

To: Leadership Board

On: 22 June 2022

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Social Renewal Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on work that is being undertaken with partners through the Social Renewal programme in Renfrewshire. The programme was initially developed in recognition of the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on local residents, but has been increasingly driven by the local response to the cost of living crisis, with significant challenges being experienced in relation to poverty and financial insecurity in households across Renfrewshire.
- 1.2 The Council has well-developed partnership programmes in place to collectively target poverty, inequality, wellbeing and issues such as alcohol and drug use, and through the Social Renewal programme officers have been working with partners to address the changing needs of local individuals and families.
- 1.3 As agreed by Council on 3 March 2022, all activities will now come together to form a new Fairer Renfrewshire Programme in Renfrewshire. Officers are working with partners to develop the principles of this programme, and will bring forward a more detailed report for the new sub-group of the Leadership Board to consider after the summer recess. Council agreed on 19 May 2022 to form this sub-group to facilitate more scrutiny and oversight of issues relating to poverty and inequality in Renfrewshire.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding these more recent developments, officers have continued to work with partners to identify immediate actions which need to be progressed to support people experiencing financial insecurity in Renfrewshire now, with particular focus in relation to food and fuel support.
- 1.5 Section 4 of this paper sets out several proposals for approval by elected members, to allow for support to be extended and developed across a number of key areas, including in relation to a proposed extension of the local fuel insecurity pilot, and community funding in

recognition of ongoing demand and challenges being experienced around community food provision.

- 1.6 Over Summer 2022 we will also commence work through the Get Heard programme to engage with people from low-income households, which will inform future partnership plans in Renfrewshire. This will build on a recent refresh of our local COVID community impact assessment, which included a further survey of the Renfrewshire Public Services Panel focusing on financial insecurity.
 - 1.7 Community partners play a critical role in providing locally based support to people experiencing issues in relation to poverty, and we will continue to engage with partners around local issues, with a specific priority being the progression and development of a new food partnership in Renfrewshire.
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2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that members of the Leadership Board:

- Note the content of the report
 - Agree to allocate a further £34,000 to top up the Community Food Fund and to open the fund immediately to applications in line with principles set out in paragraph 4.5
 - Agree the allocation of £50,000 to extend the fuel insecurity pilot until the end of 2022/23, awarding funding of £17,000 to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, and £16,500 each to Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Foodbank.
 - Approve the statement on the Exercise of Functions relating to period poverty, as set out in Appendix 1, for submission to Scottish Government.
 - Agree grant funding of £45,000 of funding to Active Communities to deliver the peer health project, previously agreed by Leadership Board in February 2022;
 - Agree the allocation of £30,000 from Social Renewal funding to support a community capacity building initiative led by the Tannahill Centre, and
 - Note the work being undertaken to develop the principles of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Council and partners have a key focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing, and have longstanding programmes of work and partnership arrangements in place to address these issues, such as the Tackling Poverty Programme and the change programme established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Drug and Alcohol Commission.
- 3.2 Evidence gathered through a partnership COVID community impact assessment in 2021, indicated that the inequalities that had existed prior to the pandemic had been exacerbated further, with the impact of the COVID often falling disproportionately on particular groups of people across communities.

As an immediate response to this work, partners developed and agreed a Social Renewal Plan for Renfrewshire which was approved by Council in March 2021.

- 3.3 The Social Renewal Plan set out a number of key actions which have been progressed by partners, with particular focus on supporting people experiencing financial insecurity. Previous papers to Leadership Board have provided detailed updates for elected members on the work that has been undertaken in relation to areas such as affordable credit, money advice and income maximisation, hardship payments and funding for initiatives which target food and fuel insecurity. Initial funding of £2m was allocated by Council to support the Social Renewal programme in 2021, and this was supplemented by £0.85M Scottish Government funding to be allocated over Winter 2021 to support local people experiencing food and fuel insecurity.
- 3.4 As elected members will be aware, the cost of living crisis has worsened significantly, and further work is now being undertaken with partners to identify gaps in provision, and to develop new ways of providing support for individuals and families that are struggling. A local energy summit was held with key partners to discuss current provision, and engagement is also ongoing with services and local community organisations to assess levels of demand and how the need is changing.
- 3.5 The UK inflation rate is now 9%, which is the highest rate for 40 years. The biggest contributor to inflation is the rising cost of energy bills. The rising energy price cap for households rose 54% to £1,971 per household (for those on direct debit) in April 2022, with estimates that this could rise another £800 in autumn 2022 to £2,800. Rising global food prices are also a concern, with households facing rising shopping bills as a result. Fuel pricing is also rising, with petrol prices hitting in excess of 180p per litre in mid June 2022. Pay and wages are also largely not keeping pace with inflation, and for those earning more than £9,880 have also been contributing additional National Insurance contributions as a result of the new Health and Social Care Levy.
- 3.6 At end of May 2022, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported on analysis which suggested that in light of the proposed price cap of £2800 which will come into force later this year, £1 in every £5 from low income family budgets could go on energy costs. It is suggested that for single adults on low incomes, this could mean spending 49% of their income on energy costs.
- 3.7 This paper seeks approval to progress activities across a number of key areas over Summer 2022. A full update on wider progress being achieved will be brought forward after the summer recess for discussion at a new sub-group of the Leadership Board which will focus on issues relating to poverty and inequality.
- 3.8 Work is also ongoing to develop the new Fairer Renfrewshire programme, as agreed as part of the Council's budget approved on 3 March 2022. The programme will bring together activities and funding currently being progressed through the existing Tackling Poverty, Alcohol and Drugs and Social Renewal programmes, under one umbrella programme. Further information on the development of Fairer Renfrewshire is provided at section 5.

4. Key activities for progression during Summer 2022

Food insecurity

4.1 At its meeting on 28 April, Council agreed the following motion:

“Council agrees to prioritise food justice as part of its cost of living crisis response and committed to bring about change locally by appointing a Food Champion. It is unacceptable that in one of the richest countries in the world, many households across Renfrewshire struggled to put food on the table, before and during the Covid-19 crisis. Food poverty has become more acute due to a cost of living crisis that had hit many households hard. Council noted that local authorities across the UK had appointed a food champion and a growing number were consolidating Covid Support Groups into formalised networks and partnerships. Council agreed that a comprehensive strategy was required on developing and maintaining food/fuel partnerships. That an update/action plan outlining timescales and work to develop a strategy be brought to the next leadership board, that a senior lead officer be identified as ‘food champion’ to support the strategy and recommended that the Leadership Board has food/fuel insecurity as a standing item on the agenda.

4.2 Food insecurity was identified as a particular issue within the Social Renewal Plan developed with partners, in response to the initial impacts of the pandemic. A range of activities have been progressed in response including:

- £75,000 funding to support three local organisations (RAMH, STAR Project and Active Communities) to develop/expand food pantry models
- The establishment of a £25,000 Community Food Fund, to provide resources and support to community organisations across Renfrewshire that have been working to provide food support to individuals and families (approx. £13,000 allocated to date)
- Additional funding of £10,000 has been provided to Renfrewshire Foodbank in recognition of pressures that were anticipated over Winter 2021
- A hardship payments scheme has been launched to support people who are struggling to pay for food and fuel costs within existing household income, recognising the choices households are having to make between essential items such as food and fuel.
- Breakfast club provision and free food during the holiday Street Stuff activities funded through the Tackling Poverty Programme
- Scottish Government funding continues to be utilised to provide payments to families during holiday periods, where children would have been entitled to free school meal provision during term time.

4.3 As recognised within the Council motion it will be important for the Council to work with local groups and organisations that are providing food support to people. The Head of Policy and Commissioning will lead this programme of work, and will seek to engage with local groups and organisations and services as to how a partnership group could work in Renfrewshire.

Officers will aim to undertake this engagement over the summer recess period, with a view to the partnership being established as quickly as possible thereafter and a shared action plan being developed by September 2022. Initial actions are likely to include work to better signpost and provide information on where food support can be accessed in Renfrewshire, and the identification of gaps in terms of provision within particular areas, including potentially villages and more rural areas across Renfrewshire.

- 4.4 Elected members may be aware that a Good Food Nation Bill is currently being progressed through Scottish Parliament as part of the Programme for Government, and this is likely to result in a duty for local authorities to produce Good Food Nation Plans. The partnership plans and arrangements under development in Renfrewshire will require to align to the principles and requirements of this legislation going forward.
- 4.5 It is important to note that over and above this planned work during the summer period, officers are continuing to work with partners to support people experiencing food insecurity now. In addition to increased demand being experienced across local organisations for food support, there are also a range of issues being experienced around food supply, largely driven by cost pressures and supply chain issues. In light of recent discussions it is recommended that the Community Food Fund is topped up to £50k from the residual budget of £16,060 and relaunched with refreshed guidance, to allow organisations to access up to £10k for a wider variety of purposes, including the purchase of food where this is required. Applications would be considered by Leadership Board in Autumn 2022, and the current assessment process would continue to be utilised.

Fuel insecurity

- 4.6 As part of the Social Renewal Programme, a fuel insecurity pilot was introduced working alongside Renfrewshire's Citizens Advice Bureau, Linstone Housing and Renfrewshire Foodbank to provide additional emergency fuel support across Renfrewshire, and improve referral routes to this support linked to both dedicated energy advice and wider money advice services. Partners have also worked to improve awareness around energy issues and available support for front-line staff working across the Council and its partners, as well as participating in communications activity to raise awareness of available support for both residents and Council employees.
- 4.7 This pilot has been successful to date in providing streamlined support for households, and in the context of continuing challenges around energy costs it is recommended that this work is extended until the end of 2022/23, with further evaluation of its impact to be undertaken over Summer 2022. Members are asked to agree the allocation of £50,000 to support this extension, with additional funding of £17,000 specifically to be allocated to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, and £16,500 each to Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Foodbank.
- 4.8 A partnership energy summit was also held in April 2022, which provided local organisations to discuss recent challenges and potential future interventions.

Financial Insecurity Winter Payment

- 4.9 A Financial Insecurity Winter Payment was launched using the Scottish Government's Winter Support Fund, which is a flexible hardship payment provided to households who are experiencing financial insecurity, particularly due to rising energy costs. The payments are available on a referral only basis in order to enable targeting to groups that have been unable to access other supports, and is administered by Advice Works alongside the provision of wider money advice for households.
- 4.10 This funding has provided payments to 1204 people since its inception in February 2022, and has worked with over 15 different services and partners to reach households experiencing financial difficulties.
- 4.11 The funding for the Financial Insecurity Winter Payment has since been supplemented with additional funding from the Council's budget, as well as the Scottish Government Economic Recovery Fund. A review will be carried out over the Summer to understand how this fund is working, and in particular how it might be scaled to support the increasing cost of living demands faced by residents.

Period products

- 4.12 The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 will come into force from 15th August 2022, which aims to make sure everyone in Scotland who menstruates can have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required. It places a duty on Local Authorities to make free period products available in schools and more widely. The Council currently make period products available in schools, as well as a range of community settings (predominantly OneRen premises) and to order for home delivery. Current provision is focussed on low-income households and school pupils. The legislation requires Councils to consult with those who need to use products before putting in place arrangements to fulfil the new duties, and also the publish a 'Statement on exercise of functions' detailed how the Council will deliver the duty.
- 4.13 The consultation for Renfrewshire residents has been open from 2nd – 29th May 2022, and sought views from residents on what provision they would like to see in Renfrewshire. A Statement of Functions can be found at Appendix 1, as well as a summary consultation report at Appendix 2.

Tackling Poverty Programme

- 4.14 The Tackling Poverty Programme is now in the fifth year of its current phase, and will be reviewed and evaluated as part of the wider Fairer Renfrewshire programme development throughout 2022. The funding allocation for the 2022/23 financial year was agreed at Leadership Board in February 2022.
- 4.15 The Peer Health programme is a long-standing project within the programme, which provides opportunities to young people in all secondary schools to provide peer support around a range of health topics, and particularly youth mental health.

This project is co-ordinated by Active Communities, who work with schools to develop and evaluate their programmes of activity. The continuation of this project was agreed in February 2022, and it is recommended that £45,000 grant funding is awarded to Active Communities to continue to deliver this project for the 2022/23 academic year. This is in line with previous years funding.

Get Heard

4.16 Officers have continued to develop plans to implement new participatory processes in Renfrewshire so that people in low incomes can influence policy and practice within the local authority. Working alongside the Poverty Alliance, it is proposed that a 'test of change' is commenced over the summer, with new models of participation in place from Autumn 2022.

4.17 This test of change will seek to develop a model of participation that will have a practical impact on local policy making, that will result in meaningful engagement on the part of both people with experience of poverty and policy makers, and that will contribute to realising a greater sense of community empowerment. This will test the process for establishing the Panel model from the 'Room Where It Happens' report. This panel will be developed in line with the recommendations contained in the report which describes panels as:

'A group of people with experience of low income and willingness to advocate for change, acting as an advisory panel for decision-makers. Typically an advisory panel would provide comment on new ideas and provide an opportunity to collaborate with grassroots activists, acting as a sounding board for a decision-making group'.

4.18 Panel development and recruitment would be carried out over the summer, with engagement and deliberation on local policy priorities happening from Autumn 2022. This will be particularly critical as the Council develops the 'Fairer Renfrewshire' programme as well as the local policy responses to the cost of living crisis.

Public Services Panel results

4.19 The participative approaches detailed above will also allow us to build on learning from the latest Public Services Panel, carried out in early 2022. 795 people responded to the survey, which asked questions about how households have been affected by and are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to providing a comparison to last years results, additional question sets were added to the survey specifically to understand how the cost of living crisis is being felt locally. The survey results are currently being analysed.

Community capacity building

4.20 As outlined in previous papers to Leadership Board, community organisations across Renfrewshire have played a vital role in terms of responding to the immediate needs of residents throughout the pandemic. This has often been in addition to existing service delivery, and there is an increasing need for these organisations to continue to develop capacity and resilience at a local level, as we move into the next phase of the pandemic.

4.21 The Tannahill Centre has worked with a range of local groups and organisations to provide support to people living in Ferguslie Park through the pandemic and are now working with these groups to consider the next steps in terms of what is required within the area over the

medium term. It is recognised that since the height of the pandemic, these small groups have continued to develop, supported by the Tannahill Centre, establishing new activities that address isolation and loneliness, food poverty and fuel insecurity often supported by short-term funding for the immediate COVID-19 response. Further development work is proposed by the Tannahill Centre to develop the next phases of community capacity and it is recommended that £30,000 of Social Renewal funding is allocated to support this programme of work, the learning from which could be shared with other local organisations. Officers will work with the Tannahill Centre to define a detailed specification for this work, which will be monitored through a grant support agreement.

5. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme development

- 5.1 On 3rd March 2022, Council agreed its budget for 2022/23 and allocated £3.98m of additional funding to support and consolidate existing programmes of work in Renfrewshire which are focused on tackling the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities. It was specifically agreed that activities being undertaken through the Tackling Poverty, Social Renewal and Alcohol and Drugs programmes would come together with other priority areas of work linked to COVID and the cost of living crisis, to form a new Fairer Renfrewshire programme.
- 5.2 Work is now being progressed to develop the principles of the programme for discussion after the summer recess, by the new Leadership sub-group which will be formed to focus on issues such as poverty and inequality. Terms of reference for the new sub-group will be presented to Council for approval on 30 June 2022.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – as outlined within the recommendations of the report, additional funding is proposed to support the community food fund of £34,000.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – Key priorities and actions within the Social Renewal plan have been agreed with partners and will form core elements of the new Community Plan under development.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health and Safety** - none
 9. **Procurement** – none
 10. **Risk** – none
 11. **Privacy Impact** – none
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
 13. **Climate Risk** – none
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Author: Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Commissioning

Renfrewshire Council – Statement of Community-Based Provision for the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021

June 2022

1. Background

The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed in 2021 and will be fully in force from 15th August 2022.

The Act aims to make sure **everyone in Scotland who menstruates** can have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required.

Period products must be reasonably easy to obtain and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products. In addition, there must be a reasonable choice of different products available.

Each responsible body, including all Scottish Local Authorities, must, as soon as reasonably practicable, prepare a written statement describing the plans for provision. The Act requires responsible bodies to consult with individuals on the arrangements that should be put in place prior to making decisions on how they fulfil their duties.

Renfrewshire Council carried out a free period product consultation over 4 weeks in April 2022. The results of this consultation informed our **Statement of Community-Based Provision** which is as follows:

‘Renfrewshire Council will work with partners across Renfrewshire to ensure that free period products are available for those who need them, where and when they need them.

Renfrewshire Council will ensure that both single use and reusable products are available, and in all cases will seek to provide and promote environmentally friendly products.

Renfrewshire Council will ensure products are available in ways that preserves the dignity of our citizens and will work to reduce the stigma associated with menstruation.’

2. How we will do this

Products will be sited in the following locations:

- Renfrewshire House
- The Russell Institute
- All OneRen Libraries, Town Halls and Leisure Centres in suitable locations, including toilets and public areas.
- JobcentrePlus offices
- Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau
- Community Pantries
- Other community locations at the request of the organisation involved. This may include 3rd sector organisations, Early Learning and Childcare Centres, Respite Units, Community Centres and community and voluntary groups.

Products held in those locations will be freely accessible without individuals having to ask for them or justify why they need them or the amount that is needed.

In addition, we intend that any individual living in Renfrewshire will be able to order a supply of products online for delivery to their home address.

We will also work with Renfrewshire HSCP to establish a supply of free products in health settings such as GP surgeries, Sandyford Clinic and pharmacies.

Organisations who wish to hold period products for their service users can contact Renfrewshire Council at any time to be considered for products.

Retail premises, such as shopping centres will be involved in the provision where possible.

The service and locations of products will be promoted throughout Renfrewshire so everyone who needs period products knows where they can access them.

3. Consultation

Scottish Government guidance stated that to ensure that the arrangements meet people's needs, responsible bodies should consult with individuals who may either

- need to use free products currently
- need to use products in the future or
- need to collect products on behalf of someone who needs to use products

The consultation must seek information to inform decisions about:

- The way products may be made available;
- The types of products required;
- The premises where the products will be available (including location within these premises)

Method

Renfrewshire Council used an online public consultation to gain as many responses as possible. This was promoted on Council social media, to Council staff, via Engage Renfrewshire (our 3rd sector interface) and via existing networks such as our Advice Partnership and Our Children group. Questionnaires were also offered in a paper format.

Notification of the survey also went to organisations working with ethnically diverse groups and those with a physical disability, as well as those with mental ill-health.

In addition, in-depth sessions were held with two community groups, Kairos Women+ a community-led women's space for all women and non-binary people in Renfrewshire and STAR Project, a community organisation which supports people in a number of ways and aims to tackle the impacts of poverty.

What we asked

Appendix 1 – Social Renewal Update, Leadership Board

We asked questions about:

- Existing provision (online and in community settings) and how well that works
- Who was/would be accessing products and how
- What products people wanted to see:
- Where they should be sited what buildings/organisations and where within those buildings
- Potential levels of usage, ie. will use free products/won't use free products/will use sometimes
- What the barriers would be to using free products

Results

424 Responses were received to the online survey and the responses have informed both our Statement and our provision plan. A separate Consultation Report is available.

4. Provision Plan

1. We intend to work right across the Council area, including schools, to ensure widest access to products.
2. We will work to get a supply of period products in the locations highlighted in the consultation where a current supply of products is not available. This includes GP surgeries, Sandyford Clinic, pharmacies and retail premises.
3. While our existing service around free period products in schools and the community to date has been absorbed by services, we will examine the resource requirement to expand access, centralise online order approval, distribution and invoice control across the Council as well as carry out regular reviews to optimise the service.
4. We will work with Communications and Marketing Teams to promote the service in a number of ways, including:
 - providing marketing materials to all venues involved
 - providing marketing materials to be displayed more widely throughout Renfrewshire
 - social media posts
 - Council website
5. The list of community settings for products will be reviewed and updated on at least a 6 monthly basis.
6. We will work with and provide guidance to organisations holding products so that they meet the standards for dignified provision.
7. We will work with partners to help challenge the stigma about periods, especially for young people, and encourage people to talk more openly about them.
8. We will examine options for inclusion/development of an app showing locations of free period products in Renfrewshire.

Appendix 2 – Social Renewal Update, Leadership Board

Renfrewshire Council Period Products Consultation

Summary report – June 2022

1. Background

- 1.1 The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed in 2021, and will be fully in force from 15th August 2022. The Act aims to make sure everyone in Scotland who menstruates can have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required.
- 1.2 Period products must be reasonably easy to obtain and provided in a way that respects the dignity of those obtaining the products. In addition, there must be a reasonable choice of different products available.
- 1.3 The Act requires responsible bodies, of which Renfrewshire Council is one, to consult with individuals on the arrangements that should be put in place prior to making decisions on how they fulfil their duties.
- 1.4 Scottish Government guidance stated that to ensure that the arrangements meet people's needs, responsible bodies should consult with individuals who may either:
 - need to use free products currently
 - need to use products in the future, or
 - need to collect products on behalf of someone who needs to use products.
- 1.5 The consultation must seek information to inform decisions about:
 - The way products may be made available;
 - The types of products required;
 - The premises where the products will be available (including location within these premises).
- 1.6 Renfrewshire Council carried out a free period product consultation over 4 weeks from 2 May 2022 to 29 May 2022.

2. Method

- 2.1 Renfrewshire Council used an online public consultation to gain as many responses as possible. This was promoted on Council social media, to Council staff, via Engage Renfrewshire (our 3rd sector interface) and via existing networks such as our Advice Partnership and Our Children group. Questionnaires were also offered in a paper format.
- 2.2 Notification of the survey also went to organisations working with ethnically diverse groups and those with a physical disability, as well as those with mental ill-health.
- 2.3 In addition, in-depth sessions were held with two community groups, Kairos Women+ a community-led women's space for all women and non-binary people in Renfrewshire and STAR Project, a community organisation which supports people in a number of ways and aims to tackle the impacts of poverty.

3. Questions

3.1 We asked questions about:

- Existing provision (online and in community settings) and how well that works
- Who was/would be accessing products and how
- What products people wanted to see
- Where they should be sited what buildings/organisations and where within those buildings
- Potential levels of usage, ie. will use free products/won't use free products/will use sometimes
- What the barriers would be to using free products

4. Results

4.1 **424** Responses were received to the online survey.

Current Service

- 4.2 The majority of people were unaware of the current Council service, with **244** unaware and **179** aware. Of those who were aware, only 60 had used the service.
- 4.3 Of those 60, the products used were split. Most had used pads (**50**), with tampons at **30** and period pants at **25**. Less used were menstrual cups at **9**, and reusable pads had been used by **14**. Most people (**49**) had obtained the products for use themselves with **30** accessing them for others.
- 4.4 An even split had used the online ordering and picking up in a building at **31** each. **1** had accessed products by another means. Only **7** of the respondents found the products not easy to access either physically or online, with most (**74**) finding them easy to access.

Locations

- 4.5 The venue named most by respondents where products should be sited was GP Surgeries and Health Centres, with **89** suggesting this. **76** agreed products should be in OneRen venues, such as Town halls and Sports Centres and Online was third most popular with **72** agreeing that this service was a useful way to get products. **50** chose libraries.
- 4.6 When asked where within physical locations products should be sited, the overwhelming majority (**257**) stated in toilets where it is discreet. Some comments made reference to products only being available in female and disabled toilets, however as products are available to all who menstruate as well as those who will pick them up for others, where products are placed in toilets, it should be all toilets for ease of access. **95** respondents wanted the products to be in open areas, clearly visible or display stands.

Usage

- 4.7 When it came to usage, **382** respondents stated that the Council supply would be their main source of period products. This was split between online and picking up from a venue, with **249** respondents stating online ordering would be their main source and **133** stating a venue would be where they would access products. **148** will only pick up for emergencies if they are near a venue that holds products and **63** will pick up products if they happen to be in a venue that has them. **69** do not intend to use the products at all.

Barriers to usage

- 4.8 The biggest barrier identified to accessing products was not knowing where to find them (**275**), with not sure how much they can take being second (**191**). Not being clear whether products were free to take would be a barrier to **177** and **132** stated embarrassment would be a barrier. **18** didn't have access to online ordering, while a cultural or language barrier was identified as an issue for **8**.

Products people would like to see

- 4.9 When it came to products, a range of products was popular with single use pads being the product most people would like to see available, and would use at **176**. **135** would like to see and use tampons and panty liners. When it came to reusables, although not quite as popular, a significant number of respondents wanted to see these available. **110** wanted to see and would use period pants, **75** reusable pads and **60** menstrual cups.

App

- 4.10 The majority of respondents stated they would find it beneficial to locate venues offering free products via an app by using GPS or a postcode. **373** thought it would be useful as opposed to **51** who wouldn't.

5. Who completed the survey

- 5.1 The survey reached a wide demographic. Most of those who completed it were users of period products (**345**), with **209** also being parents. Respondents also comprised those with a disability or long term health condition, carers, care experienced and people who are transgender, non-binary or intersex. **95** of those who completed the survey had low incomes, **10** lived in rural areas, while **2** experience cultural/language barriers. **154** of those who responded would pick up products for others.

6. General Comments

- 6.1 General Comments were also collected. These fell into 5 main areas

- Stigma
- Locations
- Products
- Marketing
- Comments on online service

Stigma

- 6.2 Stigma was raised as an issue for many, with general comments such as 'It's vital that stigma is reduced' and 'Normalising the way people access period products is a great thing. It should be recognised as a normal, healthy body function that no-one need be embarrassed about.'
- 6.3 Stigma around obtaining products was also mentioned, with respondents who mentioned stigma generally being in favour of online ordering as well as discretion in being able to obtain products – like within bathrooms. This was thought especially important for young people.

- 6.4 In addition, when speaking to the groups STAR Project and Kairos, the issue of stigma, especially amongst young people was raised as a barrier to accessing products. It was agreed that speaking about periods should be normalised, however there is a way to go yet until people feel able to be open about periods and able to request products. The consultation results and in-depth conversations both highlighted the need for products to be easy to access without asking and for privacy, should be available in all toilets, male, female, non-gendered and disabled to allow discreet use as well as, where space allows, or in places without public toilets, easily accessible.

Locations

- 6.5 An online ordering service was welcome, especially for those who work or have health issues, and may not be able to visit venues where products are currently held. For example, one respondent stated they have 'severe anxiety and don't really go out unless I must go to appointments, I would only be able to use this service if it was available online'.
- 6.5 Other suggestions of places to hold products were made, such as GPs and pharmacies and all Council offices. Shops and shopping centres were mentioned as fitting in with working hours and being a place where most people go. 'The only place I go to regularly where I could pick them up is supermarkets/shops.'
- 6.7 At the discussion with Kairos, suggestion was made to have the products in the Sandyford Clinic also, while at STAR project, churches were also thought to be a useful venue.

Products

- 6.8 In general a mix of products was welcomed, with reusables, especially period pants being described as 'awesome' and others asking for a variety of different pads and panty liners to be available for different flows. This came across in conversations at STAR too, where good quality products for those with heavy menstrual bleeds were particularly requested.
- 6.9 Size of packs available from venues was also mentioned, with respondents stating that rather than single products or small boxes being available, packs should be available for taking home.
- 6.10 Reusables, while generally welcomed, were not a product that suits everyone. Feedback from Renfrewshire Foodbank was that clients did not want these, as they couldn't wash them effectively. Low-income clients and others where discretion is vital may prefer single use items.

Marketing

- 6.11 The importance of good marketing was highlighted, with suggestions such as 'make sure there are signs up on the front of the venue to make it clear that the products are available inside...' and signs with the products stating "these are FREE please take as many as you need" being helpful. An app to show where products are available was thought useful, and in the session held at Kairos, stickers with a QR code, showing where products were available to be distributed all over Renfrewshire – cafes, bars etc. was discussed as being really beneficial to spread the word.

- 6.12 It was suggested that front facing Council Services, especially dealing with those in crisis, such as Scottish Welfare Fund, should ask clients if they would like information about where to access free period products.
- 6.13 In addition, Kairos service users considered stalls at local events, such as Winterfest were an excellent place to both give out products and spread the word about the free service.

Online Service

- 6.14 The current online service was thought discrete and easy to use, however mention was made of the delays in products arriving. This was a particular problem last year when the Suez Canal was blocked and products couldn't reach the UK. Many people thought that online had to be a vital part of any service 'Online service ... must be offered alongside in person pickup.'

7. Statement

- 7.1 The results of this consultation will inform Renfrewshire Council's Statement of Community-Based Provision for the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021.

Appendix A – Copy of Period Product Consultation

Period Product consultation

New legislation is being introduced to make free period products widely available in Scotland. This means everyone in Scotland who menstruates should have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required.

Councils will have to make sure that free period products are available for people.

We are looking for your views on where and how these products should be made available in Renfrewshire and what types of products we should offer.

This consultation is for anyone who uses period products, will use them in future or will pick them up for family or friends.

Please give us your views below. This consultation will end on May 29th, 2022, at 11:45pm.

By taking part in this short survey, you will help us to ensure that we are providing the best choice of products in the best possible way. This should take approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

If you would like to contact us in an alternative way, please contact communityplanning@renfrewshire.gov.uk

1. Are you aware of our current community provision of free period products in Renfrewshire?

2. Have you used this service?
3. Please tell us more about how you accessed these free period products. (Please tick all that apply)
 - Online ordering*
 - Telephone ordering*
 - Renfrewshire House*
 - Library*
 - Town Hall, Sports centre or other One Ren (Renfrewshire Leisure venue)*
 - Pantry or community food group*
 - Foodbank*
 - Other community setting (RAMH REStore/Remode/Home-Start etc)*
 - Early Learning Centre/nursery*
4. What free period products have you accessed? (Please tick all that apply)
 - Pads*
 - Tampons*
 - Reusable menstrual cups*
 - Period pants*
 - Reusable pads*
 - other*
5. Who did you access products for? (Please tick all that apply)
 - Myself*
 - Family member/ friend*
 - other*
6. How did you access products? (Please tick all that apply)
 - Online*
 - In a building*
 - By telephone*
7. How easy were the products to access in a building?
 - Not easy to access*
 - Had to ask, not clearly signposted or easy to access*
 - Had to ask, but easy to access*
 - Easy to find, easy to access*
8. If there was difficulty accessing, please tell us what that was? (If you got products that way)

9. How easy were these products to order online?

- Not easy to order*
- Had some difficulty ordering*
- Easy to order*

10. If there was difficulty ordering, please tell us what that was? (If you got products that way).

11. Do you feel that the service you used is dignified and meets your need for discretion?

- Service is dignified and discreet*
- It is somewhat dignified and discreet*
- It isn't dignified and discreet*

12. If the service is not dignified and discreet, please tell us what could be done to improve it.

13. What free period products would you like to see available, and which would you/your family/friends make use of? (Please select one answer for each product)

Like to see/ Will use/ Both/ Neither

- Period pads*
- Tampons*
- Period pants*
- Reusable menstrual cups*
- Reusable pads*
- Pantyliners*

14. Where do you think would be the best place to access free products? (Please tick all that apply)

- Council building*
- Town Hall, Sports centre or other One Ren (Renfrewshire Leisure venue)*
- Library*
- Doctors/health centre*
- Foodbank*
- Pantry/Community food group*
- Local community group*
- Online ordering postal service*

15. Do you think that having products in the locations from Q14 is enough? If not, where would you have them? (Are there any areas missing?) (Any venues missing?)

16. Where in the above venues would you most like to see free period products?

- In reception areas even if they are visible to others*
- In toilets where it is discreet (including male, female, and disabled toilets)*

- *On display stands that are easy to find and access*
- *Somewhere out of the way where no one will see me pick up*

17. How do you think you will access free period products? (Please tick all that apply)

- *Will order online. This will be my main source of sanitary products*
- *Will pick up from a venue. This will be my main source of sanitary products*
- *Will pick up if I happen to be in a venue that holds products*
- *Will use only for emergencies if I'm near a venue that holds products*
- *Don't intend to use free products*

18. What is your postcode? (Please provide your postcode as this will allow us to ensure we reach all areas of Renfrewshire)

19. Would you find it beneficial to locate venues offering free products via an app by using GPS or a postcode? (This will let us know if we have managed to reach all areas of Renfrewshire)

20. What, if anything, would stop you from accessing these products? (Please tick all that apply)

- *Not knowing where to get them*
- *Embarrassment*
- *Not sure how much I can take*
- *My preferred brand not available*
- *Can't get out to access venues*
- *A cultural/language barrier*
- *Don't have internet access for online ordering*
- *Not clear if the products are free and I'm allowed to take them*

21. To make sure we are asking a broad section of the community their views can you tell us a bit more about yourself. This information will remain anonymous. (Please tick all that apply)

- *I am a user of period products*
- *I will pick up products for someone else*
- *I am a carer (for an adult)*
- *I am parent/guardian*
- *I have a disability/ long-term health condition*
- *I am a transgender or non-binary or intersex person*
- *I am currently homeless*
- *I am a Gypsy/Traveller*
- *I have a low income*
- *I live in a rural location*
- *I experience cultural/language barriers*
- *I am in care/ care experienced*

22. To help us to provide the best service it would be helpful to let us know if you have any further comments or personal circumstances which would affect the way you access products that we could help to overcome. (Optional)