

## Businesses must ensure they are compliant with Natasha's Law amid continued allergen woes

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In recent years, there have been growing reports of allergy tragedies as a result of food business negligence. Such tragedies include 23-year-old James Atkinson, a university student with a severe peanut allergy who passed away in 2020 after eating a slice of a pizza ordered through Deliveroo in Newcastle. An inquest into the incident in January uncovered that the restaurant in question had [blank allergen sections](#) in its food safety management documents. With these tragedies becoming all too common, many are pondering whether restaurants in the UK will remain compliant with *Natasha's Law* in 2024.

Natasha's Law was introduced to protect food allergy sufferers and give them confidence in the food they buy and increasing transparency across the food industry to protect both customers and businesses. It came into effect in October 2021, with all restaurants and catering services having to ensure all food produced and packed for sale in the same premises provided a complete ingredient list identifying all ingredients on the product label, emphasising the 14 allergenic ingredients.

According to Matt Smith, Director of Customer Operations at [mpro5](#): "To remain compliant, food service providers must establish good relationships with their suppliers to enable them to provide detailed ingredient information and notify them promptly of any changes as the slightest tweak to an ingredient could have huge implications. It is also important to consider how food labels are produced, and with handwritten labels being inadequate, businesses must consider the type of printer and labels they require. Staff training is also essential, and employees should be aware of processes every time a new item is added to the menu or if there's a change to a recipe.

“However, manually checking ingredients across every PPDS item isn’t practical, especially where larger chains are concerned. The most effective way to maintain accurate ingredient and allergen information is with the help of specialist software. There are plenty of digital food management and labelling solutions on the market that automatically update nutritional and allergen details across various systems, saving valuable time while ensuring information remains reliable and consistent.

“It is also important for businesses to consider using a digital management platform to confirm that staff follow the correct protocols. For instance, you can request that employees complete a digital checklist or logbook to show they’ve read and understood a new recipe. These automated processes will help with compliance while reassuring head office that the appropriate steps are followed.

“Natasha’s Law amplifies the importance of accurate labelling even further, and with the right tools and technology, the task becomes much more manageable. Anything the food industry can do to help consumers make safer food choices and prevent future tragedies is what it’s about. Allergen tragedies are becoming all too common in the UK and can be avoided if businesses have the correct digital processes in place. It’s vital to understand the consequences that inadequate labelling can have for both customers and the business are understood”, concluded Meyers.