

## MEDIA STATEMENT



### LACA RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S FREE PRIMARY SCHOOL MEALS PILOT SCHEME

The **Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA)** welcomes today's (*Wednesday 24 September*) announcement by the Schools Secretary, Ed Balls to run a pilot scheme in two areas of England to offer all Primary school pupils free school meals. Three Local Authorities in deprived areas will trial the scheme in a two year pilot starting next year. Two authorities will trial free school lunches for all Primary pupils whilst means testing in a third will be altered to allow more pupils to qualify.

Commenting on today's announcement by the Government, **Neil Porter, LACA Chairman** says:

“This is good news and a positive step for Primary school meals. LACA has been calling on the Government for some time to look at the provision of free school meals for all so we greatly welcome the announcement about a pilot scheme. However, changing eating habits and improving the health of young people can only be achieved if these measures are sustainable in the longer term”.

“We have been encouraged by the upturn in Primary school meal numbers which we hope will continue following the introduction of the new tougher Nutrient Standards in Primary schools from this September. Our concerns, however, remain focused on the future viability of Secondary school meals which have seen a considerable downturn as students are shunning the new healthier meals and that is before the introduction of the new Nutrient Standards in Secondary Schools from next September”.

“The speech by the Schools Secretary referred to the ‘battle of obesity’ so I am concerned that the timescale of the trial may not be long enough to change eating habits or reverse levels of obesity. Hull is one authority that conducted a free school meals scheme but after a couple of years, it was folded. Whilst school meal uptake increased, it was an insufficient timescale to really do much to decrease child obesity”.

“If the Government is serious about improving the long term health of young people then the introduction of free school meals for all must be a longer term commitment with funding to match”.

- ends -

Contact: Hazel Green, National Press Officer, LACA  
T: 01483 574727 E-m: [HaGreen7@aol.com](mailto:HaGreen7@aol.com)

24 September 2008