

## Food and Safety Service FAQ's

This document has been put together to assist with enquiries about COVID-19 and related issues. These are some of the most frequently asked questions with sign posting to good sources of information to assist businesses. Some of this information is useful to businesses who have continued to operate and adapted and those businesses who are getting ready to reopen after a period of closure.

### Food Business Related Enquiries

**Can I catch coronavirus from food?** It is very unlikely that you can catch Coronavirus from food. The current advice relating to transmission of the virus in food can be found on Food Standards Agency website: <https://www.food.gov.uk/>

**Which food businesses can stay open?** Food retailers including supermarkets, food markets, convenience stores, and corner shops may remain open. This includes off-licenses and newsagents.

Cafés or canteens at hospitals, care homes or schools; prison and military canteens; services providing food or drink to the homeless can also remain open.

Workplace canteens can remain open if there is no other practical alternative.

Public Houses and bars including bars in hotels or members clubs must close.

Restaurants and Cafes must close but may operate a food delivery and takeaway service.

**Can my existing food business serve takeaway food?** In response to restaurants, bars, etc being required to close, many food businesses are now considering operating as takeaway and delivery businesses in the immediate term, to continue trading. Provided you have already registered with the local authority as a food business you need only notify us of the change to the way you are operating. If the food business operator remains unchanged you do not need to reregister.

You should ensure the food you deliver remains safe and you may need to review and adjust your food safety management system to take into account food safety during deliveries (see below for further advice).



The government has relaxed planning controls for public houses and restaurants providing hot food and drinks takeaway services on a temporary basis during the current exceptional circumstances. Further information on relaxing planning rules can be found at gov.uk.

If you decide to provide a take away service, you will need to notify the local planning authority when the new use begins and ends.

**What specific advice is there relating to food safety?** If you are altering your menu and adapting what you're producing, you will need to consider if any new dishes present additional hazards and ensure effective food safety controls are implemented. You must detail any new food safety controls you have put in place in your documented food safety management system/Safer Food Better Business pack.

All staff need to be suitably trained and instructed on the new work arrangements, especially when you may take on additional staff to assist you with deliveries. You also need to be mindful of the latest Government guidance on stopping spread of the infection ensuring as far as possible that the following measures are taken:

1. Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so.
2. Ensure customers and your staff maintain the social distancing recommendations which is currently maintaining a 2m space between all persons including kitchen staff.
3. To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue in a bin immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
4. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your sanitiser spray or bleach in the customer areas to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

**What are the requirements relating to food deliveries?** You need to consider how the food will be delivered whilst ensuring that you have adequate hygiene controls in place. For example, ensure the delivery vehicle is clean and tidy, ensure you can prevent potential cross-contamination of food (e.g. store food in sealed food-grade containers), maintain temperature control and ensure that any insulated delivery bags and boxes are adequately cleaned and disinfected.

In order to protect your delivery staff and customers you may wish to place items being delivered on the doorstep, knock on the door and step aside to a safe distance while the customer retrieves the delivery so that you minimise contact with the customer. Similarly, many businesses are no longer dealing with cash. You should

consider whether it is possible to only accept electronic payment at the time of the order.

**What about the boxes I use for delivery?** 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.

**What temperature control requirements do I need to be aware of for food deliveries?** Whether you are going to be selling hot or cold foods, you must ensure maintenance of the hot or cold chain. This is a critical point and you are advised to monitor and record delivery temperatures as part of your food safety management system. This can be a diary log or simple check sheet. Ensure that the staff involved understand the process and the required temperatures, including what to do if these temperatures are not within the required limits.

- Hot food must be hot held at 63° C or above. To ensure this will be maintained, you can use insulated bags or boxes.
- Cold food should ideally be kept at fridge temperatures below 8° C. Again, cool bags and boxes can be used with the addition of ice packs
- It is also advised to limit the length of delivery times. For example, limit the number of 'drop-off's' in one run.

Please refer to this link:

[SFBB hot holding and delivery](#)

**What about delivery drivers?** Ideally, only those staff who are involved in food preparation should be allowed in the kitchen while food is being prepared. Delivery drivers should be prevented from entering the kitchen in outdoor clothing as this could be a source of contamination and it also restricts the number of people in the workplace to a minimum. Remember social distancing rules still apply to staff.

**Can customers queue in my premises?** Government guidance is that everyone should keep a distance of 2 metres between themselves and others. You will need to monitor and regulate the number of people allowed entry to your premises to enable this to be possible. You might consider displaying clear signage on shop facades as a reminder.

**Can customers use my toilet facilities?** Once the Government has allowed hospitality sector businesses to open you should allow customers to use your toilet facilities. This will require you to ensure all surfaces, including taps, flush mechanisms, toilet seats, locks and door handles are thoroughly cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis and appropriate cleaning wipes should be provided so that customers can wipe down surfaces before they use the facilities.

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**Can I use the area outside my premises for seating?** No, any area adjacent to the premises of the business where seating is made available for customers of the business (whether or not by the business) is to be treated as part of the premises of that business. **This may change in line with further Government advice around easing of lockdown measures.**

**How do I tell my takeaway customers about allergens?** However, you are selling food to consumers, it is a legal requirement to provide accurate information on the allergens present in the food. If food is sold through distance selling, for example through a telephone or online order for a takeaway/delivery, allergen information should be provided at two stages in the process. This means providing it:

- before the purchase of the food is completed - this could be in writing (for example on a website, catalogue or menu) or orally (for example by phone)
- when the food is delivered - this could be in writing (for example on allergen stickers on food or enclosed hard copy of menu) The allergen information should be available to a customer in a written form at some point between a customer placing the order and taking delivery of it. Label takeaway meals clearly, so your customers know which dishes are suitable for those with an allergy.

[Allergens information](#) is available on the Food Standards Agency website.

If you require any further advice, email us at [foodandsafety@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:foodandsafety@n-somerset.gov.uk) outlining your enquiry and giving your contact details and the name and address of your business.

**Where can I access help with other matters in relation to COVID-19 ?** Please see the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

**Where can I find more advice in relation to my food business?** The FSA has produced advice for small food businesses to help them stay safe and within the law which can be accessed [here](#).

## Other Business-Related Enquiries

**Which other businesses can open?** The Government announced on Monday 25 May that some other businesses can open. On June 1 car show rooms and open-air markets can open and on June 15 the Government are allowing other non-essential retail shops such as department stores to open. As yet there is no date set when the hospitality sector or hairdressers, gyms or beauty parlours may open.

## **What do I need to do if I offer a collection service?**

For these services:

- no orders should be taken in person on the premises - this should be communicated to customers by appropriate means such as signage.
- businesses should therefore only take orders online or by telephone.
- customers could have staggered collection times - customers should be discouraged from entering the premises until their order is ready.
- customers arriving without having already placed an order should be encouraged to leave the premises to place their order by telephone or online and to return at a designated time for collection.
- customers whose orders are ready should enter one at a time to collect orders and make payments.
- businesses should discourage crowding outside the premises. Where possible, use queue management systems to maintain the 2 metres separation.

**What if I use delivery drivers to deliver goods?** Drivers should wash their hands on arrival for pick-ups and when returning after deliveries. Consider how you will accept payment, for example upfront or on delivery. Cashless systems should be implemented due to hygiene and safety reasons. Where non-contactless payments are made, the chip and pin machine should be sanitised after each customer use.

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.

**How can I tell if hand sanitiser or face masks are fake?** There are a lot of counterfeit and unauthorised products being placed on the market by unscrupulous traders seeking to profit from the pandemic. These are potentially dangerous as they can give the user a false sense of security who may then relax other safety measures as a result. Therefore,

Only buy from legitimate suppliers and read the label

Do not buy homemade or unlabelled sanitisers

If buying a face mask (not a face-covering) make sure it has the CE mark on it

Report the sale of suspicious products to **Trading Standards on 0808 223 1133**

## **Businesses Reopening that have been closed for a while**

**If my business has been closed for a while what matters should I consider?**

You should test all the fire alarms and emergency lighting to ensure that they are in

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good working order. You should also check your stock to ensure that it is still all within date, if it is edible. There are also precautions you should take around water systems and Legionella control. There is a guidance document which we have posted on our website which will help you manage your water system after a period of closure. The link can be found here [Legionella guide after a period of closure](#)

## **What health and safety matters do I need to consider for my employees?**

### **Working Safely during the Coronavirus outbreak**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced a short guide on how to protect people in your workplace from Coronavirus. You should do a risk assessment and manage the risk of Coronavirus in your business.

By consulting and involving people in the steps you are taking to manage the risk of Coronavirus in your workplace you can:

- explain the changes you are planning to work safely
- make sure changes will work and hear their ideas
- continue to operate your business safely during the outbreak

**Social Distancing** 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. Tasks may also need to separate by time to reduce the number of staff working together in the same space. Make sure this two metres rule applies at all times – this includes in the kitchen, front-of-house, deliveries, lunch and break times, and monitor compliance with this.

There is a useful short guide on the Health and Safety Executive website which will help you and including some more practical measures you can take to minimise the risks. Please see this link, [Working safely during the Coronavirus outbreak - a short guide](#)

**Laundry of uniforms** Uniforms are a potential source of transmission. Ensure staff wear clean uniforms at all times. All uniforms must be washed at temperatures above

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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.

**Do I need to report via RIDDOR if one of my employees is diagnosed as a confirmed COVID case?** If a worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease. You should also report if a worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.

**What other Health and Safety issues are there that I should cover?** The Government has produced very comprehensive guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the pandemic. The guidance is split into business sectors and the guides can be found on this link [Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

Depending on your business type you may need to look at more than one guide.

## **Food Safety Related Matters for Businesses who are looking to re-open after a period of closure**

### **I operate a restaurant, cafe or public house and have not operated at all during the Coronavirus outbreak, what matters should I consider before I reopen?**

Reopening your business after a period of closure will require some 'extra' checks alongside your usual 'daily' checks. The checks will help you make sure that your business can restart safely.

A review of your food safety management system should be undertaken to identify risks. This should be recorded in your Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan or your Safer Food Better Business Pack.

### **Is there a checklist I can follow to ensure I have considered all relevant areas?**

Yes, the Food Standards Agency has produced a 'Reopening Checklist' for food businesses and it covers matters such as checks to ensure the business is pest free, making sure all your cleaning consumables are in date and that your equipment is working. The complete checklist can be found here, [Checklist for businesses reopening](#). On the same page as this link there is more helpful information that businesses' need to consider before they open.

**How can I ensure that my customers are kept safe?** Refer to the Government guidance [on social distancing, customer interaction and communication or instruction to the public](#)

If you have a specific query which is not covered here, please email [foodandsafety@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:foodandsafety@n-somerset.gov.uk) where we will be pleased to help you.