

Period Poverty Proposal

Report by John Blair, Director Resources and Mary Smith, Director Education Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

To provide a costed proposal for the Council to implement the provision of free sanitary products for school pupils across Midlothian.

2 Background

2.1 Council Meeting 29 August 2017

At this meeting the Council approved the following motion:

“Midlothian Council congratulates Monica Lennon MSP, Shadow Minister for Inequality, on her work raising awareness of and campaigning against period poverty; agrees that the Council will respond positively to her consultation and calls on the Scottish Government to fully fund any outcomes from that consultation.

Council supports in principal the provision of free sanitary products for pupils and asks the Director of Resources to prepare a detailed report on the costs involved.”

2.2 Context

The issue of period poverty is currently being considered by a number of Scottish local authorities and it is proposed that the Council puts arrangements in place across the six High Schools, the relevant Primary Schools and Saltersgate School to provide free access to sanitary products for pupils.

Presently school office or guidance teachers are able to supply sanitary products, if requested by pupils at no cost to the pupil.

Furthermore the draft Council response to the government consultation is appended to this report for consideration by Council.

3.0 Proposed Scheme

3.1 In support of the Council motion it is proposed that the provision of free sanitary products be put in place at the following locations during the Autumn term prior to Christmas break.

- Beeslack Community High School
- Dalkeith High School
- Lasswade High School
- Newbattle Community High school
- Penicuik High School
- St Davids RC High School
- Saltersgate School

In addition it is proposed to establish arrangements with the Primary Schools where appropriate.

3.2 Best Practice and Guidance

The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 is the main underpinning for standards in school toilets in Scotland. These regulations set out ratios of children to toilets and toilets to washbasins, requires locks on the toilet doors, and that there should be a place to dispose of sanitary towels from Primary four – but any provision of sanitary products themselves is absent.

In terms of specific issues relating to school toilet provision currently there is no definitive Scottish guidance, however the Welsh government has provided the guidance entitled School Toilets: Good Practice for Schools in Wales, which has been used as a basis for costing this proposal.

Sanitary machines are placed in all age appropriate girls' toilets (aged 8 or over) where sanitary towels/tampons can be obtained unobtrusively without having to ask an adult.

- Secondary schools: each set of toilets (with two or more toilet cubicles) for girls has a sanitary dispenser.
- Primary schools: a minimum of one set of toilets for girls aged eight and over has a sanitary dispenser.
- All girls are regularly informed (including at the beginning of every school year) that sanitary products are available to obtain in a discreet manner (and from named females) in an emergency at all times.
- Disposal bags or toilet paper are available in cubicles for girls to wrap used sanitary products in.
- Sanitary disposal units are available in all age-appropriate female toilets within individual cubicles. Ordinary bins are not sufficient.
- Sanitary disposal units are emptied sufficiently often, by a registered company, to prevent them from becoming overfull or malodorous.

This guidance has been used to provide the assumptions to underpin the costs of implementing the Council motion.

4.0 Report Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

Taking cognisance of the intention of the Council motion the cost of the proposal comprises two distinct elements.

- a) The provision of sanitary products to Midlothian School pupils.
- b) The provision of sanitary dispensing machines within school premises.

4.2 Provision of Sanitary Products

In the Ending Period Poverty Bill there are costings which have been applied to the Midlothian female school population on a pro rata basis as set out in the table below.

	Scotland	Midlothian
Estimated number of menstruating pupils	100,000	1,700
Lower Estimated Cost	£360,000	£6,000
Higher Estimated Cost	£450,000	£7,500

Accordingly it is estimated that the indicative annual cost of providing free sanitary products based on Scotland wide assumptions as they apply to Midlothian is approximately £7,500 per annum.

This estimate is based on a number of assumptions most critically the take up level of free sanitary products which has been estimated at 50% and may vary.

Dispensing Sanitary Machines

The estimated maximum cost of providing sanitary dispensing machines and associated servicing is estimated at £5,000 per annum.

Accordingly it is anticipated that should the Council wish to adopt the guidance as set out in section 3.2 the costs to the Council amount to a maximum of £5000 per annum which is additional to the estimated direct costs of providing free sanitary protection.

Therefore it is proposed that the Council write to the Scottish Government advising of the overall cost and to seek to secure extra additional funding of £12,500 based on estimated costs.

4.3 Risk

Should the Council not support the proposals as set out in this report there is a possibility that negative reputational criticism could be received when compared to other public sector bodies who have introduced a scheme.

4.4 Policy

Single Midlothian plan and Business Transformation themes addressed in this report.

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- X Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

4.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The provision of free sanitary products will assist in ensuring that pupils do not have the opportunity to miss school and assist with education.

4.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This proposal will in part contribute to increasing access to education and potentially improve attendance.

4.7 Involving Communities and other stakeholders

This proposal has been developed in conjunction with colleagues within the Education Directorate.

4.8 Ensuring Equalities

This proposal is open to all female pupils irrespective of age, ~~and~~ disability, race, religion or belief or socio economic status.

4.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

This proposal is consistent with the Councils focus on improving education achievement levels.

4.9 IT Issues

There are no direct IT issues arising from this report.

5 Recommendations

Council are invited to consider the proposal to provide free sanitary products to Midlothian pupils and specifically:

- a) Note the additional recurring revenue cost of £7,500 per annum for the provision of sanitary protection.
- b) Note the maximum recurring revenue cost of £5,000 per annum for the provision of dispensing machines across the school estate.
- c) Note the planned timescale for introduction of free sanitary products.
- d) Note the draft response to the consultation as appended to this report.
- e) Instruct the Director Resources to write to Scottish Government via COSLA to seek additional funding.
- f) Instruct the Director Resources to monitor the cost of the provision of free sanitary products.

Date: October 2017

Report Contact:

Name Tel

Background Papers

QUESTIONS
ABOUT YOU

1. Are you responding as:

- ☐ an individual – in which case go to Q2A
☒ on behalf of an organisation? – in which case go to Q2B

2A. Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose “Member of the public”.)

- ☒ Politician (MSP/MP/Peer/MEP/Councillor)
☐ Professional with experience in a relevant subject
☐ Academic with expertise in a relevant subject
☐ Student (at school, college or university)
☐ Other member of the public

2B. Please select the category which best describes your organisation:

- ☐ Public sector body (Scottish/UK Government or agency, local authority, NDPB)
☐ School, college or university
☐ Commercial organisation (company, business)
☐ Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)
☐ Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, nonprofit)
☐ Other (e.g. clubs, local groups, groups of individuals, etc.)

3. Please choose one of the following:

- ☒ I am content for this response to be attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your name or the name of your organisation as you wish it to be published:

Name: MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL

- ☐ I would like this response to be anonymous (the response may be published, but no name)
☐ I would like this response to be confidential (no part of the response to be published)

4. Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. (Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. We will not publish these details.)

Contact details:

Sandra.wright@midlothian.gov.uk

YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL

Aim and approach

1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

- ☒ Fully supportive
☐ Partially supportive
☐ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
☐ Partially opposed
☐ Fully opposed
☐ Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response.
Universal provision of sanitary products

2. Do you think a universal, card-based system (modelled on the C-card system for free condoms) would be an effective means of providing sanitary products for free to those who need them?

- ☒ Yes
☐ Unsure
☐ No

Please explain the reasons for your response.

3. Which of the following best expresses your view in relation to a cardbased system?

- ☐ The card should be available to anyone; card-holders should have unlimited access to free sanitary products
☐ The card should be available to anyone; its use should be restricted (e.g. by limiting the number of products that may be claimed each month)
☐ The card should be available only to those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits; card-holders should have unlimited access to free sanitary products
☒ The card should be available only to those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits; its use should be restricted (e.g. by limiting the number of products that may be claimed each month)
☐ There is no need for a card scheme
☐ Other (please specify)

Please explain the reasons for your response.

4. Do you have a view on which locations would be most suitable for dispensing free sanitary products (e.g. GP surgeries, pharmacies, community centres, health clinics)?

Schools, colleges and universities

5. Do you agree that there should be specific obligations on schools, colleges and universities to make sanitary products available for free

(via dispensers in toilets)?

- ☒ Yes
☐ Unsure
☐ No

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Personal experience (questions 6 and 7 are for individual respondents only)

6. Have you ever struggled to access or afford sanitary products during menstruation? (e.g. financial barriers, unexpected circumstances, health issues)

- ☐ Yes, frequently
☐ Yes, occasionally
☐ No
☐ Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products
☐ I prefer not to say

Please explain or give an example of your experience if you feel able to do so.

7. If sanitary products were available for free, which of the following would apply to you?

- ☐ I would expect to claim free products regularly
☐ I would expect to claim free products occasionally
☐ I would not expect to claim free products
☐ Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products
☐ I prefer not to say

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Financial implications

8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

(a) Government and the public sector (e.g. local authorities, the NHS)

- ☐ Significant increase in cost
☒ Some increase in cost
☐ Broadly cost-neutral
☐ Some reduction in cost
☐ Significant reduction in cost
☐ Unsure

(b) Colleges and universities


- ☐ Significant increase in cost
☐ Some increase in cost
☐ Broadly cost-neutral

- ☐ Some reduction in cost
☐ Significant reduction in cost
☐ Unsure
 (c) Businesses (including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)
☐ Significant increase in cost
☐ Some increase in cost
☐ Broadly cost-neutral
☐ Some reduction in cost
☐ Significant reduction in cost
☐ Unsure
 (d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)
☐ Significant increase in cost
☐ Some increase in cost
☐ Broadly cost-neutral
☐ Some reduction in cost
☐ Significant reduction in cost
☐ Unsure
 Please explain the reasons for your response.

9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

Equalities

10. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation

-  Positive
☐ Slightly positive
☐ Neutral (neither positive nor negative)
☐ Slightly negative
☐ Negative
☐ Unsure
 Please explain the reasons for your response.

11. In what ways could any negative impact of the Bill on equality be minimised or avoided?

12. Do you consider that the proposed bill can be delivered sustainably, i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes
 No
 Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response.

General

13. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION

You are invited to respond to this consultation *by 9th December 2017* answering the questions in the consultation and *by* adding any other comments that you consider appropriate.

Format of responses

You are encouraged to submit your response via an online survey (Smart Survey) if possible, as this is quicker and more efficient both for you and the Parliament. However, if you do not have online access, or prefer not to use Smart Survey, you may also respond by e-mail or in hard copy.

Online survey

To respond via Smart Survey, please follow this link: <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EndingPeriodPoverty/>

The platform for the online survey is Smart Survey, a third party online survey system enabling the SPCB to collect responses to MSP consultations. Smart Survey is based in the UK and is subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. Any information you send in response to this consultation (including personal data and sensitive personal data) will be seen by the MSP progressing the Bill and by specified *staff* in NGBU, and may be added manually to Smart Survey.

Further information on the handling of your data can be found in the Privacy Notice, which is available either via the Smart Survey link above, or directly from this link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy>

Electronic or hard copy submissions

If possible, please submit your response electronically – preferably in MS Word document. Please keep formatting of this document to a minimum, and avoid including any personal data other than your name (or the name of the group or organisation on whose behalf you are responding).

Any additional personal data (e.g. contact details) should be provided in the covering e-mail (or a covering letter).

Please make clear whether you are responding as an individual (in a personal capacity) or on behalf of a group or organisation. If you are responding as an

individual, you may wish to explain briefly what relevant expertise or experience you have. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, you may wish to explain the role of that organisation and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (for example, whether it reflects an established policy or was voted on by members).