



## Food safety in nurseries

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Under food safety legislation it is the responsibility of those operating the food business to ensure that the food produced is safe in terms of biological, chemical and physical hazards. Food hygiene regulations also require compliance with both general and specific hygiene requirements.

General requirements include keeping the premises and equipment clean and well maintained, ensuring that staff are trained in personal and food hygiene and are properly supervised. Proper pest control and facilities for waste food disposal must also be in place. Specific hygiene requirements include compliance with microbiological criteria, temperature control requirements and maintaining the cold chain.

A documented food safety management system based upon the principles of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is an additional legal requirement. Under this system, potential food safety hazards are identified and controls put into place to ensure the food produced, stored and served is safe to eat.

These food safety management systems are risk-based and need to be proportionate to the business activity. Consequently, in settings

providing care for babies and young children who may be particularly vulnerable to food-borne infections, the controls required must be more rigorous. This is particularly important in relation to microbiological criteria where, even where levels of bacteria are below those set under the regulations, they may still cause illness in vulnerable groups. These risks should be reflected in the food safety management system.

Compliance with food safety and hygiene legislation applies to food prepared within settings and also to the storage and handling of meals provided by outside caterers or packed lunches brought in by parents.

To ensure that the food served is safe, care must also be taken with the preparation of foods containing allergens. All dishes that contain known allergens should be listed and a system designed to make sure that these are not served to children who are allergic to the ingredients.

Non compliance with food legislation can result in prosecution and significant sanctions including fines and community service.

### Action points:

- ensure your staff have up to date food safety training
- review your documented food safety management system
- ensure all staff are aware of children's allergies

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