

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	Access to Free Sanitary Products in Scottish Government Buildings
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	The Scottish Government, as part of its People Strategy commitment, has committed to providing access to free sanitary products to staff and visitors in Scottish Government buildings, 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 their Scottish Government business, and to set an example for other public sector bodies in Scotland.
Directorate: Division: team	DCMS: Comms: Facilities Services

Executive summary

The provision of free sanitary products in Scottish Government buildings has been driven by the issue of "period poverty". The Working Group have raised four points which are considered - what products should be available, who should they be available to, where should the products be located and what is the financial impact - identifying potential impacts on the protected characteristics. The conclusion is that a range of sanitary products should be available in all visitor toilets and a number of other toilets, dependent on the building population and layout.

Background

The issue of "period poverty" has had significant and sustained media coverage both within the UK and internationally in the past 12-18 months. Access to free sanitary products has been introduced in schools, colleges and universities, and COSLA and the Scottish Parliament announced on 17th and 18th May that they would make free sanitary products available for staff and visitors. A Private Member's Bill, Proposed Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland), completed consultation on 8th December 2017 and received 1753 responses, of which 96% were supportive of the proposal.

The Scope of the EQIA

We consider both the impact and the risk to be low. We have identified some potential impacts on the protected characteristics. No negative impacts have been identified. However, there are evidence gaps meaning the potential impact on certain groups is either unknown or not well understood.

Key Findings

There are a number of questions and potential implications that this policy raises, and these were considered by the Working Group.

What products should be available?

There will be a requirement for differing types of sanitary product, both pads and tampons. Some users, for religious, medical or personal reasons, may only wish to use non-invasive products. Specific products may be required for certain groups including pregnant, post-partum, pre- and post-menopausal users. The brand and quality of the products will need to be agreed, and it is likely that multiple brands, designs and absorbencies will be required. This will require adequate storage in each building where the products are available.

Who should they be available to?

The products should be available to all Scottish Government staff working in Scottish Government buildings, contractor staff working for the Scottish Government and bona fide visitors to the Scottish Government. In addition, there are a number of Scottish Government buildings that have employees of other public sector bodies within them, such as Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service and the Student Awards Agency. These staff would also have access to free sanitary products. There are also Scottish Government staff who work in other public sector buildings, not managed by the Scottish Government, and in small regional offices, where facilities are shared with other users. These employees may consider that they are disadvantaged compared with those working in core buildings unless they also have access to free sanitary products.

Where should the products be located?

Products should be in an adequate number of toilets to enable access by all users of each building. This does not require products to be in every toilet, but they should include all visitor toilets and a number of female toilets, gender neutral toilets and male toilets. The reason for inclusion of male toilets is for transgender males who menstruate. Under these circumstances, sanitary disposal units would also need to be located in the male toilets where the products are available. For those buildings that do not have gender neutral toilets, sanitary disposal bins will be placed in each cubicle of the male toilet/toilet block located in areas where there is a high visitor footfall. Work is in progress to identify the male toilets and have all the sanitary bins and sanitary products in place by 31 October 2018.

What is the financial impact?

There are significant cost implications, both direct and indirect, which cannot be quantified, as they will depend on the volume of use and any potential abuse. The direct cost will be the product cost. The products will need to be procured as other building consumables are, either directly or via a cleaning service provider. If the products are procured directly, a procurement process will need to be followed. If they are sourced via a service provider, a contract variation will be needed. There will also be the cost of staff receiving the goods, distribution and replenishing in toilet areas.

In respect of the use of public funds, it can be argued that it would be more appropriate to supply sanitary products to food banks and outlets where those in greatest need are already accessing services. The cost to public funds will be dependent on uptake. If the majority of users take products only in an emergency or where they do not have funds to purchase their own products, the cost will be low. If, however, the policy is regarded as a source of unlimited sanitary products for all, the costs will escalate. There may also be individuals who have no personal need of sanitary products, who also take the products, either to pass on to others or to resell. However, controlled issue raises questions of dignity, privacy and potentially data protection.

Depending on the volume provided, there is a low risk that some market distortion will occur, with products being taken free of charge, as opposed to being purchased from a high street retailer.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is recommended that a range of sanitary products are available in all visitor toilets in Scottish Government building, and in a number of female, gender neutral and male toilets in each building, relevant to the size and layout of the building population. The demand will be monitored by volume over a twelve month time frame, to identify the level of uptake and enable the locations and product range to be amended in line with usage and feedback.