

## Coronavirus (COVID-19):

### Environmental Health – Food Safety Advice For Businesses

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We understand that food businesses may look to change their business model and diversify to maintain business during this difficult time.

The following advice is for those food businesses and community groups that are looking to make provision for the preparation of takeaways (hot meals for immediate consumption), ready to eat meals for consumption at a later date and food deliveries, including hampers. If you are not already registered with the Highland Council as a food business you should [complete a registration form](#). If you are already registered, then we would ask you to notify us of this change. This advice should be used in conjunction with, and to supplement your business's own food safety management system. It is a legal requirement that all food businesses have a food safety management system in place and we would strongly recommend you adopt [Cooksafe](#), which can be downloaded from Food Standards Scotland.

There is currently no evidence that food is a source of coronavirus (COVID-19) and it is very unlikely it can be transmitted through the consumption of food. However, if you are changing how you are used to operating then you should consider any additional hazards and ensure that you have satisfactory control measures in place to address them. Further information for consumers and businesses regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) and food can be found on the Food Standards Scotland website - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and Food](#).

#### Prepacked Food

If a food business or community group diversifies into the production of ready to eat meals for consumption at a later date, this type of food would be classified as prepacked. Prepacked food is subject to labelling requirements which are designed to protect the consumer who should have the correct information available to make confident and informed food choices. To assist food businesses, we have prepared guidance which outlines all the food information which needs to accompany prepacked food.

Further information on prepacked ready meal labelling requirements is available on the document entitled 'prepacked food labelling advice' which can be found on our website.

The legal obligations in respect the information which must be provided is onerous and you need to be able to validate any reheating instructions, shelf life, allergen declarations, etc. which are on your label.

Another significant food safety consideration is that the food producer is responsible for the safety of the food until the point of consumption (provided the consumer follows the producer's instructions i.e. storage instructions, shelf life, cooking / reheating instructions etc).

In view of the factors needing to be taken into account we recommend you avoid the production of pre-packed ready meals. However, if you decide you want to produce prepacked ready meals, please discuss your proposal with the Environmental Health Service as we can advise if you first need to obtain 'Approval' under specific legislation which doesn't apply to typical catering activities.

### **Infection Control**

You have a legal responsibility to ensure your food handlers are fit for work under the food hygiene regulations. Additionally, 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, and any person so affected and employed in a food business and who is likely to come into contact with food is to report immediately the illness or symptoms, and if possible their causes, to the food business operator.

Guidance on COVID-19 for employees and businesses has been issued by the [UK Government](#).

### **Food Preparation**

- Staff must stay 2 metres away from each other at all times. To achieve this, you may need to review your working practices and procedures. Your solution to this should be incorporated into your food safety management system.
- It is important to follow good hygiene practice when handling and preparing food. You should wash hands often and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, particularly after coughing, sneezing, going to the toilet, before eating and drinking and after handling raw meats, raw eggs and dirty vegetable. This [YouTube video](#) is worth watching.
- You should minimise direct hand contact with food, by using tongs and utensils. Gloves may be used to minimise direct contact but be aware that these can become contaminated with bacteria in the same way as hands, so are not a substitute for good personal hygiene and handwashing.
- Make sure fridges and freezers are working properly (5°C or less for fridges and -18°C for freezers). Any cooking of food must achieve a temperature of 75°C and any food reheating

- must be to 82°C. Food that is hot-held must be kept above 63°C. These temperatures should be recorded in your Cooksafe record book.
- Remember to avoid cross-contamination between raw meat / dirty vegetables and ready to eat food. The [FSS 'controlling cross contamination' guidance](#) provides more detail on this.
- Those offering hot food for immediate consumption (takeaway) are providing non-prepacked foods. The requirements for hot food for immediate consumption are less onerous than those for prepacked ready meals because the presumption is the food will be eaten immediately and the provider of the food only provides quality and safety assurances up to the point of delivery. Takeaway food is not normally cooked too far in advance of service and provision needs to be made maintain the correct holding temperature.
- Allergens – Advice for businesses on allergen management is provided on the [FSS website](#).

### Take Away Service

- For a collection or take away service, customers should sanitize their hands upon arrival. You should provide hand sanitizer at the entrance with a sign asking customers to use it.
- Non-cash payment should be encouraged, and staff should place food down and keep a sensible distance from the customer.
- The serving area should be regularly sanitised and staff should wash their hands after each handover.
- In accordance with social distancing guidance, you should limit the number of customers inside the shop to maintain the 2-metre distancing requirement. This distance should also be maintained for customers queuing outside the shop. Signage at the door should inform your customers of this requirement and you should mark out queue locations on the floor.

### Transportation

All foods must be delivered to consumers in a way that ensures that they do not become unsafe or unfit to eat.

- If you are transporting hot food, it should be kept hot. This may require transporting the food in a suitably insulated box. To ensure food does not cool down too much (it should arrive at the customer above 63°C), it is recommended you keep delivery distances short and delivery times limited to within 30 minutes.
- Foods that need refrigerating must be kept cool whilst they are being transported (less than 8°C). You may need to transport them in an insulated box or cool bag, with cool blocks or gel packs.
- Insulated containers should preferably be plastic, as these are easier to sanitise than cloth / fabric.
- Insulated containers should be sanitized (internally and externally) at the start of the day before use, and regularly throughout the day.

- Checks should be made to ensure the food is being delivered to the customer at the correct temperatures and records of such checks should be kept in your CookSafe folder.
- Foods being placed into hampers should, ideally, be bought in pre-packed. However, if this is not possible and is to be packed by the distributor, then the packaging used must be food grade (such packaging has a food safe symbol on it – a wine glass and a fork).
- All containers and packaging should be disposable, to avoid having to clean and disinfect returned containers.
- For hampers, assembly must be in such a way as to prevent any risk of cross-contamination between raw meat / dirty vegetables and ready to eat food. The [FSS 'controlling cross contamination' guidance](#) provides further detail on this.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) have provided advice for delivery – '[How to manage a food business if you sell products online, for takeaway or for delivery.](#)'

## Delivery Drivers

Delivery vehicles should be generally clean and tidy.

The delivery driver should have been given a basic induction to the correct handling of food.

Drivers should wash their hands with soap and water on arrival and returning to the kitchen.

Ideally, drivers should not enter the kitchen. If they must, then kitchen staff should box the food and place it in a low risk area of the kitchen for the driver to collect.

No drivers should show symptoms of infection, if they do, they should be immediately sent home as per the Gov.UK [self-isolation guidance](#).

## Contact-free delivery

- Limiting contact when delivering orders will help keep everyone healthy, so you could consider leaving deliveries at the door of your customer, rather than handing it over to them. Knock on the door, step back at least 2 metres and wait nearby for your customer to collect it.
- Take payments over the phone or internet rather than taking a cash payment.
- Customers who are self-isolating may order food by phone or online. If you are undertaking deliveries, then you should have a system in place where such clients can notify the restaurant/delivery drivers whether they are self-isolating so that deliveries can be either left outside, or as appropriate for their home.