# Waltham Forest leads UK with highest per capita zero-star food hygiene ratings



Recent investigations have unveiled Waltham Forest in east London as Britain’s area with the most alarming food hygiene standards. In a comprehensive analysis conducted by MailOnline, concerning data from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Office for National Statistics was examined, highlighting the appalling rates of zero-star food establishments—those deemed to require urgent improvement.

The findings revealed that Waltham Forest boasts a staggering 76 zero-rated businesses in an area with a population of approximately 275,980, translating to a shocking rate of 27.5 zero-star establishments per 100,000 residents. This is alarmingly higher than Westminster, the next worst area, which has only 13.7 zero-rated sites per 100,000. The FSA advocates for all food businesses to aim for at least a three-star rating, underscoring the dire reality faced by consumers in Waltham Forest, where one in every 25 eateries is classified as a threat to public health.

During visits to some of these takeaways, disturbing hygiene practices were evident. At a local taco restaurant, the owner used their bare hands to manipulate raw meat, while debris and dirt were prevalent in other shops, highlighting systemic neglect of food safety standards. Community leaders are increasingly vocal about these shortcomings. The Deputy Leader of the local Conservative party, Afzal Akram, lambasted the council for ignoring these zero-rated eateries when it should be prioritising public health issues over revenue from parking fines. Waltham Forest accrued £6.3 million in parking fines last year, diverting attention from the urgent need to enhance food hygiene practices.

Waltham Forest’s poor food hygiene ratings are not outliers but indicative of a broader trend. Recent statistics show that 11.47% of the borough’s food establishments have been rated zero or one star, starkly contrasting with the national average. Moreover, a report indicated that 95 businesses within the area had received the lowest rating, underlining the necessity for stricter food safety measures. This dismal performance places Waltham Forest at the bottom of the food hygiene rankings in the UK, where the average rating stands at 3.77 out of 5—well below the London average of 4.34.

The situation is compounded by reports of misrepresentation, where 27 establishments were found to falsely display higher ratings than officially recorded. Such discrepancies heighten public health risks and underscore the need for rigorous enforcement of food safety regulations. Local authorities claim to follow FSA guidance in their inspections and enforcement; however, the community remains sceptical about their commitment to addressing these urgent issues.

Waltham Forest is not alone in struggling with food hygiene. Surrounding councils, including Camden and Newham, also feature poorly in food safety rankings, reflecting a troubling trend across London. In contrast, areas like Birmingham, while having the highest number of zero-rated stores, have a lower rate per capita due to their larger population. This indicates that the scale of the issue in Waltham Forest is particularly acute, necessitating immediate action from local authorities.

Despite assurances from council officials that efforts are being made to address these concerns, the visible conditions in several establishments tell a different story. Local businesses have come under scrutiny for their hygiene practices, with some owners claiming they are unaware of their ratings contrary to the official listings. This discrepancy points to a widespread ignorance or neglect of food safety standards that could have dire repercussions for public health.

As the community grapples with these alarming food hygiene issues, the interplay between local government accountability and business compliance remains pivotal. Calls for inquiry into the handling of zero-rated establishments continue to grow, suggesting that without significant intervention, the frightening state of food hygiene in Waltham Forest is likely to persist.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.canalitv.com.br/noticias/worst-place-in-the-uk-for-food-standards-with-streets-riddled-with-zero-rated-takeaways-and-shops/33386/), [[3]](https://foodowl.co.uk/news/london/waltham-forest/zero-food-hygiene-rating)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.canalitv.com.br/noticias/worst-place-in-the-uk-for-food-standards-with-streets-riddled-with-zero-rated-takeaways-and-shops/33386/), [[2]](https://foodowl.co.uk/blog/food-hygiene-rating-statistics), [[4]](https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/06/29/waltham-forest-has-worst-average-food-hygiene-ratings-in-uk/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://foodowl.co.uk/blog/food-hygiene-rating-statistics), [[5]](https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/12/28/nine-waltham-forest-restaurants-receive-minimum-food-hygiene-rating/), [[6]](https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2024/10/07/27-waltham-forest-stores-lied-about-food-hygiene-ratings/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://foodowl.co.uk/blog/food-hygiene-rating-statistics), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/london-waltham-forest-uk-food-hygeine-rating-best-worst-results-b1170349.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.canalitv.com.br/noticias/worst-place-in-the-uk-for-food-standards-with-streets-riddled-with-zero-rated-takeaways-and-shops/33386/), [[6]](https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2024/10/07/27-waltham-forest-stores-lied-about-food-hygiene-ratings/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://foodowl.co.uk/news/london/waltham-forest/zero-food-hygiene-rating), [[5]](https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/12/28/nine-waltham-forest-restaurants-receive-minimum-food-hygiene-rating/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.canalitv.com.br/noticias/worst-place-in-the-uk-for-food-standards-with-streets-riddled-with-zero-rated-takeaways-and-shops/33386/), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/london-waltham-forest-uk-food-hygeine-rating-best-worst-results-b1170349.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.canalitv.com.br/noticias/worst-place-in-the-uk-for-food-standards-with-streets-riddled-with-zero-rated-takeaways-and-shops/33386/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://foodowl.co.uk/blog/food-hygiene-rating-statistics> - An analysis of food hygiene ratings across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland reveals that Waltham Forest has the highest percentage of zero and one-rated food establishments, with 11.47% of its 1,996 food-based businesses rated as such. This indicates a significant concern regarding food hygiene standards in the area.
3. <https://foodowl.co.uk/news/london/waltham-forest/zero-food-hygiene-rating> - A report highlights that 95 establishments in Waltham Forest have received a 'zero' food hygiene rating, the lowest possible score. This rating signifies that urgent improvements are necessary, emphasizing the critical need for enhanced food safety measures in the borough.
4. <https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/06/29/waltham-forest-has-worst-average-food-hygiene-ratings-in-uk/> - Waltham Forest has the lowest average food hygiene rating in the UK, with an average score of 3.77 out of 5. This is significantly below the London average of 4.34, highlighting the borough's challenges in maintaining food safety standards.
5. <https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2023/12/28/nine-waltham-forest-restaurants-receive-minimum-food-hygiene-rating/> - In November, nine establishments in Waltham Forest received a zero-out-of-five food hygiene rating. These include restaurants and takeaways in Walthamstow and Leyton, indicating ongoing concerns about food safety in the area.
6. <https://walthamforestecho.co.uk/2024/10/07/27-waltham-forest-stores-lied-about-food-hygiene-ratings/> - An investigation found that 27 stores in Waltham Forest misrepresented their food hygiene ratings, displaying higher ratings than they actually received. This deception underscores the need for stricter enforcement of food safety regulations in the borough.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/london-waltham-forest-uk-food-hygeine-rating-best-worst-results-b1170349.html> - A report reveals that London has the worst food hygiene rating in the UK, with Waltham Forest being the lowest-ranked borough. The average food hygiene rating in the borough is 3.74 out of 5, below the London average of 4.36.