

Kitchen Compliance Mini-Guide

What Environmental Health Officers look for in your kitchen



EHO inspections cover three main areas. Here's what they check and what tends to catch kitchens out. We've put this together from years of working with UK food businesses, so you can walk into any inspection with confidence.

01 Food Hygiene & Safety

How food is stored, prepared, cooked and served. Inspectors check allergen controls, date labelling and that raw and ready-to-eat food are properly separated, for example, raw chicken must never be stored above salads or cooked foods in the fridge. Temperature records for chilled and cooked food are also checked here.

02 Temperature Control

Chilled food must be kept below 8°C (aim for 1 to 4°C in practice). Hot food held during service must stay above 63°C at all times. Bacteria can double every 20 minutes at the wrong temperature, which is why inspectors take this seriously. They expect to see temperature logs filled in daily, not just when a visit is due.

03 Kitchen Structure & Equipment

Surfaces must be smooth, non-porous and easy to clean. That's why stainless steel is the commercial standard, it naturally ticks all three boxes.

Cracked tiles, damaged fridge door seals, worn prep tables and wooden surfaces are all flagged because bacteria can hide in gaps and scratches that can't be properly cleaned out.

04 Handwashing & Sinks

A dedicated handwash sink is a legal requirement, completely separate from food prep and washing up. It must have soap and paper towels available at all times. You can't use it for anything else, even rinsing veg. This catches a lot of kitchens out, especially those that have grown organically over time.

05 Management & Records

Temperature logs, cleaning schedules, your food safety management system and staff training records.

Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) is the free pack most small kitchens use, it's a simple folder of daily checklists from the Food Standards Agency.

A clean kitchen with no paperwork will still score low here. The records prove that safe practices are what you do every day.

Before the Inspector Arrives

Run through this regularly — not just when an inspection is due



Food & Hygiene	Kitchen & Equipment	Records
☐ Fridges & freezers at correct temperatures	☐ Prep surfaces clean and undamaged	☐ Temperature logs up to date
☐ Temperature readings logged daily	☐ Fridge door seals intact	☐ Cleaning schedule signed off
☐ Hot holding above 63°C during service	☐ Dishwasher at sanitising temperature	☐ Food safety management system current
☐ Raw and ready-to-eat food stored separately	☐ Floors & hard-to-reach areas cleaned	☐ Staff training records available
☐ Colour-coded boards used correctly	☐ Ventilation filters clean and working	☐ Pest control docs in order
☐ Date labels on all stored food	☐ Waste stored correctly	☐ Delivery & supplier records kept
☐ Allergen info accurate and accessible	☐ Pest control measures in place	☐ Previous inspection actions completed

The right equipment makes compliance easier

Commercial refrigeration

Your fridges and freezers need to hold consistent temperatures. If a unit is drifting, it shows up in your logs before it shows up in a conversation with an inspector. At NCE, we stock both new and tested used commercial refrigeration, all checked before sale. A quality used unit is often the most practical choice for smaller kitchens on a budget.

Commercial dishwashers

Manual washing up is harder to get consistently right, water temperature, detergent and rinse cycles all need to be correct every single time. A commercial dishwasher removes that guesswork. It washes and rinses at fixed temperatures that sanitise properly, regardless of how rushed the service is. Worth it for the reliability alone.

Stainless steel prep surfaces

Food contact surfaces must be smooth, non-porous and easy to clean, that's exactly why stainless steel became the commercial kitchen standard. Wooden surfaces, cracked worktops and surfaces with rough joins give bacteria somewhere to hide that you can't clean out properly. If your prep tables are looking tired, NCE can help you sort a replacement without breaking the bank.

Hot holding equipment

If food sits between cooking and service, it must stay above 63°C throughout, not just at the start of service, but right to the end. A bain marie or heated display that's underpowered or poorly maintained will drop below temperature during a busy rush. That's a food safety issue and an inspection issue. If you're not sure your unit is up to it, we're happy to advise.

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