

Food Businesses Guidance during the Covid-19 Outbreak

New Emergency legislation, The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on the 26 March 2020. These are required to prevent the further spread of Covid-19 (Coronavirus). Alongside these regulations many different guidance documents have also been published by different bodies. Because of the ever-changing nature of the outbreak and decisions made by the British Government the guidance and indeed Legislation has been changing at quite a pace.

We understand that this is an incredibly worrying and uncertain time for you as individuals and also for you as businesses, therefore we are looking to do everything we can to make the legal requirements put on you as easy to understand as possible

The above-mentioned Regulations states that restaurants, cafes, bars and Public Houses, during the emergency period, must:

- close any premises, or part of the premises, in which food or drink are sold for consumption on those premises, AND:
- cease selling food or drink for consumption on its premises.

However, the Government has announced a relaxation of planning rules to assist pubs and restaurants during the Coronavirus pandemic. For the next twelve months premises who were not able to previously, will now be able to operate as takeaways providing hot food and drink. Further information on relaxing planning rules can be found on the Gov.uk website [here](#).

If you wish to do this, you must inform our planning team by emailing them at: planning@northampton.gov.uk. You should include the name of your premises, full address, your contact details and the date you intend to start offering takeaways.

You can only do take away / delivery of alcohol if you are permitted to do so under your premises licence. Further advice on Licensing requirements can be obtained by contacting Northampton Borough Council's Licensing team via email at: licensing@northampton.gov.uk
Further information on the support and advice available to businesses, employers and employees is available on the Northampton Borough Council website

Food Hygiene Guidance for Food Businesses

As per your normal operation food should always be prepared hygienically to prevent cross contamination. The Food Standards Agency consider it very unlikely to transmit Coronavirus through food, however extra and vigilant hand hygiene should be employed during food preparation.

- Any food handler who is unwell should not be at work. If they have symptoms, they should follow government advice and stay at home.
- Employers should stress the importance of more frequent handwashing and maintaining good hygiene practices in food preparation and handling areas. Employees should wash their hands for 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.

- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products. Food businesses can refer to the Food Standards Agency's safer food, better business (SFBB) guidance for further guidance on expected food hygiene standards.
- You will need to update your food safety management system if any of your normal cooking processes have changed to provide delivered food, for example if you now cook – chill – reheat food to make food preparation quicker upon delivery, where before you used to just cook – serve. It's important to update your procedures on these changes to demonstrate you have considered any risks to food safety. Ensure any staff are made aware of these changes.
- Food delivery businesses must provide allergen information to customers when taking an order and upon delivery. This can be done verbally over the phone or in writing (through your website or a printed menu) when taking an order. You should have a statement on your website to advise customers where they can obtain allergen information before they place their order (For example: "Please speak to a member of staff if you have any food allergies"). Further information on the 14 major food allergens which must be declared can be found here: www.food.gov.uk. Takeaway meals should be labelled clearly so customers know which dishes are suitable for those with an allergy.
- For food safety and quality, you want to ensure food is delivered piping hot in sealed food-safe containers. You will need to consider how to do this. Insulated cool boxes / bags are a good way to keep the heat in food. Also deliver the food as quickly as possible after preparing.
- If delivering, consider leaving the food on the doorstep then messaging or phoning the customer to advise the food is there to ensure social distance is maintained.

The Food Standards Agency has published guidance for Takeaway and food delivery businesses which can found here: www.food.gov.uk

Social distancing – general guidance

The advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone. You need to minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of two metres between individuals. This advice applies to both inside the food business and in the external public areas where customers may need to queue. You must also think about how you undertake food deliveries if you are intending to do these. People should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds and more frequently than normal.

The practical implementation of this advice will depend on the local circumstances. This may be best evaluated by the food business manager, however a few general indicators may be relevant to the majority of retail outlets and situations:

- 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
- Use floor markings inside the commercial spaces to facilitate compliance with the social distancing advice of two metres, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving counters and tills.

- Use vertical signage to direct customers into lanes if feasible to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining two metre distance.
- Make regular announcements to remind customers to follow social distancing advice and clean their hands regularly.
- Place plexiglass barriers at tills and counters if feasible, as an additional element of protection for workers and customers.
- Encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers.
- Provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser.

Further information on [social distancing and adults who are at increased risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

Guidance for Food Businesses offering a collection service

No orders should be taken in person on the premises – this should be communicated to customers by appropriate means such as signage which is visible to customers outside your premises and on your website/social media pages

Businesses should therefore only take orders online or by telephone

- Customers could have staggered collections times – customers should be discouraged from entering the premises until their order is ready
- Customers arriving without having already placed an order should be encouraged to leave the premises to place their 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 payments
- Businesses should discourage crowding outside the premise. Where possible, use queue management systems to maintain the 2 metres separation. For example, you may wish to use floor markings (using tape or chalk) outside your premises to achieve a 2-metre separation between customers whilst queuing to collect their order.
- Where possible, payment should be taken over the phone to avoid handling cash upon delivery. If you do need to take a cash payment, ask the customer for exact change or consider re-pricing your dishes to minimise the need for change (eg £8.00 instead of £8.20). If you can, ensure your driver has some alcohol gel to clean their hands after handling money.

The above legislation is enforced by Environmental Health and is supported by the Police. As the Police are on patrol, they, or we, may visit your premises to check that you are following the appropriate guidance to assist in the prevention of the further spread of Covid-19 (Coronavirus).

What happens if I don't follow the legislation / guidance?

Our aim is to assist and work with you to prevent the further spread of Covid-19. As with our normal enforcement we have a staged approach to enforcement, this begins with education- which is this stage.

We appreciate the guidance may be confusing so if we do identify a breach of the above, we may offer further advice prior to taking enforcement action. If we are not satisfied that a Food Business is complying with the legislation, we have the following formal enforcement options available to us:

- **Prohibition Notice** – This is to stop with immediate effect a business carrying on or providing a service that contravenes the legislation. There is no appeal process of this notice.
- **Fixed Penalty Notice** – A FPN of £ 60.00 can be served alongside a prohibition notice, then two further FPN's can be served at £120.00 and up to £960.00 for contraventions.
- **Prosecution** – Continued or serious failure to comply with a prohibition notice, or failure to pay a FPN can lead to a prosecution and potentially unlimited fines.

More information and guidance on this and other aspects of keeping your premises safe are available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.cieh.org/media/4070/covid-19-food-delivery-and-takeaway-guidance.pdf>

All Government Covid-19 guidance is available at www.gov.uk/coronavirus