

Food & Safety Update

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



A NEW YEAR AND NEW CHALLENGES

Last year's newsletter was a success, so we're kicking off 2026 with a new edition. Please take a moment to read it and share with your team.

We're here to provide information and advice. If you have a topic, you'd like us to cover, email

food.safety@west-norfolk.gov.uk with "Newsletter Enquiry" in the subject line.

Use these updates for team discussions & refresher training.

January 2026 Content

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Focus Point: Update & Review

- As the new year begins, it's a good time to review your Food Safety Management System, ensuring it is up to date... Look back at the past 12 months, think about what worked well and what didn't, and make any needed updates. Ask yourself if you have:
 - **Changed the menu?**
 - **Is the allergen information accurate and up to date?**
 - **Switched any suppliers?**
 - **Had new team members start before Christmas who are still waiting to be trained in food safety?**
 - **Added any new equipment?**
 - **Updated or changed any practices?**
 - **Are there any in-house maintenance jobs you've been putting off!**





Have you heard about Menta?

A nonprofit organisation supporting small and micro businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk.

They provide practical help through expert advice, networking events, training, access to funding, workshops, mentoring, and a wide range of digital resources.

Explore how they can support your business at menta.org.uk



- Noses and mouths harbour bacteria such as *Staphylococcus Aureus* which can cause food poisoning if it's transferred to food

Allergen Safety – Clear Communication is Key

To keep customers safe, allergen information must flow smoothly from the customer to the kitchen and back.

- Encourage customers to share allergen needs – ask directly, message before bookings, or display reminders in your business or online.
- You must provide written allergen information – make it available in print or digital form.
- The customer must be made aware of allergen ingredients that are within the foods served.
- The customer must be able to make informed choices – give them the facts they need.
- Record allergen requests with orders – note them clearly and pass details to the kitchen. Digital systems should have a space for this.
- Alert the food preparer – the chef must know the allergen requirements for each order.
- Take precautions in the kitchen – can you remove allergen ingredients from dishes? Minimise the risk of cross contamination and ensure that food is covered and separated.
- Clearly identify allergen-safe meals for service – use flags, stickers, or different plates.
- Front of house hygiene – staff must wash hands before serving allergen-safe meals.
- Double-check before serving – ensure the right dish goes to the right customer.

Personal Hygiene – it's more than just hand washing!

Good hygiene in food service isn't only about washing your hands. You should also be thinking about the following.

- ✓ Remove aprons before using the toilet – this applies to both kitchen and front-of-house staff.
- ✗ Do not travel to work in chef uniforms – uniforms should only be worn at work to protect food from outside contamination.
- ✗ Avoid wearing jackets, hoodies & coats while preparing/serving food these are not suitable for working in food service. You may wear them under your chef jacket/apron but they are not protective clothing on their own.
- ✓ Keep long hair secured and tied back so that it does not become a physical contaminant.

Remember to wash your hands! With so many people suffering from colds and coughs at this time of year, please remember:

- Always wash your hands after blowing your nose. If you need to cough, this should be done away from your body into the crook of your arm rather than your hand.
- This helps stop the spread of germs and keeps both staff and customers safe.





Maintenance & Deep Clean

This time of year, often provides a good opportunity to refresh the business front of house, but it's just as important to focus on the areas behind the scenes, such as the kitchen. The law requires food to be prepared in premises that are clean, well-maintained, and in a safe condition. Take the time to inspect your kitchen and any other room used for food or drinks storage, including outside areas thoroughly and address any issues you find.

- Signs of leaks on ceilings — arrange for the roof to be inspected and repaired
- Flaking paint on walls or ceilings — rub down affected areas and redecorate
- Cobwebs at height or in hard-to-reach areas — use appropriate equipment or move items to allow for a deep clean
- Broken or damaged wall tiles — remove damaged tiles and surrounding grout, then replace them with new
- Damage caused by moved equipment — repair gaps and cracks, and ensure surfaces are left in a cleanable condition
- Holes in floor coverings — arrange for proper repairs; duct tape is not an acceptable long-term solution
- Equipment due for routine maintenance (e.g., vacuum packers, gas appliances) — book servicing promptly
- Extension cables trailing everywhere are a hazard. Contact a qualified electrician to discuss installing additional sockets so equipment can be used safely and without reliance on temporary leads.
- Build-up of redundant equipment in storerooms — bring forward your spring clean and create space

Don't Let it Be You!

Across the country, Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams are visiting business and some visits are resulting in the



prosecution of the food businesses. A number of cases reviewed have been in relation to the sale or use of food past its Use By date.

- **Enfield** – One business was prosecuted for offering 17 items past their Use By date and fined

£1,400. A second business was fined £1,640 for selling four out-of-date items, and a third received fines exceeding £3,200 after 21 items were found beyond their Use By date.

- **South Kesteven** – A business faced prosecution for multiple offences, including the presence of food past its Use By date.
- **Southend** – A business was prosecuted after repeatedly failing to identify out-of-date foods. Over a five-month period, 39 items were found, resulting in fines of more than £5,800.

These cases highlight a failure to meet the legal duty to provide safe food to consumers. Your food safety management system must include robust stock rotation procedures, and staff must be properly trained and supervised to follow your policies. If you use SFBB you will know that checking food at the end of the day and removing food which will expire is part of your closing check list for the daily diary.

If foods are awaiting return to the supplier, they must be clearly separated from items in use and labelled appropriately to prevent confusion. Such products must never be left in public areas where customers can access or purchase them.

Provision of a Place to Change and a Place for Personal Belongings

Did you know that the law requires you to provide suitable changing facilities for staff? As mentioned earlier, employees should not travel to work in their uniform, and a toilet cubicle is not considered an appropriate place to get changed.

Separate or lockable changing facilities should be provided for male and female staff, and these areas must be kept clean and well maintained. If you do not currently have a suitable space, you should identify and designate an appropriate area that can be used for this purpose.

Staff must also have access to secure storage for their personal belongings (e.g. lockers), ensuring that items like jackets, cigarettes, vapes and medication aren't brought into the kitchen and food storage areas.





HEALTH & SAFETY

You may not have health and safety officers routinely visiting your business, 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?

Reminder to Businesses: Secure Your Waste Bins

As winter sets in, people sleeping outside may look for shelter in large commercial bins. This can be extremely dangerous.

Last year, a 36-year-old man climbed into a cardboard recycling bin to escape the cold. The bin was later emptied into a waste lorry.

Despite the driver checking and following procedures, the man was not found until much later. He tragically died from severe injuries caused by being crushed.

To reduce risks:

- Keep bins in secure areas where possible.
- Make sure bins are well lit.
- Train staff to spot and report signs of people trying to use bins for shelter.
- Use lid locks or restrictors where you can.

If you do find someone inside a bin, do not try to restrain them. They may act defensively, and there may be a risk of violence.

Let your waste collectors know if people have been using your bins for shelter so they can take extra care.

For more information visit the Health and Safety Executive's website using the QR Code:



The following outlines how to comply with your legal duty:

Identifying Hazardous Substances

Identify any substances you use, produce, or come into contact with, such as chemicals, fumes, dusts, vapor, mists, or biological agents.

Examples include:

- Flour dust causing respiratory issues or asthma
- Carbon monoxide from charcoal grills
- Chemical burns or dermatitis from cleaning products and beer line cleaner



COSHH Risk Assessment

Complete a COSHH risk assessment. If you employ five or more people, the assessment must be written down. To complete your assessment, you need to understand:

- How each substance is used
- Who may be exposed
- How exposure occurs
- The level of risk involved

Control Measures

Once risks are assessed, you must introduce suitable control measures to **eliminate** or **reduce exposure** so far as reasonably practicable. Controls may include:

- Substituting hazardous substances for safer alternatives
- Using engineering controls such as ventilation or extraction
- Changing work processes
- Ensuring safe handling and storage procedures

The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should not be relied upon as the primary control measure. It must only be used when other control methods cannot reduce the risk to a safe level.

Using and Maintaining Controls

You must ensure all control measures are used correctly and remain effective. This includes:

COSHH

COSHH requires employers to identify hazardous substances in the workplace, assess the risks they pose, and put measures in place to reduce harm to health.





- Providing regular training and refresher instruction
- Keeping PPE in good condition, free from damage, and suitable for the task
- Maintaining, inspecting, and testing equipment such as local exhaust ventilation to ensure it remains in proper working order.

- Ensuring that you have up to date Safety Data Sheets for all relevant hazardous substances and that they are accessible as they may be vital in the provision of first aid information.

Information, Instruction, and Training

Employees must be provided with clear information, instruction, and training on the hazardous substances they may use. Safety Data Sheets must be easily accessible, and staff must follow the manufacturer's instructions when using any product. Employees should also be adequately supervised to ensure safe and compliant working practices.

Recent reportable incidents have shown that inadequate emergency response and delays in treating exposure can lead to more serious injuries, highlighting the importance of robust and well-understood procedures.



What to do next?

- Check what chemicals you have on site. If you have changed suppliers, do you have a mixture of new and old? Avoid confusion and only use one product at a time. And before use of your new products review your COSHH assessments to ensure they are adequate.
- Are the substances stored safely and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Are chemicals kept in their original containers?
- Where chemicals are decanted ensure that they are not placed in spray bottles or similar which have been used for other products.

Exposure Monitoring



If your risk assessment indicates that exposure to a substance could approach harmful levels, you must carry out regular exposure monitoring. For more information in relation to this, use the QR code.

Health Surveillance



Some substances can cause ill health conditions such as asthma, dermatitis, cancer or other respiratory illnesses, which may require health surveillance.

This may require the services of occupational health profession. For more information use the QR code.

Emergency Procedures

You must have procedures for dealing with spills, leaks and accidental exposure and staff should be trained with regards to actions to be taken in the event of an emergency.

Your procedures may include:

- The means of removing someone from a dangerous situation without putting yourself at risk.
- The provision of specific first aid kits to deal with injuries.
- The provision of spill kits to stop the spread of chemicals and enabling means of clean up.
- The provision of training in how to clean up chemical spills and preventing reoccurrence.

Risk of Violence & Aggression – Night Time Economy

The risk of violence and aggression must be included in your risk assessment process. You should identify ways to reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring and implement appropriate control measures where necessary.

You should pay particular attention to any advice from the police or licensing authorities regarding local factors that may increase the risk of violence at work. This may include operating in a high-crime area or being situated near other establishments that have recently been targeted as part of a criminal campaign.

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related violence as: "Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work."

This can include verbal abuse, threats (whether face-to-face or otherwise), and physical attacks



from members of the public, including customers, directed at someone carrying out their work duties.

You may find that carefully worded signage can help remind people to behave respectfully and that staff should not be subjected to abuse. You may also wish to consider the use and positioning of CCTV, and whether trained security personnel or alarm systems could act as effective deterrents.

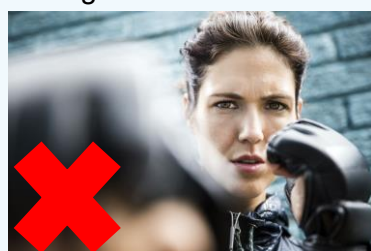
Ensure that staff receive basic training that covers:

- Identifying underlying causes of violence and aggression
- Understanding that such behavior is not an acceptable part of the job
- Recognising early warning signs, including body language and changes in behavior
- Where appropriate, developing awareness of safe and approved physical intervention techniques.

Provide staff with training in de-escalation techniques, including:

- Speaking politely and using a clear, calm tone
- Maintaining a relaxed posture with hands kept at their sides
- Keeping a safe distance to protect personal space
- Facing the person and maintaining appropriate eye contact
- Showing empathy and demonstrating active listening
- Avoiding arguments and not raising their voice
- Exploring alternative solutions to help resolve the issue

If in doubt, staff should trust their instincts. If they feel unsafe, they should use a diversion tactic — for example, saying “Let me check that with my manager.”



RIDDOR and Food Allergen Incidents

Most people associate RIDDOR with slips, trips, falls, and musculoskeletal injuries that require reporting. However, following a rise in allergen-related incidents, the Health and Safety Executive has reviewed what qualifies as reportable.

Allergic reactions suffered by a customer or member of the public after consuming food containing allergens are only reportable in certain circumstances. Not every incident will meet the criteria.

To be reportable, the allergic reaction must:

1. Arise from a work-related incident, and
2. Result in either a fatality or the person being taken directly to hospital for treatment specifically for the allergic reaction.

If hospital treatment is not required, the incident does not need to be reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). However, each case should still be reviewed carefully to determine whether the criteria have been met or may be met at a later stage.

Examples of reportable incidents

- A customer with a known nut allergy orders a menu item advertised as nut-free. Although the kitchen prepares the dish, it is made on a surface where tree nuts were recently used for another dish. The customer suffers an allergic reaction and must be taken directly to hospital for urgent treatment.
- A child with an egg allergy suffers an allergic reaction after eating a school lunch and requires medical attention. The school had an established care plan for the child, but on that day a mobile cook was covering for the regular cook and had not been informed of the allergy or the additional precautions required.