

Changes to food legislation (from Dec 2014)

Question asked on the Independent Childminders Facebook group - another childminder told me that from 1 Sep you have to list every ingredient in every item of food or drink you give to a child - so if you give even just a digestive biscuit you have to keep a record of every ingredient in it - this seems a bit much for every single thing - is this what we have to do from 1 Sept with the new EYFS?

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No, this is another case of Chinese whispers ... the childminder is wrong.

New allergy labelling legislation comes into force from 13th December 2014. It is EU legislation – not something Ofsted are telling us to do – specifically it is part of the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation 1169/2011. All food providers (childminders are food providers if you cook or prepare any food for children) will have to comply with the new allergy legislation.

You can read more about it here – and email this leaflet to parents to keep them updated - <http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf>.

The requirement is to provide allergy information on 'food sold unpackaged' - we have to inform parents about food contents - we don't have to write everything down - we just have to be able to tell them what is in the food we give their child. See page 3 in the above leaflet – 'If it (information about allergens in food) is not provided upfront (on a notice board or written in menus), you will need to signpost to where it could be obtained, either in written or oral formats.'

A verbal list of ingredients is enough if parents ask for it – and the leaflet makes it clear that while we must ask parents about their child's dietary requirements and act on the information they give us (this is also a requirement of the EYFS), parents also have a responsibility to tell us what their child is allergic to and ask us about contents of the food we provide.

The new legislation will make it a lot easier if you are shopping for children with an allergy because the product labels will change and if the contents include one of the most common allergens, they will be in bold or capital letters on the contents list. As long as you shop responsibly from reputable suppliers (which I am sure we all do) you will be able to provide parents with information about what food you give their child. We have to keep shopping receipts for 3 months anyway to comply with Food Hygiene legislation (to ensure food is traceable if a child has food poisoning) so this shouldn't be a problem.

If you use recipes from books (or in your head), you will be able to share them with parents (which is very good practice anyway) and as you already share menu information with parents (because it is required by the EYFS) the new labelling legislation means that you will find it much easier to see exactly what is in food and share information about any possible allergens with parents.

To comply with the legislation you can, if you wish, publish your menu (as we have to do to comply with the EYFS) and say at the bottom ... 'food provided for children may contain one or more of the 14 main allergens (please see displayed allergen poster). If you would like to know more about the contents of your child's food, please ask me for more information'. Then print this poster and display it on your noticeboard –

<http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/thinkallergy.pdf>.

If parents ask for more information, you could take photos of food labels to show them – or give them a link to the product information on the Tesco / Asda website – or write out a recipe every time you cook something different and keep it in a folder for parents to browse. To comply with the legislation you don't have to list every ingredient – you only have to share information about the 14 main allergens in the food – for example...

Today we have eaten...

Breakfast – cereal and milk (contains gluten and milk)

Snack – sesame coated breadsticks and fruit (contains gluten and sesame)

Lunch – cheese on toast, fruit and yoghurt (contains milk and gluten)

Snack – toasted teacakes with butter and jam (contains gluten and milk)

Tea – shepherds pie (contains milk and fish* and gluten)

*Contents of Worcestershire sauce in shepherds pie - <http://www.leaperrins.com/products/the-original-worcestershire-sauce/nutrition.aspx>.

At Knutsford Childminding we are working on an allergy leaflet for our parents – it will include basic information about the 14 allergens and how we use them in children's food. Our chef has already done the allergy training course** (see below). We currently inform parents about what food we give their child in our menus and tell them that we are happy to share ingredient lists on request... so we won't need to make any changes to most of what we already do.

**There is a free interactive training tool which you can use – with a certificate to print at the end – here – <http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>. It contributes 3 hours to your CPD.

All childminders must be registered with their LA as a food handler and should be using Safer Food Better Business for childminders (this is a print friendly version) - <http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/sfbbwebfriendlychilminders0513.pdf>. Pages 19 and 20 cover allergy information. You might find it useful to send a copy of the document to parents and suggest they read the relevant pages about food allergies.

Training requirements vary – some LAs require childminders to take face-to-face and / or online food hygiene courses and some don't – you should check with your LA for further information.

If you care for a child who has food allergies, you might find these 'chef cards' useful to give to cooks / staff in cafes or restaurants when you visit them with the children –

<http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/chefcard.pdf>. I will also be updating my 'eating out with children' risk assessment to include information about the new requirements.

Action plan

To be completed by 13th December 2014 –

Things to do	Date completed
Do free online interactive training and print certificate to display	
Inform parents about the new allergy legislation	
Print and display allergy poster	
Update 'eating out with children' risk assessment	
Update menu for winter / spring and add a line to ask parents to speak to us if they want further information about possible allergens in their child's food	
Email parents with – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An allergy information leaflet • Allergy chef cards link • Allergy information leaflet from HSE • Copy of new menu for winter / spring 	
Add information about changes we have made to the SEF	