

Toby Hattersley



Toby Hattersley is a Technical Services Manager at Greencore, a leading manufacturer of convenience foods, employing around 11,000 people at sites in the UK. He works at the company's Kiveton site.

What is your current job title and what does it involve?

I manage a team of seven which includes a Senior Raw Material Quality Assurance (QA), three Raw Material QAs, one internal auditor and two office based colleagues who deal with Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting and customer enquiries. Under my management the team is responsible for the quality and safety of the ingredients and packaging we use and the specifications of our ingredients. We also ensure Greencore is meeting legislative and retailer requirements by auditing against the policies and standards in place. And finally, we report our KPIs within Greencore and to all our customers.

Thinking back to school days, did you know what you wanted to become?

Not exactly. I just knew it would be something scientific, as that was what I most enjoyed. Whilst I took the three sciences at 'A' level, it was biology that really held my interest and led me on to a degree in Microbiology at Sheffield University.

What were/are your main interests, e.g. science in general, food technology, microbiology, nutrition, something else?

My main interest is in microbiology, especially the effect microorganisms can have on us, and their uses. In my current role this relates mainly to food safety but my broader scientific experience and knowledge is also invaluable with nutritional issues and problem solving.

What qualifications do you have? GCSEs? A Levels? Degree(s)/other?

I have a BSc in Microbiology. However, my learning did not stop there; once I started working, I was fortunate to have employers keen to help employees expand their knowledge through training. I have attended many courses including food hygiene, HACCP, horizon scanning, management skills and many more.

In rough outline, what was your job pathway – companies and job titles, plus anything of particular note, e.g. level of responsibility, exposure to any particular developments/issues?

I have been at the Kiveton site for over 20 years. I started when it was ET Sutherlands, which was bought by Hazlewood Foods and then Greencore.

I started as a Laboratory Technician, responsible for the day to day testing of product and environmental samples. This was mostly microbiology but

I was also trained to analyse food chemistry. I became a Laboratory Supervisor, responsible for the day to day smooth running of the laboratory.

Fortunately, my managers saw my potential, suggesting I move out of the lab into a broader site role as Technical Services Manager. I still cover the laboratory when the Lab Manager is away.

This interesting role involves retailer and supplier contact, I have to react to issues that affect the site (examples being horsemeat and bird flu), to avoid the site being impacted and to demonstrate compliance with retailer and legislative requirements.

I visit suppliers to build relationships – by working together we improve quality and reduce risks. It's always good to see other factories in operation, for inspiration and new perspectives.

I'm currently on secondment, which includes various projects across the group. By working with talented people I am learning from their experience, which is a benefit to Greencore and myself.

What were your aspirations when starting your career and what are they now?

Initially, I thought I'd work in a research laboratory progressing up to a manager level, but that changed with my first job in the food sector. Greencore has plenty of opportunities to follow different paths.

The logical choice, and the one I enjoy the most, is in technical – especially the role in Technical Services, which involves contact with people in different departments and companies. I enjoy what I do and feel I make a difference.

What single piece of advice would you offer someone curious about working in the Sector?

Take the advice of your manager. Take opportunities as they come up, if they interest you. Don't be afraid of change. If you are willing to work hard and adapt, you can advance in a rewarding, fulfilling career.

There's a lot more to the food industry than you may think; it's not just creating recipes. There's a job for just about everyone in roles including, for example: Technical, NPD, Process, Supplier Approval, HR, Purchasing, IT, Engineers, Specifications, Laboratory, Innovation and Operations.

What would you say to encourage them further? i.e. what are the best bits?

I think we are a long way off from the domestic replicators of Star Trek! So, there is plenty of time for a long and fulfilling career in food. Though we might just be eating protein from a different source in the future.

People will always need to eat and they like to eat tasty, safe, food.

There will be challenges that make headlines, but that is what makes the job interesting and it gives you an enormous amount of satisfaction when you resolve them with your colleagues.