

PPDS labelling

Will it affect your service?

As Natasha's Law comes into effect, Sally Trice, an expert trainer at Food Allergy Aware, provides a valuable update and guide to ensure your service is compliant.

Care catering is a challenging profession that demands specialist skills and knowledge. The elderly and most vulnerable in our society are more likely to suffer from food poisoning and become ill due to a weakened immune system and the inability to fight infection, and they deserve the highest of standards in catering. This not only means extra vigilance on microbiological control but also careful attention to all aspects of food allergen management, including labelling.

Of course, whilst labelling and allergen information is useful in many instances and is a legal requirement, in a care environment where there are those suffering with dementia, autism, or another disability that impairs judgement, this information does not really help. Instead, the process of ensuring that foods are safe for allergy sufferers to consume falls to the carers and the catering team. It is essential that all team members have food allergy training that is tailored to their particular role and that they are aware of the allergies and requirements of each individual within their care.

The FIR 1169/2011 introduced in 2014 some major changes for the catering industry, notably the provision of accurate allergy information which must be provided for loose foods. It does seem that most caterers are aware of their obligations under the FIC but unfortunately, due to lockdown, there have been instances of some businesses supplying food with little or no information on the packaging and not being registered with their local authority. This is dangerous for the allergy sufferer and extremely challenging and difficult for the local authority to police. The risks to the food allergy sufferer are very high, not only from a food safety (microbiological) point of view but also the fact that unknown or hidden allergens may be present in the food on offer.

FROM 1ST OCTOBER 2021

From 1st October 2021, the UK Food Information Amendment 2019 will apply in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to all businesses selling Prepacked for Direct Sale Foods (PPDS). After determining whether or not a business fits the PPDS criteria and to effectively comply with the regulations, there are four key areas which will need close scrutiny. They are suppliers, stock, training, and implementation.

It is essential that a supplier provides accurate ingredient and allergen information for all the food items they provide. This should include clear communication to the caterer when there are recipe changes or an alternative product brand is supplied. It is a legal requirement to provide accurate and verifiable food allergy information at every stage of the food supply chain. You should also be aware of manufacturers' Precautionary Allergy Labelling (PAL) and ensure information is available and transferred to data sheets as appropriate.

FOOD ALLERGY AWARE

Food Allergy Aware provides, training, auditing, mystery dining and consultancy services for all sectors of the food service industry. Get in contact to see how we can help you!

Contact Sally Trice at:
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HELPFUL INFORMATION

- ▶ There is some very helpful information and advice for caterers on the Food Allergy Aware website:
www.foodallergyaware.co.uk/resources/factsheets
- ▶ The FSA website includes the PPDS checker and recorded webinars with detailed information: www.food.gov.uk/ppds

Allergens are a food safety hazard – i.e. 'something with the potential to cause harm' – and the risk factor is the likelihood of allergenic contamination. Caterers must do everything possible to reduce the risk of allergenic cross-contamination. This of course, is a fundamental part of allergen management and should be a priority in dedicated allergen awareness training, which is essential for all involved in food production and service.

Allergen management should be treated just like any other risk management process in a business, and it is essential that all employees understand the risks posed by allergenic contamination within their establishment.

WHAT IS PPDS FOOD?

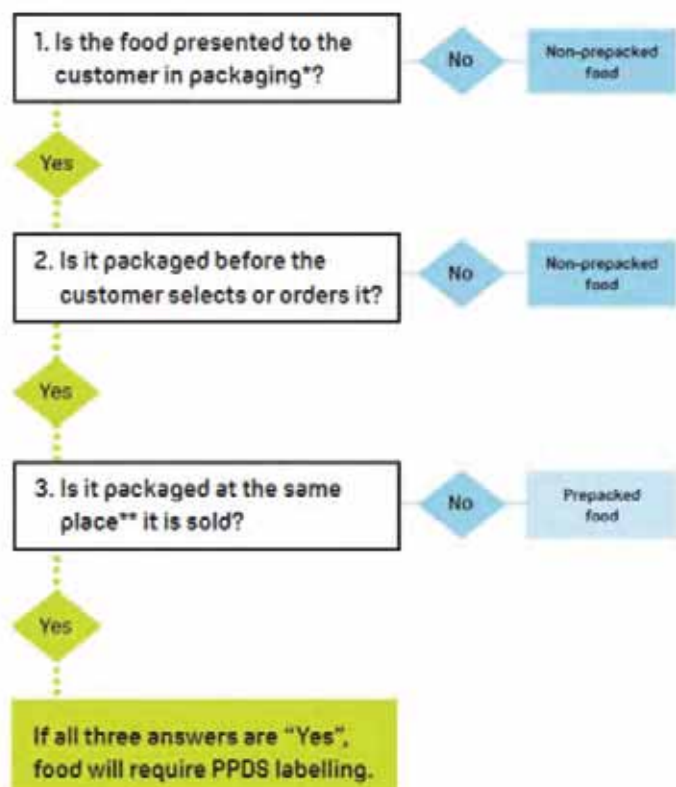
PPDS food is any food item that is packed before being offered for sale by the same food business to the final consumer. This could be on the same premises, on the same site such as a railway station with multiple outlets, or on other premises if food is offered for sale from a moveable or temporary premises, but offered for sale by the same business who packed it.

All PPDS foods must state on the packaging the name of the food and a full ingredient list, and if any of the 14 major allergens are contained within, they must be clearly highlighted, in bold, underlined or in any contrasting colour. All the ingredients of the food must be stated in descending order of weight as recorded at the time of their use in the manufacture of the product. The allergens within the food must be emphasised every time they appear in the ingredients list and all component parts of the food product, such as the bread and filling in a packed sandwich or the dressing with a boxed salad, must be detailed. Contains statements will not be permissible, however, 'may contains' will be as appropriate to manufacture information (ingredient) or after a thorough risk assessment due to in-house preparation.

Pre-ordered packed lunches or sandwiches where the allergens have been clearly stated in advance and the customer has made a choice based on that information, may state the name of the item and the allergens present as best practice on the label. If it is a random choice, then full ingredient labelling must be applied.

There are many software options available for printed labels, which are usually linked to major brands through the main distributors, but there is also the option of handwritten labels. However, this must be done correctly and there is detailed guidance on the size of the label and the print on the FSA website.

It is essential to determine if any the food that you produce falls into the PPDS category as local authorities will be checking that labelling standards comply with the new legislation. Ignorance of the law is no defence and non-compliance is an offence.



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