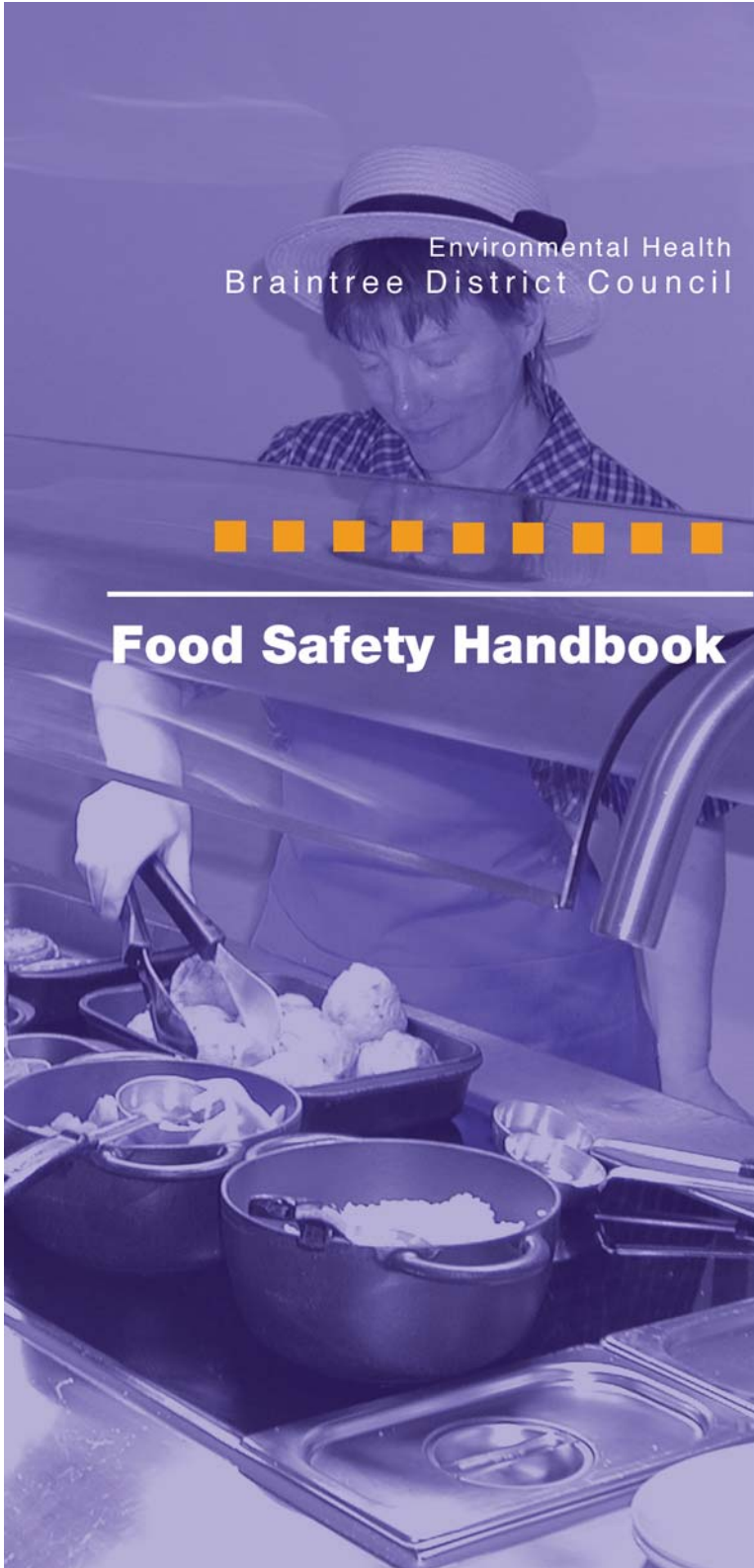


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Food Safety Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of the Braintree District Council Food Safety Handbook. We have prepared this booklet to provide you with information and practical advice on how to comply with the regulations that affect your food business.

Braintree District Council has sought for many years to encourage businesses to achieve high standards through co-operation, constructive dialogue, partnership and where necessary, enforcement action.

We hope that you find the contents of this new handbook useful and informative, and that you will keep it handy for future reference. The handbook has been written to take account of the important changes to food hygiene legislation.

It is not possible for a handbook of this size to be a comprehensive guide to compliance with food safety legislation. We have included details of a selection of relevant publications, guidance and useful websites in the reference section at the back of this handbook. Don't forget, we are here to help so if you have any queries or would like any further information or food safety advice please contact us. Our details are on the following page.

Good standards of food safety do not happen by chance. They need to be well managed, just like any other aspect of your business. We look forward to your continued co-operation in securing further improvements in food safety for customers of all food business across Braintree.

We value any feedback or comments that you have on this handbook so that we can improve future editions to meet your needs. Please email hannah.stoneman@braintree.gov.uk if you have any comments on this booklet.

Lee Crabb
Chief Environmental Health Officer

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document should not be construed as a full statement of the law or a comment on it and is intended as guidance only. The advertisements within this booklet should not be regarded as an endorsement or recommendation by Braintree District Council.

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ESTABLISHING A FOOD BUSINESS

If you are planning to start a new food business you will need to ensure that the food or drink you will be producing is both safe and wholesome. We recommended that you discuss your proposals with your local Environmental Health Department for further information and also refer you to other relevant departments.

The following table provides details of specific telephone numbers you may need.

Department	Areas of Advice	Telephone Number	Address
Environmental Health	Food hygiene, health & safety, infection control, health education, nuisance investigation etc.	01376 551414	Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, Essex CM7 9HB
Licensing Services	Licensing	01376 551414	As above
Planning Development Control	Planning permission, Change of use.	01376 551414	As above
Building Control	Structural requirements, drainage, building regulation consent	01376 551414	As above
Trading Standards	Labelling, food quality etc	08454 040506	Essex County Council Trading Standards, 2 Beaufort Rd, New Dukes Hay, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6PS

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What Food Safety Legislation will I need to comply with?

Anyone who owns, manages or works in a food business should be aware of their legal responsibilities. From 1 January 2006 a number of new food hygiene regulations came into force in the UK. The regulations that are most important for your business are

- Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
- The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (and equivalent regulations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Many of the requirements in the new regulations are the same as the regulations they replace. However you are now **also** required to provide some simple written evidence that your procedures to ensure food safety have been thought through carefully and are being properly applied.

In order to comply you may follow the toolkit issued by the Food Standards Agency - Safer Food Better Business (England) which will guide you through how to comply and provide the necessary documentation. This document is available free of charge from the Food Standards Agency at: 0845 606 0667. Several packs are available – Catering, Retail, Indian cuisine, Chinese cuisine or a pack written in Cantonese. Diary refills are also available.

Registration

Food business operators are required to register each of their premises with the Local Authority at least 28 days before opening. If you use premises in more than one place you need to register all of them. Additionally, food business operators must ensure the Local Authority is informed of any significant changes such as change of food business proprietor or the nature of the business including closure.

Registration allows us to keep an up-to-date list of all those premises in our area so we can inspect them when we need to. The frequency of the inspections will depend on the type of business.

Registration is a very simple process and there is no charge. A registration form can be found on our website at www.braintree.gov.uk

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Have you completed and returned your food premises registration form to the Environmental Health Department, at least 28 days before you are due to open?

YES:

NO:

The Licensing Act 2003

This legislation requires that certain premises have to obtain a premises licence to enable serving of alcohol for consumption on or off the premises and also for the provision of regulated entertainment e.g. dancing or live or recorded music.

Additionally premises, including mobile vehicles serving hot food or hot drinks to the public for consumption between the hours of 11pm and 5am will require a premises licence. It is an offence to undertake such activities without a licence.

Further information can be obtained from the Licensing section of Environmental Health.

Have you contacted the licensing department to ensure that you have the appropriate licence to serve alcohol, hot food after 11pm or provide entertainment?

YES:

NO:



FOOD – WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Food

The definition of food includes drinks, raw ingredients and finished products. Food that is to be sold or served should be fit for human consumption and must meet food safety requirements.

Problems with Food

The following are the most common contaminants of food

Microbiological - bacteria or viruses which cause food poisoning or fungi e.g. moulds which cause decomposition of food;



Physical - glass, string, hair, insects etc;



Chemical – cleaning fluids, pesticides etc;

Allergies – some ingredients may cause an allergic reaction in some people e.g. histamine poisoning in tuna, nut allergy etc.



Food poisoning

Food poisoning is an unpleasant illness caused by the consumption of food or drink contaminated with:

- Bacteria
- Viruses
- Poisonous plants
- Chemicals/metals

However, the most common cause of food poisoning is bacteria.

Food poisoning symptoms

The symptoms of food poisoning vary but may include:

- Stomach ache
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Nausea

Following consumption of contaminated food, onset of symptoms may vary from a few hours to a number of days.





TYPES OF FOOD POISONING

Salmonella

Source – Humans, raw meat/poultry, untreated milk, eggs, made up raw foods, unwashed vegetables.

How contamination occurs

- Via contaminated foods to hands, utensils or work surfaces which in turn can contaminate foods which are to be eaten without further cooking.
- Poor hygiene practices of food handler.
- Using known contaminated foods as raw ingredients without adequate cooking and temperature control.

Control

- Regular hand washing
- Cleaning utensils and work surface before and after use
- Separation of areas/utensils/personnel when preparing raw and cooked food items
- Control use of eggs
- Thorough cooking

Staphylococcus Aureus

Source – Human body especially skin, nose, mouth, cuts and boils.

How contamination occurs

- From skin flora or infections in food handlers directly on to cooked foods.
- If the organism builds up to high numbers it may produce a heat resistant toxin. If this is in prepared dishes reheating or even thorough cooking may not destroy it.

Control

- Frequent hand washing
- Ensuring food handlers with infected wounds, cuts, boils etc do not handle food or they are appropriately covered



- Keep ready to eat food under refrigeration until required for service /use

Clostridium Perfringens

Source – Animal and human excreta, soil, dust, insects and raw meat.

How contamination occurs

Spores – these are dormant in food, soil and dust and may be activated by cooking to germinate and multiply causing illness after the food is eaten. Outbreaks have been associated with large scale catering where meat and poultry dishes are pre-cooked, cooled down slowly then left at temperatures which allow the growth of micro-organisms and then reheated inadequately.

Controls

- Cool food as quickly as possible and then place in a fridge operating below 8°C.
- Ensure bulk foods are thoroughly cooked
- Avoid cooking food in advance

Bacillus Cereus

Source – Cereals (especially rice), soil, vegetables

How Contamination occurs

- Poor cooling of cooked food items

Controls

- Avoid pre-cooking of food especially rice
- Cool food as quickly as possible and then store in the fridge operating below 8°C

Campylobacter

Source – Raw poultry, raw meat, milk and animals (including pets).

How contamination occurs

Poor handling of raw meat and poultry causing cross contamination of food and work surface



- Bird pecked milk
- Untreated milk

Controls

- Hand washing before and after handling raw meat and poultry
- Use of different areas, separate utensils, chopping boards etc for handling raw and cooked food items
- Pasteurised milk

Escherichia Coli

Source – Human and animal gut, sewage, water and raw meat.

How contamination occurs

- Poor personal hygiene leading to cross contamination
- Contamination of meat during slaughter of animals

Control

- Practice good personal hygiene
- Ensure reformed meat products e.g. burgers are cooked thoroughly

Are staff aware of the above types of food poisoning bacteria and their controls?

YES:

NO:



FOOD HYGIENE COMPLAINTS

Braintree District Council receives approximately 100 complaints a year from the public about food and food premises, both in and outside the district. These complaints range from dirty food premises, unhygienic handling, unsatisfactory/unsafe food and suspected food poisoning.

For complaints relating to premises outside of the district, where we have no jurisdiction, we liaise with the relevant Local Authority. Occasionally we may receive a complaint regarding a product purchased within our district but manufactured/produced abroad i.e. rusty nail in dates, insect in exotic fruit etc. In this situation we provide information to the Food Standards Agency who investigate the complaint on our behalf.

HOW WE DEAL WITH A FOOD COMPLAINT:

Premises

We would visit your premises, when we receive complaints regarding poor cleanliness, structural condition or pest infestation. The validity of the complaint is investigated and then you as the food business operator will be advised of any action that must be taken. We will inform you of our actions/any further action required to prevent a similar recurrence.



Food poisoning

If a case of suspected food poisoning has been received implicating your premises we would carry out the following checks: - collect information on foods consumed, take food samples, undertake a food hygiene visit to the premises take stool samples etc. Of particular importance are functions, parties, wedding receptions, BBQ's or foreign holidays etc where a number of people may be involved. This information can be cross-referenced for links with other reported cases. We have available, free leaflets providing tips on how to prevent food poisoning.

Food complaints

These include foods that may be contaminated with chemicals e.g. cleaning chemicals; foreign bodies e.g. paper clips, matchsticks, insects



etc; and food that may have deteriorated, turned mouldy, poor odour etc. We undertake an investigation to ascertain where/how the food became contaminated with the aim to prevent a recurrence.

When investigating complaints our concern is to protect the public and prevent any recurrence. We do not pursue or negotiate compensation.

We investigate complaints of foods being sold past their use-by date, foods being sold past their best before date or foods that are badly or incorrectly labelled are passed to Trading Standards, as the enforcing authority.

Have you got a food complaint procedure in place to ensure that complaints made to you are adequately dealt with?

YES:

NO:

Food alerts

Food alerts are a system for warning the public, food businesses and local enforcement authorities to national or regional problems concerning food, which fails to comply with food safety requirements.

Where a problem has occurred food is normally withdrawn through voluntary action of the food companies. We act on advice via the Food Standards Agency to ensure that this takes place and food is withdrawn by communicating with suppliers, wholesalers, and retailers as necessary and with the general public in the form of press release, local radio or information displayed in store at the point of sale for the particular product. Enforcement action may be taken against companies that do not comply with the voluntary withdrawal procedure.

Do you have a procedure in place for ensuring that the necessary action is taken when a food alert is brought to your attention?

YES:

NO:

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FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS

The Council's Environmental Health Team carry out regular inspections of food businesses within the Braintree District Council area to ensure that the public is protected and that high standards of food safety and hygiene are maintained.

When will my business be inspected?

We usually carry out inspections WITHOUT prior notification at any reasonable time when your business is likely to be operating (including evenings and weekends, if appropriate). Inspections are prioritised according to the degree of potential risk as determined, by a risk rating system set out in a national Code of Practice issued by the Food Standards Agency. How often we inspect your business will depend on the nature of your business and your previous hygiene record. Those premises in the highest risk category can expect a visit at least every six months, medium risk businesses every 12 to 18 months, and the lowest risk businesses may simply have to complete a questionnaire.

We may also visit you as part of our food sampling programme or as a result of a complaint from a member of the public.

What will the officers do when they visit?

Upon arrival the officer will show you identification and will generally try to speak to the business owner or manager to explain the reasons for the visit and the format of the inspection. During an inspection, officers will check that potential food safety risks have been adequately identified and controlled in your business through an appropriate food safety management system.

They will check documentation and monitoring records to ensure that adequate food safety controls (e.g. temperature monitoring) are being effectively implemented. Officers will also look at the training of managers and food handlers to ensure that they have sufficient food safety knowledge and check that the condition of the premises and equipment is satisfactory.

Officers may speak with your staff to ensure that they are carrying out safe practices and that they understand the reasons for these.

Officers may want to check systems to ensure that they are working, for





instance, taking readings of fridge temperatures to ensure that legal requirements are being complied with.

What will happen after the inspection?

Immediately after inspecting your premises, the officer will want to discuss his or her findings with you. If you need to make some improvements the officer will explain what you need to do to comply with the law and what would simply be recommendations for good practice. This is the best time to ask questions regarding findings or any technical questions or queries you might have. The officer will also discuss with you the time scales within which any necessary improvements should be completed.

The options open to officers after an inspection vary depending on the conditions found. The most common outcome is either a premises inspection report which is completed by the officer and left with you at the time of the inspection or an inspection report letter which will be sent to you shortly after the inspection. The legal requirements and recommendations will be clearly identified. If there are any queries regarding what is being asked of you, it is important to contact the officer who issued the letter in the first instance.

Do you have a procedure in place detailing how to deal with an Environmental Health visit?

YES: NO:

Are staff aware of this procedure?

YES NO:

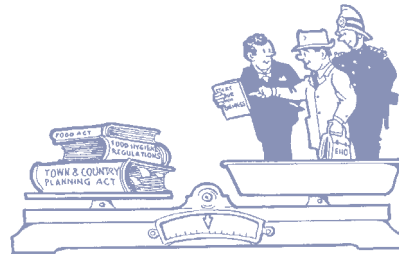


Do the public have the right to see a copy of my food hygiene inspection report?

Yes, subject to the Data Protection Act, copies of inspection reports and enforcement notices will be divulged to members of the public, since individual rights of access to information were introduced in January 2005 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

What further action can officers take?

A revisit may also be necessary after the inspection report has been issued. This enables an officer to be certain that works have been completed satisfactorily, or are in hand. If there are likely to be any problems with completing the improvements within the time given, you should contact the officer as soon as possible in order to discuss these problems.



Where practices or conditions are not satisfactory, every attempt will be made to resolve the situation by informal means, but where poor conditions persist, or where there is a risk to public health it may be necessary to resort to formal enforcement action.

Enforcement action can include taking photographs, inspecting records, seizing or detaining suspect foods, collecting evidence, including food samples and interviewing relevant persons, if necessary under caution. In certain circumstances, officers may have the power to serve formal legal notices, called Hygiene Improvement Notices, requiring works to be carried out within a stated time period. In more serious cases an officer may recommend prosecution and in rare cases where there is an imminent risk to consumers' health, officers can serve a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice which requires immediate closure of a premises, process or equipment.

We aim to carry out all enforcement in a fair, consistent and transparent manner in accordance with our enforcement policy, which can be downloaded from our website or obtained on request from the Council offices.



FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

An important requirement of the new regulations is for food business operators to put in place food safety management procedures based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point).

HACCP is a system that puts in place procedures to control hazards. This can be achieved by carrying out:

- Analysis of the potential hazards in the business.
- Identifying the points where hazards occur and deciding which are critical for food safety – these are the critical control points
- Implementing appropriate controls for eliminating or reducing each hazard
- Establishing a monitoring system to ensure that the controls are effective
- Setting up procedures to correct any problems
- Reviewing the system from time to time and whenever the operation changes
- Documenting the system and keeping appropriate records to show your procedures are working.



Food Safety
Policy
Document

The regulations are designed to be flexible so the amount of documentation you will need will depend on the type of food you prepare/handle and the risks presented by the business.

What is a hazard?

A hazard is something that could mean that food will not be safe to eat. Food hazards can be

Microbiological – bacteria that cause food poisoning;

Chemical – for example from cleaning chemicals

Physical – involves objects getting into food e.g. glass, piece of packaging etc

Hazards can happen at any stage in the business from taking deliveries to serving the customers.



Does your business have a documented food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP?

YES:

NO:

How do I put in place Food Safety Management procedures?

Many premises will already have suitable documented systems in place which they can continue to use. If you do not have procedures you can develop your own procedures based on the principles of HACCP or alternatively you can use a pack produced by the Food Standards Agency. This pack is called Safer Food Better Business. For information please contact Environmental Health or if you have access to the Internet look at the Food Standard Agency website www.food.gov.uk and search under Safer Food Better Business or call 0845 606 0667 for your free copy.



Packs are also available in Cantonese and in English but tailored to Indian or Chinese cuisine. Retail packs and diary refills are also available.



TRAINING OF FOOD HANDLERS

The Regulations require that food business operators ensure that all food handlers engaged in the food business are supervised, instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters as necessary bearing in mind the type of work which they do.



Those responsible for the development and maintenance of the food safety management system in the business should have received adequate training in the application of HACCP principals.

A food handler is any person who directly handles or prepares food, irrespective of whether it is open (unwrapped) or packaged.

What level of training do I need to give my staff?

Training will relate to the actual job undertaken by the individual and the food that they handle. People who handle high-risk food will need more training than those who handle only low risk food.

The following are a list of courses provided by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

Level 1 aimed at those who handle low risk or wrapped food only before starting work or as part of an induction programme

Level 2 Award in Food Safety Catering aimed at those who handle open high-risk food (equal to present foundation or basic qualification)

Level 3 Award in Food Safety Management Systems aimed at food handlers who also have a supervisory role (equal to intermediate qualification).

Level 4 aimed at food handlers who also have a management role (equal to the present advanced qualification.)

Braintree District Council run the Level 2 Award once a month at Causeway House, other training providers also run the course locally.

For details about other training providers please contact the following organisations: -



Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) on 020 7928 6006.
The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene (RIPHH)
The Royal Society of Health (RSH)

Have you identified which level of training is appropriate for each member of staff, relevant to the job which they undertake?

YES:

NO:

Training plan and records

It is recommended you provide a training plan to identify the training or experience needed for each member of staff. Thereafter, it is good practice to keep records of training completed by every member of staff to help demonstrate compliance with the training requirement.

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Tel: 01473 785543 www.otleycollege.ac.uk

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Training review

Training needs of your staff should be reviewed on a regular basis and refresher or update training should be provided where necessary. It is recommended that regular refresher training is undertaken at least every 3 years.

Does your training plan have a review period?

YES:

NO:

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ARE YOU A FIVE STAR FOOD BUSINESS?

Scores on the Doors



From June 2008, food hygiene inspection results, for registered caterers across the district, will be published on a national website. Residents and visitors will be able to find out how hygienic their chosen eatery is before they visit, by simply clicking onto the council's website.

Food premises will be awarded a star rating based on the assessment of hygiene standards that is completed at the end of every food hygiene inspection by the council's environmental health team. Premises with excellent standards of food hygiene will be awarded five stars ranging to zero stars for food businesses with very poor hygiene standards. The star rating from the most recent inspection of the business concerned will then be published on the website www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk

The scoring system is based on the following three criteria taken from the Food Standards Agency's statutory risk rating system:

- The current level of compliance of food hygiene practices and procedures;
- The current level of compliance relating to the structure and cleanliness of the premises;
- Confidence in management of the business and food safety controls.

Risk Rating Categories	Excellent					Very Poor
	0	5	10	15	20	
Food Hygiene and Safety	0	5	10	15	20	25
Structure and Cleaning	0	5	10	15	20	25
Management and Control	0	5	10		20	30

These criteria are the only ones that are directly controllable by the food business and are the reason they have been used to determine the Braintree Scores on the Doors star rating.



We propose to convert the total scores from the 3 categories to the following given star rating. (NB: Consultation about a National Scheme is ongoing. If a National Scheme is agreed we are likely to alter ours to come in line with a National Scheme.)

Score	Level of Compliance	Star Rating
Up to 5	Excellent	★★★★★
Up to 15	Very Good	★★★★
Up to 25	Good	★★★
Up to 30	Fair	★★
Up to 45	Poor	★
Above 46	Very Poor	none

Several other Essex Councils are also launching the scheme in 2008. Although the majority of Braintree's food businesses operate to a high standard, the aim of the scheme is to drive standards up even higher, by allowing potential customers to make a more informed choice about where to eat and by giving public recognition to those food businesses who have achieved excellent standards of food hygiene.

The website also contains contact information, a location map, description of the business and offers an optional facility for businesses to upload an image of their premises or use the right to reply service, which allows businesses to post reasonable comments. (Useful in situations where there had been a change of management, or money spent on refurbishment, for example.)

Want to improve your star rating? Then call our environmental health team on 01376 551414, for free food safety advice and information.

Visit www.braintree.gov.uk to find out more about the scheme.



GOOD HYGIENE PRACTICES

These guidelines should be given to all staff as part of their induction training before they are permitted to handle food.

1. Reporting Illness

Tell your supervisor or the management before commencing work of any skin, nose, stomach or bowel trouble or infected wound.

Also tell management if someone else in your household is sick or has diarrhoea.

2. Protective Clothing

Do not bring your outdoor clothes and shoes into the food preparation room. Food handlers must wear suitable clean, light coloured protective clothing including a head covering.

3. Jewellery

Do not wear jewellery except a plain gold wedding ring and sleeper earrings while handling food.

4. First Aid.

Cover any minor lesions or cuts with a highly visible waterproof dressing preferably blue coloured.

5. Smoking etc.

Do not smoke, eat or drink in a food room. Never cough or sneeze over food.

6. Food Handling.

- Avoid unnecessary food handling.
- Do not prepare food too far in advance of service.



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- Keep perishable food either refrigerated or piping hot.
- Keep the preparation of raw and cooked foods strictly separate.
- When reheating food, ensure it gets piping hot.

7. Hand Washing.

Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot water. Use disposal paper towels or a hot air hand dryer for drying hands. Keep your nails short and clean at all times.

Wash your hands :

- After using the toilet
- On entering a food room before handling food
- Before and after cleaning
- After touching your ears nose mouth or hair
- After handling raw food
- After every break

8. General

Clean as you go. Keep all equipment and surfaces clean. Follow any food safety instructions either on food packaging or from your supervisor. If you see something wrong, tell your supervisor.

Are all food handling staff trained in good hygiene practices before they start work?

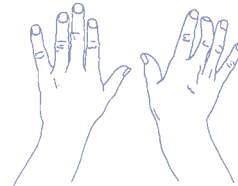
YES:

NO:



PERSONAL HYGIENE

Under the regulations every person working in a food handling area must maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear appropriate protective clothing. This will include observing good hygiene practices such as hand washing.



Failure to observe good hygiene practices may result in food poisoning by direct or indirect contamination of food, work surfaces and equipment or contamination of the food by foreign objects.

Do you ensure that adequate facilities are available for staff to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness?

YES: NO:

Have staff been trained in good personal hygiene practices?

YES: NO:

Do you monitor and audit staff to ensure they are implementing safe personal hygiene methods.

YES: NO:

Fitness to Work

Staff should be 'fit for work' at all times. This means that they must not be suffering from, or carrying, an illness or disease that could cause a problem with food safety. People who are not 'fit for work' could spread harmful bacteria to food. Any member of staff who has diarrhoea and/or vomiting should report it to their manager immediately and either stay at home or go home straight away. People suffering from these symptoms often carry harmful bacteria on their hands and can spread them to food or equipment they touch. Staff should not return to work until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

It is good practice for the food business operator to ensure that all



employees (including agency staff) receive induction training on appointment. This should detail their responsibility to notify their manager at the beginning of their shift or before they start work if they are suffering from diarrhoea, vomiting, skin infections or wounds or sores. It is good practice to give this instruction in writing and get staff to sign it.

A sample employee health questionnaire can be found opposite.

Do you have a fitness to work policy, which includes when staff may return back to work?

YES:

NO:

Have all staff, including agency staff, been trained on when they should report certain types of illness and infection and is this recorded?

YES:

NO:

TO PHOTOCOPY

CONFIDENTIAL – Employee Medical Questionnaire

To be completed by employees on induction, return to work after illness and/or return to work after travel abroad

NAME: _____ JOB TITLE: _____

New starter: Return to work:
Return to work after overseas travel:

Have you, in the past 2 weeks/during your absence experienced, or are currently experiencing, any of the following symptoms?

- Abdominal pain Yes No
- Fever Yes No
- Diarrhoea Yes No
- Vomiting Yes No
- Skin trouble affecting hands, arms or face: Yes No
- Red or swollen wounds/cuts on hands and forearm Yes No
- Has anyone in your household been suffering from diarrhoea or vomiting in the past 2 weeks Yes No

If you have answered “Yes” to any of the above questions, tell your manager before working with food. This is because many of these symptoms may be associated with food poisoning and your manager may need to ask you more questions or ask you not to work with food until you are better.

I declare that all of the above statements are true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature:

Date: / /

NAME IN CAPITALS:



TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Why is temperature control important?

Poor or inadequate temperature control of food is the main cause of food poisoning. Bacteria that cause food poisoning need warmth to multiply, therefore correct use of temperature control can prevent food poisoning by providing environments which either destroy or dramatically reduce the growth of bacteria.

The temperature danger zone?

Between the temperatures 8°C and 63°C, bacteria can multiply rapidly and in optimum conditions (37°C) can double in numbers every 10 to 20 minutes.

If bacteria multiply rapidly in food they may reach sufficient numbers to cause food poisoning when the food is eaten. This does not always affect the taste, appearance or smell of the food itself. It is important to keep food, particularly high protein foods, below 8°C or above 63°C (out of the danger zone).

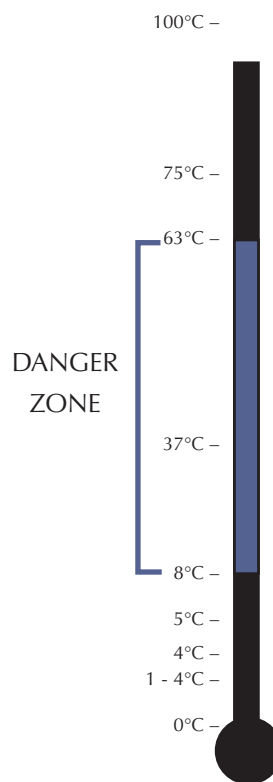
We recommend that frozen foods be kept at or below -18°C so that bacteria stop growing.

In order to ensure that you keep food out of the danger zone or below -18°C it is recommended that you follow the advice below:

1. Deliveries

We recommend that the temperature of refrigerated and frozen foods that are delivered to you are checked and recorded. This is to ensure that you are not accepting foods that have not been kept at the correct temperature – you might be accepting someone else's problem.

To carry out a temperature check of a delivery, place a clean food probe in between 2 packs of products. Leave for a few minutes and check the temperature.





High-risk food, which has been delivered above 8°C or above -12°C, should be rejected.

2. Storage

During storage, high-risk foods must be kept at or below 8°C in a refrigerator or below -18°C in a freezer. NB The food temperature requirements relate to the food temperature and not the air temperature of the refrigerator. The temperature of your refrigerators should be recorded at least twice daily and freezers at least once a week. A written record should be kept of these checks.

It is advisable that frozen food is defrosted in a refrigerator that will hold the temperature out of the danger zone.

To temperature check a refrigerator, choose a suitable food item to probe, which has been stored in the unit for at least 12 hours. Clean the food probe, place it into the food and close the door. Leave for a few minutes, and then check the temperature.

High risk food which has been above 8°C for more than 4 hours should be disposed of; less than 4 hours – it may be moved to another unit operating at or below 8°C. IF IN DOUBT – THROW IT OUT.

3. Preparation

The temperature of many kitchens is often in the middle of the “danger zone” and therefore ideal for rapid multiplication of bacteria. It is vital to keep preparation time to an absolute minimum. Immediately after preparation, the food should be returned to refrigeration below 8°C, or cooking commenced.

4. Cooking/reheating

Cook foods thoroughly until they are piping hot. Make sure that the core temperature in joints of meat, poultry, large dishes etc reaches at least 75°C. Other checks can also be carried out to ensure that food is cooked, e.g. make sure liquid dishes e.g. soups and sauces, are simmering; make visual checks on the colour of meat at the thickest part to ensure there are no pink or red areas; etc.

To carry out a temperature check, using a clean food probe, place it into the thickest part of the meat/dish and leave for a few minutes. If the temperature reaches above 75°C, it should be safe to serve. If lower than 75°C, continue to cook then re-check the temperature.

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Food should be cooked from its “fresh condition” and serve hot as quickly as possible. If you frequently cook a product which has a set portion size you can establish time/temperature combinations of above 75°C. e.g. a tray of lasagne, cooked at 180°C for 80 minutes achieves above 75°C, can be cooked the following week at the same time/temperature combination.

Under NO circumstances should food be re-heated more than once.

5. Cooling

All “left-over” food, which has not been served, is best thrown out. The practice of cooling foods and then reheating involves a considerable risk of food poisoning unless strict attention is paid to the rapid cooling of food (to ensure it is refrigerated within 1½ hours); maintaining refrigerated storage temperature below 8°C after cooling of the food; and reheating of the food to above 75°C.

To assist in cooling food quickly, the following methods can be used:

- portion/reduce the volume of food being cooled
- transfer hot food into shallow trays
- sit containers of hot food into an ice/cold water bath
- cool hot food in the coolest and best ventilated part of the kitchen
- restrict joint size to less than 6lbs

Remember – food may be left at room temperature for up to 1½ hours, but if it can be cooled and put into the refrigerator quicker than this, then it should. If food is still too hot after the 1½ hours, then you must use other methods, such as those listed above, to cool the food quicker.

6. Hot holding of food

In some instances, it is necessary to keep high-risk foods (including soups, sauces, gravies etc) hot after cooking before they are served. These must be kept at a minimum temperature of 63°C. Below this temperature, bacteria will multiply rapidly in the food.

Hot food can be kept for service, or on display for sale, for a single period of up to 2 hours at a temperature below 63°C. After 2 hours food must be restored to a suitable temperature (below 8°C or above 63°C) and then kept at that temperature until it can be used safely or thrown away.



Under no circumstance should food be left in a cooker or hot-holding unit after the unit has been switched off. The food should be cooled as quickly as possible and returned to refrigeration below 8°C or alternatively thrown away.

Do your procedures detail set temperature limits at each process step and what corrective action should be taken if they are not achieved?

YES:

NO:

Do you have a procedure to ensure your thermometer is calibrated on a regular basis?

YES:

NO:



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CLEANING

Cleaning is of major importance in all food preparation and serving areas. To prevent the risk of contamination of food it is vital that cleaning is planned and systematic.

The organisation of proper cleaning can be made much easier by ensuring that a Cleaning Schedule is drawn up and is implemented and checked.

Do you have a written cleaning schedule in place?

YES:

NO:

A cleaning schedule is a written statement which can be in the form of a wall chart which specifies the cleaning to be carried out in your food premises and will include:-

Surfaces and equipment to be cleaned

This should be identified in your hazard analysis i.e. floor, walls, equipment etc.

The frequency of cleaning

This can be clean-as-you-go or daily, weekly, monthly, etc. This will depend on factors, such as the amount of use and soiling which a particular area or item receives. You will need to review this where cleaning frequencies are proving to be inadequate.

The method of cleaning

Does equipment require dismantling or can it be cleaned in position. Ensure staff are aware of the correct cleaning methods and contact times (this is the length of time the cleaning chemical needs to be left on the item you are cleaning).

Cleaning materials to be used

It is essential that the correct chemicals and materials are used depending on the type of surface to be cleaned. Manufacturers instructions should



be followed at all times, this is particularly important if you need to dilute the cleaning chemicals you are using. It is recommended that the cleaning products are made up fresh as required because their cleaning properties are lost over time.

Are there sufficient facilities and equipment available to undertake cleaning effectively?

YES:

NO:

Safety precautions

Do special precautions need to be taken or protective clothing worn? Do staff require training in the safe use of cleaning materials and equipment or the safe dismantling of dangerous machinery?

The person undertaking the task

It is important to identify who is responsible for each job to enable training needs for the individual to be identified.

What standard to expect

It is important to supervise cleaning practices to ensure that staff are following correct procedures. Cleaning times should be increased, if the level of cleaning is not found to be satisfactory.

Is anyone responsible for monitoring cleaning standards?

YES:

NO:

What type of chemical to use?

It is important that the correct chemical is used to ensure that work surfaces and equipment are visually clean and free from excessive levels of harmful bacteria. The following definitions will help when purchasing chemicals:-



Detergent – a chemical (e.g. washing up liquid) used to remove grease, dirt and food.

Disinfectant antibacterial spray – a chemical which reduces the number of bacteria to a safe level. Check that surfaces are clear of grease, dirt and food debris before you use a disinfectant.



Sanitiser – a two-in-one product that acts as a detergent and disinfectant.

Contact time – this is how long a cleaning chemical needs to be left on the item you are cleaning to be effective.

Are chemicals being used safely and correctly, in accordance with manufacturers instructions?

YES: NO:

Are cleaning chemicals and equipment stored safely and away from food?

YES: NO:



PEST CONTROL

Food premises attract pests because they provide the ideal habitat. Most premises provide food, warmth, moisture and shelter. Pests can enter the building through open windows and doors or through a crack in the walls and around pipes and windows. The common pests found in the food premises include:

- Rodents, rats and mice
- Insects, such as flies, moths, ants, cockroaches and wasps
- Birds - mainly feral pigeons, sparrows and starlings



Reasons for control

- To prevent spread of disease
- Prevent contamination and wastage of food
- Prevent damage to property
- Prevent loss of customers and profit
- Loss of staff
- Compliance with the law

Prevention of infestation

- Structure
- Doors and windows to be kept closed and be close fitting.
- Fly screens may be needed for openable windows.
- Defects in the building such as broken windows, gaps around pipes should be made good.

Good Housekeeping

- Keep all food areas clean and avoid food spillages as remains may attract pests.
- Keep refuse areas clean and ensure waste receptacles have close fitting lids.



- Rotate food stocks don't keep more than required.
- Keep food in lidded pest proof containers.
- Store food off the floor.

Monitoring

- Carry out regular checks for signs of pests.
- Investigate all damaged packaging.
- Ensure staff know to report any suspected pest problems.

Is there a formal monitoring scheme in operation?

YES: NO:

Do staff know that they should report signs of an infestation immediately and who to report this to?

YES: NO:

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Action

Ensure any problems are dealt with promptly and properly.

Seek help and advice if needed from your local Environmental Health Team or specialist contractor.

Safety

Always ensure pest control products are used with care in accordance with manufacturers instructions. They must be stored safely away from food.

A contract with a reputable pest control company is recommended for regular monitoring visits. You may then seek expert advice on proofing of your premises and siting of electrical fly killers. The contractor should leave a record with you, detailing visits made, any problems found and action taken or required.

The contractor should be a member of the British Pest Control Association.



MANAGEMENT CHECK

Once you have set up your food safety management system, it will need to be checked to ensure it is working correctly, as you intended. This will mean that the food business operator or appointed person will need to consider the following points:-

- your hazards/controls (safe methods) have been correctly identified
- the controls are properly applied
- the controls are being correctly monitored to ensure that corrective action is taken if things go wrong
- systems are in place to prevent a recurrence
- staff are trained and understand the system in relation to the job they undertake

Have you verified your food safety management system to ensure it is working correctly?

YES:

NO:

Review

After the business has been running, you may wish/need to make changes to the business i.e. change the design of the premises, staff changes, menu changes etc which may affect the food safety management system.

At this stage it will be necessary to review the system to see that it is still working or if alterations or improvements are needed. When any changes in the operation are planned, careful consideration must be given to the overall effect on the safety of the food.



A review of the system must be taken at the following times:-



- When checks reveal that the system is not working properly
- When significant changes in the operation occur e.g. types of food being served, layout/design of the premises, different suppliers etc
- periodically to ensure the system is working correctly

We recommend that when a review is undertaken the procedures are signed and dated, thereafter they should be communicated to all staff.

Has a change to the business occurred?

YES:

NO:

Have you undertaken a review of your food safety management system?

YES:

NO:



FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Listed below are a number of questions you need to consider when going through each step of the catering operation. However this list is not exhaustive.

Purchase

- Do you buy your ingredients/products from reputable suppliers?

Receipt of food

- Are the temperatures of chilled high-risk foods and frozen foods checked routinely on delivery?
- Are the date codes on the packaging checked and adequate for your needs?
- Is packaging checked visually for signs of damage or contamination?

Storage

- Are temperatures monitored and recorded at least twice per day for foods stored in refrigerators/freezers?
- Are stock rotation procedures in place and observed?
- Are foods covered/wrapped to prevent contamination?
- Is the packaging of the food clean and adequate?
- Are chemicals stored in a separate area away from food?
- Are raw and cooked foods separate to prevent cross-contamination?
- Are the facilities adequate for the range of goods to be stored?
- Are storage areas kept clean and well maintained?

Preparation

- Is satisfactory time/temperature control being maintained?
- Have you adequately controlled the risk of cross contamination from surfaces, equipment or utensils? (e.g. use of colour coded equipment, use of separate areas etc).
- Are there adequate and appropriate cleaning chemicals available, and are staff trained in their use?



- Are you satisfied that staff are wearing clean work-clothes and maintain a high standard of personal hygiene?
- Is there an adequate supply of hot and cold water, soap and hygienic means of hand drying provided for use at all times at the wash hand basins?
- Have you considered all the potential foreign body hazards which could occur in the preparation areas (e.g. pest control, packaging materials etc)?

Cooking

- Do you have systems in place to ensure that food is adequately cooked (e.g. use of a food probe, visual checks, time/temperature combinations etc)?
- Have you proved your cooking method is safe and have records to prove this?
- Is the cooking method suitable for the type of the food?
- Are cooking procedures properly scheduled to avoid unnecessary delays?
- Are you satisfied the equipment is maintained in good working order?

Hot holding

- Are holding times and temperatures satisfactory (i.e. above 63°C)?
- Are you satisfied that the risks of contamination have been considered and controlled (e.g. from foreign bodies, chemicals, other foods etc)?

Cooling

- Are your cooling times, temperatures and procedures safe?
- Are foods covered/protected to prevent contamination?

Service

- Is food displayed for service kept at the correct temperature (i.e. hot food above 63°C, cold foods below 8°C)?
- Is food protected from contamination?
- Are surfaces, utensils and equipment maintained in a clean state?



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

At what temperature should my fridge operate?

Your fridge must operate at a temperature that will keep high risk foods at or below 8°C.

What is the maximum time I should keep various foods in the fridge?

Food should be kept in accordance with the manufactures instructions. For cook-cool food items or products that have been opened from their original packaging – keep for 2-3 days maximum. This is assuming that the food is in good condition when put in the fridge, is appropriately covered and that the fridge temperature is correct.

What is the best time to undertake temperature checks of fridge freezer units?

We would recommend that your temperature checks are carried out at the start of the day prior to the commencement of food preparation so that any corrective action that is required may be undertaken. However it is recommended that further checks should be carried out during and at the end of service, to ensure food temperatures have not raised above 8°C.

How long should I keep my monitoring records for?

It is recommended that you keep records for at least 3 months, but a maximum of 6 months would be sufficient. You may want to keep them longer if you are dealing with a food enquiry.

How can I cool food quickly?

Small quantities will cool quickly. Larger quantities should be either divided into smaller portions or transferred to a container with a large surface area. If available, place on a cooling rack to allow air to circulate. Stand containers of food in cold water changing the water frequently to speed cooling times. Ensure the food is cooled within a maximum of 1½ hours and then placed in the fridge operating below 8°C.

What is a best before date?

A best 'before date' is an indication to the consumer of the period during



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which a product will be in its best condition if kept in accordance with the manufactures instructions.

What is a use by date?

The use-by date mark is for highly perishable foods which could become a food risk if food is consumed beyond this date.

What is a high-risk food?

These are foods that are particularly susceptible to bacterial growth and are intended for consumption without treatment that would destroy such organisms and so are more likely to cause food poisoning, e.g. cooked meat and poultry, cooked rice etc.

How often will I get a food hygiene inspection?

The frequency of visits will depend on the type and size of food business, customers served and compliance with legislation. Some businesses will be visited more frequently than others. This is in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice.

What are the recommended chemicals for cleaning food preparation areas?

It is recommended that food safe sanitising chemicals with disposable cloths are used. Alternatively a food safe detergent and disinfectant. All chemicals must be used in accordance with manufactures instructions.

Do I have to implement SFBB?

If you already have a documented food safety system in place, which has either been provided by your parent company or has been developed in house it may mean that you already comply with the new requirements of the legislation. We recommend that you speak to your company head office or the Environmental Health Team for confirmation.



WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

For further information please contact our Environmental Health Team on 01376 551414 or visit our website at www.braintree.gov.uk. Additionally, you may find the following websites provide useful information:

www.cieh.org.uk – Chartered Institute of Environmental Health – information on food hygiene training providers

www.food.gov.uk – Food Standards Agency

www.foodlink.org.uk – Food safety information, advice and resource information.

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk – Food safety information

www.businesslink.gov.uk/east – or call 0845 7171615 for the answers to all your business questions.

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