

Factsheet 1: Getting started

Why this matters

Food safety is essential to protect people from food poisoning and allergic reactions.

Following the correct procedures helps keep everyone safe and makes sure legal requirements are met.

Who needs to register as a food business?

You will need to register as a food business with your local authority if you sell, give away, cook, store, prepare, handle, or distribute food on a **regular** basis. You can register here: northyorks.gov.uk/environment-and-neighbourhoods/food-safety-and-hygiene/register-food-business

This applies to food activities carried out:

- At or during a charity or fundraising event
- From physical customer-facing premises
- From home
- From a mobile unit or temporary premises
- Delivering food parcels or meals to someone's home

If your food activity is very limited or infrequent, your local authority may decide that you don't need to register.

If you're unsure whether registration applies to you, it's always best to contact your local authority for advice. You can reach North Yorkshire Council's food safety team at RegSupport@northyorks.gov.uk.

Other things you need to do:

- The supervisor or manager should have Level 2 Food Safety training
- All food handlers follow basic hygiene rules (*see factsheet 3*)
- Employees and volunteers involved in food preparation are suitably trained (*see factsheet 2*)
- Food areas are kept to a high standard in respect of cleaning arrangements, waste disposal and pest control
- Food handlers should let their supervisor know if they're unwell with any illness that could affect food safety

Who this applies to:

- Paid staff
- Volunteers
- Anyone handling, preparing or storing food

Useful websites to help you get started:

- food.gov.uk
- food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-banks-and-charities/useful-downloads-and-links-for-food-banks-and-charities
- food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-safety-for-community-cooking-and-food-banks



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Factsheet 2: Staff and volunteer training

Who needs formal training?

- Anyone regularly preparing or handling unwrapped high-risk food (e.g. meat, seafood, poultry, eggs and dairy products) on a regular basis
- The person in charge of the community food project

What training level is recommended?

Level 2 Food Safety in Catering

How can I access this training?

You can access Level 2 Food Safety training through a range of accredited training providers.

Below are some examples of training you can access online or in person:

- highspeedtraining.co.uk/food-hygiene
- visitnorthyorkshire.com/funded-food-hygiene-and-safety-training
- nyestraining.co.uk

Please note that some courses may incur a cost. For more options, contact North Yorkshire Council customer services at 0300 131 2 131 (and say 'Food Safety' when prompted) and they can put you through to the Food Safety Team.

What about volunteers?

Volunteers don't need formal food hygiene qualifications but they may feel they benefit from it. Volunteers should always:

- Follow basic hygiene rules (see factsheet 3)
- Understand food allergies

Free training available for volunteers:

Volunteers can complete free online Food Allergy Training provided by the Food Standards Agency: allergytraining.food.gov.uk



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Factsheet 3: Personal hygiene when handling and preparing food

Handwashing is essential

Wash hands:

- Before handling food
- After using the toilet
- After wiping your nose
- After touching raw food or waste
- After eating or smoking
- After undertaking cleaning duties
- At any other time you feel it is appropriate

Other hygiene tips:

- Keep handwashing basins clean and make sure there is always enough liquid soap and disposable towels for drying hands, and a bin available
- Avoid eating, drinking or chewing gum while preparing or handling food
- Wear clean clothes, and protective clothing if it's provided
- Always cover any cuts, boils or infected wounds with blue waterproof plasters
- Staff and volunteers **must report** diarrhoea, vomiting, and weeping or infectious wounds to their manager/volunteer coordinator

For more information about identifying and preventing food poisoning and how to report it please see northyorks.gov.uk/environment-and-neighbourhoods/food-safety-and-hygiene/food-poisoning



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Factsheet 4a: Chilling food safely

Chilling Food Safely

Fridge temperatures

- Keep your fridge between **0°C and 5°C**
- Use a **fridge thermometer** and check the temperature **at least once a week** to make sure it's working correctly

Storing chilled food

What should be kept in the fridge?

- **High-risk foods** such as cooked meats, fish, dairy products, prepared salads and cooked vegetable dishes
- **Any food with a Use-By date**

Other important points

- Always follow the **storage instructions** on the label
- Try to keep chilled food **out of the fridge for as little time as possible** during preparation — ideally **no more than 4 hours**
- Avoid leaving the fridge door open for long periods, as this warms the fridge and makes it work harder

Cooling cooked food

- Don't put **hot food** straight into the fridge
- Cool cooked food at room temperature and refrigerate within **1–2 hours**
- To speed up cooling, divide food into **smaller portions**

Leftovers

- Leftovers can be eaten cold if they were cooked properly, cooled quickly and stored in the fridge **within 2 hours**
- Eat leftovers **within 48 hours**, or freeze them if you can't use them in time



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Factsheet 4b: Freezing and defrosting food safely

Freezing Food Safely

Freezer temperatures

- Keep your freezer at **-18°C**
- Freezing **pauses bacterial growth**, but food quality may reduce over time

What you can freeze

- Most foods can be frozen, as long as the label says they are **suitable for freezing**
- You can freeze food **up to midnight on its Use-By date**

Preparing food for the freezer

- Allow hot dishes to **cool before freezing**
- Freeze leftovers and homemade dishes **as soon as possible once cooled**
- Divide food into **smaller portions for faster freezing** and easier defrosting later

What is freezer burn?

- Freezer burn happens when food is exposed to **cold, dry air**, causing dehydration and ice crystals
- It affects **quality, not safety**

When to use frozen foods for best quality

- **Meat:** best within **2–3 months**
- **Baked goods, fruit and vegetables:** best within **3–4 months**

Preventing freezer burn

- Store food in **airtight containers or well-sealed freezer bags**
- **Label everything** to avoid 'UFOs' – Unidentified Frozen Objects!

Defrosting Food Safely

Where to defrost

- The safest place to defrost food is **in the fridge**, as this keeps it out of the Danger Zone (**8–63°C**) where bacteria grow quickly
- Place food in a **container** to catch any drips
- If fridge defrosting isn't possible, use the **microwave defrost setting** immediately before cooking

Timing and safety

- Allow enough time for food to **fully defrost**, especially larger items
- Make sure the **middle of the food is completely thawed** before cooking
- Once defrosted, use within **24 hours**

Other important points

- Always clean surfaces, chopping boards, utensils and hands with **warm, soapy water** after handling raw or thawing meat
- You can **freeze food again after it has been cooked**, but it can only be **reheated once**
- Freezing food in **individual portions** makes it easier to defrost only what you need

Factsheet 5: Food allergies, intolerances & special diets

What is an allergen?

When someone has a food allergy, eating just a small amount of certain foods can **cause illness and even death**. This can include inhaling particulates from food products that become airborne, e.g. mixing nuts.

What is food intolerance?

A food intolerance is when someone has difficulty digesting certain foods and has an unpleasant physical reaction to them. It causes symptoms, such as bloating and stomach pain, which usually happen a few hours after eating the food.

These 14 allergens by law must be declared in food ingredients:

- **Cereals** containing gluten, namely: wheat (such as spelt and Khorasan wheat), rye, barley, and oats
- **Crustaceans** – such as prawns, crabs, and lobsters
- **Eggs**
- **Fish**
- **Peanuts**
- **Soybeans**
- **Milk** and products thereof (including lactose)
- **Tree Nuts**, namely: almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia, and Queensland nuts.
- **Celery**
- **Mustard**
- **Sesame seeds**
- **Sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if concentration of more than ten parts per million)
- **Lupin**
- **Molluscs** – such as mussels and oysters

Your responsibilities

1. Have a clear **allergen system**

- Allergen management must be part of your risk assessment
- A simple allergen protocol should cover the whole process – from receiving food to storage, preparation, repacking and serving
- Allergen information must be easy to find, up to date and consistent

This includes ingredients, additives and processing aids that may still be present in the final food.

For example: sulphites used to preserve dried fruit must still be declared if the fruit is used to make chutney.

2. Provide **accurate information**

- Always give clear and correct allergen information
- Never guess, check the labels or ingredient information
- If unsure, it's safest not to offer the food

3. **Repacked food must be labelled**

- Any food that is repacked must be clearly labelled with:
 - Ingredients
 - Allergens

If you're unsure what needs to be included, contact food.standards@northyorks.gov.uk for advice.

For further advice and access to allergen icons and posters please visit: [food.gov.uk/business-guidance/download-your-allergen-icons-and-postersAgency](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/download-your-allergen-icons-and-postersAgency) For more guidance on managing allergens please see: [food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-checklist-for-food-businesses](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-checklist-for-food-businesses)



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Factsheet 6: Food arriving on site

Examples of food that may arrive on site include:

- Donated items from volunteers (such as homemade cakes or soups)
- Surplus food from organisations like FareShare or local supermarkets
- Produce from community allotments
- Food purchased specifically for the project

When collecting or receiving food

- Please make sure transport is clean and in good condition
- Any containers used for transporting food are clean, in good condition and checked for signs of damage
- Unload food and store it appropriately **as soon as possible** once it arrives

When volunteers provide homemade food, it's recommended they share an ingredients list or recipe. This makes it easier to give accurate allergen information to anyone who needs it.

Always visually inspect all food before accepting it.

Check that:

- Packaging is sealed, intact and not damaged
- Food is clearly labelled, including allergen information
- Check dates on all products:
 - If food is past its 'Use-by' date – **do not accept**
 - Check 'Best before' dates to ensure the food is of sufficient quality

- Temperature of food on delivery is correct: chilled $\leq 5^{\circ}\text{C}$ | frozen $\leq 18^{\circ}\text{C}$

If any of these checks fail, do not accept the food.

Storage after delivery

- Keep all areas clean and tidy
- Store food at the **correct temperatures**
- Keep raw food, cooked food and allergens separate
- Rotate stock using **first in, first out**
- Dispose of any food that passes its use-by date

Donated food

- Low risk foods (tinned foods, jars, packets, bottled drinks etc.) can be accepted if in date, not damaged and unopened
- High risk foods (such as cooked or ready-to-eat foods requiring refrigeration) should not usually be accepted unless the source and safety can be confirmed

Buying in food

- Carry out the **same safety checks** as for donated food. Be particularly aware of **allergen risks**, including **cross contamination/ contamination warnings** on packaging
- For example, some products (such as fish fingers) may be manufactured in factories that also process milk, which presents a risk for individuals with a milk allergy
- If a food or ingredient is replaced by an alternative, ensure you check for any allergens, you should obtain up to date ingredient information from the supplier

Factsheet 7: Using food from allotments

Potential risks from this produce

When using produce grown on allotments, be aware of possible risks such as:

- Soil bacteria (including E. coli)
- Pests
- Fertilisers and animal waste

What to do

- Wash all produce thoroughly with clean drinking water before entering kitchen and food premises

Recommended

A manager or supervisor completes this course to understand relevant hazards:

- Level 2 course in Food Safety for Fresh Produce Field Workers at elearning.cieh.org



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Factsheet 8: Cleaning food areas

Keeping food areas clean is essential to prevent the spread of infection and deter pests. This is best achieved through a simple, systematic cleaning routine. You may need to check this with whoever manages the building.

Cleaning schedules

There should be a cleaning schedule that covers all food areas, including:

- Rooms and storage areas
- Fixtures and fittings
- Equipment
- Work surfaces

The schedule should clearly show:

- What needs cleaning
- How often it must be cleaned
- Who is responsible (person, role and shift)
- How it should be cleaned, including:
 - Method
 - Equipment used
 - Cleaning chemicals or detergents (including correct dilution)

Cleaning records should show:

- Who carried out the cleaning
- When it was done
- Who checked that the cleaning was completed properly

Occasional food preparation

If food is only prepared or handled occasionally, it is sufficient to:

- Thoroughly clean the area before use with hot water and detergent, followed by an antibacterial cleaner or sanitiser
- Use clean cloths and equipment during cleaning

Good practice

- **Clean up spills immediately to prevent food debris building up and to reduce the risk of slips**
- **After every use:**
 - Wash, disinfect and wring out mops
 - Empty, clean and store mop buckets upside down to drain
- **Mop heads:**
 - Store with the head facing upwards to allow them to dry
 - Avoid storing mop heads soaking in water or disinfectant solutions
- Launder detachable mop heads regularly and never wash them in a dishwasher
- **Cleaning equipment and chemicals:**
 - Return all cleaning equipment and chemicals to their storage area after use
 - Store in a separate, locked cupboard or designated area
 - Never store in food preparation or food serving areas

Factsheet 9: Waste disposal, buildings & equipment

Waste Disposal

Correct waste disposal is essential to **prevent pests**, reduce unpleasant smells, and **avoid accidents or fire risks** in food areas.

Safe waste disposal

- Empty refuse containers **regularly** and **at the end of each working day** to prevent overflowing
- Keep refuse containers **clean**, paying special attention to lids
- Tie refuse sacks when full and place them in **lidded containers**
- Wash hands **immediately after handling waste or bins**

Waste storage areas must:

- Have a **well drained, hard (impervious) surface**
- Be kept clean and tidy at all times

Waste oil

Avoid pouring waste oil down drains, instead it should be collected by a **registered waste carrier**.

Pest control

- Keep premises **pest proofed** and free from signs of pests
- Food must always be protected from pest contamination
- If you notice any signs or sightings of pests, **report this as soon as possible** to the building manager or the responsible person

Buildings & Equipment

Keep the food pantry and all food storage areas in **good repair** so they are easy to clean and do not pose a risk to food safety.

- Keep walls, floors, ceilings and surfaces **easy to clean and in good condition**
- Repair any **cracks, holes or flaking paint** promptly to prevent contamination and stop pests from getting in
- Keep all food storage areas **clean, dry and well maintained**
- Ensure all equipment used for food is **clean, suitable for use and in good working order**
- **Remove any damaged or faulty equipment from use** until it has been repaired or replaced



Factsheet 10: Preventing E. coli and similar illnesses

E. coli and similar bacteria can cause serious illness, therefore it's important to follow Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidance when handling raw food (including meat, fruit, and vegetables) and ready to eat food.

Key points:

Keep raw food and ready to eat food separate at all times:

- Use separate containers, utensils and preparation surfaces
- Some equipment may be shared only if it has been thoroughly cleaned in a dishwasher between uses

Wash hands thoroughly

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water between handling raw food and ready to eat food
- Hand gels and gloves are not sufficient on their own and must not replace proper handwashing

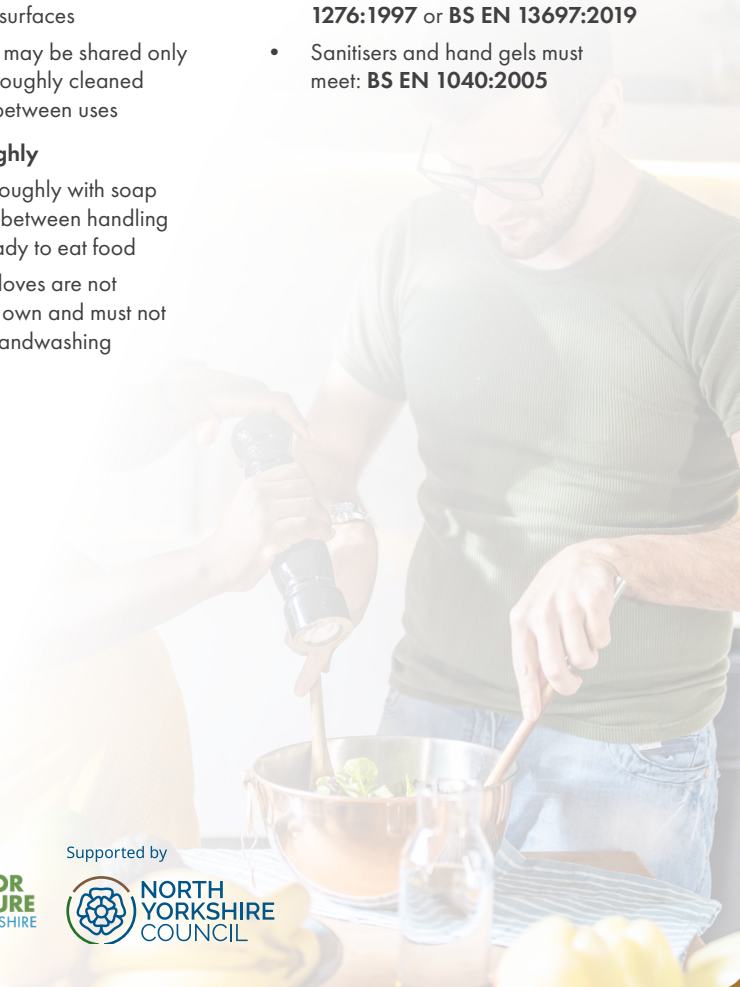
Cleaning and disinfection

When cleaning food preparation areas, equipment or surfaces:

- **Step 1:** Clean using hot soapy water to remove dirt and food debris
- **Step 2:** Disinfect using an approved antibacterial cleaner or sanitiser
- Antibacterial cleaners and disinfectants must meet: **British Standard BS EN 1276:1997** or **BS EN 13697:2019**
- Sanitisers and hand gels must meet: **BS EN 1040:2005**



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Factsheet 11a: Managing cooked food

How to Check Food Is Cooked Properly

Using visual cues

These signs help you tell when food is cooked safely:

- Food should be **steaming hot throughout**
- **For meats like chicken:** cut into the thickest part — there should be **no pink meat**, and the **juices should run clear**
- **For large dishes** like lasagne: **steam** should be rising from the surface and when cut look for steam escaping from the inside

Using a Food Thermometer

- Clean the thermometer **before and after use**
- Check the **centre of the food** for the most accurate temperature
- Avoid touching bones, as readings may be inaccurate
- Be cautious when touching hot food to prevent burns or cross contamination

Safe Cooking Temperatures

The middle of the food should reach **70°C for 2 minutes** or one of the following safe combinations:

- 60°C for 45 minutes
- 65°C for 10 minutes
- 75°C for 30 seconds
- 80°C for 6 seconds

These times ensure harmful bacteria are destroyed.

Cooking Meat Safely

Poultry & Pork (e.g. chicken, turkey, duck and game birds)

These meats can contain bacteria throughout, so must be **cooked all the way through**.

If you don't have a thermometer:

- Cut into the thickest part — **juices should run clear**.
- Check there is **no pink, fleshing meat** remaining as this means the meat is undercooked
- Cut the meat open with a knife to ensure it is **steaming hot** all the way through

Minced Meat & Offal (e.g. burgers, sausages, kebabs, mince, kidneys and liver)

If not using a thermometer:

- Look for **steam** rising from the surface and steam escaping when the food is cut
- Check for **colour changes** — these foods will be **brown when cooked**

Whole Cuts (e.g. steaks and beef joints)

These only carry bacteria on the **outside surface** (except poultry and pork), so can be served with pink in the middle. Before serving:

- **Sear the outside** on a high heat to kill surface bacteria
- Ensure the whole outside has **changed colour**



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Factsheet 11b: Managing cooked food

How to Check Food Is Cooked Properly

Cooking Fish & Seafood

Visual and sensory clues for correct cooking:

- **Fish:** flesh should turn **opaque** and flake easily
- **Shellfish (prawns, scallops, crab and lobster):** flesh becomes **firm and opaque**
- Discard any mussels, clams or oysters that **do not open** during cooking as they may have gone bad
- Strong or unpleasant smells may indicate **spoilage**

Cooking Frozen Vegetables

Some frozen vegetables may contain bacteria and must be **cooked before eating** unless the packaging states otherwise.

If using cold (e.g. in salads), check packaging — if cooking is required, they must be cooked and then cooled before serving. Alternatively, you could use tinned equivalents for cold dishes.

Reheating Leftovers

To reheat leftovers safely:

- Reheat until **steaming hot throughout**
- Only **reheat once**
- Stir during reheating to avoid cold spots
- Smaller portions reheat more evenly

Alternative Cooking Methods

Microwaves, air fryers, slow cookers and similar appliances are safe to use when:

- You follow the **instructions** for both the appliance and the food
- You ensure **good air circulation** (e.g. spacing food in an air fryer)
- You still **check the food is fully cooked**, using a thermometer or visual cues

Distributing packaged, cooked food prepared on site

Cooked food to be taken away

If you wish to provide food in containers, it is important to select appropriate, food grade packaging. This is packaging intended for multiple uses, such as Tupperware or takeaway boxes. This will make sure that the transported food is safe and its quality is maintained.

- **Well-fitting lids** will also minimise any spillage risks from liquid foods such as soups.
- **Clean containers** thoroughly to prevent cross-contamination with germs, allergens and physical contaminants. If they are dishwasher safe, a dishwasher is preferable for cleaning due to the high temperature it reaches. Containers should be washed thoroughly in hot, soapy water if a dishwasher is unavailable.
- Details of **what the food is** and which, (if any) of the **14 regulated allergens** are contained within the food should accompany the food by way of a label attached to the container.
- It is also helpful to **retain original packaging** of ingredients contained within the food, so people with allergies or intolerance can check ingredients themselves.

Factsheet 12: : Safe food distribution and transport

Food distribution

Food cannot be redistributed or consumed after the [Use-by date \(food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/best-before-and-use-by-dates\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/best-before-and-use-by-dates). Food should not be donated after its Use-by date. The only exception is if the food has gone through a safe [freezing \(food.gov.uk/business-guidance/bulk-freezing-of-ambient-and-chilled-foods\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/bulk-freezing-of-ambient-and-chilled-foods) or [cooking \(wrap.ngo/resources/guide/surplus-food-redistribution-guidance\)](https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/guide/surplus-food-redistribution-guidance) process before the Use-by date has passed. In this instance the food should be appropriately re-labelled.

Food with a best before date can be legally redistributed and consumed after this date if it is judged to be of sufficient quality. However, it may not meet the quality expected by the consumer. [wrap.ngo/resources/guide/surplus-food-redistribution-guidance](https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/guide/surplus-food-redistribution-guidance) has visual check guidelines for supplying food past the best before date.

Offering pre-packed and non-prepacked food

Prepacked Foods e.g. Food that is packaged **before** being offered for sale, like products you buy in a supermarket.

What information is required?

Prepacked foods must show:

- The **name of the food**
- A **full ingredients list**
- The **14 regulated allergens clearly emphasised** within the list

If you are serving prepacked products, it's helpful to **keep the original packaging** so people with allergies or intolerances can check ingredients themselves.

Non Prepacked Food (e.g. home baked cakes, meals served on the day)

Food businesses providing **non prepacked foods** must give allergen information for any of the **14 mandatory allergens** included in the food.

How allergen information can be given

You can provide allergen information:

- **In writing** — on menus, notices, cards, or an allergen matrix
- **Verbally**, as long as you have a **clear sign** telling people where to ask for this information

If you are offering homemade items such as cakes or soup, it's recommended that you **keep a note of the ingredients or recipe**. This helps you give accurate allergen information to anyone who needs it.

Transporting food safely

Food must be delivered to consumers **safe and fit to eat**. You must ensure:

- Food is transported in packaging or containers that prevent contamination
- Chilled and frozen foods are delivered in a way that ensures that they do not become unsafe or unfit to eat (for example, by using cool bags and boxes, or refrigerated vans)
- Raw and ready-to-eat foods are kept separately
- Chilled foods that are highly perishable should be kept out of the fridge for the shortest time possible, ideally no longer than 4 hours
- Follow [food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-safety-for-food-delivery](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-safety-for-food-delivery)



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Factsheet Checklist

Factsheet	Completed	Date Completed	Signature <i>I confirm I have read and understood the Food Safety factsheet</i>
Factsheet 1: Getting started	✓		
Factsheet 2: Staff and volunteer training			
Factsheet 3: Personal hygiene when handling and preparing food			
Factsheet 4a & 4b: Chilling, freezing & defrosting food safely			
Factsheet 5: Food Allergies, intolerances & special diets			
Factsheet 6: Food arriving on site			
Factsheet 7: Using food from allotments			
Factsheet 8: Cleaning food areas			
Factsheet 9: Waste disposal, buildings and equipment			
Factsheet 10: Preventing E. coli and similar illnesses			
Factsheet 11a & 11b: Managing cooked food			
Factsheet 12: Safe food distribution and transport			



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