



Clutha District Council

FOOD PREMISES SICKNESS POLICY - BACKGROUND

WHAT IS A HAZARD?

A 'hazard' is anyone who can carry harmful bugs into a food handling area. This can contaminate food by direct contact or indirectly by touching equipment and utensils etc. The people themselves may not even appear to be ill to do this and may be what are called 'carriers'. Bugs which cause such sickness can be passed on through body wastes [liquid or solid], from coughs and sneezes, from vomit or even saliva [spit!].

In some cases people may suffer from conditions that mean they have to stay off work all together. This may mean that before they can return to work that involves handling food they have to be given a specific clearance.

WHO DOES THE POLICY APPLY TO?

The policy has wider implications than might at first seem obvious. Here is a list:-

- All staff who directly handle food
- Staff who involved in food service and sale (this includes other kitchen staff and waiting staff);
- Anyone who repairs or maintains equipment in food handling areas, including outside contractors;
- Visitors to food premises, such as delivery personnel and even Environmental Health Officers.

MAKING THE POLICY SUIT YOUR BUSINESS

The template policy will need to be adapted if there is a risk that is peculiar to your business, for example infected visitors or residents in a rest home may present a risk if they have access to the kitchen facilities. Special risks may also apply where vulnerable people are involved such as childcare centres and rest homes.

PUTTING THE POLICY INTO PRACTICE

The following steps should be taken when putting together your sickness policy:-

1. Make sure the policy deals with all of the possible risks that might be found in your business.
2. Make sure that everyone who needs to know is properly informed, specially your staff.
3. Make sure staff can find a copy if they need to check it. Pin a copy up on the notice board, for example.
4. Make sure that you can make the policy work for any visitors coming into your business. This does not mean that everyone has to give you a full medical history on entry, it just means using your eyes and ears to pick up on clues if anything does not seem right.
5. Keep a written record of staff sickness, including any illness while at work, and what was done about it. This might say, for example, that staff were sent home or put onto other duties.
6. Check from time to time that your system is working as it should.
7. Once a year just check through the policy and make sure that you do not need to make any changes.