

Access to Sanitary Products

Summary and Recommendations

The Scottish Government gave a commitment in their Programme for Government 2017/18 that pupils and student in schools, colleges and universities should have access to free sanitary products. Local authorities are now delivering this in schools. The 2018/19 Programme for Government gives a commitment to increase the number and range of places sanitary products are available.

This report updates Members on the eligibility criteria associated with funding and high level principles for delivery, and seeks agreement that local authorities will expand availability of sanitary products beyond schools, through engaging with partners as appropriate.

This paper invites Members to:

- i. Agree the high level principles for delivery as set out at paragraph 5;
- ii. Agree the proposed eligibility criteria as set out in paragraph 8 but note this is the criteria Scottish Government have used to calculate funding and is not a strict criteria for delivery; and
- iii. Agree in principle, pending a decision by COSLA Leaders, to expand availability of sanitary products beyond schools.

References

Previous reports:

- COSLA Community Wellbeing Board Report – General Update – September 2018
- COSLA Leaders – Access to Sanitary Products in Schools – May 2018
- COSLA Leaders – Distribution – May 2018
- COSLA CYP Board Report – Access to Sanitary Products – December 2017

Access to Sanitary Products

Purpose

1. This report provides Members with an update on the Scottish Government's Access to Sanitary Products commitments and asks the Board to agree in principle, pending a decision by COSLA Leaders, to expand availability of sanitary products beyond schools.

Current COSLA Position

2. The Scottish Government gave a commitment in their Programme for Government 2017/18 that pupils and student in schools, colleges and universities should have access to free sanitary products. Local authorities were with funding to deliver this commitment from the beginning of the academic year in August 2018.
3. In September, the Community Wellbeing Board noted that the 2018/19 Programme for Government has a commitment to increase the number and range of places where sanitary products are available for those who need them. Civil servants had approached COSLA officers to explore the possibility of delivery through local authority services and buildings.
4. The commitment stated that they will work with the third sector and private sector organisations to enhance the provision. COSLA officers have been clear that a strategic approach through local Community Planning Partnerships would best meet the aims of the Programme for Government commitment. This would maximise reach locally and minimise risk of duplication as other public sector agencies, the third sector and where relevant the private sector would be engaged in discussions around this.
5. In September the Board also noted that the high level guiding principles for delivery suggested by civil servants did not seem problematic as these do not contradict any of the existing delivery programmes local authorities are already undertaking. The principles were:
 - i. Protecting individual's dignity, avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma;
 - ii. Making a range of products and different qualities available in places that people use;
 - iii. A response that is reflective of communities views and needs;
 - iv. An efficient and effective approach which demonstrates value for money;
 - v. Individuals being able to get sufficient products to meet their needs;
 - vi. Gender equality, ensuring anyone who menstruates can access products, including transgender men/non-binary individuals, and that language is gender inclusive.
 - vii. Awareness raising and education to both promote the 'offer' and attempt to change cultural norms
6. The Board noted that there were two issues to be resolved, these were around commitment to longer term funding and baselining the funding into the settlement, and clarification on the eligibility definition.

What is changing?

7. Scottish Government officials have now clarified the eligibility criteria and in turn the policy intent around the Programme for Government Commitment. There are two groups that the policy wishes to support, those with a low income, and universal access for emergency need within local authority services and buildings.
8. The Scottish Government's estimated overall annual funding is £2,782,000 for 19/20 and 20/21, broken down into £2.31m for the low income element and £472,000 for universal access. Set up and development funding has been estimated at £536,000 in total, as a one off cost.
9. Civil servants have stated that pro rata funding is available for the rest of this financial year, with the annual amount stated in paragraph 9 available for 19/20 and 20/21, but have asked that information gathered from schools provision and any information available from 19/20 provision to inform the final baselined amount. COSLA officers have been clear that funding for this provision must be baselined in order for agreement from Councils on this policy. The money will not be ringfenced.
10. Specifics around delivery models will be for local authorities, working with Community Planning Partners where appropriate, to decide.

Proposed COSLA Position

11. It is proposed that the Board agree in principle, pending a decision by COSLA Leaders, to expand availability of sanitary products beyond schools with a focus on those with low incomes and a provision in local authority services and buildings for "emergencies", through engaging with partners as appropriate in their local authority area and based on their knowledge of their communities. The high level principles, as set out at paragraph 5, and noted by the Board in September, should inform the delivery models.
12. The in principle agreement of the Board to deliver the policy will be dependent on confirmation from Scottish Government that funding is baselined for future years.

Next Steps

13. If agreed, COSLA Leaders will be asked to agree a report on the overall policy and funding elements, pending the recommendations of the Settlement and Distribution Group, on 30th November 2018.

November 2018