
Report To:	Education and Communities Committee	Date:	5 September 2023
Report By:	Ruth Binks Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/37/23/HS
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Subject:	Access to Free Sanitary Products Update		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the implementation and the progress of the Scottish Government commitment to provide free access to sanitary products in schools and in wider communities.
- 1.3 The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was introduced to secure the provision of free period products throughout Scotland. The Act places legal duties on local authorities to make period products available for free both in schools and more widely for those who need to use them.
- 1.4 Very good progress continues to be made by the service in implementing the provisions of the Act and work continues through 2023/24 to develop and improve.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Communities Committee notes the progress made in 2022/23 and the next steps that will be taken in 2023/24.

Ruth Binks
Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council has been receiving funding from the Scottish Government since 2018 to provide access to free sanitary products. The funding was initially for the purpose of providing school pupils with access to free sanitary products.
- 3.2 In 2019/20 the Scottish Government made the decision to not only provide access to free sanitary products in schools, but to increase the number and range of places where sanitary products could be accessed by those who needed them. This led to the Council using its funding for 2019/20 to continue providing products in schools but also to make the products available at community locations such as public toilets and libraries.
- 3.3 The promotion and distribution of the Council's period poverty work is undertaken by the Culture, Communities and Educational Resources Service.

Legislative Requirements

- 3.4 The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was introduced to secure the provision of free period products throughout Scotland. The Act places legal duties on local authorities to make period products available for free both in schools and more widely for those who need to use them. Local authorities must meet their duties by establishing and maintaining arrangements for making period products obtainable for free, however, they have flexibility with regards to how they do this in practice.
- 3.5 The Act requires responsible bodies to consult with individuals on the arrangements that should be put in place to fulfil their duties. To meet this part of the legislation, extensive engagement was carried out between March and June 2022 to find out how people in Inverclyde would like to be able to access free period products and what type of products they want to be able to access. Young people who access the products in education establishments were consulted, along with communities and people who have previously used the Free Period Products Service. In addition, we attempted to reach those that may face multiple barriers when accessing period products, including those who may experience homelessness, New Scot families and people within the LGBTQI+ community. The results from the engagement informed the development and implementation of new arrangements which are detailed below.
- 3.6 Under the legislation, local authorities were required to publish a written Statement of Intent setting out how they would exercise their functions under the Act. Inverclyde's statement of intent was approved by this Committee in August 2022 and contains:
 - background information and the requirements of the Act;
 - Inverclyde Council's commitment to meeting the requirements of the Act;
 - details of how free period products can be accessed within the community; and
 - details of how free period products can be accessed with education establishments.

3.7 Progress to date

Significant progress was made during 2022/23 to implement the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 within Inverclyde. This report provides details of the progress made.

- 3.8 **New Delivery Model** - A new delivery model was developed and implemented in August 2022. Communities told us they wanted to be able to access bulk uplift of period products from Pharmacies, GP Practices and via an online ordering service. We made changes to our community provision to take on board this feedback and our community provision now consists of the following three elements:

- Bulk uplift of free period products from Pharmacies, GP Practices and Community Centres;
- Single use provision from a range of community venues such as leisure facilities, community centres and libraries across Inverclyde; and
- An online ordering service which is accessible via the Council's website. Any Inverclyde resident can use this service to order free products and they will be delivered to their home address.

3.9 Educational Establishments - Changes have been made to provision within education establishments to consider feedback from young people. Provision in schools now consists of:

- bulk uplift and individual use provision is available in all primary and secondary schools in Inverclyde;
- where possible, the products are available in toilet cubicles. Young people told us their preference would be for the products to be located in toilet cubicles to make it easier to access them; and
- where bulk products cannot be stored in toilets, there is an accessible store somewhere within the building and this is advertised to pupils.

3.10 Community Venues - In 2022/23 an additional 26 venues began working with us and now provide the public with access to free sanitary products at their locations. This means that there are now a total of 128 venues that stock products. Full details of all the venues are available on the Council's web site at [About Period Dignity Inverclyde - Inverclyde Council](#) and via the PickupMyPeriod app.

3.11 Local Businesses - We worked in partnership with NHS GGC Employment & Health Team to contact businesses and organisations in Inverclyde that had achieved a Healthy Working Lives award. Organisations who were registered as award holders, were offered the opportunity to work with us and provide their employees with access to free products. As a result, we now work with several local employers.

3.12 Pop-Up Shops - Pop-up shops were held at venues across Inverclyde to try and reach even more people and provide another means of accessing free sanitary products. In December 2022 pop-up shops were held at Greenock Central, Southwest, Port Glasgow and Gourock Libraries, as well as the Oak Mall. In January 2023, further pop-up shops were held at Kilmacolm Community Centre, the Inverkip Community Hub and McGilp's pop-up shop in Gourock. In February 2023, a pop-up shop was held at Broomhill Community Hub and a further weeklong pop-up shop was held in 7 ½ John Wood Street in Port Glasgow in May.

By far the most successful pop-up shop was McGilp's in Gourock where a total of 273 reusable and 65 disposable products were handed out. Feedback from people who came to McGilp's said that it was the fact the shop was there all week, and they could access it on a day and time that was suitable that encouraged them to use it. The other pop-up shops were a one off and were only available for a few hours on a set date. Port Glasgow Library and the Oakmall were also popular locations.

Pilot pop-up shops were also held in high schools across Inverclyde during March. Two pop-up shops were held at St Columba's, Clydeview, Port Glasgow High School and Notre Dame High School during lunch times. The pop-up shops were set up in either the guidance or medical room within each school and proved popular with both pupils and the staff.

3.13 Marketing and Promotion - As in previous years, the distribution of free sanitary products in 2022/23 was underpinned by a marketing campaign, the key elements of which included:

- the promotion of the new arrangements introduced in August 2022 to meet the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021. The new arrangements were published on the Council's website and promoted via the Greenock Telegraph;
- an ongoing campaign to promote the numerous ways in which people can access free sanitary products in Inverclyde began in November 2022 and will run until the end of March 2023. The campaign consisted of regular articles in the Greenock Telegraph and digital advertising. In addition, a special feature on how to access free sanitary products in Inverclyde appeared in the Greenock Telegraph's festive supplement;
- the promotion of pop-up shops with publicity taking place Greenock Central Library and at McGilp's pop-up shop; and
- the production and distribution of leaflets and flyers to promote the online ordering service, community venues, the pop-up shops and arrangements in schools.

3.14 **Funding** – Of the allocation of £89,000 in 2022/23 to make free sanitary products available across Inverclyde and encourage uptake. As of 31 March 2023, a total of £75,149 had been spent. The Council has been allocated £89,000 in 2023/24 to continue to implement access to free period products in schools and in wider communities

3.15 **Performance** – the following performance information demonstrates the progress that is being made to develop and improve the service. For example:

- during 2022/23 there was almost a 50% increase in online orders from the previous year. In 2021/22 a total of 799 online orders were placed and this increased to 1532 in 2022/23;
- the number of orders placed by venues also increased from 88 in 2021/22 to 150 in 2022/23. This demonstrates the efforts made by the Health and Well-Being team to reach out and work with a greater number of venues;
- in 2022/23 a total of 541 reusable products and 163 disposable products were distributed through pop-up shops. Pop-up shops only started in December 2022, and this is therefore a baseline figure;
- widespread engagement was carried out in 2022/23 for the first time. Of the people who took part, 68% knew about the free period products service. This has provided us with a baseline figure which we hope to improve on in 2023/24;
- as part of the engagement conducted in 2022/23, users of the online service reported a satisfaction figure of 91%; and
- In total 2386 products were distributed across Inverclyde (please note each boxes contains a number of products)

4.0 PLANS FOR 2023/24

4.1 Throughout 2023/24 the service will:

- continue to hold pop-up shops at different locations and target different audiences to see what works best. For example, weeklong pop-up shops in areas that are affected by high levels of deprivation;
- continue to engage with the community and young people to evaluate our current arrangements and identify where improvements could be made;
- take part in Period Dignity Training run by Hey Girls;
- We will work with Hey Girls to re-design the online ordering form and make improvements to this service;
- continue to explore possible new partnerships. For example, there is potential to work further with Health Visitors to establish a process for distributing free sanitary products to new mothers;

- develop a campaign to raise awareness of menstrual health and the challenges of period poverty; and
- carry out an evaluation to assess the impact of our period poverty work.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		X
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
0444-000-20079		2022/23	£89,000		

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 Legal/Risk

No.

5.4 Human Resources

No.

5.5 Strategic

No.

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:

Has there been active consideration of how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children’s rights.

5.7 Environmental/Sustainability

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
X	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

5.8 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Communities and young people were consulted over the arrangements that have been put in place to meet the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Inverclyde Council – Statement on Exercise of functions; for Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021.