

Annexe 2

If you are planning to offer parcels of cooked meals

If you are thinking of offering cooked meals, there are food safety considerations you must bear in mind.

Food Safety for Food Banks

Why is Food Safety Important for Food banks?

Any food supplied by a food bank must be safe to eat. Legally, as it states in the Food Safety Act 1990, all types of organisations supplying food must ensure:

- They do not include anything in food, remove anything from food or treat food in any way which means it would be damaging to the health of people eating it;
- The food you offer is of the nature or quality which people would expect.
- The food is labelled and presented in a way that is not false or misleading.

Cross Contamination

In any organisation that provides food to those in your community, you must take all aspects of food safety extremely seriously. Food that is provided for community groups must comply with food law and be safe to eat.

You also need to make sure that any food containing **allergens are labelled clearly**. Furthermore, it is important that those who handle food do not pose a risk of contaminating food or passing on illness to the recipients.

Food banks should consider all aspects of food hygiene and safety and ensure they always adhere to rules and regulations. The main areas of food hygiene and safety to consider are avoiding cross-contamination, food allergies, monitor food storage conditions and temperatures, following food dates closely and using food safe packaging appropriately.

Food Allergies

Controlling the risks posed by allergens is a legal requirement under food safety and labelling laws. **Natasha's Law** came into force in October 2021. This requires any food that is pre-packed directly for sale and made on the premises has a label with a full list of ingredients, including any allergens in the food. For food banks receiving pre-packaged items, having food products labelled in such a way should enable better communication of ingredients and allergens with those receiving the food.

Another way of controlling the risk of allergenic contamination in a food bank is to make sure all staff have a knowledge of what an allergen is. People can be allergic to anything, however there are 14 named allergens that everyone who handles food should be aware of. These are:

- Celery and celeriac.
- Cereals containing gluten.
- Crustaceans.
- Eggs.
- Fish.
- Lupin.
- Molluscs.
- Milk.
- Mustard.
- Nuts.
- Peanuts.
- Sesame seeds.
- Soy.
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at levels above 10mg per kg or 10ml per litre.

You can stick this list somewhere visible to the team. The best way to avoid allergenic contamination is to keep any food items that contain any of these ingredients separate to other foods. This will likely mean having separate storage areas.

Taking steps to protect people from allergens and being transparent will allow people with food allergies to make safer choices.

Food temperature

It is essential that food should be stored at the correct temperature. The Food Standards Agency sets the **temperature danger zone** for food between 8°C and 60°C, and this is the range you want to keep the food out of. This means that food is safest when it is either frozen, chilled at a temperature of less than 8°C, or heated beyond 60°C.

Chilled food should be stored at a temperature of between 1°C and 5°C as best practice, and frozen food should be stored at a maximum temperature of -18°C. By storing food at the correct temperature you will prevent the growth of harmful bacteria and help keep the food safe.

Food dates

It goes without saying that you should never use food past its **use by date**. However, food that has passed its **best before date** can be legally sold, redistributed, and consumed after this date, if judged to be of sufficient quality to be donated and made available to be eaten. Food banks and redistributors should check all food that is past the best before date to ensure it is of sufficient quality - usually a visual inspection of the food will do this. You can use food items that are past their best before date as a meal ingredient, but again a quality inspection should occur.

Food Safe Packaging

Without [correct packaging](#), chemical contaminants or germs could transfer onto food.

Food banks can reuse glass or plastic packaging so long as there are no chips or cracks in it. Any food storage containers or packaging must be cleaned thoroughly between uses to prevent cross contamination of germs, allergens, and physical contaminants. Washing should be thorough and use hot soapy water, sanitiser and/or disinfectant.

Training for Food banks

Food Hygiene

You may wish to have one or two people in the organisation who have received Food Hygiene training and has a good understanding of food safety risks and management. An online Food Hygiene course costs around £30 per person.

Source: High Speed Training, <https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/food-banks-rules-regulations/>