

Food Labelling Changes and How it Affects You

From 1 October 2021 the requirements for labelling pre-packaged food for sale direct to customers, will change across the UK.

Our responsibilities

Our responsibility to ensure the food we provide is safe and that allergen information is readily available to enable our customers to make safe and informed food choices, including parents applying for special dietary requirements for their primary school child, a secondary pupil making a lunch choice, or a customer selecting a food item at our coffee shops, restaurants, or cafes.

How we have prepared for Natasha's Law

HC3S has been preparing for this change, known as Natasha's Law, and is ready ahead of 1 October; over 900 staff have been trained to Level 2 allergen training so they are allergen aware and can protect our customers, and specific training has started to be rolled out to staff with regard to Natasha's Law.

All food we sell as pre-packed ready for customers to purchase, will be brought in directly from our approved suppliers and will be pre-labelled in accordance with the new labelling legislation. In addition, we will be undertaking our own internal audits to closely monitor food labels.

How will this affect our customers?

The new labelling requirements will help protect consumers by providing potentially life-saving allergen information on packaging. This means there will be full visibility as we will be required to include the name of the food and a full ingredients list on packaging and emphasise allergenic ingredients. In our secondary schools and colleges, this includes emphasising in the ingredients list any of the 14 allergens used in the product, as required by food law.

What food does this apply to?

It applies to a single item of food that is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to customers and is presented to the customer in this packaging before it is ordered or selected. This can include food that consumers select themselves, for example from a display unit, as well as products kept behind a counter.

Examples of food that our schools may provide in accordance with Natasha's law include:

- breakfast pots
- packaged sandwiches, paninis, wraps, sushi or salad boxes

What is not included in the labelling for Natasha's law?

Food that is not in packaging or placed into packaging or plated at the customer's request. For example, this could include products such as:

- loose food (not pre-packed)
- unpackaged cakes, and unpackaged food behind a glass display counter or in a hot hold cupboard
- if the salad bar is self-service, and the student plates it onto a plate or into a box themselves this is non-prepacked food
- meals made or plated to order.

What happens with food for packed lunches taken on school trips

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If packed lunches are made on school premises in anticipation of an event, such as a school trip, they would normally be pre-ordered and so would not be classed as pre-packed or fall under the new legislation.

