

Food & Safety Update

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



BLAST THIS CHRISTMAS MUSIC! IT'S JOYFUL & TRIUMPHANT (THE GRINCH)



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; and in each issue we will have a 'Focus Point.'

Use these updates for team discussions & refresher training.

December 2026 Content

FOOD SAFETY

- Focus Point: Common Findings at Inspection
- Cross Contamination
- Defrost Safely
- Food Hygiene Training
- Don't Let it Be You!
- Christmas Preparation

- Sickness Policy
- Allergen Symptoms

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Cellar Safety – Confined Spaces & Gas Safety
- Employers Liability Compulsory Insurance



Focus Point: Common Findings at inspection!

Poor Stock Rotation – including poor labelling, not following your own date labelling system, not labelling foods removed from the freezer.

Foods Not Protected from Contamination – foods not being covered properly creating a risk between raw and ready to eat and allergen risk.

Poor Cleaning Standards – Staff not cleaning beneath and behind equipment. Not cleaning frequently used equipment such as commercial tin openers. Mouldy fridge door seals.

Dual Use of complex equipment – the ecoli guidance clearly states that dual use is not allowed. Where equipment has been dual used such as vacuum packers you must use it as raw only unless you have it recommissioned.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are complying with the legislation. If you fail to take action your food hygiene rating score may be impacted.

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The 4 C's of Food Safety:

Cross Contamination

In our next few focus issues, we will be looking at the 4 C's of Food Safety. If you are not familiar with these, you should review your Food Safety Management System, as they are a key part of it.

Cross Contamination

You must prevent the transfer of harmful bacteria from raw foods to ready-to-eat foods.

To reduce this risk, ensure that:

Storage

- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate
- Ideally store raw meat in a separate fridge or chiller
- If stored together, make sure foods are sealed or fully wrapped.



Equipment and Utensils

- Use separate equipment for raw and cooked foods
- Colour-coded equipment is recommended
- If not available, clean and disinfect equipment thoroughly before and after use.

Fruit and Vegetables

- Wash all fruit, vegetables, and salad items thoroughly
- Treat them as raw/dirty as they may contain soil or bacteria
- Store unwashed produce below ready-to-eat foods
- Follow supplier instructions, including washing items like micro herbs and edible flowers
- Ensure ready-to-eat fruits and salads are properly cleaned before use



Food Handlers

- Staff must maintain good hygiene practices
- Wash hands regularly, especially:
- After handling raw foods

Before handling ready-to-eat foods

- Change aprons if they may have been contaminated when moving between raw and ready-to-eat tasks.

Food Safety Training

Not Just a Tick-Box Exercise

In the last edition, we talked about food hygiene training for staff and the different levels of training available



However, we are finding that some businesses treat it as a simple tick-box exercise to satisfy food officers.

While we do want to see training certificates, we also want to see that staff understand and apply what they have learned; and it's important that your food safety management system and procedures are fully put into practice to make sure food is safe. If you use Safer Food Better Business ensure the training record for each food handler is completed.

A certificate alone does not show that staff truly understand their training. Completing a course does not mean someone feels confident making important decisions or challenging unsafe behaviors, especially if it involves more senior colleagues.

Training should focus on building staff understanding and confidence. Staff should feel capable of carrying out their duties and complying with food safety laws and understand those measures in place to monitor and control food hazards.



The main aims of training should be to:

- Protect customers by providing safe food
- Protect the business by ensuring staff understand their responsibilities and help maintain a good reputation





Officers Using Phones: Safeguarding Reassurance

Sometimes officers are questioned about using phones during inspections or investigations.



We understand that organisations working with children and vulnerable people may have safeguarding concerns.

We want to reassure you that when officers use their phones, it is **not to take photos of individuals in your care**.

Phones and tablets are now an important part of our work. We may use them to:

- Take photos of issues identified during inspections
- Photograph documents
- Carry out research while on site

Our visits are always for a specific purpose, such as inspecting a kitchen (or in the case of Health and Safety Visits, we could be taking photographs of equipment or areas where an incident occurred).

We fully understand and support safeguarding procedures. If your policy is to escort visitors around site, we will not be offended, however please allow us time to do our job whilst at site.

Norovirus (Vomiting Bug)

Norovirus, often referred to as the *winter vomiting bug*, is a highly contagious stomach virus that causes vomiting and diarrhoea. While symptoms

are usually short-lived, most people begin to feel better within around two days.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms of norovirus can include:

- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- High temperature
- Headaches
- Stomach cramps
- Body aches and pains

How Norovirus Spreads

Norovirus is extremely infectious and can spread easily through:

- Close contact with someone who has the virus
- Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching your mouth
- Eating food that has been prepared or handled by someone infected

For this reason, it is essential that **any staff showing symptoms—whether kitchen or front-of-house—must not attend work**.

Preventing the Spread in Your Business

If a member of staff develops symptoms:

- **Send them home immediately**
- Enforce your sickness policy
- Do not allow them to return to work until they have been **symptom-free for at least 48 hours**

You must also ensure that all areas the individual may have come into contact with are thoroughly **cleaned and disinfected**, including:

- Food preparation surfaces
- Equipment
- Toilets and washrooms
- Frequently touched surfaces (e.g. door handles)

Maintaining strict hygiene controls is essential to prevent outbreaks and protect both staff and customers.





Don't Let It Be You

Serious gas and hygiene breaches in a food outlet

In Dudley, officers carrying out a routine inspection found the premises had switched from natural gas to Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG).



There were no installation certificates, and the manager could not prove it had been installed safely. The business agreed to stop using the LPG immediately, leading to a three-day closure.

Officers also found poor cleaning standards and instructed the business to carry out a deep clean. However, a follow-up visit five days later showed no improvement and revealed a cockroach infestation, with both live and dead insects present.

Further issues included the absence of a food safety management system, poor cleaning and maintenance, inadequate pest control, and food left exposed to contamination. Handwashing facilities were also inadequate, with no soap or proper drying methods. Equipment and surfaces were poorly maintained, and staff lacked proper training.

Due to the serious risk to health, officers used emergency powers to close the premises. The business remained closed for four weeks while pest control treatments and necessary improvements were completed.

The director was fined £902 for gas safety offences and £601 for food hygiene offences, plus a £601 victim surcharge and over £1,390 in costs. The manager was fined £973 for gas safety offences and £649 for food hygiene offences, along with a victim surcharge of over £648 and costs of over £1,390.

Successful prosecution following serious food hygiene breaches

During an inspection of premises in Warrington, officers found very poor food hygiene standards. Issues included inadequate staff training, no effective food safety management system, and poor cleaning practices.

A serious risk to health was identified due to a cockroach infestation throughout the premises, including the kitchen and food storage areas. As a result, the premises was closed. A follow-up visit showed the infestation was still present, and the business later stopped trading.

The food business operator pleaded guilty to 11 offences under the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations.

They were fined £2,769, ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £1,108, and costs of £3,739—totaling over £7,500.

The company was also fined £300 and required to pay a £120 victim surcharge.

Christmas Preparation

By now, you have likely planned your Christmas menu and are searching for the best deals from your suppliers. With high volumes of food preparation taking place daily, it's important not to become complacent. Busy periods can lead to rushed decisions, bad habits, and poor practices, so maintaining high standards at all times is essential.

Personal Hygiene - With increased workloads and time pressures, it is vital to maintain excellent personal hygiene.

Always wash your hands thoroughly between tasks to prevent cross-contamination.

Stock Control - With additional stock deliveries expected, ensure you have sufficient storage space available for both dry goods and refrigerated items.

- Do not store food on the floor.
- Avoid overfilling refrigerators, as this can restrict airflow and risk overloading the unit, potentially causing breakdowns.

Defrosting - When purchasing food in bulk, particularly frozen items such as turkey crowns, allow adequate time for safe defrosting.

- Defrost foods in a controlled environment (e.g. refrigeration).
- Never rush the defrosting process

Cooking - Follow your food safety management system at all times during cooking.

- Ensure food reaches a core temperature of 70°C for 2 minutes, or
- 75°C for 30 seconds.

Cooling - If preparing food in advance for large



bookings, ensure safe and effective cooling practices:

- Divide food into smaller portions.
- Use shallow trays.
- Consider ice or cold-water baths where appropriate.
- Allow food to cool safely after cooking — but never leave food at ambient temperature overnight.

Reheating - Any food that has been previously cooled must be reheated safely:

- Reheat to a minimum of 70°C for 2 minutes, or an equivalent safe temperature/time combination.
- Ensure thorough reheating throughout.

Hot Holding - When hot holding food for service, particularly for large events:

- Maintain food temperatures at 63°C or above.
- Regularly monitor temperatures to ensure food remains safe to serve.

Sickness Policy

Any member of staff experiencing diarrhoea and/or vomiting must report their symptoms to their manager immediately and must not remain at work. It is an offence to work with food when suffering from sickness and/or diarrhoea.

If a member of staff becomes ill while on duty:

- They must stop work immediately and leave the food handling area.
- Any unwrapped food they have handled must be disposed of.
- A thorough clean and disinfection must be carried out in all affected areas, including food preparation areas, toilets, and changing rooms.

Return to Work

Staff who have suffered from diarrhoea and/or vomiting must not return to work until they have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours.

Even after symptoms have stopped, individuals may still carry and spread food poisoning bacteria during this 48-hour period.

Staff Awareness

Managers must ensure all staff understand this requirement clearly.

It is important to emphasise that the 48-hour exclusion period begins from the time symptoms **STOP**, not from when the illness first starts.

Allergy Symptoms

Allergens are substances that trigger a response from the body's immune system. In severe cases, an allergic reaction can lead to anaphylactic shock, which is life-threatening and may result in death if not treated promptly.



Common Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction - Symptoms can vary from mild to severe and may include:

- Generalised flushing of the skin
- Swelling of the throat and mouth
- Conjunctivitis (itchy, swollen eyes)
- Rhinitis (runny, itchy, or blocked nose)
- Severe asthma symptoms
- Constriction of the airways (wheezing)
- Sudden feeling of weakness (drop in blood pressure)
- Hives or nettle rash
- Difficulty swallowing or speaking
- Abdominal pain, nausea, and/or vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Collapse and unconsciousness

Foods That Can Cause Allergic Reactions

It is essential to encourage customers to inform staff of any food allergies. Particular attention should be given to the 14 recognised allergens:

- Cereals containing gluten (wheat/rye/barley/oats)
- Crustaceans (prawn/crab/lobster)
- Celery – including stalk/leaves/seeds & root (& Celeriac)
- Eggs – from all birds
- Fish - including fish oil
- Lupin
- Milk including from cows, goats and sheep.
- Molluscs (mussels/oysters/squid)
- Mustard includes liquid mustard, powder & seeds.
- Tree Nuts including Almonds, Hazelnuts, Walnuts, Brazils, Cashews, Pecan, Pistachio & Macadamia.
- Soya
- Sesame seeds
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites

Be prepared, do you know what to do if someone has an allergic reaction?

HEALTH & SAFETY



Confined Spaces and Cellar Safety – Have You Assessed the Risk?

We often talk about risk assessments, but have you considered *all* areas of your workplace? For example, are you aware that your cellar could be classed as a **confined space**?

A confined space is an enclosed area where there is a risk of serious injury or death due to hazardous substances or dangerous conditions. This means your cellar must be properly assessed.

You must assess the risk of **gas asphyxiation** in each cellar. If you have more than one cellar, each one requires its own assessment. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) can leak from gas cylinders, which may lead to unconsciousness or even death.

Gas Cylinders – Safety Checks

Gas cylinders must be safe and in good condition. They should not be damaged or corroded, as they are under high pressure and could rupture without warning.

You can ask your supplier if cylinders are regularly tested.

On delivery, always check:

- Are cylinders in good condition?
- Are they clearly labelled?
- Do they have a product safety label?
- Is there a traceability code?
- Is there a plastic test date ring, and is it less than 5 years old?

Storage of Cylinders

- Store cylinders securely at all times
- Keep empty and full cylinders in a rack or wedged safely
- When in use, keep cylinders upright on a flat surface
- Use brackets or straps to keep them stable

Changing Cylinders

- Only trained staff should change cylinders
- Make sure the correct cylinder is connected to the correct keg

- Check the washer is not damaged to prevent leaks
- Always turn the valve fully off before changing
- Remaining gas could cause blowback and injury

Gas Leaks

Check your system daily:

- Ensure all seals and fittings are tight
- Listen for hissing sounds

Carbon dioxide is heavier than air and can cause suffocation, unconsciousness, or death.

Warning signs of a leak:

- Frost on the cylinder (do not touch without gloves)
- Higher than usual gas usage

If You Suspect a Gas Leak

Even a small leak requires action:

- Ventilate the cellar
- Prevent others from entering
- Inform someone before entering and how long you'll be
- Shut off the gas cylinder
- Isolate the system
- Spray water on the floor (CO₂ dissolves in water)
- Inform colleagues when it is safe to return

Additional Safety Measures

A gas detection monitor and alarm system can be very useful, as it will alert staff to dangerous gas levels early.

Finally, ask yourself:

Do you have an emergency evacuation plan in place for a major gas leak?





Do you have ELCI in place?

The Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance Act 1969 requires you to have relevant insurance in place to protect your employees. By law, you are required to insure against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment

Although, not enforced by the Local Authority, it is an area of Health and Safety you are still required to comply with.

Businesses are to hold adequate coverage of at least £5 million. Failure to have adequate insurance can lead to fines for uninsured employers of up to £2,500 for every day the business trades without suitable insurance.

A certificate of non compliance – the business can be fined up to £1,000 for failing to display the insurance certificate or refusing to show it to an inspection upon request. More information is available on the HSE website: Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969: A guide for employers HSE40

Health and Safety Proactive Project - Gas Safety Requirements for Food Businesses

In previous communications, you may have seen short articles regarding gas safety and your kitchen appliances. As part of a national health and safety initiative, officers will now be requesting to see a copy of your most recent Gas Safety Certificate during inspections.

If your appliances have not been inspected within the last 12 months, you must arrange for this to be carried out without delay.

If your appliances have been inspected but you no longer have the relevant documentation, please contact your Gas Safe registered engineer to obtain a replacement copy for your records.

If you are unable to provide the required documentation at the time of inspection, you will be expected to submit it within 14 days to your inspecting officer or via email to

food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk.

Failure to provide the necessary information may result in further enforcement action.

Gas Safe Register

When selecting a gas engineer, you must ensure they are registered with the **Gas Safe Register**, which is the official list of businesses legally permitted to carry out gas work in the UK.



All registered businesses employ engineers who carry a valid Gas Safe ID card. However, not all engineers are qualified to undertake every type of gas work. It is therefore essential to check their ID card carefully before any work is carried out to confirm they are appropriately qualified for the task required.

Finding a Registered Engineer

You can find a Gas Safe registered business by visiting the Gas Safe Register website. Simply enter your town or postcode and ensure you select the '**commercial**' option when searching. If you wish to verify a specific business, you can:

- Enter their **Gas Safe registration number** (if known), or
- Search using their **trading name**

You can also check individual engineers using their **7-digit licence number**. Please note that ID cards are issued annually, and licence numbers may change.

How to Check a Gas Engineer

1. Check they are registered

All Gas Safe registered engineers carry a Gas Safe ID card with a unique licence number. Always ask to see this card before any work begins.

2. Check they are qualified for the work

Gas engineers may hold a range of qualifications that allow them to carry out specific types of gas work. It is important to check that the engineer is qualified for the particular work you require.