



Department for

Communities

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn

Pobal

Department for

Commonities

From: The DALO

Level 9

Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7EG

Telephone: (028) 9051 5234

e-mail: assembly.section@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: CORR-1836-2021

Date: 22 December 2021

Aoibheann Treanor
Committee Clerk
Committee for Education
Room 430
Parliament Buildings

Via email: aoibheann.treanor@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Aoibheann,

PERIOD PRODUCTS (FREE PROVISION) BILL

You spoke to Rosheen Thompson, Private Secretary, on 14 December 2021 about the Department for Communities' role in respect of your scrutiny of the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill.

It was advised that since DfC was not leading on this Private Member's Bill it would not be able to provide clause by clause scrutiny to the Committee. However, it was indicated that officials would endeavour to be as helpful as possible in answering both the questions posed and providing any additional information that may be of use within the time available.

Rosheen also advised that whilst DfC could not speak on behalf of councils in relation to any policy or operational experience they have in providing free period products, the questions posed in respect of local government would be passed on, and I can confirm a memo was circulated to that effect.

In line with New Decade, New Approach, DfC is leading on the development of the Executive's new Social Inclusion Strategies, including the Gender Equality and Anti-Poverty Strategies.

Issues relating to the provision and availability of period products for all who need them were raised by the Gender Equality Strategy Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) in their report published on 5 March 2021. Period poverty has also been raised by the Gender Equality Strategy Co-design Group and stakeholders during the ongoing co-design process.

As part of the emergency Covid response DfC operated a Food Pallet Scheme that ran from January to March 2021. This scheme saw the Department bulk purchase £1.25m of food and essential items for supply to community food providers and made available to families and individuals experiencing hardship.

In recognition that those experiencing food poverty are likely to be experiencing other forms of poverty including period poverty, groups also had the opportunity to order female sanitary products.

An evaluation of the scheme confirmed a need for period product support with 83% of participating community food providers requesting sanitary products accounting for 1.58 % of the total spend, approx. £20K. Of those groups who did not order products many had existing relationships with community pharmacies and other retailers who provided donations of product on a regular basis.

You asked if officials would be willing to brief the Committee, and I can confirm that should the Committee require briefing on any particular issue in relation to this matter that we will be happy to provide the most appropriate official at that stage.

Yours sincerely,

Fionnbarr Dorrian
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Private Office