

Health and hygiene in the kitchen – people and premises

Premises

It is important to allow time to be able to locate and choose a suitable premises for food production, especially if you are looking to create a retail ready product. If you are looking for a rentable kitchen, many churches, community halls or food-related colleges may have kitchens to rent at low cost. If you find a suitable premises and are planning a regular day of the week for production, check in with the premises operator to see if any regular days or afternoons are already booked before you plan any further.

There is a requirement for all food businesses to be registered for commercial food production and this also extends to voluntary food supply operations. The local EHO will supply a form for you to complete and this is supposed to be supplied at least 28 days prior to commencement. It is worth asking if the kitchen is registered and whether it has had an EHO inspection before and if you can view the report. This will help you quickly identify if there are any structural issues with the building or anything that was picked up that needs improvement.

The next consideration is, is it a good enough size to be able to produce your product safely? Is there room for your staff or volunteers to manoeuvre safely e.g. with hot pans, if you have social distancing policies, or if there is enough production space or cooling space.

Some facilities may be registered, but if your use is different from the registered use and you are a separate organisation, you will need to register yourself for the organisation using the facilities. In addition, some halls and community centres may have been registered for preparation of refreshments and service of low risk foods, such as biscuits and cakes, but may not be suitable for a full scale catering or production operation and this should be checked with the local authority.

If there has not been an EHO inspection on the premises check if the kitchen space is in clean, good condition.

Look for:

- floors and walls with washable surfaces
- separate hand wash sink
- separate sink(s) for food preparation and cleaning
- provision of extractor fan/canopy (notably where there will be significant cooking)
- washable prep tables or surfaces
- separate toilet facilities
- plentiful water supply with hot and cold water.
- does it have the basic facilities needed? e.g. cooker, refrigeration space, arrangements for waste including food waste.

It is also important to ask the kitchen operator who else uses the kitchen on a regular basis and whether there is a cleaning schedule for each hirer in place. This is important for managing allergens and maintaining a high standard of cleanliness.

People

Ensuring you have a team that is healthy and prepared for food production is a key element of preparing safe food. Managing a team of volunteers or staff comes with responsibilities. Induction training, before handling products, should be delivered and signed off with explanation of the bulleted points within the list below, as well as fire and safety-related instructions. Before you have a new volunteer or staff member starts production, a 'Fitness to work' form should be completed (see link below) Your team should also be aware of their responsibilities as a food handler and yours as the food operator.



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Food Safety Law states that food handlers MUST:

- Keep themselves and your workplace clean and wear suitable, clean protective clothing.
- Store, prepare and display food at safe temperatures.
- Do everything possible to protect food from contamination.
- Inform the employer if you have symptoms of a foodborne illness, contact with anyone who has been unwell, been unwell returning from being abroad, suffering skin infections, or heavy colds/flu.
- Wear designated protective clothing to protect food from risk of contamination.
- Make appropriate use of hand-washing facilities.
- Safeguard food so that it does not cause illness or harm.
- Have appropriate training related to food handling being undertaken.

To enable food handlers i.e. your staff or volunteers to comply with the law you should provide protective clothing suitable for the task and provide training, especially if your team is new to food production. This may take the form of an online or in-person formal food hygiene training, or having a formally qualified member of your team supervising others carrying out food production. Be aware that some training online is of a dubious quality and is often uncertified.

Documented control and monitoring of food safety hazards

Remember, it is a legal requirement to operate a documented system to record and monitor requirements for food safety. These systems are based on the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) principles and are required for all businesses. The complexity of the system employed will be determined by the nature and size of the business. For simple catering systems the Food Standards Agency has provided a pack that can be tailored to individual operations and is downloadable at <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-for-caterers>. For manufacturing and larger enterprises, it will be necessary to provide a fuller system and further details are available in the 'Record keeping' document included within this series.

Summary

It is your responsibility as the food operator to:

- Register the premises with the Local Authority
- Design, equip and operate premises to prevent contamination
- Ensure there are adequate hand-washing facilities and arrangements for personal hygiene
- Ensure all staff are trained and supervised to work hygienically and safely
- Assess food hazards and take action to reduce risks (known as hazard analysis)
- Implement and maintain a Food Safety Management System based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) principles

Links and references

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fitnesstoworkguide.pdf>

https://www.thesaferfoodgroup.com/courses/food-hygiene-level-2_catering/demo/1/

<http://www.iqualifi.co.uk>

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

