

New legal requirements for food businesses.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020

In response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, Islington is monitoring the situation closely is implementing official Government instructions and legal requirements to help save lives.

Our environmental health duty line is operating by email only at commercial.envh@islington.gov.uk if you require specific advice.

All food businesses must stop the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises with only retail and takeaway sales allowed. Businesses that remain open must enforce social distancing for both customers and staff.

Social Distancing

Where employees attend work, social distancing must be implemented to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This involves maintaining a distance of 2 metres (6.5 feet) between people and reduced social interactions.

Businesses that breach the new regulations will be subject to prohibition notices, and potentially unlimited fines.

To implement social distancing for both staff and customers, food businesses must:

- Cease selling food to eat or drink on the premises
- Remove in-store seating where possible; if not possible as an alternative stack chairs or create a physical barrier to seating area. You should display clear signage in your business saying seating is not for use
- Remove tables and chairs from outside areas; where this is not possible make outside areas inaccessible

- Limit the number of people who can come into your food business/corner shop/supermarket/market stall etc. at any one time. You will need to assess this based on the size of your business but customers must be more than 2m apart and 2m from all staff
- Implement control measures for queueing outside your premises e.g. tape marks on floor 2 m apart and signage asking people to keep 2 m apart

- Hand sanitisers should be provided by businesses where possible
- Wipes should be provided for customers to clean the handles of shopping trolleys and baskets.
- Touch points e.g. trolleys, keypads, door handles etc., should be cleaned more frequently
- Keep doors open where possible to minimise contact

- Where operating a takeaway food service you must ensure the following:
 - No orders should be taken from a customer 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 and giving customers information to return at a designated time for collection
 - Customers should have staggered collection times - customers should be discouraged from entering the premises until their order is ready
 - Customers whose orders are ready should enter one at a time to collect orders and make payments
 - Orders that are being collected should be placed at a separate collection point to maximising the distance from staff and have hand sanitiser at this point, where possible.
 - Businesses should discourage crowding outside the premises. Where possible, use queue management systems to maintain the 2 metres separation

- Where possible you should use spacing measures e.g. tape strips, tape crosses, tape squares as floor markers at tills or queues
- Use a ticketing system where appropriate
- Where possible use contactless rather than cash. If food workers must handle money, it is important they wash their hands afterwards and always before handling food

- Put clear signage near your door explaining your precautions, Here is an example:

We respectfully ask that you help us to keep you safe:

- Only four customers in the premises at any one time.
- You must stay 2m from staff and other customers.
- Please use hand sanitiser at entrance.
- Please stick to my 2m distance markers in queues.

How is COVID-19 passed on?

The virus is commonly passed on:

- Directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (for example, droplets from coughing or sneezing)

- Indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on

Current information suggests that the virus could survive up to 72 hours (3 days) on hard surfaces depending on the material. However, the numbers of virus will reduce considerably over that time as it dies off. Simple household disinfectants can kill it.

What can food workers do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Staff and food business owners should not work if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19. For more information visit the [NHS website](#).

Should an infected worker handle food it is possible that they could introduce virus to the food they are working on, or onto surfaces within the food business, by coughing and sneezing, or through hand contact.

You must carry out a risk assessment for your business to protect yourself, your employees and customers from risk of infection. See the [HSE webpages](#) for more information.

General measures of good practice to reduce chance of infection must include the following, even if symptom free:

- Proper hand hygiene
- Good cough/cold hygiene practices
- Safe food practices including increased cleaning regime for all hand contact surfaces including door handles, entrance doors, credit card readers, light switches etc.
- Avoiding close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing

In general, food business owners should remember that you have particular responsibilities under food law and must maintain proper hygiene practices at all times.

You must still, in general:

- ensure that staff are trained appropriately in food hygiene and hygienic practices
- ensure effective supervision of staff to reinforce hygienic practices
- provide the correct facilities e.g. hand washing, toilets, to enable staff to practice good hygiene
- ensure staff and contractors report any physical signs/symptoms of illness, before commencing work or while in the workplace
- keep vigilant and ensure that staff are not ill and are fit to work

For more information

For up-to-date information visit [here](#).

For the latest guidance for members of the public visit [here](#).

For advice for employers and businesses visit [here](#).

National Council for Voluntary Organisations has some good advice for its members [here](#).

Public Health England has some good posters for businesses to download [here](#).