Food businesses are facing many challenges at this time and we wish to support you with as much guidance as we can.

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) are leading the UK government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

* You can get up to date information and guidance for the public on the risk from Coronavirus on the government’s website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
* If you employ people, the guidance for employers and business will help you and your workers prevent the spread of COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>
* Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#maintaining-social-distancing-in-specific-food-business-settings>

**Closure of Food Businesses**

**You will be aware the closure of food businesses and other businesses is now in place**.

**The government has strongly advised the public to only make essential visits outside of the home.**

**Takeaway / Delivery Service**

**If you are thinking of offering an alternative food service to customers, you may only offer a delivery or takeaway service.** Contact Environmental Heath on env.health@north-herts.gov.uk to ensure that you receive the necessary permission.

**Takeaways and restaurants offering a pick-up service**

For these services:

* no orders should be taken in person on the premises - this should be communicated to customers by appropriate means such as signage
* businesses should therefore only take orders online or by telephone
* payment can also be made via telephone or using online platforms
* customers can have staggered collection 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 by debit/credit card; avoid handling cash
* businesses should discourage crowding outside the premises; where possible, use queue management systems to maintain the 2 metres separation; do not allow customers to eat food inside or outside your premise.

You must revise your food safety management system to have safe procedures in place for this activity.

**Delivery Vehicles and Drivers**

Take payment in advance over the telephone or online.

It is necessary that the driver employed is insured for business purposes and has a vehicle or motorbike that is fully taxed and MOT certified. If deliveries are done by bicycle, it must be roadworthy and the appropriate helmet and high visibility clothing provided and worn by the rider. If using an external provider, make sure they too are reputable.

* Sale of hot food and hot drink is not licensable except between 11pm and 5am.
* All foods for customer take-away and/or delivery must be stored in suitable food grade containers, e.g. polystyrene, foil and plastic with lids
* These containers must be clean and stored hygienically
* It is not good practice to allow a food handler to touch the inner surface of the food container before any food is added
* For hot food deliveries, use an insulated bag to help retain heat
* For cold food deliveries use a cool box or bag with ice blocks or packs
* If using a storage box fixed to the back of a motorbike, the inside surface still needs to be kept clean and not come into direct contact with the outer surfaces of the food delivery containers e.g. place the containers into a paper or plastic food bag first
* To ensure safety, remove the food delivery and leave on the door step of the customer
* Ensure delivery personnel have both anti-bacterial spray and gel with them on all deliveries
* Limit the radius of delivery to 2-3 miles maximum so that foods can be delivered from final point of cooking and packing to final point of destination for consumption so that foods are still hot for the consumer to eat.

The food business operator must:

**At the premise**:

* Ensure food handlers are trained in food hygiene
* On arrival at the premise, wash hands in a separate hand wash basin with running hot and cold water, liquid anti-bactericidal soap; dry hands with disposable paper towels; and turn off taps with disposable paper towels
* Change into clean laundered overclothing every time on entering the premise
* Ensure handwashing every time staff enter the kitchen and throughout food handling and preparation activities
* Everyone to maintain a 2 metre separation distance
* Ensure all raw and ready to eat foods are kept separate during storage, preparation, service and delivery
* Use separate equipment, overclothing and utensils for raw and ready to eat foods
* Clean and disinfect food preparation surfaces with a disinfectant or sanitiser compliant with British Standard BS-EN 1276 or 13967; use disposable single use cloths and also pay close attention to all hand touch points including taps, fridge handles, till points, credit/debit card readers, telephones, door handles, etc. Clean and disinfect throughout the day
* Cleaning in non-healthcare settings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
* Keep high risk foods chilled below 8OC in a fridge, suitably covered and monitor the temperature throughout the trading day
* Cook foods to 75OC or above
* Hot held foods must be kept above 63OC

Temperature control is critical to prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria in food. Monitoring is needed throughout the day using e.g. a digital probe thermometer. All monitoring checks should be recorded and records kept available for inspection.

**Food Allergens**

All food handlers and service staff need to know how to deal with allergen enquiries from customers.

If someone asks if a menu item contains a certain food / allergen, check **all** the ingredients (and what they contain), as well as what you use to prepare or cook the item. Always read labels and other information. Never guess.

If you are unsure what allergens the dish contains, tell the customer you cannot take their order. Refer to the Food Standards Agency for more information [www.food.gov.uk/allergy](http://www.food.gov.uk/allergy)

**Illness**

Food handlers, service staff and delivery personnel must not work if they have any symptoms of illness that will compromise food safety or cause the spread of infection.

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, **continuous cough or a high temperature**, they should be sent home and advised to follow current NHS advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Remind employees to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues which should be binned.

**Health & Safety**

The health, safety and welfare of you, your staff and visitors is paramount at this very difficult time, like the provision of access to welfare facilities, maintaining a safe distance of 2 metres, hand washing measures and the provision of personal protective equipment where it is needed.

You will need to consider all aspects as part of your business risk assessment and take steps to ensure your workplace is a safe environment at which to work.

For general advice please refer to Health and Safety Executive [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

For further guidance, contact Environmental Health:

T: 01462474331

E: [env.health@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@north-herts.gov.uk)