

Guidance for Operators of Bed and Breakfast Establishments and Guest Houses

We have produced this guidance to assist those operating bed and breakfast establishments and guest houses in the Eden District Council area to comply with food safety laws. The document also outlines good food hygiene practices.

Planning

If you are thinking of starting a bed and breakfast business, contact Planning Services, telephone 01768 817817 for advice on any planning consent required.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Executive may be responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation in bed and breakfast establishments if the premises is mainly domestic. Local Authority Environmental Health Departments usually cover hotels and guest houses. However, check with the Food, Health and Safety Section, if you are unclear.

Fire Precautions

We advise you to contact the local Fire Officer at Cumbria County Council, www.cumbria.gov.uk, for guidance on fire precautions which need to be taken.

Registration as a Food Business

Under Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Article 6(2), food business operators must register each establishment under their control with the local environmental health department. This includes all bed and breakfast and guest house businesses. Previously, it was only necessary to register if there were more than three bedrooms for guests, but now all bed and breakfast and guest houses have to register. There is no fee to register and a registration form is available on request or on line.

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The guidance includes both legal requirements and good practice recommendations. Legal requirements **must** be complied with. You are not obliged to follow good practice recommendations but these will assist you to maintain high standards of hygiene in your premises.

The list is not exhaustive and as food premises vary greatly, you are strongly advised to discuss your individual situation with a member of the Food, Health and Safety Team.

Legal Requirements and Good Practice Recommendations

Food Safety Management Procedures

Food Safety law requires food business operators to have food safety management procedures based upon the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). The food safety management procedures should usually be in writing but how food business operators meet this requirement will depend upon the size and the nature of the business; for example, whether the food products handled are high risk or not. Many small bed and breakfast and guest house businesses only need a very simple system.

What needs to be done?

The food safety management system will need to focus on identifying where food safety problems could arise and putting steps in place to prevent things going wrong. As mentioned above, the regulations say that the system **must** be based upon “Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point” (HACCP) principles. A HACCP system identifies the critical points in the various stages of a food operation where problems or hazards might occur and puts controls in place to stop them occurring.

No specific type of food safety management system has to be used. Any system, provided it covers all aspects of the food operation and is designed to ensure that the food produced is safe to eat will comply.

For instance, you may wish to use the Government’s Safer Food Better Business pack for Caterers. You can download this pack free of charge from the Food Standards Agency’s website.

Alternatively, for small B & B’s the information in this guide may be sufficient for your purposes. If you would like to discuss how food safety management should be applied to your circumstances, please contact the Food, Health and Safety Section.

The Hazards

What is a Hazard?

A hazard is something that could be dangerous, and there are lots of different hazards which could make food unsafe to eat. Food safety hazards could be:

- microbiological - this usually means harmful bacteria which could cause food poisoning - this could happen if certain foods were left out of the refrigerator for too long, allowing the bacteria to grow. Some viruses cause food poisoning too.
- chemical - where chemicals get into foods, like cleaning products for instance, or substances which people might be allergic to.
- physical - actual physical objects getting into food, like broken glass, packaging, string, insects etc.

Listed below are some hazards you should consider when deciding on your food safety management system:

- Survival of harmful bacteria **if** food isn't cooked enough
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** chilled high risk foods such as cooked meat and dairy products are not kept cold enough
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** frozen food starts to defrost
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** hot foods are not kept hot enough
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** cooling of high risk foods takes too long
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** reheating of high risk foods is not thorough or takes too long
- Multiplication of harmful bacteria **if** high risk food is kept too long

And this is how food can get contaminated:

- Bacterial and physical contamination of food by bacteria, dirt, hair and jewellery etc from people and clothing.
- Bacterial and physical contamination of food by bacteria and debris from dirty surfaces and equipment or by loose/broken pieces of equipment or structure.
- Bacterial and physical contamination of food from rodents, crawling and flying insects.
- Bacterial contamination of high risk ready to eat food by raw food.
- Bacterial, physical and chemical contamination of food from packaging, chemicals, cleaning equipment, refuse and pets.
- Bacterial, physical and chemical contamination of food by soil and other contaminants.

The Controls

Controls **must** be effective, they should either remove the hazard completely or reduce it to a safe level. They should be practical, easy to carry out and all staff should understand what to do and why they need to implement the controls.

Some examples of the controls you may need to use are given below. There may be others you need to implement.

- **Purchasing** products and ingredients
 - buy from reputable suppliers.
 - Use a cool box or cool bag to carry home high risk foods (foods which need refrigeration)
 - Use ice packs in cool boxes/bags to keep food cool (especially in warm weather)
 - Use separate bags for ready to eat and raw foods.
 - Try to buy chilled and frozen food last.
 - Take chilled and frozen food home without delay.
- **Storing** products and ingredients
 - Transfer chilled and frozen goods to refrigerators and freezers straight away to stop bacteria growing.
 - Store raw and ready to eat products separately to prevent cross contamination. If separate fridges are not available raw products must be kept wrapped or enclosed in containers at the bottom of the fridge, to prevent juices dripping onto ready to eat products. Ensure you have enough refrigeration space to store raw and ready to eat food to prevent cross contamination.
 - Certain foods, like cooked meats, pate and other high risk foods are required to be stored at 8°C or below. You must monitor the temperature of fridges containing high risk food regularly
 - Aim to keep refrigerators at a temperature of 5°C or below and freezers at minus 18°C.
 - Do not overload your fridges. They work best when air can circulate around the fridge.
 - Defrost fridges and freezers regularly.
 - Do not leave fridge doors open for longer than necessary.
 - Do not store opened cans of food in the fridge. Instead, decant contents into a sealable plastic container.

- Ingredients/products must be protected from any contamination, for example by pests or cleaning chemicals.
- Check 'use by' and 'best before' dates on products and ingredients regularly and dispose of out of code products.
- Store cleaning chemicals in a separate area/cupboard to reduce the risk of foods becoming contaminated or tainted by them.
- **Preparing food**
 - Food must be protected from contamination with foreign bodies like glass, flies, or chemicals.
 - Check that equipment and working surfaces are clean and properly disinfected to prevent contamination from bacteria.
 - Clean work surfaces and spillages as you go.
 - Maintain high standards of personal hygiene. Food handlers must wear clean and if appropriate, protective clothing, such as aprons.
 - Hands must be washed before preparing food, after handling raw food, before handling ready to eat food, and after going to the toilet.
 - Check that products and ingredients are within their shelf life when used.
 - Frozen food should be defrosted thoroughly before cooking unless the manufacturers' instructions say it can be cooked from frozen.
 - Raw and ready to eat food must be kept separate during preparation and cooking. We recommend that you use separate, colour coded boards and knives to prepare different types of food.
 - If the same equipment, like chopping boards or knives, are used for preparing raw and ready to eat products, they must be thoroughly disinfected between each use.
- **Cooking methods**
 - You should always check that foods are thoroughly cooked, particularly meat dishes. This may be by checking that the juices are running clear and there are no pink bits in the middle of products like burgers or chicken pieces. Alternatively, you could use a probe thermometer to check that the centre temperature reaches 75°C.
 - Stir large pans of gravy or stews regularly to ensure thorough, even cooking.

- **Cooling**

- Allow hot foods to cool at room temperature for no longer than 90 minutes and then put in the fridge. Never put hot foods straight into the fridge.
- In order to achieve quick cooling of foods, restrict the size of joints of meat to no more than 3 kg. If large batches of food are to be cooled, you could speed up cooling by cutting into smaller portions or sit the container in a tray of iced water.
- Products should be protected from contamination whilst cooling down.

- **Reheating methods**

- If products are reheated a check should be made to ensure it is piping hot right the way through
- Alternatively, you could use a probe thermometer to check that the centre temperature reaches 75°C.
- It is recommended that you don't reheat foods more than once.

- **Keeping food hot or cold for service or display**

- Is hot food kept at 63°C or above, and or if food is displayed cold, is it kept at 8°C or below?
- If food on display is not heated or chilled, is hot food kept at below 63°C for no more than two hours, and cold food kept above 8°C for no more than four hours?
- Is food displayed at below 63°C or above 8°C only once?

The Checks

You need to regularly monitor the controls you put in place. How you do this will depend on the size and nature of your food business. Examples of typical checks you need to make are:

- Ensuring food is properly cooked, eg by checking the temperature of the centre of the food has reached 75°C using a probe thermometer or cutting food in half to check it is thoroughly cooked.
- Ensuring any reheated food is thoroughly reheated and reaches a centre temperature of 75°C.
- Delivery and storage temperatures (store chilled food at 5°C or below and frozen food at -18°C or below).
- Date marks.
- Cleaning and maintenance of the premises. It is a good idea to carry out routine

daily checks prior to the kitchen being used and at the end of the day, after it has been cleaned to ensure cleaning is thorough and that the equipment and structure is intact. Make sure cleaning chemicals are being used in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

- Check that all staff maintain high levels of personal hygiene, including regularly washing their hands.

If the checks reveal that there is a problem, then you **must** take action. You and your staff need to know what to do in such circumstances and reference to this should be included within your food safety management system.

Recording Checks

Checks should be recorded but the way in which you record the checks can be in whatever form suits you and your staff. For instance, it may not be practical to record every time you carry out a check. You may just prefer to make a record when problems are found and to include in your record the action you took to put things right. You may wish to use forms or checklists to record the checks or you may simply prefer to keep a note in your diary. However, remember that keeping records will help you to review your system and demonstrate you are complying with the law.

Review

You need to review your operation regularly to make sure the system you have in place is still capable of delivering safe food. In particular, you should review your systems when you change the menu, install new equipment or introduce new practices.

General Advice

Food Allergy and Intolerance

Food allergy and food intolerance are both types of food sensitivity. When someone has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to a particular food as if it isn't safe. If someone has a severe food allergy, this can cause a life-threatening reaction.

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is generally not life-threatening. However, if someone eats a food they are intolerant to, this could make them feel ill or affect their long-term health. **Requesting information from guests about any food allergies/intolerances which they have is vital**, so that only appropriate foods are given.

In theory, any food can cause a food allergy, but in fact just a small number of foods are to blame for 90% of allergic reactions to food in the UK. The 14 allergens are: celery; cereals containing gluten; crustaceans; eggs; fish; lupin; milk; molluscs; mustard; nuts; peanuts; sesame seeds; soya and sulphur dioxide.

Food labelling rules require pre-packed food sold in the UK or the rest of the European Union (EU) to show clearly on the label if it contains one of the fourteen allergens stated above.

It is essential to look carefully at the label on any pre-packed food you buy if you are

buying food for someone who has an allergy or intolerance. Even if you have bought the product before, you should still check the label as the recipe might have changed.

All food businesses serving loose foods must now be able to supply accurate information about menu items that contain any of the 14 allergens listed above and contained in the Food Information Regulations. These rules enable people to avoid the most common allergens. If you display foods for self-service by guests, you should ensure that information on allergen content is readily available.

It is also important to consider the potential for cross contamination of allergens within your business, as even tiny amounts of an allergen can cause a reaction in some individuals.

Training

The law requires that food handlers receive supervision, instruction and/or training to a level which is suitable for the job they do.

You **must**, at the very least, be aware, and understand the principles of food hygiene and the safe handling of food. Eden District Council has produced a number of Information leaflets which may help you gain the required knowledge. Information is also available on the Food Standards Agency website at www.food.gov.uk.

Many food handlers have found attending short basic food hygiene courses run by education establishments and private training companies have helped them get a clearer understanding of safe food handling practices. Such courses have the added advantage of giving you the opportunity to ask questions on things you are not sure about.

Personal Hygiene

Food handlers can be one of the principal causes of spreading bacteria around food premises, if they don't follow some basic rules. Most of these were mentioned in the section on Controls, but because they are so important they are repeated here.

- When preparing food, clean washable over clothing **must** be worn.
- You **must** ensure that you wash your hands frequently and always before beginning food preparation, after using the toilet or handling raw meat and fish or soiled vegetables.
- Any cuts or abrasions **must** be covered with a suitable (preferably coloured) waterproof dressing.
- Persons suffering the symptoms of food poisoning **must** not prepare food or enter the kitchen, until they have been totally symptom free for forty-eight hours. You are advised to consult your doctor if you have food poisoning symptoms. You should not prepare food if you are suffering from or carrying a disease likely to be transmitted to food, or you have an infected wound, skin infections or sores. If you are unsure about this, speak to your Environmental Health Officer.

Equipment

All equipment with which food comes into contact **must** be kept clean and in good condition and repair, so as to:

- i) enable it to be effectively cleaned
- ii) prevent so far as reasonably practical any matter being absorbed
- iii) prevent as far as reasonably practicable, risk of contamination of food

Whilst stainless steel is an excellent surface, the normal plastic laminate kitchen work surface is perfectly acceptable, if it is in good condition.

Any wooden shelves or cupboards used to store food **must** have sealed surfaces.

There **must** be at least one sink capable of washing the equipment you use. The sink **must** be provided with constant supplies of hot and cold water, and properly connected to the drainage system.

A separate wash hand basin **must** be available, provided with constant supplies of hot and cold water or of warm water at a suitably controlled temperature, and properly connected to the drainage system. The wash hand basin **must** either be in the kitchen or in a conveniently accessible position to the kitchen.

There **must** be materials for cleaning and hygienically drying hands at the wash hand basin.

The Food Preparation Area

The kitchen size and layout **must** allow for safe working practices, including the separation of raw food preparation, cooking, cooked food preparation and washing up.

Provided the structure is sound, clean and capable of being kept clean, most types of decor can be accepted.

In particular the walls/ceiling **must** have a smooth non-absorbent and readily cleansable finish. If walls/ceiling are wall papered, they **must** be kept in good condition.

Floors **must** have an impervious and readily cleansable finish.

All other parts of the structure, fixtures and fittings **must** be maintained in a sound, clean condition, capable of easy and frequent cleaning and disinfection where necessary.

Domestic Kitchens

We recognise you usually prepare food for guests in your own domestic kitchen. This is acceptable, provided that the kitchen meets the requirements of the regulations, in the main. Because it is a domestic kitchen, there may be certain circumstances where it is difficult to comply strictly with the regulations. Therefore the following matters **must** be given consideration:

- a) Pets should not be allowed in the kitchen. However, if pets do gain access to the

kitchen, all work surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before food is prepared.

- b) Facilities for washing clothes should not be situated in the kitchen. However, it is not always possible to re-site washing machines and if this is the case:
- i) washing should be done at different times from food preparation
 - ii) washing should not be placed on food preparation surfaces
 - iii) food preparation surfaces should be sanitised before food preparation takes place.

Lighting and Ventilation

The kitchen **must** be adequately lit and ventilated.

Water Supplies

An adequate wholesome supply of cold water, sufficient for the needs of the business **must** be provided.

Private water supplies (other than from the mains) will be subject to regular testing. Water treatment may be required in the event of unsatisfactory results.

The hot water supply **must** be constant.

Pest Control

You **must** make sure the state of repair of your property prevents access by pests.

If you see signs of pests you **must** take action immediately to eradicate them, preferably using a professional pest control company.

If you use opening windows to provide ventilation to your kitchen, you may need to install fly proof screens, which should be easy to dismantle for cleaning.

Bathroom and Toilet Facilities

Adequate sanitary accommodation **must** be provided for food handlers and your guests.

For guests, a ratio of one bathroom/shower room plus WC per six people should be provided as a minimum, subject to each bedroom having its own wash hand basin. (Alternatively an increased ratio of shared facilities should be provided).

For further information:

- Contact: Food, Health and Safety Team, Eden District Council, Mansion House, Penrith CA11 7YG
- Telephone 01768 212491

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- Email: env.health@eden.gov.uk
 - Website: www.eden.gov.uk

You may also find the following websites useful:

Food Standards Agency: www.food.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk