

# Food allergy awareness champions: Improving food safety standards in online food procurement for people with food hypersensitivities

Area of research interest: [Food hypersensitivity](#)

Project status: Completed

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## Background

There have been changes more recently in how people commonly acquire and consume food at home. The practice of ordering online food delivery including ready-to-eat meals, drinks, and snacks has increased immensely. The COVID-19 pandemic has likely been a factor in this change in practice as it's now the case that one in four consumers thinks about using meal delivery services on a regular basis.

The aims of this project were:

- to improve understanding and knowledge of the behaviours of FHS citizen scientists buying ready-to-eat (takeaway and delivered) food online.
- to learn more about the visible procedures and practices of individual food businesses offering online food delivery.
- to use accredited methods to determine the presence of certain allergens in selected samples of food procured by participants.

## Results

In general, respondents expressed more trust in nationwide food chains due to their perceived resources, updated information, menu consistency and/or accreditation by a UK allergy charity, such as Allergy UK or Coeliac UK.

The citizen scientists revealed some of their behaviours to minimise the risk of contamination including

- eating food alone, before or after the family or work meal
- physically separating gluten-containing from non-gluten-containing foods at the table
- double checking the food order and the labels provided
- following good food hygiene guidelines
- using their own senses.

Furthermore, there were some indications that older FHS citizens may perceive the risk of ordering online differently from younger age groups.

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