

Registering as a food business operator

What counts as a food business?

If you are working for a charitable organisation that gives away food without charge, or are a not for profit organisation distributing food you may still be classified by your local authority as a food business and need to register as one. There are few exceptions in the need to register and your local EHO will advise. Whether you make and distribute food from home, a rented space, a commercial kitchen or a mobile unit, you should check whether you should register. It is free of charge to do and you cannot be refused by your local authority.

When do I need to register as a food business with my local council?

You should register a minimum of 28 days in advance of starting, or taking over your food business, or immediately if you have already started. Changes to existing business operations will also often need to be advised to the EHO for the registration to be adjusted. The online registration form is at <https://www.gov.uk/food-business-registration> This is national government form, which is then sent to your local authority for reviewing and to complete your registration.

What will I be asked?

You will be asked for a contact name and address, what your food-based activities involve and who your customers are (or those receiving your food). You will need to provide your operating or opening hours and how your water is supplied.

What happens next?

The information is then assessed by your local Environmental health team who may contact you for further information and may arrange to visit you to do an inspection of your premises and processes. At the earliest opportunity you should start preparing your food safety procedures so they are available for inspection by an environmental health officer at any time.

As a food business operator you should also undertake accredited food safety training - the minimum recommendation is a Level 2 course, but if you supervise or manage others in preparing food, it may be advisable to do a Level 3 course so you can meet industry standards and demonstrate your knowledge to others. Formal food hygiene training is not currently a legal requirement, but it is the food business operators responsibility to ensure that any food handlers receive adequate training and supervision and often completing an accredited course is the best way.

Formal food safety training can help to demonstrate professionalism of your team and your commitment to food safety. For catering and small manufacturing businesses, the EHO will assess the current training in making a decision on awarding the food hygiene rating score. Scores of 4 and 5 are rarely awarded in cases where training cannot be evidenced. Before serving food to others, you should check whether you should have your own insurance for your activities and products. See helpsheet on insurance requirements.

What if something changes?

If there are any significant changes within your business, i.e. new location, operator, significant changes to business activities or closure, you must tell your local authority. Further information: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/start-up-checklist-for-new-food-businesses>

Find out more about what you can do to prepare:

Guidance on food hygiene and how to run a safe food business: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance>

How to achieve a high food hygiene rating (FHRS score) : <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-hygiene-ratings-for-businesses>

Information on the food safety management system safer food, better business:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business>

Food labelling and allergens guidance:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/industry-specific-advice/labelling-and-allergens>

Business support & helpline: <https://www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline>

or contact the Business Support Helpline on 0800 998 1098

