Food Safety

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A varied and high-quality food offering can be a key factor in delivering customer satisfaction as attendees expect, unique high-quality experiences at the events they attend. From world street food to local produce, there are a variety of options available to suit the specific needs of events, and there are multiple caterers in Scotland who specialise in outdoor catering.

Alternatively, organisers may work with caterers whose day-to-day business is in house catering or non-professional supporters to offer catering at the event. The risks involved and complexities in the provision of food in purpose build premises or in a temporary event space differ greatly, so to help caterers through the process and to help ensure that events are safe a guide for caterers has been produced by Aberdeen City Council's Environmental Health Service.

As well as improving the customer experience, the provision of food can present opportunities to generate additional income for the event as caterers are charged fees for the right to attend. It is common for multiple caterers to operate at a single event and Aberdeen City Council advise organisers to ensure caterers are made aware of other caters attending at the point of agreeing to attend. The competition may impact their ability to generate income and their financial offer to the event. Alternatively, one company may pay for the right to exclusively cater at the event.

Often the higher the quality of the catering offer the less the fee paid to the event, so event organisers are advised to assess the needs and wants of their attendees and balance the quality of the offering vs the additional revenue to the event. Once the model has been agreed event organisers are advised to use this information to scope a procurement exercise to ensure that the event receives the best value offering available. This may be an exercise to contract one caterer with exclusive rights or multiple caterers who will each pay a fee for a pitch at the event.

Whilst catering can improve the customer experience and generate additional revenue, it will also present multiple health and safety risks, from fire to food poisoning. Event organisers have a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare of those working and attending their event and are required to satisfy themselves that caterers have the skills, knowledge, experience and capacity to cater at the event safely.

As well as satisfying the event organisers, caterers will be required to satisfy officers of Aberdeen City Council's Environmental Health Service that they are competent and have the equipment, training, procedures and certification to operate safely.

As part of the procurement process mentioned above, event organisers should request evidence of the caterer's industry experience, membership of any governing bodies / industry association (such as the National Outdoor Caterers Association etc.), staff training policies, as well as the following documentation which will be required by Aberdeen City Council's Environmental Health Service before caterers will be allowed to operate on local authority land.

1. Copies of Public and Employer's Liability Insurance
2. Gas Safety Certificate (if applicable)*
3. Electric Safety Certificate (if applicable)
4. Food Hygiene Information Scheme Pass Certificate
5. HACPP plan / Food Safety Documentation
6. Copy of Vehicle/Trailer Local Authority Certificate of Compliance
7. Health & Safety Risk Assessments and Safe Working Procedures including the use of appropriate hand washing facilities

Mandatory Condition

Events that include catering will be required to submit Insurance Certificates, HACPP Plan, Trailer Compliance Certificate, Risk Assessment & Safe Working Practices, Food Hygiene Certification, Gas Safety and Electric Safety Certificates to Aberdeen City Council in advance of the event and also satisfy officers from the Environmental Health Service.

Further Reading

Food Standards Agency

* Gas safety Information is included here.