Reopening checklist for food businesses during COVID-19

A checklist to support food businesses to reopen safely during COVID-19 after a period of inaction.

Reopening your food business after a period of closure will require some extra checks alongside your 'normal' daily opening checks. These will help to make sure that your business can restart safely. You will need to maintain your basic hygiene standards and recognise the areas where greater attention will be required.

A review of your Food Safety Management System should be undertaken to identify risks. This should be recorded in your Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan, or your Safer food, better business pack (Safe catering in Northern Ireland).

This review should consider all changes to your business's processes and services connected to coronavirus (COVID-19). This could include changes to production, workflow management, staffing, customer interactions and any required control measures.

Completing this reopening checklist will allow you to record progress when restarting your food business. This checklist is also available for download in table format.

View Reopening checklist for food businesses during COVID-19 as PDF (186.21 KB)

Planning and preparation for start-up

Check your Local Authority is informed of current food activities

- Notify your Local Authority of your intention to restart operations.
- Notify your Local Authority of any change to the business activities you are registered for. This includes the introduction of any new delivery or takeaway service.

Update your Food Safety Management System for any new procedures

- Consider any risks to food safety introduced by changes to procedures.
- Review and document new procedures in relation to takeaway or delivery services e.g. allergen management, cook-chill-reheat, temperature control awaiting collection or during delivery.
- Manage risks of cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Ensure food packaging for takeaways and delivery is food grade, and appropriate for the purpose and food type.
- Store food packaging hygienically. Check that the hygiene and integrity of any packaging stored through a period of closure has been maintained and dispose of unsuitable packaging.
- Check staff are fit for work and wearing clean work clothes. Staff should be fit for work at all times. This means they must not be suffering from, or carrying, an illness or disease that could cause a problem with food safety. During COVID-19, staff who are displaying symptoms of the disease should follow the government's Stay at home and Staying safe outside your home guidance. You must make sure that staff understand your Fitness to

Work policy and are aware of any updates that have been made in relation to COVID-19. You may wish to consider any appropriate changes to your visitor questionnaires to address COVID-19 exposure risks.

- Consider adjustments to fitness for work procedures to take account of COVID-19 symptoms. Initial telephone interviews with staff may be beneficial in assessing fitness to work.
- Review the government advice on use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) outside of medical and care settings. Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) has further guidance for restaurants offering takeaway or delivery.
- If your business requires staff to wear PPE, check you have adequate stocks available.
- Review any PPE laundering procedures, where appropriate, to ensure PPE worn by staff can be safely changed and cleaned regularly.
- Ensure any changes to procedures are communicated to staff and training is provided where appropriate, including training of any new staff.

Check registered waste carrier services

- Ensure that your registered waste carrier services are running and available as required, to ensure there is no build-up of waste on site.

Site checks

Check food preparation areas are clean and disinfected (this includes work surfaces, equipment and utensils)

- Carry-out a full site assessment to determine if you can undertake a thorough clean or if a professional deep clean is needed.
- Source suitable cleaning and disinfection consumables and check existing stocks are within their use-by date. Cleaning products made-up or diluted before any closure should be disposed of as effectiveness reduces over time. See our guidance if your regular cleaning products are not available.
- Assess if staff need re-training on dilution rates and cleaning procedures.
- Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection, paying particular attention to shared equipment and high through-put and touch areas.

Check all areas are free from evidence of pest activity

- Look for evidence of pests, and take action if necessary, before restarting your operations. Check for:
    - signs of damage or smearing to walls and doors
    - gnawed or stained packaging
    - footprints in dust
    - animal droppings or urine smell
    - insect bodies, larvae, cocoons and egg/pupal casings
    - feathers.
- Consider resetting your pest-control schedule if necessary.
- Arrange for contractors to undertake a pre-opening site survey, if required.

Check handwashing and cleaning materials' availability (this includes soap, sanitiser and paper towels)

- Make sure all consumables are within dates for use.
- Obtain enough of your regular cleaning consumables such as soap, sanitiser and paper towels. Provide suitable alternatives if your regular products are unavailable.
- Consider updating staff training in line with government advice that staff should wash their hands more frequently than usual

. This should be for 20 seconds with warm water and soap.

Check hot and cold running water is available at all sinks and hand wash basins.

- Make sure adequate hand-washing stations are provided at all appropriate points within the food production and communal areas.
- Consider providing hand sanitiser in addition to hand-washing facilities at appropriate locations.

Equipment checks

Check your fridges, chilled display equipment and freezers are working properly

- Thoroughly clean equipment before restarting and restocking.
- Check required temperatures and any temperature control records, if kept during closure period.
- Review whether equipment requires maintenance after a period of inaction.
- Allow sufficient time for equipment to reach required temperature before restocking.
- Remove and refresh any ice left in machines and dispensers.

Check your other equipment (e.g. oven) is working properly

- Thoroughly clean all equipment before reopening.
- Inspect for maintenance requirements, verify temperatures and re-calibrate where necessary for time or temperature.
- Run dishwashers and glasswashers empty on hot cycle before use.
- Flush through taps and other equipment with water systems (e.g. bain marie).
- Consider Legionella risks and take action in line with [Legionella guidance from the Health and Safety Executive](#) to reduce risks.
- Check probe thermometers are working properly, and probe wipes are available
- Consider whether probe thermometers need to be recalibrated.

Ingredient and product checks

Check raw materials and ingredients

- Check for any damage to packaging which might affect safety of food or result in loss of allergen information.
- Check for any evidence of temperature abuse which may render the food unsafe. Refer to temperature control records where available.
- Check the use-by and best before dates on existing stock. Ensure that storage has been in-line with manufacturer's instructions. For example, check that any opened or unsealed product has been stored in line with labelled instruction such as 'Once opened consume within'.
- For [foods frozen by you on closure](#), check that labelling and records are sufficient to allow the safe use of the food.
- Check that the length of storage is in-line with your assessment at point of freezing.
- Check that you can obtain your usual raw materials and ingredients so that your product specifications can be met.
- Ensure that any new suppliers are reputable and can meet your requirements. [Safer food, better business](#) guidance is available on the selection of suppliers and contractors.

Check allergen information is accurate and available for all products

- Review your allergen management system, allergen matrices and menus to account for changes of supplier and any new raw materials or products.
- Review new takeaway or delivery services to ensure risk of allergen cross-contamination is managed.
- Ensure allergen information is available to customers at time of ordering and at delivery of food.

Social distancing measures

Employee safety

- Review the government advice on social distancing in the workplace in Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Provide where possible for 2 metre social distancing. See Social distancing at work and Food preparation.
- Consider steps to minimise staff-customer interactions. See Managing your customers, visitors and contractors.
- Consider how you will communicate with, update and where necessary train staff in new procedures. See Communications and training.
- Identify staff at higher risk. See Protecting people at higher risk.
- Cohort working teams to lower staff mixing. See Workforce management.
- Increase ventilation. You should assess the possibility to do this without introducing new risks or hazards to food safety and hygiene. See Before reopening.

Public safety

- Refer to government guidance on social distancing, customer interaction and communication or instructions to the public.