

Re-opening your business during the coronavirus pandemic

The following measures are for consideration by Food Business Operators (FBO) when they are re-opening a business that has been closed due to Coronavirus Restrictions.

A handy [COVID-19 Summary Checklist for re-starting your business](#) has been produced by Food Standards Scotland.

Starting up/Before opening

1. Water supply

If your building was closed during the coronavirus outbreak, water system stagnation may have occurred due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. If your business utilises water storage tanks and these tanks have been isolated for a period time and not been maintained throughout your closure, then you must follow all relevant protocols for the safe recommissioning of such tanks.

The Legionella Control Association (LCA) indicates the minimum expectation for small, simple hot and cold water systems would be flushing through with fresh mains water. In other cases, including premises with water tanks the expectation is likely to be for more extensive flushing followed by cleaning and disinfection. Further information can be found in the [Safe Management of Water Systems in Buildings During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) and the [Control of legionella bacteria in water systems Approved Code of Practice and guidance](#)

2. Condition of Premises and Equipment

When premises have been closed for a prolonged period of time it is essential to carry out thorough checks prior to re-opening to ensure that they are in a safe condition, do not present a risk of contamination and will allow for the hygienic production or handling of food. Carry out a walk-through of the premises to ensure it is in a good state of repair and that no damage has occurred during the closure. Check all essential equipment is operating and in good condition.

3. Services

Ensure the essential services required for power, hot and cold water supply and drainage are working as intended. Contact your waste contractor to ensure that commercial waste from the premises will be uplifted.

4. Cleaning

Following prolonged closure, a 'deep clean' should be carried out to ensure the entire premises is adequately cleaned/disinfected prior to reopening. This should be done in accordance with and supplemented by your existing cleaning schedule. Ensure that hand contact points such as door handles, tap handles, light switches and soap/hand towel dispensers (list not exhaustive) are not missed when undertaking such. Consideration should also be given to communal areas such as staff rooms, changing rooms and staff toilet facilities.

Flush clean water through machines that are plumbed into the water supply, such as dish washers, ice machines, drinking fountains, coffee machines, slush-ice makers, post mix guns, self-service soft drink machines and water coolers, in order to flush through any stagnant water. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on settings to be used for cleaning if equipment has not been used for some time.

5. Stock check/food disposal

As many businesses will have closed unexpectedly and at short notice, checks should be made for expired durability dates. You must remember to include partially used items such as sauces that require to be used within a specific period once open. Ensure waste food is disposed of appropriately and quickly and is not allowed to accumulate inside or outside the premises. As daily temperature monitoring will not have been undertaken check there is no evidence of temporary power failures within your equipment such as fridges and freezers. If there is any evidence that defrosting may have occurred the food should be disposed of. It is difficult to assess for evidence of temporary power failure within refrigerators, so where there is any doubt whatsoever about product safety then all relevant precautions must be taken i.e. disposal of products. It is however highly likely that food items stored within the refrigerator will now have exceeded their durability dates and should therefore be discarded. Oil in fryers should be replaced, particularly where it has been left uncovered.

6. Pest Control

Temporary closures can put businesses at risk of potential pest infestations due to the lack of business activity and maintenance of pest guarding during closure. Furthermore, as we approach the summer months and the temperature increases this can also result in increased pest activity. Thorough pest control checks must be carried out prior to reopening. Any noted pest activity or presence must be addressed. It is recommended that you seek assistance from a reputable pest control contractor to aid you with this.

Operating under the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020

It is critical that food businesses prioritise the safety of their staff as an essential resource and to ensure all their employees are following government guidance on infection prevention and control measures against Covid-19. It is of the utmost importance that food businesses continue to uphold their existing good hygiene practices pertinent to food and customer safety as well as further supplementing them in light of the current situation.

Falkirk Council understands that businesses may look to change their business model and diversify in order to maintain their business during this time.

In addition to the information below if you have any specific enquiries please email fs@falkirk.gov.uk and an officer will contact you to discuss your new business model so that we can help to ensure that you are doing this safely.

Food Standards Scotland have put together a [generic risk assessment tool](#) to help food businesses review facilities and workflow in line with COVID-19 hygiene and physical distancing requirements and identify changes needed to make when re-starting food production and service operations following lockdown.

Please refer to the various COVID-19 guidance when undertaking your risk assessment. Guidance has been produced by [Food Standards Scotland](#) and [Health and Safety Executive](#), as well as Scottish

Government's sector guidance for easing lockdown. Scottish Government has now produced guidance for various sectors, including [retail](#) and [hospitality](#), which are updated as required.

If further advice is required, useful information for employers is available from [Healthy Working Lives](#).

In addition to the current controls you already have in place these are some additional issues you need to consider:

1. Social (Physical) Distancing

It is essential that the requirements of the above mentioned regulations are adhered to at all times during operation.

You must risk assess, and put in place, control measures to ensure that all staff can adhere to social distancing requirements i.e. maintain a 2m distance from each other. This may include the redesign of workflows, implementation of "one way" systems, reduction in your capacity, staff numbers and menu, as well as changes to the way in which you interact with your customers during service, food collections and deliveries.

Detailed guidance has been produced by the [Scottish Government](#) and [Food Standards Scotland](#). The use of screens, signs and marking tapes may help you implement such measures. Some example of signage can be found on the FSS guidance.

Further guidance on workplace safety, including industry specific guidance can be found on the HSE website, especially [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): working safely](#) and [How to avoid spreading coronavirus \(COVID-19\) at work](#).

2. Infection Control

You have responsibilities to ensure food handlers are fit for work under the food hygiene regulations. In addition you have a general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of persons in your employment and members of the public. Ensure the [Government's infection control policy](#) in relation to coronavirus is followed. All staff should be familiar of the symptoms of Coronavirus (high temperature/fever and/or new continuous cough and/or loss/change in sense of taste/smell) and of the actions to take should anyone display symptoms. Guidance on symptoms, actions and subsequent cleaning and disinfection of areas can be found at [NHS Inform](#) and [COVID-19 - guidance for non-healthcare settings](#).

3. Personal Hygiene

All food handlers must regularly wash their hands using warm running water and hand soap (for at least 20 seconds) and dry them with disposable paper towels. Alcohol based hand sanitiser gels can be used in addition to hand washing, but it is important to note that they only work on visibly clean hands. They should never be used as a substitute to hand washing with soap and water. Staff should be reminded of the importance of thorough and frequent handwashing and it is advised that you implement regular monitoring checks to ensure staff are adhering to effective hand washing techniques. Customers should be encouraged to use a sanitiser on entry to the premises. Further guidance on handwashing can be found [here](#). Use of disposable gloves is not a suitable alternative to regular thorough hand washing and their use is not encouraged.

4. Cleaning/sanitising

During operation, it is advised that you increase the frequency of your ongoing cleaning/disinfecting activities to at least every two hours, particularly for hand contact surfaces and worktops. For regular cleaning and disinfecting of key touch points (including worktops, door handles, grab-rails in corridors, stairwells, keypads, vending machines, etc) use a disposable cloth; first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use.

Consideration should be given to augmenting existing cleaning procedures that comply with Food Standards Scotland's current [E. Coli O157 Control of Cross Contamination Guidance](#) and the additional regular cleaning of hand contact areas with cleaning agents known to be effective against viruses e.g. use of quaternary ammonium compounds as there is evidence that such can deactivate viruses. Products bearing the EN 14476:2019 standard should have been tested for efficacy against enveloped viruses (although not specifically the virus responsible for COVID-19).

4. Menu control & Suppliers

Due to the current restrictions, food premises may be working with reduced staff numbers, this can potentially increase the risks to food safety such as greater potential for cross contamination to occur. A review of your menu may be required with a view to potentially reducing the range of foods available for order.

It is important to remember that if you have made any changes to your menu, or if your supplier(s) or ingredients change, you must ensure you have reviewed your allergy information.

You should continue to ensure that you 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.

5. Food Collection and Deliveries

As previously mentioned, you must continue to ensure that social distancing requirements can be maintained during food collections and deliveries. Give consideration as to how you might achieve this e.g. encourage contact-free delivery, phone orders and staggered collection times.

If you are introducing a food delivery service as a new aspect then ensure you give consideration to temperature control and vehicle cleanliness during transit of orders.

6. Food Safety Management System & Staff training

You must ensure that consideration is given to hazards, controls and monitoring procedures when making any of the above or other procedural changes such as the introduction of a takeaway/delivery service to ensure there is no compromise to food safety. Your current Food Safety Management system must be updated and staff (existing and new/replacement) instructed/trained appropriately in all new procedures and made familiar with its contents.

There is no relaxation on food law legal requirements for matters relating to food safety and standards, as well as in relation to the training requirements of food handlers during this COVID-19 pandemic. All new staff still require to be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity. Staff in their entirety should be trained on any measures implemented by the business to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

7. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems (HVAC)

With regards to COVID-19 related ventilation HSE has produced guidance: [Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

If you would like help, or need any further advice, then please contact us at fs@falkirk.gov.uk; or speak to your area Environmental Health Officer/Food Safety Officer.