

# PRE-SCREENING NOTIFICATION

September 2018

## SEA PRE-SCREENING DOCUMENT

**Responsible Authority:** Scottish Government

**Title of the plan:** Access to Free Sanitary Products

**What prompted the plan:**  
(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

Programme for Government commitment

**Plan subject:**  
(e.g. transport)

Waste management

**Brief summary of the plan:**  
(including the area or location to which the plan related)

In the Programme for Government, published in September 2017, the Scottish Government committed to introducing a scheme to fund access to free sanitary products for those attending schools, colleges and universities (and to consider further action to support others on low incomes in light of the findings of the pilot scheme in Aberdeen). This will cover the whole of Scotland.

As part of this work, an Access to Free Sanitary Products Working Group has been established, with membership drawn from relevant Scottish Government teams and third and public sector partners with an interest in the policy. The Group agreed that the policy should be informed by a number of Guiding Principles. Given the voluntary, non-regulatory approach to the policy, it was agreed the local delivery partners – that is, local authorities, colleges and universities – would develop implementation plans that best suit their particular circumstances.

**Brief summary of the likely environmental consequences:**  
(including whether it has been determined that the plan is likely to have no or minimum effects, either directly or indirectly)

This policy will have minimal effect on the environment. As such, no SEA is required.

While national in scope, each of our delivery partners – local authorities, colleges and universities – has had the flexibility to develop their own delivery models and mechanisms. Delivery partners were, however, expected to consider how reusable or environmentally-friendly products could feature in delivery.

Partners will undertake local awareness-raising campaigns to make sure potential beneficiaries are aware of the provision and to allow them to make informed choices about the products they use. This will be complemented by a national awareness-raising campaign, which will include specific messaging about environmentally-

friendly behaviour and choices. An example of this work is Young Scot's microsite dedicated to the issue of menstruation and access to sanitary products - [www.Young.Scot/periods](http://www.Young.Scot/periods).

We are also exploring ways to tackle the stigma and common misconceptions around menstruation. This wider educational work will also include promotion of environmentally-friendly and reusable products to allow people to make informed choices about managing their menstruation and menstrual health.

Delivery partners have been allocated funding to deliver this policy which may include putting in place proper disposal mechanisms for single-use products where these do not already exist. Local delivery should conform to partners' own environmental strategies, actions plans and targets. As such, partners should have given due consideration to how delivery of the policy interacts with these existing frameworks. Local and national messaging will make clear the importance of properly disposing of single-use products. Scottish Government is also providing funding for development posts within COSLA and the Scottish Funding Council. Among other duties, the post-holders may be able to support delivery partners to explore and promote environmentally friendly options.

We will work closely with delivery partners to review and monitor this policy. Delivery partners will monitor the uptake of the different types of products being used, including reusable and environmentally-friendly products. While a number of underlying assumptions have been made about the extent of uptake, monitoring data will allow refinement of the policy as we better understand the extent and nature of the problem it seeks to address. This could conceivably lead to a greater focus on environmentally-friendly choices, so that on the whole the policy's impact may be a positive one, with greater national usage of environmentally-friendly and reusable products. At the same time, as delivery partners better understand local circumstances and how the provision 'fits' within their own systems and procedures, delivery is likely to become embedded within existing procurement and facilities management strategies. This should see delivery streamlined and made more efficient in terms of, for example, transportation and delivery of products and waste management.

As part of our pilot in Aberdeen to test different approaches to providing access to free sanitary products for low income households and all students, and to better understand the circumstances that mean people cannot access sanitary products, we explored specifically the issue of reusable products. The main products made available were menstrual cups and reusable towels. A Reusable Steering Group was formed consisting of staff with experience of using such products. The group produced a video introducing and promoting reusable products and held information and workshop sessions with partner organisations.

While engagement was slow at the beginning, partners and participants became more interested in reusable products as they learned more about them. Although 32 per cent of participants at community partners had heard of reusable products, only four per cent had used them. With more information and greater understanding, however, 59 per cent of community participants said they would be interested in trying them. Of the 68 per cent of community participants who had never heard of reusable products, 41 per cent said they would be interested in using them. By contrast, awareness of reusable products was much higher among participants in education, with 72 per cent having heard of them and 91 per cent expressing an interest in using them. Our evidence suggests, then, that that access to information about reusable products will be crucial and could lead to greater usage both among those already aware of them and those who are not. We expect therefore that national and local messaging on reusable products will encourage more students to consider using them.

While access will be available in educational establishments to those who need them, evidence suggests that one of the most common reasons people have experienced difficulty in accessing sanitary products is because they could not afford to buy them when needed. There is some evidence from the pilot to suggest that people will self-regulate in terms of accessing this provision; in other words, doing so only when the need arises. There may be a slight increase in the number of single-use products being used as people who have struggled in the past to access them may change products more frequently. This will, however, be mitigated by the measures outlined in this assessment so that, on the whole, we do not expect to see a dramatic increase in the overall number of single-use sanitary products being used and disposed of.

While much of the provision of products will be focussed on campuses or schools, delivery partners will also make provision for holiday periods. Although this could lead to a potential upturn in the number of single-use products being improperly disposed of, we would expect that local and national messaging on proper disposal will mostly mitigate against such behaviour. Equally, given the growing emphasis on them, increasing numbers of people may opt instead to use reusable or environmentally-friendly products.

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5 September 2018

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