

## **COVID-19 Guidance for Food Businesses in the Take Away Sector (1 May 2020)**

**This guidance has been produced in partnership with the Executive of the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee**

**A quick Summary of this guidance is provided in Annex 1**

Following new Scottish Government restrictions placed on premises such as public houses, restaurants, cafes etc. during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, food business operators (FBOs) may be considering diversifying to provide a take-away food service.

During this time, Government guidance allows that food takeaway can remain operational and can be a new activity supported by the new permitted development right. ***This covers the service of hot or cold food that has been prepared for consumers for collection or delivery to be consumed, reheated or cooked by consumers off the premises.***

It is essential in these challenging times, for all FBOs currently operating, or considering providing, a take-away food service, to prioritise the safety of their staff as a critical resource and ensure that they have appropriate measures in place to protect their customers from the risks of both food poisoning and COVID-19.

Whilst **there is currently no evidence that food is a source of COVID-19**, it is more important than ever for all food businesses to implement an effective Food Safety Management System (FSMS), with robust personal hygiene measures including the application of frequent and thorough hand washing practice. Such measures play a critical role in controlling the transmission of foodborne pathogens as well as respiratory viruses such as the coronavirus responsible for COVID-19.

Food businesses who currently offer, or who are changing to provide a take-away service, should ensure they have a robust FSMS in place and consider how this may need to be adapted in order to implement the necessary infection prevention and control measures required to control the spread of COVID-19. For those businesses who are offering a take-away service for the first time, it is particularly important to identify any potential gaps in their existing FSMS, and to ensure that their premises is able to accommodate the social distancing measures required to protect their staff and their customers from COVID-19.

**Food businesses must be able to demonstrate and give confidence to their workforce that they can consistently practice safe infection prevention and control measures and comply with ALL other standard health and safety requirements. Businesses who are unable to implement these additional controls should stop the take-away collection service and seriously consider**

**closing the business until such time as the additional control requirements are relaxed.**

This guidance aims to provide support to FBOs offering or considering providing, a take-away food service; and help to ensure that the requirements of the Scottish and UK Government, and the advice of Health Protection Scotland on the control of COVID-19 can be met and followed in practice.

In order to ensure food safety, in addition to being able to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is essential for food businesses in the take-away sector to ensure they have appropriate measures in place across the following areas:

## **1. Training & Instruction of Existing and New Staff**

It is important to emphasise that there is **no** relaxation on legal requirements for training of food handlers during this COVID-19 pandemic. Any new staff utilised, (e.g. due to staff absences because of self- isolation), still require to be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity. At this time, it is also critical to ensure all existing and new staff are trained in the measures that are required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

All staff must be provided with clear instructions on any infection control policy in place, and any person with illness or symptoms must report it to a person in charge. Ensure all staff are familiarised with the Government's infection control policy in relation to coronavirus by referring them to the following national guidance:

- [Read guidance from the Scottish Government](#)
- [Read guidance from the UK Government](#)

[Food Standards Scotland has produced guidance on the responsibilities of food businesses with regard to the measures that should be implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.](#) This guidance should be used by all FBOs to assess their ability to implement requirements for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in their premises and protect their staff from infection. It also includes useful references (also provided at the end of this document) which should be referred to for training and supervising staff involved in the preparation and handling of take-away food during the pandemic.

## **2. Reinforcing Effective Hand Washing by Food Handlers**

All food handlers must regularly wash their hands using warm running water and hand soap (for at least 20 seconds) and dry them with single use disposable paper towels. Managers should reinforce the importance of thorough and frequent handwashing and

implement regular monitoring checks to ensure staff are adhering to effective hand washing techniques.

An adequate supply of hand washing and hygienic hand drying materials should be available at each wash hand basin throughout the food business. Alcohol based hand sanitiser gels can be used in addition to hand washing, but they only work on visibly clean hands. They should never be used as a substitute to hand washing with soap and water.

[Watch the Food Standards Scotland video on how to carry out effective hand washing.](#)

### **3. Implementing Social Distancing Measures**

Physical (social) distancing plays a critical role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in food premises. Everyone working in the premises should ensure social distancing is adhered to. FBOs should risk assess, and put in place, control measures to ensure that all staff can adhere to social distancing requirements i.e. are kept 2m (6ft.) apart. Communal areas in the food premises, such as staff rooms and changing rooms, provide a key opportunity for personnel to congregate. In order to control the number of people using these areas, and to enable the workforce to maintain social distancing, food businesses should develop and implement a rota system for staggering breaks. Non-essential visits to food premises from external parties should be postponed and stopped wherever possible. If visitors to the premises are essential (e.g. Local Authority Officers authorised to undertake official duties, delivery drivers, pest control, critical maintenance contractors etc), they should be aware of and be following Government guidelines on infection control and social distancing.

### **4. Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures**

FBOs should continue to apply their existing cleaning and disinfection regimes for food contact surfaces such as those outlined in [FSS's Guidance on the Control of E. coli O157 Cross Contamination](#). However, in order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, it may be necessary to increase the cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and areas within the premises that come into more regular contact with staff and customers. Key touch points (including work surfaces, door handles, light switches, hand towel dispensers, taps, mop handles etc). should be identified. FBOs and managers should ensure these are being frequently cleaned and disinfected, paying particular attention to communal areas such as staff rooms, changing room and staff toilets.

For areas and surfaces which are subject to more regular human contact, consideration should be given to the need for additional disinfection using products that are known to be effective against viruses. FBOs should check with their suppliers whether the cleaning products they are using is suitable for this purpose, and many

disinfectants should have information on the label that will indicate whether they are effective against enveloped viruses such as coronavirus.

**It is important to remember that disinfection will only be effective if carried out on visibly clean surfaces that are free from grease, film or solid matter. FBOs should ensure they have an adequate supply of detergents and disinfectants available for use, and should always follow the manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times.**

Wherever possible disposable or washing up gloves and aprons should be worn for cleaning. Separate refuse bins should be provided for the disposal of paper towel waste gloves and aprons used for cleaning. After use, these should be double bagged, stored securely then disposed of with general waste refuse

Heat disinfection by machine dish washing and steam cleaning should be used wherever possible for the cleaning of equipment and utensils.

## **5. Ensuring the Appropriate Use, Cleaning and Disposal of Protective Clothing**

Protective clothing must continue to be worn as required in line with the existing food requirements of the food business.

Where protective clothing is a requirement, staff should be provided with appropriate changing facilities with sufficient space that allows individuals to remain 2m apart. Where this is not achievable, use of such areas should be managed through a rota system to control the number of people using the space at any one time.

Businesses should provide areas (e.g. lockers and wall hooks) for storing protective clothing such as overalls, aprons, hats, and footwear, and staff should be encouraged not to remove these items from the premises. Appropriate disposal facilities should be available which allow single use items such as hairnets and gloves to be disposed of safely, and wherever possible, the necessary laundering services should be provided to ensure re-usable items are washed in accordance with these guidelines (see below).

Further information on the use of protective equipment can be found in [FSS's Q&A for food businesses](#), and their [guidance for food business operators and their employees](#).

### *Laundering of protective clothing*

It is important to ensure staff are wearing clean clothing each working day. All protective clothing must be washed at temperatures above 60°C or higher. Laundry sanitising agent should be considered for use where fabrics cannot be washed at high temperatures. In circumstances where it is necessary for staff to wash their protective

clothing at home, these items must be washed and stored separately from other household laundry.

## **6. Maintaining Effective Hygiene Practice Within the Takeaway Premises**

The following measures will help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within your premises:

- Maintaining regular cleaning and disinfection of all food contact surfaces, counters, and utensils;
- Developing more frequent cleaning and disinfection procedures for surfaces which are regularly touched by customers and staff such as door handles, counters and seating areas;
- Requiring food service staff to wash their hands more frequently for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap, both during food handling and after contact with items touched by other employees and customers including door handles, money etc.
- Ensuring gloves are changed regularly e.g. before and after preparing or handling food and after carrying out non-food related activities;
- Leaving entrance doors open to minimise hand contact;
- Providing hand sanitiser for customers to use on their way in and out of the food premises;
- Encouraging customers to pay for orders with contactless payment where possible.

## **7. Ensuring Social Distancing is Adhered to During the Collection and Delivery of Takeaways**

In order to minimise traffic within the premises, customers should be encouraged to order their deliveries online, by app, or by phone.

**When customers and delivery drivers are required to enter the premises to place or collect an order, steps must be taken to ensure social distancing requirements are adhered to by all individuals.** It should be borne in mind that whilst social distancing requirements apply to all customers there may be exceptional circumstances where there is a need for certain individuals to be accompanied into the premises for example when being assisted by a carer.

The number of customers who enter the premises to collect food should be limited to ensure that the 2 metres social distancing can be adhered to. This can be achieved with the use of floor markers or partitions. Customers waiting to order or collect should wait in a designated area where a 2-metre distance from other people can be maintained. If it is not possible to maintain social distancing within the customer area

of the premises, customers should enter the premises one at a time and only when their order is ready to be made or collected.

Collection times should be staggered to discourage crowding outside the premises. Where queuing is taking place, you should use queue management systems to maintain a 2-metre distance between people. A “Social Distancing” poster/sign can be used to remind customers of the requirement to maintain the 2 metre distance from one another. We recommend that notices are displayed in prominent positions throughout your food business to provide advice for anyone visiting the premises to collect food or deliver supplies. **Examples of customer notices are provided as attachments to this guidance.**

Social distancing restrictions also apply to delivery drivers when they are waiting to pick up and collect orders from the food premises, and also when they are delivering them to customers. Delivery drivers should always maintain a distance of 2 metres from the customer when the food is delivered.

For Government guidance on social distancing requirements please [visit the Scottish Government website](#).

## **8. Menu Control**

### Suppliers

Food businesses should continue to use reputable suppliers. As many businesses have temporarily closed, there is an increased risk of food fraud with unfit, unsafe, out of date or sub-standard food entering the supply chain – please check all goods received.

### Staffing

Due to the current restrictions, food premises may be working with reduced numbers of staff which could increase the risks to food safety. Menus should therefore be reviewed and FBOs then decide if it is necessary for the range of foods available for take-away to be reduced for the time being.

### Allergens

FBOs should review allergy information If any changes to the menu have been made, or if suppliers or ingredients have changed. **Do not serve people with a food allergy or intolerance if it cannot be guaranteed that their food has not been contaminated with any specified allergen.** Ensure that menus or websites contain all relevant allergen information or at a minimum state that the customer should ask

about allergens. Ask the customer about allergens when they place an order by telephone.

### **Further Guidance and advice – Staying informed**

FBOs and managers of food businesses are strongly advised to keep themselves and their staff up to date by regularly referring to the Government guidance. This is a fluid situation and the official guidance from Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland, NHS Inform, Gov.uk and the Food Standards Scotland website changes frequently. FBOs should ensure that all Government advice and instruction, relevant to their food business, is actioned, implemented and communicated to staff accordingly.

Local Authority Environmental Health services can also provide practical advice on infection prevention and control and FSM procedures appropriate to food premises.

### **Other useful links**

[Scottish Government – New Permitted development right for take-away provision](#)

[Scottish Government – COVID-19 business-and-social-distancing-guidance](#)

[UK Government – guidance for food businesses on Coronavirus-COVID-19](#)

[Food Standards Scotland Q&A on COVID-19](#)

Read further information on selling products for takeaway or delivery visit on [the Food Standards Agency website](#) an [UK Government webstie](#).

If anyone within the premises displays symptoms of Coronavirus you should follow the [Scottish Government guidance](#) and [Health Protection Scotland guidance](#) with immediate effect, which includes:

- [Cleaning and sanitising affected areas including hand contact surfaces as detailed within Health Protection Scotland Guidance](#)

## **ANNEX I COVID-19 FOOD BUSINESS TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY**

Below is a summary of advice for food businesses to follow to protect their workforce and customers, whilst continuing to trade.

### **COVID-19 and food**

- It is very unlikely that you can catch coronavirus from food. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness. It is not known to be transmitted by exposure to food or food packaging.
- Any food handler who is unwell should not be at work. If they have symptoms, they should follow government advice and stay at home.

### **Hand washing**

- FBOs should stress the importance frequent handwashing & maintaining good hygiene practices. Employees should wash their hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap, especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.

### **Food Safety management**

- FBOs should continue to follow their existing FSMS that includes existing food hygiene guidance and HACCP processes.

### **Cleaning & Disinfection**

- Cleaning & Disinfection should be in line with existing FSMS. Frequently clean and sanitise objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard detergent and sanitiser products. All hand contact surfaces to be sanitised every 2 hours within kitchen and premises generally.

### **Social distancing**

Minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a social distance of 2 metres between individuals. Where possible:

- no orders should be taken in person on the premises – Communicate this to customers by appropriate means such as signage. Businesses should only take orders online or by telephone. Agree approximate pickup times to reduce people queuing at the premises.
- use additional signage to ask customers not to enter the shop if they have symptoms

- regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded. Customers could have staggered collection times - customers should be discouraged from entering the premises until their order is ready. wedge open the entrance door to avoid hand contact.
- Encourage customers arriving who haven't already placed an order to leave the premises to order by telephone or online and to return at a designated time for collection
- customers whose orders are ready should enter one at a time to collect orders and make payment. Customers should pay by contactless wherever possible
- businesses should discourage crowding outside the premises. Where possible, use queue management systems to maintain the 2 metres separation.