

# **Department of Education**

## **Guidance to ‘Specified Public Service Bodies’**

**on the**

## **Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**May 2024**

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# Introduction and Background

1. This Guidance is issued by the Department of Education (DE) in accordance with its statutory requirements under Section 5 of the [Period Products \(Free Provision\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#), (the Act).
2. The Guidance applies to Specified Public Service Bodies (SPSBs) in The Period Products (Department of Education Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (DE's Regulations).
3. This Guidance provides advice to SPSBs on compliance with their duties under sections 2, 3 and 6 of the Act.
4. As well as listing SPSBs, DE's Regulations provide 'descriptions of persons and premises' for the purposes of the Act.
5. The main duty for a SPSB under the Act is to *'ensure that period products are obtainable free of charge ..... by persons in its premises who need to use them'*.
6. **In short, SPSBs must:**
  - a. **consult with 'product users' on the arrangements to provide free period products;**
  - b. **establish and maintain arrangements to provide free period products;**
  - c. **publicise the availability of the free products; and**
  - d. **publish a statement on the arrangements that have been established.**
7. Provision required under the Act is for period products which is defined as 'manufactured articles the purpose of which is to absorb or collect menstrual flow'.
8. The Act sets out 'Particular Requirements' which must be met, and these are explained in the Guidance.

9. DE has specified the following SPSBs in its Regulations made under s.2 (1) of the Act:

**Table 1**

	<b>Specified Public Service Body</b>	<b>Descriptions of Premises</b>	<b>Descriptions of persons in premises</b>
(a) (i)	The Education Authority (EA), as manager of controlled schools	All buildings comprising school premises	(i) pupils (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(a) (ii)	The EA, in respect of statutory youth settings	EA owned or leased premises used as statutory youth settings	(i) young people (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(a) (iii)	The EA, in respect of education other than at school settings	EA owned or leased premises used as education other than at school settings	(i) pupils (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(a) (iv)	The EA, in respect of its administrative accommodation	EA administrative accommodation	(i) staff (ii) visitors
(b)	Managers of voluntary schools	All buildings comprising school premises	(i) pupils (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(c)	Managers of grant-maintained integrated schools	All buildings comprising school premises	(i) pupils (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(d)	Managers of independent schools	All buildings comprising school premises	(i) pupils (ii) staff (iii) visitors
(e)	CCMS	CCMS administrative accommodation	(i) staff (ii) visitors
(f)	GTCNI	GTCNI administrative accommodation	(i) staff (ii) visitors
(g)	NICCEA	NICCEA administrative accommodation	(i) staff (ii) visitors

10. The Regulations and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum [can be accessed here.](#)

11. Under s(5) of the Act, Departments must issue Guidance to SPSBs in relation to their duties under the Act. Key points to note are that:

- a. The Act requires that the Guidance is issued as soon as practicable after first specifying the SPSBs in Regulations.
- b. Departments must consult with SPSBs before the Guidance is first issued.
- c. DE carried out a 4-week consultation on this Guidance between 16/04/24 and 15/05/24.

12. **SPSBs must ensure that the requirements under both the Act and DE's Regulations are met, when establishing their arrangements for providing free period products.**

## SECTION A - Overarching Principles

13. There are several overarching principles which apply to all Department of Education (DE) Specified Public Service Bodies (SPSBs) in carrying out their duties under the Act. These are covered here, in Section A.

### A1. Meeting Individual Need

14. **Under section 2 of the Act, sufficient free period products must be obtainable to meet the needs of ‘persons on the premises’ of SPSBs, while they are on the premises.** This means that there is no legal requirement to provide products to take home or use elsewhere. See Section B however for clarification around take-home provision for pupils in schools.
15. **DE’s Regulations ensure that products need only be provided for those set out in the third column of Table 1 above i.e.:**
- a. **Pupils in schools and EA EOTAS settings;**
  - b. **Young people in EA statutory youth settings; and**
  - c. **Staff and visitors on all premises<sup>1</sup>.**
16. This minor narrowing of scope, via DE’s Regulations, is intended to ensure that members of the public are not entitled to enter the premises of DE’s SPSBs to obtain free period products. This is particularly important for the safeguarding of children and young people.
17. There should be no judgement as to ‘need’. This means that individuals don’t need a reason to access free period products, over and above the fact that they menstruate, however an individual’s need (while on the premises of an SPSB) could vary considerably, due to the reason for the need arising, including, for example:
- a. A period starting unexpectedly or forgetting to bring products from home; and/or
  - b. Higher than average need due to a medical condition.
18. An individual must be able to access sufficient products to meet their needs while on the premises and the overarching principles set out in this Guidance apply, regardless of how the need arises. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that the frequency of restocking products is sufficient to meet demand.
19. **It is important to note that the Act requires that arrangements must provide for period products to be always obtainable (free of charge) when the SPSB’s premises are in use, whether or not they are in use by the public.**

### A2. Arrangements for providing Free Period Products

20. **SPSBs will meet their duties under the Act by establishing and maintaining arrangements for making period products obtainable for free. Period products is defined as ‘manufactured articles the purpose of which is to absorb or collect menstrual flow’.**

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<sup>1</sup> In DE’s Regulations, ‘staff’ means employees or agency workers. Visitors means people attending meetings or events or providing a function/service on the premises.

SPSBs have flexibility as to how they do this however, the arrangements put in place must meet ‘Particular Requirements’ (set out in A3 below), and bodies must consult with relevant people before putting their arrangements in place (see A4 ‘The Statutory Requirement to consult with Product Users and the Requirements of Consultation’). Note that the Act requires that free products must be available at all times on the premises of SPSBs.

21. **Having had regard to this Guidance and having consulted with product users, all SPSBs must produce a ‘Statement on Arrangements’ that summarises the arrangements that will be put in place to provide free period products, meeting the ‘Particular Requirements’ set out under the next section (A3).**
22. A suggested template for Statements on Arrangements is provided at [Annex C1](#), however SPSBs are not required to use the template, providing their arrangements have had regard to this Guidance.
23. Note that a ‘Statement on Arrangements’ is distinct from individual school period dignity policy documents although one may well inform the other. Individual schools that are *also* SPSBs (i.e. voluntary schools, grant maintained integrated schools and independent schools) may of course combine or link these two documents if they wish.
24. SPSBs’ arrangements can secure provision of period products as the body sees fit, provided it has had regard to its consultation and this Guidance, especially Guidance on the ‘Particular Requirements’ of the Act. See Section A3.
25. **Arrangements must specify the locations of free products, and this must include locations in premises across all sites of a SPSB. While the Act does not require products to be made available in more than one location at each site, it does require that products be available reasonably easily, protecting the dignity and confidentiality of product users.**
26. **It is important to note however that DE’s Regulations require that period products be available in all buildings comprising school premises (see Section B).**
27. To ensure inclusivity, SPSBs should also consider the range of needs of product users who are likely to be on their premises based on, for example, their religious belief, disability, gender identity, age, and health conditions. These needs should be explored through consultation with product users.

### A3. Particular Requirements

28. **As well as products being available at all times, the Act requires that period products are obtainable reasonably easily, in a way that respects dignity, privacy and confidentiality, and that a reasonable choice of period products be made available, having regard to articles which are reusable.** No definition or explanation of these requirements is provided in the Act and therefore SPSBs may find the Guidance in this section helpful.

#### *Reasonable Ease of Access*

29. **Products must be reasonably easy to access** and SPSBs should have regard to the following list:

- a. Where and how free products can be obtained should be neither complex nor bureaucratic;
- b. As described in the Dignity section below, products should be freely accessible from places where individuals are comfortable doing so without having to ask for them (for example from baskets by sinks and/or in individual toilet cubicles);
- c. There is no requirement to provide products at every possible location at each site of a SPSB. **SPSBs should however consider locations, where period products are to be made available, in the context of the legal requirement for reasonable ease of access, respecting dignity, privacy and confidentiality;**
- d. There is no requirement for SPSBs to provide a full range of products in a single, or every location. For example, an SPSB may decide to provide tampons and towels in toilets but other products, such as reusable period pants, may be made available through a school nurse's office;
- e. Reasonable ease should include ease of physical access for those with physical disabilities or mobility issues;
- f. Rural needs should be taken into consideration when making arrangement for free period products; and
- g. The requirement to publicise availability of the free products (see paragraph 42) is likely to contribute to the products being reasonably easy to obtain.
- h. The practical application of the legislation will be within the control of respective ALBs; however, locations of free products must form part of organisations' consultations with product users (see Section 4A The Statutory Requirement to Consult with Product Users and Requirements of Consultation).

#### *Respecting Dignity, Privacy, and Confidentiality*

30. **Products must be provided in a way which respects the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of individuals obtaining them.** Again, these terms are not defined in the Act.
31. While progress has been made in recent years to tackle the stigma associated with menstruation and period products, people who need to access period products for free may still find this an embarrassing situation and any potential embarrassment must be minimised as much as possible. Therefore, the ways in which, and places where, products are made obtainable must consider the needs and wishes of users in relation to privacy (including, for example, for religious and/or cultural reasons) and avoiding anxiety or embarrassment. One example of avoiding embarrassment may be to consider placing products in sink areas of toilets **and** individual toilet cubicles, as well as placing them in gender neutral toilets.
32. As part of wider work to tackle the stigma around menstruation and period products, SPSBs should balance considerations around privacy with the importance of normalisation and visibility of periods and period products. Offering a dignified response does not necessarily require hiding products away.
33. As a general point, a dignified approach would ensure that products could be easily accessed in a place where individuals are comfortable doing so, as identified through consultation.
34. Individuals having to:
  - a. ask someone for products;
  - b. justify why they need them; and
  - c. justify the amount that is needed;

would not generally be considered a dignified approach.

35. Different arrangements may however be appropriate for different types of free period products. For example, it may be reasonable for product users to have to ask for free reusable products, given the significantly increased cost over single use products.

*Reasonable Choice (and having regard to articles that are reusable)*

36. The type of period product an individual uses is a matter of personal preference. SPSBs must take this into account when deciding which products to make available free of charge in meeting their duty.
37. Within the Act there are key definitions which include:
- a. “period products” means manufactured articles the purpose of which is to absorb or collect menstrual flow; and
  - b. types of period products include tampons, sanitary towels and articles which are reusable.
38. **SPSB must provide for a reasonable choice of different types of period products to be available, having regard to articles which are reusable**, although a full range of products does not need to be provided in every location.
39. Articles which are reusable, such as reusable period pants, are expensive in comparison to single use items. It would therefore be reasonable not to leave such items in unattended locations. SPSBs will need to take available budget into account when making reusable items available to product users.
40. Reasonable choice is not defined in the Act. Based on evidence gathered during its Pilot Scheme, DE considers that SPSBs should, as a minimum, make at least one type of tampon and sanitary towel available, in various absorbencies, ranging from normal to heavy flow.
41. **SPSBs must consult** on the types of products to be made available and should not make assumptions about which products particular individuals may wish to use. SPSBs must take account of consultation responses on this point. For full details on the requirements for SPSBs’ consultations, see Section A4.
42. SPSBs are not obliged to make particular brands of products available, nor every absorbency of a particular type of product, nor provide a full range of products in every location, **however a reasonable choice of products must be available.**

*Publicising the Availability of Free Products by SPSBs*

43. **SPSBs must publicise availability of free period products to product users in a way that they see fit, however dignity, privacy and confidentiality must be respected. Publication must include:**
- a. **the availability of period products;**
  - b. **that period products are obtainable free of charge; and**
  - c. **the arrangements for obtaining those period products free of charge, including how where and when products may be obtained.**

44. An SPSB may publicise the availability of free products in any way it sees fit, providing dignity, privacy and confidentiality are respected and a-c above are included in the publication. Publication could for example be through posters, on inter/intranet sites, notice boards, newsletters etc. SPSBs should give due consideration to accessibility of their publications.
45. The Act does not specify how frequently publication of availability of free period products should be carried out. Ongoing publication of up-to-date arrangements would however support reasonable ease of access. This should be reasonably easy to achieve through websites and posters, for example.

#### *Consideration of the Environmental Impact of Single Use Period Products*

46. There is growing interest in reusable period products, which have the potential to reduce the environmental impact of single use products.
47. **The Act requires that arrangements must provide for a reasonable choice of different types of period products to be obtainable, having regard to articles which are reusable.**
48. Articles which are reusable might include, for example, menstrual cups and reusable period pants. See section B however, which sets out considerations for inclusion of these products, in the arrangements of DE's SPSBs, when making provision for children and young people.
49. SPSBs must therefore consider including reusable period products in their arrangements, for those who wish to use those types of products. There should however be no pressure applied to people who do not wish to use reusable products.
50. Articles which are reusable, such as reusable period pants, are expensive in comparison to single use items. SPSBs will need to take available budget into account when making reusable items available to product users.
51. The environmental impact of single use products can also be reduced through several measures which are not referenced in the Act:
  - a. Opting for plastic free options;
  - b. Making fewer orders per year (reducing transport emissions);
  - c. Taking country of manufacture into account when sourcing products;
  - d. Providing information to product users on correct disposal of period products e.g. providing signage to read:

*'To help the environment, remember to dispose of tampons, applicator tubes and wrappers in a waste bin. Please do not flush tampons, applicator tubes or wrappers.'*

#### A4. The Statutory Requirement to Consult with Product Users and Requirements of Consultation

52. **Before preparing a written statement on their arrangements (see A5), each SPSB:**
  - a. **must consult with product users (as defined in the Act<sup>2</sup>), who are likely to be on their premises, as the SPSB thinks appropriate;**
  - b. **may consult any other body or person the SPSB thinks appropriate,**
  - c. **must include consultation on—**

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<sup>2</sup> "product users" means persons who need to use period products, or may need to use period products in the future s6(8)

- i. **ways in which product users ought to be able to obtain period products free of charge;**
  - ii. **the locations in the SPSB's premises in which period products ought to be obtainable free of charge; and**
  - iii. **the types of period products which ought to be obtainable free of charge.**
  
- 53. **The consultation to be carried out by SPSBs is a statutory requirement, and it is therefore imperative that it be properly carried out.** This means undertaking the consultation when arrangements are at a formative stage; with clear proposals and/or options for consultees to consider and respond to. Consultation periods should be sufficient to allow consultees to fully consider and submit a response. There is no set period for a statutory consultation and an appropriate period is likely to vary between SPSBs. SPSBs may find [Equality Commission Northern Ireland's Guidance on consultation](#) helpful in this regard.
  
- 54. **DE's SPSBs must consult with those set out in column 3 of table 1 on page 4. The definition of product user in the Act extends to people who may need to use the products in the future.** For example:
  - a. in school settings, it would be appropriate to consult with younger pupils who have not stated their period yet.
  - b. All settings are likely to have visitors. It would be challenging to consult with every potential visitor to a setting. DE would therefore recommend that SPSBs identify a small focus group of regular visitors to their premises.
  
- 55. An SPSB may approach this consultation as it sees fit, to best establish a good picture of the range of needs. This could for example be through a combination of confidential surveys and focus groups.
  
- 56. Consultees should be asked about ways in which products ought to be obtainable free of charge. For example in individual toilet cubicles, at shared sinks, from a school nurse etc.
  
- 57. **The SPSBs' consultations must have regard to—**
  - a. **the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users; and**
  - b. **articles which are reusable.**
  
- 58. The Act does not define dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users however these terms are discussed earlier in this Guidance (see paragraphs 30-36). Articles which are reusable are discussed at paragraph 45-48.

#### A5. [Written Statement on Arrangements](#)

- 59. **An SPSB must, as soon as reasonably practicable after Guidance is first published by its corresponding Department, prepare a 'Written Statement on its Arrangements in relation to provision of free period products in its premises.** It may also prepare a Written Statement on its Arrangements at any other time.
  
- 60. Note that a 'Statement on Arrangements' is distinct from individual school period dignity policy documents. CCEA has however updated its Period Dignity School Policy Template so that it can also be used as a Written Statement on Arrangements. See Annex C2.

61. **The written statement must, as a minimum, describe/include—**
- a. **the consultation conducted by the SPSB;**
  - b. **the arrangements to be put in place as a result of consultation;**
  - c. **how, in developing those arrangements, the SPSB has had regard to—**
    - i. **the guidance provided by its Department as it relates to that body; and**
    - ii. **the consultation conducted by the SPSB (including how it met the consultation requirements set out in Section A4 above.**
62. **The statement should include a list of sites (including addresses), along with details of locations where products will be available on those sites.**
63. SPSBs may find the template at Annex C1 helpful in developing their Statements on Arrangements. Schools who are also SPSBs and wish to develop/update a Period Dignity School Policy, can use the template at Annex C2.
64. **The SPSB should publish its Statement on Arrangements to provide free period products in such ways as it thinks appropriate.** For example, this may be on SPSBs internet or intranet site. SPSBs should ensure their written statement on arrangements are accessible to all.
65. **“Product users” means people who need to use period products, or may need to use period products in the future,** for example younger pupils in schools who have not started to have periods yet.

#### A6. (Departments’) Publicising of Availability of Free Period Products

66. **Departments are required under the Act to publish information about the locations where free period products are available within a year of making Regulations and at least on an annual basis thereafter.** SPSBs should therefore be aware that DE will ask SPSBs to provide it with a copy of their Statements on Arrangements on an annual basis.
67. Note that the duty for Departments to publicise availability of free period products to product users is a distinct and different duty to the SPSBs’ duty to publish their written Statements on Arrangements.

#### A7. Safety Considerations

68. The Act does not require Departments to include safety considerations in Guidance however DE considers it is important to do so, given the rare but serious condition called Toxic Shock Syndrome, associated with tampon use. See more information at Annex A and at [www.tssis.com](http://www.tssis.com).
69. SPSBs can reduce risk by including the following in their procedures/arrangements:
- a. Suitable storage of products so that they don’t become damaged;
  - b. Good stock management and rotation so products (in particular tampons) do not exceed their expiry date;
  - c. Where possible, dispensing individual items from their original outer packaging;
  - d. Ensuring users have access to safety instructions for use, particularly if SPSBs are providing products ‘loose’;
  - e. Stocking products suitable for the age/development stage of product users (see section B on products for children and young people).

70. Schools may find [Unit 4 of CCEA's Post Primary Period Dignity resources](#) helpful as regards product safety. Further materials may be made available in the future.
71. Any risks identified should be considered and managed using the SPSB's appropriate procedures and processes.

#### A8. Value for Money (Procurement of Products) and Operational Considerations

72. Whilst there is no requirement in the Act for SPSBs to have regard to Value for Money, or for Departments to provide guidance on this issue, SPSBs will however be aware of the important overarching requirement to ensure value for money in their spending. [See Managing Public Money NI.](#)
73. The Education Authority is seeking to extend its current period products contract and SPSBs may wish to avail of that contract and any future contracts awarded by EA.
74. The existing contract provides a range of branded, unbranded and environmentally friendly tampons and towels, in various absorbencies. Settings can also purchase wet wipes, disposable bags and reusable period pants.
75. A copy of the current contract schedule for period products is available on [EA Procure](#). You can request login details by emailing [eaprocur@eani.org.uk](mailto:eaprocur@eani.org.uk).
76. It may however be the case that value for money could be better achieved through local arrangements, such as existing contractual arrangements/relationships or establishing new local washroom contracts. In these circumstances, SPSBs must refer to their own internal procurement guidelines when purchasing period products.
77. There is nothing in the Act that prevents SPSBs from making arrangements through voluntary organisations for the provision of free period products however, supply must be reliable to ensure requirements under the Act are met: i.e.: allow for sufficient products, available at all times, reasonable choice, reasonable ease of access, protecting dignity and confidentiality etc.

#### A9. Timescales to have Arrangements in Place

78. DE will publish a final version of this Guidance in May 2024. SPSBs must, as soon as reasonably practicable after the Guidance is published, publish a Written Statement on Arrangements to be put in place.
79. DE's consultation on this Guidance provided the following timetable, which was considered by DE as reasonably practicable to allow sufficient consultation with product users and to develop Written Statements on Arrangements:

SPSBs Statutory Consultation with product users	SPSBs prepare to consult - early May 2024
	SPSBs consult with product users (and others if applicable) - Mid May/June 2024
	SPSBs consider consultation responses - June/July 2024
SPSBs Written Statements on Arrangements	SPSBs develop Written Statements on Arrangements - July/August 2024
	SPSBs publish Written Statements on Arrangements - mid August 2024

80. Some SPSBs indicated in their consultation responses that the timetable was not reasonably practicable. Those SPSBs should make progress as swiftly as possible to meet their legal duties under the Act and seek support from DE if required.

#### A 10. Funding Arrangements

81. DE will bid for required funding on behalf of SPSBs (excluding Independent Schools) at the appropriate time.
82. DE will base its overall cost estimates on numbers of females (pupils, young people and staff) likely to be menstruating, based on their age.
83. Budgets, if made available, will be allocated to settings based on the number of females that are likely to be menstruating. The Education Authority will be responsible for the allocation of individual budgets to settings, and further communication on this process will be provided in due course.

# SECTION B - Additional Guidance Specific to School, EOTAS and Statutory Youth Settings

## B1. General Points for School, EOTAS and Youth Settings

84. The principles in Section A apply to all settings captured in DE's Regulations and are relevant to all product users. This section addresses specific or additional considerations when making provision, especially for children and young people, in schools, EA education other than a school (EOTAS) and statutory youth settings.
85. Arrangements for the provision of free period products must meet the requirements of the Act in all settings/all types of school and the requirements of the Act are explained in detail in this Guidance document.

## B2. Locations/Buildings

86. **The Act requires that provision be made at all sites of a SPSB. DE's Regulations clarify this provision by stating that products must be available in all buildings comprising school premises.** Therefore, period products should be available in all school buildings (not individual classrooms) used for education and non-educational purposes. For example, buildings comprising science labs, off site sports facilities and detached canteen buildings, providing these are school premises, should all have free period products available for use on the premises.
87. It may be the case that it is simply not practical or beneficial to provide products in some buildings (e.g. off-site stores without toilets) however this must be explored and agreed through the **consultation process**, rather than SPSBs making assumptions and judgements about the locations from which product users wish to access free period products.
88. Many schools who have engaged with the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme have actively involved pupils in the monitoring of the scheme and restocking of products e.g. by appointing Period Dignity prefects or Period Dignity committees. Schools may find this approach useful in ensuring there is a reasonable choice of free period products available in all buildings at all times.
89. Some schools have reported misuse of period products provided under the period dignity pilot scheme. Organisations have a degree of flexibility in their arrangements for providing free period products under the new legislation, providing the requirements of the Act are met (see Section A3 – pg 8).
90. It is important to note that the Act **requires** that products be reasonably easy to access, and that dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users must be respected. Organisations are required under the Act to consult with product users on the arrangements and their Written Statements on Arrangements must include information on how the arrangements have had regard to the consultation carried out and to DE's Guidance document.

### B3. Additional Product Considerations for Children and Young People

91. It is important to ensure that period products provided are suitable for the age and developmental stage of product users, for example, tampons may not be suitable for primary school age children and some pupils attending special schools. In these cases, a range of sanitary towels in different absorbencies, may be the most appropriate products to provide. Reusable items such as period pants may also be suitable, setting budget permitting.
92. Schools, EA EOTAS settings and EA Youth Settings, choosing to make tampons available to children and young people, should be aware of their association with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). TSS is a rare but very serious illness that can develop rapidly. Symptoms of TSS include a sudden high fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle aches, a sunburn-like rash, a sore throat, dizziness and/or fainting. More information can be found at annex A and at <https://www.tssis.com/>.
93. **The Act requires SPSBs to have regard to items which are reusable.** While re-usable period pants would be suitable for children and young people in all settings, care should be taken when considering providing menstrual cups because:
  - a. These items are currently unregulated in the UK;
  - b. It is common for manufacturers to recommend seeking medical advice before adolescents make use of these products;
  - c. These products may need rinsing during the day which may deem them unsuitable for use in certain settings, especially where sinks are communal; and
  - d. Hygiene risks of rinsing these items during the day also need to be considered (e.g. hazard presented by spilt blood).
94. Note that the Act does not require provision of other 'essential' items such as wet wipes, disposal bags and spare pants and tights. Wet wipes and bags are however available for purchase under the existing EA contract. DE and EA are considering options around provision for free pants and tights.

### B4. Consultation for Provision for Children and Young People

95. **We stated in Section A that SPSBs are:**
  - a. **Required to consult with product users who are likely to be in their premises, as the SPSB thinks appropriate; and**
  - b. **may consult any other body or person the SPSB thinks appropriate.**
96. **'Product users' includes people who may need to use period products on the premises in the future.** For example, younger pupils in special schools and primary schools who haven't started having periods but are likely to menstruate in the future.
97. Primary schools and special schools may wish to take a simple, fact-based approach to consulting with their pupils. This could be done verbally, for example during a brief lesson on periods, or in a focus group. There are excellent primary school [Period Dignity Educational](#)

[Resources](#) on CCEA's Website which may be helpful and SEN resources will be uploaded soon.

98. SPSBs can also consult with other people as they see fit. When making provision for children and young people, SPSBs may wish to consider including Boards of Governors and parents/guardians in the consultation process.

#### B5. Take Home Provision for Pupils in Schools/School Trips

99. The Pilot Scheme to Address Period Dignity in Schools included a certain degree of 'take home' provision for pupils who needed it. Section 2 of The Act however only requires that provision be made to meet needs while on the premises.
100. Universal take home provision is however now available to all citizens, [through an Executive Office scheme, delivered through all libraries in Northern Ireland](#).
101. Under the Act, section 2 provision is to be sufficient for use on the premises however in practice, if products are reasonably easy to access (a requirement of the Act) then pupils should be able to take sufficient products with them on day trips and sports trips etc. Schools should bear this mind when outlining the operation of the scheme to pupils, parents and staff.

#### B6. Educational Resources

102. Period dignity/period poverty refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to manage a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods.
103. Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.
104. Period poverty generally refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products. Plan International describes what it calls a toxic trio of:
  - the cost of sanitary products;
  - a lack of education about periods; and,
  - shame, stigma and taboo.
105. Promoting period dignity and tackling period poverty helps learners to reach their potential and supports confident attendance at school.
106. As part of the Pilot Scheme to Address Period Dignity in Schools, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has produced a suite of educational resources which [can be accessed here](#). Resources are provided for Primary and Post-Primary settings. CCEA is also finalising resources for SEN pupils and educational short films which will be available soon.

#### B7. School Period Dignity Policy - Template

107. The EA/ Individual Schools who are also SPSBs (Voluntary/Maintained, Grant Maintained Integrated and independent schools) may find CCEA's Period Dignity Policy Template at [Annex C2](#) helpful in developing their Written Statement on Arrangements.

The Act does not require the level of detail in CCEA's template, however, it has been updated so that it can double up as a Written Statement on Arrangements. This may be welcomed by schools wishing to do more than the legal minimum in this important policy area.

# Annex A – Toxic Shock Syndrome

SPSBs choosing to make free tampons available on their premises should be aware of their association with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). TSS is a rare but very serious illness that can develop rapidly.

Symptoms of TSS include a sudden high fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle aches, a sunburn-like rash, a sore throat, dizziness and/or fainting, and a severe flu-like feeling. Not all symptoms of TSS may occur simultaneously.

In the unlikely event that symptoms of TSS occur, remove the tampon, consult a doctor urgently and inform them that a tampon has been used. If left untreated, TSS can be fatal.

The following actions will help reduce the very small risk of TSS occurring:

- At night, insert a fresh tampon before going to sleep and replace it first thing in the morning. Change your tampon every 4 to 8 hours or more often if needed.
- Think about switching between tampons and towels, pads/liners from time to time during your period.
- Always wash your hands before and after inserting a tampon.
- Only use tampons during menstruation. Use only one tampon at any time and ensure the removal of the last tampon once menstruation has finished.

If you decide to make tampons available in your setting (not recommended for primary schools), you should ensure good stock rotation, that instructions for use are available and visible, and that tampons are kept in their original packaging, for protection against damage.

Further information is available at <https://www.tssis.com/>.

# Annex B – Links to the Regulations and the Act

You can read the Period Products Regulations and Explanatory Memorandum [here](#)

You can read the Period Product Act [here](#)

## Annex C – Templates

***These templates may be helpful to Specified Public Service Bodies in Developing Their Statements on Arrangements***

### Annex C1 – General Template for Statement on Arrangements

*The Act requires that each Specified Public Service Body (SPSB), as soon as is practicable after Guidance is issued by its corresponding Department, must prepare and publish a 'Statement on Arrangements'.*

*This template may be helpful to SPSBs in developing their Statements on Arrangements which will be requested by DE on an annual basis.*

### Statement on Arrangements for the Provision of Free Period Products

#### Details of Specified Public Service Body

<b>Name of Specified Public Service Body</b>	
<b>Main Address of Specified Public Service Body</b>	
<b>Reference to Annex/hyperlink to full list of sites where free period products are available</b>	

#### Publication Details

<b>Date of first publication</b> <b>Dates of subsequent publication</b>	
<b>Where will this Statement be published?</b> <i>SPSBs may publish this statement in such a way as they think appropriate, such as publication on their websites.</i>	

#### Details of Consultation Carried Out

<b>WHEN was a consultation carried out?</b> <i>Enter start and finish date.</i>	
<b>WHO was consulted?</b>  <i>As a minimum, this should be product users who are likely to be on the premises, as the SPSB thinks</i>	

<p><i>appropriate. 'Product users' includes people who may need to use the products in the future, such as younger pupils who are likely to have periods in the future.</i></p> <p><i>Other people may also be consulted and DE recommends that parents and boards of governors are included for school consultations.</i></p>	
<p><b>HOW did the consultation <u>process</u> establish:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i. the ways in which products users ought to be able to obtain free period products?</b></li> <li><b>ii. the locations in the SPSBs premises in which period products ought to be obtainable free of charge?</b></li> <li><b>iii. the types of period products which ought to be available?</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>HOW has the consultation <u>process</u> had regard to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i. dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users</b></li> <li><b>ii. articles which are reusable</b></li> </ul>	

## The Arrangements

### **What arrangements are being put in place as a result of the consultation?**

*In completing this section, SPSBs must include details on-*

- How the arrangements have had regard to the consultation carried out*
- How the arrangements have had regard to Departmental Guidance, including guidance on reasonable access, respecting dignity, privacy and confidentiality.*
- The products that will be provided, and how these represent a reasonable choice, having regard to items which are reusable (see pages 8-9)*
- How product users will obtain the free products*
- How the arrangements will ensure that products are obtained 'reasonably easily', respecting privacy, dignity and confidentiality (see page 8)*
- Where the products will be located (note different arrangements can be applied to different types of product - see pages 8-9)*
- When the products can be obtained*
- How the SPSB will ensure that products are available at all times on the premises, whether or not the premises are in use by the public.*

## The Arrangements – other details

*Use this box to record anything else about the arrangements not included above. These may be arrangements that are important for a particular SPSB, but there is no legal requirement to include them in the statement (e.g. specific needs of children and young people (see page 16), product safety, operational details including procurement arrangements (see page 13) environmental impact considerations – see pages 10-11)*

## Publicising the Arrangements

### ***How will the SPSB publicise the availability of free products-***

- (i) the availability of free products, in a way that respects dignity, privacy and confidentiality?*
- (ii) that the products are not just available but are free of charge?*
- (iii) the arrangements for obtaining the products, including how, where and when they may be obtained?*

## Annex C2 – Detailed School Policy Template

The Act does not require the detail set out below. CCEA's framework has however been updated so that it can double as a Written Statement on Arrangements, for schools wishing to develop or update a school Period Dignity Policy.

### May 2024 - CCEA Framework for Developing a Period Dignity School Policy Including Written Statement of Arrangements for the Provision of Free Period Products

<b>1. Contextual information</b>	
School details (School name and address)  Date of policy Date of subsequent revisions  Where the policy is to be published (Provide web link if appropriate.)	
<b>Overall school aims and objectives of the Period Dignity policy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the aims of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy support the values, ethos, and moral and ethical framework of the school</li> <li>• How this will inform education and awareness around Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing in the school in an inclusive and equitable manner</li> <li>• How the policy links to the School Development Plan</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the policy takes account of the <a href="#">Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022</a>, available at <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk">www.legislation.gov.uk</a>, and the Department of Education's Guidance for Specified Public Service Bodies or the Education Authority's Guidance for Schools (still to be published)</li> <li>• How the policy takes account of <a href="#">The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006</a>, available at <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk">www.legislation.gov.uk</a></li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to the relevant sections of the <a href="#">UNCRC</a>, available at <a href="http://www.unicef.org.uk">www.unicef.org.uk</a></li> <li>• How the policy contributes to <a href="#">Every School a Good School</a>, <a href="#">Together Towards Improvement</a> and <a href="#">Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy</a>; these documents are available at <a href="http://www.education-ni.gov.uk">www.education-ni.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• How the policy supports the Children and Young People’s Strategy for Northern Ireland</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Consultation process and policy formation</b>	
<p>How the policy was drawn up – who was consulted (for example staff, governors, pupils (including pupils who have not yet started their periods) and parents or carers) and how they were consulted</p>	
<p>How did the consultation process establish:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ways in which product users should be able to obtain free period products;</li> <li>the locations in school premises in which period products should be obtainable free of charge; and</li> <li>the types of period products that should be obtainable.</li> </ol>	
<p>How did the consultation process take into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users; and</li> <li>reusable items.</li> </ol>	
<p>Where the policy will be published and how it will be disseminated – who will receive it and where it can be accessed</p>	
<p>How and when it will be reviewed</p>	
<p>Contact person for comments or feedback on policy</p>	
<p>How the policy is linked to other school policies, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection policy or Safeguarding policy</li> <li>• Pastoral Care Programme</li> <li>• RSE policy</li> <li>• SEN policy</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Behaviour policy</li> <li>• Anti-Bullying policy</li> <li>• Environmental policy</li> <li>• Policy on using outside agencies and vetting arrangements</li> <li>• Confidentiality policy</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Arrangements regarding the provision of free period products</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the arrangements have taken account of the consultation carried out</li> <li>• How the arrangements have taken account of Departmental guidance, including guidance on reasonable choice and respecting dignity, privacy and confidentiality</li> </ul>	
<p>A description of the products that have been provided</p> <p>How these represent a reasonable choice of reusable items</p>	
<p>How environmental considerations have been taken into account when purchasing, using or disposing of period products</p>	
<p>Where, how and when product users can obtain the free products, ensuring that they are obtained 'reasonably easily', respecting dignity, privacy and confidentiality</p>	
<p>How the setting can ensure that the products are available at all times on the premises</p>	
<p>How the arrangements to provide free period products are <b>publicised</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in a way that respects dignity, privacy and confidentiality;</li> <li>• to clarify that the products are free of charge; and</li> <li>• to include where, how and when they may be obtained.</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Key staff and roles and responsibilities</b>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Leader with responsibility for period dignity and the provision of free period products</li> <li>• School Governor with oversight of period dignity and the provision of free period products</li> <li>• Pastoral Care Lead</li> <li>• Period Dignity Key Contact</li> <li>• SENCO</li> <li>• SEN staff</li> <li>• Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Whole-school approach to period dignity</b></p>	
<p><b>i. School ethos</b> How the school supports period dignity through its provision, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visibly promotes the importance of period dignity;</li> <li>• challenges negative views, stereotypes, gender inequality and stigma around periods;</li> <li>• communication about period dignity and related issues is through a whole-school approach;</li> <li>• how the school approaches education for young males on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing; and</li> <li>• education around periods, period dignity and menstrual wellbeing complements the provision of free products.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>ii. Child-centred provision</b> How the school supports pupils through its provision, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral Care – addressing issues that affect young people in relation to periods or period dignity;</li> <li>• how the school provides for learners with SEN;</li> <li>• considering the gender, culture, religion and age range of pupils in the school;</li> <li>• engaging with pupils when determining how and where period products are made available; and</li> <li>• evaluating the impact of the provision.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Period dignity support for pupils</b></p>	
<p>Early consultation carried out with pupils on period dignity</p>	

How free period products are chosen and purchased for use by pupils in the school	
Types of products available for menstruating pupils	
How free period products are made available to those who need them during the school term	
Where period products are stored	
Process and people involved in purchasing, monitoring and replenishing period product supplies, including checking expiry dates	
How pupils are informed about the safe use of period products (for example period hygiene and toxic shock syndrome)	
Identity of staff member(s) who pupils can approach with any issues they may have	
Pupil and parental involvement in period dignity provision	
<b>7. Period dignity and menstrual wellbeing education and learning</b>	
How the teaching about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing supports the school's ethos and reflects the moral and religious principles held by parents or carers and school management	
The objectives of education about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing in the school – what the school is setting out to achieve	
How the school will ensure inclusive learning for <b>all pupils</b> through education about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing	
The management and co-ordination of period dignity/menstrual wellbeing education in the school	
Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education Co-ordinator	
Classroom or teaching arrangements, for example single-gender classes, mixed gender classes or both	

Approaches to learning and teaching – teaching methodologies that will be used	
Provision for learners with SEN	
Period dignity/menstrual wellbeing resources used and criteria for selection (to ensure they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and values framework)	
Strategies for gathering and disseminating the most current and relevant information and related research to inform planning and ensure relevance	
How to deal with sensitive issues and respond to pupils' questions	
Teacher Professional Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who</li> <li>• How</li> <li>• When</li> <li>• How often</li> </ul>	
Monitoring and evaluation of period dignity/menstrual wellbeing education provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools for gathering data</li> <li>• Who will be involved</li> <li>• How often evaluation takes place</li> </ul>	
<b>8. Involving and consulting with parents or carers</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents' or carers' rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Engagement with parents or carers, for example policy consultation, information, support sessions or providing materials for home use</li> <li>• Parents or carers with learning difficulties</li> <li>• Withdrawal from lessons on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing</li> </ul>	
<b>9. Links across the curriculum and to the wider life of the school</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the learning and teaching about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing links across the curriculum to other areas of learning in the different key stages</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How elements of the wider pastoral programme support and complement education about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing, for example school assemblies</li> <li>• How other school initiatives support and complement education about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing, including RSE, Health and Wellbeing, Personal Development, and the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Managing issues</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warning signs that staff will watch for which may indicate a pupil may be experiencing emotional or physical distress due to having a period</li> <li>• Ensuring staff are supportive and non-judgemental</li> <li>• How the school responds to absences due to period issues</li> <li>• What additional items and facilities are available to menstruating pupils should they be needed, for example heat pads, somewhere to lie down or a change of clothes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11. Possible appendices</b></p>	
<p>Relevant documentation could be signposted, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent- or carer-friendly summary of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy</li> <li>• Pupil-friendly summary of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy</li> <li>• Pupil-friendly and/or parent-friendly list of contacts, websites and organisations related to period dignity or menstrual wellbeing (CCEA website)</li> <li>• Relevant Department of Education circulars</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Curriculum link</li> <li>• Outline programme across the key stages</li> <li>• Brief details of outside agencies or individuals the school uses to support the delivery of period dignity or menstrual wellbeing and an outline of the session.</li> </ul>	

# Annex D – Suggested Consultation Questions for Consultation with Product Users

## Statutory Requirements for Consultation with Product Users.

**Before preparing a written statement on their arrangements each SPSB:**

- ✓ **must consult with product users\* who are likely to be on their premises, as the SPSB thinks appropriate;**
- ✓ **may consult any other body or person the SPSB thinks appropriate;**
- ✓ **must include consultation on—**
  - **ways in which product users ought to be able to obtain period products free of charge;**
  - **the locations in the SPSB’s premises in which period products ought to be obtainable free of charge; and**
  - **the types of period products which ought to be obtainable free of charge.**

\*Product users includes those who may need to use products in the future such as younger pupils who have not started to have periods.

## Baseline suggested questions

The following suggestions may be helpful to SPSBs ensure that their consultations meet statutory requirements. SPSBs will however wish to develop these further to reflect the circumstances of their own setting and product users.

*e.g. (1) – Reasonable Ease of Access*

“The new law requires that free period products be reasonably easy to access – what does this mean to you?”

Options: “all toilets, most toilets, school nurse, designated teacher, designated member of staff, box in specific communal location (e.g. PE Hall/reception/office/library/common rooms), all of the above, don’t know, other discreet location (please specify)”

*e.g. (2) – Reasonable choice of free period products*

“The new law requires that a reasonable range of free period products be made available. What does this mean to you?”

Options\*: Period pads (various absorbencies), Applicator Tampons (various absorbencies), Non-Applicator Tampons (various absorbencies) panty liners, reusable period pants, reusable period pads menstrual cups, wet wipes, disposable bags, spare underwear, spare tights, don't know, other.”

SPSBs could also include questions on the importance of: branded items, plastic free single use items and whether respondents are content to use lower cost unbranded items to make the budget go further.

\*Note that the new law defines period products as being items designed to absorb menstrual flow and that SPSBs are therefore not required to provide all the items listed above.

*e.g. (3) – Access to free period products must respect privacy, dignity and confidentiality.*

“The new law requires that you can access free period products in a way that respects your dignity, privacy and confidentiality. What does this mean to you?”

Options: Pupils allowed out during class to access products, period products in individual toilet cubicles, period products at communal sinks in toilets, not having to ask members of staff for free period products, other comments/ideas.

*e.g. (4) – Free products to be available at all times.*

“The new law requires that free products are available at all times. Can you suggest some ideas for how we can keep products well stocked? For example, this could involve a committee of pupils, staff volunteers, a process for reporting that product stocks are running low in certain locations.”

(free text answer)

*e.g. (5) - Publicising free period products*

“The new law requires that we make sure everyone knows that there are free period products available. What do you think would be a good way of doing this?”

Options: posters, website, assembly, workshops, staff meetings, social media, other (please specify) etc.

*(6) Other setting specific questions*

SPSBs could also ask other questions about how the products should be made available in their particular setting.

**Primary schools** may find it more appropriate to consult with pupils in a group discussion. Please note that [CCEA provides excellent resources for talking about periods with primary school children](#) which may be helpful. Note that CCEA will soon be uploading **SEN resources and short videos** which may also be helpful.

If a school noted any misuse of free products under the Period Dignity Pilot scheme, they could explore this with pupils in terms of how this could be managed so products can be made easily available and not locked away. It may also be appropriate for other settings e.g. Youth Settings, to explore how to balance potential abuse of products with ensuring reasonable ease of access.

The legislation requires that provision is to be available in all buildings comprising school premises. If a school has practical concerns related to its specific premises, it should explore these through consultation with product users before making a decision not to provide period products in certain buildings.

When consulting with staff in **administrative accommodation**, it may be worth exploring how to ensure reasonable choice and ease of access on premises with hybrid workers. For example, how could products be kept stocked up and available at all times?