

Starting a New Food Business

Setting up any business will naturally require much planning and thought and there are some particular considerations when opening up a food business. This advice sheet will provide you with the first steps you need to take when starting up a new food business in Coventry.



Definition of a food business

A food business is any undertaking - whether carried out for profit or not which involves any of the following:

- preparation of food
- processing of food
- manufacture of food
- packaging of food
- storage of food
- transportation/distribution of food
- handling of food
- offering food for sale.

This includes restaurants, cafes, hotels, shops, canteens, childminders, market stalls, churches and temples, cake makers, and mobile catering vans

Do food safety laws apply to me?

If you're involved either as an owner, employee or volunteer in any business/voluntary organisation which sells or gives food (including drinks) away to members of the public you will have to comply with food safety law.

Registration

If you are planning to operate a new food business, or take over an existing business as the new food business operator, you will need to register the business with Coventry City Council's Food Safety Team.

All types of food business have a legal requirement to register **at least 28 days** before opening. It is free to register the business. Once you have registered with the Council, as long as you can produce food safely, you can start trading. You do not have to wait until you have been inspected. Registration can be completed online on the Council's website.

Certain types of food businesses that produce dairy products, meat products, fishery products, egg products, minced meat or meat preparation may require a different type of registration, called 'Approval'. If you think that your new food business falls into this category, you must contact the Food Safety Team as soon as possible - food businesses that require Approval cannot start trading until approval has been granted.

What happens after my business is registered?

A Food Safety Officer will carry out an unannounced inspection soon after you have opened. During the visit, the Officer will ask questions to determine if food is being handled safely at the business, and inspect the business' food safety management system. They will also inspect the premises to ensure that the structure and equipment complies with current legislation, and that cleaning and disinfection is adequate. At the end of the visit, the Officer will leave a short written summary of the inspection.

What happens after the food hygiene inspection?

An inspection report is sent to the Food Business Operator after the visit, which gives feedback on things that need doing to improve food safety and hygiene standards. Some of these issues are legal requirements that require attention, and others are recommendations for good practice. The report also tells businesses what they are doing well.



You will also be given a rating under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. This score will be based on the food safety conditions found at the time of your inspection. You will be provided with a window/door sticker and a certificate to display in your business.

How often will my business be inspected?

Food businesses can be inspected anywhere from between 6 months and 3 years, depending on the food safety conditions found at the time of the last inspection, and the type of business. You may also be visited if a member of the public has made a complaint. Inspectors can visit at any reasonable time - we do not normally make appointments before a visit.

Food Safety Law

There are a number of legal requirements and regulations that relate to food businesses. The main aim of the law is to ensure that food produced by a business is safe to eat. This is broken down into three main areas: Food Hygiene, Structure and Management.

Consideration should be given to documentation you will need, what food hygiene training will be necessary, how you control stock, your suppliers and labelling of products. You will also need to think about how the premises is designed, constructed, kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition, so as to avoid the risk of contaminating food and harbouring pests. Depending on the type and size of your business these may vary.

Food Hygiene and Safety

- Ensure that raw meat and ready to eat foods are kept completely separate. Raw meat must be stored away from cooked food and other ready to eat foods such as salads. Either store it in a separate fridge or at the bottom of the fridge where it cannot contaminate other foods.

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- Ensure that raw meat is prepared in an area away from where ready to eat food is handled/prepared. Ideally raw meat should be prepared in a separate area but where this is not possible you must ensure that the area is thoroughly cleaned and sanitised between uses. Separate or disposable cleaning cloths should be used.
- Thoroughly wash all salads, vegetables and fruit and peel where possible, this is particularly important for those which are covered in soil that could be contaminated with bacteria.

- Use separate chopping boards, knives/utensils for preparing the raw meat and other ready to eat foods. Don't forget raw meat includes bacon, burgers and sausages too.



- Appropriate hand washing facilities must be provided - the number of separate wash hand basins will depend on the size and nature of the business. Wash hand basins must be provided with a supply of hot and cold or appropriately mixed running water, soap (e.g. liquid antibacterial soap) and hygienic drying facilities (e.g. paper towels). The wash hand basin is to be used only for the purpose of hand washing. Ensure that all staff observe good personal hygiene and wash their hands thoroughly with soap and hot water after handling raw meat, dirty vegetables etc. and after using the toilet.



- All food handlers must wear suitable clean (and where appropriate, protective), clothing. Depending on the type of food, this may include hats, hairnets, and aprons.
- High risk food must be stored at safe temperatures in order to prevent the growth of food poisoning organisms. High risk foods can include: cooked meats, ready meals, cooked rice, dairy products, cooked fish and shellfish, prepared salads containing mayonnaise, egg dishes, and sandwiches.
- Food which needs to be kept cold, must be stored at a temperature of 8°C or below. It is good practice to operate fridges between 1 and 5°C to allow for fluctuating temperatures. Frozen food should ideally be stored at -18°C.

- It is very important that food is cooked thoroughly, to kill any food poisoning organisms that may be present. It is best practice to check the core temperature of a food with a clean temperature probe. The centre of the food product should be 75°C or hotter. You can also use visual checks, such as cutting into meat, checking that any juices run clear and looking for a change in colour.



- If you intend to keep food hot for display (e.g. hot-holding cabinet or bain-marie), you must keep the food at a temperature of 63°C or hotter.



- If you plan on cooling cooked food down and using it later or the next day, you must cool it down safely. High-risk foods should be cooled within 90 minutes of cooking and then refrigerated below 8°C. This is to prevent the growth of food poisoning organisms during the cooling process. You can speed up the cooling process by dividing the food in to smaller portions, or pouring the food in to a cold, shallow tray. You should plan your day to ensure that food is produced as close to the time of service as possible.

Structure and Cleaning

- You must ensure that the structure of your food handling areas is kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition.
- Floors, walls and ceilings must be smooth, non-absorbent and washable.
- There must be provision for cleaning/disinfecting work equipment and utensils. You must use an appropriate anti-bacterial spray or sanitiser to disinfect food contact surfaces. It is essential that you follow the instructions in how to use the product - for example how long it must be left on the surface in order to work properly (known as the 'contact time'). Antibacterial sprays and sanitisers used in the kitchen must meet certain British Standard requirements: either BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697.
- An adequate supply of hot water must be available for hand-washing and washing equipment. The water provided to the food business must be of drinking-quality (i.e. from the mains).
- All food contact surfaces (work tops, cutting boards etc) must be in sound condition, easy to clean and disinfect.
- All equipment used in the preparation of food must be in good condition, be easy to keep clean and if necessary disinfect. You must ensure that you regularly check utensils and other equipment for signs of damage, in order to prevent contamination of food. Remove damaged equipment.
- There must be adequate natural/artificial lighting and ventilation within the food business.



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- You must ensure that the food business is always pest free. Pests could include mice, rats, flies, birds, cockroaches and ants. This can be achieved with regular checking of the kitchen for evidence of pests (droppings, nibbled food). The building must not have any holes or gaps through which pests could enter. Make sure that no food is left out and that the business is kept clean. It is good practice to employ a Pest Control Contractor to provide expert advice and thorough checks for evidence of pests.
- Adequate facilities must be provided for the storage and disposal waste (including waste oil). Food waste must not be allowed to accumulate in the food preparation area or external storage area (e.g. yard).



Food Safety Management



- The Food Business Operator must identify steps in the activities of the business that are critical to ensuring food safety. Having identified those steps, the proprietor needs to ensure that adequate safety procedures are identified, implemented, maintained and reviewed in order to control the potential food hazards. These controls may include temperature control, cleaning, avoiding cross contamination, thorough cooking of food, personal hygiene etc. It has been a legal requirement since January 2006 to have a documented food safety management system in place.
- The Government has produced a pack to help businesses comply with this requirement called Safer Food, Better Business. This pack can be downloaded for free from the Food Standards Agency's website, or purchased from the Council's website.
- All food handlers must be trained/supervised/instructed so that they can carry out their duties hygienically and without affecting the safety of the food. The level of food hygiene training required will depend on the responsibilities of the employee and the type of food being handled. Food handlers often hold Level 2 Food Hygiene Training, however a supervisor or manager responsible for the food safety management system may require Level 3.
- No person who may be suffering from a disease likely to be transmitted through food should be allowed to work with food. (e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, viral infections, etc) Any food handler who has been ill needs 48 hours free from any symptoms before returning to work.





- As a food business operator, you should be able to identify the person or business that supplied you with food. You should keep appropriate records from your suppliers (e.g. receipts/delivery notes).

Additional information:

Where can I get advice about food labelling?

The Trading Standards Department at the City Council can provide you with labelling advice and can be contacted on 0808 223 1133.

Do I need planning permission?

You must contact the Planning Department on 02476 831109 to make sure that you have permission to run a food business from the premises. We strongly recommend that you do this before you sign a rental agreement or buy a property.

Do I have to install toilets for members of the public to use?

If it is a new business and you have seating for people to eat their food you should install at least one public toilet.

Do I need to make special arrangements for the waste that comes from my business?

Yes. It is a legal requirement for all food businesses to have a trade waste contract with a registered waste carrier. The City Council has a Commercial Waste service (024 7683 2255) or you find the details of other waste carriers on the internet or in the Yellow Pages.



Food Standards Agency has a web site, which has information on all aspects of safe food production and legal guidance.

www.food.gov.uk

This document is a brief overview of the legal requirements you must follow when starting a new food business. The 'Setting Up A New Food Business' section of the Council's website provides more detailed guidance on areas covered within this leaflet.

For further information please contact:

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