

Woking Ranks Lowest in South East for Food Hygiene

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Woking has been named the worst-performing town in the South East of England for food hygiene, according to new data compiled by High Speed Training.

Out of 279 restaurants, cafes, takeaways and other food-serving establishments inspected in the town, Woking received an average hygiene rating of just **4.27 out of 5**. This marks a

decline from the 4.41 recorded in 2024, placing Woking at the bottom of the regional rankings and 52nd out of 59 towns assessed nationally.

The only other Surrey town featured in the study was Guildford, which fared much better. It achieved an average score of 4.63 out of 5 from 244 premises ranking 21st nationwide and highlighting a notable gap in hygiene standards between neighbouring boroughs.

According to the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Woking currently has nine businesses with a zero rating, with a further 28 rated one out of five, and 14 more at two out of five. While the majority of establishments in the town meet acceptable standards, the number of poorly rated venues is disproportionately high.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) was introduced in 2010 to improve transparency and encourage higher standards across the food industry. Ratings are based on food handling, cleanliness, the condition of facilities, and how well businesses manage food safety. These scores are published on the FSA website and are often displayed near the entrance of premises.

In England, it is not mandatory for businesses to display their food hygiene ratings, unlike in Wales and Northern Ireland, where public visibility is legally required.

Cllr Liam Lyons, Woking Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation, responded to the figures in a statement to *SurreyLive*:

"The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme provides a clear and accessible way for the public to make informed choices. It encourages transparency and helps drive up standards... While Woking has an average score of 4.27 out of 5, the data clearly shows that the vast majority of food businesses have good or very good hygiene ratings."

Lyons added that the council's Environmental Health team continues to support local food businesses in improving standards and maintaining compliance. He emphasised that many businesses "take real pride" in their hygiene and are committed to high standards.

Despite Woking's underwhelming figures, High Speed Training noted a slight improvement in national food hygiene scores compared to last year. However, the disparity between towns like Woking and higher-performing areas such as Guildford underscores the need for consistent enforcement and public awareness.

Bolton, in the North East, was ranked the worst overall in the UK, with an average hygiene rating of just 4.08.