

Getting Started – For Caterers

This support document was kindly produced by Caterlink, based on their experience catering for universal free school meals (UFSM) in Islington primary schools.

1 Analysis of Current Take Up and Service Provision

- Consider number and diversity of school meals providers to assess ease/complexity of implementation
- Establish baseline and profile of current take up
- Estimate likely increase in take up
- Clarify numbers eligible for FSM
- Assess likely increase in take up:
 - We used an assumption of 85% take – up as benchmark for implementation plan
 - This assumption took absence into account (i.e. 5% allowance for pupil absence)
 - The take-up assumption is critical to capital and revenue implications, and timing of implementation plan
- Clarify with the school: are they allowing parents to pick and choose which lunches they would like to take weekly; will they have a policy where if you have a free school meal (FSM) you have it for a whole term and rather than picking days.
- Ask parents to see what the likelihood is of them enrolling their child for a meal. We are advising schools to carry out this piece of work so we can work on more practical figures.

2 Physical Capacity

Kitchen Capacity and Equipment

- Assess kitchen capacity to house additional equipment required; is the school already a production kitchen or not?
- If a kitchen delivers to another site will they be capable of handling their extra numbers and the send outs extra?
- If they are transported to kitchen is there any scope / funding to make them into a production kitchen?
- Assess practical implications of the anticipated increase in school meal take up of the new policy in relation to food storage facilities, fridges, dry storage etc.
- We carried out a detailed school by school audit of the implications of an increased take-up of school meals was undertaken across all nursery and primary schools. The Audit identified considerable essential investments required in capacity at a number of schools and on the basis of the anticipated take up of 85%.
- Increase the attractiveness of school meals to increase take-up; for example, we replaced all flight trays with separate plates, bowls etc.



2 Physical Capacity (con.)

Dining Arrangements – School considerations

- Review capacity of dining hall, dining furniture, as well as any logistical problems faced by individual schools for the lunch time period
- Consider the quality of the dining environment
- Consider the logistics of higher throughput of meals – potential implications for school timetable to ensure sufficient time to deliver the increased number of meals
- Adequate dining time is an important aspect of the success of scheme; consider the timings for service, and whether extra service points will be required.
- Schools need to assess deployment of supervisory staff over lunch time period. This depends on balance of children that have packed lunch already in the school hall.

3 Staffing capacity

- Ensure the capacity of catering providers to be able to manage increase take up with suitably qualified and trained staff
- Working on a 1hour to 10 meal ratio can more hours be awarded to existing staff or is there a need to hire extra hands.

4 Funding – advise clients on investment needed

- additional large kitchen equipment - to cover storage (fridges) and cooking: combi-ovens prep machines etc.
- additional serving trolleys and serveries – hot and cold cabinets; hot plates etc.
- kitchen refurbishments and extensions
- small kitchen items including light equipment, cutlery, plates, bowls etc

5. Questions to ask prior to carrying out survey of provision

1. Do you currently allow pupils to pick and choose if they are having a lunch daily?
 - a. If yes to Q1, will you be adopting this policy with KS1 from September?
 - b. If no to Q1, over which period (i.e. weekly, half termly) do you ask pupils to enrol into school meals before making a change?
2. Have you asked KS1 parents based on the above to see if they are looking to enrol in the UFSM scheme?
 - a. If yes to Q2, what % of parents are looking to enrol on UFSM and over which period (i.e. if daily which days and if weekly or half termly)?
 - b. If no to Q2, suggest you do gather this information, so both the school and caterer can plan how the extra numbers will affect, service, length of lunch, staffing on both sides etc.

