



Food Safety & Food Allergies

Care & Support Services

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy will apply to all Care and Support services that provide food to people using services, this includes Central Bedfordshire Council Care Homes, Day Services, Step Up/Step Down units and Supported Living Services (where applicable).
- 1.2. This policy describes how the services maintain food safety and assesses risks to people using services from food allergies.
- 1.3. This policy delivers guidance on how to provide relevant information to people on potential food allergens and information on what to do in the event of anyone suffering an allergic reaction or illness.

2. Legislation and Regulatory Framework

- 2.1. The Council recognises its duty to ensure the safety of its staff and people using its services and its responsibilities and to comply with the applicable Health and Safety and Food Safety laws.
- 2.2. Relevant Legislation:
 - Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 and the Care Quality Commission's Fundamental Standards.
 - Regulation 14: Meeting Nutritional and Hydration Needs - providers to ensure that the nutritional and hydration needs of people are met.
 - Outcome 4 of Essential Standards of Quality and Safety – CQC
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Mental Capacity Act 2005
 - Food Safety Act 1990
 - Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
 - Food Information Regulations 2014
 - Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (known as "Natasha's Law").
- 2.3. The Food Safety Act 1990 outlines businesses such as (but not limited to) care homes should ensure that there is: "Provision for securing the observance of hygienic conditions and practices in connection with the carrying out of commercial operations with respect to food or food sources".
- 2.4. The Food Safety Act focuses on the preparation, storage and service of food – and the CQC requires that care homes ensure that the food and drink they provide is handled, stored, prepared and delivered in a way that meets the requirements of the Act.

3. Principles of the Policy

- 3.1. Everyone has the right to a varied and nutritious diet that provides for their dietary needs and offers health, choice, and pleasure. Food and water are essential in terms of physical, psychological, cultural and social wellbeing.
- 3.2. In the UK, 1-2% of adults have a food allergy. This, combined with the 5-8% of children with a food allergy, equates to about 2 million people. However, this does not include those with food intolerances. This means the actual number of affected people living with food allergy and/or food intolerance is considerably more ([Facts and Figures | Anaphylaxis Campaign](#)).
- 3.3. Having a food allergy means that there will be certain food items containing allergens that some people cannot eat.
- 3.4. An allergic reaction can be produced by even a tiny amount of a food ingredient that a person is sensitive to. Symptoms of an allergic reaction can be very serious, ranging from mild itching around the mouth to vomiting, diarrhoea, wheezing and, on occasion, potentially fatal anaphylactic shock.
- 3.5. Someone with food intolerance may suffer migraine and unexplained fatigue (central nervous system), abdominal pain, bloating and frequent diarrhoea (gastrointestinal system), unexplained muscle and joint pains (musculoskeletal system) and unexplained nasal congestion and discharge (upper respiratory system).
- 3.6. Central Bedfordshire Council's Care and Support services will ensure that appropriate food information is provided to people accessing services to inform them when foods contain potential allergens.
- 3.7. A person's individual needs and allergies will be taken into consideration when meals are provided so that their nutritional intake is not compromised, and their enjoyment of food and mealtimes is not reduced.
- 3.8. Those people who suffer from allergies but lack the capacity to be able to choose safe food options will be supported by staff to help them to achieve a healthy diet.

4. Policy Details

Food Safety

- 4.1. Where applicable, services within Care and Support use [Safer food, better business for caterers – Manual](#) for Food Hygiene and Food Safety Management. Each service completes this document with details relevant to their service provision. Managers are responsible for their own manual.
- 4.2. Anyone accessing Central Bedfordshire Council Adult Social Care support will be subject to a needs assessment and those accessing Care and Support Services will have a Care and Support Plan which will include asking a person about their nutritional and mealtime needs, including food preferences and dislikes, sensitivities, and any food allergies.

- 4.3. Those people in a Care Home or Step Up/Down unit will also be subject to nutritional and hydration screening using recognised tools to make sure that they are receiving a healthy and well-balanced diet that promotes their health and wellbeing.
- 4.4. When people accessing services are offered meals, menus will offer choice and people will be asked which food they prefer. Staff should ensure that diet/nutritional needs are shared with catering staff as required so that appropriate food can be offered.
- 4.5. All food prepared, cooked and stored within the services will be presented in accordance with the high standards required by food hygiene regulations and the food allergy legislation.

Food Allergens

- 4.6. Staff must take all reasonable actions to prevent allergen cross-contamination, including:
 - cleaning utensils before each usage, especially if they were used to prepare meals containing allergens
 - washing hands thoroughly between preparing dishes with and without certain allergens
 - storing ingredients and prepared foods separately in closed and labelled containers
 - keeping ingredients that contain allergens separate from other ingredients.
- 4.7. Where there are any pre-packed foods and pre-packed for direct sale foods, these will be properly labelled and have information about allergens clearly set out on their labels. Any 'pre-packed for direct sale' (PPDS) items must be labelled in compliance with Natasha's law. PPDS items include food which meets all of the following criteria:
 - food fully or partly enclosed by packaging
 - food that cannot be altered without opening or changing the packaging in some way
 - food that must be ready for final sale to the consumer.
- 4.8. In all aspects of food preparation and serving, the service will comply with the latest best practice guidance published by the Food Standards Agency. This should include the updated [Food Allergen Labelling and Information: Technical Guidance](#).
- 4.9. It is understood that the need to identify any potential allergens applies not only to the main ingredients of any dish or meal but also to any additives, processing aids and any other substances which may be present in the final product.
- 4.10. All foods will be provided with any potential allergen information and will be in a format that the person can understand. Weekly and daily allergen charts will be completed by staff to support this (see appendices). Where necessary, care staff will read through the daily menu with people, describing their choices and informing them of the allergen information.

4.11. Allergen information will include a list of allergens specified in the Food Information Regulations 2014:

- Celery
- Cereals containing gluten (such as barley and oats)
- Crustaceans (such as prawns, crabs, and lobsters)
- Molluscs (such as mussels and oysters)
- Lupin
- Eggs
- Fish
- Milk
- Mustard
- Nuts (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, and macadamia nuts)
- Peanuts
- Sesame seeds
- Soya
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites.

4.12. Where possible menus will be planned, giving due consideration to people and with any known food allergies. Services will ensure that anyone who has a food allergy has a full range of alternative food choices that meet their needs.

4.13. Special allergen free therapeutic diets will be provided when advised by healthcare or dietetic staff as required.

Mental Capacity

4.14. Where a person may lack the capacity to understand the information given, or to make choices based on the information provided, staff must follow a best interest process in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to help people with allergies avoid foods that may make them ill.

4.15. Every effort will be made to help the person understand their choices and no assumption of incapacity should be made.

5. Anaphylaxis

Information in the section of the policy has been taken from NHS.UK

5.1. Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to a trigger such as an allergy. Anaphylaxis is a medical emergency. It can be very serious if not treated quickly.

5.2. The symptoms include:

- feeling [lightheaded or faint](#)
- [breathing difficulties](#) – such as fast, shallow breathing
- wheezing
- a fast heartbeat
- clammy skin
- [confusion](#) and anxiety
- collapsing or losing consciousness

5.3. There may also be other [allergy symptoms](#), including an itchy, raised rash ([hives](#)); feeling or being sick; swelling ([angioedema](#)) or [stomach pain](#).

5.4. NHS.UK advises if someone has symptoms of anaphylaxis:

1. **Use an adrenaline auto-injector if the person has one** – but make sure you know how to use it correctly first.
2. **Call 999 for an ambulance immediately (even if they start to feel better)** – mention that you think the person has anaphylaxis.
3. **Remove any trigger if possible** – for example, carefully remove any stinger stuck in the skin.
4. **Lie the person down and raise their legs** – unless they're having breathing difficulties and need to sit up to help them breathe. If they're pregnant, lie them down on their left side.
5. **Give another injection after 5 minutes** if the symptoms do not improve and a second auto-injector is available.

5.5. Further information about how to treat anaphylaxis and using auto-injectors and correct positioning is available at [Anaphylaxis - Treatment - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

6. Equality and Diversity

6.1. All SCHH policies are accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment (where applicable) and an implementation plan that sets out monitoring and reporting arrangements available in relation to this policy.

6.2. The Council will be proactive about putting in place arrangements to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against individuals on the grounds of their protected characteristics. Equality is integral to the way in which any support is prioritised and delivered.

7. Information and Training Responsibilities

- 7.1. Those Staff in the service preparing food will be fully trained to understand food allergies and will be careful in the use of ingredients and in the prevention of contamination of different foods with foods that might produce an allergic reaction.
- 7.2. Caterers are expected to know the ingredients in all meals served and to ensure that this information is as described on menus and other allergen information sources.
- 7.3. Staff working in the service who prepare food, must undertake training in allergen awareness. Free training is available at the following link <https://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>
- 7.4. Further information is available to support staff at the following link: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>

8. Related Policies

- Person Centred Care Policy
- Admissions, Assessments & Care Planning – Care Homes
- Safeguarding & Safe Care Policy
- MUST & Nutrition Policy
- Food Safety - the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business for Caterers manual

9. Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

- 9.1. Feedback from people, carers and families will be encouraged, including feedback as to the clarity of the allergen information provided.

10. Evaluation and Review

- 10.1. This document will be reviewed every 2 years unless statutory guidance changes where a review will take place sooner

11. Appendices

- Appendix 1: [Safer food, better business for caterers – Manual](#)
- Appendix 2: [Food Allergen Recipe Card \(Individual Meal Allergens\)](#)
- Appendix 3: [Food Allergen Chart \(Weekly Menu Allergens\)](#)
- Appendix 4: [Food Allergens – What to look out for Guidance](#)
- Appendix 5: [NHS Anaphylaxis Information](#)
- Appendix 6: [Supported Living Service Consumables Guidance](#)