



This guidance document contains Assured Advice under the ACS Primary Authority Scheme. For more details visit www.acs.org.uk/assured-advice

ACS | advice

MANAGING FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE

All convenience stores sell food, either wrapped, loose or heated to their customers. Food safety and hygiene laws can be seen as complex and this guide provides an overview of what is expected of you as a business owner.

1. INTRODUCTION

Main principles

Your obligations to customers with regard to food safety and hygiene are mainly contained in the Food Safety Act 1990, Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC).

The most important things to know about selling food are:

- The food you sell must be safe for customers to eat.
- Allergenic ingredients must be listed for customers to see.
- You need to have a 'documented food safety management system' in place to ensure that your business complies with procedures in place.
- Your staff must be trained on how to comply with the law.
- Your business MUST be registered with your local council environmental health office before it can sell food.

Getting started

The first step to managing food safety and hygiene is to consider the foods you are selling or wish to sell, and how they are being stored. Some of the most common issues are set out on pages 4-5 and this guide includes a template food management system for you to download and complete.

Generally speaking, the more involvement you have in the preparation of food (making sandwiches, heating pies) the more you will have to do.

Getting outside help

Any person starting or taking over a food business should contact the environmental health service at their local council. The council will require you to register with them and should also be able to provide you with a range of additional advice.

Written food management system

You must have a written food safety management system in place which you can download here: <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbretail>

You will need to complete the safe methods sections so that the system reflects your own practices.

You may already have a system in place, or be part of a chain that provides this for you.

2. WATER REFILLS

If you are a business that sells alcohol for consumption on the premises, you are required to provide water free of charge for customers on request. For stores that do not sell alcohol, or only sell for consumption off the premises, there are no requirements. However, providing water for customers that want to fill up their own containers can be a good way to demonstrate your commitment to the environment.

For retailers that are looking into providing a facility for water refills, there are a number of areas to consider:



Types of water refill point

There are two main ways to offer a water refill service to customers. The first involves a member of staff taking a customer's container and filling it up from a tap somewhere in a staff area, while the second involves providing either a tap or facility on the shop floor where customers can fill up themselves. For retailers looking to provide a water refill facility on the shop floor, it is important to minimise the potential of spillage so as not to cause health and safety issues. When siting the water station, take into consideration general use, including the potential for overspill and splashing.



Security concerns

You should consider whether to offer a water refill service during times when the business is operating with only one member of staff on the shop floor, for example on a forecourt during the night shift. Where a water refill service requires a member of staff to leave the till point, either to fill up at a point behind them or in a different room, this leaves the store exposed to potential theft.



Acceptable containers

It is recommended that members of staff only accept clean containers when providing a staff-operated water refill service. Manufacturers of single use plastic bottles recommend that they are not to be refilled, but this is not a legal requirement and so is at your discretion as to whether you accept them to be refilled. Dirty containers should not be accepted as they raise potential hygiene issues. For all containers it is recommended that the container should not come into direct contact with the tap to avoid any risk of cross contamination.



Mains fed tap water

Drinking water

All mains fed tap water in the UK and Ireland is safe to drink. If you are providing a water refill service, you should ensure that the tap you provide water from is mains fed and is not fed from a tank on the premises.



Commercial considerations

If you do not sell alcohol on the premises for immediate consumption, there is no requirement for you to provide water free of charge. While the vast majority of businesses that provide water refills do so free of charge, there is no obligation to do so and you may want to consider whether to require customers to make a purchase in store to be able to fill up their container for free, or whether to charge for the service itself.

Risk Assessment

It is recommended that a risk assessment is carried out to take into account the issues raised in this document.

3. HOW TO MANAGE FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE RISKS

Look closely at your shop and stock area and think about what the food safety and hygiene risks are. Do you have the correct and enough storage space for refrigerated, frozen and shelf stable products? Is there adequate pest proofing and waste storage / removal? Think about whether you have the right procedures in place. Think about whether your members of staff are sufficiently trained for the food safety and hygiene tasks that they may be asked to carry out in your shop. This illustration sets out the main areas that a convenience store must address regarding food safety. It is not intended to be a definitive list.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Food temperatures should be checked daily to ensure that food is being kept below 8 degrees C and records of these checks must be maintained.

HANDLING CASH

In practice the risks of transferring pathogenic bacteria from handling foods and cash is very slim, but it is a common complaint and good practice to separate these activities. Where possible separate staff should handle open high risk foods and cash / card readers. If this is not possible staff must wash hands in between handling cash / card readers and open foods, or separate the two activities using gloves or utensils such as tongs, spoons or food wrapping, to handle food.

HOT FOODS

Hot foods must be stored or displayed at temperatures above 63 degrees C, a probe thermometer should be used and records of these checks maintained. If the hot food is displayed at temperatures below 63 degrees C then it must be disposed of within two hours.

BEST BEFORE / USE BY DATES

Most prepacked foodstuffs must carry a date of minimum durability. This can be either a 'best before' date or a 'use by' date. These date marks must be in a prominent place on the label, if this is difficult the manufacturer must state where the date can be found, for example best before: see date on lid.

A 'use by' date must be used for food which is highly perishable and is likely, after a short period, to become an immediate danger to human health. Examples are cooked meat and some ready prepared meals. 'Use by' dates are made up of either a day and month or a day, month and year. It is an offence to sell or display for sale any food after its 'use by' date.

'Best before' dates are an indicator of quality not safety. Food that has passed its best before date may be sold at a reduced price to prevent wastage.

CHILLED STORAGE

Ready to eat foods such as sandwiches, milk, yoghurts, cheese, cooked meats and ready meals must all be kept below 8 degrees C. Temperature checks should be carried out with a probe on a daily basis and recorded.

HAND WASHING

Staff toilets must have a wash basin with antibacterial soap, hot and cold running water and suitable hand drying facilities.

STORE ROOM

Food must not be kept on the floor of the store room - shelving, cupboards or roll cages must be used instead.

WASTE

Keep waste well away from food. Waste must be stored in lidded containers to avoid contamination with food.

COVERING FOODS

All foods must be protected from the risk of contamination. This means it must be stored wrapped, boxed or in lidded containers. Food left open on display must be either protected by a screen or be covered by a lid, mesh cover or cling-film, etc.

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Raw food (such as uncooked sausages) and ready to eat foods (such as sandwiches and pies) must be stored and handled separately. Members of staff must wash their hands with antibacterial soap between handling raw food and ready to eat food.

HOT FOODS

If you are cooking on site, ensure food is cooked to a core temperature of 75 degrees C for at least 30 seconds. A probe thermometer should be used to check temperatures and results recorded.

PEST CONTROL

All food areas must be free from pests, including vermin and flying insects. You should seek the advice of a professional pest control company.

WEIGHING SCALES

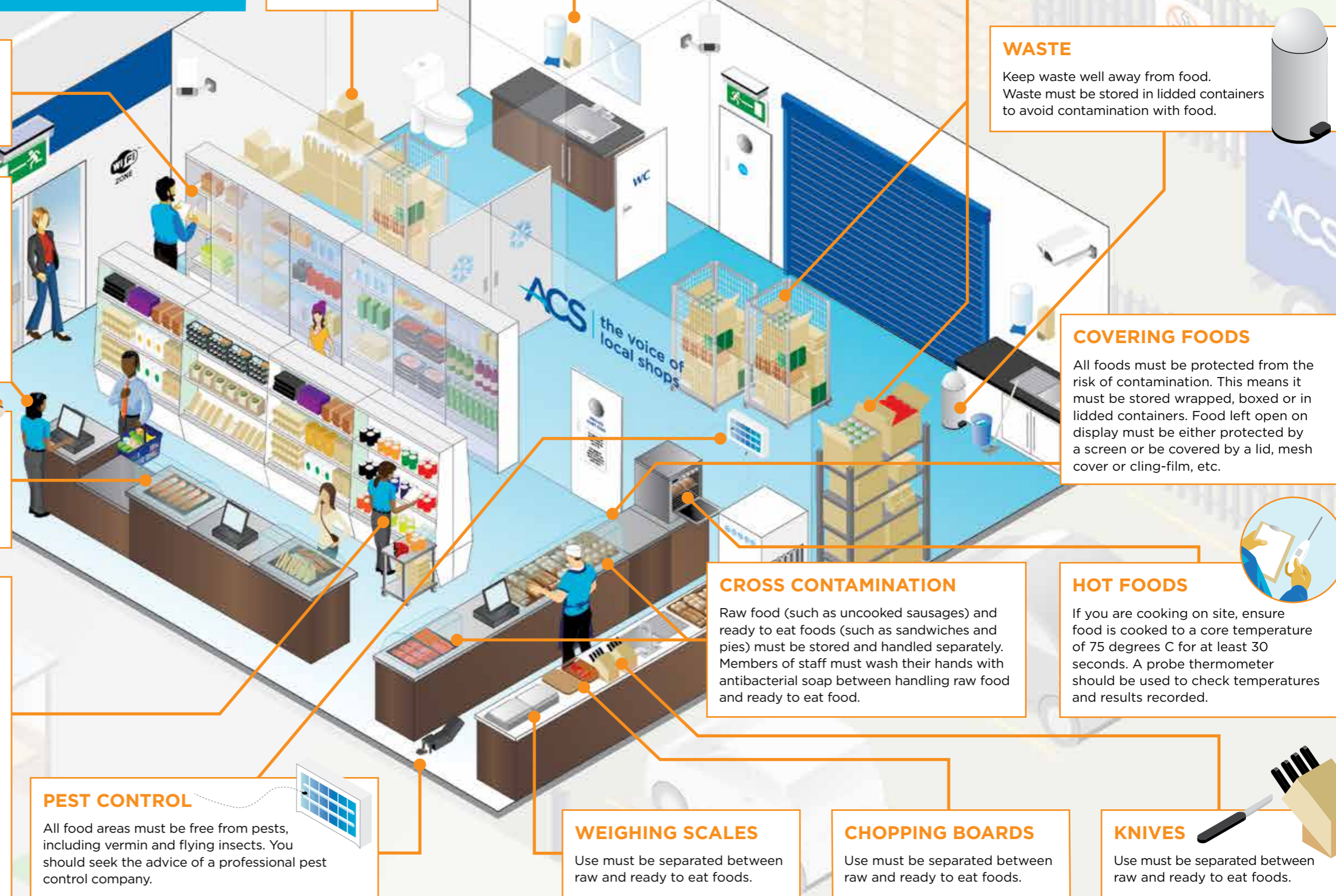
Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

CHOPPING BOARDS

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

KNIVES

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.



4. RECORD KEEPING

You have to maintain a documented food safety management system. The purpose of these documents is to outline all of the food hazards present in the business, and how they are controlled. The checks that you carry out in your business will demonstrate that the controls identified are working properly.

Records to be maintained:

- **Staff training certificates:** If staff are preparing foods such as sandwiches, or cooking foods such as pies then they need to be trained to 'Basic Food Hygiene' level also known as CIEH Level 2 Food Hygiene. These training records should be retained by you (your local environmental health office can provide this training or advise on appropriate local food hygiene courses).
- **Temperature control checks:** The records of these must be retained for at least six months.

Cabinet number	Cabinet description	Target temperature	Recorded temperature					Additional comments	Status of cabinet
			Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		

- **Daily stock rotation checks:** The records of these must be retained for at least six months.
- **Cleaning records:** There should be a cleaning schedule in place that lists what needs cleaning, when and how. Records should be kept to show compliance with this schedule and retained for six months.
- **Pest control records:** If you have a contract with a professional pest control company, they should leave you with a 'pest control book' which should be kept on the premises. If you do not use an external company, you should check at least once a week for signs of any pest activity (droppings, gnawed food, dead bodies) and these checks should be recorded.
- **Documented food safety management system:** This may be your own written procedures identifying hazards and how hazards are controlled and monitored, or, you may complete the FSA Safer Food Better Business. <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbretail>



5. FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

Environmental Health Officers will inspect your premises and 'score' it according to food hygiene compliance. These scores are translated into a food hygiene rating score (with zero being the lowest and 5 being the highest score).

You can expect to be notified of your food hygiene rating score within 14 days of the inspection and a sticker will be provided for you to display in your window.

If you disagree with the score given, there is a right to appeal and the letter that you receive will explain how to do this. You will also have the right to request a re-inspection of your premises (there may be a charge for this).

Your food hygiene rating score will be displayed on the Food Standards Agency website here: <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/>

Those stores that only sell low risk packaged foods are exempt from the food hygiene rating system.

In Wales and Northern Ireland it is mandatory to display your sticker. Failure to display or displaying the wrong rating may result in a fixed penalty notice being served with a fine of £200.



6. MORE COMPLEX FOOD PREPARATION

This guide has been developed for stores that are performing basic food preparation activities such as making sandwiches and heating pies. If you are carrying out more complex food preparation activities such as:

- Cooking.
- Cooling.
- Making meals such as curries.
- Making samosas, pies and other savoury goods.
- Making pasta salads.

Then you should follow the guidance in the government's 'Safer Food Better Business' guide here: <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbcaterers>



7. ALLERGENIC INGREDIENTS

You must protect those customers that suffer from allergic reactions to food. There are 14 allergens covered by the law, they are:

- Celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans (crab, lobster, prawn, scampi).
- Eggs, fish, lupin (sometimes found in bread, pasta and pastries).
- Milk, molluscs (mussels, land snails, squid, whelks).
- Mustard, nuts, peanuts, sesame seeds, soya.
- Sulphur dioxide, also known as sulphites (often contained in dried fruits, wine and other alcohol).

If you are sourcing food such as sandwiches, bread, cakes and savoury products locally, then the suppliers of these foods are responsible for putting the required information on a label on the food. If the food is not packaged (and therefore does not have a label attached) then the supplier must provide this information separately along with the food.

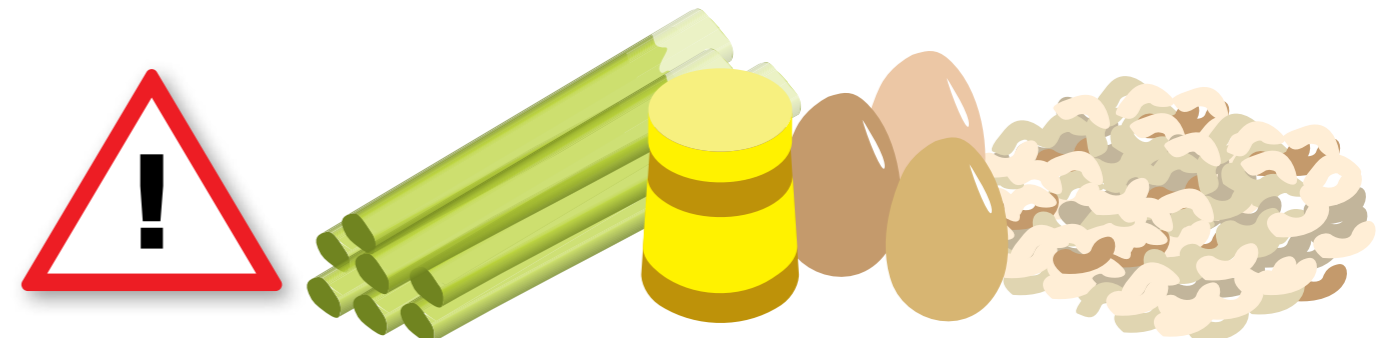
You MUST then display this information in an obvious place so that customers are aware of what allergens are contained in the food.

If you are preparing food yourself to sell in the store (sandwiches for example) then you must either:

- Package the food and put a label on it showing what allergens are present, or
- Signpost the consumer to the fact that allergens are present, using a notice, menu, chalkboard or information pack.

Food business operators who do not comply with allergen legislation requirements may be subject to prosecution, both under criminal or civil law. Criminal offences may result in a term of imprisonment.

Further allergen guidance can be found here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-information-for-pre-packed-and-loose-foods>



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is provided by the Association of Convenience Stores in consultation with Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards and Woking Borough Council. It was last updated in January 2020. Please refer to the ACS website for the most current version of this guidance.

ACS Primary Authority Scheme

This advice was developed by ACS, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Woking Borough Council and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; as part of a dedicated primary authority scheme. This means that all the advice that has this mark against it is 'Assured Advice'.

Assured Advice means that if you adopt this policy in your business, then it must be respected by all other local authorities and they cannot ask you to adopt a different policy.



This guide covers a range of different issues of best practice and law. Those that qualify as assured advice are marked by this hallmark.

To benefit from assured advice you must sign up to the ACS scheme. All ACS members can sign up to the ACS Primary Authority Scheme for details of how to join up visit www.acs.org.uk/advice

CONTACT

For more details on this guidance, contact a member of the ACS team on 01252 515001.

For more details on ACS:

Visit: www.acs.org.uk

Call: 01252 515001

Follow us on Twitter: @ACS_Localshops

© ACS 2020. Design & illustration by www.fluiddesignstudio.com