

REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 1ST February 2018

PERIOD POVERTY

1 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider the effectiveness of current arrangements in relation to access to sanitary products in schools.
- 1.2 Identify and recommend any change to current practice.

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 In June 2017 the Education and Children's Services Committee requested that consideration be given to making sanitary products more readily and easily available to pupils. How women, particularly those on low incomes, can access sanitary products free of cost and free of stigma is of concern to those involved in supporting young people. Most girls start their period at about 12 years of age but onset of menstruation can be much earlier.

Context

Poverty and Inequalities

- 2.2 The impact of poverty on children's life chances is well understood and supported by extensive evidence. Poverty has negative impacts on children's health, educational outcomes and access to employment. It impacts on cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural development, friendships, self-esteem and relationships.
- 2.3 The costs associated with school and the effect of negative attitudes towards poverty are significant for low-income families. Children and young people can experience stigma and may be unable to participate in all the social and learning experiences that schools can offer. In order to close the attainment gap and improve the life chances of children in poverty, all children and young people must have equal opportunity to participate and succeed in school activities.
- 2.4 In some circumstances, including those associated with poverty, girls may experience difficulty in managing their needs during menstruation.

Legislation and Policy Context

- 2.5 The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 is the main underpinning for standards in school toilets in Scotland. These regulations set out ratios of children to toilets and toilets to washbasins, requires locks on the toilet doors, and that there should be a

place to dispose of sanitary towels from Primary 4 but the provision of sanitary products is not required.

- 2.6 A proposal for a Bill to ensure free access to sanitary products including in schools, colleges and universities is currently subject to public consultation. If successful the Bill would establish a legal requirement to provide free sanitary products in schools. Additionally, in order to grant the greatest possible access and to preserve students' dignity and privacy, the proposed Bill would require products to be available via dispensers in toilets, and not only available at a central location in the school such as an office or reception desk.

Context for Change

Local and National Context

- 2.7 Schools in Aberdeenshire are currently providing products for pupils who require them in both primary and secondary school at no cost to the pupil. In secondary schools this is generally done via guidance staff or the school nurse and involves the pupil requesting products. Pupils are generally made aware of how to access products through Personal and Social Education (PSE).
- 2.8 In primary schools pupils access these products free of charge typically from a teacher or pupil support assistant by asking the member of staff. Pupils are generally made aware of how to access products through Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHPE) and some primary schools provide primary 7 pupils with a 'starter pack' of products.
- 2.9 Products are obtained by schools in a number of ways, namely:
- Procuring products using school budgets
 - Donated products
 - Sample products are provided to schools by commercial companies.

Options for Change

- 2.10 **Option 1 Continuing with current arrangements.**
Schools continue to provide sanitary products to pupils at no cost to pupils. Guidance would be developed to support schools to enable young people to easily and readily access sanitary products at no cost in school establishments. This guidance would include recommendations for schools to provide free products and remove any barriers that may currently exist in accessing these products (such as having to ask a member of staff) in both primary and secondary schools. This guidance would assist schools in reviewing and where appropriate, amending any existing approaches that are currently in use to become more formal, clear and consistent across Aberdeenshire.

Strengths:

- Continues current local arrangements to meet needs identified locally
- Addresses removal of barriers through guidance
- No additional cost to schools or Service.

Weaknesses:

- Consistency across Aberdeenshire not guaranteed

Option 1 - No additional costs

- 2.11 **Option 2 Provide schools with free products and continue to provide to pupils through current arrangements.** A local authority commitment for the provision of free products in all schools but with no dispensing units.

Strengths:

- Continues current local arrangements to meet needs identified locally
- Addresses removal of barriers through guidance

Weaknesses:

- Consistency across Aberdeenshire not guaranteed
- Cost implication.

Option 2 - An additional recurring cost of £38,328 per annum for the provision of sanitary protection for all schools without sanitary product dispensing units

- 2.12 **Option 3 Free provision from dispensing units.** This would be accompanied by sanitary product dispensing units in secondary schools and special schools only or in all schools in Aberdeenshire. Machines would be leased and incur a weekly charge.

Strengths:

- Consistency across Aberdeenshire
- Few barriers

Weaknesses:

- Primary schools do not have dispensers so if all schools are included cost will be high
- Cost implication
- Stocking of machines may be problematic in some schools where janitorial cover is not sufficiently frequent.

Option 3 - A maximum recurring cost of £60,480 per annum for the provision of sanitary product dispensing units and products across the secondary school and special schools estate only. A maximum recurring cost of £498,240 per annum for the provision of sanitary product dispensing machines and products across the entire school estate.

- 2.13 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and they are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 Reports to the Education and Children's Services Committee on the current practice in Aberdeenshire on the provision of menstruation products in schools and options for providing ready and easy access to products in both primary and secondary schools is considered as the Committee is able to take a decision on this item under section E.3.3.4 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, namely to oversee the functions of

the Council under the Education (Scotland) Acts, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, and all other relevant legislation and regulations.

4 Implications and Risk

4.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of this paper. It is included as an appendix and there are positive impacts as follows:

- Gender (female): Girls will be able to access products with greater ease which will minimise likelihood of girls having to miss education due to not having the required access to menstrual hygiene products.
- Gender Reassignment: Transgender pupils and those who identify as non-binary will have access to products with greater ease and free from stigma.
- Age- young women who are at school are unlikely to have access to their own income, this could put them at a disadvantage. Providing free access to sanitary products in school could reduce this inequality.

4.2 Options have cost implications as above. These costings are based on figures published nationally and applied to the Aberdeenshire female school population on a pro rata basis. These figures are based on providing universal access and not only to those on low incomes.

The indicative annual cost of providing free sanitary products is based on Scotland wide assumptions as they apply to Aberdeenshire. This estimate is based on a number of assumptions most critically the take up level of free sanitary products. This has been estimated at 50% and may vary.

These figures are based on one unit per establishment. Consideration should also be given to the provision of sanitary product dispensing units in unisex toilet facilities as well as those identified as female toilets. Establishments may require 2 units depending on the existing facilities in that school.

4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- Budget Pressures as any costs are not presently included.
- Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation arising from current proposals to bring forward legislation and practice changes at national level.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- Developing Excellence and Equity risks related to non-attendance at school for some learners.

Maria Walker
Director of Education & Children's Services



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).	
Service	Education and Children's Services
Section	Education
Title of the activity etc.	Period Poverty Report- Options relating to the implementation of free sanitary products in Aberdeenshire schools
Aims of the activity	Identify options to provide sanitary products free of charge to pupils in schools in Aberdeenshire
Author(s) & Title(s)	Audrey Hendry, Lead Officer - Early Years , ,

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.	
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Seemis data 1-2-1 interviews with professionals within schools
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	1-2-1 interviews with professionals within schools Focus group with staff School nursing feedback Pupil feedback
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	
External data (census, available statistics).	.

Other (general information as appropriate).

Scottish Government consultation document on Ending Period Poverty 'Cost of the School Day' report

Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?

Figures are based on number of female pupils in Aberdeenshire schools and not on number of menstruating pupils.

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.

What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.

Measures:

Timescale:

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age – Older			Yes	
Disability			Yes	
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)			Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Gender – male/female	Yes			
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	

Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)	Yes			Item: 10 Page: 59
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?

Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	Gender (female) Girls will be able to access products with greater ease which will minimise risk of girls having to miss education due to not having the required access to menstrual hygiene products.	
	Gender Reassignment- Transgender pupils who still experience menstruation and those who identify as non-binary will have access to products with greater ease and free from stigma.	
	Age- young women who are at school are unlikely to have access to their own income, this could put them at a disadvantage. Providing free access to sanitary products in school could reduce this inequality.	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?

If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	Professional advice has been sought from practitioners working with young people on current practices and barriers that currently exist. Similarly on what implication there may be if the proposals were to be progressed. Feedback has also been sought from 2 pupil representatives.
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Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?

	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	Proposals will be taken forward as a result of this paper will be articulated clearly to staff, parents and pupils and any training requirements will be undertaken to support implementation. Information on any new processes will be clearly defined. An officer will be identified to lead the implementation of proposals and address any issues as they arise.	

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?

These should be included in the action plan.	
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Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

Options outlined in this paper will enable girls to access sanitary products with increased ease and minimise stigma and preserve dignity. This will reduce the likelihood of girls missing school as a result of difficulties accessing sanitary products.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?

These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	Pupils will be asked to complete a survey 6 months after implementation. Pupils will be aware of how to raise any issues in school establishments.
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Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	No negatives have been identified as the options enhance what is currently in place. These options will offer a choice for young people and is not compulsory. This will enable those who choose to access products to do so easily. It is noted that any options progressed should be free from stigmatisation.	

	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team		
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Period Poverty Report- Options relating to the implementation of free sanitary products in Aberdeenshire schools (if appropriate)	
	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Audrey Hendry Position: Lead Officer - Early Years Date: 07/12/17 Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Date:	
5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Position: Date:	Name: Position: Date:	

	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.	Item: 10 Page: 62 Date:
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: eia@abdnshire	Date:
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO		Date:

