

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Written statement regarding provision of Free Period Products

The Department of Health has directed Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to provide period products free of charge on their premises in accordance with the “Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022” – referred to as the Act. This written statement relates to South Eastern Trust’s implementation of this Act by providing period products free of charge in the most effective and cost-efficient way across our sites, in line with a regional commitment from all Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Consultation

A regional engagement exercise was undertaken by all HSC Trusts and took place from 18 November 2024 until Tuesday 31 December 2024. The form of the engagement exercise was a confidential survey which invited views from a wide range of stakeholders, including patients and service users, carers, staff and the general public. The confidential survey explored a range of topics relating covering different types of period products that could be made available, and preferred methods to obtain (and locations to access) the products and if respondents felt that providing the products free of charge would be of benefit. A total of 2,665 responses were received by all HSC Trusts as an outcome of the engagement exercise.

Feedback from the outcome of the engagement survey has been used to shape how the Trust implements the requirements of the Act. There was overall support for the provision of free period products along with the sentiment that the Trust should also ensure ‘value for money’ where possible.

Arrangements for provision

The Trust is fully committed to providing period products in a way that respects the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of those who need them.

Consideration will be given to ensure the products are easy to access, in a variety of locations. In line with feedback received following consultation, it is intended that the products will be available in central female or gender neutral bathrooms as well as central accessible/adapted toilets/bathrooms and in inpatient wards upon request.

The Trust will make every effort to make period products available, free of charge, for all who use them. It is important to acknowledge however that, at this time, there is no funding allocated for provision of the products and as such, provision will be funded from existing resources. The Department of Health guidance stipulates the importance and overarching requirement for Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure value for money. Therefore, the Trust will implement the scheme on a pilot scale (in locations with the highest footfall/ attendance rates) initially, with rollout across a larger scale in the longer term.

Which are the main public toilets in the following locations

- Ards Hospital main entrance
- Bangor Hospital main entrance
- Downe Atrium & Downshire Great Hall
- Lisburn PCC atrium
- LVH main entrance
- Ulster ASB –café connect
- Ulster IWB – café connect
- Ulster Hospital main entrance (Retained)
- Ulster Maternity main entrance
- Ulster MacMillan main entrance
- Ulster Renal main entrance

This will also be kept under review.

Implementation is expected to commence (in line with regional CAG procuring Products and Dispensers Est: Summer 2025).

Department of Health N.I. Guidance

The Trust has taken Department of Health Guidance ([Microsoft Word - FINAL GUIDANCE- DoH Guidance for Provision of Free Period Products- Jan 2025](#)) into account during the planning stages and will continue to do so during implementation and monitoring. The Guidance has also been useful in providing direction regarding consultation with service users, carers, staff and the wider public. An equality screening has also been conducted to ensure equality and human rights are core to its implementation and this will be subject to ongoing monitoring for any impact.

The Trust welcomes the provision of free period products as part of a regional commitment from all HSC organisations to implement the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland).