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| Agenda Item | 7.       |
| Report No   | CP/21/22 |

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 16 November 2022

**Report Title:** Implementing the requirements of the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 in Highland

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 (the Act) came into force on 15 August 2022. The Act places a duty on local authorities and education providers to provide access to period products for all those who might need them. It requires the provision to be made free of charge, and in an accessible way that respects the dignity of the people obtaining them.
- 1.2 The Act also requires the Council to publish a “Statement on Exercise of Functions” that summarises the arrangements that will be put in place to meet the duty. The Council’s approach should be informed by consultation with the local community.
- 1.3 This report updates Members on the requirements of the Period Products Act and provides information on the activities undertaken to meet them to date. It summarises the results of the community consultation undertaken in Highland and asks Members to agree the revised Statement on Exercise of Functions that reflects the community feedback.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the arrangements that have been made to provide free period products in Highland;
- Note the results of the community consultation on free period products in Highland;
- Consider and note the actions agreed by the Partnership Steering Group to further develop provision in Highland, based upon the consultation feedback;
- Agree and adopt the Statement on Exercise of Functions found at Appendix 1.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. Highland Council receives an annual Scottish Government funding allocation to meet the requirements in school and community settings as per the Act. This budget covers the costs of the arrangements made by the Council for the provision of free period products.
- 3.2 **Legal** – Since 15 August 2022, The Highland Council is legally required by the Act to make period products freely available to everyone who needs them within Highland, both in the community and on education premises and to publish a Statement on Exercise of Functions.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – An Equality Impact Assessment, a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment and a Rural Impact Assessment have been carried out. This scheme aims at tackling period poverty and the stigma around periods and menstrual health. It is also designed to be inclusive and accessible to all and should have a positive impact. This is particularly the case of low-income households whose financial burden will be alleviated. In addition, the home delivery option will ensure provision for people in remote areas, or who would otherwise struggle to access products.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – The Highland Council is promoting reusable period products, such as cups and washable pads, which can be obtained through the home delivery service. Reusable period products have a significantly lower carbon impact than their disposable equivalents.
- 3.5 **Risk** – Without arrangements to provide free period products, The Highland Council would fail to meet its legal obligations under the Act. The lack of suitable provision would also incur reputational risks to the Council.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – There are no direct Gaelic implications arising from this report.

### 4. Background

- 4.1 Period poverty is when people needing period products struggle to afford or access them. Research has shown that this is a real problem in the UK. A 2020 survey by Young Scot found that that 1 in 4 respondents were in period poverty, whilst a 2020 study by Plan International UK estimated that over a third (36%) of girls aged 14-21 in the UK have struggled to afford or access period products during the Coronavirus pandemic. Being in period poverty can lead to missing education or work and to using unsuitable items to collect menstrual flow. This matter is likely to become more prevalent in the context of the current cost of living crisis.
- 4.2 To address the challenge of period poverty, the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament and came into force on 15 August 2022. The Act requires local authorities to ensure period products are available free of charge within the Local Authority area and for anyone who needs them. It also requires all education providers to make period products available free within their premises, which applies to The Highland Council as an education provider.

- 4.3 Period products (such as pads and tampons) must be reasonably easy to obtain and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products. In addition, there must be a reasonable choice of different products available and consideration given to reusable products. To support implementation, Local Authorities should undertake local consultation to understand where people would wish to see products located and what type of products people would wish to see available.
- 4.4 As part of the duties contained within the Act, each Local Authority must publish a Statement on Exercise of Functions. This statement must outline how it is going to meet the duties contained within the Act and how local consultation has informed local arrangements. Statements should be reviewed at regular intervals to reflect changes in circumstance and provision. Highland Council's initial Statement published on 15 August, can be found at the following link: [www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/25545/free\\_period\\_product\\_provision\\_statement\\_on\\_exercise\\_of\\_function](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/25545/free_period_product_provision_statement_on_exercise_of_function)
- 4.5 The Scottish Government makes funding available to Local Authorities for them to undertake these duties.
- 4.6 Whilst the Act introduces a wider duty on period product provision, funded by the Scottish Government, free period products have been provided in Highland schools since 2018-2019. Between 2020 and 2022, the Council's Community Hubs provided free period products to people in need as part of the humanitarian response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.7 In April 2022, a project co-ordinator was recruited to develop arrangements for the provision of free period products across Highland. To help support this work, a Partnership Steering Group was formed which includes representatives from the Council, High Life Highland, NHS Highland and the Highland Third Sector Interface.
- 4.8 This report provides Members with an update on the work undertaken to make period products available across Highland. It summarises the feedback received from the community consultation undertaken and outlines the next steps for strengthening the offering across Highland. The report also outlines the updated Statement on Exercise of Functions, revised to reflect the community consultation feedback.

## **5. Implementation of the Act in Highland**

- 5.1 As outlined in section 4, the Period Products Act came into force on 15 August 2022. A partnership steering group was established to help support the implementation of the Act in Highland. Within the Highland context, initial considerations for local access were:
- The importance of good geographical access
  - Venues which the Council and its partners have direct access to
  - Providing a range of products
  - Development of a Home Delivery service for people who do not have a venue immediately nearby or who may have a disability that would prevent them from using a physical access point.

The following outlines the work undertaken to deliver local provision:

## 5.2 Community pick-up points

- 5.2.1 Thanks to a partnership between The Highland Council and High Life Highland, free period products can be obtained at over 70 pick-up points across Highland since 15 August 2022. The collection points are located in leisure and community centres, libraries, service points and visitor attractions.
- 5.2.2 Period products provided currently include a range of disposable pads and tampons. The locations of these within venues vary depending upon the building, with some of them being located in toilets while others are available in reception areas. In all cases, guidance has been issued to ensure that period products are available to all those who need them, including those who pick up items on behalf of others.
- 5.2.3 Community pick-up points can be located via the MyPeriod website or the PickUpMyPeriod app, which are national resources created by the Scottish social enterprise Hey Girls. The website can be accessed at: <https://myperiodlive.azurewebsites.net/> and the app can be downloaded at:
- Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.myperiodapp>
  - Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/pickupmyperiod/id1500403938>
- 5.2.4 To promote this provision in the community, a webpage has been developed on the Council's website with information on the scheme and can be found at [www.highland.gov/freeperiodproducts](http://www.highland.gov/freeperiodproducts). Promotional posters have also been created and are used within venues to help locate products and provide further advice on the scheme.

## 5.3 Local community groups

- 5.3.1 An important pick-up point identified for products was community food larders and foodbanks. The Council has partnered with Cfine to deliver free period products directly to local food groups providing these services. Cfine are part of the FareShare network and already distribute surplus food to a number of local groups. By adding period products to their routine deliveries, we are reaching some of the people needing them the most and gaining a wider geographical cover.
- 5.3.2 Additionally, a number of local community groups have notified their interest of hosting a pick-up point for free period products. Their requests will be reviewed to ensure that new pick-up points fill geographical gaps and are in line with consultation outcomes.

## 5.4 Home delivery service

- 5.4.1 The Steering Group agreed at an early stage that a Home Delivery service would be essential to support the effective implementation of the Act in Highland. Based upon learning from other Local Authorities, it was agreed that a partnership approach with Scottish social enterprise Hey Girls, would best deliver a home delivery service to Highland residents requiring free period products. This service is particularly aimed at people living in remote locations or who would otherwise have a limited access to the community pick-up points, for example due to disability, and do not have someone who can collect the products on their behalf. The service will also give access to reusable period products, such as menstrual cups and washable pads. The home delivery service went live on 26 October 2022.

## 5.5 Education provision

5.5.1 Period products have been provided free of charge in Highland schools since 2018-2019. Currently each school orders products and makes arrangements to make them available with guidance provided centrally. Period products have also been made available in different ways, for example:

- Storage containers/baskets in toilets
- Free vending machines/dispensers in toilets
- Pick-up points on school's premises.

5.5.2 In addition, schools have been encouraged to enable pupils to "stock up" before a holiday to ensure they have the products to cover their needs out with term time.

5.5.3 Consultation was carried out with pupils in Highland schools in the summer 2019 and feedback at that time indicated that pupils would like to see a better choice of products; more environmentally friendly products; and more collection points in schools. Further consultation is to be carried out with pupils and teachers in Highland schools during 2022-23 in order to understand how the arrangements that are already in place are working and to inform any action taken to improve provision.

## 6. **Community consultation and engagement**

6.1 To support the implementation of the Act, The Highland Council held a public consultation about provision of free period products in community settings. The purpose of the survey was to ask for views on proposed arrangements for the provision of free period products in community settings, including specifically about:

- the locations and types of premises that would be considered suitable where period products should be obtainable;
- the ways in which product users ought to be able to obtain period products; and
- the types of period products which ought to be obtainable.

6.2 An online survey was published which ran between 6 July and 3 August 2022 for a total of 4 weeks. Discussion materials were also provided to a number of local groups representing individuals with additional barriers – e.g. Women's Aid, Gypsy Traveller - and invited to respond on behalf of their client group.

6.3 The online consultation received a total of 762 responses. In addition to this, 19 individuals or groups reacted to the consultation via email. We are aware that at least a couple of groups used the activities we proposed to hold informal discussions on the subject, but no feedback on this was provided.

6.4 The main outcomes of the consultation were:

- Disposable pads and tampons were the most popular period products, but there was also a significant interest in reusable period products.
- Health settings (e.g. pharmacies, GP surgeries) were the venue preferred by most to pick up free period products from (86% of respondents in support). Leisure and community centres, and food banks were also very popular (73% of respondents supported these venues).
- The option of a home delivery service was also popular, 72% of respondents

supported this.

- Respondents preferred collecting products from toilets and generally discreet locations (81% of support).
- A lack of information on the scheme was identified by most respondents as potentially the biggest barrier to accessing period products.

6.5 A summary of the consultation feedback can be found at appendix 2 and will be available on the Council's website.

## **7. Next Steps**

7.1 The Partnership Steering Group has reviewed the feedback from the consultation and has agreed the following actions to support the further development of provision of free period products in Highland:

### **7.2 Access**

- To consider additional venues for collection points based on consultation responses and geographical gaps identified, with a specific focus on engaging with health providers about potential partnership arrangements.
- To work to improve the current range of period products available, taking into account the consultation responses, and the updated national procurement framework expected in October 2022. There will be a particular focus on how reusable products can be promoted.
- To ensure that the scheme is inclusive and that products are available to groups or individuals that may face additional barriers to accessing products. This will include ensuring key staff e.g. health visitors, social care workers and venues e.g. Women's Aid, have access to products to provide to clients where required.

### **7.3 Promotion and Awareness**

- To increase promotion of the availability of free period products in Highland and ensure information is accessible.
- To carry out consultation and engagement at regular intervals with both users and venue providers to support improvements in provision and to raise awareness.
- To engage with pupils and staff during the 2022/23 school year in order to understand how current arrangements are working. This will inform any improvement actions identified.
- To build on work to deliver educational awareness resources in schools in Highland to raise awareness of the scheme and of menstrual health.
- To maintain the key principles of dignity and respect in the delivery of the scheme.

### **7.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

- To monitor, evaluate and build on service provision to ensure everyone has easy access to products appropriate to their needs in Highland.

- 7.5 The Council's Statement on Exercise of Functions has been updated to reflect the consultation feedback and the actions for moving forward. This can be found at appendix 1. Members are asked to consider and agree the Statement.
- 7.6 The provision of period products in Highland will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review to respond to the needs of the community. Reports on take-up and development of the scheme in Highland will come to future meetings of this committee.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 24 October 2022

Author: Wanda Girard-Prudon, Project Co-ordinator  
Rosemary MacKinnon, Principal Policy Officer

**Appendix 1** - Highland Council Free Period Product Provision: Statement on Exercise of Functions. 1 November 2022

**Appendix 2** – Summary of Consultation Feedback

## Appendix 1

# Highland Council Free Period Product Provision: Statement on Exercise of Functions

16 November 2022



# Highland Council Free Period Product Provision: Statement on Exercise of Functions

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was given Royal Assent on 12 January 2021. The Act requires local authorities to ensure period products are available free of charge within the Local Authority area and for anyone who needs them.

Period products (such as pads and tampons) must be reasonably easy to obtain and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products. In addition, there must be a reasonable choice of different products available.


Each local authority must prepare a written statement describing its plans for provision. The statement should be prepared following consultation with relevant individuals and groups and include a summary of the arrangements put in place to make period products accessible free of charge and any plans for making information available about how and where products can be accessed.

This statement sets out The Highland Council's commitment to free period product provision and details current and future provision in the wider community and in Highland Council schools.

## Highland Council commitments

With the funding made available by Scottish Government, The Highland Council is committed to the provision of free period products to all those who need them. Provision is to be made available for Highland residents and those visiting the area for work or leisure.

We will ensure that:

- All period products we provide are free of charge and reasonably easy to obtain, and a reasonable choice of products is offered.
  - Provision will be available in the community and in Highland Council schools.
  - We work with partners to address period poverty and stigma.
  - Consideration is given to respect and dignity in our approach.
  - Consideration is given to those who may face additional barriers.
  - Consideration is given to sustainability and environmental impact.
  - Public consultation and community engagement has been carried out to inform our provision.
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- Information on the scheme is communicated effectively to the public, and
- Provision will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

## Consultation

Following guidance produced by the Scottish Government, a consultation exercise was carried out over a 4-week period during July/August 2022 to inform community provision and identify need in Highland.

The consultation was open to any member of the public and we particularly sought the views of:

- Those currently using sanitary products.
- Those who will use sanitary products in the future.
- Those who may collect sanitary products on behalf of others.

And asked for their feedback on:

- The way products may be made available.
- The types of products required.
- The premises where the products will be available.
- The location of products in those premises.

An online survey was published on the Council's website, and information was promoted on social media channels and a press release. Additionally, a range of local community groups were contacted separately to invite them to respond to and circulate the survey. In particular, groups that worked with individuals who may face additional barriers to both the consultation and period products were identified and encouraged to consider carrying out discussions or focus groups with their members and feed responses to us as an alternative to the online survey.

Over 750 responses to the survey were received and will be analysed to inform our developing provision in Highland.

The main outcomes were:

- Disposable pads and tampons are the most popular period products, but there is also a significant interest in reusable period products.
- Health settings (e.g. pharmacies, GP surgeries) were the venue preferred by most to pick up free period products from (86% of respondents in



support). Leisure and community centres, food banks were also very popular (73% of respondents in support)

- The option of a home delivery service was also popular (72 % of respondents were supportive).
- Respondents preferred collecting products from toilets and generally discreet locations (81% of support).
- The lack of information on the scheme was identified by most respondents as potentially the biggest barrier to accessing period products.

A summary of the consultation feedback can be found at the following link: *link to be added once statement agreed.*

Consultation was carried out with pupils in Highland schools in the summer 2019 and feedback at that time indicated that pupils would like to see a better choice of products; more environmentally friendly products; and more collection points in schools.

Further consultation is to be carried out with pupils and teachers in Highland schools during 2022-23.

## **Current community provision**

The Council is working in partnership with High Life Highland and Cfine to provide free period products in community locations across Highland.

Initial locations for collection points include the network of the Council's Service Points and Access Points, and High Life Highland libraries, leisure and community centres. Since October 2022, the Council also works with the Scottish charity Cfine to distribute free period products to over 50 local food groups, such as food banks and community fridges. In addition, some community organisations have notified their interest of becoming a pick-up point. Their requests will be reviewed to ensure that new pick-up points fill geographical gaps and are in line with consultation outcomes.

Period products provided currently include a range of disposable pads and tampons. The locations of these within venues vary depending on the building, with some of them being located in toilets while others are available in reception areas. In all cases, guidance has been issued to ensure that period products are available to all those who need them, including those who pick up items on behalf of others.



A full and up-to-date list of public collection points can be found on the My Period website <https://myperiodlive.azurewebsites.net/>.

The same information can also be accessed from the app PickUpMyPeriod which can be downloaded from the following links:

For Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.myperiodapp>

For Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/pickupmyperiod/id1500403938>

In addition to the community pick-up points, The Highland Council has partnered with the Scottish social enterprise Hey Girls to provide a home delivery service from October 2022. This service is aimed at Highland residents who cannot easily access free period products in the community or in schools, particularly people living in remote locations, or where they cannot access products in person and do not have someone to collect products on their behalf. The service also provides reusable period products (menstrual cups and washable pads).

To promote this provision in the community, a webpage has been developed on the Council's website with information on the scheme and can be found at <http://www.highland.gov/freeperiodproducts>. Promotional posters have also been created and are used within venues to help locate products and provide further advice on the scheme.

## **Current education provision**

Period products have been provided free of charge in Highland schools since 2018-2019. Currently each school orders products and puts arrangements in place to make them available with guidance provided centrally. Period products have also been made available in different ways, for example:

- Storage containers/baskets in toilets.
- Free vending machines/dispensers in toilets.
- Pick-up points on schools premises.

In addition, schools have been encouraged to enable pupils to "stock up" before a holiday to ensure they have the products to cover their needs out with term time.



## **Proposed arrangements for future provision**


The Highland Council will continue to develop good practice in the delivery of free period products. We have been supported in this work by a steering group which has included partners in High Life Highland, NHS Highland, and the Highland Third Sector Interface.

The Partnership Steering Group has reviewed the feedback from the consultation and has agreed the following actions to support the further development of provision of free period products in Highland:

### **Access**

- To consider additional venues for collection points based on consultation responses and geographical gaps identified, with a specific focus on engaging with health providers about potential partnership arrangements.
- To work to improve the current range of period products available, taking into account the consultation responses and the updated national procurement framework from October 2022. There will be a particular focus on how reusable products can be promoted.
- To ensure that the scheme is inclusive and that products are available to groups or individuals that may face additional barriers to accessing products. This will include ensuring key staff e.g. health visitors, social care workers and venues e.g. Women's Aid, have access to products to provide to clients where required.

### **Promotion and Awareness**

- To increase promotion of the availability of free period products in Highland and ensure information is accessible.
  - To carry out consultation and engagement at regular intervals with both users and venue providers to support improvements in provision and to raise awareness.
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- To engage with pupils and staff during the 2022/23 school year in order to understand how current arrangements are working. This will inform any improvement actions identified.
- To build on work to deliver educational awareness resources in schools in Highland to raise awareness of the scheme and of menstrual health.
- To maintain the key principles of dignity and respect in the delivery of the scheme.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- To monitor, evaluate and build on service provision to ensure everyone has easy access to products appropriate to their needs in Highland.

## **Contact information**

For any further information, please visit [www.highland.gov.uk/freeperiodproducts](http://www.highland.gov.uk/freeperiodproducts) or get in touch with us at [period.products@highland.gov.uk](mailto:period.products@highland.gov.uk).

## **References**

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021: Guidance – September 2021  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/period-products-free-provision-scotland-act-2021-guidance-responsible-bodies-september-2021/>



## **Appendix 2: Implementing Free Period Product Provision in Highland**

### **Community consultation and engagement 2022: Summary of feedback**

#### **Background**

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 requires local authorities to ensure period products are available free of charge within a Local Authority area and for anyone who needs them. It also requires all education providers to make period products available free within their premises, which applies to The Highland Council as an education provider.

A reasonable choice of period products, including consideration of reusable products, must be available and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products.

As part of the duties within the Act, each Local Authority must consult with relevant people before putting in place their arrangements in order to help them understand where products would be best located and what types of products are preferred.

A local authority must also publish a Statement on Exercise of Functions which outlines how it will meet the duties and how local consultation has informed local arrangements.

#### **Consultation on Community Provision**

To support the implementation of the community requirements in the Act, The Highland Council held a public consultation about provision of free period products in community settings during July and August 2022.

#### ***The purpose of the consultation***

In line with Scottish Government guidance, the purpose of the consultation was to ask for views on proposed arrangements for the provision of free period products in community settings, including specifically about:

- the locations and types of premises that would be considered suitable where period products should be obtainable
- the ways in which product users ought to be able to obtain period products, and
- the types of period products which ought to be obtainable.

### ***How the consultation was carried out***

An online survey was promoted through a press release, social media and direct contact with a wide range of community organisations and equality groups. The survey was also available in hard copy or other formats on request. Discussion materials were also provided to a number of local groups representing individuals who it was felt may face additional barriers either to responding to the survey or to accessing products – e.g. Women’s Aid, minority ethnic groups, disability groups, and invited to respond on behalf of their client group.

### ***Summary of survey results***

The online consultation survey asked a set of ten questions and received a total of 762 responses. In addition to this, 19 individuals or groups reacted to the consultation via email. We are aware that a couple of groups used the activities and materials provided to hold informal discussions on the subject, but no feedback on this was provided.

In relation to questions 1-5 and 7, respondents were asked to select all answers that applied.

#### *Q1 – Who do you need period products for?*

Most respondents (65%) reported needing period products for themselves, or for a family member (41%). One in five responded for ‘a member for the community’ (20%), and for ‘a friend’ (14%) or ‘someone I care for’ (8%). A range of ‘other’ responses included young people, refugees, local food groups, and staff.

#### *Q2 – What type of free period products do you think should be available in your community?*

Disposable products were more popular than reusable ones, pads being the most popular option overall (84% of respondents). However, over half of respondents indicated they would like reusable period products to be available. There was no clear preference between the three reusable products, although washable pads were the option selected the most (56% of respondents).

#### *Q3 – Where do you think would be a good place to get free period products from in your community?*

Health settings such as GP practices and surgeries were the most popular option to pick up free period products (86% of respondents). Community/leisure centres and food banks/community larders were also felt to be good places to get free products (73% respondents for each). A home delivery option was similarly popular (72% of respondents). While Council buildings and libraries were less popular, nearly half of respondents felt they were good places to collect products from.



While numbers were small, the home delivery service was a preferred option with respondents who identified as victims of domestic abuse and those with a disability or long-term condition.

*Q4 – Where in the above venues would you find it easiest to access?*

Most respondents (81%) would prefer to access free period products from toilets where they are discreetly available. Between 33%-40% of respondents thought they should be available in reception areas, accessible display areas, or other discreet locations demonstrating a need to accommodate various requirements including ease of access.

*Q5 – What if anything would stop you from accessing free period products?*

“not knowing where to access them” (80% of respondents) was the most common barrier to accessing products. The second most common ones were “not being sure if the products are free and if I can take them” (55%) and “not being sure of how much I can take” (46%).

32% of respondents identified embarrassment as a barrier, while around a quarter questioned the suitability of products for their need (26%) or notified their inability to get out and about easily (24%).

12% of respondents mentioned internet access and 8% of respondents mentioned language, cultural or religious barriers.

### ***Other comments***

Of those who took the survey, 46% left a comment. Many comments were general and reflected responses already provided. Of the remainder, some of the most common references included:

- A number of comments positively welcomed the initiative, especially in context of the cost of living crisis or as a human rights matter. A smaller number of negative comments expressed concerns around the cost of universal provision.
- 28% of comments were gender-critical remarks referring to the language used as part of the consultation. Respondents wanted the words “women” and girls” to be used instead of “people” or “person” (Scottish Government guidance recommends an inclusive approach to language and provision).
- Comments on reaffirming the need for reusable period products (14% of total comments) or the need for sustainable products such as organic, plastic-free or biodegradable items.
- The need for information and education, both on the scheme itself and periods and menstrual health in general. It was also mentioned that stigma is

still present around both periods and poverty, especially in small rural communities, and stressed the need for this to be tackled.

### ***Where respondents are from:***

- Around a quarter of respondents (24%) indicated they lived in a remote location.
- Most respondents came from Inverness and its surrounding area (28%). 19% came from Caithness, 13% Wester Ross and 10% from Dingwall and the Black Isle.
- There were fewer respondents from other areas, and especially from Badenoch & Strathspey (3%), Nairn (2%) and Skye (2%).
- 10% of respondents did not provide postcodes and 4% of postcodes were out with the Highland Council area.

### ***Representative communities***

In order to ensure we heard the views of a broad section of the community, we asked respondents to tell us a little more about themselves:

- Most respondents were themselves users of period products (69%) and about a third of them were a partner or family member of someone using period products (32%).
- A number of respondents (21%) no longer needed period products themselves but wanted to provide their views.
- About a fifth of respondents (19%) declared being on a low income.
- Most respondents (44%) were aged between 35-49, 23% were aged 50-64, and 18% aged 25-34. Only 5% of responses were from people aged 18-24 and only 3% of respondents under 18.
- Most respondents identified as being from a 'white' ethnic background (92%),
- Some samples were small (although significant in terms of representation), suggesting more engagement with certain groups is required, for example: Gypsy-traveller communities; Transgender, non-binary and intersex individuals; People having experienced homelessness; Care-experienced individuals.

### **School Provision and proposed consultation**

Period products have been provided free of charge in Highland schools since 2018-2019 and consultation was carried out with pupils at that time. Further engagement with pupils and teachers will be carried out during 2022-23 to find out how current arrangements are working and to inform any action taken to improve provision.

## **Key messages from the community consultation survey**

A range of options will be needed to meet individual and community requirements in Highland. The key messages provided by those who responded to the consultation included:

- A lack of awareness of the initiative was identified by most respondents as potentially the biggest barrier to accessing period products.
- Disposable pads and tampons were the most popular period products, but there was also a significant interest in reusable period products.
- Health settings (e.g. pharmacies, GP surgeries) were seen to be preferred venues to pick up free period products from. Leisure and community centres, and food banks were also very popular.
- The option of a home delivery service was also popular among respondents.
- Respondents expressed a preference for collecting products from discreet locations including toilets within venues.

Having reviewed the feedback from the consultation a number of actions have been agreed to support the development of provision of free period products in Highland and can be found in the Highland Council's Statement on Exercise of Functions.

Link to Highland Council [Statement on Exercise of Functions](#).

Link to Scottish Government [Period Products \(Free Provision\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021: guidance](#)