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Risk control

Home Food Preparation for Schools



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Home Food Preparation for Schools

Introduction

The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014¹ came into force on 1 January 2015. They were made under section.114A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998² and establish food-based standards in schools.

Good standards of food management are long established and embedded into the risk management processes within schools, however, there are occasions such as charity fundraising events where food may be prepared by guardians, carers, parents etc. where there will be less control by schools over food preparation, storage and handling, therefore increasing the potential of this food not being fit for consumption.

This guidance document is intended to assist clients in ensuring there is a robust risk management approach to food safety which is not directly prepared by the school.

Externally Prepared Food

Food occasionally prepared outside the school by parents or others, for example for a school function, is beyond the direct control of the school. As such, it is difficult to monitor and assess the risk.

The 2014 Regulations clearly indicate, in section.2 that they do not apply to food provided:

- At parties or events that observe religious or cultural occasions
- At fund-raising events
- As rewards for achievement, good behaviour, or effort
- For use in teaching food preparation and cookery skills, including where the food prepared by a pupil is served as part of the pupil's school lunch
- On an occasional basis by parents or pupils.

Regardless of the exception, the school must ensure that if it is allowing an event to be held on its premises then all aspects of any catering arrangements which are provided by the school, such as storage facilities, surfaces, cutlery, crockery, washing up facilities and so on, do not pose a risk to health.

Food Standards Agency Advice

Having an exception to the Regulations does not mean there is no risk. All food supplied, sold, or provided at charity or community events, such as street parties, school fetes or fundraisers, **must** comply with relevant food laws and be safe to eat. **The person providing the food takes on this responsibility** and as such, it is essential that those preparing, storing, and selling food

follow the good food hygiene advice from the Food Standards Agency (FSA)³ which is detailed below:

- Prepare food in advance and freeze it, if you can, but ensure the food is properly defrosted before you use it
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, using hand sanitisers if hand washing facilities are not available
- Always wash fresh fruit and vegetables
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart
- Do not use food past its use-by date
- Always read any cooking instructions and make sure food is perfectly cooked before you serve it
- Ensure that food preparation areas are cleaned and sanitised after use and wash any equipment you are using in hot soapy water
- Keep food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible. Food that needs to be chilled, such as sandwich fillings served as part of a buffet, should be left out of the fridge for no more than four hours. After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge. If you put the food back in the fridge, do not let it stand around at room temperature when you serve it again.

On the day, people bringing in food from home or running the stall should follow these tips:

- Transport food in clean, sealable containers or other appropriate containers relevant to the food type
- Wash hands as frequently as possible
- Ensure that cheesecake and any cakes or desserts, or other food containing cream are left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible
- When handling food use appropriate utensils such as tongs or a cake slice instead

Allergen Information

Under the Food Information Regulations 2014⁴ there is a legal responsibility to label any food and drink served or sold with information about 14 specified allergens listed in the Regulations.

This **will not** apply to charity fundraising events, however, in an age where allergies and intolerances are so widespread, and given some reported fatalities caused by food allergens, it is good practice to let people know what they're eating and therefore, assist to minimise the risk of problems or complaints.

The most notable food allergens are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans.

Risk Assessments

Schools should have safety policies supported by risk assessments of hazards relating to its associated activities. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of hazards likely to exist, an assessment of whether the hazard is likely to harm anyone and what precautions need to be taken.

Where charity fund raisers involving the introduction of food from non-school sources, the organising group must ensure a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is in place to minimise risk of food poisoning and other related adverse effects.

The risk assessment must identify all the hazards, who is at risk and those especially at risk (those who may suffer allergies), considering control measures have been evaluated, and the remaining risk is low.

Further information on risk assessments in general can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website⁵.

Liabilities and Insurance

The organising group are required to ensure they have sufficient insurance cover in case of an adverse event. For example, an event organised by the Parents and Teachers Association will require separate liability insurance if their activities are not covered by the school's insurance policy.

An outbreak of salmonella food poisoning, at a Newcastle Street Spice Festival in 2013 resulted in 50 people being awarded compensation for their suffering. The victims were awarded a share of over £400,000⁶.

This serves to reinforce the message that no event is held without appropriate risk controls and insurance in place.

Conclusions

In most cases, charity events within the school environment will be run by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA should ensure that:

- A suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been done to identify hazards and control risks
- Control measures are assigned and implemented and, where possible, monitored throughout the process and the event
- Provide written guidance, based around the FSA good food hygiene advice to those preparing, handling, storing, and selling / distributing food for charity fundraisers or on good standards of hygiene to ensure the risk is reduced to a level which is as low as reasonably practicable

References

1. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1603/contents/made>
2. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents>
3. <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events>
4. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1855/contents/made>
5. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>
6. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4166608/Curry-fans-struck-food-poisoning-compensation.html>

Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

Get in touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.

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