



## Statement of School and Community-Based provision for the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021

July 2022



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## **Introduction**

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 12 January 2021. The Scottish Government advised local authorities on 2 March 2022 of their intention to bring the legal provisions into force on 15 August 2022. From this date local authorities will have a legal duty to make period products available free of charge for anyone who needs them, and in their role as education authorities, make period products available at no cost in schools. Local authorities are also required to publish a Statement on how they will exercise their functions under the Act. The statement must be prepared in consultation with relevant individuals, groups, and organisations.

The Act states: -

- “Everyone in Scotland who menstruates should have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when required. This includes visitors to Scotland for the duration of their stay. “
- We must make products reasonably easy to obtain, we must try to ensure dignity is preserved and respected and offer a reasonable choice of types of products (1 type of tampon, 1 type of sanitary pad and 1 reusable product).
- Recipients should not be required to ask for products, justify why they need them, or any limit placed on the number of products recipients can receive.

Aberdeenshire Council will meet the requirements of the Act by implementing the following actions: –

- Carrying out consultation with our communities and schools to determine the breadth of product.
- Engaging with organisations working with groups and individuals including those with equalities issues to ensure the broadest range of access is achieved.
- Working with strategic partners in Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership to identify premises and distribution methods for providing access in a way that maintains the dignity of those seeking access to period products.
- Liaising with community groups to identify where products are placed and distribution methods to ensure we maintain the dignity of those seeking access to period products.
- Routinely reviewing the levels of demand and supply to establish the strongest possible match between the two.
- Providing information about what period products are available, where, and how they can be obtained.

## **Current Provision**

Aberdeenshire Council has been providing free period products in schools since 2018 and in public buildings since 2020, In addition an online home delivery service was created in response to times of COVID 19 lockdown when buildings and schools were closed.

The PickupmyPeriod, which can be readily downloaded on Android and Apple devices at no cost, shows nearby locations where products can be accessed. The locations are augmented as new organisations offer to make products available from their venue. This is particularly relevant following COVID restrictions when some community venues were closed for a sustained period of time.

Aberdeenshire Council has made a range of products available including -

- Pads.
- Tampons (with or without applicator).
- Reusable pads.
- Panty Liners (schools only).

All disposable products are plastic free, made with sustainable sourced bamboo and 100% certified organic cotton. All reusable products are designed to last between 5-10 years, preventing unnecessary waste.

Products are available from our Local Authority funded schools, children and young people's residential care settings and from Council buildings, including swimming pools, leisure centres, community centres, town halls, libraries, and some museums. We also have an online home delivery service which is a popular choice for people living within a particularly rural community or who do not have transport.

## **Consultation**

Before preparing a Statement Local Authorities must consult those groups of people identified in the Scottish Government Guidance about period products, and any other organisation or individuals they think are appropriate. This section describes the nature and findings of the consultation carried out by Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Who we had to consult:**

Scottish Government guidance advised Local Authorities to consult with individuals who:-

- Need to use free products currently.
- Need to use products in the future or.
- Need to collect products on behalf of someone who needs to use products.

What we had to ask about:

- Ways in which people could obtain period products free of charge
- Dignity and ease of access.
- The required choice of period products that should be available.

In order to reach a broad range of people and to ensure we asked those people who may have protected characteristics/barriers to access, our main engagement was via an online survey (via Engage Aberdeenshire). The link for the online survey was widely shared via social media, Aberdeenshire Council's website and targeting key partners and user groups through a variety of services/groups including the below: –

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Organisations – (Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action)
- Grampian Women's Aid.
- Youth Networks.
- Gypsy Traveller network.
- Poverty and Inequalities Group.
- Health and Social Care Partnership managers.
- Mental Health and Learning Disability colleagues for sharing with clients/carers.
- Substance Misuse Service.
- School Staff.

The Online Survey

The online survey consisted of twelve questions and ran for 4 weeks between April and May 2022. A total of 400 responses to the online survey were received with a wide range of people participating including dads, carers (both male and female), transgender/non-binary individuals, victims of Domestic Abuse, those living in a remote location, those on a low income and single parents.

The majority of respondents needed to use period products now for themselves, with a number of respondents also having low income, and/or living in a rural area. A number of respondents also had caring responsibilities.

There was a fairly even spread across Aberdeenshire with **25%** of respondents living in North Aberdeenshire, **40%** living in Central Aberdeenshire and **31%** living in South Aberdeenshire. **3%** of respondents lived in Aberdeen city but worked in Aberdeenshire.

Nearly half of respondents (**42%**) were aware of the provision across Aberdeenshire.

Of 174 respondents that had already accessed the free period products, the most popular point of access was the online home delivery service (**32%**). **13%** had accessed them via swimming pools/leisure centre, **10%** from council buildings, **8%** from foodbank, **5%** from community centre, **7%** from GP surgery and **25%** from 'other' which included public toilets, schools, community larder, hospital, and CAB offices.

Many respondents (**74%**) had used pads, **44%** had used tampons, **24%** had used re-usable pads and **8%** had used 'other' which included panty liners.

**79%** of respondents accessed the products for their own use, whilst **41%** accessed them for family members and a small **5%** accessed them for 'other' which included school pupils and clients.

It was reassuring that a large **61%** of respondents felt really comfortable accessing the free products with no issue at all, and a minor **4%** felt really embarrassed and really uncomfortable. **61%** of people said they didn't have to ask for them, whilst **29%** found they had to ask for them. **9%** stated 'other' which included that they 'sometimes' had to ask.

At the time of the consultation work, it became clear that recipients obtained a wide range of period products, mostly for personal, or family use from a variety of locations, but our online home delivery service proved to be the most popular choice for accessing products. A large percentage felt very comfortable and at ease using the service, maintaining dignity.

In conclusion, our current free period product service has provided a great baseline for us to work from in continuing to shape and develop such a provision.

In terms of future provision, a high number of respondents would like to see a range of products on offer, including re-usables. **84%** would like pads, **77%** tampons, **64%** reusable pads, **60%** menstrual cups and **11%** other, including period pants.

**Q9** sought thoughts on specific locations where respondents would like to access free products – the most popular choice was the online home delivery service followed closely by pharmacies, GP surgeries, leisure centres and community centres.

Considering the specific pick-up points within locations the most popular response was within toilets (**78%**) and half of that again choosing reception areas as another identified area.

Most of the respondents (**82%**) reported that not knowing where to get free period products was a major barrier to accessing them as well as not being sure as to how many products they could take.

### Focus Groups

As well as the online survey, there were also several focus groups held across Aberdeenshire as part of the consultation. Grampian Women's Aid held both face to face and online focus groups. Senior Pupils in some schools facilitated focus groups with fellow pupils. Each group followed the outline of the 3 questions we were required to ask – *how* you want to access the products, *where* you want to access them and *what* you want to access.

Key themes that emerged from these groups were like that of the online survey. Popular locations for accessing free products were Schools, GP practices, public toilets, and Pharmacies.

## Conclusions

It is evident from our results that respondents are happy to continue to have the current range of period products available but with another re-usable product on offer (Menstrual cup in particular). The continuation of a home delivery service is a popular option for future provision but with several respondents also identifying GP surgeries and pharmacies as other popular venues for collection. Most people are unsure of where they would be able to access free period products and knowing how much to take at one time.

## **Future Provision**

In line with the Period Products (Free Products) (Scotland) Act 2021 and our practice to date, the arrangements to access period products will be underpinned by the following key principles:

- Products will be reasonably easy to access from a range of venues across Aberdeenshire.
- We will promote dignity in accessing products and seek wherever possible to attend to privacy considerations and make reasonable effort to minimise embarrassment.
- Individuals will not routinely have to ask for products or justify why they need them or the amount they require.
- It is recognised that people accessing products may be doing so on behalf of themselves or on behalf of other people.
- A reasonable choice of product will be offered.
- While we will promote reusable products, people will not be under pressure to opt for these.
- The approach taken will be inclusive and recognise that not everyone requiring products will identify as female.

We will be open to suggestions to new venues and new approaches to accessing period products and will keep our arrangements under review.

The results of our consultation confirm that people in Aberdeenshire continue to want a range of period products from a range of local venues including schools. We will therefore continue to provide the following products in venues throughout Aberdeenshire: –

- Pads.
- Tampons (with or without applicator).
- Reusable pads.
- Panty Liners (only for schools).
- Menstrual cup (online only).

Our free period products can be accessed via our swimming pools/leisure centres, community centres, town halls, museums, and libraries, as well as our schools. We will continue to provide an online home delivery service. Delivery will come straight from our supplier Hey Girls. We will continue to engage with other local venues to increase local access and to promote information on venues where products can be accessed via the Council's website and the PickupmyPeriod app.

### Communication plan

In response to feedback, we plan to increase the awareness of our free period product provision. In partnership with the Corporate Communications team, we will utilise the following communication links:

- Aberdeenshire Council website.
- Aberdeenshire Council Social Media sites (Facebook, Twitter).
- Employee intranet.
- Local press.
- Providing venues with poster material to promote pick up points.
- Various partners within Aberdeenshire.

### Service Review

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that access arrangements are dynamic and evolve and grow as more local organisations opt to become involved and make products available from their venues and as we get feedback from those accessing products about their experience and suggestions on how to improve access. We will be open to new suggestions and will keep our arrangements under review and provide updates to our Delivery Statement periodically.

# Free Period Product Access

Engage Aberdeenshire

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## Appendix 1

### Free Period Product

**Where in Aberdeenshire do you live? (This information will remain anonymous)**

**Are you aware of our current provision of free period products across Aberdeenshire?**

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No

**If you have accessed free period products already, please tell us where you accessed them from**

(Choose all that apply)

- Swimming pool/Leisure centre
- Council building
- Online home delivery service
- Foodbank
- Community Centre
- GP Surgery
- Other (please specify)

**What free products have you used?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Pads
- Tampons
- Re-usable pads
- Other (please specify)

**Who do you need the products for?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Myself
- Family members
- Other (please specify)

**Based on your experience, please rate the extent that you felt comfortable accessing the products**

(Choose any one option)

- Really comfortable, no issue at all
- Felt reasonably comfortable but a little embarrassed
- Felt quite uncomfortable and embarrassed
- Felt really uncomfortable and really embarrassed

# Free Period Product Access

## Engage Aberdeenshire

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**Did you have to ask for the free period products?**

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

**What free period products do you think should be available in your community?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Pads Tampons
- Re-usable pads
- Menstrual cups
- Other (please specify)

**Where do you think would be a good place to get free period products in your community?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Community Centre
- GP Surgery
- Council Building
- Swimming pool/Leisure centre
- Pharmacy
- Foodbank
- Online Home Delivery Service
- Other (please specify)

**Where in the above venues do you think the products would be best placed?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Toilets
- Reception
- On Display
- Somewhere out of the way
- Other (please specify)

**What, if anything, would stop you from accessing the free period products?**

(Choose all that apply)

- Not knowing where to get them
- Can't get to the shops/venues
- Embarrassment
- No internet access/computer
- Not sure how much I can take
- Other (please specify)

**In order to ensure we are asking a broad section of the community their views, can you please tell us a little more about yourself? (This information will remain anonymous)**

(Choose all that apply)

- I am a dad, brother, partner or family member of someone who needs these products
- I have a disability
- I am a transgender or non binary person and would need products to be available in male and female toilets or anywhere else that

# Free Period Product Access

## Engage Aberdeenshire

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- has gender restrictions
- I need to use Period Products now
- I don't use Period Products now but will need to use them in the future
- I am currently homeless
- I am a Gypsy/Traveller
- I am a victim of Domestic Abuse
- I have caring responsibilities
- I live in a remote location
- There are cultural reasons for not being able to access these products
- I have a low income
- I am a single parent
- Other (please specify)