however warrant investigation by the council. These include:

- Food that is considered a risk to health
- Food that is unfit for consumption
- Food that is mouldy when purchased
- Food that has a foreign object in it

The following complaints are dealt with by our colleagues in the **Trading Standards Department at Staffordshire Council** who can be contacted at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/) or telephone **03454040506**

- Composition of food (such as sausages containing less than the minimum percentage of meat)
- Adulteration of foods
- Labelling offences and misleading claims
- Quality and nature of food (such as pollock being sold as cod)



## How you can assist with complaints

- If you notice an issue with the food while it is still in the container, do not open the container. Keep the food in its original state to preserve the evidence.
- If you notice an issue after opening the container, keep the food alongside it as well as the physical contamination and place this in a suitable container and environment to preserve the evidence. Try and handle the evidence as little as possible.
- Keep all packaging of the item and retain your receipt if that is possible.



## Best Before and Use By

Please note it is not an offence for a business to sell an item past its Best Before date, so long as the quality of the item is not affected, and the consumer is made aware. However, it is an offence to sell food past its Use By date. If you spot a store selling food produce past its Use By date, you should report this to the Food Safety Team. This can be done at [www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/environmental-health/food-and-health-safety/contact-environmental-health](http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/environmental-health/food-and-health-safety/contact-environmental-health).

## Taking Action

In order for the Food Safety Team to take formal action there will have to be:

- A public health risk.
- A good chain of evidence (such as details of where the food was bought, any relevant packaging)
- Evidence that the company concerned has not taken all reasonable steps to prevent the problem.

Without these it is unlikely that we will be able to act. Formal action must also comply with the Council's Enforcement Policy.



## Contact Us

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