

Report title	Period Poverty
Report author	Abigail Lowless, National Management Trainee
Department	Community Services
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable

Purpose of report:
For information

Synopsis of report:
This report provides contextual background information on the Period Poverty Project; and outlines the research that has been completed and the proposed plans going forward.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Following a motion at a meeting of the Council on 20 July 2023, it was resolved that this Committee be tasked with researching ways to provide free and as a preference, plastic-free and bio-degradable, period products in all the Council’s public accessible toilets and buildings including leisure centres, libraries and community centres.
- 1.2 On 21 September 2023, a budget of £24,000 divided over three years, was approved by this Committee, to work with local organisations to provide access to free sanitary products.
- 1.3 Statistics show that 60% of people who menstruate have to prioritise buying food over period products (Action Aid, 2023). By providing products for free, the Council hopes to reduce the financial pressures some individuals face when menstruating.
- 1.4 This project aims to reduce the impact period poverty has on individuals and to reduce the stigma surrounding periods, by normalising discussions around menstruation and encouraging those who don’t menstruate to support those who do.
- 1.5 A key focus of this project is to ensure products are accessible to all if they are unable to purchase them themselves. It will also provide products for those who find themselves in a situation where they need them, allowing individuals to menstruate with dignity. Products will therefore be placed in all bathrooms (male, female and disabled) to ensure privacy, inclusivity and accessibility for all who menstruate.
- 1.6 This report summarises the work that has been undertaken since this approval and how the Council intends to support residents in Runnymede who menstruate.

- 1.7 A project group met on 14 December 2023 to discuss a forward plan and again on 6 February 2024 to review the research that had been conducted into suppliers and local organisations where products could be placed. The project group comprised Councillor Abby King, Councillor Chris Howorth, Chair of Community Services Committee, two officers from Community Services, and the Corporate Head of Community Services.
- 1.8 A total of 32 venues and organisations located in Runnymede were contacted to gauge interest in having a vending machine, trough or basket located in their premises. Example images of these different dispensing options are available in Appendix 'A'. All those who responded and have suitable facilities, of which there are 19, were interested in providing products in their premises.
- 1.9 A total of seven suppliers, distributors and social enterprises were contacted to discuss the types of products they could provide for this project.

2. Report

- 2.1 Research was conducted to map existing provision of free sanitary products. Locations include all Surrey libraries and some Surrey County Council offices. Products are also available in some supermarkets and local secondary schools.
- 2.2 After researching and contacting all relevant venues where products could be provided across the borough, a list of suitable and interested venues, have been collated. These venues are a range of:
- Community centres
 - Leisure centres
 - GP surgery's
 - Food banks
 - Runnymede Borough Council owned buildings

By providing free access to products in these locations, the Council hopes to reach a range of individuals. Appendix 'B' sets out a full list of venues involved in this project.

- 2.3 A list of providers, distributors and social enterprises were collated, and meetings were set up to explore the different products and services each could provide. After extensive research and discussions, four organisations provided the most value in terms of their environmental impact, social value and costs. They have been compared in the table below:

	<u>Hey Girls</u>	<u>Here we Flo</u>	<u>TSL</u>	<u>& Sisters</u>
<u>Pads</u>	500 (maximum bulk capacity) = £41.25 8p per pad	1250 (maximum bulk capacity) = £150 12p per pad	1000 (maximum bulk capacity) = £88 9p per pad	120 (maximum bulk capacity) = £33.96 28p per pad
<u>Tampons</u>	500 (maximum bulk capacity) = £77.45 15p per tampon	1400 (maximum bulk capacity) = £210 15p per tampon	240 (maximum bulk capacity) = £27.88 12p per tampon	432 (maximum bulk capacity) = £57.84 13p per tampon
<u>Menstrual cups</u>	1 = £3.94 Pack of 6 = £23.68	N/A	1 = £12.26 – includes sterilising pot	1 = £15.86
<u>Dispensers</u>	£176 – free vend	£185 – free vend	£69.99 – free vend	N/A

	£13.20 – 75.63 - trough	£25 – 30 - basket		
<u>Delivery</u>	Free – to one or to numerous locations	£9.99 – per delivery – can be reduced if sending to numerous locations – still additional charge	Will be an added cost if sending to numerous locations – makes products more expensive rather than a set delivery cost	£8 – free if order exceeds £350
<u>Other</u>	Free marketing, advice and training	Free marketing and advice	N/A	N/A

2.4 A waiver has been approved to partner with the social enterprise Hey Girls. As stated in point 2.3, a range of companies, social enterprises and charities who supply sanitary products were explored and considerations were made against cost, experience of working with local government, maximising social value and environmental impact. Having considered all the above, the national social enterprise Hey Girls, were identified as being the preferred partner due to other suppliers not offering the full suite of opportunity, against the stated considerations. This partnership has also been supported by Councillors.

2.5 Hey Girls aim to reduce the taboo around periods and strive for equal access to period products. Hey Girls has been identified as being the appropriate organisation to partner with due to the following:

- All the products that they supply are sustainable. They are made from natural materials and contain 100% organic cotton. All plant-based ingredients are responsibly sourced and renewable, and the wrappers of products are biodegradable within 6 months.
- Their reusable products are designed to last between 5 – 10 years, preventing unnecessary waste in landfills. This zero-waste design has seen them be shortlisted for awards.
- They are the only social enterprise to become finalists at the global climate conference COP26 for the ‘Heroes of NetZero’ Award.
- They have a Buy One, Donate One model, where for every product bought, they donate one to someone facing period poverty. Additionally, all profits go towards ending period poverty. Partnering with a not-for-profit that works off this model, will not only help end period poverty within Runnymede, but across the UK. It also creates strong social value and supports the purpose of this project.
- Hey Girls provide free support and advice throughout the partnership, using their extensive knowledge on periods and period poverty.
- Costs are comparable with other suppliers; however, they offer a range of additional benefits that other organisations do not. This includes free marketing in the form of posters and advertisements on their social media (see Appendix C), free training to venues where products will be stocked, advice and guidance throughout the partnership and free delivery to numerous venues allowing us to directly supply interested venues with products. This suite of benefits was not provided by any other organisation.
- Hey Girls have a track record of providing their goods and services to local authorities across the UK. They have partnered with 13 Councils within England, as well as a large range of councils within Scotland and

Wales. Other suppliers engaged with did not have the same level of experience partnering with local authorities.

- 2.6 The next steps will be to confirm with venues the most suitable dispenser and arrange for products to be delivered. Hey Girls have made the recommendation that a venue is initially supplied with 500 pads and 500 tampons. It will then be possible to gauge demand and order accordingly.
- 2.7 Referencing point 1.5 it has been recommended in discussions with providers, that products be placed in all bathrooms (male, female and disabled), for the purpose of inclusivity and for reducing the stigma around periods. Hey Girls provide information leaflets for non-menstruating individuals to raise awareness of menstruation, these leaflets will be found alongside products in male bathrooms. Providing products in all bathrooms ensures every individual has access to products, it can serve to educate and reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation, and allows individuals to access products to support loved ones who menstruate.
- 2.8 Officers will work with the Communications Team to create a communications plan for this project. This plan will focus on promoting the availability and location of products throughout the three years that this project runs. Continued promotion is required to raise awareness of this project, reaching as many individuals as possible, using a range of communication channels used by all age groups (including Instagram). There are also plans to map locations of where to find free period products online.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 This report meets the corporate objectives of the Council, specifically in relation to Health and Wellbeing. The following objectives within the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy are also supported:
- Creating healthy homes
 - Creating healthy communities
 - Working in partnership to tackle health inequality.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 As outlined in the September Committee report, the funding for this project has been identified from within the following budgets:

Sum	Identified Budget	Business Unit Responsible
£7,500	2023/2024 Communities First	Community Services
£7,500	Ringfenced funding from NHS for local projects and initiatives	Community Services
£9,000 (£3,000 per annum)	Housing Revenue Account – Existing Budgets	Housing

4.2 At the time of writing, no additional funding has been identified to extend the project beyond the 3-year timescale. However, permission will be sought to carry over any funding not spent after the 3-year timescale, to lengthen the period of this project.

5. Legal implications

5.1 The Council's Contract Standing Order require that all procurement exercises of over £5,000 go through the Council's e-tendering process, unless a waiver has been approved, which is the route taken here.

5.2 Having considered the information provided to it, the panel will have agreed that a waiver would be appropriate in this instance.

5.3 Results of investigations made by Officers into the offer available on the market provide the required information to Members of this Committee.

6. Equality implications

6.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b) Advance equality of opportunity
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

6.2 We should at all times act in a way that is non-discriminatory through our policies and procedures and interactions with people.

6.3 In the development of a plan to distribute and make accessible period products across the borough, a full equalities impact assessment has been completed and has been reviewed by the Council's Equalities Group (see Appendix 'D').

6.4 Whilst socio-economic circumstances are not a protected characteristic, making period products more widely available would have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of Sex (women) and while it is considered to have a positive impact on both Gender Reassignment and Age, other factors may limit that impact during the initial stages of this Project.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 The products that Hey Girls supply are sustainable and environmentally friendly. Sourcing products that are created with the impact on the environment in mind, ensures any negative environmental, sustainability and biodiversity implications are reduced.

7.2 Pads and tampons will be single use products, however their negative impact on the environment is reduced by being made of 100% organic materials. These products are plant-based and are made with sustainably sourced bamboo and 100% certified organic cotton. They are plastic free, using sugar cane as an alternative. All wrappers are biodegradable, reducing the amount of waste ending up in landfill.

7.3 Reusable products such as menstrual cups and period pants will be provided to foodbanks if demand for such products is identified. Although these products are more sustainable than single use products, it is not appropriate to provide these products widely across the borough, when acknowledging not all individuals have the facilities required to keep these products sanitary.

8. Other implications

8.1 None identified.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1 This project will commence in Quarter 1 of 2024/2025 and is budgeted to last for three years.

9.2 If additional funding is identified, or permission is given to carry funding beyond three years, the project will continue for however long is possible.

10. Conclusions

10.1 After thoroughly researching ways to provide free products to Runnymede residents, a plan has been outlined. Numerous venues have shown an interest in this project, and an environmentally friendly provider has been identified.

10.2 Partnering with a not-for-profit social enterprise who campaign for period equality, and working with venues across the borough will be a good opportunity for the Council to advertise this scheme and make access to period products easier, reducing the pressures those impacted by period poverty face.

11. Background papers

None.

12. Appendices

Appendix 'A' [Example photos of different dispenser options](#)

Appendix 'B' [List of Venues interested in providing period products](#)

Appendix 'C' [Example of Marketing provided by Hey Girls](#)

Appendix 'D' [Equality Impact Assessment](#)