

Dr Andy Bowles

My job title is “Specialist Food Law Solicitor”.

Food industry experience

I started my working career as a laboratory technician at Unigate Dairies (later Dairy Crest Dairies) performing routine microbiological and chemical tests on dairy products. I moved into Quality Assurance and as Quality Assurance Manager was responsible for the design and implementation of the company’s HACCP system. I also had a spell as “Product Service Manager” where I was responsible for the purchase of all ingredients and packaging which gave me a good insight into the workings, and failures, of the supply chain.

Environmental Health

One function of my job at the dairy was to deal with consumer and local authority complaints. I was in regular contact with local Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers and when the opportunity came, I went to work at the London Borough of Enfield, Environmental Health Department. Initially I was employed as a Technical Officer to undertake inspections of the local food manufacturers, but I was fortunate enough to be awarded several promotions to Team Leader then Group Manager (Food Safety) and then as acting Head of Environmental Health (Commercial). My time at Enfield involved the routine inspection of food businesses from take-aways to manufacturers, the investigation of food poisoning outbreaks and prosecution of food offenders.

University lecturer

I left Enfield to take up a position as Programme Manager (Food Safety) at Middlesex University where I lectured food law, science and technology on the BSc and MSc Environmental Health degree programmes. Part of my job involved running Continual Professional Development (CPD) courses for Environmental Health and Trading Standards staff and after a couple of years I decided to do this full time through ABC Food Safety, a company that I set up with my wife Sharon.

Continuing Professional Development

I spent over 10 years running CPD courses around the UK, mostly on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), on topics ranging from Imported Food Control to Criminal Investigations and pretty much every food law related topic in between. I was also seconded to the FSA to help write the Food Law Code of Practice and to assist with the audit of local authorities. In recent years I also revised the Food Standards Agency’s “MyHACCP” online food safety management tool and designed and delivered national consistency exercises for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Qualifications

As well as a lecturer, it is fair to say that throughout my career I have been a life-long learner. I completed all of my higher education by part-time study as this has included: BSc (hons) Life Sciences, MSc Microbiology, BSc (Hons) Environmental Health, PgDip Health & Safety, PgDip Acoustics and Noise Control and PhD Food Law. I qualified as a solicitor in 2015 having completed both the Graduate Diploma in Law and legal Practice Course.

Memberships

I am a member of the Law Society and a Fellow of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (FIFST). I am also a Member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (MCIEH) and a home and away Norwich City FC season ticket holder.

Specialist Food Law Solicitor

I set up ABC Food Law with Sharon, who is also a solicitor, as a niche legal practice specialising in food law. I still regularly run food law training sessions, but these days I confine the classroom training to our facility at Norwich City Football Club and regularly run online webinars.

So, what does my job involve? Well I spend much of my time advising businesses on matters such as food labelling and, in particular, the use of health and nutrition claims on labels, websites and social media. I regularly advise on food hygiene issues, imported food, novel foods, food supplements, use of additives and suitability of packaging materials.

I can, of course, advise on more traditional legal topics but I try to use my food experience to tailor such advice to make it relevant to my client's needs. For example, one area that I often get involved in is the drafting of supply and purchase contracts or dispute resolution when such matters go wrong. I also draft employment contracts, website terms and conditions and privacy policies.

I regularly work with local authorities, drafting enforcement notices, providing written legal opinions, reviewing prosecution files and prosecuting in the Magistrates Court on their behalf.

How much do I charge?

I am a firm believer in transparent and realistic pricing. I charge a fixed fee of £295 + vat for a food label review and this includes a full written compliance report and 28 days consultancy to help achieve compliance. Additional labels submitted at the same time cost just £95 + vat each.

Some of my clients like to use my services on a monthly plan whereby they can ask questions as and when they arise. These plans are available from as little as £300 + vat per month (for 2 hours advice per month) Others prefer to engage me on a particular project on a fixed fee basis. I will always quote in advance of undertaking any work.

Contact

If you would like to discuss using my services. Please contact me at andy.bowles@abcfoodlaw.co.uk