

COVID-19 Advice to Community Groups and Charities Offering Foods



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Introduction

Whether operating as a charity, community group or business, all food handlers have a duty of care to keep foods safe. The following advice is aimed at those that are setting up a community group to provide food to those self-isolating due to COVID19.

Before reading this guidance, if you haven't yet already done so you are strongly advised to speak to the Food Safety Team at Teignbridge to discuss your food activity and to see if you are required to register with the department. The team can be contacted on foodandsafety@teignbridge.gov.uk.

Wherever possible, foods should be handled as little as possible to prevent the spread of food borne illness. Where more information on either food safety or infection control procedures etc then you can contact the Food Safety Team.

Personal hygiene

- Clothing

All persons handling open foods must ensure they protect foods by wearing clean clothing. Where there are no facilities in place for volunteers to change into clean clothes, an apron must be worn. Long hair must be tied back and rings and other hand and wrist jewellery must be removed.



- Hand washing and using gloves

It is imperative that regular hand washing takes place in a designated hand wash basin used solely for the washing of hands (this must be in the kitchen and not be the toilet wash hand basin). Hand wash stations must be provided with hot and cold running water (or a mixer tap) and disposable hand towels or similar. It is not good practice to use cloth towels as these can spread bacteria. Hands must be washed by all staff and delivery drivers –

- On entering any food area
- Before touching or handling any food or utensils
- After breaks.
- After visiting the toilet.
- After coughing or sneezing into hands or tissues
- Before handling ready to eat foods such as sandwiches, salad items and any other food that wont be cooked again before its eaten
- After eating, drinking or smoking.
- After touching hair or face.
- After carrying out any cleaning and handling waste.

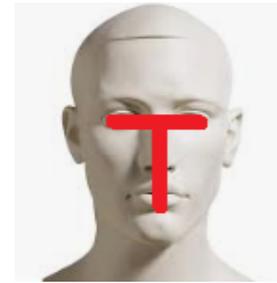
Using disposable gloves to protect foods must never be used instead of regular hand washing and **hands must be washed both before and after gloves are worn to protect foods from contamination.**



- **The T zone and social distancing**

In line with current advice, volunteers are strongly encouraged to keep at least 2m apart to prevent the potential spread of COVID19 by asymptomatic carriers. The 2m separation distance should be kept between volunteers not from the same household. Volunteers should be encouraged to avoid touching the T zone (eyes, nose and mouth) before hand washing. More information is available here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>



- **Separation of raw and ready to eat (RTE) foods**

All raw foods including root vegetables such as leeks, potatoes and carrots (especially those with excessive mud on) must be stored and handled separately from ready to eat (RTE) foods such as cooked ham, sandwiches, ready meals and salad items such as tomatoes, lettuce and cucumbers. Raw meats should be prepared on separate chopping boards, ideally colour coded to keep them separate from chopping boards used for RTE foods. Raw meats must always be stored in a container or in its original packaging below ready to eat foods in fridges. Raw meats must not be allowed on a work surface where a RTE food is also being prepared (even if using a different colour chopping board).



- **Pest control**

Whilst it is not compulsory to have in place a pest control contract you must ensure that pests such as flies, rats and mice are not allowed into the food preparation and storage areas. You should have in place a process where checks for pest issues are routinely undertaken. Doors and windows that open to the outside should be fly screened or kept closed when food handling. Gaps under doors and around pipework that measures greater than 6mm should be reduced in size to prevent mice and rats gain access. It is strongly recommended that snap traps or bait boxes are placed in food areas to help monitor pest activity. Where you feel you may have an issue with pest control you are strongly advised to contact the Food Safety Team for advice at foodandsafety@teignbridge.gov.uk.



Cleaning

- Surface cleaning

All food handling surfaces must be suitably cleaned before food handling starts and regularly throughout the day. You should also be operating a clean as you go policy dealing with food spills etc when they occur. Work surfaces that are used to prepare raw meat, that are then used to prepare RTE foods must be cleaned using the following method



1. Using a cloth, blue roll or kitchen towel, wipe over the surface with hot soapy water to remove any grease and food debris.
2. Using blue roll or kitchen towel, remove excess moisture from the surface and spray with a suitable sanitiser or antibacterial spray.
3. Allow the spray to sit on the work surface for as long as the manufacturer recommends (contact times vary from product to product but it may be between 1 and 5 minutes).
4. Once the contact time has been observed the work surface will be safe to prepare RTE foods
5. If using a cleaning cloth then throw the cloth away or put it to wash.

Sanitisers and antibacterial sprays must conform to **BSEN 1276 or 13697** where they are used on surfaces where raw meat and RTE foods are prepared.

Please note - Keep your volunteers safe by always reading the manufacturer's instructions on cleaning products to ensure they are used properly. Never decant cleaning products into an unmarked container and never mix different cleaning chemicals.

- Cloth use

Ideally try to use disposable cleaning cloths or blue roll for cleaning to prevent the spread of bacteria. These types of cloths should be thrown away after use. Reusable cloths should be put to wash straight after use, especially where raw meat and dirty vegetables have been handled.

Cooking

- Safe cooking temperatures

To ensure that foods are properly cooked it is strongly recommended that a temperature probe is used to measure the core temperature of the food. The food should reach a minimum of **75°C** in its thickest part to ensure the food is safe. This is the same when re-heating foods. Other methods of checking food are properly cooked, such as checking for pink



meat and blood, can be less reliable but are acceptable where a temperature probe is not available.

- Hot holding

Once foods have been cooked they can be held hot until they are used / delivered. Where hot foods are to be held for a period **longer than 2 hours**, these foods must be held above **63°C** to keep them safe. You should have a process in place to monitor these temperatures using a temperature probe every 2 hours to ensure the food is still above **63°C**. Where foods fall below **63°C**, they must be used within 2 hours (ideally 90 minutes)

- Allergens

Only registered food businesses are required to provide allergen information to their customers. However, it is strongly advised that you put in place a process to help identify the allergens in the foods you are handling in order that accurate information can be given to the final consumer. Allergen information can be found on the back of ingredients where it will be highlighted in some way against the rest of the ingredients.

INGREDIENTS

Water, Carrots, Onions, Red Lentils (4.5%) Potatoes, Cauliflower, Leeks, Peas, Cornflower, **Wheat**flour, Cream (**milk**), Yeast Extract, Concentrated Tomato Paste, Garlic, Sugar, **Celery** Seed, Sunflower Oil, Herb and Spice, White Pepper, Parsley

As a minimum, if someone states they have an allergy and you are not sure if the food contains that allergen you must err on the side of caution and not sell that food to that person!

More information on allergens and the controls required can be found here – <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>

Deliveries

It is strongly advised that hot food deliveries are undertaken within 30 minutes where possible and that some means to keep foods hot are in place. More information can be found here on undertaking food deliveries and keeping staff etc safe – <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-wellbeing/food-safety/coronavirus-covid-19-food-delivery-and-takeaway-guidance/>



Cooling

- Chill temps

Refrigeration equipment should be set to run at less than 8^oc (ideally it should be set at 5^oc or lower). Fridges and freezers temperatures should be checked every day at the start of food production to ensure they are still operating at a safe temperature. There should be a means to easily determine fridge temperatures in the fridge such as a temperature monitor. All foods in storage must be wrapped in cling film or be in clean containers with lids. It is not good practice to store open tins in fridges with foods in. All open foods must be decanted and stored in appropriate containers. .

- Cooling foods

All foods must be cooled as quickly as possible using the fastest method possible. In any case foods must be cooled to below 8^oc **within 2 hours of cooking**. There are many ways of cooling foods quickly such as cutting joints of meat in half, running rice under cold water or spreading it out into a shallow dish to increase the surface area of the food. More info on cooling methods can be found here - <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/sfbb-chilling-02-chilling-down-hot-food.pdf>

- Use by dates

It is good practice to give high risk foods made in house (eg, cooked meats and vegetables, pasta dishes, pie mix etc) a **3 day use by date** from the day it's cooked. All high risk foods should be date labelled to ensure the use by date is known and that food is used in rotation. It is strongly recommended that date labels or day dots are used to indicate the day that foods must be used by.

You must also be mindful of the manufacturers instruction on high risk foods once they have been opened. For example, a pack of ham with a 10 day shelf life may need to be used in 2 or 3 days once it has been opened. Your date labelling should take account of the manufacturers use instructions for foods when they are opened.



- The 4 hour rule for cold foods

Cold foods (below 8^oc) can be held outside of temperature control (the fridge) for **1 period of up to 4 hours**. This allows for the preparation, delivery and display of cold foods. Therefore if you are delivering cold foods in your local area you may not need to store them chilled if the

delivery time is short (30 mins) and the food starts out cold (below 8°C). Where delivery times are longer chilled storage may need to be considered.

- **Freezing and defrosting**

Freezers should be set to run at **-18°C** and should not be overstocked to ensure foods are stored safely. It is good practice to check the freezer temperature at the start of each day to ensure food is stored safely.

Ideally foods should be defrosted overnight in the bottom of the fridge. Foods should be covered when defrosting and placed on a plate or in a container to catch any dirty water run-off. You must be careful not to contaminate RTE foods when foods are being defrosted and you should also ensure that foods are thoroughly defrosted before cooking.

Glossary

RTE Food	Ready To Eat Foods. Foods that do not require further processing such as cooking before they are consumed
Sanitiser	Another name for antibacterial Spray
BS EN 1276 or 13697	British Standard that sanitisers and antibacterial sprays must conform to where raw meat and RTE foods are handled on the same surface
Contact time	How long the sanitiser or antibacterial spray needs to be in contact with the surface for
Day dots	Date labelling system that can be used to show when food must be used by or thrown away
T Zone	The area of the eyes, mouth and nose where viruses can enter the body through mucus membranes

Links to useful information

More information can be found at the following web links -

General advice on COVID19 -

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Teignbridge Advice to businesses on COVID19 -

<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-help-and-advice/coronavirus-updates/>

Resources such as downloadable posters to display -

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-coronavirus-/resources>

Safer Food Better Business packs -

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business>

Information on allergens -

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>

Information for those wanting to volunteer -

<https://www.teigncvs.org.uk/>