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Trevor Allen
Clerk
Committee for the Executive Office
NI Assembly
Room 247 Parliament Buildings
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Date: 2 July 2026

Dear Trevor,

The Executive Office proposes to make a Statutory Rule under powers conferred by the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (The Act). The Statutory Rule is subject to affirmative resolution procedure.

Purpose of the Statutory Rule

The purpose of this Statutory Rule is to amend S.R. 2024 No. 185 to update the list of public service bodies specified under section 2 of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Section 2 of the Act requires each Department to specify, by regulations, the public service bodies within its functions that are under a duty to make period products available free of charge to users while on their premises.

The Executive Office fulfilled this duty through S.R. 2024 No. 185, which came into operation on 25 October 2024 and specified eight public service bodies.

This Rule makes limited, technical amendments to that list to include additional public service bodies with the functions of the Executive Office that have been established since the original Rule was made, thereby extending the application of existing provision arrangements. It does not alter the policy intention of the original Regulations.

The Act defines a 'Public Service Body' as a body which is both (a) constituted by or under a statutory provision; and (b) has functions that consist of or include providing public services or otherwise serving the public interest.

Legal / regulatory imperative

The Rule is made under the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which places a statutory duty on Departments to specify, by regulations, the public service bodies within their functions that must provide free period products. The amendment is required to ensure that all relevant bodies are appropriately designated in line with the intent and requirements of the Act, and to support the continued implementation of the statutory scheme.

Options considered

The Department considered the following options:

- **Option 1:** Do nothing and retain the current list of specified public service bodies;
- **Option 2:** Amend the Regulations to include the additional public service bodies identified as appropriate for inclusion.

Option selected and rationale

Option 2 has been selected. This ensures that the statutory duty to provide free period products is applied consistently across relevant public service bodies, improving access and supporting the policy objective to ensure access to free period products for anyone who needs to use them whilst on the premises of the ALBs. It also ensures alignment with the overarching framework established by the 2022 Act.

Risks and unintended consequences

The Department has considered potential risks associated with the amendment. As the Rule extends existing obligations to additional bodies, risks are minimal and related primarily to implementation, including operational and resource considerations for the bodies concerned. These risks are mitigated through existing guidance and established delivery mechanisms under the current scheme. No significant unintended consequences have been identified.

Implications of not implementing the Rule

If the Rule were not implemented, the additional public service bodies would not be subject to the statutory duty to provide free period products. This would result in reduced access to products in certain settings, leading to inconsistency in provision and undermining the policy objective of ensuring equitable access across Northern Ireland. It would also mean that the Department would not be fully meeting the intent of the 2022 Act.

Previous Engagement with the Committee

The Committee was engaged in September 2024 when the original Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 were made. The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the original statutory rule at its meeting on the 11 September 2024.

Financial Implications

The ALBs specified by the Rule will be required to make and maintain arrangements to provide period products for use on their premises. Given the size of the bodies concerned these costs are not expected to be significant.

Consultation

The Act requires that TEO consults with ALBs prior to the Regulations being made. Executive Office officials engaged with the three additional bodies in the spring of 2026, with no objections being raised to the inclusion of these bodies in regulations.

Compliance with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

The amendments made by this Rule are limited in scope and technical in nature, extending the application of existing period product provision arrangements to additional public service bodies.

In relation to the European Convention on Human Rights, the Executive Office considers that the Rule does not engage any Convention rights in a manner that would give rise to incompatibility. To the extent that any rights are indirectly engaged (for example, in relation to access to services), the Department considers that the provisions are proportionate, non-discriminatory and pursue a legitimate aim. On that basis, the Department is satisfied that the Rule is compatible with Convention rights.

In relation to Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework (no diminution of rights) the Rule does not remove or reduce any protections relating to equality of opportunity or human rights. Instead, it extends the availability of period products to additional public service bodies and therefore is consistent with, and supportive of, existing equality and rights protections. The Department therefore considers that Article 2(1) is not adversely engaged and that the Rule complies with the “no diminution” obligation

Consideration by the Executive

The Statutory Rule is substantively an administrative matter and does not require Executive referral Not applicable.

Equality Impact

An Equality Screening Exercise has been carried out and the policy screened out. The Statutory Rule to update the Schedule of Public Bodies under the Act is substantively an administrative matter, and I can confirm that consideration has been given, regarding compliance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Regulatory Impact

The Rule has no impact on businesses, charities, social economy enterprises or voluntary bodies.

Rural Needs Impact

A Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the policy has been conducted. The current Rule makes a limited amendment to extend the application of the existing Regulations to three additional public service bodies. It does not alter the policy intent, delivery mechanisms or eligibility criteria previously assessed. The Department considers that the amendment will have a neutral to positive impact on persons in rural areas by increasing the range of locations at which free period products may be accessed. Given the minor and technical nature of the amendment, and that it builds on an existing policy framework already subject to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment, a further assessment has not been considered necessary.

Data Protection Impact

The Department has considered whether the Rule gives rise to any data protection implications requiring a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). The current Rule makes a limited amendment to extend the application of the existing Regulations to three additional public service bodies. It does not introduce any new processing of personal data, change the nature, scope or purposes of existing processing activities, or involve new categories of personal data.

As such, the Department considers that the Rule does not give rise to any additional data protection risks.

Child Rights Impact

A Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) was undertaken in respect of the original policy concluding a positive impact on children. The current Rule makes a limited amendment to extend the application of the existing Regulations to three additional public service bodies. It does not alter the policy intent, eligibility criteria or the manner in which benefits are delivered.

The Department considers that the amendment will maintain, and potentially enhance, the positive impacts already identified, including by increasing the availability of period products in additional settings which may be accessible to children and young people.

Given the minor and technical nature of the amendment, and that it builds on an existing policy framework already subject to a Child Rights Impact Assessment, a further assessment has not been considered necessary.

Position in Great Britain

Provision of free period products varies across Great Britain and is not delivered through a single, consistent legislative framework. The current Rule does not introduce any divergence from Great Britain approaches but operates within the framework of the Northern Ireland Act 2022 by specifying additional public service bodies to which existing duties apply. As such, no significant implications arise from differences in approach across jurisdictions.

Any other information

No other information.

Proposed timing of consideration of the SL1

The SL1 has been submitted to the Committee in accordance with the minimum four-week timeframe. The proposed date on which the Department proposes that the Committee consider the SL1 is 30 September 2026.

Proposed Operational Date

It is proposed that the rule will come into operation on 31st December 2026.

The draft of the proposed Statutory Rule and Explanatory Memorandum are attached, and you will wish to bring this matter to the attention of the Committee for The Executive Office.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID McCREEDY

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer