

Food delivery and takeaway guidance



Following new Government restrictions placed on public houses, restaurants, cafes etc during the **coronavirus (COVID-19)** pandemic, you may be considering diversifying your food business to provide food from your normal menu or new dishes for delivery or takeaway.

This can be a great service to the community. After working long hours, key workers may want access to quick hot food, and those who are self-isolating may seek alternative ways to access the food they enjoy in their own homes.

This guidance will help ensure you trade safely. It should be used in conjunction with, and to supplement your own food safety management procedures, for example [Safer Food Better Business \(SFBB\)](#), and any hygiene and cleaning procedures you have developed based on [public health guidance on coronavirus](#). If you do not use SFBB, your food safety management system should be updated accordingly.

Transmission of COVID-19

Current scientific advice is that COVID-19 is very unlikely to be spread by food. Close contact with an infected individual via sneezing, coughing or picking up the virus from contaminated surfaces and then transfer by hands to face (eyes, nose and mouth) contact are all transmission routes that need to be prevented with good hand hygiene and social distancing.

COVID-19 is thought to survive on hard surfaces for up to three days which is why cleaning and disinfection routines throughout the customer journey are critical to minimise its spread.

All staff need to be informed of the background of coronavirus including transmission routes, symptoms and what to do if they become ill, self-isolation requirements and other relevant information to be able to effectively control the spread of coronavirus. [The Government have issued guidance on COVID-19 for employees and businesses.](#)

Food business registration

If you are not already registered as a food business with your local authority you must register. You [can register for free online.](#)

If you are already registered but plan to change your food operation to include delivery, or any other significant change, for example supplying vulnerable groups, you will need to inform your local authority. The easiest way to do this is via email.

Allergies and ordering

If you have a website or other forms of advertising, you must clearly communicate that customers should ask about allergies and intolerances when they order. Here is some sample wording you can use for this purpose:

Before ordering, please speak to a member of staff if you have any food allergies or intolerances.

When customers phone to place an order, you should ask them if they or any of their party have any allergies or intolerances. If they do, make a record of their requirements. Ensure you communicate this clearly to kitchen staff to ensure the specific allergenic ingredient is avoided as well as ensuring food is prepared safely by avoiding cross contact.

Ensure you clearly label the allergy sufferer's meal, identifying their individual food items to avoid mistakes on delivery and unpacking by the customer. During delivery, food prepared for allergenic customers should be stored separately to avoid any cross contact.

If you are unable to put in place safe procedures to prepare meals for allergy sufferers, you **MUST NOT** offer or serve allergy-free food to customers until you are confident you can prepare those dishes safely.

Remember, allergic reactions to ingredients can be fatal. Please ensure that you and your staff are familiar with the full list of 14 allergens.

For more information and advice about allergies, visit: [food.gov.uk/allergy](https://www.food.gov.uk/allergy).

You can identify allergens using the [matrix available from the Food Standards Agency \(FSA\)](#). It is important to ensure that any menu changes are reflected in your allergen matrix, and this should be reviewed whenever there is a change in menu and or recipe.

In Wales, if you have a specific menu developed for food delivery, the law requires you to advise customers how to check your Food Hygiene Rating. The following wording should be added to all promotional material:

Ewch i [food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) i ganfod sgôr hylendid bwyd ein busnes neu gofynnwch inni beth yw ein sgôr hylendid bwyd wrth archebu.

Go to [food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) to find out the food hygiene rating of our business or ask us for our food hygiene rating when you order.

The font must be:

- Type size of at least 9 points as measured in font 'Times New Roman' and not narrowed
- Spaced between text lines of least 3mm

Customers self-isolating or ill

You must put in place a process, at the point of ordering, to establish whether a customer is self-isolating or ill. The process should include how this information is communicated to drivers and/or riders to minimise the risk to them of COVID-19 transmission.

Food packaging

Food packaging has to comply with the law, be clean and suitable for food use. Ensure it is stored hygienically at your business before use. You can check whether it is food safe by looking for a symbol that looks like a wine glass and a fork. You can also check if it is marked 'for food contact'.

It is recommended that you use disposable containers and packaging to avoid the need to deal with cleaning of any returns. This will avoid any potential viral

contamination and transmission of COVID-19 from returned containers.

Delivery boxes and bags

If boxes and bags need to keep food hot or cold, then choose appropriate insulated carriers.

They should be easy to clean and disinfect. You should use the two stage cleaning process to disinfect containers internally and externally. Ensure effective disinfection at the start of the day, before carrying food and after deliveries, as well as regularly throughout the day.

Hot food should be provided to customers at 63°C or above and cold food at 8°C or colder. To achieve this, it is recommended to keep distances short and limited to within a 30 minute radius. You should carry out periodic checks to ensure the food is maintained at a safe temperature, either hot or cold, and record this in your due diligence records.

If ice packs are used, these should be cleaned and sanitised as per the insulated box or bag in between every use.

Drivers and riders

Drivers and riders must have insurance for business use. Vehicles must be clean, comply with MOT, tax etc. Smoking is not permitted in any delivery vehicle as these are considered workplaces. Working time and length of time driving should also be considered. You can check here for the Government's official guidance on [Rules on Driving Hours](#). A thorough risk assessment will ensure you comply with the law but if in doubt check with your legal advisors.

Remember that delivery drivers are food handlers and therefore must be given basic induction on safe food handling, personal hygiene and reporting of any infections or illness. Check drivers for signs and symptoms of coronavirus and record in your due diligence records.

Drivers and or riders must hand wash or sanitise before and after collection as they could cross contaminate between the restaurant and the customer.

The driver must be provided with alcohol hand sanitiser with an alcohol content of at least 60+%.

You must implement a drop-off system where the order is placed at the customer's door and contact is made via the bell or phone whilst the driver or rider moves back from the order to allow for a two metre social space.

Social distancing of two metres must be used at all times.

Driver pick-ups and drop-offs

Drivers should wash their hands on arrival for pick-ups and when returning after deliveries. Find a low risk area for food pick-ups. This will avoid the need for drivers to enter kitchen areas or come into contact with kitchen staff.

If kitchen staff accidentally come into contact with any items used by delivery drivers or riders, they need to ensure they wash their hands before moving on to another task.

Consider how you will accept payment, for example upfront or on delivery. Cashless systems should be implemented due to hygiene reasons.

Your drivers and riders will require training to ensure they carry out their job safely and to ensure excellence in customer service. Training should cover age verification (if including alcohol), food hygiene, health and safety

and allergens. All training should be recorded on a training record.

Food takeaway

If you are operating a collection or take-away service, customers must be encouraged to sanitise their hands upon arrival at the premises. It is recommended that hand sanitiser is placed at the entrance with a sign asking customers to use it before entering. Post signage at the door – here is some suggested wording that can be used for this:

For the safety of everyone, please use this hand sanitiser before entering – do not enter if you are ill.

You should encourage non-cash payments and designate a low risk area for hand-over of the food. This should be well away from the kitchen and at a distance from as many staff as possible. Staff handing over food should place it down and keep a sensible distance from the customer. This area should be regularly sanitised throughout the day and staff should wash their hands after each handover.

You should try to adopt a one-in-one-out policy and identify allocated collection times for customers to avoid queuing outside the premise. If this is not possible, then you should ensure a queue control system is implemented, inside and outside your premises, ensuring the two meter distancing requirement is applied.

You could also post signage – here is some suggested wording that can be used for this:

Social distancing. To protect our customers and staff at this time, we are actively managing the number of customers who can come into our premises at any one time. Please make sure you stand two metres apart using the marked lines on the floor. When at the front wait behind the line until called forward. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

Safe food procedures

Maintaining hygienic practices and ensuring food safety are critical at all times. It is recommended that food is offered cooked and ready-to-eat rather than cooked later by the customer.

You will need to update your food safety management system (e.g. SFBB or equivalent) if any of your normal cooking processes have changed to provide delivered or takeaway food. For example, this would apply if you now cook – chill – reheat food to make food preparation quicker, where previously you used to just cook – serve food.

It is important to update your procedures with these changes to demonstrate you have considered any food safety hazards and the controls necessary to minimise risks to food safety. Ensure all staff are aware of these changes and that training records are kept.

For any food intended to be re-heated at a future date and not consumed immediately on delivery, you should indicate when the food should be used by. If you are considering changing the shelf life of cooked/ready-to-eat foods, it is recommended that you seek expert advice.

There are a number of complex rules around retailing foods including labelling and nutrition laws that you may need to comply with if you are selling ready-meals (frozen or chilled), in particular. The FSA has provided advice for business on this: [How to manage a food business if you sell products online, for takeaway or for delivery](#).

Social distancing for staff

It is extremely important that staff can keep themselves and others safe. Staff must stay two metres away from each other at all times. People can be infected but not show any symptoms. Ensure all staff understand what is expected of them and make sure their working area is reviewed and rearranged if necessary to allow this to happen safely. For example, you may have to put in extra controls that say only one person can be in the walk-in chiller at any time.

Make sure this two metres rule applies at all times – this includes in the kitchen, front-of-house, lunch and break times, and monitor compliance with this.

Laundry

Uniforms are a potential source of transmission. Ensure staff wear clean uniforms at all times. All uniforms must be washed at temperatures above 60°C or higher, or use a laundry sanitising agent if the fabrics cannot be washed at high temperatures. It is recommended as standard practice in food businesses that uniforms are laundered commercially.

If you are unable to wash items immediately, leave in a sealed bag for at least three days and wash as normal.

You may need to invest in new uniforms if you are unable to follow this advice. Where staff are washing their uniforms at home, they should ensure they are washed and stored separately from other household laundry.

Cleaning

Ensure that the frequency of disinfection is increased throughout service, and make sure staff are including all high-touch surfaces such as work surfaces, tables, chairs, switches, door handles, push plates on doors, toilets, hand towel dispensers, taps, mop handles etc.

Check that you are using sanitisers that comply with **BS EN 1276** and that staff are adhering to the correct contact time. At the end of the shift, clean all high-touch surfaces one more time before closing.

Handwashing

Ensure staff are handwashing regularly and basins provided with warm running water, anti-bacterial soap and paper towels. Hands should be washed:

- On arrival at work
- On entering any service area
- Before handling any 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
- After using the toilet
- After smoking
- After handling and opening packaging, money, receipts and cleaning supplies
- After removing gloves and aprons and before putting on new ones
- Any time your hands are contaminated
- After touching rubbish
- Regularly

Safe cooking, hot holding and chilling

If you are starting to prepare/produce new menu items, it is important that these are produced hygienically, taking care to control cross contamination. Make sure there is careful separation of raw and ready-to-eat foods. Don't allow any contamination of ready-to-eat foods (or equipment for ready-to-eat foods) with anything that may have been in contact with raw meat or dirty root vegetables.

Take and record food temperatures on cooking ensuring 75° is reached. If you are storing food hot, it must be kept above 63°. Chilled food that needs to be kept cold to keep safe must be stored at or below 8°. Packaging should insulate sufficiently to maintain safe temperatures throughout delivery. Keep distances short and limited to within a 30 minute radius.

Preparing bulk quantities in advance introduces risks of food poisoning, bacterial growth, spore and toxin formation. To avoid this, as a general rule you need to ensure food is cooled quickly to below 8° within **two** hours and then refrigerated. The times at which cooling starts and ends must be recorded.

Ice baths or running food items such as rice under cold water are practical ways to achieve this. You may even consider special equipment like a blast chiller to cool food rapidly.

If you prepare and freeze food, you also need to cool and freeze it quickly and reheat it safely.

Food must be reheated so that it is piping hot to a minimum 75° and consumed the same day.

Traceability

Should you have to change or use different suppliers, ensure their details are recorded in your food safety management system.

Relaxation of planning use

The Government has announced a relaxation of planning rules to assist pubs and restaurants during the coronavirus pandemic. For the next 12 months premises who were not previously, will now be able to operate as takeaways providing hot food and drink. Further information on relaxing planning rules can be found on the [Gov.uk website](#).

Alcohol (premises) licence

You can only offer takeaway/delivery alcohol if your premises licence states 'off-sales' or 'both' under the section that reads "Where the licence authorises the supply of alcohol, whether these are on and/or off supplies". This is usually found on the second page of the licence summary (Part B) or page two of Part A.

When delivering alcohol always ensure ID checks are carried out and that alcohol is not given to anyone under the age of 18.

If you do not have 'off-sales' for alcohol but are considering delivering directly to customers, food deliveries are usually not prohibited by a premises licence. However, it is worth checking your conditions just in case and applying for a variation if required to permit such deliveries.

If you require further clarification on this or want to make a variation to your premises licence, please contact your local licensing officer at your local authority.

Further support and advice

The FSA has produced advice for small food businesses to help them stay safe and within the law which can be accessed [here](#).

For food delivery and preparing food in advance or to freeze in order to cope with increased demand, you may find the following guidance documents from the FSA useful:

- [Chilling down hot food](#)
- [Freezing](#)
- [Ready-to-eat-food](#)
- [Managing food allergen information](#)

Free advice from experts

[My Compliance People](#) has agreed to provide advice **free of charge** during these unprecedented times. Supporting the hospitality community to help businesses trade safely is at the heart of this initiative as businesses step up to serve communities across the UK.

[My Compliance People](#) has a community of independent freelance food safety experts and environmental health practitioners who you can talk to get the advice you need. Get in touch for **FREE** advice via email at covid19@mycompliancepeople.com.

UKHospitality also has [this guidance available](#).

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

Reference advice

Government advice

[COVID-19 advice for accommodation providers](#)

[COVID-19 essential travel guidance](#)

[Guidance: further businesses and premises to close: Guidance \(including revised guidance that specifically states that places providing takeaway and delivery food can continue doing so\)](#)

[Government advice for employers and businesses](#)

[Government advice for non-clinical and public settings](#)

[Government advice for the public](#)

[Public information campaign on handwashing](#)

Public health advice

[Guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection / home isolation \('stay at home'\)](#)

[Advice from the NHS](#)

[IFH Factsheet](#)

[Social distancing and for vulnerable people](#)

[Resources such as hand washing posters](#)

Food standards advice

[How to manage a food business if you sell products online, for takeaway or for delivery](#)

[FSA guidance for food businesses on coronavirus](#)

Credits

CIEH is grateful to the following for assistance in providing this guidance:

[Wales Food Safety Expert Panel.](#)

[Angeline Wolfe and Samantha Delamor, Chartered Environmental Health Practitioners and founders of \[My Compliance People\]\(#\).](#)