

Food safety

Policy

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Introduction

All youth work organisations, regardless of the extent to which they prepare or supply food, should consider and apply principles of good food hygiene and safety. Some organisations may qualify as a 'food business' and be subject to the regulations of the food industry (see section below for more details), but all organisations should be mindful of hygiene and safety principles as part of their general health & safety responsibilities.

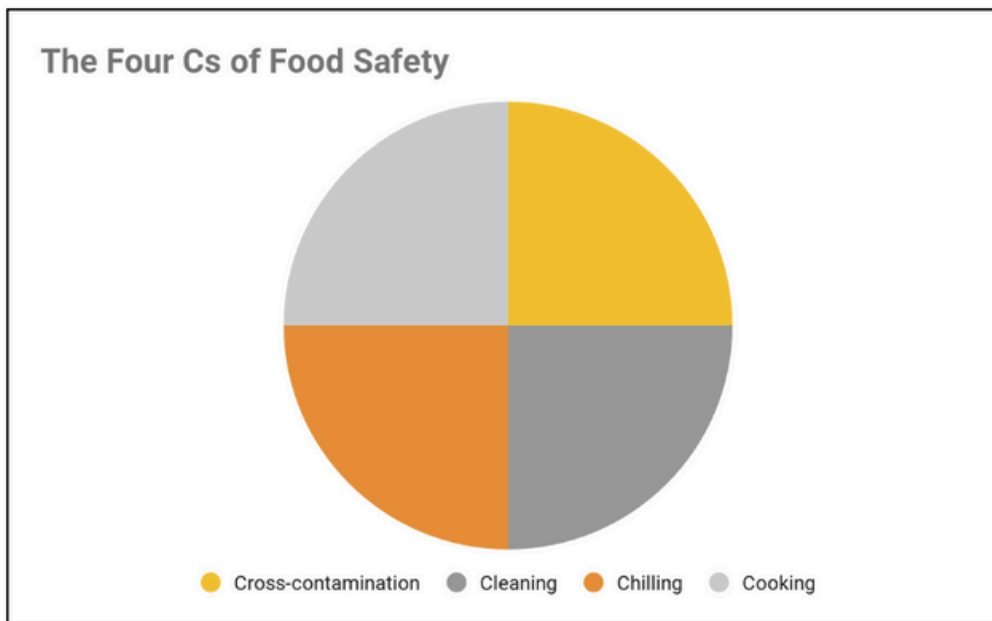
Where food provision is outsourced to a third party such as a specialist caterer or accommodation provider, youth work organisations should ensure they have accessed the provider's standards and ability to meet the needs of the group (further information is included in the [External Providers](#) resource) and have liaised effectively with the provider regarding any dietary requirements, intolerances and allergies.

Self-catering provision introduces further considerations including the involvement of young people which may present a valuable learning opportunity. The principles and guidance below should be considered, many of which can be effectively managed by sensible menu choices and appropriate training/briefings for workers and young people as applicable.

The Four Cs of Food Safety

In order to achieve good food hygiene it is important to control the safety of food and water, which can cause serious illness or injury.

There are four primary considerations: Cross-contamination; Cleaning; Chilling; & Cooking which are commonly known as the four Cs.



If these four elements are managed correctly it will help to prevent the most common food safety issues.

The following table provides guiding principles pertaining to each of these four areas which should be followed as applicable for any level of food handling or provision.

Cross-Contamination

Allergies

It is very important that all allergens are safely managed to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis:

- Dietary requirements and allergies for all persons should be known and made available to all food handlers
- Check with the individual(s) to understand the specifics of their allergy in advance. This may need input from parent carers depending on the age and any other additional needs of the young person.
- Food handlers should understand which food stuffs can cause a problem including: nuts; eggs; milk; fish and seafood; wheat & gluten; celery; seeds including sesame & lupin; mustard; soya. Further information can be found on the [Food Standards Agency website](#). Food handlers must not consider such requirements as trivial or even 'lifestyle choices'.
- Food should be clearly labelled and food handlers should understand the ingredients in any pre or ready-made foods such as sauces, dressings or oils. Caution should be taken when repackaging or preparing food items that don't have the original ingredients displayed.
- Care and procedures should be taken to ensure there is no cross contamination when preparing food for individuals with an allergy; ensure thorough cleaning and handwashing; use a separate work surface and equipment
- If a mistake is made when preparing food for an individual with a food allergy, do not just remove the ingredient containing the allergen and still serve the food - start from scratch with fresh ingredients

Unlike bacteria, allergens are always present in the food and cannot be removed or destroyed by cooking.

Cross-Contamination

Food preparation and cooking

- During food preparation it is essential to maintain separation between raw and ready to eat foods. If possible, different work surfaces and equipment should be utilised or use the same area at a different time provided there is thorough cleaning before a different food is prepared.
- Cross contamination procedures should be in place to protect food whilst it is being handled, which may include the use of different coloured chopping boards, knives and equipment for raw and ready to eat foods

Natasha's Law

'Natasha's Law' came into effect in October 2021, following the tragic death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse, the teenager who died after suffering an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger baguette. The law requires food businesses to include full ingredient details on prepacked food for sale and is designed to protect individuals with allergies and give them greater confidence when purchasing foods.

Natasha's Law is unlikely to apply to youth work organisations unless the organisation also qualifies as a 'food business'. Organisations are encouraged to visit the [Food Standards Agency website](#) (see below) for further information or to contact FSA directly for further clarity on whether Natasha's Law applies.

Regardless, youth work organisations are encouraged to consider the purpose of Natasha's Law and apply the guiding principles in ensuring that they are absolutely clear about all the ingredients contained in the food they're serving, and in communicating those ingredients to all consumers, particularly those with known allergies.

Cleaning

Cleaning & disinfection:

Cleaning is the process used for removing grease, dirt and visible soiling. Disinfection is a further stage of the cleaning process using suitable chemicals to reduce the risk of food being contaminated by harmful bacteria:

- All chemicals used should be designed for use in food premises, should be clearly labelled and stored in a separate area from food to prevent contamination
- Food equipment & utensils should be washed in hot water with appropriate food safe detergent after use
- Utensils (i.e. knives) must be thoroughly cleaned as above after use with raw meats before being used with other foodstuffs
- Work surfaces should be smooth, impervious, durable, suitable for their intended use and kept clean

Refuse & pest control

Rodents, insects, and flies can contaminate food with harmful bacteria and should be prevented from entering food premises and preparation areas:

- Food premises and refuse areas should be kept clean and contained to prevent access by rodents
- Where possible, food should be stored off the floor and kept away from the walls
- As far as practicable, drains should be kept clean and in good condition
- Where applicable there should be a pest control programme for the buildings, grounds and food handling areas, which should include regular surveys & reporting of pest damage or sightings
- Any infestations should be dealt with immediately utilising a pest control expert
- Food waste and refuse should not be allowed to accumulate in food areas and adequate provision should be made for its removal

Cleaning

Procurement, sourcing and delivery

- Food should be sourced from reputable and known supermarkets and/or wholesale suppliers
- Where relevant, deliveries should be checked for freshness, temperature, colour, odour, contamination, infestations and satisfactory packaging and labelling, and should not be accepted if applicable
- Where relevant, the delivery reception area should be kept clean, free from waste materials and any risk of infestation and contamination
- Containers used for the receipt, storage or distribution of goods should be kept clean and dry

Food preparation and cooking

- Work surfaces and equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use and between use for different foods
- Cleaning cloths used on work surfaces or equipment in contact with raw food should be a distinct colour and never used on ready to eat work surfaces and equipment
- When defrosting, foods should be protected from contamination; thawed liquids should be prevented from contaminating other food or preparation areas; checks should be made to ensure the food is thoroughly defrosted throughout; the temperature of the food should not exceed 80C; date and time of removal from the freezer should be noted

Food handlers & personal hygiene

Food handlers are those who are involved in the storage, preparation, processing or serving of food. They may be workers, volunteers or even young people themselves. Food handlers may bring bacteria and viruses that can cause food poisoning into the food area and therefore it is important for workers to be aware of any illness so that appropriate actions can be taken.

- Food handlers should maintain appropriate standards of personal hygiene
- Any person suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea or other illnesses that could be transferred through food should not be permitted to work in any food handling areas.
- There should be a suitable and sufficient supply of first aid equipment available for the use by food handlers in an accessible location.
- Any cuts or abrasions should be covered with (ideally a) brightly coloured waterproof dressing so as to be clearly visible if accidentally dropped into food.
- Food handlers must frequently wash their hands with soap and warm water particularly between preparing raw and ready to eat foods, and should be aware of the importance of regular hand washing
- Workers and young people should regularly be encouraged to wash their hands; hand washing facilities should be available with hand basins separate from food preparation sinks where possible
- Hand washing facilities should be supplied with hot and cold water, soap and disposable paper towels or hot air hand drying facilities where possible
- Food handlers should wear a hat or net and long hair should be tied back to minimise the risk of hair falling into food and reduce the likelihood of food handlers touching their hair whilst handling food
- Watches and jewellery (except plain wedding bands) should be removed
- Nails should be short and clean - false nails should not be worn
- Food handlers should wear clothing which is suitable, clean and protective. Workers who have been involved in other activities prior to preparing or cooking food should consider changing their clothes and/or wearing an apron.

Chilling

Food storage

Food stock should be kept to a minimum and should be stored to prevent deterioration, contamination or cross contamination:

- Manufacturer's instructions regarding storage should be followed
- Where not available or where food has been removed from packaging, the caterer should determine the shelf life and label the product accordingly - labels should include a product description, produced/opened date & best before or use by date
- Spoiled, rejected or out of date food should be separated and identified to prevent accidental use
- Rooms and equipment for storage of dry products should be:
 - Kept clean, dry & free from pests
 - Kept cool and well ventilated (either natural or assisted)
 - Lit well enough to be able to see dirt or pest infestation
- Where possible, products should be stored off the floor and away from walls, on racking or mobile units and should be able to be checked easily
- The correct use of cold storage should be maintained at all times to prevent bacterial growth. The lids and doors of refrigerators and freezers should have effective seals. Refrigerators should be capable of maintaining food temperatures between 0oC (32oF) and 8oC (46oF). Frozen products should be stored at -18oC (0oF) or below
- Keep raw and ready to eat foods separate, preferably in separate refrigerator or freezer units. If separate units are not available:
 - Store raw (including meat) and ready to eat foods on separate shelves
 - Raw (including meat) food shelves should be clearly marked and always located below ready to eat food shelves
- All frozen and refrigerated foods should be stored in clean food grade containers to prevent cross contamination and preserve the quality of the foods
- All foods which have gone beyond the 'use by' date displayed on the packaging should not be consumed

Procurement, sourcing and delivery

- Chilled & frozen goods should not be accepted if the food temperature is above 8oC (46oF) or -18oC (0oF) respectively
- Where relevant, deliveries of frozen or chilled goods should be placed in the appropriate storage within 15 minutes of delivery

Food preparation

- When defrosting, foods should be protected from contamination; thawed liquids should be prevented from contaminating other food or preparation areas; checks should be made to ensure the food is thoroughly defrosted throughout; the temperature of the food should not exceed 8oC; date and time of removal from the freezer should be noted

Cooking

Cooking

- Food should be cooked at the right temperature and for the correct length of time to ensure that any harmful bacteria are killed. Advice and cooking instructions on food packaging should be followed. Standard advice is to cook food until it has reached 70°C throughout and stayed at that temperature for at least 2 minutes.
- Wherever possible food should be cooked and served without undue delay
- Cooked food items not for immediate service, or those to be served cold should be cooled to less than 10°C (51°F) as quickly as possible (within 4 hours) and kept refrigerated; cooked food should be decanted into cold storage containers; where appropriate bulk foods should be sliced or portioned to assist the cooling process; areas suitable for the cooling of food should be designated
- Food should only be reheated once and should ensure that the centre of the food reaches at least 75°C
- Further advice regarding cooking including how temperature and time kill bacteria can be found on the [Food Standards Agency website](#)

Use of equipment

This includes all of the equipment, furnishings and fittings used in the storage, preparation or processing of food:

- All equipment must be maintained in good condition and full working order and maintenance/repairs should not be carried out in areas whilst food is being prepared or displayed

Further principles of good hygiene and food safety

a. Food premises

All areas where food is stored, prepared or processed can be considered as a 'food premises' and will normally be a kitchen or other area that is different to sleeping accommodation or areas where other activity and occurs:

- The size of the food premises should be appropriate for the volume of food being processed/prepared. The layout should ensure that food can be moved in a sequence from receipt, through preparation, processing, cooking and to serving in order to minimise the risk of cross contamination
- Floors, walls and ceilings should be in a good state of repair and kept clean
- Floors should be smooth, non-slip, & impervious
- Lighting should be sufficient to allow safe food handling, effective cleaning and the monitoring of cleaning standards
- Ventilation should be sufficient to remove heat and cooking fumes from the food premises. Ventilation units should be kept in a clean condition
- Drainage should be sufficient to carry away the waste and should be protected to prevent the entry of pests. All drainage channels should be kept clean
- Ideally, provision for hand washing, food washing and equipment washing facilities will be kept separate
- All sinks regardless of their use should have an adequate supply of hot and cold running water of drinking quality for washing food
- Hand washing facilities should also be supplied with anti-bacterial soap and disposable paper towels or hot air hand drying

b. Kitchen fire safety

Please see the [Fire Safety guidance](#) on The Hub.

c. Preparation and cooking of food by young people

Cooking can be a great activity for young people to participate in and there are many developmental outcomes that could be considered as part of youth programme activity. It should however be properly planned in advance since it can involve elements of health and safety risk that many young people are unfamiliar with.

Where food is prepared and/or cooked by young people themselves, the principles set out above apply where appropriate. Young people should be briefed on food safety and personal hygiene before preparing food and should be supervised appropriately to ensure standards are met.

d. Kitchen knife safety

Youth organisations should ensure that the use of knives is covered under their [risk assessment](#) and look to establish protocols for the management of sharp knives in advance of any youth programme.

Where possible, sharp knives should be removed from any kitchens that may be used by young people prior to arrival, with workers managing an issue and return system of knives at cooking/meal times only. Access to sharp knives at all other times should be restricted and controlled. At venues where this is not possible, for example in communal kitchens that may be used by other groups or members of the public, young people should be directly supervised.

Young people should be [supervised](#) as far as is practicable whenever possible when using or in possession of sharp knives. Knives should be kept in good condition and blades should be kept sharp. Accidents are more likely to happen with blunt blades due to excessive force being applied.

e. Food safety whilst camping

The nature of camping means that many of the principles highlighted above, such as personal hygiene, cross contamination and storage conditions, may be harder to manage. Principles however should be applied as far as practicable and be considered in the planning stage. Many of the hazards associated with indoor catering can be minimised through food choice. For example, by selecting foods without allergens and/or that do not require refrigeration, and by avoiding food such as meats which present a higher bacterial risk if not cooked sufficiently.

See the Fire Safety information contained within The Hub for more information regarding cooking safely and carbon monoxide risk?

Regulations and compliance

There are a number of regulations in the food industry that must be followed by organisations to ensure that both consumers and employers are as safe as possible. The [Food Safety Act 1990](#) provides the framework for all food legislation in England, Wales & Scotland, and means that everyone who handles or prepares food for public consumption is responsible for food hygiene and safety. The Act is there to set the standards for the safe handling and preparation of food to avoid the incidence of food poisoning, through raising awareness and promoting good practice, specifically through training for food handlers and registration of premises.

The Food Standards Agency states via the Food Safety Act 1990 that all 'food businesses' must register their business with their local authority. Further information and guidance regarding registration and what constitutes a 'food business' can be found on the [Food Standards Agency website](#).

Youth organisations should consider whether they qualify as a 'food business' and need to register based on their own specific circumstances, and with awareness of the regulations. If unsure, youth organisations may decide to consult with their local authority Environmental Health Officer for further advice and guidance.

Where registration is deemed necessary, youth organisations should ensure they register in advance of provisioning. Where organisations decide that registration is not applicable, they should document and record the justification for their decision.

Worker training, information & supervision

In the UK, food handlers don't need to hold a food hygiene certificate to prepare or sell food. However, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) states that food business operators must ensure that food handlers receive the appropriate supervision and training in food hygiene. Therefore it is important that youth organisations ensure that workers practice good personal hygiene and understand basic food safety principles as a minimum. This may be covered by internal training and briefing.

There are a number of recognised training courses available online which may be appropriate for workers to undertake. The FSA offers free [e-learning courses](#) via their website. When considering online courses for workers, youth organisations should ensure that content is, as far as possible, appropriate for each staff role and that courses are RoSPA approved and would be accepted by the local authority / Environmental Health Officer.

The FSA provides further detailed information and guidance on their website including free [Safer food, better business \(SFBB\)](#) information packs which, whilst written for businesses may provide useful reference information for youth organisations.