

Community Safety and Wellbeing

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The Manager/Food
Business Operator

Our Ref: Covid-19 Pandemic Food Health & Safety Advice Retailers

Date:

Dear Sir or Madam

Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
Food Safety Act 1990
Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

[ADDRESS]

During these difficult times there are many businesses that have remained open to support the community providing food and essential items to local residents.

Some of you will have converted your operations to delivery and takeaway services, you may be a retailer or a community kitchen or food bank, whatever type of business you are, you must ensure that you comply with the Food, Health and Safety Law.

Please take some time to read through the advice provided in the links below and below, and apply it to your food business activities.

Food Registered: You must register as a food business with the council. If you are not registered, go to <https://register.food.gov.uk/new/ashford>. There is no cost.

Fitness to work: The Food Standards Agency's [fitness for work](#) guidance for staff who handle food products provides advice on managing sickness in a food business. Understanding this guidance and applying it on both a personal and business level can help to prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Managing Sickness: If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in the business or workplace they should be sent home and advised to follow the [stay at home guidance](#). If you or an employee are experiencing symptoms, visit NHS 111 online or call 111 if there is no internet access. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms



themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

Keeping your business operating: Provided you can operate your business in a way that enables all relevant government guidance and food and health & safety laws to be implemented, including social distancing, it is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home, unless government policy changes. You should keep monitoring the [government response to coronavirus](#) for further updates.

Social Distancing: The Government advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone. You need to minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of 2 meters between individuals. This includes staff working in your business.

Hand washing: Ensure staff are handwashing regularly and basins provided with warm running water, anti-bacterial soap and paper towels.

Hands should be washed regularly:

- ⊗ On arrival at work
- ⊗ Before handling any food
- ⊗ After handling raw food
- ⊗ After touching anything that customers, staff or delivery drivers may have contaminated
- ⊗ After touching hand contact surfaces such as handrails, door handles
- ⊗ Always after using the toilet or going into the toilet areas
- ⊗ After touching your face, sneezing or coughing
- ⊗ In between **ALL** tasks
- ⊗ After cleaning, using the toilet, smoking, handling and opening packaging, money, receipts and cleaning supplies, handling refuse
- ⊗ After removing gloves and aprons and before putting on new ones
- ⊗ Any time your hands are contaminated

Personal Hygiene Rules:

- ⊗ Wear clean protective clothing
- ⊗ If you have a skin, nose or throat problem or an infected wound, do not handle unwrapped food.
- ⊗ If you have a stomach upset, do not handle food for at least 48hrs after you are free of symptoms.
- ⊗ Ensure that cuts, spots or sores are covered with a brightly coloured waterproof plaster.
- ⊗ Do not smoke, eat or drink where open food is handled.
- ⊗ Clean as you go - keep all equipment and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- ⊗ Avoid unnecessary handling of food.

Training: All food handlers must be trained or supervised to an appropriate level, depending on the type of food handled. If your business involves the handling of high-risk foods, such as meat products, dairy products, fish or shellfish, it is strongly advised that you obtain the equivalent of the CIEH Level 2 (Foundation) Award in Food Safety.

Food safety management system: A documented Food Safety Management system (also known as Hazard Analysis or HACCP) is a legal requirement and an essential part of ensuring food safety. You need to consider in detail how you prepare and handle foodstuffs from purchase of ingredients to serving customers, identify what food safety



hazards exist at each stage and put appropriate controls/procedures in place to prevent these hazards.

For businesses providing, preparing or selling high-risk foods – which can include retail businesses if you are preparing (baking off) pastries or open foods such as cakes and bread, or operate a delicatessen or meat counter for example, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has produced a pack entitled 'Safer Food, Better Business' to help you comply.

You can download a copy of the pack from the FSA website at:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/sfbb-catering-2019.pdf>

or

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-for-retailers>

Reputable Suppliers: all food must be sourced from reputable suppliers, this may prove particularly challenging with food supply chains under pressure keeping up with demand. Traceability of all your food products coming in and going out is a legal requirement.

Stock Control: Fresh high risk foods or other perishable products have a 'use by' date on them. Check these daily and make sure that food beyond its use by date is discarded. Follow the manufacturers' guidance on storage and shelf life.

Ambient shelf stable products do not require refrigeration but must be stored in a cool dry hygienic space away from direct sunlight and away from any potential pest damage. These products will have a 'best before' date on them. They can be used after the best before date has expired **provided** they have not been previously opened and there is no evidence of damage to the packaging. There will be no food safety risk but the quality may start to deteriorate.

Safe temperatures: If your business involves preparation, handling or storage of high-risk foods, effective temperature control is one of the most important safeguards for controlling the growth of food poisoning organisms and preventing food poisoning. High risk foods are those that can support the growth of bacteria, including food poisoning bacteria.

- **High risk foods include:** Dairy products; foods containing cooked meat/poultry/fish/eggs and cooked vegetable products (including rice); prepared ready-to-eat vegetables and prepared salads containing mayonnaise or coleslaw; most smoked or cured meat; and fish and shellfish.
- **Chilled foods:** High-risk and vacuum packed foods must be kept at or below 8°C, preferably below 5°C, during storage, transport and display for sale. It is good practice to keep raw meats and raw meat products below 5°C. This can be achieved using refrigerated vehicles and refrigerated display units or suitable insulated containers with sufficient ice packs. Raw fish should be displayed under ice which should be regularly topped up.
- **Cooking food:** Meats/poultry and products containing these must be thoroughly cooked to at least 75°C. A food probe thermometer can be used to confirm this - disinfect between uses.
- **Hot holding:** High-risk foods held hot for service after cooking must be kept at a temperature at or above 63°C.
- **Cooling Foods:** Batch cooking and cooling of foods must be done safely. It is important to make sure foods are cooled rapidly to below 8°C within 90 minutes and then cooled to below 5°C within 90 minutes.



minutes but no longer than 2 hours. Ice baths, decanting into small portions, cold running water, and blast chilling are a few of the different ways that can be used to achieve this.

- **Frozen food:** The recommended operating temperature for freezers is between -18°C and -21°C.

Temperature monitoring: Regular temperature checks are imperative to ensure that foods are being kept at safe temperatures. You will need a suitable thermometer(s) and food safe probe wipes. You should keep a record of your temperature checks as you will need to provide evidence of correct temperature control.

The law allows for a one-off period of up to a maximum of 4 hours during which high-risk foods can be displayed for sale unrefrigerated. Food not sold or delivered after that time cannot be safely re-chilled for later use.

Food intended to be kept longer term for future sale, must be chilled below 8°C or be thrown away. The food must not be displayed again at a temperature above 8°C.

Hot food can be displayed for sale at a temperature below 63°C for a single period of up to 2 hours. If it has not been used, or consumed by that time, it must be discarded. It is, however, much safer to keep high-risk foods at safe temperatures at all times.

Where you are relying on the '4 hour' or '2 hour' time periods identified above, it is essential you have a reliable control system in place and be able to demonstrate clearly that the permitted display times have not been exceeded.

Cross-contamination: Measures must be put in place to prevent cross-contamination during preparation, storage or service of food:

- ⊖ Food preparation areas should be designated for separate raw and ready to eat food production where possible or production should be separated by time and disinfection.
- ⊖ Colour coded chopping boards should be used according to task and purple boards are now available for allergen use. They must be cleaned/disinfected after use.
- ⊖ Raw and cooked food should be kept separate at all times, raw food should always be stored below cooked food, ideally separate refrigerators should be used.
- ⊖ Clean sinks after washing/preparing vegetables and raw food.
- ⊖ Avoid unnecessary touching/handling of food, use tongs or serving equipment.
- ⊖ All equipment including knives and containers should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- ⊖ Equipment for handling raw and ready to eat food must be washed and stored separately.
- ⊖ Disinfect all cloths regularly and replace as soon as they become worn/damaged. The use of disposable cloths and paper towels is recommended.
- ⊖ Food must not be stored on the ground and must be kept away from risk of contamination.
- ⊖ Equipment/utensils/crockery should be stored hygienically and kept free from contamination.
- ⊖ Protect food from pests (insects, birds and rodents).
- ⊖ Do not wash raw meat.

Allergens: As the person preparing and providing the food, you have very clear responsibilities to make sure your customers know if any of the 14 identified



be in the food you are supplying. This includes them being in sauces or flavourings you may have added to your recipe.

You must make allergen information easily available to your customers and the best time to do this is at the time of their order, but you are also strongly advised to include information about allergens on each item of food you supply.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/recipe-sheet.pdf><https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/allergen-chart.pdf>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/allergen-signage.pdf>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf>

<http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/food-allergies.pdf>

Washing facilities – hand and equipment: Effective hand and equipment washing is essential where open foods are handled to prevent food becoming contaminated with bacteria that can cause illness. Where open foods are sold the law requires that:

- Suitable and sufficient hand wash facilities must be provided for use by food handlers. A separate designated hand wash basin with hot and cold (or suitably mixed) running water, supplies of antibacterial soap and hygienic hand drying facilities must be available.
- Suitable facilities must also be provided for cleaning utensils and equipment and, where relevant, washing of food. An adequate supply of hot and cold (or suitably mixed) running water must be provided as well as supplies of cleaning and disinfection materials.

Cleaning and Disinfection: Supplies of a suitable detergent and food grade disinfectant or sanitising agent should be used for the regular cleaning and disinfection of equipment and work surfaces. If you handle raw and ready-to-eat foods you must use a disinfectant that meets the British Standards BS EN 1276:1997 or BS EN 13697:2001. Hazardous substances, including certain cleaning materials, must be used and stored in a safe manner.

Equipment: All articles, fittings and equipment with which food comes into contact shall be kept clean and be constructed of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition, as to minimise the risk of contamination.

The construction of all articles, fittings and equipment must enable them to be kept thoroughly cleaned and where necessary, disinfected, sufficient for the purpose intended. The installation of all articles, fittings and equipment should allow adequate cleaning of the surrounding area.

Adequate provision must be made for the cleaning and where necessary disinfecting of work utensils and equipment.

Water supply: Water used for food preparation and hand and equipment cleaning must be obtained from a safe drinking water supply.



Transportation: Food deliveries must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable containers to prevent contamination. Vehicles and containers should be kept clean and in good repair. If the vehicle is used for other purposes, it should be thoroughly cleaned before use. High-risk foods must be kept at a safe temperature.

Structure: All food surfaces must be of sound construction enabling effective cleaning. Choose ceiling, wall and floor finishes that are smooth, hard-wearing and washable. Floors should be non-slip. Surfaces used for preparing or displaying food must be smooth and impervious to allow them to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Suitable ventilation and lighting should be provided as appropriate.

Refuse: Provide a bin for food waste and other rubbish. Adequate provision must be made for the removal and storage of food waste and other refuse.

Pest control: Food businesses are required to take all reasonable precautions to prevent food pests, namely rats, mice, cockroaches and flying insects gaining entry into food storage and preparation areas. This is to prevent the contamination of foodstuffs. Check that you have done the following:

- ⊖ Any gaps and holes to external doors, windows, pipes, drains etc. must be filled or covered with a solid, durable material in order to minimise pest entry points into food preparation and storage areas.
- ⊖ You should regularly check for any evidence of pests and call in a reputable pest control company if any signs are seen.

Removing Pests: You can search for a company on the [British Pest Control Association](#) (BPCA website)

Protecting your food while cooking and packing: All food must be protected against contamination. This means being very careful to make sure physical objects like hair, or chemicals like bleach or cleaning agents don't get in it.

To reduce the risks from bacterial contamination it is essential raw foods are kept in completely different containers from the ready to eat food.

Food Containers: It is recommended you do not re-use containers. If however you do intend to collect and reuse them, you must take careful precautions:

- ⊖ Keep the used containers completely separate from any bags or containers you are using for delivering food to your customers.
- ⊖ As soon as practicable thoroughly clean and disinfect them prior to re-use. Use high temperatures and / or sanitiser and where possible allow the containers to air dry.
- ⊖ Store so they are away from risk of contamination before reuse.

Insulated boxes/bags: High risk ready to eat foods must be kept covered using lidded containers – preferably insulated boxes or bags - with the food inside tightly wrapped using cellophane/aluminium foil tightly wrapped over the plate/bowl of food. Only use food grade disposable containers. All containers, insulated boxes / bags / trays must be cleaned and disinfected between deliveries.

Hot food deliveries: Deliver your hot food in insulated containers to keep hot and make sure it reaches the customer as soon as possible, ideally within 30 minutes but no longer than 2 hours.



Delivery vehicles: All vehicles used for deliveries must be well maintained and kept clean.

Personal Hygiene: All staff must practice the highest standards of personal hygiene at all times. After each delivery staff must sanitise their hands on return to their vehicle and thoroughly clean them on return to the business premises.

Particular COVID-19 precautions: There is a lot of advice for businesses and the public for individual protection during these extraordinary times. The government has issued guidance on COVID-19 for employees and businesses.

This guidance is not specific for food businesses, but it does advise the public that if they have been asked to self-isolate, they should only order food by phone or online and should ask the delivery driver that the items are to be left outside, or as appropriate at your home.

For you operating your business, you must have a system in place whereby customers can notify you that they are self-isolating. In particular:

- ⊖ Check at the time of the order if your customer is self-isolating. Do not place your delivery agents at risk.

- ⊖ Staff should not enter customers' properties and should keep as far away from them as is possible when handing over the food. Consider leaving deliveries at the door. Knock on the door, step back at least 2 metre and wait nearby for your customer to collect it.

- ⊖ Take payment over the phone or via internet ordering. If in exceptional circumstances this is not possible staff must either wear single use disposable gloves and / or sanitise their hands after each transaction.

Social distancing (PHE Guidance)

Whether you have decided to operate from your retail shop, or start providing deliveries the advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone.

You need to minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of 2 meters between individuals. **This includes staff working in your business.** It may mean you have to change how you normally work so you can keep everyone safe.

Retail Food Shops: Retail food shops need to help reduce the spread of this virus. This includes avoiding crowding and create adequate spacing between individuals. Effective measures to support this will vary by store and location but could include:

- ⊖ **Buy what you need:** Reminding customers to only buy what they need
- ⊖ **Clear signs:** Use clear signs outside your shop asking customers not to enter the shop if they have symptoms of COVID-19
- ⊖ **Control number of customers:** Work out how many people can safely be in your shop at a time so you can maintain the 2 meter minimum distance between them.
- ⊖ Then regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded
- ⊖ **Use floor markings:** This may be inside the shop area, and may also be needed outside so your customers can safely wait to enter your shop.
- ⊖ **Control the 'flow' of customers around your shop:** It is really important you think about how you can do this particularly in the most crowded or narrow areas of your shop to include serving counters and tills.
- ⊖ It may help to use signs which direct your customers into lanes, and may mean they need to go 'one way' round your shop so that you can do your best to give them space to move round your shop and keep the 2 meter distance



- ⌘ **Talk to your customers – advise them:** Whenever possible, make announcements reminding them to follow social distancing advice and clean their hands regularly. This protects them, and your staff.
- ⌘ **Barriers:** Consider placing plexiglass (or similar) barriers at tills and counters. This can add extra protection for both your staff and customers
- ⌘ **Contactless payments:** Encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers.
- ⌘ **Hand washing:** Where you do accept cash make sure your staff have access to good sanitizer or hand washing facilities which they can easily access between customers.
- ⌘ **Restocking shelves:** Try to arrange to restock shelving when the business is closed to avoid congestion in the aisles.

Further information on [social distancing and adults who are at increased risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

This advice applies to both inside the food business where your customers shop, your stock rooms and in the external public areas where customers may need to queue.

Remember to:

- ⌘ Keep monitoring the number of customers and limit where necessary limit access to avoid congestion.
- ⌘ Implement a good queue management systems to limit too many people gathering at entrances, so everyone can stick to the 2 meters distance advice.

All businesses will be different: Your store manager needs to think about this very carefully, and be prepared to change or make improvements to make sure you offer maximum protection for staff, customers and; where queuing is on the public pavement, you must also consider the passing pedestrians and not block their along the street.

Examples of Retailer signage can be found on these links:

<https://www.acs.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-posters-retailers>

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-coronavirus-resources/5016>

Food Delivery Considerations: To reduce the number of people coming to your shop, you may consider taking orders and doing some deliveries.

You must not enter customers' properties and should keep 2 meters away from customers when handing over the food.

It is advisable to provide your delivery staff with gloves, or access to effective sanitiser or hand washing facilities. For more information about deliveries, please refer to our advisory sheet dealing specifically with deliveries.

Infection control: You have responsibilities to ensure food handlers are fit for work under the food hygiene regulations. In addition you have a general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of persons in your employment and members of the public.



Relevant staff must be provided with clear instructions on any infection control policy in place.

Managing the Health & Safety of your staff

As an employer you have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to protect employees and members of the public from harm within the workplace.

You are required to introduce the public health social distancing measures to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace and protect your staff and customers.

The best place to start is with doing a 'Risk assessment'. This means stopping to think about how you are working and if you have put safe systems in place to protect the staff and those affected by your actions – so that includes your customers. This means thinking about:

- ⊖ **Number of staff:** You may need to consider a reduction of employees working at one time or agree revised shift patterns with employees, where both parties are in agreement. This is to allow spacing out and applying the social distancing advice.
- ⊖ **Personal protective equipment:** You may need to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) refer to www.gov.uk for current advice.
- ⊖ **It may not be safe to operate your business:** You may need to close the business where risks cannot be managed or mitigated.

There is a lot more helpful advice available on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

Food, Health and Safety Team

