

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021
West Dunbartonshire Council Consultation Report
December 2021



#EndPeriodPoverty in West Dunbartonshire

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Introduction

West Dunbartonshire Council has been providing access to free period products in the community since August 2018. Mainly disposable sanitary towels and tampons. This is funded by the Scottish Government and has meant that the Council has been able to develop a way of providing these products free in communities leading up to when the new Law (Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021) (the Act) starts. This will be sometime in 2022 (date is yet to be confirmed). The new Act places duties on the Council to provide free access to period products in a way that protects the dignity of anyone requiring them. Guidance was issued by the Scottish Government in September 2021 which tells us what actions that must be taken prior to its start date.

Guidance Key Messages

The Act states that everyone in Scotland who has a period should have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required. This includes visitors to Scotland for the duration of their stay.

Section 1 of the Act places a duty on Local Authorities to make sure that people can get period products free of charge for anyone who needs to use them.

Meeting individual needs and Dignity by default

Period products should be available in a way that respects the dignity of the people who pick them up. This principle has been in place since Scottish Government first made a commitment to make period products available for free. Dignity should always be at the forefront of voluntary delivery, however it becomes a statutory requirement when the Act comes into force.

Consultation and Statement on Exercise of Functions

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), must publish a written statement setting out how they will exercise their functions under the Act. WDC must publish their first statement as soon as is reasonably possible after receiving the Guidance and can publish further statements at any time in the future.

Before drafting a statement, WDC must undertake consultation as set out below:

- ✓ Make it Gender Equality Free for all anyone who has a period so men or women can collect them.
- ✓ Involve individuals who may find it more difficult to pick up these products.
- ✓ Pay regard to particular groups of people who have been identified as being most in need.
- ✓ Consider what information needs to be provided to the public for example safety information regarding Toxic Shock related to use of Tampons.
- ✓ Ability for others to collect products on behalf of individuals.

Consultation

The Guidance tells us who we must consult with and what we must ask them about. Here are some of the specific things we are told to do within the Guidance.

Before preparing a statement we must consult the persons mentioned in the Guidance, and any other organisation or person we think are appropriate.

Who we needed to consult:

- People that use period products who live or are otherwise likely to be present in the local authority's area;
- Persons who may want to collect period products on behalf of product users;
- People facing additional barriers to access.

What we needed to include:

- Ways in which people could get hold of period products free of charge;
- Dignity and ease of access;
- With a reasonable choice of different types of period products available.

How we done this:

Online Consultation

In order to reach as many people who live or work in West Dunbartonshire the quickest and most effective tool we had available was Survey Monkey. This enabled us to create a survey that could be emailed to a wide range of people and widely circulated on all available Medias. It also meant that responses could be anonymous and that was an important factor in this due to the nature of the subject. Stigma and embarrassment around menstruation (periods) is a barrier to openly discussing this subject.

The survey consisted of eleven questions. As WDC has been providing period products in communities for over two years it was important that the consultation included questions about that in order to measure successes and issues that need addressed going forward. Questions one to six formed part of the review and questions seven to eleven asked about specifics highlighted in the guidance.

The survey results All percentages have been rounded up or down for ease of reading.

Question 1: What area of West Dunbartonshire do you live in? 169 people answered:

Geographical Area			
Alexandria	Clydebank	Dumbarton	Other
34%	33%	22.5%	10.5%

Question 2: Are you aware of our current community provision of free period products in West Dunbartonshire? 169 people answered:

- Yes 62%
- No 38%

Question 3: If you answered yes to Question 2, please tell us more about how you accessed these free period products. 57 people answered:

Access to Period Products (Pads, Tampons and Reusable items)					
Online ordering	Council Building	Community Venue	Other (details below)	Doctors office	Foodbank
51%	49%	24.5%	19%	14%	12%

Other responses included School, College, Supermarket and public toilets out with West Dunbartonshire.

Question 4: What free period products have you used? 54 people answered:

Types of Period Products accessed						
Pads	Tampons	Other (details below)	Menstrual Cup	Reusable Pads	Period Pants	Reusable Liners
72%	41%	15%	13%	9%	7.5%	4%

Others included not being aware of WDC supplying period pants and no availability of products for heavy periods.

Question 5: Who do you need the free period products for? 54 people answered:

- Myself 67%
- a family member 41%
- Other 15%

Others included Granddaughter, client, someone I support and people on benefits.

Question 6: Based on your experience please rate the extent that you felt comfortable accessing the products. Was your dignity considered or did you have to ask for them? 51 people answered:

How people felt about accessing period products				
Wouldn't use again	Was ok but felt embarrassed	Was ok	Felt my dignity was considered as it was no problem getting the products	Great service. Dignified, discreet and easy to access.
2	2	10	9	28

Question 7: What free period products do you think should be available in your community? 102 people answered:

What period products should be available in West Dunbartonshire?	
Pads	95%
Tampons	85%
Menstrual Cup	63%
Other products (please specify)	19%

Respondents were able to select more than one product. The other products named were mainly reusable pads and period pants. Also wipes and products for heavier periods.

Question 8:

Where do you think will be the best place to get the free period products from? 104 people answered:

Best locations to get period products from							
Online Ordering/Postal Service	Chemist	Community Venue	Doctors Office	Foodbank	Council Building	Local Shop	Other
72%	67%	56%	53%	46%	42%	40%	10%

The only other place mentioned that is not already supplied by WDC was Dentists. The results reflect how we already supply products. More focus on Chemists will be considered going forward as we currently only supply two.

Question 9: Where in the above locations would you be happy to see free period products? 104 people answered:

Where people would want to see free period products in a location	%
In toilets where it is discreet (including Male/Female and Disabled toilets)	83%
On a display stand that easy to access	50%
Somewhere out of the way so no one can see me pick them up	46%
In reception areas even if they are visible to others	41.5%
Other (please tell us if you have any ideas of places to put Period Products while protecting peoples dignity)	6%

Other suggestions: Reception Area - Council Building Church Street; in names bags maybe in boxes in chemists etc.; this is why, although more costly, a delivery

service/online portal would be good. Even if this was for an introductory time period until the scheme was more widely known and spoken of.

Question 10: What, if anything, would stop you from accessing these products? 102 people answered:

Answer	%
Not knowing where to get them	71.5%
Not sure how much I can take at any one time	41%
Embarrassment	28.5%
Can't get out to shops or other buildings	25.5%
Don't have access to online ordering (no internet or phone/computer)	7%
Other (please specify)	6%

Other answers: The Council Building being closed; I don't use community venues and only accessed in council buildings when we were able to work in the office; none available for heavy cycles; People should have to pay as they always have.

Question 11: In order to make sure we are asking a broad section of the community their views can you tell us a bit more about yourself? People were able to select more than one option.

Tell us a bit more about yourself	Number
I am a dad, brother, partner or family member of someone who needs these products	6
I am a mother, sister, partner or family member of someone who needs these products	56
I have a disability	10
I am a transgender or non-binary person and would need products to be available in male and female toilets or anywhere else that has gender restrictions	3
I need to use Period Products now	47
I don't use Period Products now but will need to use them in the future	2
I am currently homeless	0
I am a Gypsy/Traveller	1
I am a victim of Domestic Abuse	1
I have caring responsibilities	10
I live in a remote location	2
There are cultural reasons for not being able to access these products	2
I have a low income	27
I am a single parent	15

Other (please tell us anything else about yourself that you think is important to this survey.)

- Needed them quickly as left home without my own;
- Worker in school so know people would need them;
- I filled this out as I think it's important for women who need them to have access to free period products;
- I can buy my own at this point in time;
- I don't need to access but good to know details so I can provide info to anyone that may need to access;
- I can afford them, and I'm not personally aware of anyone that can't but there was a time when my family was on a low income and I didn't want to ask for them, so it would have been amazing to have these available to me as a teen, so I'm glad it's happening now and I fully support it;
- Work with Young people male and female within West Dunbartonshire;
- I'm too old now to use these products;
- Council worker - provide products to clients.

Final Question: Please tell us anything else if you have anything else to say that would help us to improve this service.

- Please consider supplying plastic-free versions of products wherever possible, particularly tampons. People think the applicators etc can be disposed of down the toilet, but when they do this they invariably end up in the Clyde and on our beaches. I have litter-picked thousands of them!
- I would like the option to order period pants and reusable pads, we would order less. Digital tampons are hard to use especially for young teens.
- Possibly an App to show the location of products, so you can find your closest or most suitable location to collect some. A pass code to access from a vending machine to reduce waste and keep products in good condition.
- It would be good if you could request online like food waste/dog poo bags.
- Would be nice if these were offered to larger woman with heavy duty bleeding.
- It is nothing short of a disgrace and typical hand outs by SNP.
- I once got an order delivered and the packaging had ripped open, could you please try to ensure this doesn't happen.
- Make products available in all buildings including sports pavilions not just main centres.
- I would think a lot more people would access the service if there was a postal service. A lot of times I have used toilet roll or old socks as I couldn't afford them I don't leave the house much either so not easy to just go somewhere local to collect.
- Wish it had been available when I was a teenager.
- I think it's a great service that should be encouraged.
- Some of the questions do not take into account that women who have been through the menopause and do not need these products, do not have a family member that needs them this is why questions are left blank.
- It should be made aware to all male members of staff as there are a lot of males who have not a clue about this subject and in this day and age is a disgrace, especially those who have daughters.
- More awareness of where products are available.

Targeted Consultation

Due to the limitations that Covid restrictions have created there were limited options for reaching specific groups of people. Face to face focus groups would have been a preferred option but that was not possible in the circumstances. As such three main questions were emailed to organisations asking them to talk to service users and send back a combined response by email as it had been raised by a group that this was too personal a subject to talk about face to face. Groups contacted were:

- Dennystoun Forge residents (Gypsy Travellers)
- Blue Triangle (Homeless people)
- Work Connect (Adults in recovery, mental ill health, specific learning disabilities and acquired brain injuries)
- Richmond Fellowship (Adult Mental Health Support)
- Women's Aid (Women experiencing Domestic Abuse)
- Carers of West Dunbartonshire (Adult Carers)
- Isaro Community Initiative (Cohesion, Integration and mutual cultural understanding)
- Cornerstone (Adults with learning disabilities)
- The Richmond Fellowship (Adult Mental Health support)
- Stepping Stones (Mental Health service for over 16s)
- Enable (Work with people with additional support needs)
- Addictions Services (Adults with Addictions)
- Alternatives (Community Based Drug Project)

Summary Analysis

The review identified that more promotion of the current services would help as some people weren't aware of the existing online postal ordering service and access to reusable products.

Statement on Exercise of Functions

We must prepare a written statement describing the West Dunbartonshire Councils plans to provide period products to local residents and visitors.

Recommendations based on consultation results:

Consider extending ranges of pads and tampons available to cover heavy periods.

Promote existing services more through the PickUpMyPeriod Locator APP and the online ordering system. Also promote the benefits of reusable products.

Endeavour to increase the amount of Chemists shops involved enabling access to free period products.

Advertise how much people can take. For example enough to cover 3 months or for a whole household.

Link to Statement of Provision of Free period products on website

<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/community/period-positive/>