



**Manchester City Council understands that there are businesses and organisations with catering facilities who want to help during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is aimed at those undertaking high risk activities e.g. cooking and chilling, such as those providing meals to the vulnerable or to people who are unable to leave their homes. Whilst we have tried to cover many different food provision scenarios, if there are specific issues that you would like to discuss, please contact:** Manchester City Council, Food, Health and Safety and Airport Team. [fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk)

**All new food preparation activities must be undertaken with thorough planning to ensure the meals prepared are safe for the consumer. Only food businesses which are already registered with the Local Authority and have a good Food Hygiene Rating level or if exempt from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme have achieved a good level of compliance in relation to food hygiene/safety and standards should undertake such activities.**

**If however you are a new food business considering such food provision then you must first contact Manchester City Council to discuss if this is a possibility:** Manchester City Council, Food, Health and Safety and Airport Team. [fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk)

**Businesses must already have a comprehensive Food Safety Management system based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control point) principles and a robust allergen management system. Further information and additional considerations are outlined in this document.**

### **Food Safety Management System**

All organisations involved with providing catering and donating foods must have already implemented a robust documented Food Safety Management System i.e Safer Food Better Business Pack or your own bespoke document. This must include a system based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) principles and suitable staff training, instruction and supervision. This must be reviewed periodically and when there is a change in operations. This may be triggered by the current COVID-19 pandemic whereby organisations have changed their usual business model to meet the high demand in food for vulnerable groups.

### **Considerations to be made:**

- Are you recruiting new staff and/or volunteers? If so; do you have the resources to ensure the provision of suitable and adequate training & supervision in line with their duties?
- Are the premises and the facilities within the kitchen still suitable for activities being undertaken? All premises and equipment used for food preparation should be able to be cleaned easily and keep food safe. There must also be a

suitable number of sinks with hot and cold running water for cleaning purposes and separate wash hand basins for staff to wash their hands.

- Is there suitable and adequate storage space for dry, chilled and frozen foods? You must ensure adequate refrigeration facilities are provided for the storage of chilled foods. Refrigerators should be able to keep high risk foods at 5°C or below. You may need to consider hiring extra refrigeration or freezer units to ensure there is enough storage for high risk food depending on your operation. All open food must be protected from risk of contamination and must not be stored on the ground. Proper containers and covers must be provided and used where necessary.
- Can you maintain adequate and effective temperature control throughout the food chain? You must ensure that adequate facilities e.g. ovens, rice cookers etc are available for thorough cooking, to at least 75°C in the centre of the food and for maintaining food at a temperature of at least 63°C after cooking if to be hot held. If preparing large quantities of food it should, on completion of cooking, be transferred to shallow trays and cooled to 8°C or less within 90 minutes. It may be necessary to use or hire a blast chiller to ensure safe cooling methods for large quantities of food. Cooled food should be kept at 8°C or less after cooling.
- Ensure that you have suitable controls in place to minimise the spread of coronavirus through ensuring workers properly self isolate, social distancing and other controls advised by the government. See further guidance below.
- Consider whether you can continue to use the services of any contractors, i.e pest control technician, waste removal company. Some services may not be operating fully during this current COVID-19 pandemic. If there are issues with certain contractors you must consider having a contingency plan to ensure food safety and public health is not compromised.

### **Suppliers**

Check that your current suppliers are able to provide the amount of food required. If sourcing new suppliers or accepting food donations you must use a reputable food business. You can check the Food Hygiene Rating of businesses via <https://ratings.food.gov.uk/>

Premises such as primary producers, manufacturers and packers, importers, distributors (including wholesalers, and other inter-business suppliers) may be exempt from food hygiene ratings but will still receive an inspection from the Local Authority or Food Standards Agency and therefore you should be able to request a copy of the last inspection report.

Controls must be put in place at the point of delivery to ensure only safe food is accepted from suppliers.

A documented procedure for checking deliveries should be provided and checks would include :

- Physical checks for signs of deterioration, odours, spoilage, broken or damaged packaging that will impact the shelf life or could indicate contamination.

- Products are clearly labelled and within the use by date. Food which has passed the Best before date may be safe to consume (you must check this with the supplier) but may have deteriorated in quality. Food products passed their use by dates are deemed unsafe in food law and should not be used.
- High Risk chilled food must only be accepted if it is at a temperature of 8 degrees Celsius or below. Some foods may require lower storage temperatures – check the packaging for details.
- Check that clear allergen information is provided for all products

Any unsafe food must be rejected and disposed of.

You must keep records of where you have obtained your supplies from to ensure traceability in case of any problems. Food product recalls can occur at any time and you must legally be able to recall food or remove food from the market that has been deemed unsafe to eat.

### **Personal Hygiene and Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Any food handler who is unwell should not be at work. If they have symptoms, they should follow government advice. Food handlers should also follow the self isolation guidance in relation to household self isolation ie they may be well but will need to self isolate if a member of their household exhibits COVID-19 symptoms. Staff should not be volunteering if they are at risk from coronavirus i.e if they are in one of the vulnerable categories.

Although it is unlikely that coronavirus is transmitted through food, as a matter of good hygiene practice anyone handling food should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done as a matter of routine, on entering the food premises, before and after handling food, after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. Where this is not possible, alcohol hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol may be used. All staff and volunteers should practice a high level of personal hygiene and avoid touching their face. A two metre distance rule from other people must be followed as part of COVID-19 social distancing advice. It is recommended that a daily staffing list is provided and daily checks are made to ensure all individuals are not symptomatic and good hygiene is maintained across all steps. It is advisable that handwashing signage, and signage about self isolation is displayed to encourage compliance with Government advice.

You may require that staff wear gloves to handle food in the food bank .In this case – you must consider how gloves are worn. They must be regularly replaced and the old ones discarded. The gloves should not be re-worn. Gloves should be taken off according to the attached poster. The gloves should then be put in a plastic bag and once full should be double bagged and marked “for storage until (72 hours ahead)”and kept for 72 hours in a secure storage area before being placed in the general waste stream. Please see below for further information and guidance on this subject.

## **Packaging and labelling of foods**

When packaging food you must:

- Ensure any food containers used are food- grade and suitable for use
- Wrap and package food in a way that avoids contamination of products this includes allergen cross contamination.
- Ensure that any containers are clean and not damaged, particularly if you use cans or glass jars
- Ensure you are able to keep the wrapping or packaging material clean
- If vac-packers are to be used - the same one must not be used for raw and ready to eat food.

For meals that are prepared/cooked, then chilled/frozen and then packed - it is recommended that the following labelling should be provided with the meals:

- Name of the food
- Any allergens included as ingredients (plus may contain statements from ingredient labels). Also consider any precautionary “allergen may contain statements” in relation to where the meal is made. It is recommended that allergen information is provided on all meals unless you have a way of identifying customers with allergies/intolerances and ensuring that such customers do not receive products that contain the allergen to which they are allergic/intolerant.
- appropriate storage conditions ie keep refrigerated/frozen etc
- cooking and/or reheating instructions to include eg cook from frozen/defrost thoroughly before cooking
- durability date ie use by/best before
- the name or business name and address of the food business operator - the customer needs to be aware where the food has come from. If there is a possibility that the customer will not know where the food has been produced then this should be on the label

## **Freezing Food Before Its Use By Date**

If you are freezing foods before their use by dates, you must have a procedure for doing this which ensures that the food you supply to customers is safe. The date the foods are frozen should be recorded and the food should now be given a best before date that has been verified i.e. how long can the product remain frozen for. The product would need to comply with food labelling legislation also. Notably Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 and the Food Information Regulations 2014. Advice would need to be given to the consumer to consume the food within 24 hours of defrosting. Your Food Safety Management system would need to address this. If this is something that you are considering - please speak to Manchester City Council, Food, Health and Safety and Airport Team. [fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:fsafoodreg@manchester.gov.uk)  
Please also see: <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/be-freezer-hero>

## **Allergens**

Food businesses must be able to provide accurate allergen information to customers. There are 14 allergens which must be identified as outlined in Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 if they are contained in the food you provide. Customers may ask about other ingredients in a dish to which they are allergic and the information you provide must also be accurate. In relation to ingredients which are not the 14 - if this information is not readily accurately available then you must tell customers this. NEVER guess in relation to allergens.

- Obtaining information from suppliers

When receiving goods from suppliers or food donors, ensure that accurate allergen information can be obtained either on the label (for pre-packed foods) or provided separately from the supplier (for non pre-packed). If there is no allergen information provided, the labelling information is not clear or the food could have been contaminated, then the product must be rejected.

- Communicating information with the customer

Consider how you will find out if customers have an allergy, intolerance or dietary requirement and put in place a procedure to ensure that information received, is recorded and passed to any staff that may need to be aware so that they can take extra care e.g. the chefs, delivery drivers.

Allergen information must be provided for each dish by checking the labels of each ingredient in the dish. The information must be written down to make sure that it is clear. Some ingredients will have “may contain” statements which must also be recorded. You must ensure the allergen information is provided to the customer or that the customer is made aware how they can obtain allergen information, if required.

It is appreciated that you may not know from one day to the next what meals that you may be preparing as this may depend on food donations. You must have a system of being able to provide when asked, the allergen information for each dish. You may decide that for each day - you do this by simply keeping ingredient labels in a folder of all the ingredients that have gone into a dish. You must consider how long you keep this information for, bearing in mind the likely longest consumption date of particular product and build in extra margin.

- Food Preparation, Storage and Delivery

When preparing a dish you must ensure there are procedures in place to reduce the risk of allergen cross contamination. You may consider using separate designated areas and assigning one member of staff for each dish. Where this is not possible, for example in a small kitchen, preparing one dish at a time and cleaning thoroughly in between might be more appropriate. Clean equipment and utensils should be used for each dish and staff must follow strict personal hygiene practices.

It may not be possible to reduce the risk of cross contamination in some circumstances, for example where fryers and grills are used for different products or where the separation of tasks is difficult. In this case the customer must be made

aware of any additional allergens which may be contained in the product due to this cross contamination risk.

Food must be stored in such a way as to reduce the risk of allergen cross contamination. Used sealed containers where possible to avoid spillage of one item into another is advised. Where decanting items into containers ensure the allergen information is retained.

Consider how you will reduce the risk of allergen cross contamination during the delivery process e.g. using a separate bags for each dish. If a meal has been prepared specifically for a customer with an allergy this must be made clearly identifiable to the customer.

### **Deliveries**

If food is being delivered to a business or individual you must ensure that the delivery vehicle is suitable for the transport of food. All vehicles must be maintained in a good condition and kept clean, ensure any food containers used are clean and in a good condition. If delivery vehicles are used to transport perishable foods, the temperature of chilled foods should be below 8C and -18C for frozen foods. Consider using insulated containers to help keep food at the correct temperature. Keep raw and cooked food separate in both the delivery vehicle and once it has been received to avoid cross-contamination. Ensure strict infection control procedures are implemented to control the risk of the transmission of COVID-19.

Please see further information/ guidance below in regards to deliveries and COVID - 19.

### **Note for recipient**

It is important to make recipients of deliveries aware to check received products in terms of:

- Allergens - if they have any allergies/ intolerances
- Durability dates - e.g checking use by dates
- Any other dietary requirements - e.g due to religious reasons

Recipients are also advised to wash their hands following receipt of a delivery and to wipe and disinfect food packaging prior to putting them away. If money is used; rinse and disinfect any money received in change. Consider contacting the recipient, e.g by email to this effect and/or a note to be placed with the delivery. Contact details should be included with this information so that the customer could contact someone with any queries.

### **Telephone/Internet Orders**

If you take any telephone/internet orders you must have a way of capturing any special dietary requirements eg any food allergies/intolerances. If any customers have any allergies/intolerances they must not receive any foods that contain such allergens either as ingredients or as “may contain” allergens.

It is advisable to establish if anyone in the household where a delivery is to be made is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 infection/has COVID-19 infection. Also whether anyone in the household is from a vulnerable group ie being shielded or self isolating due to being in a vulnerable group. This information **MUST** be conveyed to the person doing the delivery so that extra precautions can be taken at point of delivery.

Please see Manchester City Council guidance note - COVID-19 - Food Safety Guidance for volunteers. (advice note for volunteers who are shopping for food supplies and delivering to those who are unable to leave their homes).

### **Useful Information/ Guidance**

#### **General**

- [https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/listeria-guidance-june2016-rev\\_0.pdf](https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/listeria-guidance-june2016-rev_0.pdf)

#### **Deliveries**

- Manchester City Council guidance note - COVID-19 - Food Safety Guidance for volunteers. (advice note for volunteers who are shopping for food supplies and delivering to those who are unable to leave their homes).
- Greater Manchester Regulatory Centre of Excellence advice note: Food delivery and takeaway guidance for information
- <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-safety-for-food-delivery>

#### **Allergens**

- Training on allergen awareness is available on the Food Standards Agency website : [allergytraining.food.gov.uk](http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk)
- <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf>
- Manchester City Council Food Allergen Insert for Caterers

#### **COVID-19**

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>