

 West Lothian Council	Environmental Health		SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL HOME CATERING
	✓	Food Safety/Food Hygiene	NUMBER: FH14
Revised: 29/06/15		Health & Safety	
		Public Health	
Status: TRADE ADVICE		Pollution Control	
Data label: Public		Pest Control/Dog Warden	

Information Sheet FH14

Running a business from home

Introduction

At Environmental Health we are often asked "Can I run a food business from home?"

Although in theory the answer to this question is YES - there are many serious considerations and implications which can easily make the answer NO!

This guidance is intended for anyone who intends to run a food business from their own home. This might include preparing food at home to sell in a shop or from a market, selling to other businesses, a sandwich round business, or even full scale catering. It is becoming increasingly popular to start and run a business from your own home, but when food is involved this can present a whole range of new problems which many people do not properly consider when starting out.

As a general principle, if you prepare high risk foods then the standards required of you will be much stricter than if you only prepare low risk foods.

Running a Business from Home

If a home based business is going to operate successfully and safely then you will need to take account of the following points.

Registration: you will have to register your home as a food business, which is free of charge. The form can be found at the hyperlink below. Please complete and return this to us 28 days before commencing operation.

<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2024/Food-and-Commercial>

Planning permission: you may need planning permission to run a business from home, the contact number is 01506 280000, or at the hyperlink below.

<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/planning-applications>

Business rates: you may have to pay increased rates if you use part of your property for a business. The revenues section information can be found at the hyperlink below

<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/pay-council-tax>

Insurance: You may wish to take out insurance to cover claims against you and may wish to consult a solicitor about this.

Restrictive Covenants: in older properties the deeds may contain clauses preventing you from carrying out certain activities, and running a food business might be one of them. You should consult your solicitor about this.

Mortgage restrictions: if you have a mortgage on the property you should contact your lender to talk to them about your intentions.

Food safety law: the law on food safety the same as any other commercial operation. You will be liable to regular inspection from Officers from Environmental Health, and you may face legal action if you break food hygiene laws. This also applies if you prepare food elsewhere e.g. community hall etc. You may wish to talk to Environmental Health, or your solicitor about the legal aspects and the problems you could face.

Training: Food handlers are required by law to have enough food safety knowledge to allow them to work safely. This may mean undertaking some form of formal training. Information on this is available from Environmental Health.

Your kitchen: domestic kitchens are not designed for commercial use and may need some alterations to comply with food safety laws. Common problems include no wash hand basin in the kitchen set aside for hand wash only, a toilet leading directly into the kitchen area, decorative finished which are not easily cleanable, insufficient storage or refrigeration capacity, inadequate work space to control cross contamination etc.

The standards you will have to meet depend upon a number of factors such as the type and quantity of food you intend to prepare, and what else the kitchen is used for. Since each case and each kitchen is different you will need to talk to your Environmental Health service to decide exactly what is necessary.

In general, we recommend that any business which intends to prepare food in anything more than very small quantities should be operating from properly designed and equipped commercial premises - and not from an ordinary domestic kitchen. The reason for this advice is quite simple. It is very difficult to achieve the standards of hygiene required by law in a domestic kitchen - and if hygiene fails then contamination and food poisoning can quickly follow.

Further help

Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that the food served to your customers is safe. If you would like help, or need any further advice, then please contact us on 01506 280000 or environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk