



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Dear Organisations,

As we approach the festive period we are aware your organisation, or those you support, may be considering whether (and how) you can provide charitable lunches for beneficiaries over the festive period in line with the current Covid-19 regulations. Firstly, we would like to thank you for your efforts in providing these important services, supporting those in need and sharing the festive joy at the end of a difficult year. We are pleased to be able to confirm that the government's regulations may allow you to continue to provide this vital service.

On 2 December the Government introduced a revised set of Local Restriction Tiers to control the spread of Covid-19. Each Tier includes gathering restrictions in order to minimise social contact and thereby transmission of the virus. Charitable lunches over the festive period are exempt from the gathering limits provided they are eligible (as set out below) and follow relevant Covid secure guidance, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery#takeaway> and

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

That is because there is an exemption to the gathering restrictions in all four Tiers for volunteers and staff working at a charitable lunch. This exemption permits volunteers and staff working at a charitable lunch to be able to do so under the exemption for a gathering, which is 'reasonably necessary for work purposes or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services.' Those attending a charitable lunch must do so within the gathering restrictions applicable to their Tier. For example, if a charitable lunch is taking place indoors in a Tier 2, Tier 3 or Tier 4 area, an attendee may only attend and therefore also sit alone or with members of their household or bubble. Further information on social distancing in an indoor setting, where more than one household is in attendance, can be found in the guidance for restaurants.

In Tier 4 areas, there is a restriction requiring people to 'stay at home' unless a reasonable excuse applies which permits them to leave home. It is a reasonable excuse for volunteers and staff working at charitable lunches to leave home in order to work or to provide voluntary or charitable services, where it is not reasonably possible for them to do so from home. It is also a reasonable excuse for beneficiaries of charitable lunches over the festive period to leave home to access services provided by voluntary or charitable services.

We recognise that you might not have your own catering facilities and therefore have relied on restaurants and venues to host your charitable lunches in the past. You can do the same this year, as there is an exemption to the business closure requirements in each of the four Tiers to enable premises to be used for the provision of essential voluntary services, or to provide support for the homeless or for vulnerable beneficiaries. This means a restaurant could host a charitable lunch for vulnerable beneficiaries even if their premises would otherwise be required to close.

We hope that this summary provides reassurance that the valuable services your organisation provides to beneficiaries in the festive period can continue to operate.

For more information and details of the practicalities of organising charitable lunches, we strongly recommend you consult the guidance mentioned in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Oliver Dowden in black ink.

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State

Handwritten signature of Matt Hancock in blue ink.

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State