



**STS**  
food safety

## COVID-19

# TAKEAWAY & DELIVERY SERVICE: FOOD SAFETY GUIDANCE



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## INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has plunged the catering and hospitality industry into uncharted territory and government restrictions have meant many food businesses have had to cease trading until further notice or adapt their operating model to maintain an income.

As a food business operator (FBO), you may be looking to diversify your business model by starting to offer takeaway and/or delivery options for the first time so we have produced this guidance **to help you make sure you have dotted the i's and crossed the t's so you can operate these services legally and safely.**

Even if you already offer food takeaway and/or delivery options to your customers, this guidance is a useful tool to help you get things right and keep your customers safe.

STS want to support the catering and hospitality industry in adapting to the requirements of business restrictions and beyond. **This guidance aims to help you trade safely and should be used in conjunction with, and to supplement, your own food safety management procedures, such as Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) or your own food safety management system.**

This guidance has been produced based on current government and public health guidance on Coronavirus at the time of writing.

## TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, transmitted in much the same way as a common cold; via sneezing, coughing, direct skin contact or via objects such as door handles (hence why hand washing and social distancing is so important to help prevent the spread).

While research into the virus is ongoing, it is thought that it can survive on hard surfaces for up to three days, which is why cleaning and disinfection practices in all areas of your business are critical to reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

**In order to effectively control the spread of coronavirus, all your team members need to be told about the virus, i.e. how it is spread, symptoms, what to do if they become ill, current self-isolation requirements and company policies and procedures to be followed for hand washing, cleaning and disinfection and social distancing.**

**It is important to note, there is no evidence to date that the virus can be transmitted via food.**

## FOOD BUSINESS REGISTRATION

By law, all food businesses must be registered with the Environmental Health department of your local authority.

If you are a new food business offering delivery/takeaway you will need to register for the first time.

**If you are an existing food business, already registered with your local authority, but have not previously offered food for takeaway and/or delivery or have started to expand your delivery services to include delivery to the NHS or care homes, this is a change in the way your business operates and you must notify your local authority of this change.**

You can notify your local authority of changes or register a new food business online or via email. Links to these services are usually available on your local authority's website.

## FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

All food businesses need to have a food safety management system (FSMS) based on HACCP principles in place that accurately reflects the practices and procedures undertaken within the business. This could be Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) or your own food safety management system.

**If you are an existing food business operator, but just starting out with takeaway and/or delivery services, or you have changed your existing takeaway/delivery services (e.g. delivering into the NHS or care homes) your food safety management system needs to be updated accordingly.**

No matter the format of your FSMS or whether you are a new or existing food business, you will need to demonstrate that you have considered all food safety hazards as well as the controls necessary to minimise risks to food safety. For example, if any of your normal cooking processes have changed to provide delivered or takeaway food (such as changing from cooking foods fresh to order to cooking, cooling then reheating foods to speed up food preparation and service), you will need to amend and update your FSMS.

If you wish to diversify into retailing foods online, the Food Standards Agency has provided separate guidance for [such foods here](#).

Your FSMS should detail how you are going to purchase, store, prepare, cook, cool, reheat and transport foods. Below are some basic temperature controls you should follow, but if you need help with writing or amending your FSMS, please get in touch.

- Chilled food storage: 0-8°C (ideally 0-5°C)
- Frozen food storage: -18°C to -24°C
- Cooked / reheated food temperature: 75°C for 30 seconds (reheating temperature 82°C in Scotland)
- Hold foods hot: 63°C or above
- Cooling foods: cool down as quickly as possible and put into the fridge within 2 hours (ideally 8°C or below within 2 hours)

Make sure hot foods are **at minimum** 63°C and chilled foods at a **maximum** temperature of 8°C (ideally 5°C or below) when they are dispatched to the customer.

We recommend you record your temperature checks periodically throughout each day.

## FOOD ALLERGIES AND ORDERING

An allergic reaction to food can be very serious for some allergen sufferers, potentially even fatal.

**Information on the allergens included in the foods you serve, including those served via takeaway/delivery, must be available at the point of purchase and at the point of delivery.**

Allergen information can be provided at the point of delivery in a number of ways, such as by applying allergen stickers to meals, by enclosing a copy of your menu with up to date allergen information highlighted or by having up to date allergen information on your website.

If you have a website or advertise in other ways, e.g. via flyers/email, you need to notify customers with food allergies to ask you about allergies when they order. For example, you might post a statement such as, *“If you have any food allergies, please speak to a member of staff before ordering”* on your website or on flyers/emails.

If customers order by phone, you should ask them when taking their order if they or anyone else eating the meal have food allergies.

**A clear record of the allergen sufferer’s requirements must be made and communicated very clearly to kitchen staff to ensure their meal is prepared safely, avoiding contamination during preparation with allergens and ensuring the specific allergen(s) are not included in their meal.**

If you are unable to prepare food for a customer with food allergies safely, then you must not offer or prepare meals for food allergy sufferers until you are confident you can prepare such foods safely.

**It is really important to clearly label food prepared for an allergen sufferer so they can easily identify their meal upon delivery/collection. Meals for allergen sufferers should be stored separately from other meals in the order to avoid allergenic cross contamination.** You can identify allergenic ingredients in a number of ways: using a matrix tick sheet, on your recipe cards, via allergen labels applied to foods, etc. If you make any changes to your standard recipes or use a different brand of ingredient to usual, then you need to check that the allergen information for that recipe has not changed. If the allergens in a recipe have changed, that recipe and any recorded allergen information must be changed. At STS, we recommend you review your recipes and allergen information to ensure accuracy on a regular basis.

Make sure all your staff (including managers and delivery drivers) are trained in the 14 allergens and your procedures for safe handling and preparation of foods for allergic customers. Training should be refreshed regularly to ensure knowledge remains at the front of you and your team members’ minds and a record of training maintained.

**Remember: the ultimate responsibility for accurate allergen information to be given to the consumer lies with the food business and no-one else, even if you are using a third-**

**party online ordering service (such as Just Eat or Deliveroo).**

If you offer food delivery and are based in Wales, by law you must include a statement in both Welsh and English on all promotional material, advising customers how to check your Food Hygiene Rating on the Food Standards Agency website. There are specific requirements around presentation of this information, so if you need help with this, please get in touch.

## FOOD PACKAGING

Food packaging must meet legal requirements, be clean and made of food grade materials to prevent contamination. Ensure it is stored hygienically at your business before use (i.e. stored off the floor and covered in an area where it will not become contaminated).

You can check whether your packaging is safe to be in contact with food by looking for a symbol that looks like a little wine glass and a fork. It might also be marked 'for food contact'. If in doubt, ask your supplier to provide evidence that your packaging is suitable for being in contact with food.

**We recommend you use disposable containers and packaging wherever possible as this avoids you having to clean and disinfect returned containers/crockery and reduces the risk of any potential viral contamination/transmission of COVID-19 from returned containers.**

## FOOD DELIVERY

All delivery vehicles and equipment used to store foods during delivery (e.g. hot boxes/insulated bags, etc) must be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout each shift. This includes ice packs if you use them.

**Drivers/riders must wash their hands thoroughly at the premises before collecting each delivery and sanitise hands after each drop-off to prevent cross contamination and transmission of the virus between restaurant and customer. Hand sanitiser with a minimum alcohol content of 60% must be provided to drivers/riders for this purpose.**

**You will need to implement a drop-off system where orders are placed on the customers doorstep and contact is made via doorbell, knocking or phone, whilst the delivery driver/rider steps back from the order and doorstep by at least 2 metres.**

Extra precautions should be in place to prevent kitchen staff and delivery drivers (including delivery equipment) coming into contact with each other.

The 2-metre social distancing rule must be followed at all times to prevent transmission of the virus.

Remember, your delivery drivers/riders must be trained in these procedures as well as given basic instructions on safe food handling, personal hygiene and reporting of sickness/symptoms. Such training should be recorded.

It is important to ensure you are monitoring drivers for systems of COVID 19 and recording this.

Payment for food delivered to customers' homes should, ideally, be made online or over the 'phone. Otherwise, payments should be cash-less to reduce the risk of transmission via cash handling.

You may decide to provide your delivery team members with disposable gloves. If so, please ensure you explain to your drivers/riders that gloves are not a substitute for hand washing and sanitising and that they must only be put on immediately before and removed immediately after each delivery and disposed of hygienically. The above hand washing and sanitising procedure for delivery drivers/riders should still be followed.

We recommend your delivery procedures are clearly communicated to customers via your website and/or promotional materials.

## FOOD TAKEAWAY

If you are operating a take-away service, where customers come and collect their meals directly from the restaurant, you should encourage your customers to sanitise their hands on arrival, using an alcohol hand sanitiser with a **minimum** alcohol content of 60%. Hand sanitiser should be placed at the entrance with a sign asking customers to use it before entering.

We recommend you encourage customers to pay by card to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 via cash handling and that you designate an area away from the kitchen/staff for the handover of food to customers. This area should be located so you and your customers can maintain a physical distance of 2 metres at all times.

**It's a good idea to have a system in place to control and minimise the number of customers inside the premises at one time, e.g. a 'one-in, one-out' policy or a queuing system inside/outside the business to ensure the 2-metre social distancing rule is maintained.**

Whatever system you are operating, make sure it is clearly communicated to customers via signs so they can easily understand what they need to do to maintain theirs and others' safety.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR STAFF

It is vital you and your staff can keep themselves and others safe.

Although difficult to manage, you and your team must stay two metres away from each other at all times.

**People can be infected with Coronavirus but not show any symptoms.**

You need to make sure all your team understand what is expected of them and what procedures you have in place to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres. You may need to review and rearrange work areas to allow this to happen safely.

Make sure the 2-metre rule is applied at all times and in **all** areas of the business (back of house/kitchen, front of house, staff changing/break areas and during break times).

## HAND WASHING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR STAFF

Hands must be washed **before**:

- starting work
- touching ready to eat foods
- putting disposable gloves on

and **after**:

- handling raw/non-ready to eat food, raw shell eggs
- visiting the toilet, eating, drinking or smoking
- coughing, sneezing or touching your hair, face, nose or skin,
- carrying out cleaning jobs or touching containers of cleaning chemicals
- dealing with rubbish
- taking disposable gloves off

**Proper hand washing technique:**

1. Wet hands thoroughly and squirt soap into palm
2. Rub hands together and massage into a lather
3. Use one hand to clean the back of the other hand/fingers, then swap and repeat
4. Rub in between fingers and thumbs by interlocking
5. Rinse off soap with clean running water and dry thoroughly (ideally using disposable paper towel)
6. Turn off tap using the towel used to dry hands and, if disposable, throw it away

There should be a suitable number of wash hand basins in food handling areas, conveniently sited for food handlers to use. Basins should be provided with hot and cold running water (preferably with non-hand operable taps), liquid antibacterial soap and a suitable means of hand drying (e.g. disposable paper towels).

**During the COVID-19 pandemic and while restrictions remain in place, it is recommended that alcohol hand sanitiser with an alcohol content of at minimum 60% is also used at the end of hand washing. However, hand sanitisers MUST NOT be used as a substitute for hand washing.**

- Wash hand basins should be clearly labelled
- Wash hand basins must not be used for any other purpose
- Wash hand basins must be regularly cleaned and disinfected
- Only designated wash hand basins should be used for hand washing. Other sinks should not be used for hand washing
- Disposable gloves are not a substitute for hand washing. Gloves should be changed and hands washed at any time an ungloved hand would be washed

It's worth noting that staff uniforms are a potential source of transmission and you should

ensure your team always wear clean uniforms. This includes items such as oven cloths/gloves.

In order to destroy the virus and any harmful bacteria present, staff clothing must be washed at temperatures above 60°C or, if fabrics cannot be washed at high temperatures, a laundry sanitising agent should be used. It is good practice in food businesses to launder staff uniforms commercially wherever possible.

If staff are washing their uniforms/clothing at home, please ensure they understand the need to wash them at high temperatures and store the washed clothing separately to other laundry and away from contaminants.

If you are unable to wash staff clothing/cloths immediately, leave in a sealed bag for at least three days and wash as per the instructions above.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Poor standards of cleanliness increase the risk of transmission ensure that the frequency of disinfection is increased throughout service, and make sure staff are including all high-contact surfaces such as work surfaces, tables, chairs, switches, door handles, push plates on doors, toilets, hand towel dispensers, taps, mop handles etc.

**You must ensure that a sanitiser (a blend of detergent and disinfectant) which complies with either BS EN 1276:1997 and/or BS EN 13697:2001 (this should be specified on the product labelling).**

## SUPPLIERS

Your suppliers may be affected during this time. However, ensure that only reputable suppliers are used and if you temporarily change supplier ensure you have their details and that they are recorded. This is important for traceability purposes.

**We appreciate these are really difficult and challenging times for food businesses and we are here to help and support you.**

**STS can help you get ready to reopen your doors safely once the lockdown restrictions are loosened and ensure you are compliant with government guidelines. Most importantly, we will help ensure your staff and customers are safe.**

**Please contact us at [info@sts-solutions.co.uk](mailto:info@sts-solutions.co.uk) for more information or to ask us a question.**



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