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**Policy Objective**

To maintain levels of safety in relation to food hygiene and to give direction to all HCWs concerned in the proper receipt, storage, handling, preparation, dispensing and transportation of food within clinical environments. To highlight responsibilities in terms of Scottish and European legislation in relation to food.

See Ice-Making Machine – Standard Operating Procedure  
See: Cleaning Specification for relevant areas.


***Compliance with this policy is mandatory***

NB throughout this document the term SERVICE ASSISTANT refers to  
Domestics, Porters, General Service Assistants and others who are  
employed to undertake catering duties.

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## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES

HCWs who handle food must:

- HCWs must demonstrate due diligence at all times and be aware that it is their legal responsibility to report any working practice or occurrence that could affect the safety or well being of patients, HCWs or members of the general public.
- Be responsible for the safe handling and storage of food wherever it may be required, e.g. wards, occupational therapy kitchens, rehabilitation areas etc.
- Report to the Line Manager if they are unable to follow this policy.
- Report using the incident reporting system any incidents relating to this policy.

Managers must:

- Ensure HCWs follow this policy.
- Ensure HCWs have the resources to follow this policy.
- Ensure HCWs have the opportunity to attend training on this policy.
- Ensure that tasks, e.g. defrosting of refrigerators, checking food is within use by and use by/best before dates, recording temperatures and keeping records, etc., is allocated to a designated person(s). This should be included in contracts where necessary.


ICTs:

- Should work with Support Services in keeping this policy up to date.

All aspects of hospital **food hygiene** are subject to control under legislation, and hospitals, including wards, can be inspected by Environmental Health Officers at any time. These Officers have the power to enforce the provision of the Food Safety Act 1990 and The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995. If food is not handled correctly, legal action can be taken against either the Service or the individual who fails to comply with the law.

### ***Some information regarding what is Food Hygiene:***

1. Protecting food from risk of contamination or re-contamination, including harmful micro-organisms, chemicals and foreign bodies.
2. Preventing any micro-organisms present multiplying to an extent that can result in the illness of consumers or the early spoilage of the food.
3. Destroying any harmful bacteria in the food by thorough cooking or processing.

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## 2. TEMPERATURE CONTROL FOR FOOD

Temperature control regulations (EC 852/2004) apply to all types of food, that without control, might support the growth of harmful (pathogenic) micro-organisms, or the formation of poisons (toxins).

**Apart from the categories of food listed below, all foods require temperature control.**

- Foods that can be kept at room temperature throughout their shelf life, without causing any health risk. This includes items such as confectionery and unopened UHT milk.
- Foods that go through a preservation process, e.g. canning or dehydration.


## 3. REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER MANAGEMENT (NON-CATERING DEPARTMENTS)

- Never overload any refrigerator. Overloading a refrigerator can reduce cold air circulation thereby reducing efficiency. Freezers on the other hand work best when full.
- Never place hot foods in a refrigerator or freezer.
- Refrigerator contents **must not** include eggs unless in an unopened sandwich or uncooked meat.
- Refrigerator contents **can** include within use by date milk, butter, pre-packed sandwiches, unopened soft drinks, pre-packed preserves, e.g. jam, sealed yoghurts and puddings. Soft drinks, etc., that can be resealed may be stored in the refrigerator as long as the contents are kept within the kitchen area.
- Other food stuffs for specific areas are allowed if approved by the ICT.
- Only perishable foods should be stored in the refrigerator. **NO OTHER SUBSTANCES MUST BE STORED IN FOOD REFRIGERATORS.**

## 4. REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER THERMOMETER

The refrigerators in the ward kitchens/pantry are provided for the storage of food which will be consumed by patients. Food belonging to HCWs for personal consumption, must be placed in a container, marked with the HCW's name and dated. Where a dedicated HCW food refrigerator is unavailable, HCWs' food should be kept on an allocated shelf away from patient food. All HCWs must note that patients food will be discarded after each meal service and staff foodstuffs will be discarded after 24hrs.

All refrigerators must have a thermometer placed on the top shelf; this is the warmest part of the refrigerator. The refrigerator temperature should be between 1-5 degrees centigrade.

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A mercury thermometer should never be used in a refrigerator or freezer - it may break and contaminate food.

All refrigerator temperatures should be checked daily and recorded – a person must be designated responsible for this. The records should be kept for 3 months by the Head of the Department.

Ice cream should never be kept over from meal times, or stored in the freezer or refrigerator compartment. If a patient requires ice cream out-with meal times the Catering Department should be contacted. (There may also be ICT approved arrangements for keeping ice cream for up to 24 hours.)

The refrigerator must be fit for purpose. Seek the advice of a member of the ICT when the refrigerator is due for replacement.

If a clinical area has permission from the ICT to keep frozen food (other than ice) the freezer temperature must also be recorded daily. This should be maintained at or below minus18 degrees centigrade. If refrigerators/freezers are not maintained at the required temperature contact local Estates urgently. Discard contents or move food to another refrigerator if the temperatures are non-compliant.


## 5. REFRIGERATOR MAINTENANCE

Service assistants will be required to clean refrigerators weekly and spot check daily. A non-perfumed bactericidal detergent should be used. Service assistants will not dispose of out of date or off food – unless this is specified in their contract - this is the responsibility of a designated person for that ward area.

Service assistants must wear appropriate designated aprons when working in the kitchen area.

## 6. REFRIGERATOR SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Aim to keep the refrigerator between 1 – 5 degrees centigrade.
- Where applicable keep the refrigerator thermometer in the warmest part of the refrigerator (top shelf).
- Check and record the temperature of the refrigerator daily.
- Return perishable foods to the refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible.
- Never overload the refrigerator.
- Foodstuffs, e.g. milk, sandwiches etc must not be kept beyond it's use by date.
- Contact Estates Department if temperature cannot be maintained between 1 – 5 degrees centigrade for refrigerators and minus18 degrees centigrade for freezers.
- A designated member of staff must record the operating temperature of the refrigerator and freezer daily. Temperatures should be recorded first thing in the morning or at night as the temperature of domestic style units rises quickly when the door is opened. These records

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should be kept for 3 months by the Head of the Department in which the refrigerator is located. If the correct temperature cannot be maintained the nursing staff/domestic staff will inform the Estates Department. Alternative appropriate arrangements should be made for any contents until the refrigeration equipment is satisfactorily repaired. The destruction of food may have to be considered.

- A designated member of staff must check that food stored in the refrigerator is within its use by date and clearly labelled. Any out of date or non-labelled food will be disposed of immediately.
- There must be a cleaning/defrosting arrangement in the cleaning specification for all kitchen appliances which should be documented.

## 7. FOOD LABELLING

Legislation states that all foods are correctly labelled so as not to confuse the consumer. The two main terms that should be referred to at the first instance are:

**‘Use By’ – high risk foods**

**‘Best Before’ – low risk foods**

**‘Use By’:** This is commonly referred to as date marking and is used primarily where perishable foods are involved. If the date is exceeded a food safety risk may occur. Foodstuffs such as meat products and ready-made meals fall in to this category. It is an offence to supply/possess food beyond its use by date.

**‘Best Before’:** Foodstuffs carrying the ‘Best Before’ date marking does not mean that the food will be dangerous if the date is exceeded. It means the food will no longer be at its best beyond this date. Canned, frozen and dried foodstuffs will deteriorate over time. The instructions placed on the packaging by the manufacturer should be followed as accurately as possible, in particular the storage instructions. It is not an offence to supply/possess food after its ‘Best Before’ provided it is fit for consumption..


## 8. FOOD HANDLERS AND TRAINING

On appointment all new food handlers will receive departmental induction training on the local Food Hygiene and Safety Policy as well as the department procedures that commensurate with their particular duties. A food handler is defined as anyone who delivers, serves or otherwise handles unwrapped food.

## 9. PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Food handlers must:

- Report any illness especially infected wounds, skin infections, diarrhoea or vomiting to their line manager or supervisor without delay. Anyone suffering from skin conditions should wear vinyl gloves when handling food.
- Report if they may have been in close contact with a family member who has a diarrhoeal illness notifying their supervisor/manager immediately.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with approved (blue) waterproof plasters.

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- Remove all hand jewellery/wrist watch/friendship bands.
- Ensure that hair is always tied back off the shoulder. Food handlers must wear protective head coverings
- Wear a designated plastic apron when serving food.
- Use liquid soap and disposable hand towels for hand hygiene before, during and after handling food.

Failure to observe the basic principles of good personal hygiene may result in direct contamination of food. Food handlers have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that food poisoning organisms and other contaminants are not introduced into the food chain. Any employee who works in a food-handling environment must maintain a high degree of personal hygiene and cleanliness.

#### 10. MEAL RECEIVING AND SERVING PROCEDURES

ON NO ACCOUNT IS FOOD INTENDED FOR THE PATIENT TO BE CONSUMED BY  
HCWs OR SERVICE ASSISTANTS

The following actions are to be adhered to at all times.


#### Hot Foods

##### Hot Trolley/Bain-Marie

- Hot Trolley/Bain-Marie should be clean, empty and switched on at least 1 hour prior to food arriving. Dry heat fan assisted units take up to 15 minutes to reach the necessary holding temperature. If food is delivered in a heated unit, it should be plugged in on arrival. If an external thermometer is available it should be checked after 40 minutes; the temperature should reach a minimum of 72°C. If a thermometer is not present then the temperature probe should be inserted to check that the temperature has reached 72 degrees centigrade.
- Hot meals must be transferred to the Hot Trolley/Bain-Marie immediately at least **within 20 minutes of arrival** on ward/clinical area. (This is to ensure food is maintained at or above the critical temperature of 63 degrees centigrade.) At this point meal temperatures should be taken and recorded, if required.
- Hot Trolleys/Bain-Maries are to be switched off after meals, allowed to cool and then cleaned with a bactericidal detergent.

##### Plated Meal Service

- Ideally **all meals** should be served immediately on arrival or within **30 minutes** of arrival.
- No hot meals should be served to patients after a period of 90 minutes has elapsed from time of delivery.

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- After each meal, **all surplus food is to be disposed** of via the waste disposal unit or returned to the kitchen as soon as possible. On no account is food to be retained for future use without the express written/verbal permission of the Catering Management.

### Cold Foods

- All plated cold foods should be placed in a refrigerator on arrival no later than **within 10 minutes of arrival**.
- Cold foods, i.e. plated salads, should never be stored on top of or near hot food storage appliances.
- Cold foods, for example, pre-packed sandwiches, that are not consumed at the dedicated mealtime must be covered, labelled, dated and refrigerated. Thereafter they must be consumed within 24 hours, or discarded.
- A person must be designated as responsible for discarding any remaining food at the end of a meal service.

### Provisions

- All food stuffs provided must be stored correctly as soon as possible after arrival. (Provisions include butter, jam, cereals, biscuits, sugar, bread etc.).
- All foods provided must be stored in suitable containers to ensure freshness, i.e. salads in plastic containers with lids, bread in breadboxes and biscuits in tins, cereals in pest-proof containers.
- Either the manufacturer or HCWs must label all foodstuffs. All food should be used on a **'first in, first out'** stock rotation. HCWs are to check the date labelling and check 'Use by' or 'Best Before' dates and act accordingly.

**Note: If you are in doubt as to the condition of the food you are about to serve to patients/clients do not serve the food, contact the catering manager for a replacement. On no account should the health and safety of patients/clients be put at risk.**


### 11. COOK CHILL

This section also applies to plated bulk cook-chill food supplied to regeneration areas at ward level. This type of food also includes salads and cold sweets as well as cook-chill foods.

On receipt at regeneration kitchen/ward level, the temperature of all cook-chill foods must be tested and a record kept. Clean the probe using a detergent wipe.

### Critical Temperature Ranges



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1°C to 4°C      acceptable  
5°C to 10°C    MUST be used within 12 hours or destroyed.

0°C to 3°C      Cook Chill Cabinet

NB All ready to eat chilled foods such as cold meats, sandwiches, salads etc must be kept chilled until required, e.g. in the chilled cabinet/delivery insulcart or ward fridge.

### Delivery of Hot Food to Clinical Areas.

- Bulk food once regenerated must be transferred into a suitable hot holding display server unit or hot holding cupboard.
- For food quality reasons service should commence and finish within 20 minutes of final regeneration.
- Food temperature must not be allowed to fall below 65°C prior to service.


The following procedures for the regeneration of cook-chill foods must be adhered to:

- It normally takes 45-60 minutes for cook-chill food to reach a core temperature of 82°C. Food should be served immediately or within 15 minutes of regeneration. The temperatures must be documented.
- If food has not reached 82°C on completion of the regeneration cycle it may be 'boosted' for a further 10-15 minutes.
- If food has not reached the correct temperature of 82°C the Catering/Hotel Services Supervisor must be informed immediately to investigate the cause.
- Following regeneration (in the regeneration kitchen) bulk meals must be transferred to the hot holding unit immediately and service should commence within 15 minutes. The temperature of the food should be documented. The temperature of the food must not be allowed to fall below 65°C prior to service.
- The only food from the food trolley that can be stored at ward level is date-stamped pre-packed products, e.g. sandwiches, rolls, yoghurts. These items should be stored in the chill cabinet or ward refrigerator.
- If a patient is away from the ward at meal times the Catering Department should be notified as soon as possible and an alternative meal will be provided as per local policy.

NB On no account should food which has been regenerated and allowed to cool be reheated for use.

### Ward Kitchen Cook Chill Cabinets

- Temperature control is the single most important factor in preventing food poisoning. The correct operation temperature of the cook chill cabinet must be between 0°C and 3°C.
- A designated member of staff must record the operating temperature of the chill cabinet daily. This is done either by reading the 24-hour temperature graph if fitted or by

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probing stored food from the top, middle and bottom shelves. If the correct temperature cannot be maintained the Hotel Services Supervisor or Manager must be contacted immediately.

- All use by dates must be checked daily. Out of date food or unlabelled food must be discarded immediately.
- All food must be covered to prevent drying out, cross contamination and absorption of odour.
- Only cook chill foods are to be stored inside the cook chill cabinet.
- The chill cabinet must not be overloaded. Free air movement will help maintain a temperature of between 0°C and 3°C.
- The chill cabinet door must never be left open any longer than necessary.
- Hotel/Domestic Services staff will clean the chill cabinets weekly. This will be done in accordance with the Hotel/Domestic Services cleaning schedule and will be documented. Any out of date food must be discarded immediately.
- Dietetic supplements, juice etc must never be stored in the chill cabinet.
- Food for staff consumption must not be stored in the chill cabinet.

## 12. READY PREPARED MILK FEEDS

Milk for feeds should be supplied in single-use containers. Once opened it should be used and then discarded - not be left to be used at a later time.

The milk stock should be rotated to ensure that milk is not wasted.

Store in accordance with manufacturer's instructions – off the floor.

Before use always check the packaging is intact and the milk is within expiry date.

Use with single use teats as required. (Single-patient-use teats may be used for babies with special needs. See local SOP for decontamination).

## 13. IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PATIENTS


Areas where patients are severely immunocompromised must have additional Standard Operating Procedures regarding restriction of high-risk foods both within the hospital and when in the community – if the patient remains immunocompromised.

## 14. FOOD BROUGHT IN FROM HOME OR OTHER OUTSIDE ESTABLISHMENTS

Visitors must be discouraged from bringing food into hospital. If food is brought in it must be pre-packed. It should be labelled with the name of the patient and the date. It should be stored within the clinical area refrigerator for no longer than twenty-four hours, after which it should be discarded or used within its shelf life if shorter.

The bringing in of hot food from outside establishments is discouraged. However if patients are insistent they should be made aware of any risk and this should be documented in their case note.

Patients' fruit should be washed prior to consumption.

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## 15. WATER COOLERS

Water coolers if used must be cleaned, sanitised and maintained according to the manufacturers instructions. There should be documented evidence of this process. If used, water coolers that are connected to the mains supply are the preferred option.

## 16. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

It is essential that any premises where food is stored, prepared or served be maintained in a serviceable, clean condition with intact surfaces and without risk to patients, HCWs and members of the public.

### 16.1. PESTS

All HCWs must be vigilant and alert to signs of infestation.

Signs of Infestation:

- droppings,
- damage including gnawing marks in food, packaging, wires etc.,
- unusual smells.

Types of Food Pests:

- rodents - rats and mice,
- insects - flies, wasps, cockroaches, ants, silver fish etc.,
- birds – sparrows.

To reduce the risk of infestation it is important that good housekeeping is employed.

- Any sign of possible infestation must be reported to **Support Services/Facilities as soon as it is identified.**

To reduce the risk of infestation it is important that good housekeeping is employed.

## 17. HAND HYGIENE


Please refer to the Infection Control Manual for the Hand Hygiene Policy.

## 18. BACTERICIDAL DETERGENT AND CLEANING

Only disposable cloths to be used.

Within all kitchens the surfaces must be cleaned using a solution of bactericidal detergent and hot water.

There must be Standard Operating Procedures for the use of replacement mop heads for kitchen use.

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## 19. FOOD CONTAMINATION / COMPLAINTS

Any customer complaint must be recorded and the Catering Manager must be contacted immediately. If foreign bodies are to be found in the food a customer complaint record must be completed.

## 20. LIQUIDISERS

Liquidisers should never be used in clinical areas.

## 21. ICE MAKING MACHINES

Please refer to SOP.


## 22. FOOD HYGIENE DO AND DON'TS

### Do

- Return to the Kitchen/Catering Manager, food deemed unacceptable due to poor condition or contamination. This is important if pests or foreign bodies are discovered or if food temperatures do not comply.
- Take drinking water from a designated drinking water port only.
- Clean up food spillages immediately and leave kitchens clean and tidy at all times.
- Check and record refrigerator and freezer temperatures daily.
- Keep all relevant recording forms for a period of three months (Department Head).
- Cover, date and label all patient and HCWs' foods held within the refrigerator.
- Wear a designated blue disposable plastic apron when handling, preparing and serving food.
- Store food and fluids in covered pest proof containers.
- Remove food waste from the kitchen after every meal.
- Where required keep refrigerated, sauces etc. that according to Manufacturer's Instructions require refrigeration after opening, e.g. tomato ketchup. Discard these as per Manufacturer's Instructions.

### Do not

- Store hot food from trolley or tray service for later use.
- Reheat patient or resident meals. If food temperatures are not satisfactory then the supplying kitchen must be contacted immediately so that a substitute meal may be supplied.
- Use wooden implements or chopping boards in kitchens.
- Keep raw food in ward refrigerators.
- Store medical items within the kitchen refrigerator.

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### 23. AUDIT

Criteria	Score
<b>Refrigerator</b>	
Food stored in the refrigerator is labelled and dated and has been in the refrigerator for <24 hours unless unopened, prepacked and within expiry date .	
Food stored in the refrigerator is within 'use by' date e.g. butter, milk.	
Non-food items are not stored in the refrigerator e.g. ice packs, drugs.	
The refrigerator temperature is 1-5°C.	
The refrigerator temperature is recorded daily.	
Foods, which require refrigeration, e.g. milk, are not left on worktops.	
No uncooked/unpasteurised food is present in the refrigerator.	
<b>Cleaning</b>	
The refrigerator is clean.	
Kitchen work surfaces are clean.	
Bactericidal liquid detergent is available.	
The kitchen mop in use is as per SOP.	
<b>General</b>	
Patients' food is not reheated in the microwave oven unless ICT approved.	
Crockery is not chipped or cracked.	
Kitchen work surfaces are in a good state of repair with intact smooth surfaces.	
HCWs wear correct protective clothing when serving meals e.g. plastic aprons and hats (if local hospital policy).	
Inappropriate items are not stored on worktops or trolley.	

Action plan:

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Fed back to:

Auditor:

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## **24. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND THE FOOD HYGIENE REGULATIONS**

### **24.1. HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974**

The Organisation believes that the provision of high standards of health, safety and welfare are fundamental to health care. The Organisation will therefore make all reasonably practicable endeavours to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations when carrying out its activities.

### **24.2. THE FOOD SAFETY ACT 1990**

This is the most important Act relating to the sale of food for human consumption and as such is applicable to all food premises and business in the UK. In addition to strengthening enforcement procedures and increasing penalties, it is an enabling Act to allow Ministers to issue regulations for securing food safety.

The Act covers all stages of food production and safety from the farm to the point of sale and affect everyone working in the production, processing, storage, distribution and sale of food.

### **24.3. EC REGULATIONS 852/2004**

These regulations are applicable to food businesses in Scotland, England and Wales. The Regulations cover all stages of food production and its main objective is to protect human health.


The Regulations therefore place extensive responsibilities on food businesses. In particular, they introduce three important new requirements into UK Food Hygiene Law:

- All Businesses must operate hygienically.
- Businesses must identify steps in their activities that are critical to ensuring food safety and ensure that adequate food safety procedures are identified, implemented, maintained and reviewed.
- All food handlers must be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities.

EC Regulations 852/2004 set temperature control standards for food that is likely to support the multiplication of pathogenic micro-organisms or the formation of toxins.

In determining, i.e. whether there is a risk in relation to food safety, we must consider: -

- The nature of the food.
- Manner in which it is handled and packed.
- Any process to which the food is subjected before supply to the consumer.
- The conditions under which it is displayed or stored.

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There is a general requirement that raw food, ingredients and intermediate and finished products must not be kept at a temperature that would lead to a risk to health and there are legal requirements for monitoring refrigerator/freezer temperatures at manufacturers and retail outlets.

Apart from some specified exceptions, food that is likely to support the multiplication of pathogenic micro-organisms must be stored at below 5 degrees centigrade (this is not a legal requirement but good practice). If such food is to be kept hot, it must be held at 63 degrees centigrade or above. Cooked food that is to be eaten used or stored cold must be cooled as rapidly as possible.

The Food Labelling Regulations 1996 deal with date marks and except for a number of exempted products, food must be labelled with an appropriate “Use by” or “Best before” date. See [Food Labelling](#).

The Quick-frozen Food Regulations 1990 ensures that quick frozen food must be date marked and labelled with temperature and storage information.

## 25. EVIDENCE BASE

1. Sprenger, R.A., (2002). Hygiene for Management: focus on food safety. 9<sup>th</sup>Ed. Highfield Publications. Doncaster.
2. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
3. The Food Safety Act 1990 & Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006.
4. EC Regulations 852/2004 (Hygiene & Foodstuffs).
5. The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995.
6. Specific Hygiene Rules for Food of Animal Origin. Regulation 853/2004
7. The Food and Environmental Protection Act 1985.
8. The Imported Food Regulations 1984.
9. Official Feed & Food Controls (Scotland) regulations 2006
10. The Food Labelling Regulations 1994.
11. Food Labelling Regulations

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