

**LACA’s initiative to encourage**

**schools to allow the return to**

**hot meals ASAP**

We understand the return to school has been challenging when it comes to providing meals at lunchtime. Some schools are still choosing packed lunches and we know retailers are promoting the voucher scheme to parents. As the colder months approach, we want to help school caterers return to serving hot cooked meals as soon as it is practicable and safe to do so. As key workers throughout the pandemic, we all know school catering teams are best placed to deliver hot meals safely.

We all know the benefits to children’s attainment and development, eating a balanced diet can make, so it’s paramount they return as soon as possible.

LACA’s new initiative - **‘Hotober’ –** has been created to encourage conversations between caterers, school representatives, on site staff and parents to facilitate the return of hot lunches as soon as everyone feels it safe to do so. We do understand many school caterers have continued to serve hot meals, sadly others have been stopped completely.

We have chosen the 1st October as a date when we would like schools to allow hot school food to be served. We recognise this is mid-week but it ties in with Census Day - a very important date for all schools to see a high uptake. We know this date might not be possible for all and in reality, schools may want to start the week before or the week after – the aim of the promotion is to keep the conversation going – caterers being able to refer to a National Initiative. Rather than leave the date open ended for schools to say we will start after half term or after Christmas, LACA have selected a date to emphasise the urgency – but of course it has to be manageable for all parties.

There are a number of free resources for Hotober at [www.thegreatschoollunch.co.uk/resources](http://www.thegreatschoollunch.co.uk/resources).

Resources include, posters, letters, activities and a logo you can use in all communications to stakeholders.