

Aspens



Aspens Services Limited
Teme House
Whittington Road
Whittington
Worcester WR5 2RY

28th September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

The food supply situation in the UK continues to be very challenging for the hospitality sector and we continue to work extremely hard to keep disruption to a minimum. We appreciate everyone's continued support whilst we work through the numerous issues all contractors in our industry are facing and we would like to update you on our contingency plans, in order to mitigate the effects of this nationwide issue.

As you know, the three major factors causing disruption are:

- Food deliveries and availability of key lines within the supply chain are disrupted due to a shortage of HGV drivers and supply staff.
- Job vacancies in the UK have exceeded 1 million for the first time since records began, with the largest increase in the accommodation and food sector which rose by 75.4%*. Our recruitment team is working hard to recruit and onboard new members of staff, working within the constraints of the Safer Recruitment Policy.
- More recently, there is uncertainty around the availability of fuel for deliveries.

All of these issues are impacting all school meal providers to varying degrees, affecting menus, service and choice for clients and customers.

We are supporting our teams in schools to help overcome any shortages. We have a toolkit of food ideas, a vast bank of recipes and identified courses of action in certain situations they can use. This may mean that alternative dishes are provided to those advertised on the menu in some limited occasions and service points may be optimised. We will still aim to provide both hot and cold options each day.

We have added to our recruitment team to assist our regional colleagues in recruitment and are paying significant 'introduce a friend' bonus payments to minimise vacancies.



We have a wide range of suppliers contracted to our company and can move spend across our supply chain to minimise product shortfalls, whilst ensuring food safety. Our Procurement Department is in continuous contact with all of our suppliers and our electronic ordering system enables spend to be instantly moved, minimising product shortages. This means in certain cases that our catering teams may receive a familiar product, but not from their usual supplier.

With varying factors out of our control, we have made the decision to not proceed with the planned launch of our new menu until the situation has stabilised.

Please be assured that as a company we are doing what we can with regards to optimising supplies, providing alternative lunch choices and recruitment of staff on a school by school basis.

Natasha's Law Update

On the 1st October a new legislation known as Natasha's Law comes into effect. It requires that any pre-packaged direct sale foods (PPDS) are clearly labelled with:

- name of food
- full list of ingredients
- allergenic ingredients emphasised within the list

We have communicated the changes and new processes to our school based teams over the last few months to get them ready for the changes we need to make. Our robust allergy procedure and special diet process will continue to remain the foundation for providing a safe food service for all of our customers.

We appreciate your ongoing support and patience.

Yours faithfully

Ben Wood

Chief Operating Officer

- Labour Market Statistics - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/september2021>

