

Highland Council Free Period Product Provision: Statement on Exercise of Functions

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The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was given Royal Assent on 12 January 2021. The Act requires local authorities to ensure period products are available free of charge within the Local Authority area and for anyone who needs them.

Period products (such as pads and tampons) must be reasonably easy to obtain and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products. In addition, there must be a reasonable choice of different products available.

Each local authority must prepare a written statement describing its plans for provision. The statement should be prepared following consultation with relevant individuals and groups and include a summary of the arrangements put in place to make period products accessible free of charge and any plans for making information available about how and where products can be accessed.

This statement sets out The Highland Council's commitment to free period product provision and details current and future provision in the wider community and in Highland Council schools.

Highland Council commitments

With the funding made available by Scottish Government, The Highland Council is committed to the provision of free period products to all those who need them. Provision is to be made available for Highland residents and those visiting the area for work or leisure.

We will ensure that:

- All period products we provide are free of charge and reasonably easy to obtain, and a reasonable choice of products is offered.
- Provision will be available in the community and in Highland Council schools.
- We work with partners to address period poverty and stigma.
- Consideration is given to respect and dignity in our approach.
- Consideration is given to those who may face additional barriers.
- Consideration is given to sustainability and environmental impact.
- Public consultation and community engagement has been carried out to inform our provision.

- Information on the scheme is communicated effectively to the public, and
- Provision will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

Consultation

Following guidance produced by the Scottish Government, a consultation exercise was carried out over a 4-week period during July/August 2022 to inform community provision and identify need in Highland.

The consultation was open to any member of the public and we particularly sought the views of:

- Those currently using sanitary products.
- Those who will use sanitary products in the future.
- Those who may collect sanitary products on behalf of others.

And asked for their feedback on:

- The way products may be made available.
- The types of products required.
- The premises where the products will be available.
- The location of products in those premises.

An online survey was published on the Council's website, and information was promoted on social media channels and a press release. Additionally, a range of local community groups were contacted separately to invite them to respond to and circulate the survey. In particular, groups that worked with individuals who may face additional barriers to both the consultation and period products were identified and encouraged to consider carrying out discussions or focus groups with their members and feed responses to us as an alternative to the online survey.

Over 750 responses to the survey were received and will be analysed to inform our developing provision in Highland.

The main outcomes were:

- Disposable pads and tampons are the most popular period products, but there is also a significant interest in reusable period products.
- Health settings (e.g. pharmacies, GP surgeries...) were the venue preferred by most to pick up free period products from (86% of respondents in

- support). Leisure and community centres, food banks (73% of respondents in support)
- A home delivery service was also very popular (72 % of respondents were supportive).
- Respondents preferred collecting products from toilets and generally discreet locations (81% of support).
- The lack of information on the scheme was identified by most respondents as the biggest barrier to access period products.

Consultation was carried out with pupils in Highland schools in the summer 2019 and feedback at that time indicated that pupils would like to see a better choice of products; more environmentally friendly products; and more collection points in schools.

Further consultation is to be carried out with pupils and teachers in Highland schools during 2022-23.

Current community provision

The Council is working in partnership with High Life Highland and CFINE to provide free period products in community locations across Highland.

Initial locations for collection points include the network of the Council's Service Points and Access Points, and High Life Highland libraries, leisure and community centres. Since October 2022, the Council also works with the Scottish charity CFINE to distribute free period products to over 50 local food groups, such as food banks and community fridges. In addition, some community organisations have notified their interest of becoming a pick-up point. Their requests will be reviewed to ensure that new pick-up points fill geographical gaps and are in line with consultation outcomes.

Period products provided currently include a range of disposable pads and tampons. The locations of these within venues vary depending on the building, with some of them being located in toilets while others are available in reception areas. In all cases, guidance has been issued to ensure that period products are available to all those who need them, including those who pick up items on behalf of others.

A full and up-to-date list of public collection points can be found on the My Period website <https://myperiodlive.azurewebsites.net/>.

The same information can also be accessed from the app PickUpMyPeriod which can be downloaded from the following links:

For Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.myperiodapp>

For Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/pickupmyperiod/id1500403938>

In addition to the community pick-up points, The Highland Council has partnered with the Scottish social enterprise Hey Girls to provide a home delivery service from October 2022. This service is aimed at Highland residents who cannot easily access free period products in the community or in schools, particularly people living in remote locations, or where they cannot access products in person and do not have someone to collect products on their behalf. The service also provides reusable period products (menstrual cups and washable pads).

To promote this provision in the community, a webpage has been developed on the Council's website with information on the scheme and can be found at <http://www.highland.gov/freeperiodproducts>. Promotional posters have also been created and are used within venues to help locate products and provide further advice on the scheme.

Current education provision

Period products have been provided free of charge in Highland schools since 2018-2019. Currently each school orders products and puts arrangements in place to make them available with guidance provided centrally. Period products have also been made available in different ways, for example:

- Storage containers/baskets in toilets.
- Free vending machines/dispensers in toilets.
- Pick-up points on schools premises.

In addition, schools have been encouraged to enable pupils to "stock up" before a holiday to ensure they have the products to cover their needs out with term time.

Proposed arrangements for future provision

The Highland Council will continue to develop good practice in the delivery of free period products. We have been supported in this work by a steering group which has included partners in High Life Highland, NHS Highland, and the Highland Third Sector Interface.

The Partnership Steering Group has reviewed the feedback from the consultation and has agreed the following actions to support the development of provision of free period products in Highland:

Access

- To consider additional venues for collection points based on consultation responses and geographical gaps identified, with a specific focus on engaging with health providers about potential partnership arrangements.
- To work to improve the current range of period products available, taking into account the consultation responses and the updated national procurement framework from October 2022. We will particularly look at how we can promote reusable products.
- To ensure that the scheme is inclusive and that products are available to groups or individuals that may face additional barriers to accessing products. This will include ensuring key staff e.g. health visitors, social care workers and venues e.g. Women's Aid have access to products to provide to clients where required.

Promotion and Awareness

- To increase promotion of the availability of free period products in Highland and ensure information is accessible.
- To carry out consultation and engagement at regular intervals with both users and venue providers to support improvements in provision and to raise awareness.
- To engage with pupils and staff during the 2022/23 school year in order to understand how current arrangements are working. This will inform any improvement actions identified.
- To build on work to deliver educational awareness resources in schools in Highland to raise awareness of the scheme and of menstrual health.



- To maintain the key principles of dignity and respect in the delivery of the scheme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- To monitor, evaluate and build on service provision to ensure everyone has easy access to products appropriate to their needs in Highland.

Contact information

For any further information, please visit www.highland.gov.uk/freeperiodproducts or get in touch with us at period.products@highland.gov.uk.

References

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021: Guidance – September 2021

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/period-products-free-provision-scotland-act-2021-guidance-responsible-bodies-september-2021/>