

Starting a food business

Getting ready to start your food business

This page provides guidance on how you can get ready to start your food business. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

Planning before you start your food business

Before starting a food business, you must take time to plan and prepare. Doing so will give you the best opportunity to run your food business safely.

Further guidance can be found in our ['things to consider before starting a food business' checklist](#) on this page.

Who needs to register

If you sell, cook, store, handle, prepare or distribute, you may be considered a food business and will need to [register with your local authority](#).

This includes food businesses trading:

- from physical customer-facing premises
- from home
- from a mobile unit or temporary premises
- online (for example via social media or a website) or through distance selling (distance selling means any selling that happens without face-to-face contact with the consumer)

Registration will apply to all types of businesses who sell food and or drink, regardless of where you operate from.

Companies involved with food distribution, brokerage or food supply that operate from an office should also register as a food business. This applies even if no food is kept at the premises.

If you operate in more than one location, you need to register each premise with the local authority in which they are located. If you are unsure if you need to register or require further advice, please [contact your local authority](#) in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Guidance on how to register your food business with your local authority

When you start a new food business, or take over an existing business, you must register with your local authority. You should do this at least 28 days before you start trading.

Registration of your food business is free and can't be refused. If you are already trading and have not registered yet, you need to register as soon as possible as this is a legal requirement.

If you supply food regularly, for free or otherwise, to the public, then you need to register as a food business.

Register your food business on the [food business registration portal](#).

Anyone who sells, cooks, stores, handles, prepares or distributes food for the public needs to register as a food business, however there are also other guidelines you need to follow to make sure you're running your business correctly.

When to register

You are required to register at least 28 days before trading. We recommend that you do not register too early, but that you wait until 28 days before you are ready to start your operations. [Use our checklist](#) to make sure that you have considered everything before you register.

If you cease trading at any point, you need to [inform your local authority](#).

Selling food from customer-facing premises

If you are trading from physical customer-facing premises, please make sure you also read our guidance on and [setting up your food business premises](#). You may also want to read our guidance on [selling food for delivery](#).

Selling food from home

If you are trading from home, please make sure you read our guidance on [starting a food business safely](#) and [starting a food business from your home](#).

Selling food from mobile or temporary premises

If you are trading from a mobile unit or temporary premises please make sure you also read our guidance on [starting a food business safely](#) and [setting up your food business premises](#).

Selling food online

If you are selling food online (for example via social media or a website) or through distance selling (distance selling means any selling that happens without face-to-face contact with the consumer) please read our guidance on [starting a food business safely](#), [setting up your food business premises](#) and [selling food for delivery](#).

Registering as a childminder

If you provide food with your childminding business in England, the details you provide to [Ofsted](#) or your [childminder agency](#) will also be used to register you as a food business with your local authority. You will not have to register separately.

You must comply with food safety and hygiene regulations if you provide food and drink for children or babies including:

- meals
- snacks

- drinks (apart from mains tap water)
- reheated food provided by a parent/carer
- food that you cut up and prepare

Childminder registration requirements differ in Wales and Northern Ireland if you provide food with your childminding business. Contact your local authority for more information.

You can find more information on food safety management for registered childminders or childcarers in our [Safer Food Better Business Pack](#).

Checklist: things to consider before starting a food business

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

WORD

[View Starting your food business safely checklist_0.docx as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (95.96 KB)

Planning

Having a business plan is important to running a successful food business. [Further guidance](#) on how to write a business plan, including examples of business plans are available online.

Registration

Once you are ready to start your food business, you must [register](#) with your local authority at least 28 days before you begin trading.

Permissions

If you are running your business from home, there are [certain requirements](#) that need to be met. For more information go to our guidance on [starting a food business from home](#).

Register as self employed

If you are starting a food business, you need to inform [HMRC](#) that you are self-employed. To get more advice on the financial aspects of becoming a food business owner, head to our [additional help and support](#).

Set up food safety procedures

Food businesses must have food safety management procedures in place. Read our guidance on [starting your food business safely](#).

Consider food safety training

It is important to demonstrate the highest standards of food preparation, handling, storage and serving. For more information read our guidance on [starting your food business safely](#).

Practice good food hygiene

Good food hygiene is essential to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat. For more information read our guidance on [starting your food business safely](#).

Prepare your premises to run a food business

Your food business premises, which could be your home, must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition. For more information read our guidance on [setting up your food business premises](#).

Selling food online and delivering it safely

You must ensure that all food is delivered to consumers in a way that ensures that it does not become unsafe or unfit to eat. More information on safe delivery can be found in [selling food for delivery](#).

Provide allergen information and follow labelling rules?

Food businesses of all sizes are required to provide allergen information and follow labelling rules as set out in food law. More information on allergen management can be found in our guidance on [starting your food business safely](#).

Was the information on this page helpful? [Give us your feedback](#).

Starting your food business safely

This page provides details on the requirements you must consider when starting a food business. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

There are several requirements you need to consider when starting a food business. These are:

Risk assessment

When starting a food business, you should carry out a risk assessment. The Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance on [how to carry out a risk assessment](#) and what to include.

Food businesses must use [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\)](#) procedures or a HACCP-based Food Safety Management System such as the [Safer Food Better Business Guide](#).

The packs contain information on:

- personal hygiene
- pest control
- cross-contamination
- cleaning

Food hygiene

Good food hygiene is essential to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat. When you are setting up a food business, you need to introduce ways of working that will help you ensure hygiene standards are right from the start.

The four main areas to remember for good food hygiene are the 4Cs:

- [cleaning](#)
- [cooking](#)
- [chilling](#)
- [cross-contamination](#)

Food hygiene training

Wherever food is served, it is important to demonstrate the highest standards of food preparation, handling, storage and serving. You will need to demonstrate that you have been adequately trained in food hygiene.

It is not compulsory for you to have a food hygiene certificate, but if you are looking to start a food business, we recommend that you pursue a food hygiene qualification to improve your knowledge.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health provides guidance on the [different levels of food hygiene certificate](#) available. Other accredited training providers are available. Your [local authority](#) will be able to advise on which course is most suitable for your needs.

Allergen management

Food businesses are required by law to provide allergen information and follow labelling rules.

The law says that you must:

- provide allergen information to your customers
- handle and manage food allergens effectively in food preparation

You need to tell customers if any food you provide contains any of the [14 allergens](#) that are required to be declared as allergens by food law.

This also applies to any additives, or any other items present in the final product, such as garnishes or cake decorations.

There are a number of ways in which allergen information can be provided to your customers.

Our [allergen guidance for food businesses](#) will help you to decide which is the best method for your business.

You can take steps to provide allergen-safe meals by:

- cleaning utensils before each use
- regularly washing hands thoroughly
- storing ingredients and prepared foods separately
- labelling takeaway meals clearly

It is important for food businesses to take steps to [avoid cross-contamination](#) in food preparation.

This protects customers with a food allergy. We have further guidance available on how to provide allergen information in food delivery.

We provide [free online food allergy training](#) which can be used to learn more about managing allergens in a kitchen, as well as how to cater for customers with food allergies.

Traceability

Traceability rules help keep track of food in the supply chain. They ensure that efficient and accurate [withdrawals and recalls](#) of unsafe foods from the market can be made in the event of any food safety problems.

You must keep records of:

- all the suppliers that provide you with food or any food ingredients
- any businesses you supply with food or food ingredients

All your records need to be kept up-to-date and always be available for inspections

Specific details of what you should include in your traceability records can be found in [managing food safety](#).

Avoiding food crime

When sourcing ingredients, only purchase food from reputable suppliers. Ensure that you are fully aware of where the food has come from.

Be vigilant when approached by businesses you have not previously had dealings with. Determine where the food has originated from before purchasing anything.

Check whether the price is in line with the current market price. Prices of products fluctuate, but be wary if suppliers are offering products at a lower price than usual.

Find out more on food crime in our [Food crime - guidance for businesses](#).

You can [report suspected food crime](#) to the National Food Crime Unit.

Health and safety

If you have five or more employees, you must have a written health and safety policy that describes the arrangements in place.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed [H&S ABC – An easy guide to health & safety](#) to help small and medium-sized businesses understand health and safety.

Starting your food business safely checklist

Carry out a risk assessment

You should carry out a [risk assessment](#) and have a [safety procedure](#) in place for your food business.

Provide staff with food hygiene training

You will need to demonstrate that you have been [adequately trained in food hygiene](#).

Ensure you are complying with allergy law

Food businesses are required by law to provide [allergen information](#) and follow labelling rules.

Ensure you have adequate traceability records

Specific details of what you should include in your traceability records can be found in [managing food safety](#).

Avoid food crime

Read our [Food crime - guidance for businesses](#). You can [report suspected food crime](#) to the National Food Crime Unit.

Ensure you have the correct health and safety procedures in place

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed [H&S ABC – An easy guide to health & safety](#).

Was the information on this page helpful? [Give us your feedback](#).

Setting up your food business premises

This page provides information on how to choose the right premises and what facilities you need to provide in your food business. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

Choosing the right premises

The premises you choose for your business, whether commercial or in your home, must:

- comply with the necessary regulations
- allow you to prepare food safely

You must keep your premises clean, maintained and in good condition. Your premises must allow you to follow good [food hygiene practices](#), including protection against [contamination](#) and pest control.

Tips

When you are choosing new premises, or making changes to premises, it's a good idea to ask your [local authority](#) for advice.

The following rules apply to your whole premises, not just the areas used for preparing food.

Handwashing facilities and toilets

You must have enough washbasins for everyone working in the business to [wash their hands](#) with hot and cold running water and materials for cleaning hands and drying them hygienically.

Changing facilities

You must provide adequate facilities for anyone working in the business to change their clothes, where necessary.

Other requirements

Your premises must have adequate ventilation, lighting and drainage.

Food preparation areas

The following rules apply to rooms where food is prepared.

Floors and walls

Floors and walls must be:

- maintained in a good condition
- easy to clean
- disinfected
- smooth, hard-wearing, washable and in a good state of repair

Ceilings

Ceilings should be:

- in good condition
- easy to clean to prevent dirt from building up
- free from condensation and mould
- free from flaking paint or plaster

Windows and doors

Windows and any other openings (such as doors) must be constructed in a way that prevents dirt from building up. If they open to the outside, they must be fitted with insect-proof screens that can be easily removed for cleaning.

Doors must be easy to:

- clean
- disinfect

Surfaces

Surfaces (including surfaces of equipment) in areas where food is handled, particularly those that are touched by food, must be:

- maintained in a good condition
- easy to clean
- disinfected

Facilities for cleaning equipment

Your premises must have adequate facilities for cleaning, disinfecting and storing utensils, including equipment. The facilities must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.

Facilities for washing food

Separate sinks must be provided, where necessary, for washing food and cleaning equipment in food preparation areas.

Every sink must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water for washing food and be of drinking quality. These facilities must be kept clean and be disinfected.

Equipment

All items, fittings and equipment that food touches must be:

- kept in good order, repair and condition
- cleaned effectively and be disinfected frequently enough to avoid any risk of [contamination](#)

You can find more information on maintenance in our [Safer food better business for caterers guide](#).

Food waste

All food businesses must [dispose of waste securely and properly](#).

To prevent your kitchen or any neighbouring properties from being flooded with [waste and sewage](#) you should put all food waste in the bin rather than down the sink and use commercial sink strainers to stop fat, oil and grease (FOG) and small bits of food waste entering the sewer network.

You should dry wipe plates and pans with kitchen roll before washing them and install grease management equipment such as a grease trap or a grease removal unit. This equipment must be maintained appropriately to remove any residual FOG going down the drain. More advice on grease management can be found in [this guide from the Foodservice Equipment Association](#).

Not only can blockages flood your premises, but you could also risk prosecution if your business disposes of FOG carelessly. Contact your Local Authority to check the correct way to dispose of waste responsibly.

You must also [remove food waste and other rubbish](#) from rooms containing food as quickly as possible to avoid it building up and attracting pests.

The three main groups of pests that are encountered in food businesses are:

- rodents - rats and mice
- insects - cockroaches, beetles, ants and flies
- birds - pigeons etc.

You can find more information on [pest control in our Safer food, better business for caterers pack](#).

What to look out for and what to do to keep pests out of your business.

Fire safety

You must carry out a fire risk assessment at your premises and take fire safety precautions to help protect you, your staff and customers.

The type of precautions you need to have will depend on the outcome of the fire risk assessment of the premises.

If you are planning to adapt your premises, it is a good idea to get fire safety advice before you start the work. You can get advice from your [local fire authority](#).

Food hygiene rating

The [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#) gives businesses a rating out of 5 so that consumers can make informed choices about where to buy and eat food.

The local authority will inspect your food business and [publish the rating](#).

All businesses should be able to achieve the top rating of 5. If you do not, the food safety officer will outline the improvements that you need to make and will advise on how to achieve a higher rating. For further information please see our '[How food hygiene ratings work](#)' page.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme has variations between [England](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

FSA Explains

Choosing the right premises checklist

Handwashing facilities and toilets

You must have enough washbasins for everyone working in the business to [wash their hands](#).

Changing facilities

You must provide adequate facilities for anyone working in the business to change their clothes, where necessary.

Other requirements

Your premises must have adequate ventilation, lighting and drainage.

Floors and walls in food preparation areas

Floors and walls must be in good condition, easy to clean, disinfected, smooth, hard wearing and washable.

Ceilings in food preparation areas

Ceilings should be easy to clean, in good condition, free from mould, condensation, flaking paint or plaster.

Windows and doors

Windows and doors must not allow dirt to build up. If they open to the outside, they must be fitted with insect-proof screens that can be easily cleaned.

Surfaces

Surfaces (including surfaces of equipment) in areas where food is handled must be maintained in a good condition, easy to clean and disinfected to avoid [contamination](#).

Facilities for cleaning equipment

Your premises must have adequate facilities for cleaning, disinfecting and storing utensils, including equipment to avoid [contamination](#).

Facilities for washing food

Separate sinks must be provided for washing food and cleaning equipment in food preparation areas.

Equipment

All items, fittings and equipment that food touches must be kept in good order, repair and condition and cleaned effectively to avoid any risk of contamination.

Food waste

You must [remove food waste and other rubbish](#) and have adequate facilities for storing and disposing of food.

Prevent pests

Find out more about [pest control in our Safer food better business guide](#).

Fire safety

You must carry out a fire risk assessment at your premises. You can get advice on this from your [local fire authority](#).

Get ready for your food hygiene inspection

The local authority will inspect your food business and [publish the rating](#). Additional information is available to help you [prepare for your first inspection](#).

Starting a food business from your home

This page provides specific information for those running a food business from home. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

This guidance is for individuals starting food businesses from home. However, you must also read our guidance on [getting ready to start your food business](#) and [starting your food business safely](#).

We also have guidance on [selling food for delivery](#).

While you may not define yourself as a business, if you are providing food on a regular and organised basis, you are a food business under food law.

Once you have registered as a food business, local authority officers will make arrangements to visit your home to conduct a food hygiene inspection. This inspection is to assess whether your food preparation areas and food safety procedures are suitable for running a food business.

Tips

Remember, if you supply food regularly to the public, for free or otherwise, you need to [register as a food business](#).

Managing food waste

All food businesses, including home-based businesses, must [dispose of waste securely and properly](#).

To prevent your kitchen from being flooded with [waste and sewage](#) you should put all food waste in the bin rather than down the sink and use sink strainers to stop fat, oil and grease (FOG) and small bits of food waste entering the sewer network.

Instead of pouring any cooking fats and oils down the sink, these can be collected in a container like a jam jar or yoghurt pot. The fat, oil and grease solidifies as it cools down. Once it is solid, you should put it in the bin. Any liquid foods like gravy can be soaked up using kitchen roll or newspaper and then also put into the bin.

It is important to dispose of FOG in this way because not only can blockages flood your home, but you could also risk prosecution if your business disposes of FOG carelessly. [Contact your Local Authority](#) to check the correct way to dispose of waste responsibly.

Practical requirements for setting up a food business from home

Register as self-employed

When you start a food business from home you need to inform HMRC that you are self-employed. This is to alert them that you will pay tax through [Self-Assessment](#). You need to register as self-employed when starting a food business, even if you are part-time or have another job.

You should register at GOV.UK to verify your account and confirm the specifics of your food business. Failure to register may result in a fine.

HMRC has [further guidance on working for yourself](#) and how to check if you should [set up as a limited company](#) instead.

Running a business from home

The government has guidance for [running a business from home](#). This includes advice on:

- getting permission from your mortgage provider or landlord
- getting permission from the local council
- insurance
- tax allowances
- business rates
- health and safety

FSA Explains

Starting a food business from home checklist

Register with your local authority

You should [register with your local authority](#) at least 28 days before you start your food business.

Check you have the appropriate permissions

If you are running your business from home, or a domestic premises, you need to ensure you have the [appropriate permissions in place](#).

Register as self-employed

When starting a food business, you need to [inform HMRC](#) that you are self-employed.

Contact your local authority for advice

Your [local authority's website](#) may have helpful guidance relating to starting your food business.

Set up food safety procedures

You should have a [safety procedure](#) in place for your food business.

Consider food safety training

Contact your local authority's Food Safety or Environmental Health team for advice on relevant [food safety training courses](#).

Practice good food hygiene

[Good food hygiene](#) is essential to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat.

Prepare your premises to run a food business

Your [food business premises](#), which could be your home, must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition.

Ensure you manage waste correctly

All food businesses, including home-based businesses, must [dispose of waste securely and properly](#).

Learn about selling food without face-to-face contact and delivering it safely

More information on selling without face to face contact and via delivery can be [selling food for delivery](#).

Provide allergen information and follow labelling rules?

Food businesses of all sizes are required to provide [allergen information](#).

Preparing for your first food hygiene inspection

This page provides information on what a food hygiene inspection may involve. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

As a new food business serving or supplying food direct to the public, the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme will apply to you.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme gives businesses a rating ranging from 0 to 5 so that consumers can make informed choices about where to buy and eat food.

Here's what the ratings mean:

- 5 – hygiene standards are very good
- 4 – hygiene standards are good
- 3 – hygiene standards are generally satisfactory
- 2 – some improvement is necessary
- 1 – major improvement is necessary
- 0 – urgent improvement is required

Your rating will be based on what is found on the day of an inspection. This will be carried out by authorised officers from the Food Safety team at your local authority. An authorised officer is usually a Food Safety Officer or an Environmental Health Officer from your local council, not the Food Standards Agency. They will inspect your premises to check if your business is complying with food law and producing food that is safe to eat.

Please see our [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRS\): guidance for businesses pages](#) for more info about the scheme.

Our [Starting your food business safely page](#) has information on good food hygiene practices you can use in your business. We also have a range of [Safer food, better business information packs](#) to help support businesses in England and Wales with food safety management. Businesses in Northern Ireland should refer to our [Safe Catering guidance](#).

Arranging a food hygiene inspection

When you register with your local authority as a food business, your local food safety team will automatically be notified. You do not need to contact them as an inspection will be arranged if required. Please note - higher risk businesses will be prioritised over low-risk businesses, and in some cases it may be several months until your business receives their first inspection.

Unannounced food hygiene inspections

Authorised officers from your local authority will usually arrive without making an appointment.

They have the right to enter and inspect your premises at any reasonable time. They must show you identification before they start carrying out the inspection.

For food businesses working from a home address, an authorised officer will make arrangements to visit your home to conduct a food hygiene inspection.

What a food hygiene inspection involves

As part of the food hygiene inspection, authorised officers will look at:

- your premises
- how hygienically you handle food
- your food safety management system

As well as looking at your records and procedures, food samples can be taken or photographed.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme does not cover:

- the quality of your food
- customer service
- presentation and culinary skill

Inspectors are not visiting to find faults or to shut down your business. The reason for inspection is to support you in providing safe food. They will provide guidance and feedback and suggest corrective action to help you get it right, if you are not complying with food law. Remember, all businesses should be able to achieve the top rating of 5.

Our [Food hygiene ratings for businesses pages](#) have more info on inspections and exemptions.

For more insights into what officers do during an inspection, please see our blogs:

- [What to expect from an inspection - a Food Safety Officer tells us](#)
- [What happens during a food business inspection? We asked an Environmental Health Practitioner](#)
- [What can you expect during a food business inspection? An Environmental Health Officer explains](#)

You may also want to [watch this video from Westminster City Council on a typical inspection](#).

What happens after an inspection

You will receive a confirmation letter outlining any necessary improvements you may need to make. If you do need to make some changes to how you operate, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make the relevant adjustments. This is unless there's an immediate risk to public health.

Please see our [Food hygiene ratings for businesses pages](#) for more information including:

- when, where and who publishes your food hygiene rating
- requesting a re-rating inspection
- how often premises are inspected
- displaying your food hygiene rating

Selling food for delivery

This page contains information for businesses who sell food for delivery, either without face-to-face contact with the consumer, or from a takeaway premises. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

Selling food without face to face contact with the consumer

When you sell food without face to face contact with the consumer, the food you sell is subject to UK law. The main law on this type of selling is the [Consumer Contracts \(Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges\) Regulations 2013](#).

This law applies to all goods sold without face to face contact with the consumer, not just food.

Methods of selling include:

- online via your own website or an external site like Deliveroo
- text messaging
- phone calls
- interactive TV
- mail order
- via social media, for example Facebook Marketplace

As with any food business, you need to [register your food business](#) 28 days before opening. The environmental health department can also provide advice on compliance with food safety and food hygiene laws.

Selling food online

The below guidance provides information for businesses selling food online, which outlines legal requirements and safety considerations.

We have also produced a guide for local authorities when dealing with businesses selling food over the internet.

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Advice to businesses selling food online as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (52.59 KB)

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Selling and buying food online Q and A as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (62.73 KB)

The law covers:

- information the seller needs to provide customers before making the sale
- rights to cancel the contract
- recovery of sums paid on cancellation
- restoration of goods by the consumer after cancellation
- delivery of food and drink to a consumer's residence or workplace

If you are selling via the internet the [UK Electronic Commerce Regulations 2002](#) will also apply to your business.

More information about online and selling without face-to-face consumer contact can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

References to EU legislation in FSA guidance

Directly applicable EU legislation no longer applies in GB. EU legislation retained when the UK exited the EU became assimilated law on 1 January 2024, published on [legislation.gov.uk](#). References to any legislation in FSA guidance with 'EU' or 'EC' in the title (e.g. Regulation (EC)

178/2002) should now be regarded as assimilated law where applicable to GB. References to 'Retained EU Law' or 'REUL' should now be regarded as references to assimilated law.

For businesses moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, information on [the Windsor Framework](#) is available on GOV.UK.

The Windsor Framework was adopted by the UK and EU on 24 March 2023. The Framework provides a unique set of arrangements to support the flow of agrifood retail products from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI), allowing GB standards for public health in relation to food, marketing and organics to apply for pre-packed retail goods moved via the NI Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS).

Allergen information for food deliveries

Food businesses need to tell customers if food they provide contains any of the specified allergens as an ingredient. These [14 allergens](#) have been chosen because they are the most common and dangerous.

Consumers may be allergic or intolerant to other ingredients, but you are only legally required to provide information for these 14 allergens.

The 14 allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as barley and oats), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin**, **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if they are at a concentration of more than ten parts per million) and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

If food is sold online or by phone through distance selling, allergen information must be provided at two stages in the order process.

You must provide allergen information:

- before the purchase of the food is completed - this can be in writing (on a website, catalogue or menu) or orally (by phone)
- when the food is delivered - this can be in writing (allergen stickers on food or an enclosed copy of a menu) or orally (by delivery driver)

It is important for food businesses to take steps to avoid cross-contamination in food preparation. This protects customers with a food allergy.

There are a number of actions you can take to prevent [cross-contamination with allergens](#) in your food business. These include:

- cleaning utensils before each usage
- regularly washing hands thoroughly
- storing ingredients and prepared foods separately
- keeping ingredients that contain allergens separate from other ingredients
- takeaway meals should be labelled clearly so customers know which dishes are suitable for those with an allergy

Food delivery protocol

If you are delivering food orders, all food must be delivered to consumers in a way that ensures that it does not become unsafe or unfit to eat.

If you use a domestic vehicle (or a non-food industry business vehicle) to transport your food orders, there are particular [hygiene requirements and vehicle specifications](#) that should be met.

Food-grade packaging

If you deliver food orders, it is important to select appropriate food-grade packaging.

For example, packaging materials may be required to be liquid or fat repellent to prevent leaks, or to stop paper becoming soaked through.

Without this type of packaging, chemical contaminants or germs could transfer onto the food. Well-fitting lids or closures will also minimise any hygiene or spillage risks.

Temperature

Foods that need refrigerating must be kept cool while they are being transported. The food may need to be packed in an insulated box with a coolant gel or in a cool bag.

Food sent by post needs to be sent to consumers in packaging that is strong enough to remain intact. Once sent, the food should be delivered as quickly as possible, ideally overnight.

When the order is made, the consumer must be told when they can expect delivery.

FSA Explains

Selling food for delivery checklist

Register your food business

You need to [register your food business](#) 28 days before opening.

Check you're complying with the law

The main law on distance selling is the [Consumer Contracts \(Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges\) Regulations 2013](#). If you are selling via the internet the [UK Electronic Commerce Regulations 2002](#) will also apply to your business.

Provide customers with allergen information

Tell customers if food you provide contains any of the [specified allergens](#) as an ingredient. You must provide allergen information before the purchase of the food is completed and when the food is delivered.

Prevent cross-contamination

Take steps to [avoid cross-contamination with allergens](#).

Meet vehicle hygiene requirements

Check your transportation vehicle for food meets [hygiene requirements and vehicle specifications](#).

Use appropriate packaging

Select appropriate food-grade packaging for deliveries. Foods that need refrigerating must be kept cool while they are being transported, for example in a cool bag.

Food sent by post needs to be sent to consumers in packaging that is strong enough to remain intact.

Keep customers informed

The consumer must be told when they can expect delivery of their order. Food should be delivered as quickly as possible, ideally overnight.

Was the information on this page helpful? [Give us your feedback.](#)

Changing your business operating model

This page contains guidance for changing the way your food business operates. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

If you are changing the operating model for your food business, such as selling food online, selling food from a mobile unit, or diversifying your business, it is important to understand the additional safety risks this may introduce.

This guidance on changing your business model includes the steps you need to take to address these risks, and how to communicate these to your customers effectively.

Inform your local authority

You must make sure your local authority has up to date information about your food business.

You should [inform your local authority](#) of any changes to your registerable food activities. This includes the introduction of a new delivery or takeaway service.

The local authority may not need to inspect your new business operation, but should be informed of any changes that may introduce additional risks into your food production processes.

You should tell your local authority if:

- you decide not to start trading
- you are planning to make significant changes to your business model
- you plan to close your food business.

Risk assessment

Food businesses which have made changes should review and, update their [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\) procedures](#), or HACCP-based Food Safety Management System (such as [Safer food, better business](#), or the [Safe catering pack in Northern Ireland](#).)

You should check that the changes you have made have not introduced any additional hazards which you are not controlling.

You must:

- document any changes you make
- document the start-up checks you undertake

Your risk assessment should consider the impact of these changes to your usual hygiene and food safety practices.

You should make all staff aware of changes to your Food Safety Management Systems, and make sure they receive training when processes are changed.

Was the information on this page helpful? [Give us your feedback.](#)

Additional help and support

This page contains additional help and resources for those who sell or distribute food to the public. Please read all the pages in this guide to ensure you have the information you need to run your food business.

Was the information in this guide helpful? [Give us your feedback.](#)

Your business can get advice on:

- [tax](#)
- [writing a business plan](#)
- [finance](#)
- [business premises and business rates](#)

You may have other responsibilities depending on what your food business does.

Make sure you check:

- [licences or permits](#) for example to sell food or to trade in the street
- [insurance](#)
- your employees have the right to work in the UK. All employers in the UK have a responsibility to prevent illegal working. You do this by conducting simple [right to work checks](#) before you employ someone.

There are also rules you must follow if you're:

- [selling food online](#)
- [importing and exporting food](#)
- [storing or using personal information](#) - this applies to information kept on staff, customers and account holders

England

[GOV.UK](#) provides useful information and resources for starting a business.

For general business guidance you can also contact the national [Business Support Helpline service](#). Additionally, you can find free support, advice and sources of finance through your local [‘growth hub’](#).

Wales

[Business Wales](#) is a free service that provides impartial, independent support and advice to people starting, running and growing a business in Wales.

Northern Ireland

nibusinessinfo.co.uk is a free service offered by Invest Northern Ireland, is the official online channel for business advice and support for starting a business.

Remember:

When you start a new food business or take over an existing business, you must [register with your local authority](#).

Revision log

Hide all updates

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- **14 March 2024** Added 'Preparing for your first food hygiene inspection' to guide

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