

This technical guidance note explains the Food Safety Act and Food Hygiene Regulations and will help community organisations to produce safe food and to meet their other responsibilities.

1. Introduction

Food safety legislation aims to make sure that all food offered to the public is safe to eat and is properly described.

Regulations apply to all premises where food and drink are supplied and, therefore, not only to commercial premises but also to community centres, village halls, clubs and other similar establishments where food or drink is stored, sold or supplied.

They apply whether or not the premises are required to be registered as food premises (on requirement to register, see Section 3 below).

From January 2006, new regulations have replaced the previous regime. The most important current regulations are:

- A European Union regulation - Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, on food hygiene;
- The General Food Regulations 2004;
- The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (with equivalent legislation for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

The requirements of the regulations are broadly in line with earlier regulations although there are two major additional provisions.

- The main additional requirement is that suppliers of food and drink must put in place 'food safety management procedures' (known as the 'HACCP principles': see Section 4 below) to show that the food items they provide are safe to consume;
- The second change is that premises such as village halls, community centres, etc., are required to register as food premises when previously this had not been the case (see Section 3 below).

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2. The legal requirements - an overview

The regulations set out the minimum legal hygiene standards that local environmental health officers have to enforce, in so far as they apply to any premises where food or drink is sold or supplied (whether or not for profit, and whether or not required to be registered - and including community centres, village halls and the like).

The regulations are aimed at preventing the contamination of food and include requirements concerning –

- the condition and cleanliness of the premises and the equipment used;
- the cleanliness of food handlers and the safe handling of food;
- the storage of food
- the transport of food;
- the disposal of food;
- the disposal of waste;
- water supply.

The regulations require community centre management committees and anyone else using a community building to supply food or drink to –

- ensure that all preparation, storing, packaging, transporting, handling and supplying or selling of food or drink is carried out in a hygienic way;
- identify food safety hazards;
- know which steps are critical for food safety;
- ensure safety controls are in place, maintained and reviewed;
- ensure that certain foods (e.g. fish, meat and dairy products) are kept either (as relevant) at above 63° C or below 8° C, except for short periods;
- keep written records to confirm that proper procedures are in place and have been followed in accordance with the HACCP principles.

The regulations, however, are designed to be flexible: the procedures may be proportional to the size and scope of the food provision operation; if this is small, only very simple procedures and records will be required.

Under the legislation, environmental health and trading standards officers have the right to enter and inspect food premises at all reasonable hours.

3. Registration of food premises

Note: where premises are not required to be registered, other hygiene and safety requirements of the legislation will still apply. Even if occasional activities are not covered by the regulations, they are still subject to the General Food Regulations 2004, which prohibit 'the placing of unsafe food on the market'.

3.1 *Who should register?*

All premises used 'regularly' for the purposes of one or more 'food businesses' - i.e., the supply, sale or other provision of food or drink, including premises where there is a permanent or frequent bar and/or where alcohol and/or other foodstuffs are stored on the premises - must be registered with the local authority. Organisations producing or supplying food on a regular basis, even if they do not charge for it, and even if only once a week, need to register with the local authority's environmental health department (but see 3.2 below).

Application should be made by the proprietor of the food business or, as in the case of a community building, by the management committee or other person or persons responsible for the supply of food or drink (for example, a social club committee or regular hirer.) This is because different activities may involve different levels of risk and require different advice

Those responsible for premises that are to be used for the first time must apply for registration at least 28 days before the first use; if more than one set of premises is involved, all premises must be registered. Those that have not changed their circumstances since registering, or since their last inspection prior to 1 January 2006 but automatically fall under the requirements of the more recent legislation.

Those responsible for registered premises must:

- make sure the local authority always has up-to-date information about the premises; and
- inform the authority if the business significantly changes what it does.

3.2 *Are there exemptions from registration?*

- Guidance published by the European Commission says, 'Operations such as the occasional handling, preparation, storage and serving of food by private individuals at events such as church, school or village fairs are not covered by the scope of the Regulation';
- The Food Standards Authority (FSA)'s guidance on the regulations stated that the regulations would not cover activities such as the occasional preparation of food by individuals or groups for gatherings or for sale at charitable events. However it might be wise for organisations to consult with their local environmental health department to confirm whether registration is required.

Beyond this, the exemptions are still somewhat unclear. In situations of doubt, the local environmental health department should be consulted.

4. HACCP

4.1 What is HACCP?

The term HACCP ('Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point') is a way of saying that food providers need to put in place procedures to control 'hazards'. HACCP involves:

- looking carefully at what an organisation does in supplying food and what could go wrong;
- identifying the points (the 'critical control points') you need to focus on to prevent hazards or control them;
- putting in place procedures to make sure the hazards at the critical control points are controlled;
- deciding what action needs to be taken (and by whom) if something goes wrong;
- making sure that the procedures are working, including keeping appropriate records to show that they are working.

While this sounds complicated, it need not be so. The regulations are intended to be flexible, so that the procedures you introduce can be appropriate to the scale and the ways in which you provide food.

Many community organisations that provide food only occasionally, or otherwise in very limited ways, will need only very simple procedures and records. They will, however, still need to comply with the recommendations in Sections 5 and 6 below.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has produced information/training packs, *Safer Food, Better Business*, that are designed to help organisations put the procedures in place: they may be downloaded from the FSA website (see contact details in 8.2 below). There are two versions, one for small retail businesses that sell food and one for small catering businesses such as restaurants, cafés and takeaways. Either or both could be relevant to the situation of a community organisation, depending upon the particular circumstances.

- Organisations that supply food on a regular basis, and certainly if they are registered as food providers, should obtain the packs and use them to whatever extent they are relevant;
- Organisations that supply food only on an occasional basis will not need to use either pack, although they will still find the information in them helpful and should therefore obtain and consult them.

4.2 What is a 'hazard'?

A hazard is anything that could go wrong and therefore prove to be dangerous. Food safety hazards can be:

- *Microbiological*: involving harmful bacteria (e.g. when certain foods are kept out of the fridge for too long);
- *Chemical*: when chemicals (e.g. cleaning or pest control substances) get into food;
- *Physical*: when objects (e.g. pieces of glass or broken packaging) get into food.

5. General requirements

This section of the technical guidance note provides general guidance on the requirements of the regulations as they will apply to community organisations, but does not give full detail. Fuller information is in the FSA publication *Food Hygiene: A guide for businesses* which may be downloaded from the FSA website (contact details in 8.2 below). In any situation of uncertainty, the local Environmental Health Department should be consulted.

5.1 Premises must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition.

Surfaces that come into contact with food must be cleaned and disinfected frequently (or, if seldom used, cleaned on a regular cycle and again before use). Equipment should be dismantled and cleaned after use. Other areas where dust or food debris may accumulate must be cleaned periodically. Avoid or minimise contamination carried in the air, contact with toxic materials, and build-up of mould. Control against pest attack.

5.2 Appropriate facilities must be available to maintain adequate personal hygiene (including facilities for the hygienic washing and drying of hands, hygienic sanitary arrangements and changing facilities).

There must be a separate hand washbasin with hot and cold water in the kitchen (or warm water). Soap and materials for hygienic drying (preferably disposable towels) must be provided when the kitchen is in use.

All sinks and washbasins must be kept clean and in good order. (If the centre is very infrequently used for catering, and only for very simple catering, then a separate hand washbasin in a nearby toilet may be sufficient).

5.3 Surfaces in contact with food must be in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfect. This will require the use of smooth, washable, non-toxic materials, unless the proprietor of the food business can satisfy the food authority that other materials used are appropriate.

Surfaces which would comply if properly maintained are stainless steel, ceramics and Formica. Chopping boards should be synthetic and preferably colour coded for different jobs to avoid cross contamination. Wooden boards are acceptable for certain jobs such as

cutting bread or pastry: the important point is that chopping boards are not badly scored or ingrained with food debris or dirt.

Joins between work surfaces could present a dirt trap and must be properly sealed. Surfaces constructed in a continuous design are far better.

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

Hot and cold water and detergent must be available for washing tools and equipment. Ideally a double sink should be provided, one for food washing and the other for equipment, crockery, etc. but where this is not possible the sink should be cleaned between different activities. Provision should be made for draining and drying.

An instant water heater is acceptable, provided the temperature can be controlled and is capable of providing hot water in sufficient quantities.

5.5 An adequate supply of hot and/or cold water must be available.

The mains water supply will normally be adequate but if private supplies are used they must be potable (i.e. of drinking quality). Where temporary facilities, such as marquees, are used tanked supplies or water bowsers may be used as long as they are cleaned and filled from the mains supply.

If non-potable water is used in any way in the premises (e.g. in a fire sprinkler system, for watering plants, etc.) it must not connect with or be able to get into the potable supply or otherwise contaminate food preparation or service areas. Ice made for food-related purposes must be made from potable water.

5.6 Adequate arrangements and/or facilities for the hygienic storage and disposal of hazardous and/or inedible substances and waste (whether liquid or solid) must be available.

Solid waste must be removed as quickly as possible from food preparation and storage areas. If left in the kitchen overnight it must be stored in a lidded bin or container. While awaiting collection outside it should be stored in a lidded dustbin, in a secure location (unless you can satisfy your local authority that, other methods of disposal are appropriate).

Waste storage areas must be kept free from animals and pests. All waste disposal must be hygienic and environmentally friendly (contact your local authority for details).

5.7 Adequate facilities and/or arrangements for maintaining and monitoring suitable food temperature conditions must be available.

If food is cooked, served and eaten straight away there is no problem but if food is cooked at home or otherwise not for immediate consumption it may be kept below 63°C for up to

two hours and then reheated thoroughly to at least 63°C.

Where a refrigerator is provided a fixed or portable thermometer should also be provided so that its temperature can be checked. If the refrigerator is only used for special events it must be switched on the day before so that it has time to reach the correct temperature. If there is no refrigerator or cooker, cool boxes and insulated containers can be used for short periods.

- Check chilled food on delivery to make sure it is cold enough;
- put food that needs to be kept chilled in the fridge immediately;
- cool cooked food as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge;
- check regularly that the fridge, and any chilled display unit, is cold enough;
- hot foods must generally be kept at 63°C or above; cold food at 8°C or below.

5.8 If cooking food from raw, make sure that the food is cooked thoroughly. When cooking or re-heating food, always check that it is piping hot all the way through.

It is particularly important to make sure that poultry, rolled joints and products made from minced meat (e.g. burgers, sausages) are cooked thoroughly, since there could be bacteria in the middle of such products. They should not be left pink or raw, but should be piping hot all the way through. Whole cuts of meat and whole joints of beef and lamb can be served pink/rare as long as they are fully sealed on the outside.

5.9 Transport

Where food or drink is being transported to or from a community centre it must be kept in clean, sealed containers that are only used for food/drink. When vehicles and/or containers are used for transporting anything other than foods, or different foods, at the same time, the different products must be effectively separated. Vehicles and/or containers used for transporting foods must be capable of keeping those foods at appropriate temperatures and, where necessary, of allowing those temperatures to be monitored.

5.10 Equipment

The fittings, equipment and any articles with which food comes into contact must be kept clean, in good order and repair, and constructed so that they can be thoroughly cleaned and, if necessary, disinfected.

5.11 Personal hygiene

In order to remind food handlers of their own responsibility for maintaining good standards of personal hygiene, a notice 'Food handlers please observe the following precautions' should be displayed in the kitchen (see specimen document '*Food Safety and Hygiene Sample Notice*'). Every person working in a food-handling area must wear suitable, clean clothing and, where necessary, protective clothing. Hair should be tied back and a suitable head covering worn.

Watches or jewellery (except a wedding band) should not be worn when preparing food. Staff should not touch their face or hair nor smoke, spit, sneeze, eat or chew gum when handling food.

Effective hand-washing is extremely important at all times, particularly:

- when entering the food handling area;
- before preparing food;
- after touching raw food;
- after handling food waste or emptying a bin;
- after cleaning;
- after blowing one's nose.

Hands should be dried thoroughly on a disposable towel.

5.12 Storage of food and drink

All food and drink stored or displayed on the premises must be protected from contamination and deterioration. In most community centres it is recommended that only dry goods such as tea, coffee and biscuits are stored on the premises and these should be kept in plastic containers or tins with close fitting lids. Bottles of squash etc. must be tightly secured. (These are best taken home unless they are likely to be used up within the next few days.)

You must not store cleaning chemicals, disinfectants, etc., in areas where food is handled or stored.

Any food or drink materials beyond their sell-by or use-by date must be removed and destroyed.

5.13 Training

All staff who handle food should be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene in a way that is appropriate for the work they do. The person or people responsible for the supervision should have received appropriate training.

This need not necessarily involve attending a formal course, although this is always useful. One of the packs produced by the FSA (see 4.1 above), or an alternative guide to good practice, may be used.

At the very least the 'Food Handlers please observe...' notice *should* be displayed in the kitchen and drawn to workers' attention. See '*Food Safety and Hygiene Sample Notice*'.

6. Kitchens

6.1 Guidelines

The following guidelines are for kitchens where some food preparation and cooking is carried out, but where there is no equipment for regular large scale catering such as deep fat fryers, in which case more stringent regulations would apply. The guidelines are intended as a summary and more detailed information will be available from the environmental health officer.

- Floors should be in good condition without crevices or splits, durable, non-absorbent, anti-slip and easily cleaned. Surfaces must be made from materials that are impervious (i.e., do not allow liquids to pass through), non-absorbent, washable and non-toxic unless you can satisfy your local authority that other materials are satisfactory;
- Walls should be light in colour, smooth, impervious, non-absorbent, washable and non-toxic, unless you can satisfy your local authority that other materials are satisfactory. Sinks, hand washbasins and work tops should have a tiled or stainless steel splash-back;
- Ceiling finishes (or the interior surface of the roof if there are no ceilings) must be constructed and finished in a way that prevents dirt from building up and reduces condensation, the growth of mould and the dropping of dust or other particles;
- Windows and doors must be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfect. All openings to the outside must be fitted, where necessary, with insect-proof screens that can easily be removed for cleaning;
- Woodwork e.g. window and door frames, shelving, etc. should be sealed so that it is smooth, impervious and easily cleaned;
- Work surfaces must be impervious and easily cleaned. There should be sufficient work areas to allow the separation of raw and cooked foods;
- Electrical supplies: An adequate number of power points should be available to avoid the need for lengthy flexes;
- Water supply and drainage: There should be a plentiful supply of clean hot and cold water and an adequate trapped drainage system to cope with peak loads;
- Hot water taps: If it is likely or possible that these will (frequently or occasionally) deliver water that is dangerously hot, warning signs should be placed in easily visible places adjacent to each tap;
- Ventilation: There should be sufficient suitable ventilation to prevent excessive heat, steam and condensation, to remove odours and replenish fresh air. Natural

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ventilation will usually be sufficient but care must be taken to prevent the entry of insects. Mechanical ventilation systems must be constructed to allow access to be able to clean and replace the filters and other parts. Toilets must have adequate natural or mechanical ventilation;

- Lighting: Suitable and sufficient lighting must be provided, including in store rooms and passage ways;
- Toilets must be provided. Toilets must not open directly into rooms where food is handled;
- Outdoor clothing and shoes may only be stored in kitchens if cupboards or lockers are provided for this purpose only. Adequate facilities must be provided for staff to change their clothes, where necessary;
- Cleaning facilities: There should be at least one sink and in many situations a double sink with an integral drainer. Sinks must have hot as well as cold water available unless they are only to be used for washing fish, vegetables and fruit;
- Washing facilities: There must be a separate hand washbasin with hot and cold water. Soap (preferably liquid) and a hygienic means of drying hands (preferably paper towels) must be provided when the kitchen is in use. All sinks and hand washbasins must be kept clean and in good order at all times;
- Cleanliness: All cutlery, crockery, equipment and surfaces with which food may come into contact must be kept clean and in good condition. Work surfaces, chopping boards and other equipment should be cleaned thoroughly before food preparation starts and again afterwards. This is particularly important where raw food is being handled. Storage facilities for equipment need to be made of corrosion-resistant material (e.g., non-rusting) and be easy to keep clean;
- A first aid kit should be easily accessible. The contents recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for a workplace 'where there is no special risk' are:
 - A leaflet giving general guidance on first aid, e.g. HSE leaflet *Basic Advice on First Aid at Work*;
 - 20 individual wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes);
 - 2 sterile eye pads;
 - 4 individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferably sterile);
 - 6 safety pins;
 - 6 medium sized (approx. 12cm x 12cm) individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings;
 - 2 large sized (approx. 18cm x 18cm) individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings;
 - 1 pair of disposable gloves.

Note: you should not keep tablets or medicines in the first aid box.

In addition, the dressings in a first aid box for use where food is prepared must be waterproof. It is advisable to use blue plasters, which can usually be obtained from places selling catering supplies or office supplies.

The above is a suggested contents list only. Equivalent but different items will be considered adequate and the precise contents should vary according to an assessment of the likely risks and needs.

- Fire fighting equipment should be as recommended by the Fire Officer and should include a fire blanket.
- Notices to be displayed in the kitchen should include:
 - No smoking;
 - Basic guidance on food handling (See specimen document '*Food Safety and Food Hygiene*');
 - Fire precautions;
 - A notice detailing relevant health and safety requirements regarding the fridge, i.e. correct temperatures, what food should be stored where etc.

6.2 Kitchens in Community Centres that are registered as food premises

Kitchens in centres that are registered as food premises will have to meet higher standards. These may include tiles or stainless steel on walls, power ventilation, increased provision of sinks etc.

6.3 Kitchenettes

Small areas provided with a sink and kettle and intended for the making of drinks only should be kept clean but need not be provided with a hand washbasin.

6.4 Movable and temporary premises

There are special provisions for movable and/or temporary premises - e.g. marquees, outside stalls, vending machines, etc. Details are available in the FSA publication *Food Hygiene: A guide for businesses* (see Section 8 below) and/or from your local council.

7. Enforcement action

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws and regulations. Enforcement officers may visit your premises to inspect them.

They have a right to enter your premises at any reasonable time and will usually come without prior notice.

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They are entitled to take action such as:

- taking samples of food;
- inspecting your records;
- writing to you asking you to put right any problems;
- serving a formal legal notice on you requiring you to take certain actions, or forbidding the use of certain processes, equipment or premises;
- recommending prosecution in serious cases.

More information on enforcement action is in the FSA publication *Food Law Inspections and your Business* (see Section 8 below).

Advice on health and hygiene matters, including food safety, should be sought from your local authority environmental health officers.

8. Further Information

Community Matters

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Tel: 020 7837 7887

Fax: 020 7278 9253

Advice Line: 0845 847 4253

E-mail: info@communitymatters.org.uk

Website: www.communitymatters.org.uk/onlineguidance

Community Matters information sheets and sample documents:

Food Safety and Hygiene Sample Notice

Food Standards Agency

Aviation House

125 Kingsway

London WC2B 6NH

Helpline: 020 7276 8829

E-mail: helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.food.gov.uk

Food Standards Agency Publications (free of charge, or downloadable from the website):

- *Basic Advice on First Aid at Work*
- *First Aid at Work: Your questions answered*
- *Food Hygiene: A guide for businesses*
- *Food Law Inspections and your Business*
- *Safer Food, Better Business (Information/Training Packs)*

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Caerphilly Business Park

Caerphilly CF83 3GG

Website: www.hse.gov.uk

HSE Books

Tel: 01787 881165

E-mail: hsebooks@prolog.uk.com

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