

# Statement on Exercise of Functions

## 1. Introduction

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 12<sup>th</sup> 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 different types of period products.

Local Authorities are required to produce and communicate a Statement on Exercise of Functions describing the plans for provision. Legal duties includes 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 Shetland Island Council's Statement of Provision

On the basis of funding being made available by the Scottish Government:

“Shetland Islands Council is committed to ensuring that everyone in Shetland who may need to access period products can obtain them free of charge as and when they are required. Over the last two years we have been making products freely available in selected venues and via specific services in the community, positively impacting on some of the most vulnerable in the community.”

*Shetland Islands Council Leader, Emma Macdonald*

We will:

- Ensure all products are free of charge and easy to obtain
- Consult with those people in our communities who will require the products
- Ensure a reasonable choice of both single use and reusable products are offered
- Ensure due consideration is given to 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.
- Ensure effective communication of which products are available and where these can be accessed to our citizens.
- Ensure that provision will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

This document will be published on Shetland Island Council's webpage and can be obtained at:

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/community/access-free-period-products>

## 2. Consultation

Before preparing a statement we must consult those groups of people identified in the Scottish Government Guidance about period products.

### Method

A public consultation was launched on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and concluded on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

The consultation was open to any member of the public regardless of gender, age or menstruating status. The survey was publicised via local radio, social media and local press. The consultation was circulated widely via community groups contact lists so as to try and target all our community groups.

#### What we asked about:

- Which free period products should be available
- Where would be the best place to get free period products from
- Dignity and ease of access
- Barriers to access
- Community or island the respondent lived in

### The Survey

The findings of the survey have been used to shape Shetland Island Council's provision. We received 395 responses. The survey contained 6 questions and was issued via online platform Smart Survey. Word document versions were available and information on receiving a paper copy in the post was also available. The survey was available on the Council's website and was promoted in the local media. Paper copies of the survey were available to anyone who needed them.

### Consultation Key Messages

#### Provision

Question 1 focussed on which free period products should be available in the community with options of pads, tampons, menstrual cups, reusable pads, period pants and other. 394 answers were provided to this question.

- 91.37% selected pads which was the most popular choice.
- 84.26% chose tampons, the second most favoured option.
- 52.79% thought that reusable pads should be available.
- 50.51% thought menstrual cups should be available.
- 49.49% selected period pants.
- 5.33% selected "other". Where other was mentioned, key themes were:
  - Emphasis on biodegradable and reusable products being available
  - A mixture of all options is important
  - Panty liners were suggested.
  - Bins for period product disposal
  - Reusable bags to place the products in when collecting

Pads and tampons were the most popular choices (91% and 84% respectively), however, menstrual cups, reusable pads and period pants were selected by at least half of respondents too. It is clear from the answers selected and further comments that a mixture of products was important and that environmentally friendly products and sanitary disposal bins should be considered.

Question 2 sought information on where people thought the best place to get period products would be from. 395 answers were provided.

- 85.82% selected 'order online for postal delivery' which was the most preferred option.
- 67.59% chose health centres which was the second most popular choice.
- 55.19% thought leisure centres would be the best place to get period products from.
- 45.06% chose community venues.
- 39.49% chose foodbanks.
- 35.19% said council buildings would be the best place to get free period products from.
- 34.18% chose order by phone for postal delivery
- 12.15% said 'other'. Where 'other' was selected, key themes were: public toilets, supermarkets and shops, workplaces and chemists and pharmacies were the most frequently referred to (other than schools where period products are already provided).

Online ordering was the most popular option of where the best place would be to get free period products with 86% of respondents opting for this. Over two thirds selected health centres and over a half said leisure centres. Community venues and foodbanks were also popular with around 45% and 40% respectively. Public toilets, supermarkets and shops, workplaces and pharmacies were also mentioned frequently. Other specific local locations were mentioned including workplaces and local buildings. Sanitary bin provision in venues was important.

Question 3 focussed on whereabouts in a public building, if picking up products from a public building, would people like to access free period products?

- 79.79% chose in toilets including male/female/disabled and changing places
- 35.49% selected somewhere out the way
- 33.68% chose on a display stand that is easy to access
- 19.43% chose reception areas
- 4.40% chose 'other'. Where 'other' was selected, key themes were: being available discreetly, clear signage and visibility of products, being available in toilets including both male and female toilets. Other areas mentioned were changing rooms, somewhere visible in the food bank and that there should be options.

Toilets were the most popular option as the place to access free period products in a public building followed by somewhere out of the way and a display stand that is easy to access. Reception areas were selected by almost a fifth of respondents. Being discreet with clear signage of where to get products was also important.

Question 4 asked what, if anything would stop people from accessing products.

- Not knowing where to get them was the most popular answer with 75.87% choosing this option.
- Not being sure how much can be taken at any one time was the second most selected answer with 43.97%.

- Embarrassment was third with 38.34%
- 21.45% chose 'can't get out to shops or other buildings'.
- Not having access to online ordering was selected by 7.77% of respondents.
- 4.56% chose 'other'. Where 'other' was selected, key themes were: Not feeling any barriers, being able to afford themselves, having to ask for products, choice of products and having to go somewhere to access. Not knowing who should access them and the time the venue was open was also mentioned.

It is clear that not knowing where to get products was the most common potential barrier followed by not being sure how many to take at one time and embarrassment. Not getting out to shops and buildings was mentioned by over a fifth of respondents and not having access to online ordering was chosen by 8% of respondents. It is also important to note that some did not feel any barriers, some felt they could afford themselves and that asking for products and the choice of products was also a factor.

Key themes when asked for other comments were:

- Reusable products are desirable in terms of money saving and environmental issues. They are more expensive but replaced less often, saving public sector money in the long run and the scheme will allow those who wouldn't be able to buy reusable products to do so.
- Environmental impact is important to people when obtaining products. There were many comments on reusable products and some on ensuring less usage of plastic packaging and applicators.
- Communication is important in terms of knowing both how to use the service, what the options are and ensuring information is given on how to use reusable products. This links to not knowing where to get products and the confidence to use reusable items.
- There were a significant number of comments praising the service, appreciative that these products will now be free.
- Some people mentioned that some products should be free and others not and it was mentioned by some that they would not use the service as they could afford to buy their own period products. Best value for the council and individual was important.

### 3. Community-based Provision

Shetland Islands Council's plan for the provision of free period products to the community has been informed by our community consultation; our experiences of supplying free products to a number of community venues and services over the last two years and by the experience of the Council's Children's Services Department in delivering free products to anyone who menstruates and attends a school in Shetland or who is Home Educated.

#### Communications

We will work with our Communications team to raise awareness of the service.

This will include, but is not limited to; promotion in local press, Shetland Islands Council website, social media and posters in the wider community.

The service will be promoted through all Shetland Islands Council's services which interact with the public; Shetland Partnership partners; Shetland CLD Partnership and a range of other local partnerships which have a key role in reaching the most vulnerable in our community.

### Available Products

- Disposable pads and tampons will be available in a range of Council venues, public buildings, community venues and local health centres.
- Disposable pads, tampons and re-usable products including period pants, menstrual cups and period pads will be available through an online delivering service.

### Methods for Obtaining Products

Shetland Islands Council will be piloting a range of methods to enable the community to access free period products. These will be reviewed at the end of 2022, and any adjustments made, will be reflected in an updated Statement of Exercise of Functions.

Health centres and community nursing venues will have supplies of period products to make available from Monday 15th August.

A range of community venues throughout Shetland, including leisure centres, Library, and Council buildings will be stocked with products from Monday 15th August.

Shetland Islands Council is working to put in place an online ordering system, which will supply a full range of period products, including reusable, direct to your door. It is anticipated that this will be available from late autumn 2022.

A full list of local stockists of free products will be updated regularly on the Council's website as provision rolls out.

### Service Review

Shetland Islands Councils delivery plan will be reviewed at the end of 2022, and again at the end of the first year of operation. Thereafter it will be reviewed annually.

### Product Locations and Access Points

The current venues where products can be obtained are listed on the Shetland Islands Council website. Any changes to locations and availability will be accessed on the Shetland Islands Council website.

### Contact

If you have any questions about this provision or wish to provide feedback please contact [CommunityPlanning&Dev@shetland.gov.uk](mailto:CommunityPlanning&Dev@shetland.gov.uk)

## 4. Education Facilities Provision

Shetland Islands Council will provide free products in all primary, secondary school establishments and school hostels for which the local authority is the education provider. Shetland Islands Council has been providing free access to period products for anyone who menstruates and attends a school in Shetland or who is Home Educated since 2018.

Products will be available in a way which respects the dignity of the pupil and can be accessed without having to ask a teacher.

## Communications

The service is promoted on the Shetland Islands Council website and information can be found here: [Period Equality – Shetland Islands Council](#)

The School regularly sends the link home to parents in newsletters and emails as well as quarterly to pupils' 'glow' email addresses.

## Available Products

- Disposable pads, panty liners and tampons are available in all schools across Shetland and the Hostel.
- Disposable pads, panty liners, tampons and reusable products, including reusable pads and menstrual cups are available to order through an online delivery service.

## Methods for Obtaining Products

Products will be available during term time in at least one building of the school which pupils can access. Most schools display products within the toilet facilities, although some schools may have products available in multiple locations.

A three-month supply of products for pupils can be ordered online to be sent directly to the door. Delivery may take up to 28 days. If the order is required more urgently, please contact [childrensservices-finance@shetland.gov.uk](mailto:childrensservices-finance@shetland.gov.uk). The order form can be found here: [Period Equality – Shetland Islands Council](#).

## Contact

If you have any questions about education provision or wish to provide feedback please contact [childrensservices-finance@shetland.gov.uk](mailto:childrensservices-finance@shetland.gov.uk).