

16 August 2023



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Equality Policy & Legislation Team
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Ref: Consultation on Free Period Products

To whom it may concern:

Mid Ulster District Council would like to take this opportunity to put forward its views and opinions in relation to the proposals set out in the Consultation on Free Period Products. The Council recognises that the purpose of the consultation is to gather information in relation to the how, where and what of Free Period Products should be made available.

The Council strongly agree that period poverty and inequality contributes to the poor mental health and wellbeing experience of those who are unable to access the basic health essentials of period products.

Each of the consultation questions are examined in turn below:

How Individuals Should be Able to Obtain Period Products Free of Charge

Mid Ulster District Council is fully supportive of people being able to obtain free period products in ways that do not make them feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

Steps should be taken to ensure that there is a level of privacy and discretion associated with how individuals are able to obtain period products free of charge.

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Where Period Products Should be Obtainable Free of Charge

The Council is supportive of the implementation of cost-effective means of obtaining period products free of charge and would recommend that a range of locations with high levels of footfall are considered as the primary locations for obtaining period products free of charge.

In particular, schools, youth clubs, further education venues should be provided with the ability to provide period products. The outputs of the Period Dignity pilot project should be able to provide evidence of where levels of demand are highest, e.g. the 23/24 budget for the Period Dignity pilot shows significantly higher spend allocation to all-girls schools in areas of high levels of economic deprivation than in EOTAS or all-boys schools.

Public buildings and local community venues should also be provided with the ability and resources to provide period products free of charge. In relation to Council services this is particularly important in relation to buildings that provide registration services. Registration services attract the attendance of women from all socioeconomic backgrounds who have recently experienced childbirth and as such will generally require post-partum period products.

In addition, tourism, leisure and arts council services attract service users from a wide age range and socio-economic backgrounds. Participation in leisure activities can be directly impacted upon by lack of access to appropriate types of period products. As such being able to obtain period products free of charge has the potential to address a participation barrier for women and girls.

The introduction of the suggested online ordering of products and then picking them up from a set place could alleviate some issues for rural dwellers, but only in areas where transport and broadband is available, accessible and affordable.

What Types of Period Products Should be Obtainable Free of Charge

The Council would be in a favour of a wide range of products being obtainable free of charge. Demand for products may differ depending on where they are being accessed.

Reusable period products are better for the environment than single use products, which often contain large amounts of plastic. Rather than single use products going to landfill reusing period products is better for the environment and can also save people money on period products in the longer term.

In conclusion, the Council welcome that this consultation is accompanied by Equality Screening document that details the particular impacts upon section 75 groups such as women and girls. The Council also welcomes that the rural needs implications for

accessing period products free of charge is also documented via the associated Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Dominic Molloy

Mid Ulster District Council Chair

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