

Food Safety Training Programme
on
FOOD ALLERGY
for
Environmental Health Officers

EVALUATION

OF THE PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

A short desk based report carried out by
Michael Walker Consulting
on behalf of the *safefood/CAWT* Project:
A cross border food safety training programme
on food allergy



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Summary

This was a successfully completed programme of work that met its objectives by a combination of good planning, an experienced and innovative training delivery contractor and a knowledgeable, resourceful and committed Project Manager. Its success should be celebrated and the training made available throughout the island of Ireland and beyond. A series of further recommendations is made in paragraph 26 below.

Background

1. The prevalence of food allergy is increasing, a trend that is mirrored in all countries of the developed world. The number of children in the UK with peanut allergy has increased more than 3-fold in the past 12 years from 1 in 200 to 1 in 55. Avoidable deaths, mainly of young people, occur each year and it has been estimated that some three quarters of these deaths occur following anaphylactic episodes in a catering environment. Thus the situation for food allergic consumers could be improved on better appreciation of the issues by both caterers and Environmental Health Officers charged with inspection of catering premises. It is upon this premise that the cross border food safety training programme, the subject of this report, is based.

2. This report evaluates

- Development and delivery of an appropriate education and training programme (as per project brief) for approximately 100 EHOs in both the HSE (ROI) and District Councils (NI) in the Border region within the CAWT area to improve their knowledge and skills in food allergen control.
- Development and delivery of a range of training materials.
- Devise and deliver seven training workshops for all relevant enforcement officers in the CAWT area (approximately 100 EHOs).
- Organise and host a major training conference in the eligible area bringing together all of the key disciplines involved in food allergen risk management.
- Development and delivery of internet/computer-based hazard analysis training materials.
- Development and delivery of a project website linking enforcement / trade / consumer training needs.

3. The independent evaluation is being carried out by 'Michael Walker Consulting' following a tendering process for the evaluation work. Appendix I gives background details on the consultancy. The evaluation is not considered part of a 'Gateway Review' process.

4. The following resources have contributed to the evaluation:
- Proposal to the **safefood**/CAWT Project Board to undertake a food safety training programme on food allergy in the CAWT region.
 - European Union INTERREG IIIA Programme for Ireland and Northern Ireland 2000-2006 Application Priority: 3 Civic and Community Networking Measure: 2 Health and Well-being
 - Rationale: Risk management interventions at catering level for the benefit of the allergic consumer
 - Management Board Meeting minutes
 - CAWT Conference
 - Project Documentation
 - Workshop materials
 - Finance information
 - End of Project Report (4 September 2007) prepared by Dr Ian Leitch
 - Conversation by telephone with the project manager Dr Ian Leitch
 - Checking Safefood website

The evaluation also had the benefit of having attended the project conference on 8 February 2007 at the Dunadry Hotel, Templepatrick, Co. Antrim.

5. This project documentation and organisation was based on the PRINCE 2 approach to project management.

Project Documents

Document	Comment
Project Initiation Document (PID)	The PID is a fit for purpose document containing the main recommended elements.
Project Plans	Three detailed project stage plans were produced and contributed to the success of the project.
Product Description	Contained in the three project stage plans.
Business Case	Detailed and persuasive business cases were made to the Interreg IIIA Programme, CAWT and safefood
Risk Log	The risk log clearly identified risks and owners. It gave an accurate analysis of likelihood and severity and measures to deal with the risks.
Issue Log	This was combined with the Risk Log.
End Project Report	This was a concise and accurate summary of the project.

Assessment of the Key Elements of the Programme

Development and delivery of a range of training materials.

6. The training materials consisted of a delegate workbook with copies of on-line training slides, interactive sections, and self evaluation material. There was also a 'Tutors Notes' workbook.

7. The interactive material included case studies and inspection scenario planning. These were well chosen to reflect the most likely situations that officers will encounter and covered a good range of premises typically inspected in the border counties. These materials were supplemented by realistic, eye-catching and thought provoking display material and hands-on food types for major allergen identification. Examples of notices that could be offered to food premises and comprehensive checklists for both food business managers and inspecting EHOs were also provided.

8. Published guidance documents were also given out and referred to. There was good evidence of careful preparation and planning of the material and of the workshops. Concise aide memoir cards were developed. The eight modules of introductory material to be delivered on-line are considered below.

9. The training material reflected the extensive practical experience of the team chosen to prepare it. It is comprehensive and well thought through. Coupled with thoughtful self assessment questionnaires, and take-home guidance this material should provide officers with the background, confidence and practical tools to make a real difference to the management of allergens in catering and SME food businesses typical of the localities in which the training was delivered.

10. It is also excellent grounding for officers going on to specialise in the area and handle major food businesses and large food production plant.

Devise and deliver seven training workshops for all relevant enforcement officers in the CAWT area (approximately 100 EHOs)

11. Seven workshops were held in 2007, exploring practical allergen control in an enforcement setting, using accelerated learning techniques. There were three in Northern Ireland and four in the Republic of Ireland, as shown in the Table I appended.

12. In total 87 EHOs were trained out of 106 who had expressed interest in the workshops. Both these figures represent an excellent response in a demand led service with many conflicting priorities. Together with the EHOs attending the conference this fulfils the aim of this part of the programme.

13. At the workshops each delegate received a workbook with a range of exercises and case studies and delegates were led through them by the course tutor, Ms. Karen Martin of Hygiene Audit Systems Ltd., UK. The material dealt with the identification of potentially allergenic foods found in catering outlets and the identification of controls that food businesses should reasonably have in place in a catering situation. This was followed by the examination of case studies into allergen related incidents from the perspectives of both the customer and the enforcement officer. Each day's events concluded with a planning session for a campaign to improve allergy awareness in the officer's district and the distribution of printed resource materials. The numbers attending each workshop were ideal for accelerated intensive learning in a complex topic. Particularly useful was the mix of officers from each jurisdiction at every workshop. Learning together, particularly in the innovative, interactive way the workshops provided, is one of the best means of generating enhanced cross border cooperation, not only in allergen issues but across the gamut of food safety and standards work.

14. Satisfaction with the content and delivery of the workshops was high. The workshops were administered and delivered in a very cost effective manner. This generated some niggles concerning arrangements but lessons have been learned from this. Feedback that should be actioned for the future included a need for more clarity on RoI legislation and the need for refresher and update training.

Organise and host a major training conference in the eligible area bringing together all of the key disciplines involved in food allergen risk management

15. The conference was held on 8 February 2007 at the Dunadry Hotel in Co. Antrim. The programme was planned to lead attendees through the scale of, and medical background to, the problem and its impact on allergic consumers, especially young people and children and their families. It then gave information and insights on legislation, followed by a caterer's perspective and an overview of current and future activities for the benefit of those at risk. An important and informative feature was a taster of the interactive material to be delivered in the forthcoming workshops.

16. The speakers represented key UK and RoI individuals and stakeholders organisations in the allergy field and all key disciplines were covered. They delivered well and although there was some minor repetition this only served to emphasise key points from a sufferer's perspective.

17. Attendance was an excellent 155 from 169 registered. The material on offer, the convenience of the venue and the fact that attendance incurred no fee all combined to render this a successful delivery of the required outcome.

18. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the event achieved good publicity in seven newspapers, five radio stations and BBC Newsline, the main local television news.

19. The event followed its training and awareness raising objectives in a wholehearted manner.

Development and delivery of internet/computer based hazard analysis training materials

20. Internet /computer based hazard analysis training materials were developed to enable officers to gain maximum benefit from the workshops. The on-line course began with registration followed by a questionnaire to gauge allergy awareness. This would also have stimulated interest in the subsequent material to fill in evident gaps in knowledge. Eight modules of allergy training were then delivered:

- Introduction – the reason for avoidance and the difference between food allergy, food intolerance and coeliac disease;
- Mechanisms of food allergy;
- Symptoms including fatalities;
- Impact on the daily lives of food allergy sufferers and their families;
- The major food groups that cause food allergy;
- Legislation and the law in NI and RoI;
- Guidance documents available;
- Website based information.

21. This distance learning technique was an excellent and cost effective approach and a good means of engaging officer interest in the workshops. It maximised practical learning at the workshops which in turn maximises retention of course material.

22. Difficulties recorded including blocked access to the on-line material by some organisation's IT security software. This should be investigated further as on-line material will be an increasingly useful means of update training. Some officers did not complete any or all of the on-line training prior to attending workshops, reflecting time constraints and the diverse abilities of officers in IT matters. Again this needs to be investigated in the future.

23. Overall, however, this was a successful, valuable and efficient means of enhancing the benefits of the programme and should form a part of future allergen training delivery.

Development and delivery of a project website linking enforcement/trade/consumer training needs

24. The object was to develop the content and delivery mechanism of a project web site linked to internet based training. It was agreed to host the information on the *safefood* website. The allergy pages were intended to be particularly aimed at food safety professionals, food industry personnel, people with allergies and their carers. Some of the materials which have been developed for the site may be seen on the general *safefood* site at www.safefoodonline.com but this element of the project has suffered from some technical delays and it seems that not all the materials which were developed have been placed on the site. Nevertheless the webpage is accessible at present (accessed 11.11.07) and contains a page of general advice with references to the CAWT project. There are a further two web pages on the project conference, one page on the workshops, a page on allergens and a links page. All the links were operating on access (11.11.07) and are extremely useful. One of the most useful from a catering perspective is 'Catering for allergy – advice from the Anaphylaxis Campaign' www.cateringforallergy.org and this should be more prominent on the home allergy page.

25. There is little information on legislation in RoI and no information on legal matters and case law. Although links are given to key UK Food Standards Agency material none of the material seems specifically pertinent to inspection, advice and enforcement by EHOs in the catering sector in RoI. This is a gap in provision that should be followed up in collaboration with FSAI in addition to posting the material that was developed for inclusion on the site. It would be useful for further training to host the on-line material referred to above as a web-based resource.

Overall Evaluation

Objective	Evidence	Outcome
Development and delivery of an appropriate education and training programme (as per project brief) for approximately 100 EHOs in both the HSE (ROI) and District Councils (NI) in the Border region within the CAWT area to improve their knowledge and skills in food allergen control.	Proposal to the CAWT/ safefood Project Board to undertake a food safety training programme on food allergy in the CAWT region. Management Board Meeting minutes. Conference. Project Documentation. Workshop materials. Finance information. End of Project Report (4 th September 2007) prepared by Dr. Ian Leitch. Conversation by telephone with the project manager Dr. Ian Leitch. Safefood website.	The programme has been successfully developed and delivered. This was a major initiative underpinned by substantial research identifying key areas of need. It marks the beginning of a substantive effort to embed HACCP application to food allergen management in the catering sector by equipping EHOs, the frontline enforcement professionals, to advise, encourage and enforce in a systematic manner and thus contributing to improvements to the quality of life and safety of food allergic individuals. The objectives of the programme have been met.
Development and delivery of a range of training materials.	Training manuals, other training material, project documentation and reports. Evaluation forms from attendees at workshops	Excellent training material has been developed. The objective has been met.
Devise and deliver seven training workshops for all relevant enforcement officers in the CAWT area (approximately 100 EHOs).	Signed attendee lists for each workshop, evaluation forms, project reports and venue invoices. Conversation by telephone with the project manager Dr. Ian Leitch	The workshops were delivered as planned and were a significant success. Interactive practical training was delivered in an innovative and professional manner. The objective has been met.
Organise and host a major training conference in the eligible area bringing together all of the key disciplines involved in food allergen risk management.	Attended conference Conference materials Feedback forms Informal Post Conference dialogue with stakeholders Media	A major awareness raising and training event that attracted informed speakers who delivered well. The audience included enforcement, food industry especially catering, teaching, regulators, healthcare students and consultants. The event generated good publicity and the conference pack and hospitality were excellent. The objective has been met.

Objective	Evidence	Outcome
Development and delivery of internet/computer-based hazard analysis training materials.	Project documentation and reports, evaluation forms. Conversation by telephone with the project manager Dr. Ian Leitch	The material was developed and successfully deployed for the vast majority of officers. The objective has been met.
Development and delivery of a project website linking enforcement / trade / consumer training needs.	Project documentation and reports; Conversation by telephone with the project manager Dr. Ian Leitch and the website itself.	The objective has been met. However the web material should be further developed.
Conduct final evaluation	End of Project Report (4 September 2007) prepared by Dr. Ian Leitch	A clear and informative report. The objective has been met.

Recommendations

26. It would detract from the value of this evaluation if it did not distil some recommendations and these are offered for consideration by the Project Executive and Project Board.

1. The training and approach, with lessons learned, should be rolled out throughout the island of Ireland mindful in particular of the feedback that included a need for more clarity on RoI legislation and the need for refresher and update training. The programme should be compared with the training offered by the UK FSA for the mutual benefit of both. The PID for a future roll-out should be expanded to include a section on stakeholders.
2. The experience gained should be shared for example by a peer reviewed publication on the programme; liaison with appropriate authorities in other countries in the European community, via DG Sanco and EFSA, and for example, FDA in the US, Health Canada, the Food Standards Agency of Australia and New Zealand... and consideration should be given to publication of this evaluation report on the **safefood** website.
3. Difficulties of blocked access to the on-line material by some organisation's IT security software should be investigated as on-line material will be an increasingly useful means of update training. A web-based resource hosted by **safefood** should be investigated.
4. A small number of officers did not complete any or all of the on-line training prior to attending workshops, reflecting time constraints and the diverse IT abilities of officers. Again, this needs to be investigated in the future.
5. Further training should be developed for officers going on to specialise in food allergy and handle major food businesses and large food production plant.
6. Allergen pages on the *Safefood* website should be developed including the posting of material developed for this programme.
7. The success of the programme should be celebrated.

Table I

Location, date and Venue	Attendees			Satisfaction
	EHOs NI	EHOs RoI	Other	
Letterkenny 18.04.07 Business development Centre, Institute of Technology	6	5	1 (Student)	High
Omagh, 19.04.07 Council Offices	6	6		High
Dundalk, 22.05.07 Louth County Hospital	7	7		High
Monaghan, 23.05.07 St Davnet's Hospital	5	11	1 (Student)	High
Armagh, 24.05.07 The Market Place Theatre	5	6		High
Sligo, 13.06.07 Sligo General Hospital	2	8		High
Enniskillen, 14.06.07 The Ardhowen Theatre	6	7		High
Total	37	50	2	

Appendix I

Michael Walker Consulting

Michael Walker – Consulting Analytical Scientist is part of an informal alliance that, with **Analytical Services and Environmental Projects Unit (ASEP)** offers a unique combination of:

- Extensive experience of:
- General analytical chemistry of Food, Water, Air and Consumer protection;
- Scientific enforcement analysis;
- Environmental analysis;
- Access to the most up-to-date analytical equipment;
- Expert witness experience for prosecution, defence, plaintiff and respondent in criminal and civil proceedings;
- Sampling – solids, water, air, emissions;
- Local knowledge - based in Northern Ireland but with extensive business contacts throughout the UK and the island of Ireland.

Michael Walker, MChemA, has over 25 years experience in Food, Water, Air and general analytical chemistry, including alcohol, allergens and drugs. He was the resident public analyst for the 26 local authorities of Northern Ireland from 1986 to 2004. His practice services the Government Chemist function in LGC, the largest independent private sector provider of analytical and forensic services in Europe, food and other industry sectors, enforcement bodies, the legal profession and private clients. He has an extensive record of service on public bodies including the Consumer Council, the Food Standards Agency and the Food Safety Promotion Board. He has supplemented this with recent experience of the management of a public sector organisation of 170 staff and an £8M annual budget, as Chief Executive of Forensic Science Northern Ireland.

The **Analytical Services and Environmental Projects Unit (ASEP)** is a commercial organisation operating within the School of Chemistry in The Queen's University of Belfast. The unit has offered a wide range of analytical services to industry for many years and has developed particular expertise in the area of environmental monitoring. The unit evolved out of the internal analytical laboratory necessary to service the Chemistry Department. From that starting point, it has developed to its present position, where the majority of its work is for external clients.