



Reopening a food business after the Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown

Guidance

The Government's current COVID-19 planning assumption is that food service providers will open no earlier than 4 July 2020, subject to premises being able to meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines.

Some venues which are, by design, crowded and where it may prove difficult to enact distancing may still not be able to reopen safely at this point, or may be able to open safely only in part.

The purpose of this guidance is to offer direction and provide a framework for best practices as you plan to reopen your premises.

Before using this guidance it is important for all food business operators to assess the extent to which their existing Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS), health and safety procedures and infection prevention and control measures will mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19.

In line with wider Government advice, you should make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19, using the Government social distancing guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. You should consider how this impacts on existing food safety management systems.

The following guidance will support food business operators in identifying where there is a need to strengthen existing controls, and areas where you will need to implement any of the additional measures outlined in this guidance before reopening your premises

You should continue to [visit GOV.UK for the most recent advice and information](https://www.gov.uk) regarding COVID-19.

Steps to take prior to reopening

Maintenance and inspection

Machinery or pieces of equipment that have been idle may need to be inspected and tested to ensure that they are capable of normal function. If your inspection certificate for any

equipment has expired during closure, you will need to have it re-inspected before it can be brought back into use.

Metal detection and temperature probe equipment may need recalibration in line with the manufacturer's instructions and your FSMS Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. Computer systems, date coding and ingredients labelling may need to be updated.

Reviewing your Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS)

Food businesses should review, and where necessary, update FSMS and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) processes, where new services will be implemented in response to COVID-19.

Existing food businesses which intend to start delivering food orders need to consider any new or different risks posed by this change in operation. You should adapt your FSMS to make sure food placed on the market remains safe to eat.

If you're intending to start a takeaway / food delivery service, you will need to consider hygiene requirements, delivery vehicle specifications, allergen guidance, temperature control and contact-free deliveries.

[Get further advice on takeaway food and deliveries.](#)

If your suppliers or ingredients have changed, or you are changing any items on your menu, you will need to review your allergen management and labelling in line with your FSMS.

Additional resources

[View the Food Standard Agency \(FSA\) food delivery guidance.](#)

[View the CIEH delivery and takeaway guidance.](#)

Implementing effective cleaning and disinfection

A thorough deep clean (and disinfection) of your premises must be carried out before you consider re-opening to the general public. This should entail a two stage cleaning procedure including the following measures.

Businesses should continue to apply their existing cleaning and disinfection regimes for controlling microbiological hazards in food.

Consideration should be given to the need for additional disinfection measures using methods known to be effective against viruses. Household bleach and other potent oxidisers can be effective for up to 24 hours. Available chlorine (ppm av.cl.), followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.) or products bearing the EN 14476:2019 standard and tested for efficacy against enveloped viruses would be recommended. Always follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for detergent and disinfectant products or use pre-mixed sanitiser sprays, which conform to British Standards.

A two stage cleaning process should be adopted. Firstly, remove physical debris with hot water and detergent, which will also prevent the virus from binding, followed by disinfecting with a suitable sanitiser, which complies with BS14476. Make sure when using two products that the first doesn't prevent the disinfectant from working effectively.

Any chemicals used in food establishments to clean and disinfect food contact surfaces and equipment must be approved as food safe. A directory of disinfectants is available for reference, but you should always check the label, and where necessary check with the manufacturer to ensure suitability.

[View directory of disinfectants.](#)

Any items that are used for cleaning, which cannot be cleaned by washing, should be disposed of.

Further guidance on cleaning and disinfection in non-healthcare settings:

[View GOV.UK decontamination in non-healthcare settings guidance.](#)

[View ECDC guidance for environmental cleaning in non-healthcare facilities.](#)

[View SOFHT guide to cleaning and disinfection.](#)

Stock checks

Before reopening, it is important that all food stock is checked to ensure food is fit for consumption and any out of date food is disposed of:

- High risk foods should be discarded if daily temperature monitoring has ceased due to closure. Daily checks should be made on short-life perishable food stored in refrigerators and weekly examinations of other foods. Stock that is undisturbed for long periods will encourage pest infestations.
- Use by and best before dates should be checked on all open **AND** unopened food products. Any food passed its use by or best before date must be disposed of.
- The use-by date is the date until which the manufacturer of the food guarantees it is safe to eat. Food sold beyond its use-by date may be of poor quality or unfit. It is an offence to sell, or expose for sale, food with an expired use by date.
- Selling old stock cheaply is not recommended and it is an offence to sell foods bearing an expired 'use-by' date.
- If due to business closure, you decided to freeze products you would normally store differently, you should check labelling. You should ensure that you are able to use the food safely, taking into account product durability once defrosted and allergen management.
- Damaged stock should be thoroughly examined before use. If there is any doubt regarding the fitness of food, it should be discarded.
- You should not use ingredients or raw materials where the integrity of packaging has been compromised or where temperature logging and alarm systems indicate that food safety may have been affected.
- Review your stock rotation procedures, to ensure that older food is used first to avoid spoilage.

- While food packaging is not known to present a specific risk of spreading COVID-19, efforts should be made to ensure it is cleaned and handled in line with usual food safety practices.
- If your suppliers or ingredients have changed, you will need to review your allergen management and labelling in line with your FSMS.

Disposal of waste

Waste generated from cleaning (including disposable cloths and tissues), plus all general waste should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full, placed in a second bin bag, tied and put in a suitable and secure refuse container until collection.

Any cleaning cloths/materials used following the onset of symptoms should be put to one side, kept securely away from staff and the public and left for 72 hours before being placed in the bin for collection.

Disinfect bin lids and handles on a regular basis to minimise the potential spread of the virus. Implement a cleaning schedule to ensure that refuse containers are frequently cleaned and disinfected.

You will need to inform your waste collection company that your premises is reopening, so that waste collection services can resume as normal.

Pest control

Rodent activity may go undetected in closed businesses. It is important that premises are thoroughly inspected prior to reopening in order to identify and eradicate pest activity that may have occurred during closure.

Perishable food and general waste should have been disposed of prior to closing your premises, to ensure that you do not get any pest infestations or odour issues.

If food has been left on site, it is possible that rodents or insects will have exploited this, and you could be susceptible to a surge in pest activity. With a change of habits and circumstances in general during the lockdown period, there may be changes in pest activity in the vicinity of your premises, leaving you further susceptible to a pest infestation as business activities resume.

If you find evidence of pest activity, appropriate treatment methods must be used to eliminate pests. We would strongly recommend that you set up a contract with a reputable pest control company, if you haven't already done so.

Further advice regarding what to look for in advance of reopening, the typical proofing, hygiene and pest activity advice is available in the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) publication.

[View CIEH pest control procedure for the food industry.](#)

Legionella

It is very important that, during this pandemic, you manage and keep all water systems safe whilst closed or during partial shutdowns for the future health and safety of guests, visitors and staff. This will impact on how soon you can open your facilities without causing harm to health.

A water supply may deteriorate when left stagnant in storage tanks and pipework. Deterioration may well be significantly exacerbated following prolonged shutdown, and may present serious and unaccounted for risks to health.

Closure of buildings, parts of buildings or their restricted use, can increase the risk of Legionella growth in water systems and associated equipment, where water has been left stagnant.

All equipment with water connections must be purged of any standing water for at least 2 minutes and all water lines must be flushed for precaution.

In most routine circumstances, water supplies to smaller public, commercial and retail buildings and other premises should, as a minimum, have progressive flushing of storage tanks and pipework to introduce fresh water into the system before consumer access.

Hot water systems will need to be raised to a temperature of greater than 60°C, and full system disinfection may be required in some circumstances to achieve 50mg/L free chlorine.

A full system disinfection of your cold-water system should also be carried out prior to re-opening. Building managers should seek advice where necessary from 'WaterSafe' scheme approved plumbers, or in more complex situations, from an experienced and competent professional, who can determine new, changed, or previously unaccounted for risks and provide advice on how to mitigate them.

[View HSE legionella risks during Coronavirus guidance.](#)

Steps to take once open

General hygiene

Employers should stress the importance of more frequent handwashing and maintaining good hygiene practices in food preparation and handling areas by:

- Reminding employees to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently (every 30 to 60 minutes) and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues.
- Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products.
- Reminding all staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 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 the advice to stay at home.
- Reminding employees and customers of the Government's public health advice by displaying posters, leaflets and other materials.

[View Government public health printed resources.](#)

You should be using the right handwashing techniques.

[View NHS advice for handwashing.](#)

Routine cleaning and disinfection

Businesses should continue to apply their existing cleaning and disinfection regimes. However, all 'higher risk' surfaces that people come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected more frequently. Your cleaning schedule should be revised to incorporate the following guidance:

- Key touch points to be cleaned and disinfected regularly (at least every two hours). This includes surfaces touched most frequently, such as switches, door handles, grab-rails in corridors, stairwells, keypads, card machines, etc.
- Devise and implement cleaning schedules at workstations, including telephones and card readers, and ensure all public areas are cleaned down regularly, every two hours where possible.
- Ensure that all surfaces in any communal areas, for example changing areas, clocking in points, WCs, kitchens, food preparation surfaces, bin lids, staff room/break facilities and surfaces, plus objects, e.g. tills, telephones, serving counters, computer keyboard/mouse are cleaned and disinfected between different groups of staff occupying these spaces.
- Paper towels/paper roll should be used in place of shared hand towels for hand washing, paper roll should be used to clean surfaces, rather than re-usable cloths and disposable mop heads to clean floors.
- Any cloths and mop heads used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags.
- When carrying out cleaning, wear gloves and aprons if possible, which can then be disposed of afterwards.

Social distancing

Businesses must continue to implement social distancing precautions, both inside the food business and in the external public areas where customers may need to queue.

The following measures must be implemented:

- Continue to regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded.
- Use additional signage to ask customers not to enter if they have symptoms.
- Use floor markings to facilitate compliance with the social distancing advice of two metres.
- Review and revise the layout of your premises to ensure the two metre rule is adhered to, by staff and customers.
- Consider removing some tables to promote social distancing for a period of time until Government guidance is updated.
- Encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers.
- Stagger reservations and collection times to discourage crowding both inside and outside the premises.

- It is also important that you take measures to increase the distance between employees or segregate them whilst working on the line. (For example by reducing line speed, introducing shift patterns, constructing panels between workers etc.)

Infection control for employees

As a business owner and/or manager, you are responsible for ensuring that food handlers are fit for work under the food hygiene regulations. You also have a general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of your employees and members of the public. You should therefore consider the following:

- Increase hand hygiene measures and sanitising of touch points to every 30 to 60 minutes.
- Provide protective gloves and masks for key roles (this is especially important for cleaners and food handlers).
- If possible, provide hand sanitiser and tissues for staff and encourage them to use them.
- Ask staff not to travel to or from work in work uniform/ safety shoes. It is recommended staff change when they arrive, and before leaving work.
- Remind staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Allocate items/tasks such as tills/telephone answering, etc., to an individual member of staff where possible or clean and disinfect the item between uses/staff changeover.
- Taking employees' temperatures is at the discretion of the food business operator. Guidance states the minimum temperature that indicates a fever is 37°C.
- If you are undertaking deliveries, you must consider a delivery infection control system which allows your customers to notify the restaurant and/or delivery drivers whether they are self-isolating.
- Your employees must be provided with clear instructions on your business's infection control policy.
- Staff must be aware of the process for reporting of illnesses. A written sickness procedure or policy should be provided or written instructions on how to notify their manager or supervisor if they are suffering from, or believe they may be a carrier of any food borne disease or infection.
- Where possible, develop and deliver a COVID-19 specific training programme, which all team members must complete before they come back to work.
- Key safety points include being fit for work, washing hands and wearing aprons or other clean clothing as appropriate. The **FSA Safe Method** checklist allows employers to assess the personal hygiene and fitness to work practices in their workplace.

[View FSA Safe Method checklist.](#)

- Please read Government advice on guidance for employees, employers and businesses in providing advice about Coronavirus (COVID-19).

[View Government guidance for employees, employers and businesses.](#)

PPE

Standard Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must continue to be worn as required, in line with the existing health and safety and first aid requirements of the food business.

The use of additional PPE specifically for COVID-19 should only be required in settings where there is a higher level of contamination risk through respiratory secretions from potentially infected individuals, such as healthcare.

- **Gloves:** The wearing of gloves by personnel handling food is not a legal requirement. The best way in which food handlers can maintain good personal hygiene is by frequently washing their hands. Gloves can be used as an aid to good food hygiene practice but should not be considered a substitute for a thorough regime of effective hand washing. If gloves are used, they should be changed as often as you would wash hands and you must wash your hands when changing or removing gloves. Gloves must be changed after carrying out non-food related activities, such as opening and closing doors by hand, handling money and emptying bins.
- **Face masks:** If you intend to provide face masks to protect high-risk foods, or where workers are exposed to airborne risks, you should continue to follow your current policies on the use of masks. Where your staff choose to wear face coverings either to travel to work or in the work place, you should put procedures in place for hygienic use, handling and storage or disposal of face coverings. Inappropriate use and handling could present a risk to food hygiene and safety.

Contact us

For further advice or enquiries, please contact our Environmental Health team.

Email: environmental.health@woking.gov.uk

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Appendix 1: Reopening check list

Task	Essential / Desirable	Complete [✓]
Building checks		
Check for indications of gas leakage. If you smell gas, notify the local utility and fire brigade .	E	
Check that your water is on and your hot water is running through.	E	
To remove potential Legionella growth in water systems and associated equipment run all taps in the premises for two minutes to remove standing water.	E	
Carry out pest checks and review your pest control procedures.	E	
Check all electrical equipment is working to ensure all is safe.	E	
Check all fire alarms are working and there's no fault showing on the fire alarm system.	E	
Check expiry dates of inspection certificates for any equipment or facilities.	E	
Implement effective cleaning and disinfection of your premises.	E	
Place tape / markers every two metres to ensure staff & customers maintain social distancing.	E	
Revise layout (including removing tables) to ensure social distancing can be adhered to.	E	
Check the car park is free from litter, maintenance and health and safety issues.	E	
Check that all external bins can be fully closed and are in good repair. Re-instate waste collection arrangements as necessary and ensure regular emptying.	E	
Stock checks		
Carry out stock check and review stock rotation processes.	E	
Discard any food that has expired (use by and best before dates) or is past its durability.	E	
Ensure food packaging has not been damaged by pests, is cleaned and handled in line with usual food safety practices.	E	
Ensure you have sufficient stock of cleaning products, sanitiser and hand soap.	E	
Management		
Read the latest Government guidance on COVID-19.	E	
Ensure the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19.	E	

Review and update your Food Safety Management System (FSMS).	E	
Any changes to usual operations (such as new menus/ delivery service) should be reflected in the above.	E	
Implement a new cleaning and disinfection regime, including compulsory handwashing.	E	
Implement social distancing precautions for staff and customers.	E	
Update your business's infection control policy.	D	
Implement a written sickness procedure & circulate to all staff .	E	
Develop and deliver a COVID-19 specific training programme for staff returning to work.	D	
Display posters, leaflets and other materials of Government advice.	D	
Provide PPE to staff carrying out cleaning duties, ideally a minimum of gloves and face masks.	D	
If possible, increase the number of hand washing stations available.	D	
Provide hand sanitiser and tissues for staff and encourage them to use them.	D	
Additional measures		
Clean and sanitise reusable menus. If you use paper menus, discard them after each customer use.	D	
Update floor plans for dining areas, redesigning seating arrangements to ensure at least six feet of separation between table setups.	E	
Limit party size at tables to no more than the established 'maximums approved' as per Government guidance.	E	
Consider a reservations-only business model, so that diners can be adequately spaced.	E	
Limit contact between staff and guests and consider requiring staff to wear face coverings.	D	

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Appendix 2: Template risk assessment

This template has been developed to help businesses implement the Government COVID-secure guidelines. It is aimed at smaller, lower risk businesses, enforced for health and safety by local authorities and who don't have dedicated health and safety advice.

Currently the guidance consists of five key points.

[View GOV.UK guidance to help businesses get back to work.](#)

There is also eight workplace guides to review.

[View GOV.UK workplace guides.](#)

Nothing in this document should add or take away from the guidance, and you don't have to use this template to complete your risk assessment. We have created this to help businesses go through the risk assessment process and document their findings. It can be freely copied and used but it is best completed on the computer as the boxes expand.

We take no responsibility for your risk assessment, but we hope this is helpful in getting back to work safely.

Next steps:

- Think about your procedure for dealing with actual cases of COVID-19 sickness.
- Complete the five boxes – the basic risk assessment.
- Additional steps from guidance – what specific measures apply to your workplace type.
- Implement all the measures and check they work.
- Save or upload risk assessment to website, print out notice, sign and display.

Business name and address:

Person carrying out risk assessment:

Signed and dated (when completed):

Firstly, be clear on your COVID-19 sickness procedure

What arrangements for sending people home if an employee or customer is displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

Any further cleaning or other actions that you would take to if this happens?

What will you do if an employee informs you that members of his/her household are displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

Secondly, complete the five boxes

1. Work from home, if you can

“All reasonable steps should be taken by employers to help people work from home. But for those who cannot work from home and whose workplace has not been told to close, our message is clear: you should go to work. Staff should speak to their employer about when their workplace will open”.

Which employees can work from home?

If your workplace has not been told to close, when do you plan to open?

How have you communicated with staff about this?

2. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with workers or trade unions

“This guidance operates within current health and safety employment and equalities legislation and employers will need to carry out COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their workers or trade unions, to establish what guidelines to put in place. If possible, employers should publish the results of their risk assessments on their website and we expect all businesses with over 50 employees to do so”.

What consultation with workers or trade unions will you do?

Will you publish the results of your risk assessment on your website?

3. Maintain two metres social distancing, wherever possible

“Employers should re-design workspaces to maintain two metre distances between people by staggering start times, creating one-way walk-throughs, opening more entrances and exits, or changing seating layouts in break rooms”.

This business will maintain two metre distances between people by:

4. Where people cannot be two metres apart, manage transmission risk

“Employers should look into putting barriers in shared spaces, creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another, or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other”.

This business will manage transmission risk where people cannot be two metres apart by:

5. Reinforcing cleaning processes

“Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points”.

This business will reinforce cleaning processes by:

Thirdly, decide which guides are relevant, put the steps into the table below and implement

These eight guides cover a range of different types of work. Many businesses operate more than one type of workplace, such as an office, factory and fleet of vehicles. You may need to use more than one of these guides as you consider what you need to do to keep people safe.

Decide which guides are relevant to your business, put the relevant measures in the table below. There is a lot of information in the guides and it is important to remember that their aim is to help implement the five points, and the steps that are usually needed are key to this.

Some associations are also providing helpful additional guidance to businesses as to the most appropriate steps to take in their work area.

The relevant workplace guides for this business are:

The workplace guides have been examined and measures applied in the table below.

Currently there are eight guides available:

- [Construction and other work](#)
- [Factories, plants and warehouses](#)

- [Labs and research facilities](#)
- [Offices and contact centres](#)
- [Care homes](#)
- [Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery](#)
- [Shops and branches](#)
- [Vehicles](#)

Further guides are likely to be published shortly, check Government websites.

Steps that are needed from workplace guidance.	How implemented, any consultation?	Documentation (e.g. written instructions, notices for customers)	Management walk around are the measures working, being complied with by staff and customers?	Further measures following management check.
Example- hazard tape on floor marking 2 m distance from checkouts for queuing customers	Discuss with employees and put down tape.	This risk assessment and verbal instructions.	No, some customers still too close.	Staff told to remind customers to socially distance. Laminated signs telling customers to stay behind the line.

After the risk assessment has been completed, what further regular monitoring will be carried out?

How will any further needed changes be put in place?

Finally save and upload your risk assessment onto your website as appropriate and print out and display the notice.

A downloadable notice is included in the downloads section of the eight workplace guides, 'staying COVID-19 secure in 2020' which employers should display in their workplaces to show their employees, customers and other visitors to their workplace that they have followed this guidance.