

Managing food safety for charity food providers

Food safety management for a charity food provider, classed as a food business

All food businesses must have [food safety management](#) procedures in place, which should be based on the principles of [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\)](#).

Our [safer food, better business \(SFBB\)](#) packs are based on HACCP principles and help smaller operations to comply with the law.

See our guide on [preparing for your first food hygiene inspection](#) to make sure you are ready for your food safety inspection.

If you are not [classed as a food business](#), you still have a duty to provide safe food. Using the guidance on this page will help.

Food safety of donations

When food has been delivered, check that foods which require chilling or freezing are cold enough and the packaging is not damaged. If you don't think the food delivered has been handled safely or is poor quality, don't use it.

Tinned food is usually safe to eat. If the tin is dented, providing the dent is shallow and there are no other obvious signs of damage the food should be safe to eat. However, if the dent is deep, the tin may have a hidden split, hole or break in the seal. This could result in a tin that is no longer a reliable container. In this case, the food inside should not be distributed or eaten. If the dent has caused the can to rust, the food inside should not be distributed or consumed.

Food stored in glass jars sometimes contains a safety button on the top of the metal lid. This can be pressed down to indicate the integrity of the product seal. Food stored in glass jars either has air removed from the product or contains a modified atmosphere to maintain the safety of the food. If the button is not pressed down, this shows the jar has been opened. Always ensure the seal on glass jars is intact and has not been opened.

Do not distribute food from a visibly bulging can or a food jar that has been tampered with (for example, the safety button on the top of the lid can be pressed down). This could indicate the presence and growth of bacteria, making the food unsafe to eat.

Providing allergen information

It is important to manage allergens effectively to ensure food is safe for customers with food allergies, intolerances or coeliac disease. If you are registered as a food business, you must follow the [allergen rules set out for food businesses](#), including:

- providing accurate allergen information for [different types of food](#), including prepacked, prepacked for direct sale, and non-prepacked (loose) foods
- handle and manage food allergens effectively in any preparation or kitchen, such as avoiding [cross contamination](#)

Having a conversation with the consumer about allergens is important to ensure that all necessary information is given to enable the safe preparation of food and meet allergen requirements, and for the consumer to make a safe and informed choice about what food to eat.

Download our [allergy and intolerance sign](#) to display on your site for the consumer.

Managers can use and share sections of our [allergen checklist](#) with staff to ensure food allergy best-practice.

Staff and volunteers can complete our free [food allergy training](#).

Download our [allergy poster](#) to display on your site for your staff. It is also available in:

- [Welsh](#)
- [Bengali \(?????\)](#)
- [Cantonese \(??\)](#)
- [Punjabi \(?????\)](#)
- [Urdu \(?????\)](#)

Use-by and best before dates

Best before dates relate to quality, not food safety.

You can supply food after the best before date, but the food may not meet the quality expected by the consumer.

[Waste and Resources Action Programme \(WRAP\) has visual check guidelines](#) for supplying food past the best before date.

Use-by dates keep consumers safe

A use-by or best before date is required on most 'prepacked' food. This will usually be done by the producer or manufacturer. Prepacked food is any food put into packaging before being sold or given away.

Some prepacked foods do not require date labelling, such as unprepared, whole fresh fruit and vegetables. Read the [full list of exemptions](#).

If you receive 'non-prepacked' (loose) foods or food that was 'pre-packed for direct sale', such as sandwiches from a sandwich shop, they may become classified as 'prepacked' food once donated to you. This is because they are no longer in the place they were made. You may be required to add date labelling before distributing in this instance.

A use-by date is required on food that spoils or goes off quickly that will be a danger to health if consumed after the given date. It is an offence to supply food after the use-by date.

If the date has already expired, [throw it away](#).

Read about [pre-packed, prepacked for direct sale and non-prepacked \(loose\) foods](#).

Find more information about [use-by and best before dates](#).

Labelling non-prepacked food donations

[Non-prepacked \(loose\) foods](#), such as sandwiches made and sold directly to customers in a sandwich shop, do not need use-by or best-before dates.

However, if non-prepacked food is donated to a food bank or charity and then put into packaging, it may become "[prepacked food](#)" because it is no longer being sold (or given away) at the place it was made and is placed in packaging.

In this case, it is required to display a use-by or best-before date, and other? [mandatory information](#), such as allergen information.?

Use WRAP's [guidance on date labelling](#) to help comply with these regulations.

We are aware meeting labelling requirements for donated non-prepacked foods may be challenging. More in-depth advice will be provided soon.?

Some foods don't require a use-by or best before date, such as unprepared, whole fresh fruit and vegetables. DEFRA and the FSA provide a list of [exemptions](#).

Talk to your [local authority food safety team](#) if you need advice and are not clear about which labelling requirements apply to food you receive and supply.

Foods requiring special attention

Foods that pose a food safety risk to the consumer and/or do not meet legal labelling requirements should not be distributed.

Some foods that need extra care - such as eggs.

In order to maintain eggs in optimum condition, guidance set out by [the British Lion](#) (an egg safety scheme) recommends eggs are:

- stored at an even temperature and below 20° in their outer boxes or packs
- stored in a dry place away from strong smelling foods and possible contaminants
- not stored or displayed near to heat sources such as fridge motors and fan heaters or in direct sunlight
- kept away from pre-cooked or raw foods
- handled in a way to minimise damage
- Once the eggs have reached the consumer, the eggs should be stored in a cool, dry place. Ideally, in the fridge.?

Other foods that require extra care include:?

- rice
- pulses
- shellfish
- fish

If you provide any of these foods, consult the "[foods which need extra care](#)" section from the [Safer Food Better Business \(SFBB\) pack](#). Ready to eat foods can become contaminated with listeria, consult the [our Listeria page](#) to help reduce the risk.

Traceability

If you are [recognised as a food business](#), you need to put systems in place to ensure traceability of the food donated and distributed.

If a product is recalled by a seller due to its safety, you need to know if you redistributed that product.

You must keep an up-to-date record of your suppliers. Records should include:

- name and address
- type and quantity of food
- date of transaction and delivery
- Read more about managing [traceability](#) and [recalls](#).

[Sign up to receive allergy alerts and recalls.](#)?