

Checking Food and/or Consumables

Supported Living Service Guidance

Guidance notes - Checking Tenants' Flats for Out of Date Food and Consumable Items

When supporting tenants in their flats, it's imperative to check for out of date or poor quality items that may be consumed. This is in the interest of their health and safety and is part of safeguarding regulated by CQC. Therefore, the following process must be adhered to diligently to maintain high quality outcomes and communication.

- Foods should be checked every time the tenant has domestic and meal planning support, as well as prior to supporting with going food shopping.
 - Staff must check all types of food stores where consumables are kept by the tenant, including fruit bowls, bread bins, fridge doors and freezers.
 - For loose items (such as fruit and vegetables), staff must use their judgment in line with their food standards and hygiene training to determine when the food is of poor quality.
 - Where food has a 'best before' date, sometimes shown as BBE (best before end), the food will be safe to eat after this date but may not be at its best. When checking 'best before' date food, staff can use sensory cues to find out if the food is appropriate to eat i.e. visible mould on bread, texture of items, or sniff/smell some dairy products with a best before date to see if they have soured.
 - When checking when food is going past the 'use by' date, staff must adhere to the date that they are checking, or the nearest date to the next support time.
- Before disposing of an item that is due to go out of date or past its best before date, staff must first ask the tenants' permission, encouraging that it is in the best interest for their health to do so.
 - If the tenant agrees, then the item can be thrown into the bin.
 - If the tenant refuses, then staff should encourage the tenant by making them aware of the potential health risks.
 - Sometimes the tenant may still refuse, so staff should reassure the tenant that the item can and will be replaced.



- If the tenant still refuses, staff should consider the persons mental capacity and follow best interest processes (see [Mental Capacity](#) below) and make a detailed recording of this in their daily notes.
- As well as domestic and meal planning support, this protocol should also be used when supporting tenants to go food shopping. Date checking should take place before planning a shopping trip, to indicate what needs replenishing. Staff can then use a shopping list (see [Appendix 1](#) example) to plan what the tenant needs to buy.
- It is good practice to check dates of items with tenants when out shopping before they are purchased, to assure the item is going to last a sufficient time for the tenant.
- It is also good practice to 'date rotate' items of food by using the earliest use by dates foods and consumables first.

Mental Capacity

The Service understands that tenants will have varying capacity surrounding the understanding of disposing and replenishing out of date foods. Every effort will be made to help the person understand their choices and no assumption of their capacity should be made.

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. A person's capacity or otherwise should be recorded in their care and support document together with what action to take in these circumstances.

Definitions: Best before and use-by dates

Use By Date:

A use-by date on food is about safety. This is the most important date to remember. You can eat food until and on the use-by date but not after. You will see use-by dates on food that goes off quickly, such as meat products or ready-to-eat salads.

Best Before Date:

The best before date, sometimes shown as BBE (best before end), is about quality and not safety. The food will be safe to eat after this date but may not be at its best. Its flavour and texture might not be as good. Best before dates appear on a wide range of foods.

Further information on Food Safety is available from the Food Standards Agency:

[Best before and use-by dates | Food Standards Agency](#)

[Food safety and hygiene - Food Standards Agency](#)



WEEKLY SHOPPING LIST

STORE CUPBOARD

DRINKS

HOUSEHOLD

