

Food allergy awareness champions: Improving food safety standards in online food procurement for people with food hypersensitivities

Area of research interest: [Food hypersensitivity](#)

Project status: Completed

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Background

There have been changes more recently in how people commonly acquire and consume food at home. The practice of ordering online food delivery including ready-to-eat meals, drinks, and snacks has increased immensely. The COVID-19 pandemic has likely been a factor in this change in practice as it's now the case that one in four consumers thinks about using meal delivery services on a regular basis.

The aims of this project were:

- to improve understanding and knowledge of the behaviours of FHS citizen scientists buying ready-to-eat (takeaway and delivered) food online.
- to learn more about the visible procedures and practices of individual food businesses offering online food delivery.
- to use accredited methods to determine the presence of certain allergens in selected samples of food procured by participants.

Results

In general, respondents expressed more trust in nationwide food chains due to their perceived resources, updated information, menu consistency and/or accreditation by a UK allergy charity, such as Allergy UK or Coeliac UK.

The citizen scientists revealed some of their behaviours to minimise the risk of contamination including

- eating food alone, before or after the family or work meal
- physically separating gluten-containing from non-gluten-containing foods at the table
- double checking the food order and the labels provided
- following good food hygiene guidelines
- using their own senses.

Furthermore, there were some indications that older FHS citizens may perceive the risk of ordering online differently from younger age groups.

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