

# Food & Safety Update

October 2025

Borough Council of  
King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk



## TURKEY & TINSEL IS ON THE WAY

Please take a moment to read our latest update & share it with your team.

**NOTE: We are looking to produce the newsletter in an electronic format in the future, however we would like some feedback from you first. Please complete the Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DWMLGQN>**

The QR code on the right, will feature on future letters from the team, to remind you to look at the newsletter.



**Please share the QR code with your staff or print it out and add it to your staff noticeboard.**

If there's a food safety or health and safety subject your team would benefit from hearing about let us know.

Email [food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk) and title your email – Newsletter.

All queries will be considered throughout the year!

### October Content

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Allergens – Coffee Machines</li><li>– Waste Rules – Cut your waste down</li><li>– Defrosting</li><li>– Cellars &amp; Stockrooms</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Obstruction</li><li>– Food Storage &amp; Delivery</li><li>– Smoke Free Shelters</li><li>– Coffee Machines &amp; Pressure Systems Regulations.</li></ul> |
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### Focus Point: Hand Washing

- **DO** wash your hands with soap and water (antibacterial liquid soap recommended).
- **DO** ensure you have soap and a suitable hygienic means of hand drying at all times at the wash hand basin and staff W.C.  
Paper towels should be wall mounted in dispensers to protect them from being contaminated.
- **DO** check that your hot water is working.
- **DO** turn off the tap with blue paper roll after hand washing.
- **DO** ensure taps and wash hand basins are cleaned each day.
- **DO** ensure staff wash their hands after they have had a break, been to the toilet, after eating, after changing bins, after handling raw/dirty foods.
- **DO NOT** Settle for rinsing your fingers and hands – this is not hand washing!
- **DO NOT** use hand sanitisers in place of soap and water.



- **And YES, we are watching for this during our inspections.**

[west-norfolk.gov.uk](http://west-norfolk.gov.uk)

01553 616200

[food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk)



## Cellars and Stock Rooms

Both are considered as food rooms if they store food, drink, or food-related items inside. As a result, these areas are also looked at as part of your food hygiene inspection, and they must:

- Be clean and well-maintained
- Be free from pests and contamination risks

Treating these spaces with the same care helps protect your products and your reputation.

And remember although your cellar may be chilled, the temperature is set to around 10-14°C, it's therefore not suitable to store foods which require refrigeration in that area.

## Defrosting

By now, you've likely planned your Christmas menu and maybe even started stocking up on festive ingredients.

Remember: when the time comes, any frozen foods you've bought in advance will need to be defrosted safely.

Whether you're cooking a whole turkey or just the crown, you'll probably need to defrost it first—unless the packaging says it's ready to cook from frozen.

✅ Plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to defrost it safely.

### Don't Defrost Your Turkey on the Work Surface!

Defrosting at room temperature can encourage harmful bacteria to grow.

✅ Best practice:

- Defrost it in the bottom of your fridge
- Place it in a tray or container to catch any juices
- This helps prevent cross-contamination with other foods.

If you have the space, consider rearranging your fridges and allocate a separate fridge for defrosting raw meat.

### ❄️ Frozen Starters or Desserts? Only If They're Meant to Be!



No one wants a frozen starter or dessert—unless that's how they're meant to be served! So be sure to include them in your daily defrosting plan.

### 📦 Storage tip:

If your starters or desserts are cooked and ready to eat, ensure they should be stored above any raw or unwashed ingredients in the fridge.

## Powers of Entry

Under food and health & safety laws, authorised food safety officers have the legal right to enter your premises at any reasonable time. This includes:

- When you're open to the public
- When you're closed but staff are still working—such as preparing for the day or cleaning up

### 👤 Who Needs to Be Present?

The owner or manager **does not** need to be on site for an inspection or investigation.

Officers can speak with staff and ask questions. If staff can't answer, we'll follow up with the owner or manager at a later date or time.

Staff are welcome to call the manager or owner to let them know we're on site, but we do not have to wait until they arrive.

## ⚠️ Refusing Entry

Denying access may be seen as obstruction, which is an offence under the law.







## Allergens & Coffee Machines

Most businesses either have either a barista style coffee machine these days, with steam wands heating up both dairy and plant based alternative milks.



### Dual Steam Wands? Here's Why

It's not unusual to see two steam wands on some coffee machines. This setup is often used by businesses separate dairy from plant-based milks.

- ✓ One wand for dairy milk
- ✓ The other for plant-based alternatives (like oat, soy, or almond)

### Offering Dairy-Free Options? Cleanliness Is Critical

If you're serving dairy-free alternatives, it's essential to have suitable and thorough cleaning systems in place for your steam wands.

Before preparing any allergen-free drink, make sure the wand is:

- Properly cleaned and sanitised using separate cloths for dairy and non dairy.
- Free from any dairy residue

This isn't just good practice—it's a vital step in protecting customers with allergies and maintaining trust.

### Plant-Based Milks Can Still Be Allergens

If you offer a range of plant-based milks, it's important to remember that some may still contain allergens.

#### Common examples:

- Nut-based milks (e.g. almond, cashew) – may trigger nut allergies
- Soya milk – a known allergen
- Oat milk – can contain gluten, unless specifically labelled gluten-free

Always check the labels and make sure staff are aware of these risks when preparing drinks for

customers with allergies.

### Minimizing Allergen Risk with Plant-Based Alternatives

If you'd prefer to avoid the complexities of managing additional allergen risks when preparing drinks, consider using a plant-based milk that isn't a common allergen.

- Oat milk is a popular choice but be sure to check whether it's certified gluten-free, as some oat products may contain traces of gluten.

While offering plant-based alternatives can enhance customer satisfaction, there is no legal obligation to provide all types.

- You are not required to stock every plant-based milk (e.g. soy, almond, oat, coconut).
- You can choose which options best suit your business, based on:
  - Allergen risk
  - Storage and shelf-life

### Shelf Life

If you're offering a variety of plant-based milks, make sure you're aware of the shelf life of each one once opened.

#### ✓ Always:

- Check the label for storage instructions
- Follow the manufacturer's guidance on how long it can be used after opening
- Label and date opened containers to avoid confusion

This helps maintain food safety, quality, and protects customers with allergies or sensitivities.

**If you cannot provide a safe allergy free drink, you do not have to by law, and you can refuse to serve the customer, but you must assess the risk first and be able to advise the customer of what ingredients are in the drinks and foods that are on your menu.**

### Staff Training & Near Miss Reporting

It's essential that all staff are trained to an adequate level, especially when handling food, drinks, and allergens.

Don't overlook near misses—these are moments when:

- A server almost serves the wrong drink
- An allergen risk is narrowly avoided
- A mistake is caught just in time



## Reduce Your Waste

By now, you're probably aware that businesses must separate food waste from general waste and recycling. This applies to:

- Kitchen waste from food prep
- Customer waste, especially if you offer accommodation or dine-in services
- ✓ Your goal should be to reduce food waste overall, and where possible:
- Arrange for proper collection of food waste
- Ensure its sent for anaerobic digestion or composting, not landfill.

If you haven't already, check with your waste collection provider to confirm:

- Which items are accepted in your food waste bins
- That they hold a valid waste carrier, broker, or dealer license with the Environment Agency
- ⚠ Never use unregistered waste companies — it's illegal and risky, best practice would be for you to send food waste for anaerobic digestion, which turns waste into renewable energy.

If that's not feasible, ensure it goes to an Authorised composting facility.

### Smarter Menu Planning & Food Redistribution

When planning your next menu update or managing surplus stock, think about how you can make the most of the ingredients you already have. If you've over-ordered or have excess items:

- ✓ Use what you can before it reaches its shelf life
- ⛔ Do not donate or sell food past its 'use by' date — it must be disposed of
- ⚠ 'Best before' dated food may have reduced quality, but it can be redistributed if it's still safe to eat

### Consider donating to:

- Charities
- Schools
- Food banks

**If you plan to give away extra food, it must be safe to eat.**

To learn more, about Simpler Recycling: workplace recycling visit, the Gov.uk website using the QR code.



## Food Storage & Delivery

As you gear up for the festive season and begin holding increased stock, make sure your operation is ready:

- 📦 Plan for delivery space — avoid clutter and ensure safe storage
- 👥 Schedule enough staff to receive and store deliveries promptly
- 🔍 Always check for damage and verify delivery temperatures to maintain food safety
- 🚚 With delivery drivers under pressure, it's essential to:
- Communicate clearly with suppliers
- Let them know when staff are on site — especially kitchen porters and chefs
- Prevent early deliveries that can't be properly received

A little planning now can save a lot of stress later.

## Notify us when things change

We must keep an up-to-date list of all registered food businesses in the borough.



But we can't do this unless businesses tell us about changes.

By law, food businesses must register with their local council

- Businesses must also inform the local council if, there are major changes, such as:
  - New food activities or equipment that could be high risk (e.g. vacuum packing/sous vide cooking, manufacturing)
  - A change in ownership (new owners/change of partners creation or changes to a limited company)
  - Updates to any details previously given.
  - Registration is free and can be completed online or via your phone by using this link:

<https://register.food.gov.uk/new>



## SMOKE FREE PREMISES

The Smoke-Free law came into effect in 2007, banning smoking in enclosed areas.

Please ensure that outdoor smoking shelters and areas for members of the public are complaint and have not become substantially enclosed or enclosed!

### Smoking Shelter Rules

You don't have to provide smoking shelters, but if you do, they must follow the law. Shelters **must not** be "substantially enclosed" or "enclosed" at least 50% of the structure must be open. This means:

- A summer house or gazebo with curtains isn't allowed, because they can become enclosed.
- Windows and doors count as enclosed parts; and retractable roofs are not permitted.
- The most common legal design looks like a bus shelter: it can have a roof, but the sides must be mostly open, with gaps between the panels and the roof or floor.
- Trellis, plants and any other added on features may mean in practice that the smoking area is not longer compliant.

### Not Sure If Your Smoking Shelter Is Legal?

You can check if your shelter meets the rules by calculating how much of it is enclosed. Here's how:

#### How to Calculate the Enclosed Percentage

##### 1. Measure the Total Perimeter Area

Measure all the walls or sides under the roof—don't include the roof or floor.

##### 2. Measure the Enclosed Parts

Measure all the solid parts like walls, doors, and windows. These count as enclosed, even if they can open.

##### 3. Do the Calculation using this formula:

Divide the enclosed area (E) by the perimeter area (P) and times by 100 as shown below:

$$E \times 100 = \% \text{ Enclosed } P$$

If your smoking area/shelter is more than 50% enclosed then it does not comply with Smoke free legislation and smoking cannot be permitted.

### Additional Things to Think About Before Making Changes

**Planning and Building Rules:** Check if you need approval from your local council or building control.

**Licensing:** Make sure the area is covered by your premises licence. If you plan to use it late at night, there may be extra conditions—especially in residential areas where noise could be a problem.

**Shelter Placement:** Don't put the shelter too close to doors, windows, or vents. Smoke could drift inside and lead to complaints.



**Cleanliness:** Provide enough bins to keep the area tidy and free of litter.

### Non-Compliant Smoking Shelters: Legal Consequences

Under the Health Act 2006 and related smoke-free legislation, smoking shelters must meet specific criteria—most notably the "50% rule":

- If the shelter has a roof, at least 50% of the perimeter must be open
- Enclosed or substantially enclosed shelters that aren't 50% or more open are noncompliant.

If your shelter doesn't comply:

-  Persons smoking inside the shelter can be issued with a fixed penalty notice (£50)
-  Businesses can be issued with fixed penalty notices for failure to have non-smoking signs (£200), and a legal action can be taken for failing to prevent smoking in an enclosed or substantially enclosed area. This carries a Level 4 fine (£2500).







## HEALTH & SAFETY: PRESSURE SYSTEMS

If you use a barista-style coffee machine or a bean-to-cup machine, you're



operating a pressure system—and that comes with legal responsibilities.

**⚠️** Under pressure system regulations, you must:





- Ensure the machine is properly maintained
- Follow a Written Scheme of Examination (WSE)
- Ideally have a service plan in place that includes:
  - Preventative inspections
  - Repairs or replacements as needed
  - Regular checks to ensure safe operation

This isn't just good practice—it's a legal duty to protect staff, customers, and your business. If you rent or lease the machine speak to the supplier to ensure that relevant inspections are completed.

### **Staff Training: The Missing Link in Coffee Machine Safety**

Now that you're aware your coffee machine is a pressure system, have you considered whether staff require training?




Your legal duties don't stop at maintenance—they extend to ensuring staff know:

-  How to operate the machine correctly
-  What to do in the event of a fault or pressure failure
-  Who to report issues to and how to escalate concerns
-  Basic emergency procedures, including isolation and shutdown steps

Untrained staff can unintentionally put themselves and others at risk. A simple oversight could lead to equipment damage or worse, a serious

incident.




### **Ask yourself:**

-  Do staff know where the pressure gauges are located?
-  Has someone been assigned responsibility to check them regularly?
-  Do staff know the warning signs of a potential issue, such as:
  - i) Unusual noises or vibrations
  - ii) Steam escaping from unexpected areas
  - iii) Pressure readings outside the normal range
  - iv) Leaks, corrosion, or visible damage

**Having clear responsibilities and basic awareness can prevent serious incidents and ensure swift action if something goes wrong.**

### **⚠️ Buying Second-Hand Coffee Machines: What to Watch Out For**

If you're considering a second-hand coffee machine, be cautious. These machines may come with hidden risks unless you receive:

-  Documented service history
-  Details of the last inspection
-  Name of the service provider

Without this, you could be inheriting a pressure system that's non-compliant or unsafe.

If the machine has been out of use, always get the machine recommissioned by a competent person.

### **Water Quality Matters: Protect Your Machine**

Water isn't just an ingredient—it's a critical factor in machine longevity and safety.

- Acidic water can corrode internal components, increasing the risk of pressure failure
- Hard water leads to scale buildup, which can age the unit prematurely and reduce efficiency

### **A water filtration system is essential to:**

- Extend machine life
- Maintain performance
- Reduce maintenance costs



# QR Code

Food & Safety Newsletter

Please display on your noticeboard for future copies

