

Public Protection, Environmental Health
Civic Offices, New Road, Grays
Essex, RM17 6SL

Essex Partnership University Trust
Thurrock Community Hospital
Long Lane,
Stifford Clays,
Essex
RM16 2PX

Our Ref: CJC/08/12/2023

Phone: 01375 652110

E-Mail: foodsafety@thurrock.gov.uk

Date: 8th December 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RETAINED REGULATION (EC) No. 852/2004
FOOD SAFETY & HYGIENE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2013
Premises: Meadowview Ward and Gloucester Ward, Thurrock Community Hospital,
Long Lane, Stifford Clays, Essex, RM16 2PX**

I refer to my inspections of Meadowview Ward's kitchen on 30th November 2023, and Gloucester Ward's kitchen on 6th December 2023.

Whilst standards found at Meadowview Ward were very good, I was concerned about the conditions found on Gloucester Ward. Action is necessary to comply with current legislative requirements.

Meadowview Ward has a HACCP in place, which if followed, will ensure food is safe. Unfortunately, staff were not following the HACCP. Food handlers had taken it upon themselves to store food in fridges located externally to the main kitchen area, not covered by the HACCP, and failed to monitor the temperature of this fridge. It was also overfilled with food items, preventing the food from reaching a safe temperature. I would not expect to see this occurring in such a high-risk food business.

As I am sure you are aware, there have been outbreaks of Listeria in hospitals associated with sandwiches leading to deaths of patients. While the source of Listeria was in the sandwiches manufactured off site, listeria grows at very low temperatures, which is why it vital that safe temperatures are maintained throughout the time the sandwiches are received and stored. Further information can be found in the Public Health England October 2020 publication '*Investigation into an outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes infections associated with hospital-provided pre-prepared sandwiches, UK May to July 2019*' which is available online at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fbd0f898fa8f559e9ea363e/2019-05-Listeria-CC8-Outbreak-Report.pdf> - page 20 (Section 4.3.4) refers to the role of hospital catering facilities.

Twenty-two sandwiches and two salads were tightly stacked to fit onto the second shelf of the fridge, causing observed temperatures when probing these to range from 6.2°C to 7.6°C, the labelling on the sandwiches s specified temperature range of 0°C and 5°C. Condensation was

also identified in many of the sandwich packs, suggesting that they were previously held at a colder temperature before warming up – likely caused by the different conditions they were held in during transit and within the fridge.

I was advised the sandwiches had been delivered the previous day and were stored in the Occupational Therapist (OT) fridge for a day before being moved to the main Gloucester Ward kitchen fridge to be served to patients. The food handler I spoke with understood my concerns with this process, and voluntarily surrendered the sandwiches and salads that were stored in this fridge. Patient yoghurts are also stored in the same fridge, but advice was given to move these to the temperature-checked main kitchen fridge, as your HACCP procedures state chilled foods should be kept at 5°C or below.

I am disappointed that no one within the Trust had identified the HACCP procedures were not being followed on Gloucester Ward, which was allowing ready-to-eat food to be stored in an unsafe manner before being given to hospital patients. If Gloucester Ward was being scored alone, it would be given a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme score of 1. However, as Essex Partnership University Trust are the Food Business Operator for both Meadowview and Gloucester Wards, the overall rating covering both these Wards has been scored as:

2 (Improvement Necessary)

To follow up on my inspections, I wanted to summarise the legal and recommended requirements I have made across both inspected Wards which can be found in the following Schedules A and B.

Schedule A details work needed to comply with the law. This work, or work considered equally effective **must** be completed.

Schedule B lists those matters which though not legally required, are considered to be good practice. You should view these recommendations as important guidance for developing safe, hygienic practices.

A copy of this letter will be kept on file and be referred to upon the next inspection. This letter covers the points inspected on the date of the visit and does not indicate compliance in areas not inspected at that time.

Should you wish to discuss this letter or need any further information or advice, please contact me..

Yours Sincerely,



Lead Food Officer

Schedule A
Contraventions of Retained Regulation (EC) 852/2004
(Unless indicated otherwise)

1) Chilled/Frozen/Ambient Storage

Gloucester Ward - On 5th December, the main kitchen fridge temperature was checked and found to be compliant with both legal requirements your HACCP procedures. Temperature check records were up-to-date. However, patient food was also being stored in a fridge located in the Occupational Therapist (OT) kitchen. The temperature of this fridge was not being monitored and it was filled inappropriately, as air-flow was restricted by the over-filling of the second shelf with pre-packed sandwiches. Our own temperature checks confirmed the sandwiches stored in this fridge were between 6.2°C and 7.6°C.

Foods stored in this fridge are high-risk and ready-to-eat, and will support the growth of food poisoning bacteria including Listeria. Your HACCP procedures state chilled foods are to be stored at or below 5°C, therefore your fridge must operate at a temperature that will keep foods at or below this temperature, or in accordance with the food manufacturer's instructions. The sandwich packaging required refrigeration at temperatures between 0°C and 5°C, which was exceeded either as a result of the inability of the fridge to reach the required level of refrigeration, or due to the method of filling the fridge. It was agreed at the time of the visit that the fridge would no longer be used.

Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 Schedule 4 para 2 (1)

This matter should be complied with immediately, including ensuring staff follow the HACCP procedures.

2) Shelf Life

Gloucester Ward – On 5th December 2023, I noted that there was an opened container of coleslaw in the fridge labelled to inform it was opened on 1st December 2023. The container for the coleslaw stated that once opened, it should be used within 72 hours, which had passed. The coleslaw was voluntarily surrendered prior to Officers leaving the kitchen.

The use-by date is superseded if a food label's manufacturer instructions indicate an alternative shelf life once opened. Manufacturer instructions should be followed.

Requirement of Retained Regulation (EC) 852/2004 Article 5 para 1

This matter should be complied with immediately.

3) Deliveries

Gloucester Ward – On 5th December 2023, I reviewed invoices for deliveries of frozen and fresh food deliveries. The Raynor Foods invoice evidenced a temperature check on delivery for sandwiches, but no such checks could be evidenced for the delivery of frozen food. I was informed by a food handler that the Housekeeper may use an infrared probe to check the temperature present in the freezer. To demonstrate you are complying with your policy of checking temperatures on delivery, you should ensure staff are following HACCP procedures.

Requirement of Retained Regulation (EC) 852/2004 Article 5 para 1

This matter is to be complied with immediately..

4) Calibration of probe thermometers

Meadowview Ward - In accordance with your procedures, the probe thermometer should be checked regularly for accuracy. As a helpful reference in doing your own checks; pure water and ice mixture should measure between -1°C to $+1^{\circ}\text{C}$, and pure boiling water should measure between 99°C and 101°C . If your thermometer appears not to be working correctly it should be replaced or sent for service. For further advice refer to the manufacturer's instructions.

Requirement of Retained Regulation (EC) 852/2004 Article 5 para 1

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**Schedule B
Advice and Recommendations**

1) Pest Control

Gloucester Ward – No evidence of pests was found in the kitchen, however advice was given regarding access to the kitchen from flying pests. These pests carry food poisoning bacteria and can contaminate food and food surfaces that they land on. The windows in the kitchen were left ajar, which could provide easy access for such pests. To prevent losing a source of natural ventilation, I recommend fitting insect-proof screens which can easily be removed for cleaning.

(Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter II Para. 1(d))

Publication of food safety inspections

All food inspections are carried out in accordance with the Food Safety Act 1990 and the European Communities Act and their regulations; also in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance. Following the inspection, your business will be risk rated in accordance with the above Food Law Code of Practice. The three major components of public interest in this risk rating score (food practices, structure and equipment and confidence in the management of the business) are then translated into an award rating which is made available to the public on the following website: www.food.gov.uk/ratings.

You will be informed of your food hygiene rating and provided with a FHRS sticker which you are encouraged to display in your premise. You will also be given a "right to reply", which can be placed on the website, e.g. if you have carried out significant improvements since your inspection. Full details of Thurrock Council's policy for publishing risk rating scores are available on www.thurrock.gov.uk/food. If you would like this in hard copy please contact foodsafety@thurrock.gov.uk or telephone the officer on the telephone number given at the top of this letter.

Please note that, subject to the Data Protection Act, further details of inspections may be divulged to members of the public under the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#).