

Setting up a food business

How to choose the right premises and what facilities you need to provide in your food business. Includes advice on health and safety and fire safety.

Choosing the right premises

The premises you choose for your business must:

- comply with the necessary regulations
- allow you to prepare food safely

You must keep your premises clean and maintained in good repair and condition. Your premises must allow you to follow good [food hygiene](#) practices, including protection against [contamination](#) and pest control.

When you are choosing new premises, or making changes to premises, it's a good idea to ask your local authority for advice.

The following rules apply to your whole premises, not just the areas used for preparing food.

Handwashing facilities and toilets

You must have enough washbasins for staff to wash their hands with hot and cold running water and materials for [cleaning hands](#) and drying them hygienically.

Changing facilities

You must provide adequate facilities for staff to change their clothes, where necessary.

Other requirements

Your premises must also have adequate ventilation, lighting and drainage.

Food preparation areas

The following rules apply to rooms where food is prepared.

Floors and walls

Floors and walls must be:

- maintained in a good condition
- easy to clean
- disinfected
- smooth, hard-wearing, washable and in a good state of repair

Ceilings

Ceilings should be:

- in good condition
- easy to clean to prevent dirt from building up
- free from condensation and mould
- free from flaking paint or plaster

Windows and doors

Windows and any other openings (such as doors) must be constructed in a way that prevents dirt from building up. If they open to the outside, they must be fitted with insect-proof screens that can be easily removed for cleaning.

Doors must be easy to:

- clean
- disinfect

Surfaces

Surfaces (including surfaces of equipment) in areas where food is handled, particularly those that are touched by food, must be:

- maintained in a good condition
- easy to clean
- disinfected

Facilities for cleaning equipment

Your premises must have adequate facilities for cleaning, disinfecting and storing utensils, including equipment. The facilities must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.

Facilities for washing food

Separate sinks must be provided, where necessary, for washing food and cleaning equipment in food preparation areas.

Every sink must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water for washing food and be of drinking quality. These facilities must be kept clean and be disinfected.

Equipment

All items, fittings and equipment that food touches must be:

- kept in good order, repair and condition
- cleaned effectively and be disinfected frequently enough to avoid any risk of [contamination](#)

You can find more information on [maintenance](#) in our Safer food, better business for

caterers pack.

Food waste

You must have adequate facilities for storing and disposing of food. You must [remove food waste and other rubbish](#) from rooms containing food as quickly as possible to avoid it building up and attracting pests.

The three main groups of pests that are encountered in food businesses are:

- rodents - rats and mice
- insects - cockroaches, beetles, ants and flies
- birds - pigeons etc

You can find more information on [pest control](#) in our Safer food, better business for caterers pack.

Food safety coaching video – Pest control

What to look out for and what to do to keep pests out of your business.

Health and safety

If you have five or more employees, you must have a written health and safety policy that describes the arrangements in place.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed an [H&S ABC – An easy guide to health & safety](#) to help small and medium sized businesses understand health and safety.

If you're in Northern Ireland, contact the [Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland](#).

Fire safety

You must carry out a fire risk assessment at your premises and take fire safety precautions to help protect you, your staff and customers. The type of precautions you need to have will depend on the outcome of the fire risk assessment of the premises.

If you are planning to adapt your premises, it is a good idea to get fire safety advice before you start the work. You can get advice from your [local fire authority](#).

For more information, see the [fire and explosion pages](#) of the Health and Safety Executive website.

Get help and support

Your business can get advice on:

- [tax](#)

- [writing a business plan](#)
- [finance](#)
- [business premises and business rates](#)

You may have other responsibilities depending on what your food business does.

Check if you need:

- [licences or permits](#), for example to sell food or to trade in the street
- [insurance](#)

There are also rules you must follow if you're:

- [selling food online](#)
- [importing and exporting food](#)
- [storing or using personal information](#) - this applies to information kept on staff, customers and account holders

[GOV.UK](#), provides free business advice and support for starting a business. You can also find free support, advice and sources of finance through your [local 'growth hub'](#).

[Business Wales](#) is a free service that provides impartial, independent support and advice to people starting, running and growing a business in Wales.

[nibusinessinfo.co.uk](#), a free service offered by Invest Northern Ireland, is the official online channel for business advice and support for starting a business.

Remember: When you start a new food business or take over an existing business, you must [register with your local authority](#).