

Food Hygiene Policy



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This church aims to be a community of believers living according to the Bible's teaching where people become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

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Introduction

Food poisoning at the best is uncomfortable and at the worst is fatal. It exposes a church to enforcement action and potentially to prosecution. It is also a bad witness.

Premises

Overview

The FSA Food Hygiene Guide advises on the suitability and condition of premises where food is prepared or provided. Good hygiene practices are important. These include keeping the premises clean and maintaining them in good repair and condition, ensuring there is no build-up of dirt and toxic materials that would contaminate food, as well as eliminating pests.

Fridges and freezers

Having enough fridges and freezers is important. These can be needed for storing food for events such as bring & share lunches, which often take place after church gatherings, without which food can become too warm before consumption. High risk food (e.g. fresh cream) should be avoided if possible for such occasions. The fridges and freezers should be checked regularly to ensure they are sealed properly against pests and temperatures are correct.

Pests

Pests such as mice, insects and birds can carry and spread bacteria. Precautions need to be taken to keep pests out of kitchens, by filling holes and ensuring doors, windows and vents are sealed. Regular checks should be made for any signs of pests (e.g. droppings, gnawed packaging, eggs or feathers). Foodstuffs should be kept in sealed pest-proof containers and food waste should not be left on the premises overnight or in open containers, as this attracts pests.

Ventilation

The kitchen should have enough ventilation (natural and/or mechanical) and lighting (natural and/or electric).

Basins and sinks

There must be a wash basin, used only for cleaning hands (with hot and cold running water, soap and materials for hygienic drying), and a separate sink for washing food. Sinks for washing food must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water and must be potable (drinking quality). They must be kept clean and, where necessary, disinfected.

Washing equipment, such as a dishwasher, needs to be made of corrosion-resistant materials and be easy to clean.

Food transportation

If vehicles are used for transporting food, they must be kept clean and ideally the food should be kept in sealed containers.

Cleanliness

Regular cleaning (and disinfecting) of all parts of the kitchen should be the routine practice, including work surfaces, floor, walls, ceiling, cupboards and equipment.

Work surfaces

Work surfaces should be in sound condition, sealable and easy to clean. They should be of materials that are smooth, washable, corrosion-resistant and non-toxic. Edges and joints should be sealed (usually with mastic) to prevent build-up of dirt.

Ceilings

Any overhead fixtures such as lighting units (which should be sealed) should be constructed and maintained in a way that prevents dirt from building up and reduces condensation and the growth of mould.

Walls

Wall surfaces should be kept in sound condition and be easy to wash (and disinfect). Wall surfaces nearest work surface should be impervious (fluids cannot pass through), non-absorbent, washable and non-toxic. Tiles are acceptable, providing they are not chipped and the grouting is in good condition. Wet wall panels are better as they do not have joints. Uneven surfaces or ledges should be avoided as dirt can build up.

Floors

As with walls, floors should be kept in sound condition and be easy to wash (and disinfect). The surface should be impervious, non-absorbent, washable and nontoxic. Sealed vinyl with curved edges, joined to wall tiles/boards are ideal, but cushion flooring or ceramic tiles are also acceptable. The edges around the skirting boards and kickboards to the kitchen units need to be sealed with mastic to prevent build-up of dirt.

Personal Hygiene

General hygiene

Churches normally have volunteers working in the kitchen, preparing and serving food for church members and visitors to enjoy. Those engaged with food must understand that

personal hygiene is essential to keep food from being contaminated. This means all those in the kitchen should:

- wear suitable clean clothing for use in a kitchen;
- tie back long hair (or wear a head covering), to prevent loose hair dropping into food or drinks;
- wear an apron when preparing food;
- remove watches and jewellery (except perhaps a plain wedding band);
- leave coats outside the kitchen and preferably bags too, or if brought into the kitchen, keep them away from work surfaces;
- put a waterproof coloured plaster over any cut.

If a person is unwell, especially from an illness likely to transmit a disease (especially diarrhoea and/or vomiting) through food, he or she is not allowed to handle food or enter a food handling area. They should not drink or eat while handling food and should avoid touching their face and coughing or sneezing over the food.

Handwashing

Handwashing must be practised in order to prevent harmful bacteria from spreading from people's hands to food, work surfaces, equipment etc. Make sure that everyone working with food washes their hands properly:

- when entering the food handling area (e.g. after a break or going to the toilet);
- before preparing food;
- after touching raw food, such as meat/poultry, fish, eggs and unwashed fruit and vegetables;
- after handling food waste or emptying a bin (a pedal operated bin does not need to be touched by hand);
- after cleaning;
- after blowing their nose;
- after touching phones, light switches, door handles and cash registers, or other surfaces that could come into contact with staff handling raw food;
- before and after handling food that is likely to cause allergies.

Do not forget to dry hands thoroughly if possible on a disposable towel – harmful bacteria can spread more easily if hands are wet or damp. Use the disposable towel to turn off the tap. If cloth tea towels or hand towels are used, they should be changed regularly and certainly at the end of any event or meeting where food is served.

Allergies

The 14 allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as wheat, barley and oats), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin**, **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if the sulphur dioxide and sulphites are at a concentration of more than ten

parts per million) and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

It is compulsory for anyone bringing food into the kitchen and The Bridge to label what food it is and what allergens are in there. If the dish contains nuts be specific with what type and please inform the person you are giving the food to. No nuts are to be left in the church kitchen overnight, if any nuts are in for cooking, any left over be removed after such cooking to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

While we are not a food business and labelling of food is not a legal requirement it is important for everyone involved in any food making and serving processes to be aware of the 14 allergens listed and if they have come into contact with them, whether at home or at the church itself. We must do everything we can to ensure the safety of all our church members and guests and regularly wash hands and clean food contact surfaces to avoid any cross contamination.

“Natashas law” basically says to label all packaged food. When large catering events are held a menu is to be prepared listing the relevant allergens used. Anyone has a dietary requirement can either check information themselves or have someone in the kitchen check for them.

Food

Risk Assessment

A basic risk assessment will be carried out when selecting what food to provide at events. The assessment will take into account the type of ingredients used, the likely temperature on the day and how long the food will be laid out for before being served.

Bacteria

Poisoning can be caused by bacteria. Often this cannot be seen or smelt, so knowing the history of the food and its preparation is important. Some bacteria multiply with moisture and warmth (temperatures between 5°C and 63°C are known as the danger zone). Food should be prepared as soon as practicable before cooking, because bacteria will multiply during the danger zone time. Cooking at high temperatures kills most bacteria and food should be cooked for at least two minutes at 75°C to the centre of the thickest part of the food. Using a temperature probe helps to be certain. Bacteria also make food perish. For example, bread left for a few days develops a mould and, if there is any sign of mould, must be disposed of. Good food hygiene is all about controlling harmful bacteria, which can cause serious illness. The four main things to remember for good hygiene are the “**fours Cs**”:

- Cross-contamination;
- Cleaning;
- Chilling;
- Cooking.

The FSA's Safer Food, Better Business pack covers this subject well and gives some very practical guidance. It is recommended that anyone responsible for catering in the Church reads this. The list of checks, the records for training and the daily diaries are all excellent in their simplicity, as they are very easy to use and enable staff to cover the various areas of management within a few minutes. The tables and diaries can be printed out and hand recorded.

Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria are spread between food, surfaces or equipment. It is most likely to happen when raw food touches (or drips onto) ready-to-eat food, equipment or surfaces. Cross-contamination is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. The following precautions should help to avoid cross contamination:

- Clean and disinfect work surfaces, chopping boards and equipment thoroughly before you start preparing food and after you have used them to prepare raw food.
- Use different equipment (including chopping boards and knives) for raw meat/poultry and ready-to-eat food unless they can be heat disinfected in, for example, a commercial dishwasher.
- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after touching raw food.
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat food apart at all times, including packaging material for ready-to-eat food.
- Store raw food below ready-to-eat food in the fridge. If possible, use separate fridges for raw and ready-to-eat food. In most church kitchens this will not be possible.
- Ideally, where practical, provide separate working areas, storage facilities, clothing and staff for the handling of ready-to-eat food. In most church kitchens this will not be possible.
- Cleaning materials, including cloths, sponges and mops, used in areas where ready-to-eat foods are stored, handled and prepared, should not be used in any other areas of the premises and vice-versa.
- Make sure that your staff (including volunteers) know how to avoid cross contamination

Cleaning

Effective cleaning gets rid of bacteria on hands, equipment and surfaces and helps to stop harmful bacteria from spreading onto food. This includes:

- Making sure that all your staff wash and dry their hands thoroughly before handling food.
- Cleaning and disinfecting food areas and equipment between different tasks, especially after handling raw food.

- Clearing and cleaning as you go; that is clearing away used equipment, spilt food etc. as you work and cleaning work surfaces thoroughly.
- Using cleaning and disinfection products that are suitable for the job (e.g. power & shine sprays or anti-bacterial surface cleansers), and following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Avoiding the build-up of food waste and never leaving food waste in the building overnight.

Chilling

Chilling food properly helps to stop harmful bacteria from growing. Some food needs to be kept chilled to keep it safe; for example food with a 'use by' date, cooked dishes and other ready-to-eat food, such as prepared salads and desserts. It is very important not to leave these types of food standing around at room temperature. Ensure the following:

- Chilled food is checked on arrival to make sure it is cool enough.
- Food that needs to be kept chilled is put in the fridge straight away.
- Cooked food is cooled as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge (e.g. divide food into smaller portions and/or place in well-sealed containers and run under cold water or stand it in a shallow tray of cold water).
- Chilled food is kept out of the fridge for the shortest time possible during preparation.
- The fridge is regularly checked to be sure it is cold enough.

Cooking

Proper cooking kills food poisoning bacteria such as listeria, salmonella, E. coli O157 and Campylobacter. So it is extremely important to make sure that food is cooked properly. When cooking or reheating food, always check that it is steaming hot all the way through (cooked for at least two minutes at 75°C to the centre of the thickest part of the food). It is especially important to make sure that poultry, pork, rolled joints and products made from minced meat, such as burgers and sausages are thoroughly cooked. This is because there could be bacteria in the middle of these types of products. They should not be served pink or rare. Whole cuts of beef and lamb, such as steaks, cutlets and whole joints, can be served pink/rare as long as they are fully sealed on the outside.

Temperature control

Temperature control is important for storing and cooking food.

- Cold food. Cold food must be stored at 8°C or below. This is a legal requirement.
- Hot Food. Hot food must be kept at 63°C or above, after it has been cooked to 75°C. This is a legal requirement. When food is reheated it must be steaming hot all the way through. There is a legal requirement for reheated food to reach at least 75°C.
- Service and display. When serving or displaying food, it can be kept out of temperature control for a limited period of time. Cold food can be kept above 8°C

for up to four hours. This should only be done once. If any food is left after this time, it should be thrown away. Hot food can be kept below 63°C for up to two hours but this should only be done once. If any food is left after this time, it should be reheated until it is steaming hot (i.e. 75°C) and then kept above 63°C until served, or cooled as quickly as possible to 8°C or below, or thrown away.

Food must be kept at a safe temperature until it is used and only reheated once.

- Defrosting. If you defrost any food you must do this in a way that minimises the risk of harmful bacteria growing, or toxins forming, in the food. While they are being defrosted, you must keep food at a temperature that would not result in a risk to health. Where liquid coming from the defrosting food may present a risk to health (e.g. when defrosting raw meat) you must drain it off adequately. Following defrosting, food must be handled in a way that minimises the risk of harmful bacteria growing or toxins forming (e.g. keeping it in the fridge).

Wrapping and packing

Wrapping and packing may be necessary at times for food transportation. Precautions should be taken to ensure that wrapping and packing materials are not a source of contamination, by keeping the wrapping and packing material away from any food (fresh, cooked or defrosted), pests (e.g. rodents) and other contaminating materials, such as bleach. Food must be wrapped and packaged in a way that avoids contamination and any containers must be clean and undamaged, particularly cans and/or glass. Any re-used wrapping or packaging must be easy to clean and where necessary disinfect.

Access to Kitchens

Children under 12 are not allowed into the kitchens.

Young people between the ages of 12 and 18 are only allowed into the kitchens if undertaking cooking activities under the supervision of an adult.

Training

The law requires that persons who handle food are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene in a way appropriate for the work they do. What is appropriate depends upon what is done. Training for making tea and coffee served with biscuits does not require the level of training required for a church serving hot meals five days a week to 50 members and guests.

There is no legal requirement to attend a formal training course. If the church wants to extend catering from a simple provision to one with regular hot meals, it must consider the training needs of its people. These training requirements might be given by someone with commercial catering experience, but that is not always possible. Alternatively a

good on-line food safety course should be considered. These are set at different levels, from assisting in serving food to food preparation and kitchen management. Level 2 Food Safety Training is usually sufficient.

Most people have home catering experience, with a general knowledge about kitchen hygiene, but are not aware of the legal requirements when food is provided in a church ministry context. Volunteering to assist in the kitchen does have strict obligations and rules for food safety. It is the responsibility of the Church to ensure people are trained appropriately. The responsible person mentioned below is responsible for ensuring those in charge of supervising any catering has received suitable training. The responsible person should also ensure suitable training is given to all volunteers.

Responsible Person

The person responsible for the implementation of this policy is Beth Walford Morris who will also monitor the condition and maintenance of all equipment within the kitchen. All reports of malfunction of electrical equipment and other concerns should be reported to Beth Morris Walford who will liaise with the Centre Manager or the Deacon responsible for premises to rectify.

This policy was adopted by the Trustees on 12 February 2024 and will be reviewed every three years.