

Statement on Exercise of Functions

1. Introduction

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 12th January 2021. The Act requires local authorities to ensure period products are provided free of charge to anyone who needs them.

Period products should be easily accessible in ways that respects the dignity of those obtaining them. There should be a reasonable choice of the varying types of period products.

All Local Authorities are required to produce and communicate a Statement on Exercise of Functions describing the plans for provision this includes the Legal duties of carrying out a public consultation.

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.

This is Scottish Borders Councils Statement of Provision

Scottish Borders Council is committed to providing access to period products free of charge to those in the Borders who need them.

Access of free sanitary products has been in place in our education settings since late 2018 and from September within our public buildings.

A dedicated page on our website will outline the full provision available along with a dedicated email address for queries Free Period Products

We will:

- Provide free of charge and easy to access product in public buildings
- Consult with those people in our communities who will require the products
- Provide a reasonable choice of both single use and reusable products are offered
- Consider those who may face additional barriers, including those who are BME, LGBTQ, disabled, homeless, victims of domestic abuse etc.
- Engage with organisations working with groups and individuals including those with equalities issues to ensure the broadest range of access is achieved.
- Work with strategic partners in the Community Learning and Development Partnership to identify premises and distribution methods for providing access in a way that maintains the dignity of those seeking access to period products.
- Clearly explain the products available and where these can be accessed to our citizens.
- Regularly monitor and review provision of period products. The aim of our Statement is to ensure gender inequality is removed whilst tackling period poverty.

2. Consultation

The Acted requires responsible bodies to consult with members of the public as identified by the Scottish Government prior to the publication of the statement. Prior to the preparation of the statement Scottish Borders Council undertook both public and Education specific consultation exercises. Colleagues in other Local Authorities were contacted in order to learn from their engagement experiences and the content of the consultation was sense checked with partners to ensure it was inclusive and appropriate.

Method used

Using Citizen Space, an online survey was available during 17 June until 18 August. Paper copies were available on request. The consultation was promoted through SBC's Communication department and to partners within community and education settings. 147 responses were received in total.

Questions we asked & key findings?

The consultation asked 16 questions to establish what level of awareness people have of existing free period products and identify what type of service they would like to see provided in Scottish Borders in the future.

Current awareness

Questions 1-2 focused on what level of awareness people have of the availability of free period products in Scottish Borders. 79 people reported they were not aware that free period products are available in community venues; 68 are aware. Only 19 people reported that they had accessed free period products.

Experiences

Questions 3-5 concerned people's experiences of using free period products and whether they had encountered any barriers. 6% of those who had used free period products accessed them through schools followed by a Council building (5%) and community café (3%). Of those who used the free period products, disposable pads were the most popular option (10%) followed by tampons (7%). Reasons for not accessing the products included not knowing how to get them (28%), not using the building (23%) and they wanted to leave products for those with a greater need (20%).

Future access

Questions 6 – 11 focused on what free period products people would like to see available and what would make them more accessible. The vast majority of people would like to have disposable pads (82%) and tampons (72%) available. Nearly half of those responding selected period pants (48%) and 41% selected reusable pads. Menstrual cup (37%) and reusable liners (32%) were also selected.

58% of those who responded said they would feel comfortable accessing free period products through a community centre. More than half felt comfortable accessing products via a school (53%). Community cafes and Council buildings were also popular answers (44%

each) followed by food banks (37%). In terms of free period product placement, 82% opted for a discreet place with 54% selecting somewhere visible.

When asked if they would use a voucher scheme to access free period products, 116 said they would and 81 said this would be their first choice of access compared to 63 people who said they would prefer to access products within a community setting.

Profile of responders

Questions 12-16 provided information on who had completed the survey. The highest number of responders live in central Borders (31.9%) with the lowest percentage in south Borders (2.72%). 5.4% of people lived out-with Borders and 4% preferred not to say.

140 of those who responded to the consultation identified as female and five identified as male. One selected 'other' and one preferred not to say. Only five of those who responded were under 18 years of age and seven were aged 18-24 years. The largest portion of respondents were the 45-59 year olds (60 respondents).

When asked about themselves, the majority of people are a period product consumer (72%) and just under half are a family member of someone who needs these products. 20% are on a low income and 14% are a single parent. When asked who they would be obtaining free period products for, 72% said it was for themselves and 47% said it was for a family member.

Consultation Key messages

Of the comments people submitted with their consultation response, many referenced their support for free period products and believe more should be done to tackle period poverty including additional outlets such as businesses being encouraged to provide free period products. Respondents are supportive of the approach and are in favour of wider community access.

Next Steps

Communication

To enhance and develop the provision of free period products, Scottish Borders Council will continue to engage with the groups identified by the Scottish Government to ensure we are delivering best practice within the budget provided.

Product sourcing & distribution

We will work with our suppliers to promote the use of re-useable products, as well as continuing to provide products through our current locations we will work with partners and agencies to provide a wider distribution network.

Changes to locations or product availability will be communicated via our web page.

