

Food & Safety Update

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



HERE COMES THE SUN

Please take a moment to read our latest update & share it with your team. We hope these updates serve as useful reminders.

We will review common issues identified during our inspections & provide tips on complying with legislation & maintaining or improving your food hygiene rating.

Both food and health and safety issues will be included in our newsletters; and in each issue we will have a 'Focus Point.'

Use these updates for team discussions & refresher training.



July Content

- Food Fraud
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Focus Point: Protect your Food

DO cover food.

DO use lids on containers

DO place foods in suitable containers / food grade packaging

DO NOT put foods at the risk of cross contamination by stacking containers of food directly on top of open food.

DO NOT ignore what you're seeing, if wrapping has come away, cover it again. Ensuring any date label information is transferred and always remove old date labels stickers from tubs.



Food Fraud

Food fraud is a form of criminal activity that can affect any food business, regardless of size, and it can damage your reputation as well as pose risks to customers. It is defined in the UK as serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains, including dishonesty at any stage of production, distribution, or sale. The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) works to prevent, detect, and investigate these offences across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What does food fraud look like

Food crime can take many forms, from misrepresentation of products to illegal processing or falsified paperwork. The Food Standards Agency highlights that food crime can range from isolated acts of dishonesty to organised criminal activity, all of which can harm consumers and businesses.

Warning signs to look out for

The following issues may indicate potential food fraud within your supply chain:

- Increase in customer complaints, especially about quality, flavour, or consistency.
- Products or ingredients that don't match their description, such as unexpected appearance, texture, or packaging.
- Suppliers who are unable or unwilling to provide full traceability, including origin, batch details, or certification.
- Inaccurate or inconsistent paperwork, such as invoices that don't match deliveries.
- Poor grammar or spelling on supplier documentation, including emails, invoices, or websites, are often a sign of illegitimate or hastily created businesses.
- Prices that seem too good to be true, especially for products that are in short supply or high demand.
- Suppliers becoming defensive or evasive, refusing to share information or avoiding questions about provenance.
- Unknown suppliers knocking at your door, trying to see you food and drink.

These signs do not automatically mean fraud is taking place, but they should prompt further checks. Food crime can emerge when supply

chains are disrupted or when criminals exploit market pressures.

Protecting your business

It is your responsibility to ensure you work only with reputable suppliers. Carrying out due diligence helps prevent your business from being unknowingly involved in fraudulent activity.

Practical steps include:

- Verifying supplier legitimacy and registration
- Requesting and reviewing traceability documentation
- Checking product specifications against deliveries
- Monitoring customer feedback trends
- Keeping clear internal records of supplier performance
- Looking closely at labelling of food packaging.

If your checks raise concerns, you should reconsider whether to continue with the transaction.

Reporting concerns

If you suspect food fraud, you can report it confidentially to the National Food Crime Unit: Food Crime Confidential
Call: 0800 028 1180

Email: foodcrime@food.gov.uk

Determining a Safe Shelf Life

While reducing food waste is important, extending the shelf life of perishable foods beyond safe limits can be dangerous—even if the food still appears fresh. Shelf life must always be based on food safety, not appearance. The following guidance reflects typical shelf-life expectations for catering operations. If you wish to go beyond these limits, formal shelf-life testing may be required.

Typical Shelf-Life Guidance for Catering Premises

- Foods prepared on site and chilled
Examples: sauces, batch-cooked items: Use By: Day of production + 2
- Chilled foods manufactured externally, you should follow the manufacturer's Use By once opened, as stated on the packaging.



- Chilled foods vacuum-packed on site - Maximum shelf life: 5 days (day of packing + 4) OR the manufacturer's original Use By date—whichever is shorter.
- Raw meat vacuum-packed on site - Maximum shelf life: 10 days (day of packing + 9) Some exceptions apply depending on the type of meat and processing method.
- Frozen foods prepared on site, including batch-cooked items. Best Before: 3 months. Foods should only be frozen if they have more than 2 days of shelf life remaining.
- Defrosted foods - Use By: 2 days (including the day of thawing) These items should be used promptly once they are fully defrosted.
- Ambient foods requiring chilling once opened, e.g. sauces, custard, long-life cream, mayonnaise. Follow the manufacturer's instruction: "Once opened, use within..."
- Decanted foods - If food is removed from its original packaging, you must record the manufacturer's Best Before date.

Food Standards Agency: [Best before and use-by dates](#) | [Food Standards Agency](#)

Keeping it chilled



Keeping foods properly chilled becomes even more critical as temperatures rise, because warm conditions allow bacteria to multiply much more quickly.

High-risk foods must stay cold from delivery through storage and service, and even short periods above safe temperatures can compromise food safety.

Why strict temperature control matters

High-risk foods such as cooked meats, dairy, ready-to-eat dishes, prepared salads, and sauces support rapid bacterial growth when they warm up.

The law requires these foods to be at or below 8°C. Aiming to have refrigerators operating at 5°C or lower provides a safety buffer for when fridge doors are opened frequently.

When equipment struggles to maintain

temperature, the risk increases. Refrigeration systems work harder in warm weather, so early action prevents breakdowns and potential food loss.

Keeping refrigeration effective in warm weather

Several practical steps help maintain safe temperatures:

- Monitor temperatures more frequently during hot weather, especially at peak service times.
- Contact your refrigeration engineer early if temperatures begin to creep up, don't wait for a full breakdown.
- Avoid overloading fridges, as this restricts airflow and slows cooling.
- Keep doors closed as much as possible, particularly on busy shifts.
- Keep extraction fans on even during quiet service times to remove heat from the kitchen.

Saladette units and countertop chillers are especially vulnerable in warm conditions. To help them stay within safe limits:

- Replace the lid immediately after removing ingredients.
- Pre-chill gastronorm containers before filling them.
- Avoid leaving the lid open during prep, as warm air quickly raises the temperature; **& never** ignore the temperature the probe.



High-risk foods kept out during service

Some businesses keep items like coleslaw, sauces, or garnishes on the workstation for quick access. These foods can only remain out of refrigeration for a maximum of 4 hours. After this:

- They must be returned to the fridge and used from chilled conditions, or
- Discarded if they have already been out for 4 hours and cannot be safely reused.
- They cannot be taken out again for another service period.



What to consider next

Consistent temperature control is one of the most visible indicators of good food safety management. Strengthening monitoring routines and ensuring staff understand the 4-hour rule can significantly reduce risk.

Food Standards Agency: [How to chill, freeze and defrost food safely](#) | [Food Standards Agency](#)

Food Hygiene Training

All food handlers must be supervised & trained in food hygiene that matches the type of work they do.



The responsibility sits with the Food Business Operator, who must ensure that anyone handling open food has the right level of instruction, knowledge, supervision and skills to work safely.

The level required varies by role: front-of-house staff generally need a basic understanding, kitchen staff need a deeper level, and supervisors or managers require more advanced knowledge so they can develop, monitor, and enforce safe procedures.

Training expectations for different roles

The law does not require staff to attend a formal course or hold a specific qualification. Competence can be gained through on-the-job training, instruction & supervision, self-study, previous experience, or structured courses. What matters is that staff can demonstrate safe practice.

A clear way to understand the levels is:

- Level 1: Aimed at new starters who need a simple introduction to food hygiene. Common for front-of-house roles who do not handle open food.
- Level 2: Previously known as both the Basic & Foundation Level. This is the standard level for anyone handling or preparing open food, such as chefs, cooks, kitchen assistants, and kitchen porters who may assist with low-risk food preparation.
- Level 3: Designed for supervisors, managers, and food business operators in small to medium operations who oversee food safety procedures. Previously the

Intermediate Certificate.

- Level 4: Intended for managers & operators of large or complex catering operations where higher-level decision-making and system design are required. Previously the Advanced Certificate.

Keeping training records

Inspecting officers may ask to see evidence of training. If certificates are not displayed, it's good practice to keep copies on file. Records should show:

- What training was completed
 - When it was completed
 - Who delivered it
 - When refresher training is due
- Refreshing training every three years is widely recommended to ensure knowledge stays current.

If you use Safer Food Better Business, ensure that staff are familiar with the file contents and that the training record in the pack for each food handler is completed.

Consequences of inadequate knowledge

If, during an inspection, food handlers cannot demonstrate appropriate knowledge, the officer may require the business to provide further supervision, instruction or training. This can also affect hygiene ratings and may lead to follow-up action if not addressed.

Shelf-Life Labels

A wide range of shelf-life labels are available on the market, but it's important to select one system that best suits your operation. Avoid using overly complicated date-labelling methods or multiple types of labels, as this often leads to confusion and inconsistent practices.

Coloured day dots are commonly used. It is important to ensure that all staff use them consistently. Some businesses apply the dot to indicate the day of production, whilst others use them to show the discard date.

You should adopt one clear, consistent labelling system that can be used across all food types, including chilled, frozen, defrosted, and ambient products. When choosing labels, ensure they are:

- Suitable for freezer use (won't bleed, smudge, or fall off)



- Easy to remove before washing containers
- Non-residue forming, so they don't leave sticky marks
- Optional: Dissolvable labels, though these can be more expensive

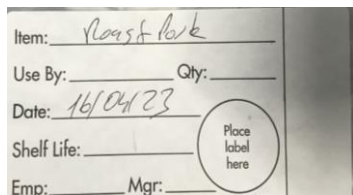
You must be able to demonstrate stock control and rotation procedures to ensure food is safe. A date labelling system is advised. This supports your Food Safety Management System by:

- Preventing the use or sale of out-of-date or potentially unsafe foods
- Supporting effective stock rotation
- Reducing food waste through better control and visibility

A consistent, well-managed labelling system is a simple but essential part of maintaining strong food safety standards.

Training Team Members to Apply Food Date Labels

During inspections, it's common to find shelf-life labels missing or completed incorrectly. This usually stems from time pressures, poor training, and limited supervision. However, unclear guidance and overly complicated labelling systems can also contribute to mistakes.



Above: Poorly completed date label

To prevent this, it's essential to train your team on why accurate labelling matters and how to use the system you've introduced. Training should cover:

- The shelf life allocated to each product
- When labels must be applied (e.g., on opening, preparation, or production)
- How to complete labels clearly and consistently
- Where labels should be placed on containers
- The importance of removing old labels before washing containers
- Not writing labels



Labels written out for consecutive Wednesdays

out in advance.

Correct labelling is a key part of your Food Safety Management System. Failing to label foods or keeping out-of-date items on site can compromise food safety and will negatively affect your food hygiene rating.

Clear expectations, simple systems, and regular supervision help ensure that labelling becomes a consistent habit rather than an afterthought.

Flying Pests

Flying pests become far more active as temperatures rise, and you will start to see an increase in activity around doors, windows, and food preparation areas.

Warm weather creates ideal breeding conditions, so prevention measures need to be in place and be maintained consistently.

Why flying pests matter in food premises

Flies carry bacteria picked up from waste, drains, and outdoor environments. When they land on food, work surfaces, or equipment, they can transfer contamination instantly. Physical barriers and well-maintained pest control equipment are essential as part of your food safety system.

Seasonal checks

With warmer weather, it's important to:

- Reinstall fly screens on windows and doors used for ventilation if they had been removed. Screens should fit securely, be free from tears, and be easy to remove for cleaning.
- Check electric fly killers (EFKs) to ensure they are working effectively.
- Replace UV tubes if they are dim, expired, or more than 12 months old. UV output declines long before the light appears to fail.
- Change sticky boards in EFKs, as they dry out and lose effectiveness over time.
- Review the placement of EFKs, ensuring they are positioned away from food preparation surfaces and not visible from outside (to avoid attracting pests indoors).
- Keep electric fly killers switched on 24/7 during the fly season.



Don't Let It Be You

A hotel owner in South Oxfordshire was ordered to pay more than £29,000 after failing to comply with



two improvement notices and committing multiple breaches of Food Safety and Hygiene Regulations.

Conditions found during the inspection

A Food Safety Officer identified significant hygiene failings at the premises, including:

- Food areas were not kept clean, nor maintained in good repair or safe condition, with damaged walls and floors in the kitchen.
- Required food safety procedures had not been implemented.
- Waste storage and disposal arrangements were inadequate.
- The construction of the premises did not prevent the risk of pest contamination.

These issues led to the service of two improvement notices requiring the business to take corrective action.

Failure to comply with improvement notices

At a follow-up visit, the officer found that the Food Business Operator had not complied with the notices within the specified timeframe and that the premises still failed to meet basic hygiene and structural standards. The operator ultimately pleaded guilty to nine breaches of Food Safety and Hygiene Regulations.

Penalties imposed

The court ordered the business owner to pay:

- £15,000 fine
- £12,243 in costs
- £2,000 victim surcharge

This totaled more than £29,000.

Why this matters for food businesses

Cases like this highlight the importance of:

- Keeping premises clean, well-maintained, and pest-proof
- Ensuring food safety procedures are in place and followed

- Responding promptly to improvement notices
- Maintaining accurate waste management and structural standards

Failing to meet these obligations can lead not only to prosecution and substantial financial penalties but also long-term damage to a business's reputation.

Looking to Offer Takeaway as part of your business, this summer?



If you're planning to offer prepacked takeaway options this summer, such as sandwiches, salads, desserts or boxed meals you must meet the correct labelling requirements.

Because this area is enforced by Trading Standards, and **not** Environmental Health, the safest approach is to follow the official guidance provided through the Business Companion, (using the QR code above), which explains the rules clearly and in plain language.

The Food Standards Agency also provides allergy guidance for Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS), introduced under Natasha's Law, which applies when food is packed on the same premises where it is offered for sale.

For foods that are fully prepacked (not PPDS), the general labelling rules are more extensive and include durability dates, ingredient lists, allergen declarations, net quantity, storage instructions, and more.

Practical next steps

- Review the Business Companion guidance before printing or applying any labels.
- Check whether your takeaway items count as PPDS or prepacked, the requirements differ.
- Ensure allergen information is accurate and clearly presented.
- Keep your labelling process consistent so staff apply the correct information every time.

FSA: [Introduction to allergen labelling for PPDS food](#) | [Food Standards Agency](#)

HEALTH & SAFETY



You may not see health and safety officers routinely, but they are still around. Are you aware that both you and your employer have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974?

Stress is Not a Weakness It can happen to anyone!

Stress is common in catering and hospitality, but it is **not** a personal failing. The pressures of fast-paced service, long hours, and demanding environments mean anyone can be affected. And alongside mental health concerns, substance misuse remains a recognised issue within hospitality industry.

Hospitality Action reported a significant rise in mental health struggles among workers across the sector, reflecting a broader trend of increased stress, anxiety, and depression.

The Health and Safety Executive's 2023 statistics showed persistent high levels of work-related stress, anxiety, and depression, with 875,000 workers affected and 17.1 million working days lost as a result across all businesses.

The HSE emphasises that employers must identify stressors, act on them, and support staff early to prevent problems from escalating.

Understanding stress in catering roles

Catering and hospitality roles often involve intense service periods, unpredictable workloads, customer-facing stress, and physically demanding tasks.

Stress and mental health can be hard to talk about, especially in environments where people feel they must "just get on with it. But ignoring the issue can increase risk.

These conditions can make it difficult for staff to recognise or talk about stress, and managers may feel unsure how to approach conversations about wellbeing. This silence can allow problems to escalate, affecting safety, performance, and team morale.

Employers must protect workers from stress by carrying out a risk assessment and taking action on the findings.

Spot the signs

Employees may notice changes in how they feel or behave, including:

- Feeling negative, overwhelmed, or indecisive
- Difficulty communicating or concentrating
- Changes in appetite
- Increased alcohol or drug use as a coping mechanism
- Trouble sleeping or feeling constantly tired



These are signs that support is needed!

As a manager you may notice:

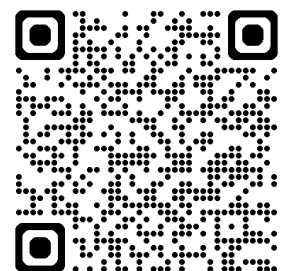
- Increased errors, Mood Swings, changes in attendance, anxiety and overtiredness, this can indicate substance abuse, but **don't** jump to the wrong conclusion. If you have concerns, speak to the employee.

Tools to help managers and teams talk about stress

The HSE Talking Toolkit is designed to help managers start structured conversations with staff about workplace pressures.

It guides discussions around workload, control, support, relationships, role clarity, and organisational change. It helps identify causes of stress and explore practical solutions, but it should be used alongside wider risk-management processes.

The toolkit is especially useful in small businesses where formal surveys may not be





practical, and it can also support one-to-one meetings, return-to-work discussions, and reasonable adjustments.

Legal responsibilities for employers

Employers must:

- Assess the risk of work-related stress
- Put measures in place to reduce or remove those risks
- Review the effectiveness of those measures
- Support staff who raise concerns

Failing to manage stress can lead to ill health, increased absence, and reduced performance.

Businesses should have structured policies in relation to alcohol and drugs and consider these as health concerns opposed to immediate disciplinary.

As an employer you may also want to consider education around the effects of alcohol and drugs particularly to those who are new to the industry and who may be impacted by peer pressure and the accepted norm of the industry.

What workers can do

Anyone experiencing signs of stress should speak to someone they trust. This could be:

- A line manager
- A colleague
- A GP or other healthcare professional
- A mental health charity such as Mind
- A confidential listening service such as Samaritans



Reaching out early can help prevent stress from becoming overwhelming.

Building stress awareness into your food business

A simple stress risk assessment for a small business typically covers:

- Workload and pace
- Working hours and shift patterns
- Communication and support
- Training and role clarity
- Relationships within the team
- Organisational changes or pressures

Documenting these points helps demonstrate compliance and provides a basis for improvement.

Why this matters for food businesses

Stress and poor mental health don't just affect individuals they influence safety, decision-making, and team dynamics. In kitchens, where sharp tools, hot equipment, and fast service are the norm, impaired concentration or judgement increases the risk of accidents.

Addressing stress proactively helps create a safer, more stable working environment.

How are you currently supporting staff wellbeing in your business?

Further guidance

ACAS [Mental health and the law - Supporting mental health at work - Acas](#)

MIND Charity: [Information and support](#)

Norfolk & Waveney MIND [Norfolk and Waveney Mind - Home](#)

Samaritans: [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

Managing Drug & Alcohol Misuse at Work: [Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work - Overview - HSE](#)