

Access to sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities

What do we know?

Access to sanitary products has been raised as a concern by campaigns and stakeholders. Scottish Government and partners have been working to build the evidence base as until recently there was very little evidence about lack of access to sanitary products in Scotland. This summary gives an overview of findings from some recent research:

- A survey of over 2000 young people and students in Scotland by Young Scotⁱ
- A representative UK survey of 1000 14-21 year olds by Plan Internationalⁱⁱ
- The evaluation of the Scottish Government/CFINE pilot in Aberdeenⁱⁱⁱ
- Qualitative research Young Scot conducted with young people and students

How many students are affected by this issue?

26% of respondents in education had '**struggled to access** sanitary products' in the previous year. Of those who experienced difficulty:

- **60%** said that this was because 'I didn't have the product I needed'
- **43%** said they 'couldn't afford to buy sanitary products'.ⁱ

10% of 14-21 year olds in the UK said they had been '**unable to afford** sanitary products', while **15%** had '**struggled to afford** sanitary wear'.ⁱⁱ

Taken together these findings suggest that a sizeable minority of students at school, college and university may experience some type of difficulty accessing sanitary products. These studies do not allow us to estimate the proportion of students in Scotland that have experienced difficulty accessing products.

What are the barriers to accessing sanitary products?

The research so far highlights two main issues for students in accessing sanitary products:

Affordability. Some students or their families may struggle to afford products. Especially for those with heavy periods.

Being 'caught out' away from home. A wider issue is not having a product when needed in school, college or university. Especially for those with irregular periods.

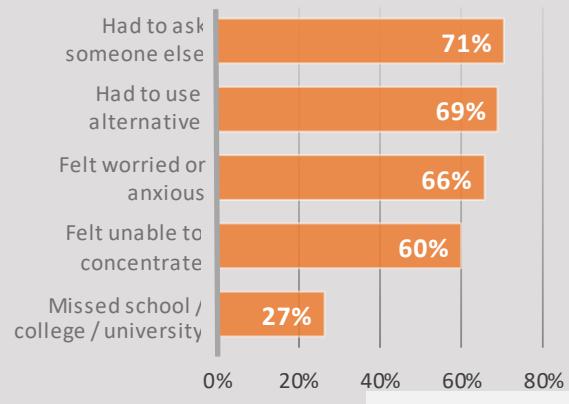
What impact does lack of access to sanitary products have?

Using an alternative (e.g. toilet paper) or **asking someone else** for a product (e.g. a friend) are common ways that students cope without the products they need.

Worry and anxiety: the research to date suggests that difficulty accessing products has an impact on wellbeing.

Engagement with education: in the studies, some students reported feeling unable to concentrate in class because they had difficulty accessing products, and a minority reported missing school, college or university during menstruation.

Those who had experienced difficulty accessing products in the previous year had experienced...



Source: Young Scot

Access to sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities

Providing access to sanitary products in educational settings

Embarrassment and stigma

- Embarrassment is a key issue.
- A survey found that 48% of girls aged 14-21 in the UK are embarrassed by their periods.ⁱⁱ
- Some young people feel embarrassed discussing periods or asking for/buying products.
- Embarrassment talking about periods and having to ask a staff member for products were considered to be key barriers to accessing products during the pilot, especially in a school setting and for younger people.

Easy to access, discreet provision

- Provision that is easy to access and discreet has been highlighted as important.
- Making products freely available in toilets is one way to remove barriers.
- When asked about options for future provision, free products available in school, college or university toilets was the most popular option among students. The least popular option was to get free products from a member of staff.
- The pilot identified possible challenges putting products school toilets due to misuse.
- Consideration of the needs of transgender students was also noted in some studies.

Other learning: products, facilities and education

- The proportion of students receiving tampons vs towels was fairly even, while the majority of school pupils received towels. Interest in reusable products (e.g. menstrual cups, reusable towels, period pants) was high, but only a minority had tried them.
- A variety of products are likely to be required to meet students' needs. Having a choice of type, absorbency and other practical aspects (e.g. wings, applicator) were important.
- Young Scot noted some issues with current facilities, especially in schools e.g. inadequate sanitary disposal provision or feeling unable to leave class when needed.
- All the research highlights a need for more education around menstruation and for all young people to reduce stigma and normalise discussion of menstruation.

Planned approaches to delivery

Implementation plans show 3 main delivery methods, with many partners planning a mixed approach to accommodate immediate access and provision of larger volumes:

a) **Pick up/access points** in various locations in schools/on campuses i.e.:

- School: school office, medical room, pupil support office, changing room;
- University: Students' Union, Library, lecture theatres, sports facilities, accommodation;
- College: Student Services/Advice, Students' Association, reception areas, library, shop.

b) **Baskets, lidded boxes or drawer units in all or key toilets** in schools/on campuses e.g. female and gender neutral / accessible / male; in sports centre, library, accommodation.

c) **Vending machines/dispensers in all or key toilets** in schools/on campuses.

ⁱ Young Scot published [Access to Sanitary Products in Scotland](#), a report on findings from an online survey in March 2018. The short survey asked about experiences accessing products and future provision. It took place between Dec 17 and Jan 18. It received 2,050 responses: 92% of respondents were currently in education.

ⁱⁱ Plan international publicised results of a [survey of young women's experiences of menstruation in the UK](#) in October 2017. The survey was conducted online by Opinium Research amongst a representative sample of 1,000 14-21 year olds in the UK in August 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ Scottish Government funded a 6-month pilot in Aberdeen (Sep 17-Feb 18). It aimed to explore options for providing access to free sanitary products in ways that provide choice and respect dignity, and to better understand the circumstances people are in that mean they cannot access sanitary products. The pilot explored both targeted provision for those in low income households and provision open to all in educational settings. Scottish Government, [Access to Sanitary Products Aberdeen Pilot: Evaluation Report](#), May 2018

**Access to Sanitary Products in Schools, Colleges and Universities
Monitoring Report: September 2018 to February 2019**

Social Justice Delivery & Communities Analysis Division

July 2019

1. Background

Being able to access sanitary products is fundamental to equality and dignity across the whole of public policy. The Programme for Government (PfG) 2017 committed to introducing a scheme to fund access to free sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities. The Scottish Government provided £5.2 million in 2018 for pupils and students in Scotland to have access to free sanitary products through their school, college or university.

To support the implementation and delivery of the commitment, the Scottish Government formed a Working Group comprising key internal and external stakeholders, including appropriate Scottish Government policy teams, CoSLA, Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland and NUS Scotland. Since its first meeting in October 2017, the Working Group has achieved the following:

- Agreement among the Working Group on the Guiding Principles which should underpin delivery (set out at Annex A), and the funding model (including a unit cost on which funding should be based and anticipated uptake level)
- Increased the evidence base through the work with Young Scot
- Working with Scotland Excel and APUC Ltd to produce a procurement strategy
- Discussed delivery models and supported organisations to deliver on time
- Production of helpful resources such as the Young Scot microsite and publicity posters through partnership work with Young Scot
- Support for education establishments and assistance in data gathering through Scottish Government funded posts in CoSLA and the Scottish Funding Council

2. Overview of Monitoring Data

It is necessary to evaluate provision of sanitary products in schools, college and universities to understand how the commitment is being implemented in different institutions, find out what works well and less well in delivering access to free sanitary products in education settings, and refine estimates of costs and uptake for future funding¹.

Monitoring data on the first six months of delivery was provided by all local authorities, colleges and universities. Institutions were instructed to report on delivery of the commitment between 1st September 2018 to 1st February 2019 (note that spend prior to September 2018 using 2018/19 Scottish Government funding was reported, where relevant, and taken into account). The next monitoring data will be collected in September 2019 (based on delivery from 2nd February – 31st August 2019).

The monitoring data addressed the following questions:

1. Did institutions achieve full roll-out of the provision and, if not, what are the reasons?
2. What delivery models are currently being implemented?
3. Are free sanitary products being made available outside of term-time? If so, how?
4. How many sanitary products were distributed to/taken by students?
5. Did institutions engage in any activities to promote the availability of free sanitary products?
6. How many and what types of sanitary products were purchased and distributed to students?
7. What is the unit cost of each sanitary product purchased?
8. Were there any changes to the range of products purchased during the roll-out of the provision?
9. What was the total spend on purchasing the sanitary products?
10. What additional costs did institutions incur (e.g. marketing, delivery)?

¹ Based on a full year of delivery.

This report provides a summary of the key findings from the monitoring data collected in February 2019 on the first six months of delivery. Local authorities, colleges and universities have been anonymised throughout this report.

3. Key Findings: Local Authority Provision

3.1 Did local authorities achieve full roll-out of the provision and, if not, what are the reasons?

By February 2019, all 32 local authorities had made progress towards delivering the PfG commitment to provide access to free sanitary products in their schools. Twenty seven local authorities were making free sanitary products available in all eligible primary, secondary and special schools. Free sanitary products were available in some, but not all, eligible schools in the five remaining local authorities. Table 1 summarises the main reasons full coverage in all schools was not achieved in these local authorities.

Table 1: Reasons full coverage was not achieved in all schools by February 2019.

Local authority	Reasons for delayed roll-out to all schools
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Schools being slow to get set up for various reasons, including meaningful consultation.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Secondary schools experiencing significant issues with their supplier.Primary schools taking time to ensure effective models are in place for weekends, evenings and holidays.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Determining the best approach for primary schools where few pupils are of menstruating age and they have limited officer capacity to develop the roll out.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary schools had their own arrangements in place already. As a model was already in place for primaries and uptake in year one was difficult to predict it was decided that this year's funding distribution would initially focus on universal provision for secondary school pupils. If funding is at a similar level in year two universal provision will be rolled-out into primary schools.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Free sanitary products were made available to all schools, but not all schools took up the offer. Schools have been reminded about the availability of products and how to order them in the hope that this will increase uptake.

Half of all local authorities reported also making free sanitary products available in non-school and community settings, including non-school educational facilities, community centres, sports and leisure centres, family centres, youth centres and outdoor learning centres.

The majority of local authorities (21 out of 32) reported that they had achieved the full extent of their planned delivery in terms of the quantity of products distributed and the number delivery locations. Where the full extent of delivery was not achieved, reasons included:

1. Waiting to receive reusable sanitary products (1 local authority);
2. Delays to the procurement of products (3 local authorities);
3. Delivery charges to rural and island schools (1 local authority);
4. Additional work needed to promote holiday provision (1 local authority);
5. Schools being given free sanitary products from charities and other sources (1 local authority);

6. Ongoing dispenser installation (1 local authority).

3.2 What delivery models are currently being implemented?

The delivery models used by local authorities were largely unchanged from the implementation plans provided in August 2018. The majority of local authorities were making products available in pupil toilets, either in storage containers or in free vending machines.

Three local authorities reported a change to their planned delivery model:

- One local authority reported that they are no longer using dispensers for this roll out.
- One local authority reported that they planned to use pharmacies and community centres as pick up points for children and young people to collect products, but this proved too complex so products are being made available in school and one non-school setting (health and information youth centre).
- One local authority reported that until February 2019 products were made available to pupils via school medical rooms. Going forward, the delivery model will be amended to make products freely available from school toilets and from a range of public buildings during the school holidays.

Several local authorities reported that schools devised their own delivery model to suit their pupil needs, taking into account the Guiding Principles agreed by the Working Group. Alongside availability in pupil toilets, other delivery methods included collection points or boxes in classrooms or other locations within the school, peer distribution and free 'shops'.

Additional comments provided by local authorities on the delivery of free sanitary products in schools are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comments provided by local authorities on delivery.

Local authority	Comments on delivery
1	“Rural island schools delivery charges, delivery charges in some instances was going to cost more than the products purchased. Buying locally - Co-op match funding their order so spend was not so great. Super Drug giving local school free products”
2	“The single biggest challenge has been procurement and the ability to source the re-usable products requested by the girls. We have only now been able to resolve this and have a supplier.”
3	“Our model is felt to be too labour intensive, and a lot of forms are involved in the process. It would be much easier and more efficient and effective if the NEC / Young Scot card could be used and children and young people could access the products of their choice at their local pharmacy or supermarket.”
4	“We are looking at extending the Red Box scheme model across all schools and community buildings over the coming month. The Red Box scheme has evaluated well and the model has proven to work providing excellent value for money too.”
5	“Initially smaller primary schools showed reluctance to participate in programme.”
6	“Anecdotal feedback from a number of Secondary schools is that prior to the SG initiative, many schools had already been operating a free sanitary product scheme, either funded or provided by the school or charities. As a result, many schools held a significant stock of products and these were utilised before any new ordering from the funding provided by Scottish Government.”
7	“To further promote the initiative and raise awareness with parents, Inverclyde Council placed an order with Hey Girls to purchase period starter kits for every P6 – S6 pupil. The value of the order was £12,220...Unfortunately, Hey Girls were unable to fulfil both orders before the 31 March 2019 due to issues with their supply chain. As a result, the orders had to be forced complete. Had the orders been delivered by 31 March 2019, as planned, there would have been a smaller underspend”
8	“One view is that, with the rollout to public buildings, young people may stock up on products at more anonymous locations than schools, such as community centres, leisure centres or libraries. (Views were sought from the local youth forum.) Because of this, the opportunity to bundle the budget would have been appreciated. As it stands, more than half the budget has to be used for schools, whereas it is known the take-up there has been low to date.”

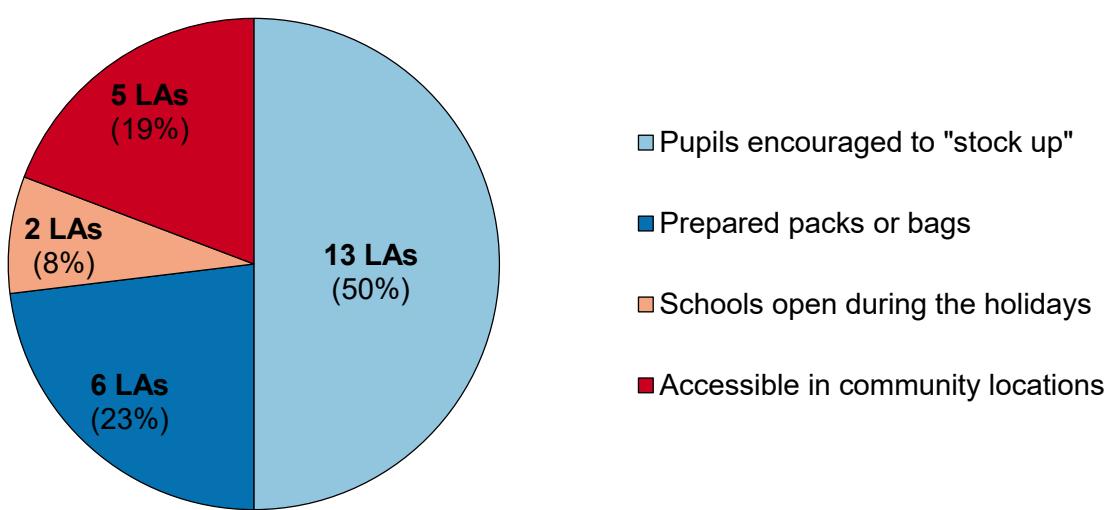
3.3 Are free sanitary products being made available outside of term-time? If so, how?

Twenty seven local authorities reported having arrangements in place to allow pupils access to free sanitary products in the school holidays. However, there was some variation in whether local authorities considered encouraging pupils to “stock up” before the holidays as providing access to products outside of term-time².

² Due to this variation, responses from some local authorities had to be re-categorised to ensure consistency across local authorities. For the purposes of this report, encouraging pupils to “stock up” is considered making products available outside term-time (i.e. local authorities reporting that they do not provide access to sanitary products outside of term-time, but encourage pupils to stock up in advance of the holidays were included as having holiday arrangements in place).

Twenty-four local authorities reported how they were making products available during the school holidays. Of these, over half were achieving this by encouraging pupils to "stock up" on products prior to the school holidays (13 local authorities). Other arrangements include preparing packs or bags for pupils to take home ahead of the school holidays (6 local authorities), or providing access to free sanitary products on the school site during the holidays (2 local authorities) or in community settings, such as libraries, youth clubs, community centres and NHS Health Promotion Office (5 local authorities). Three local authorities were offering products outside of term-time through more than one of these means, with the implementation in specific schools dependent on local arrangements. Figure 1 presents an overview of holiday arrangements.

Figure 1: Overview of arrangements to make sanitary products available outside of school term-time. Note that some local authorities were making use of more than one arrangement.



3.4 How many sanitary products were distributed to students?

Based on data provided by 25 local authorities, on average, 95% of all sanitary products purchased were distributed to schools. This ranged from 2% to 266% of all products purchased across local authorities. Four local authorities reported distributing more products to schools than the number purchased – no reason was provided but this is likely due to local authorities distributing products held in stock that were purchased prior to the introduction of the PfG commitment. This will be monitored in the next round of reporting.

Data on the number of products taken by pupils was not available from local authorities. However, four local authorities provided comments about pupil uptake (see Table 3).

Table 3: Comments provided by local authorities on pupil uptake.

Local authority	Comments about pupil uptake
1	"Experience and take up was not as anticipated. Overall, quantity of products collected by students was poor. Presently, CFINE ³ 's view is that many schools need to more fully embrace and promote ASP; From running the pilot, CFINE is clear that the need is considerable so the results were disappointing. Hopefully we will continue to operate this scheme through 2019/20 during which we will consider and implement strategies to see uptake increased"
2	"There is a higher sanitary product uptake in North Ayrshire Secondary schools where the Head Teacher has actively encouraged the initiative within the school, eg Irvine Royal Academy. The uptake of free sanitary products was very high when the programme was first launched in the Secondary Schools, however, uptake has now settled."
3	"Uptake to date has been relatively slow but we anticipate this will increase as awareness increases."
4	"To date uptake during the trial period in schools has been low. Purchases were also low until recently partly due to the fact that most of the schools already had a stock of sanitary products, so only purchased relatively small numbers of additional products."

3.5 What types of sanitary products were purchased and distributed to students?

The majority of local authorities were making a variety of product types and absorbencies available to pupils, including day/night products, applicator and non-applicator tampons and products specifically developed for teenagers.

All 32 local authorities were making at least 1 type of sanitary towel available to students and 30 local authorities were making at least 1 type of tampon available. Ten local authorities were making reusable products available, comprising 3 local authorities making menstrual cups available, 1 local authority making reusable pads available and 6 local authorities making both menstrual cups and reusable pads available. Two additional local authorities reported that reusable products were available to schools upon request, but had not been taken up on the offer during the reporting period.

Six local authorities were using Scottish Government funding to make additional products available, including tote bags,(1 local authority), "starter packs" comprising a variety of sanitary and non-sanitary products (3 local authorities), wet bags (1 local authority) and underwear (2 local authorities).

3.6 How many sanitary products were purchased and distributed to students?

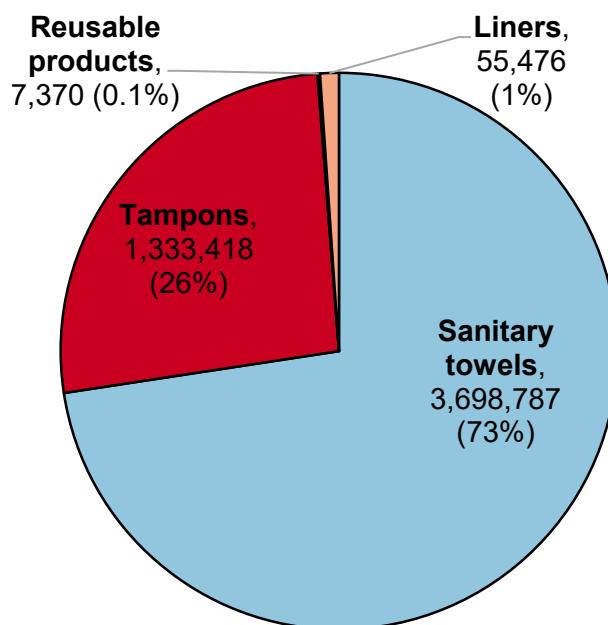
Based on data provided by 29 local authorities, 5,095,051 sanitary products were purchased during the first six months of delivery. This reflects an average of 39 products per female secondary school pupil⁴ within these local authorities, ranging from 4 products per female secondary school pupil to 287 products per female secondary school pupil across local authorities.

³ CFINE (Community Food Initiatives North East) is a charity and a social enterprise focused on improving health and wellbeing in the North East of Scotland.

⁴ The 2018/19 funding allocations to local authorities were based on the number of female secondary school pupils only (Scottish Government Pupil Census 2017) as the number of female primary school pupils of menstruating age in each local authority is not available (due to low population sizes in some local authorities). Consequently this calculation slightly overestimates the number of products per pupil for all local authorities.

Sanitary towels were purchased in the highest quantity, comprising 73% of all products purchased. Figure 2 presents a breakdown of the quantities of each product type purchased.

Figure 2: The quantities of each sanitary product types purchased (based on data from 29 local authorities).



3.7 What is the unit cost of each sanitary product purchased?

Sanitary towels were the lowest cost product per unit (£0.15) and menstrual cups were the highest cost product per unit (£4.69). However, as shown in Table 4, there were a range of unit costs for each product type depending on supplier arrangements within each local authority.

Table 4: Average unit costs per product type purchased by local authorities. Unit costs are presented excluding VAT.

Product type	Average	Range
Sanitary towels	£0.15	£0.05-£0.58
Tampons	£0.20	£0.05-£1.03
Menstrual cups	£4.69	£3.42-£12.60
Reusable pads	£3.71	£2.15-£12.16
Liners	£0.05	£0.02-£0.07

3.8 Were there any changes to the range of products purchased during the roll-out of the provision?

In 31 local authorities, the range of products remained unchanged throughout the reporting period. In the remaining local authority, 2 additional types of sanitary towel were added following consultation with pupils.

Six local authorities reported gathering feedback from students on the range of products available. One additional local authority reported that they intended to gather feedback within the next reporting period. An overview of the feedback obtained and any actions implemented as a result of student feedback is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Comments on the range of products available in schools.

Local authority	Comments on the range of products
1	“Using knowledge gained from the pilot. CFINE purchased Sainsbury’s own brand of sanitary products as a popular choice and good value for money.”
2	“Reusable products have not yet been procured. This is planned for the coming weeks.”
3	“An internal survey and stock take is planned to commence at the end of February as this will give us 6 months of data to evaluate. It will also be an opportunity to look at what products were popular with the young people and which products we could perhaps phase out. We currently make 12 products available in secondary schools and 4 products in primaries.”
4	“Schools purchased their own products, following the guidelines the authority issued to schools at the start of the project. Schools consulted with pupils about the types and makes of products they wished to be made available... The Pilot study showed that branded products are preferred. This is due to confidence and trust in the product. Always and Bodyform Pads were preferred, Bodyform being the more economical option. Supermarkets sell their own brand at approximately 50% of well-known brand costs.”
5	“Feedback received was girls preferred Lil lets Teens as these were more suited to the shape of their bodies and the pack size was ideal for taking home. The girls also liked the packaging on these as they felt they were discreet. Going forward we will continue to order the Lil Lets products for primary Schools.”
6	“Prior to implementation, our Youth Services team conducted engagement sessions with young girls to determine what their preferences would be. ... During this girls told us how they wanted to access products and which products they wanted to have available to them.”
7	“We did a pilot in one of our High Schools in the Spring/Summer term of 2018 and then surveyed the pupils – this dictated what products we started with – however we have added a couple of other products after feedback through the last few months...During this reporting period we added a couple of other sanitary towels after feedback from the schools.”

3.9 What was the total spend on purchasing sanitary products?

The total spend on sanitary products across all local authorities was £566,909 (excluding VAT). This represents 41% of the total 2018/19 product funding allocation, with a projected 54% spend over the full eight-month funding period. Figures with VAT included (5%) are presented in Footnote 5.

Spend on sanitary products, as a proportion of individual local authority product allocation, ranged from 0% to 132%.

⁵ Including 5% VAT, the total spend on sanitary products across all local authorities was £595,254. This represents 43% of the total 2018/19 product funding allocation, with a projected spend of 57% spend over the full eight month funding period. Sanitary products are currently taxed at 5% in the UK.

Twenty-eight local authorities reported that they reclaimed the VAT incurred on the purchase of sanitary products whereas three local authorities reported that they did not reclaim the VAT incurred. One local authority did not provide a response.

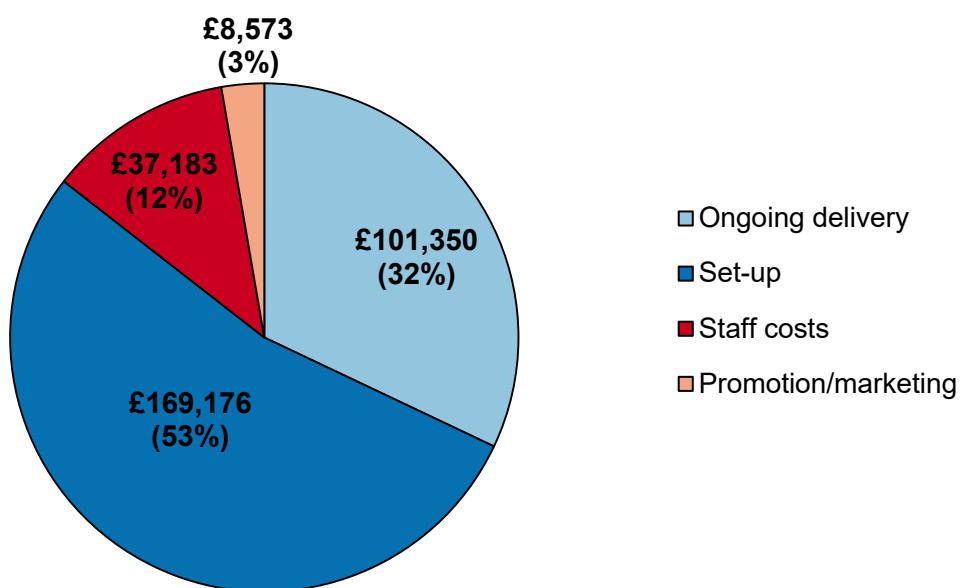
3.10 What additional costs did institutions incur (e.g. marketing, delivery)?

The total spend on development and delivery across all local authorities was £317,203 (excluding VAT). This represents 57% of the total 2018/19 development allocation, with a projected 77% spend over the full eight-month funding period. Additional spend including VAT (20%) are presented in Footnote 6.

Additional spend, as a proportion of individual local authority development allocation, ranged from 0% to 209%.

Set-up costs, including the purchase of storage containers and the installation of free vending machines, comprised 53% (£169,176) of the total additional spend. A breakdown of additional spend by type is presented in Figure 3. Ongoing delivery costs include maintenance of dispensing machines, sanitary bin waste disposal and facilities management. Promotion/marketing costs include the purchase of teaching materials, posters and badges.

Figure 3: A breakdown of additional spend by type (based on data from 31 local authorities). Figures are presented excluding VAT.



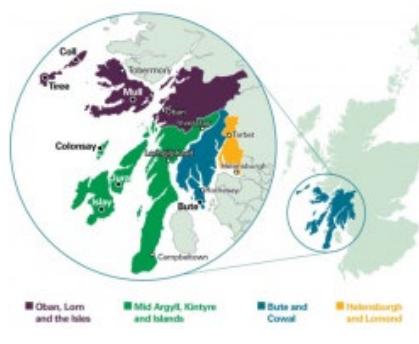
⁶ Including 20% VAT, the total additional spend was £380,644. This represents 69% of the total 2018/19 development funding allocation, with a projected spend of 92% over the full eight month funding period.



4. Local Authority Case Studies

Case studies for three local authorities - Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh and Dundee - have been provided by CoSLA. These case studies provide an overview of sanitary product provision within selected schools and the challenges encountered in delivering the PfG commitment.

4.1 Case Study: Argyll and Bute



The 89 schools on Argyll and Bute serve some of Scotland's most rural and isolated communities, of its 79 primary schools almost half have a register of 25 or less. Service delivery of any kind incurs unique logistical challenges. In looking to provide access to free sanitary protection each local school has purchased its own products and devised its own delivery models to best suit the needs of its pupils. The examples below demonstrate the approaches taken in sample schools and considers how implementation will be developed as the initiative progresses.

4.1.1 Dunoon Grammar School

With a school roll of 674 pupils Dunoon Grammar School is situated in the East of Argyll and Bute. The school approached the roll out of free access to sanitary protection by conducting surveys with small groups of S4 and S6 pupils as well as parents to establish the types of products the young people would want and where would be best to place them. As a result, products were ordered by the school and placed in multi-draw storage units in ladies, gender neutral and disabled toilets, PE and learning support departments. Period starter packs were also provided to S1 and S2 nurture group pupils whom are in receipt of free school meals. The school intends to conduct further consultation at the end of the school year to ensure the product provide and its placement is correct and is looking to expand the provision of S1 starter kits.

Cara (S6) reflected on the impact of this provision so far.

'Having pads and tampons available in the toilets is really positive, I've overheard lots of girls talking about how handy it is. I think it normalises periods, which is really important; people aren't as embarrassed about them and it's taken away the stress and anxiety from not being able to get the products that they need. I know a few people who weren't coming in when they had their period because they didn't have stuff at home and now they can get it here they are coming in more.'

4.1.2 Lochgilphead Joint Campus

In central Argyll and Bute, the initiative at Lochgilphead has been developed and led by a 'pupil voice' group, ten girls representing all school years. Amanda (S6) described how they have approached it and how successful it has been:

'In the beginning we presented an assembly and we talked about making sanitary products free in school, why it was happening and how important it was. We also did a survey to see what products people would want. We bought the products in bulk and put them all around the school in individual toilet cubicles where it is private, and people feel like they can take them. There are sanitary products and different things you might need like waste bags. We decided hanging bags with pockets would be best for storage. We have also left out full packs of products incase people need to take them home. We have put posters on the doors where products are available and even have some in the staff toilets, which students can go and use in an emergency. We have a pupil rota to stock up the products and we do it weekly.'

The boys have been involved too. When we gave our talk on period poverty and we presented the topic to them. They were shocked at the cost of sanitary products and have been really supportive and empathetic. They also covered some men's health topics like Movember and testicular cancer, so they had conversations about men's health as well. The tutorial class built some cabinets for us to keep products in! These cabinets have gone into all of the disabled toilets, so people can help themselves there too.

It is working really well and is really appreciated; our stocks are going down so people definitely need them. A couple of people have said that its really helped them a lot because they are not able to get any anywhere else. I've really enjoyed being involved in this as I feel like I am helping people. Our next job is to provide more sanitary bins!'



and the outlying areas of Colintaive and Glendaruel. The hostel has capacity for 70 young people. Glencruitten hostel serves young people from the bridge of Ochy and the Islands of Colansay, Coll, Mull, Lismore, Iona, Kerrera, Shuna and Easdale with capacity for more than 80 young people. Due to demand and through arrangements with the secondary schools' free sanitary products have also been made available in school hostels

4.1.4 Kirn Primary School

Kirn primary school, also in Dunoon, has a school roll of 285. At the end of the last academic year the school consulted with a group of P6 and P7 girls on the initial set up of free sanitary provision. They discussed what products should be made available, where would be appropriate for easy access for all and the discussion generated talk about sanitary bin provision in school which the girls felt was inadequate. As a result of this collaboration a sanitary bin and box with supplies (pads, nappy bags, deodorant, wet wipes and a guidance leaflet) was located in the disabled toilet between the P6 and 7 classrooms. The young people felt that school was the most sensible place for them to access sanitary products as they could get them without deviating from their normal routine.

Parents were informed that education on menstrual cycle and sanitary products would take place and all P6 and P7 girls took part in a discussion which focused on menstrual cycle but

also allowed the girls to familiarise themselves with sanitary products, how to use them and apply them to underwear.

It has been observed that usage of the products is not high and it is topped up termly, however, there have been no requests to staff for sanitary wear, indicating that no girls having been caught short, since this initiative has been introduced. Staff feel that having supply available has removed the embarrassment factor of having to ask.

4.1.5 Challenges

In addition to challenges related to achieving cultural change which are likely to be universally experienced the key challenge to providing access to free sanitary protection in Argyll and Bute is one of geography.

- getting products to the most rural schools can be more expensive than purchasing them, economical means to transport them have had to be identified
- as some of the primary schools are very small they currently do not have any girls old enough to be eligible for the funding. This will change as the community changes and girls enter and leave different educational establishment

Given the unique challenges of this community, schools and their pupils taking on responsibility for the development and delivery of free access to sanitary protection has been the most appropriate model, consequently it has been approached differently in different settings. Work moving forward will continue to encourage each eligible school to ensure sanitary provision is available to all pupils across Argyll and Bute in their school environment.

4.2 Case Study: City of Edinburgh



The initiative to provide access to free sanitary protection has been well received by schools in Edinburgh. Funding to make these products available was devolved to each eligible school; the descriptors below detail the approach sample schools have taken, why and with what impact.

4.2.1 Craigroyston Community High School

Situated in the north of the city, most of the pupils at Craigroyston Community High school live in SIMD 1 and 2 areas. Given this, the school places a high importance on providing access to sanitary products. Prior to the commitment to make free sanitary products available in all schools Craigroyston pupils who required them would have to request them from guidance staff. Staff often paid for these products personally. On the launch of the free access to sanitary protection initiative Craigroyston held a focus group with students from S1-S6 who said they would like sanitary products to be more readily available for them, without having to ask someone as this caused embarrassment. Following this, a cupboard of supplies has been provided in the main girl's toilets, in the changing rooms in PE and in a toilet near the guidance department. These are restocked regularly and contain a very varied range of sanitary products in them including liners, different sizes of towels, day and night towels, tampons in different flows etc. There are now several options for picking up products with no need to ask anyone, young people can simply help themselves to whatever they need. They are also encouraged to take enough products to last them, there is no limit.

In addition to this, boxes of sanitary products have been generally distributed to all year groups through PSE lessons and time has been put into the curriculum to teach the younger year groups the difference between each type of sanitary towel and how tampons can be used, including their advantages and risks. Pupils have identified members of staff that they would go to if they had a problem relating to their periods and referrals can be made to our school nurse if appropriate. Making sanitary products freely available has presented the opportunity for further education around what can be a challenging subject and the young people at Craigroyston feel much more able to collect the products that they need.

4.2.2 Tynecastle High School

Tynecastle High School is a diverse inner-city high school; its 609 pupils speak 42 different languages between them, 17% of pupils currently receive free school meals. Pupils Ewa and Catherine and their colleagues told us about how access to sanitary products has been organised and what young people think of the provision:

'There are individual products, a mixture of tampons and towels, available in toilets in every faculty as well as the disabled toilets which are gender neutral. We have some pupils in the school who are transitioning so we spoke with them and our LGBT group to plan where would be the best place to put these. Toilets where free sanitary protection is available have a poster on the door and there is of a list of teachers, from who we can collect boxes rather than individual products, on the poster too. We think that it's important that you can collect them in bulk if you want so you can get them from the named teachers or there is a classroom in the first floor where you can help yourself to boxes of tampons or sanitary towels. There are stocks available in PE too. It's good to be able to get them in more than one way. We check supplies a few times a week and know they are really being used as we are doing lots of topping up. People are coming back again and again for boxes of products; we know that some might also taking them home because none of their family have any and it will be good when they can collect these in places out of school too. Both teachers and

pupils see the differences this has made, the biggest one is that the young people no longer having to go to the, often busy, welfare office to ask for products. It has removed the embarrassment, people can access sanitary protection where and when they need to but also know where they can go for help if they want it. We don't know if it has improved school attendance, it's very hard to tell, though some of the girls think that it might have done. What it has done is help remove the fear of being found out because there is a smell or a leak through your leggings and that will help attendance and participation, particularly in classes like dance where we wear leotards and that sort of thing is more of a worry! Next, we are looking at buying reusable products and promoting these through our eco-friendly group. We think people are a bit sceptical about these products because they are new, so it may take a little while to get people to take them. We are also going to provide 'my first period kits' for S1s and work with them when they move from primary to secondary, so they are comfortable with the topic and know where they can collect products in our school'.

4.2.3 Broughton High School

Broughton High School, also in the north of the city, is proud to educate young people from diverse backgrounds. In 2018 it served the second highest number of children from SIMD 1-3 of any school in Edinburgh. It also welcomes a high number of SIMD 10 pupils as the only state funded school in an area renowned for its high-profile public schools. Broughton High School has always provided sanitary products should pupils be caught unprepared for their period but now has the resources to provide sanitary products for more general needs and to encourage pupils to stock up for holidays. Following an initiative in school to create awareness of the government funded products, pupils are coming forward in increasing numbers to pick up what they need.

Pupils were consulted to canvas ideas and opinions on how the initiative to deliver access to free sanitary products could be rolled out effectively. This allowed the school to:

- develop ways to distribute products that reflect pupils' views and experiences
- involve pupils in conversation around stigma and distribution of products
- organise the distribution of products at the end of term so pupils had holiday supplies
- produce an article to be published in school newsletter to raise awareness of the initiative throughout the wider school community.



A 'pick and mix' event was organised at the end of term where young people could pick products to take home with them. The 'pick and mix' service was utilised by 70 young people. Several other events have been undertaken to improve understanding of need, distribute products before holidays and raise awareness in relation to this initiative. This included:

- a survey on reusables where interestingly 70% of pupils indicated that they would be interested in using reusable products due to environmental concerns.
- development of the school website in relation to the initiative
- delivery of products to all-female PE classes before the end of term

- making products available in departments throughout the school
- a messy play workshop looking at the absorbency of the products

A pupil steering group is currently being formed to continue to take this initiative forward in the longer term. For instance, the group will be leading whole school assemblies on menstrual health in September. Broughton High School has embraced this initiative and its guiding principles and as with other Edinburgh schools will continue to deliver and develop access to free sanitary products for their pupils.



4.3 Case Study- Dundee

Dundee City Council took a collaborative approach to providing access to free sanitary products, working to design a consistent model that was rolled out across local schools. Below we reflect on the design process as well as the learning and feedback from the initiative in its early stages.



Consultations- Harris Academy

4.3.1 Service Design

To deliver access to free sanitary protection in Dundee a working group was formed, made up of education staff, deputy head teachers, guidance teachers and support staff from the following three schools: Braeview Academy, St Paul's RC Academy and Harris Academy. The ideas generated by the focus group were tried and tested within these school settings.

The approach developed was two- fold:

- Individuals could collect products from identified drop in points like PE, Guidance Departments or Pupil Support areas
- Individuals could pre-order a monthly supply for collection to account for regular need and ensure holiday cover.

Consultation with pupils was undertaken at each school to identify the students preferred products and ascertain where was best to pick up monthly supplies. Each school decided its own pick up points, which included some run by pupils or trusted staff members. The timing of collections was also discussed with all schools attempting to make pick up as accessible and discreet as possible. Consultation with the pupils meant that the pupils adapted the model that had been developed to best suit their own needs and environment. As a result of the hard work of this working group this model was rolled out to other schools and adapted. The group was also nominated for an award at the **Dundee City Council – 2019 Outstanding Service & Commitment awards for their efforts.**

4.3.2 Learning and Feedback

Since the launch of this new initiative both students and pupils at the schools describe the beginning of culture change for everyone involved. There has been more opportunity for learning about periods across a large cross section of people. Council Elected Members, Children and Families Senior Management Team, Head Teachers, Teachers and Pupils of all genders have all been prompted to have conversations that they may previously have found too awkward and learn more about a topic that was not previously discussed. Pupils described the impact of this learning below:

'We haven't talked about periods much before at school and when we had assemblies about free sanitary products and about how to order the products we needed we left quite excited about it and excited about trying new products like moon cups' (Pupil, S5)

'It is important for boys to learn about periods too. It is about respect. There was a girl who had a problem with her period, some of the boys were laughing but another one gave her his hoodie and went with her to guidance to help. Boys understand more since we have had free period products in school, we have had assemblies for boys as well as girls to talk about periods. The more boys understand the more respectful they will be' (Pupil, S2)

They also describe the initiative as something that helps keep young people in the classroom:

'Girls can see the sign in the toilets and stuff and they know where to get the things they need. Now they don't miss classes to go to guidance and they are more confident because it is not something they have to worry about' (Pupil, S2)

5. Key Findings: College and University Provision

5.1 Did institutions achieve full roll-out of the provision and, if not, what are the reasons?

By February 2019, 24 (out of 26) colleges and all 19 universities had made progress towards delivering the PfG commitment to provide access to free sanitary products in colleges and universities. The two remaining colleges planned to commence delivery in the next reporting period. Of these, one had purchased products and were planning a launch event in March 2019 and the other was already providing access to free sanitary products and were in negotiations with a supplier to continue delivery using Scottish Government funding.

Fifteen colleges and 12 universities reported that they had achieved the full extent of their planned delivery in terms of the quantity of products distributed and the number of delivery locations by February 2019. Where the full extent of delivery was not achieved, the following information was provided:

1. Planned installation of free vending machines in accessible toilets (1 institution) and shelving in additional locations (1 institution).
2. Issues encountering with stocking products in planned locations due to being in a public building (1 institution), not being able to secure suitable locations in some campus buildings (1 institution), and in some off-campus locations where students are based but cleaning staff do not work (e.g. NHS hospitals, 1 institution).
3. Additional marketing and promotion planned to increase uptake amongst all students (2 institution) and distance learners (1 institution).
4. Reduction in the quantity of products purchased as using up old stock purchased prior to receiving Scottish Government funding (1 institution);
5. Delayed delivery due to deliberation about the best ways of delivering and monitoring roll out, and the need for a job role to oversee implementation and development (1 institution).

5.2 What delivery models are currently being implemented?

The delivery models used by institutions were largely unchanged from the implementation plans provided in August 2018. However, several institutions reported that they were currently reviewing their delivery model or planned to do so.

Among the institutions underway with delivering the PfG commitment, all 24 colleges and 18 (out of 19) universities were making free sanitary products available to students on campus. The remaining university was providing a non-means tested grant (£35/year) to students. Grants to purchase sanitary products were also available to distance learners at one college.

Where products were being made available to students on campus, the majority of institutions were providing free sanitary products in student toilets accessible from storage containers, lockers or free vending machines. Six colleges and 5 universities were offering free sanitary products at various pick-up points on campus, including from a 'shop front' collection point, student shop, student association offices, and campus reception desks. Ordering systems were in place at 4 institutions. For example, 1 college, was operating an ordering system where each student living on campus was given an order form as part of their welcome pack offering them free sanitary products that would be replenished on a weekly basis when rooms were serviced by housekeeping. One institution was also placing sanitary products in their student crisis food parcels .

Four institutions reported changing their delivery model during the reporting period:

1. One institution reported that they initially piloted an online order form but received low uptake and have now switched to placing products in various locations on campus.

2. One institution reported that they were originally making free sanitary products available in student toilets but changed their delivery model to pick-up points due to misuse of products.
3. One institution reported that they were reviewing delivery and suitable locations for products at their new campus which opened as the reporting period began.
4. One institution reported that their original delivery model comprised making sanitary products freely available in baskets in a wide range of accessible and gender-neutral toilets across different buildings and campuses. Due to the size of the campus and the practicalities this delivery model, it has been decided that this model is neither sustainable nor workable as a way of ensuring (i) the availability of products, (ii) access to a larger volume of products at any one time and (iii) the cleanliness and hygiene of the products available. Free vending machines were planned to be installed in Semester 2 in key buildings which are anticipated to be easier to monitor and re-stock. Negotiations were also underway to make use of existing 'shop fronts' to make reusable products available.

5.3 Are free sanitary products being made available outside of term-time? If so, how?

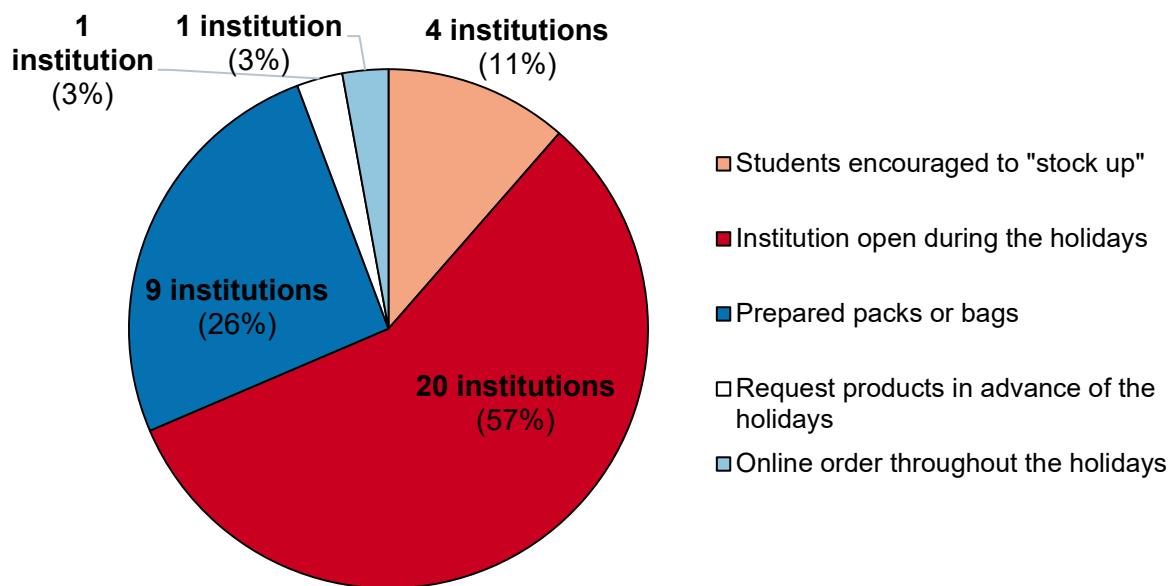
Twenty-two colleges and 17 universities reported making sanitary products available to students outside of term-time. However, as with the local authorities, there was some variation in whether institutions considered encouraging students to "stock up" in advance of the holidays providing access to products outside of term-time⁷.

Among the institutions providing access to sanitary products outside of term-time, the majority (57%, 12 colleges and 8 universities) reported that students could access free sanitary products in campus buildings during the holidays⁸. Other arrangements included preparing packs for students in advance of the holidays, encouraging students to "stock up" to cover requirements during the holidays, and operating systems to allow students to request products in bulk in advance of the holidays or place online orders during the holidays. An overview of arrangements to allow access outside of term-time are presented in Figure 4.

⁷ For the purposes of this report, encouraging students to "stock up" is considered making products available outside term-time.

⁸ However, several of these institutions noted that campus closures during the Christmas holidays limited access during this time.

Figure 4: Overview of arrangements to provide access to sanitary products outside of term-time at colleges and universities (based on data from 20 colleges and 14 universities).



5.4 Are there any special arrangements in place to provide free sanitary products for part-time students or distance learners?

Eleven colleges and eight universities reported putting in place special arrangements to provide access to free sanitary products for part-time students or distance learners.

Arrangements for part-time students involved reminding students where they could access free products on campus. Four colleges and three universities reported specific arrangements for distance learners, including the distribution of sanitary products to outreach centres (2 institutions), the availability of a grant to distance learners upon application to student services (2 institutions), allowing distance learners to request a bulk supply of products (2 institutions), and preparing packs for collection on campus (1 institution). Furthermore, one additional institution reported that many of their distance learners attend campus and could then access products.

5.5 How many sanitary products were distributed to/taken by students?

Based on data from 21 colleges, 38% of all sanitary products purchased were distributed to college students. This ranged from 0.1% to 100%. Based on data from 15 universities, 64% of all sanitary products purchased were distributed to university students. This ranged from 1% to 240%.

Based on data from 16 colleges and 13 universities, it is estimated that 33% of all sanitary products purchased by colleges were taken by students and 42% of products purchased by universities were taken by students. This corresponds to 79% uptake of distributed products among college students and 85% uptake among university students.

When asked to reflect on product uptake and how it compared with their expectations, ten colleges and ten universities reported that uptake was low/lower than expected. Two colleges and six universities reported that uptake was high/higher than expected. Where uptake was low/lower than anticipated, this was mostly attributed to a perceived lack of awareness of the availability of free sanitary products among students and resulting slow start in students accessing provision. Several institutions anticipated higher uptake as

awareness increases, and had planned to promote the availability of free sanitary products and how students could access them in the next reporting period.

5.6 Did institutions engage in any activities to promote the availability of free sanitary products?

Seven colleges and 14 universities reported taking steps to raise awareness of free sanitary products within their institution. An additional 6 colleges and 1 university were planning to promote the availability free products within the next reporting period. One institution reported that they had some issues with the suitability of the graphics received for promoting the initiative in that there were not entirely appropriate for a university environment.

Institutions engaged in various types of promotional activities, including:

1. Information sessions for students (1 institution);
2. Promotional events or activities across campus (4 institutions) ;
3. Promotion on social media, email website (4 institutions);
4. Promotion during the new student events, such the Freshers Fayre or Freshers week (2 institutions);
5. Dedicated face-to-face promotional events (3 institutions);
6. The provision of samples from Mooncup as part of a sponsored pilot (1 institution);
7. Promotion by the Student Advice Hub or Student Association/Union (5 institutions);
8. QR codes on posters to provide information on the location of the washrooms where products can be accessed (1 institution).
9. Integrating elements of delivery into class project work, including sourcing ethical baskets, designing and producing promotional information, and designing, making and installing shelves (1 institution).

5.7 Did institutions gather feedback and views from students on the delivery of free sanitary products?

Nine colleges and 11 universities reported gathering student feedback on the delivery of free sanitary products. In addition, 7 colleges and 2 universities reported that they were currently underway with gathering student feedback or were planning to do so.

Where student feedback was gathered, this was via:

1. A student survey (5 institutions);
2. A dedicated email address (3 institutions);
3. Social media or website (2 institutions);
4. Student meetings or student councils (5 institutions);
5. Student events (2 institutions).

Example: A survey of 142 students at one university showed that **62% of students who responded to the survey had accessed free sanitary products** during the first term of the academic year. The majority of students were happy with the range of products available and the locations of these products (94%). The survey also showed that a minority of students (19%) were aware that they could access reusable products and that they could collect larger packs of products for during placements and holidays (29%). As a results of this, further promotion of reusable products and of placement/holiday packs was planned for the next reporting period.

5.8 What types of sanitary products were purchased and distributed to students?

The majority of colleges and universities providing sanitary products on campus were making a variety of product types absorbencies available to students, including day/night products and applicator and non-applicator tampons.

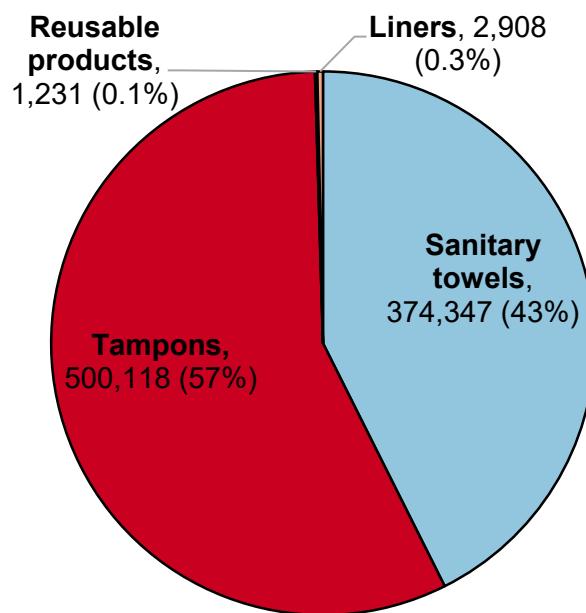
Among the 24 colleges and 18 universities providing sanitary products on campus, all were providing at least 1 type of sanitary towel and at least 1 type of tampon. Three colleges and 8 universities were providing reusable products, with 2 colleges and four universities providing menstrual cups, and 1 college and 3 universities providing both menstrual cups and reusable pads.

5.9 How many sanitary products were purchased and distributed to students?

Based on available data from 24 colleges, 878,604 sanitary products were purchased up to February 2019. This reflects an average of 19 products per female student at these colleges, ranging from two products per female student to 59 products per female student.

Tampons were purchased in the highest quantity, comprising 57% of all products purchased. Figure 5 presents a breakdown of the quantities of each product type purchased.

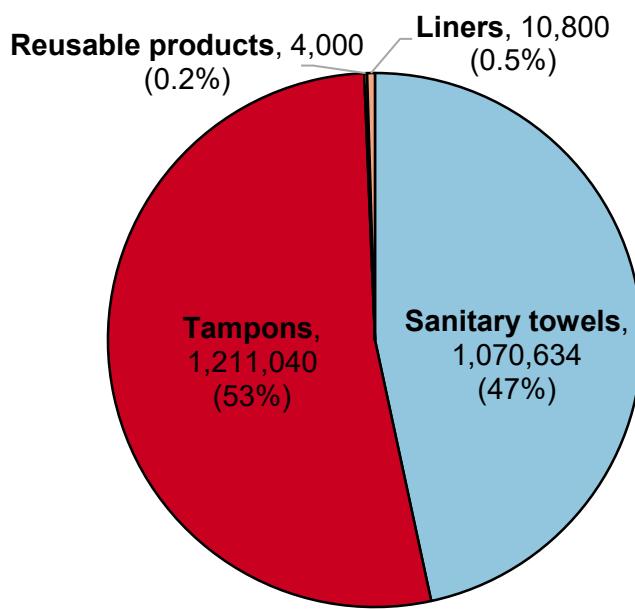
Figure 5: The quantities of each sanitary product types purchased (based on data from 24 colleges).



Based on data from all 18 universities providing products on campus, 2,296,474 sanitary products were purchased between September 2018 and February 2019. This reflects an average of 19 per female student at these universities, ranging from one product per female student to 50 products purchased per female student.

Tampons and sanitary towels were purchased in similar quantities. Figure 6 presents a breakdown of the quantities of each product type purchased by universities.

Figure 6: The quantities of each sanitary product types purchased (based on data from 18 universities).



5.10 What is the unit cost of each sanitary product purchased?

Sanitary towels were the lowest cost per unit in both colleges and universities and menstrual cups were the highest cost per unit. An overview of unit costs per product type at colleges and universities is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Average unit costs per product type purchased by colleges and universities. The range for each product type is presented in parentheses. (-) indicates that the product was available at only 1 college/university so the range could not be calculated. Unit costs are presented excluding VAT.

Product type	Colleges	Universities
Sanitary towels	£0.18 (£0.06-£0.58)	£0.13 (£0.02-£0.57)
Tampons	£0.21 (£0.04-£0.90)	£0.12 (£0.03-£0.24)
Menstrual cups	£13.10 (£3.59-£19.05)	£11.06 (£3.59-£19.05)
Reusable pads	£12.26 (-)	£2.39 (£2.15-£2.53)
Liners	£0.04 (-)	£0.01 (-)

Were there any changes to the range of products purchased during the roll-out of the provision?

Several institutions reported that they had obtained student feedback on the range of products available. Three universities reported demand from students for reusable sanitary products during this reporting period and, as a result, had made these products available or were planning to do so. For example, 1 university reported that student feedback indicated that a better range of products is needed and that students would welcome the availability of sustainable products. One college reported that it had been difficult to predict preferred products with increasing demand for tampons and reduced demand for night time sanitary towels (relative to their trial).

Issues with sourcing products within the unit cost agreed by the Access to Free Sanitary Products Working Group was also noted by 1 institution, resulting in this institution switching to a new supplier and product range. This will be introduced in the next reporting period.

5.11 What was the total spend on purchasing the sanitary products?

Based on data from 24 colleges, the total spend on sanitary products (including grants) was **£207,508** (excluding VAT). This represents, on average, 13% of the 2018/19 product allocation and a projected 18% spend based on the full eight month delivery period. Spend against product allocation ranged between 0.1% to 112%. For spend including 5% VAT, see Footnote 9.

Based on data from all 19 universities, the total spend on sanitary products (including grants) was **£261,028** (excluding VAT). This represents 19% of the 2018/19 product allocation and a projected spend of 25% of product allocation over the full eight month funding period. Spend against product allocation ranged from 1% to 62%. For spend including 5% VAT, see Footnote 10.

Six colleges and six universities reported that they reclaimed the VAT on the sanitary products purchased during this reporting period. The amount that an institution can claim back could be the full costs of the VAT or a partial reclaim (an agreement from HMRC to recover an agreed percentage of costs) – this information was not collected from institutions so it is not possible to calculate the total spend on products that was reclaimed.

5.12 What additional costs did institutions incur (e.g. marketing, delivery)?

Based on data provided by 20 colleges, the total spend on delivery (excluding product spend) was **£107,169** (excluding VAT). This represents an average spend of 19% of the 2018/19 development allocation, with a projected spend of 31% of the development allocation over the full eight-month funding period. Spend against development allocation ranged from 0% to 50%. For additional spend including 20% VAT, see Footnote 11.

Based on data provided by 17 universities, the total spend on delivery (excluding product spend) was **£78,680** (excluding VAT). This represents an average spend of 22% of the 2018/19 development allocation, with a projected spend of 29% of allocation over the full eight-month funding period. Spend against development allocation ranged from 0% to 83%. For additional spend including 20% VAT, see Footnote 12.

Institutions reported a total additional spend amount so it is not possible to break this down into type. However, several institutions provided a summary of costs incurred in addition to the purchase of sanitary products. Costs included: marketing, labour costs, set-up costs (e.g. installation and adaptation of vending machines, purchase of storage containers) and staff costs (e.g. cleaning/facilities management staff to restock products, administration of the scheme etc.).

⁹ Based on data from 24 colleges, the total spend on sanitary products (including grants) with 5% VAT included was £217,884. This represents an average of 14% of the 2018/19 product allocation and a projected 19% product spend based on the full eight month delivery period.

¹⁰ Based on data from all 19 universities, the total spend on sanitary products (including grants) with 5% included was £274,080. This represents 20% of the total 2018/19 product allocation and a projected 26% product spend.

¹¹ Based on data from 20 colleges, the total additional spend with 20% VAT included was £128,603. This represents an average spend of 23% of the 2018/19 development allocation, with a projected spend of 37% of the development allocation over the full eight-month funding period.

¹² Based on data from 17 universities, the total additional spend with 20% VAT included was £94,415. This represents 26% of the 2018/19 development allocation, with a projected spend of 35% of development allocation over the full eight-month funding period.

Annex A – Guiding Principles

Statement of Purpose

The Scottish Government has committed to providing access to free sanitary products to students in schools, colleges and universities to support equality, dignity and rights for those who menstruate and to ensure that lack of access to products does not impact on an individual's ability to fully participate in education at all levels.

Guiding Principles

The delivery model should be based on:

- **Protecting students' dignity**, avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma
- Making a range of products and different qualities available, giving students **choice** about the products they want to use;
- A response that is **reflective of students' views and experiences**;
- An efficient and dignified approach which demonstrates **value for money**;
- An **offer** for all eligible students throughout the year regardless of whether it is term time or holidays
- Ensuring sanitary products are easily accessible to **meet individual needs**;
- Individuals being able to get sufficient products to **meet their needs**;
- **Gender equality**, ensuring anyone who menstruates can access products, including transgender men/non-binary individuals, and that language is gender neutral. The roll out of gender neutral toilets should also be taken account of.
- **Awareness raising and education** to both promote the 'offer' and change cultural norms.

From: [redacted]

DHSJ: Social Justice & Regeneration

19 December 2019

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

PUBLICATION OF YOUNG SCOT PERIOD PRODUCTS SURVEY FINDINGS

Purpose

1. To inform you of the forthcoming publication of the findings from the Young Scot survey on the first full year of delivery of access to free period products in schools, colleges and universities.

Priority

2. Routine. Young Scot intend to publish the findings report on 8 January 2020.

Background

3. As part of our evaluation of the first full year of delivery of access to period products in education settings, we commissioned Young Scot to conduct a survey to gain views from pupils and students on their experiences of the policy. The survey, which ran from 19 June to 2 September, received over 3,000 responses from pupils and students from all 32 local authorities. A summary of the key findings is set out at **Annex A**.

4. As noted above, Young Scot will publish the report on 8 January 2020, publicised by a news release to be issued on 7 January, under embargo until 8 January. Comms colleagues will liaise with your office to provide a Ministerial quote for the news release.

5. We note that a small minority of people have reported difficulties in accessing products. Part of our plans for 2020 are to share and spread good practice across education settings to improve the offer and increase uptake, and these findings will help inform that work.

Conclusion

6. That you note the contents of this submission.

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning					X

DG Education, Communities and Justice
Director for Housing and Social Justice
Paul Tyrer

Audrey McDougall

Catriona MacKean

Gareth Brown

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Comms CSSE

Jeanette Campbell

ANNEX A

PUBLICATION OF YOUNG SCOT PERIOD PRODUCTS SURVEY FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Almost 9 in 10 respondents stated that they had used or needed to use a period product in the past year. Of these, almost two thirds reported that they had received free period products from their school, college or university in the past academic year.
2. Of the respondents who had accessed free period products from their school, college or university:
 - a. Over 8 in 10 stated that they were able to access their preferred product and were able to access enough products to meet their needs.
 - b. Over 8 in 10 stated that the availability of free period products had a positive impact on them, with the majority reporting that they were less worried about having their period (89%) and were more able to continue with their day-to-day activities (64%). A quarter stated that the availability of free period products had improved their mental health and wellbeing.
 - c. Almost half reported an issue that had prevented them from accessing free period products from their educational establishment at some point over the past academic year. The most commonly reported issue was lack of product availability (48%).
3. Just over a third of respondents reported that they had not accessed free period products from their educational establishment, mostly because they did not need to because their family purchased their period products (62%). However, just under a third of these reported that this was because there were no free period products available when they needed them (30%) and just under a fifth of these reported that they didn't know how to access free products (18%).
4. Just under a third of respondents who had not accessed a free product said that the availability of free period products had positive impact even though they had not accessed a product, with the reason being given by over 90% of these being that they felt less worried about getting their period.
5. When asked about usage of reusable period products, over 4 in 5 respondents were not currently using reusable products but just over half stated that they would consider using them in the future (51%) and almost a third were undecided (30%). The most common suggestion for development of the initiative was to increase the availability of reusable products and, of the minority of respondents who reported that they were not able to access their preferred product, the most common product type they would have preferred to access was a reusable product in some form.