

ITEM No ...2.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE – 6 DECEMBER 2021

REPORT ON: PROVISION OF FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 339- 2021

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 COSLA Leaders agreed to provide access to free period products in schools and public buildings in 2018 and all local authorities do so according to a set of guiding principles. On 19 October 2020 the **Period Products in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020** came into force placing a duty on Local Authorities to provide period products for those who need them in education settings. In addition, the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 will, when it is fully in force in 2022, place legal duties on local authorities to make period products available for free both in schools (through their role as education authorities) and more widely in the community for all those who need to use them.
- 1.2 This report outlines the requirements on both schools and local authorities to implement the regulations and the Act, and specifically the progress made on the delivery of provision of free period products in schools in Dundee. An update report was provided in 2020 with reference made to Article IV of the Minute of the Meeting of the Children and Families Services Committee of 26 October 2020 (report no. 274-2020 refers).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children and Families Services Committee:
- i note the contents of the report
 - ii note the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 and requirements placed on local authorities
 - iii note the consultations underway to help develop future delivery of free period products

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 In a change from previous years, the funding of £143,000 from Scottish Government has been allocated as a single budget at Local Authority level to allow maximum flexibility for Authorities to manage and utilise the funding.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Since June 2017, “Ending Period Poverty” has been high on Scotland’s public policy agenda. Easy access to period products is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of those who menstruate. With one in four children in Scotland living in poverty, the cost of essential period products is yet another expense that low income families struggle to meet. Being able to access period products when you need them, is also regarded as a gender equality issue.

The Scottish Government has therefore committed funding to all Local Authorities to ensure that lack of access to products does not impact on an individual’s ability to participate fully in learning in education at all levels. National Guiding Principles have been developed which include:

- **Protecting children and young people’s dignity**, avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma;
- Making a range of products with different qualities available, giving children and young people **choice** about the products they want to use;

- A response that is **reflective of children and young people’s views and experiences**;
- An efficient and dignified approach which demonstrates **value for money**;
- An offer for all eligible **children and young people** during **term time**
- Ensuring period products are easily accessible to **meet individual needs**;
- Individuals being able to get sufficient products to **meet their needs**;
- **Gender equality**, ensuring anyone who menstruates can access products, including transgender men and non-binary individuals, and that language is gender neutral.
- **Awareness raising and education** to both promote the ‘offer’ and change cultural norms

4.2 Dundee schools’ central team engaged with schools, children, young people and families, and key partners to create policy guidelines and a delivery model which embrace these National Guiding Principles across all Dundee schools. The policy guidelines focus on 6 key areas:

- Developing the Culture in schools – reducing stigma
- Developing the Curriculum
- Involving children, young people, staff and parents
- Provision out with school
- Procurement of products and services
- Monitoring and evaluation

5.0 PROGRESS IN SCHOOLS

5.1 The **Period Products in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020 and the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021** places a requirement on Local Authorities to make period products available to pupils who need them who are:

- in attendance at a public school.
- accommodated in a hostel provided or maintained by them.

Since the last Committee Report in October 2020, great progress has been made implementing the Dundee Schools delivery model. All Secondary Schools, Specials Schools and Primaries are fully implementing access to free period products. This has been achieved in partnership with Tayside Contracts, who have taken on the role, in most settings, of ordering, providing and replenishing period products in identified places in schools, including toilets. In addition, Dundee Children and Families Service have ensured access to free period products is in place within all Children’s Residential Houses.

5.2 As part of COVID Recovery, schools also ensured that additional support was on offer to children and young people through a range of local school models, including toiletry packs being made available at school receptions, toiletry packs delivered to targeted families, online ordering and promotions/drop-ins within the school.

5.3 Although COVID 19 presented challenges, due to school and other council facility closures, for both community and school delivery models, a partnership approach led to the creation of an online ordering system which provided a home delivery service of period products to all residents across this City. This system was continued beyond March 2021 and is being delivered by a partner organisation Hey Girls.

6.0 FUTURE DELIVERY

6.1 The Scottish Government has recently published the following Guidance for Local Authorities www.gov.scot/isbn/9781802013924

6.2 Whilst it is for each Local Authority to decide what practical arrangements are put in place, the Act states that we must give "anyone who needs them" access to "different types of period products", "reasonably easily" and with "reasonable dignity".

6.3 **Section 1** of the Act places a duty on Local Authorities to make period products obtainable free of charge for **anyone who needs to use them**. **Section 2** of the Act places a duty on

education providers to make period products obtainable free of charge on their premises for pupils and students during term time.

- 6.4 Dundee City Council is required to publish a **Statement on Exercise of Functions** that summarises the arrangements that will be put in place to meet the duty within schools and the wider community. This will be a joint statement between the Children and Families and Chief Executive's Service however the guidance states that the statement must separately set out the arrangements for sections 1 and 2.
- 6.5 Each local authority must undertake consultation with children and young people and the wider community and use this feedback to publish the **Statement on Exercise of Functions**. To ensure that the arrangements meet people's needs, we are required to consult with individuals who may either a) need to use free products currently b) need to use products in the future or c) need to collect products on behalf of someone who needs to use product
- 6.6 The following methods of consultation are being progressed across Dundee schools and the wider community between November 2021 and February 2022:

Schools Consultation

- Electronic Surveys are being created for all Secondary School aged young people
- Focus Groups with primary school aged children in all 8 clusters
- A Focus Group with representatives from all 8 Secondary schools

Wider community consultation

- Electronic survey via the DCC and partners website
- Targeted consultation with those identified as possibly having additional barriers to accessing free products
- Community consultation events

- 6.7 The analysis of the consultations will provide key themes for the Statement of Exercise of Function as well as areas for improvement for the future joint delivery model in schools and the community moving forward. It is expected that the Act will come into force in August 2022 prior to the beginning of the new academic year

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness and poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Council Management Team and Tayside Contracts have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

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