

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

**ACCESS TO
PERIOD PRODUCTS
STATEMENT ON
EXERCISE OF
FUNCTIONS**



INTRODUCTION

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed in November 2020. It is the world's first legislation to support the provision of free products for those who have a period.

The Act requires local authorities to provide period products free of charge to anyone who needs them. The Act specifies that local authorities must make products reasonably easy to obtain, respect dignity and offer a reasonable choice of types of period products.

There are two parts to the Act:

Section 1 requires local authorities to ensure that anyone within their local area who requires period products can obtain them free of charge, in sufficient quantities to meet their needs. This includes those living, working or visiting the local authority area.

Section 2 requires all education providers to make period products obtainable free of charge on their premises for pupils and students during term time. Products should be available in at least one location in every building normally used by pupils in both primary and secondary schools.

The Act also requires Local Authorities to publish a written statement describing the plans for provision.

This is the East Renfrewshire Council Statement of Provision. This statement covers both Section 1 and Section 2 of the Act.

OUR COMMITMENT

Community Provision

“East Renfrewshire Council will provide free period products for all who live, work or visit the area. We will provide a range of products in accessible venues across the area. We will encourage people to take what they need, when they need it, for whoever needs it.”

We will do this by:

- 💧 Providing a range of free products, both single-use and reusable, to meet the needs identified by the public consultation findings. We will provide sufficient products to meet the needs whilst on the premises, as well as products which can be taken away for ongoing need
- 💧 Ensuring products are available in a wide range of venues which are most accessible in terms of location, transport access and venue opening hours. We will use the feedback from the public consultation to target specific venues and ensure adequate provision
- 💧 Considering dignity and respect in our provision, giving due consideration to those who face additional barriers and monitoring and reviewing our provision regularly.

Education Provision

“East Renfrewshire Council will aim to ensure the discreet accessibility of appropriate period products for all school pupils and staff across all education establishments, as and when they are required.”

We will do this by:

- 💧 Continuing to consult with our pupils, families and staff (including those who may not require such products) to ensure discreet accessibility of provision in the most appropriate locations across each education setting
- 💧 Taking pupil feedback in to account to inform the procurement of future products, making sure the right, most appropriate products are available for those who may need to use them
- 💧 Engaging with pupil and staff groups to reduce stigma and increase awareness of provision across all education and wider community facilities.

CONSULTATION

The Act requires responsible bodies to consult with appropriate individuals, as identified by the Scottish Government, prior to the preparation of this statement. East Renfrewshire Council undertook both a public consultation as well as an Education specific consultation exercise.

In February and March 2022, we published an online survey which was open to anyone to complete. We publicised this through social media, community groups and word of mouth, with a particular focus on equality groups. We collected a limited amount of identifying information including geographical location, low-income status, caring responsibilities and other potential barriers to access. In total, there were 323 responses to the survey, covering a wide range of geographical locations in the local authority and representing the views of a multitude of backgrounds and characteristics.

Throughout May and early June 2022 we published an online survey, available for all education staff, pupils and families to complete. The survey was publicised online through the Council's existing social media channels and by each school individually. To ensure respondents felt comfortable in providing responses, the only identifying information we asked for was whether they were a pupil, member of staff or family member and the school either they or their child attended or where they worked. A total of 330 responses were received, with respondents from all mainstream secondary schools. A limited number of responses from primary school pupils were also received. Further engagement will be undertaken with the special sector in the new term to ensure that pupils and staff are able to design the best scheme for their own provision in school.

Through both consultations, we asked about:

- 💧 People's awareness and experience of the existing provision in place, including any perceived barriers to access
- 💧 How people would like provision to work in the future based on the new Act, including product type and access requirements
- 💧 Any other additional information relevant to making these products available.

KEY FINDINGS

Current Provision

- 💧 Only 1 in 5 respondents have accessed free products in community venues, whilst almost half (45%) have made use of the products currently available at school
 - the majority had accessed them for their own personal use
 - in schools, around a quarter accessed them for a friend
- 💧 Of those who have accessed products:
 - leisure/sports centres and health centres were the most commonly used community venues and single-use pads and tampons were the most commonly accessed products
 - three quarters of respondents in community venues felt the provision was discreet and dignified
 - over three quarters of pupils had accessed them in a single-gender toilet, whilst a small number accessed them in gender-neutral toilets or from either a member of staff or the school office
- 💧 Of those who had not accessed products, the largest number indicated that they preferred to use their own products they brought themselves. The other most popular responses were that they were embarrassed to access them or were not aware that these products were available for use.

KEY FINDINGS

Future Provision

- Single use products remained the most popular type of provision that people would like to see – both pads and tampons

Reusable products, specifically menstrual cups and pads were favoured by around half of the respondents to the community consultation. Within school a smaller number also indicated that they would like to see reusable products including period pants be made available

- On the accessibility of future provision:

- Online ordering / postal delivery was the most popular method of community provision with four out of five requesting this
- The most favoured community venues were libraries, sport centres and health centres.
- The majority of respondents (both community and school) would like products to be available in single-gender and gender-neutral toilets for enhanced accessibility
- A large proportion also indicated that they would like to see discreet collection points within community venues and schools
- A smaller proportion would like to see them on display stands and/or in reception areas in community venues showing a preference for ease of access over discreteness
- Respondents told us the most important aspect of a making a community venue accessible is that it is open evenings and/or weekends. Over half also felt it was important to have parking nearby

- Other relevant issues raised in the open comments included making products available within individual cubicles; ensuring greater discretion and avoiding stigma or embarrassment; demand for reusable products; and the availability of different products or brands.

NEXT STEPS

You said

We want to access free products in a discreet and dignified way

We want to be able to access the right products, including reusable options

We want increased awareness and reduced stigma

We want easy access to products, including home delivery

We are doing

We will work with venue staff, school staff and pupils to look at where the most appropriate locations are for product accessibility. Where possible, we will make more products available within cubicles in all single-gender and gender-neutral toilets

We will continue to ensure that products are available both within the toilets and from other discreet locations including from trusted staff, school offices and discreet locations with-in community venues

The existing contract for products will end in Autumn 2022 and this will provide an opportunity for us to consider the most appropriate products to make available in each of our venues and schools. Whilst respondents strongly indicated they were keen to continue with single use products, a number also indicated they would like to see alternatives available

We introduced reusable towels, period pants and menstrual cups to the display stands within our two health centres, and to other community venues on demand. We will continue to offer a range of reusable products to venues in recognition of the benefits to the environment and longer-term financial savings

Over recent years, a large amount of awareness raising has taken place, however, there is more that needs to be done to improve knowledge of the scheme

We will work alongside the wider Council on an awareness raising campaign, both in schools and in other community facilities, to increase understanding and, in turn, reduce the stigma associated with accessing products that are available for all

We currently provide products in a range of council buildings, youth facilities, health centres, libraries, sports facilities, halls and partner organisations. A number of specific council teams and services also have a supply of products

We will undertake a review of all our existing venues and associated opening hours and continue to update this as venues re-open following the pandemic. We will work to increase provision within the venues identified by the consultation findings

The cost of home delivery is currently very high and if we spend our budget on delivery, we will significantly reduce the number and/or range of products we can provide. We will continue to explore potential solutions for home delivery and if we can find a cost effective option we will aim to introduce this.

CONCLUSION

This is the East Renfrewshire Council written statement on the exercise of their functions under the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021. This statement has been produced in partnership between the Education Department and the Business, Operations and Partnerships Department.

Our provision is based on the findings from the consultation and outlines how we will ensure that products reasonably easy to obtain, respect dignity and offer a reasonable choice of types of period products in East Renfrewshire. We will continue to monitor provision and review local arrangements as required.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more detail on our provision of free period products in East Renfrewshire, please visit our [website page](#).

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch to discuss any of these issues, please contact: listening@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk