

Essex Food Group Food Safety Guidance Note

Hygiene Advice for Childminders

Food safety is an important issue, but the way in which it is enforced has to be related to the risk involved, e.g. the type of food served – is it high risk? (i.e. capable of supporting bacterial growth), the method of cooking – reheating, use of microwave, from frozen?, the people eating the food – young children and the elderly are especially vulnerable if something goes wrong.

These guidelines aim to provide you with details of the key issues of the law and how it applies to you and some information of good practices.

What law applies to childminders?

- (i) European Regulation 178/2002 – prohibits sale of unsafe foods
and
- (ii) European Regulation 852/2004 – These regulations cover a number of things:
 - (a) Requires food business operators to identify hazards in their operations and to identify and implement necessary controls to minimise the risk posed by those hazards. For example, inadequate cooking of foods will not kill any food poisoning bacteria that may be present on food.
 - (b) Requires premises to be clean and maintained in good repair, be designed and constructed to permit good hygiene practices.
 - (c) Requires food handlers to observe good personal hygiene and to protect food from contamination and to work in a clean and hygienic manner.
 - (d) Requires childminders to register as a food business.
- (iii) The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 cover the following:
 - (a) Gives power to enforcement agencies to serve hygiene improvement notices, prohibit certain processes and to close businesses (where risk is serious enough) etc.
 - (b) Prescribes the temperatures at which certain foods must be kept.

For further guidance on the new legislation you may like to visit the Food Standards Agency's website at <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/foodguid/fhlguidance/>

Do I have to be trained in Food Hygiene?

Under European Regulation 852/2004 all food handlers have to be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities. In reality most childminders are not subject to supervision and may not have received instruction and therefore training should be undertaken which will give an understanding of the basic principles of food hygiene. An example of such training is the Basic Certificate run by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health which can be completed in one day.

Many Local Authorities and colleges run such food hygiene courses.

Will my kitchen be inspected on a regular basis?

Food hygiene legislation does apply to childminders as outlined above and therefore an Enforcement Officer may visit to inspect your kitchen. He/She should give you 24 hours notice of such a visit unless a complaint or a food poisoning notification has been received.

What structural standard do I have to have in my kitchen?

In simple terms, a clean and tidy domestic kitchen is usually adequate for the type of food preparation expected of a childminder caring for small numbers of children. However, if you mind several children additional facilities may be necessary (refer to FSA booklet – Food Safety Regulations). It is your food handling and hygiene practices which are most important.

Important Practices

Whilst food poisoning incidents involving childminders are very rare, good hygiene practices are vital to ensure the safety of young children and babies in your care.

What temperature should I operate my fridge at?

Food in fridges should be kept at less than 8°C. You can buy thermometers to leave inside the appliance which are quite cheap from departmental and hardware stores.

It is especially important to check that food brought in by parents of the children in your care has been prepared and stored correctly.

Is it safe to re-heat food?

Where possible try to prepare food for immediate consumption, but if you do have to re-heat food, allow yourself plenty of time to thoroughly heat the food so that it is piping hot, and then let it cool to the required temperature. Never just warm the food through.

Do not re-heat food more than once and discard any food which is not eaten within 1½ hours of re-heating.

Is it safe to use out of date food?

Food should be stored in accordance with the manufacturers instructions and consumed as quickly as possible after purchase. Never use foods once the use-by date has passed.

Hygiene practices – Are there any specific things I should be doing?

- Always wash hands before handling food, and after handling raw food.
- Always wash and re-sterilise dummies if they are dropped.

- Ensure separation of cooked and uncooked foodstuffs during storage and during food preparation.
- Towels and flannels should be cleaned on a regular basis.
- Ensure that each child has his/her own flannel, towel, toothbrush and hairbrush.
- Ensure that everyone washes their hands after using the toilet and always before eating.
- When handling or clearing up any spillage of body fluid (e.g. urine, blood, faeces) wear latex gloves, keep people away from the area, and clear up immediately. Soak up excess with disposable towels and then apply a disinfectant such as household bleach (one part bleach to ten parts water) for 2 minutes. Then wipe surface with general purpose detergent and hot water. Bag up and dispose of soiled materials and place in refuse bin. When finished wash your hands.

Nappy hygiene – what should I do?

It is a good idea to set aside a designated area for nappy changing.

The changing surface should be waterproof (surfaces used for preparing or serving food must not be used for this purpose).

Changing mats should be clean and in a good state of repair i.e. no breaks or tears in the waterproof covering.

Paper towelling can be used to protect the changing mat and discarded between uses.

Potties and soiled surfaces must be cleaned with detergent and hot water, disinfected and left to dry.

Ensure creams and lotions are not shared between children – each child should have their own supplies of creams and lotions.

If disposable nappies are used, these should be disposed of by wrapping securely in a plastic bag, and placed in a refuse bin. Any excessive faeces should be flushed down the toilet.

Laundering of children's soiled clothing and nappies is not recommended. They should be bagged and sent home to the parent. If this is not possible they should be soaked in a germ-killing solution then rinsed thoroughly or else boil-washed to kill germs.

- Hand washing is the single most effective means of reducing cross-infection, and must be performed after every nappy change.

What about pets? – can I keep them?

Dogs, cats and other pets are always loved by children and they can be a source of stimulation and education. They are also a potential source of disease most of which can be prevented by following a few simple hygiene rules:

1. Dogs and cats groom themselves by licking their fur including their bottoms which can mean that they spread germs all over themselves, so ensure that children always wash their hands after playing with an animal especially before eating.

2. Keep children away from pet beds. This is not just for the child's health – a dog or cat should always have access to a “safe” place where they can get away from young children if they want to.
3. Make sure your pet has his own dish and cutlery that is washed up separately from your dishes.
4. Ideally, your pet should not be fed in the kitchen, but if there is nowhere else suitable then make sure leftovers are removed as soon as it has finished and splashes or spills cleaned up to prevent bacteria from multiplying or pests being attracted. Pet food should not be stored open in the refrigerator, but a suitable cleansable plastic lidded container used to keep the pet food in while inside the refrigerator.
5. Ensure that both dogs and cats are “wormed” every six months to prevent them carrying the parasites that cause Toxocara disease in children (it sometimes causes blindness). Cover sandpits when not in use.
6. Ideally, cat litter trays should not be present when children are in the house, but there may be occasions when cat litter trays are unavoidably present. These should be sited away from areas where children can gain access, and away from the kitchen area.
7. Children and pets, together must be under supervision. A cat net may be required where there are sleeping babies.

What do I do if a child becomes ill?

- Seek medical advice.
- Inform the parent, and ask them to collect the child immediately.
- If suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting; keep away from any other children. Do not give anything by mouth until medical advice has been sought.
- If suffering from a high temperature; keep them cool and give plenty to drink.
- If suffering from a rash; keep away from any other children. Seek medical advice.
- Do not accept children who are suffering from sickness or diarrhoea. Responsibility for looking after children when they are ill rests with the parent/guardian. Exclusion for 48 hours after symptom free to reduce risk of transmission of infection to others.
- Do not mind children if you are a member of your household is suffering from sickness and/or diarrhoea – you could pass it on. Exclusion for 48 hours after symptom free to reduce risk of transmission of infection to others.

Further information and advice on prevention and control of infection is available from your Community Infection Control Nurse.

Where can I get further information?

For further information on health and hygiene matters please contact your local Environmental Health Department. This advice has been approved by all Essex District Council Environmental Health Departments.