Department for Education

Period Products Scheme

Ad-hoc statistics: 2021 Management Information

January 2022

Contents

Summary

This ad-hoc notice provides information on the Department for Education's scheme to provide free period products to schools and colleges in England. It covers the 2021 calendar year but also presents some statistics covering the whole scheme since its introduction on 20 January 2020.

Take-up of the scheme

13,822 organisations had made at least one order since the scheme began in January 2020. This represents 68% of the organisations that are currently eligible.

Half of eligible organisations had ordered during 2021, slightly higher than the equivalent figure for 2020 (50% compared to 48%). 17,866 orders were placed during 2021.

The total value of orders placed during 2021 was £3,442,000 which is 58% of the available budget for the scheme. The total spent in 2021 exceeded that for 2020 (£2,791,000).

Variation by characteristics of organisation

94% of secondary schools and 90% of post 16 organisations had made at least one order since the scheme began in January 2020. The equivalent figure for primary schools is lower, at 61%.

Post 16 organisations and secondary schools were most likely to have ordered during 2021 (84% and 81% respectively). Primary schools were least likely to have ordered during 2021 (42%). Larger organisations and those with higher levels of disadvantage were more likely to have ordered. These patterns are similar to those seen in 2020.

Percentage of spend cap spent

On average, organisations who ordered in 2021 spent an average of 68% of their spend cap which is higher than the equivalent figure for 2020 (57%). In 2021, 69% of organisations who ordered had spent most (over 90%) of their spend cap, compared to only 38% of organisations in 2020.

Primary schools, special schools, alternative provision and smaller organisations were more likely than other types of organisation to have spent most of their spend cap.

Types of product ordered

Almost all organisations who had ordered bought some pads and almost half bought some tampons. Pads accounted for three-quarters of all products ordered and tampons accounted for most of the rest.

Over a third of organisations ordered some environmentally friendly or reusable products and the majority also bought standard products. 48% of all products ordered were environmentally friendly or reusable products which is considerably higher than in 2020 (30%).

1. Introduction

The Period Products scheme was launched on 20 January 2020 to ensure that no learner misses out on education due to their period. It enables schools and colleges[1] in England to provide free period products for learners in their place of study.

The scheme covers all state-funded schools and 16 to 19 education organisations in England who have female learners in year 5 (aged 9 or 10 years) or above. Each eligible organisation was allocated a maximum amount of spend (a 'spend cap') between January 2020 and December 2020. They received a separate spend cap for the 2021 calendar year. Both spend caps were based on 35% of the number of learners in the organisation[2] whose legal gender was female and who, based on age, were likely to have started their periods. 35% is an assumed take-up rate, reflecting the fact that not all learners will need products all of the time. A minimum spend cap of £16 was set[3] to allow all organisations to order a reasonable range of products. An average secondary school has a spend cap of around £1,300 each year but most primary schools have a spend cap at or close to the minimum.

The scheme is delivered by Personal Hygiene Services Limited (phs). Organisations order online from a range of 17 products and the products are delivered directly to the organisation free of charge. Organisations can order at any point in the year and are encouraged to wait until their stocks are running low before re-ordering. The smallest organisations are expected to make up to two orders within the year, but larger organisations may order more frequently.

Schools are able to select from a wide range of period products, varying in type, size and brand. They do not need to order the same products throughout the year. Products available include:

- period pads
- environmentally friendly period pads
- reusable period pads
- applicator tampons
- non-applicator tampons
- menstrual cups

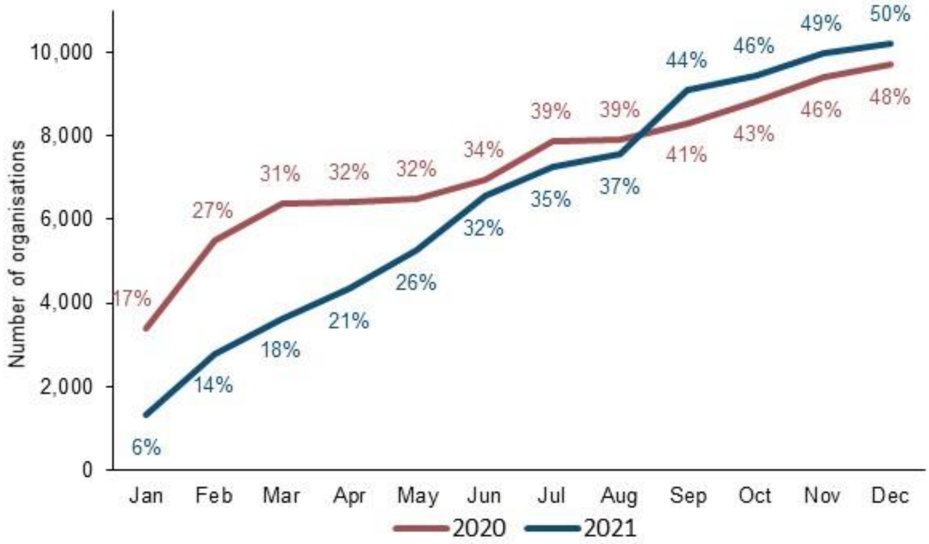
We receive regular management information from phs on the number and value of orders placed and the type of products ordered. We published a summary of that information covering the 2020 calendar year in January 2021. This release updates that with information covering the 2021 calendar year.

1 Referred to as 'organisations' throughout this ad-hoc notice.
2 2021 spend caps were based on learner numbers reported in the Autumn 2020 School Census for organisations that completed it and DfE forecasts of 2020-21 learner numbers for those that didn't. We assume that 5% of 9-year-olds, 10% of 10-year-olds, 20% of 11-year-olds, 50% of 12-year-olds, 75% of 13-year-olds, 95% of 14-year-olds and 100% of those aged 15 or over are menstruating. These estimates are based on information from Age of menarche in contemporary British teenagers: survey of girls born between 1982 and 1986.
3 Any organisation with a calculated spend cap below this level will have their spend cap increased to £16.

2. Take-up of the period products scheme

Half of eligible organisations had made at least one order during 2021 (10,213 out of 20,458 organisations). Take-up was low at the start of 2021 but has subsequently increased - this is likely to be due to the restricted opening of schools and colleges during January and February 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, many organisations made orders towards the end of 2020 so may have had sufficient stocks of products available for the first few months of the year. By the end of the year, take-up was slightly higher than in 2020 (50% compared to 48%) (figure 1).

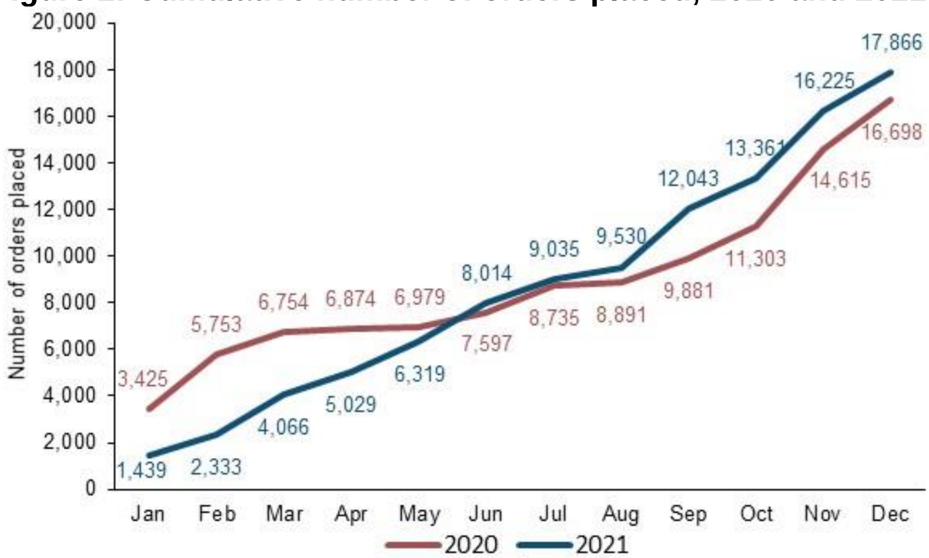
Figure 1: Cumulative number and percentage of organisations who have placed at least one order, 2020 and 2021



Overall, 13,822 organisations had made at least one order since the scheme began in January 2020. This is 68% of the organisations that are currently eligible.

The number of orders placed follows a similar pattern (figure 2). 17,866 orders were placed during 2021 which is an average of 1.7 orders per ordering organisation. The majority of organisations (76% of those that ordered) made a single order during 2021.

Figure 2: Cumulative number of orders placed, 2020 and 2021



The total value of orders placed during 2021 was £3,442,000 which is 68% of the total spend cap for those organisations who had ordered and 58% of the total spend cap for all organisations. The total value of orders increased steadily throughout the year and exceeded the total for 2020 (£2,791,000) (figure 3).

Figure 3: Total value of orders placed, 2020 and 2021

3. Variation by characteristics of organisation

Organisation type

Table 1 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by organisation type. This shows that post 16 organisations and secondary schools were most likely to have made an order (84% and 81% respectively). Primary schools were least likely to have made an order (42%). This is a similar pattern to that seen in 2020.

Table 1: Orders and spend by organisation type, 2021

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Organisation Type	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Primary schools	15,184	42%	£18	£16	92%
Secondary schools[4]	3,346	81%	£1,355	£878	65%
Special schools	1,125	53%	£84	£73	87%
Alternative provision	388	49%	£72	£59	82%
Post 16	415	84%	£3,460	£2,606	75%

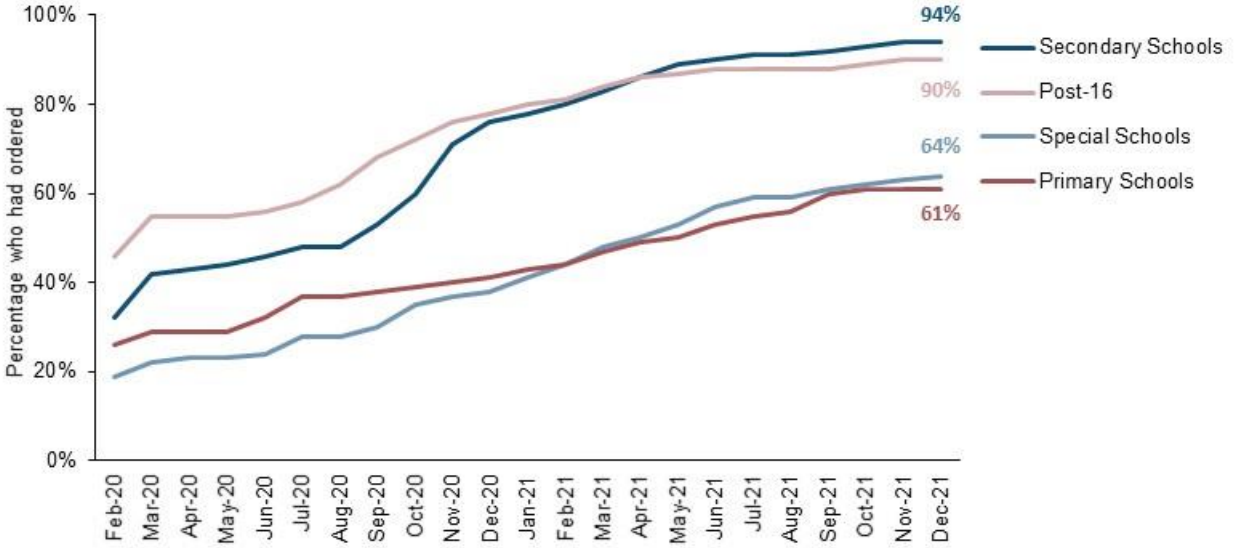
Primary schools have the lowest average spend (£16) but those who have ordered have spent almost all (92%) of their spend cap. This reflects the fact that most primary schools have a low spend cap due to low numbers of pupils assumed to be menstruating. In contrast, post 16 organisations have the highest average spend (£3,460) but this

4 Including all-through schools

represents only 75% of their spend cap. This reflects the fact that these tend to be larger organisations.

94% of secondary schools and 90% of post 16 organisations had made at least one order since the scheme began in January 2020. The equivalent figure for primary schools is lower at 61% (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage of organisations who have placed at least one order by organisation type[5]



Academy status

Table 2 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by academy status for primary and secondary schools. This shows that there is little difference in the likelihood of ordering for different types of primary schools - primary free schools appear slightly more likely to have ordered but this is based on a small number of schools. There is also little difference in the proportion of the spend cap spent between primary schools of different types.

There is also little difference in the likelihood of ordering for different types of secondary schools – secondary free schools appear slightly less likely to have ordered but again this is based on a small number of schools. Secondary free schools have spent a slightly higher proportion of their spend cap though this may reflect the lower average size of this type of secondary school.

5 Alternative provision not shown for clarity. Figures are available in the accompanying tables.

Table 2: Orders and spend by academy status, 2021

Organisation Type	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Primary schools					
LA maintained	9,547	41%	£17	£16	92%
Academy converter	3,924	42%	£18	£16	92%
Academy sponsor led	1,554	44%	£17	£16	93%
Free schools	159	50%	£17	£15	93%
Secondary schools[6]					
LA maintained	728	80%	£1,374	£866	63%
Academy converter	1,572	81%	£1,577	£1,029	65%
Academy sponsor led	764	83%	£1,163	£749	64%
Free schools	279	76%	£524	£365	70%

Spend cap

Table 3 shows the differences in likelihood of ordering and spend by spend cap. This shows a clear increase in likelihood of having ordered with increasing spend cap – 40% of organisations with a spend cap of £16 had made an order compared to 91% of those with a spend cap of over £2000.

There is also a clear decline in the proportion of the spend cap spent as the spend cap increases – organisations with a spend cap of £16 had spent an average of 94% of their spend cap while those with a spend cap of over £2000 had spent an average of 72% of their spend cap.

Table 3: Orders and spend by spend cap, 2021

Spend cap	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
£16	12,543	40%	£16	£15	94%
£17 to £25	2,853	48%	£21	£19	90%
£26 to £100	1,069	58%	£52	£46	88%
£101 to £1000	1,558	74%	£524	£367	70%
£1001 to £2000	1,686	83%	£1,436	£882	61%
£2001 +	749	91%	£3,363	£2,426	72%

Levels of disadvantage

Table 4 shows the differences in likelihood of ordering and spend by the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium[7] in the organisation. This information is not available for 641 organisations[8]. Organisations with lower levels of pupil premium were less likely to

6 Three secondary City Technology Colleges (CTC) are not shown.
7 Based on pupil premium allocations for the financial year beginning 1 April 2020.
8 Including 388 post-16 organisations, 152 special schools, 52 alternative provision organisations and 52 mainstream schools. In most cases, information is not available because pupil premium is not available in that type of organisation.

have ordered period products than those with higher levels of pupil premium. This is likely to be because the scheme aims to provide products to learners who need them, including those who have forgotten products or come on their period unexpectedly as well as those who cannot afford products.

There is little difference in the proportion of the spend cap spent between organisations with different pupil premium levels.

Table 4: Orders and spend by percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium, 2021

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Pupil premium band[9]	**Number of organisations**	**Percentage who ordered**	**Average spend cap**	**Average spend**	**Spend as % of spend cap**
Very Low	3,866	39%	£293	£202	69%
Low	3,878	47%	£423	£282	67%
Medium	4,191	51%	£478	£311	65%
High	3,912	55%	£422	£277	66%
Very High	3,970	55%	£329	£215	65%

4. Geographical variation

Table 5 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by region. Organisations in the East Midlands were most likely to have made an order (55%) and those in the South East and North East regions were least likely to have made an order (47%). Organisations in the North East had spent a higher proportion of their spend cap (76%) than organisations in other regions.

Organisations in the East Midlands had the lowest average spend (£268) while those in London have the highest average spend (£402). However, this reflects differences in the average size of schools and colleges (as illustrated by differences in average spend cap) between these areas.

Table 5: Orders and spend by region, 2021

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Region	**Number of organisations**	**Percentage who ordered**	**Average spend cap**	**Average spend**	**Spend as % of spend cap**
North East	1,067	47%	£477	£363	76%
North West	3,123	48%	£450	£296	66%
Yorkshire and the Humber	2,166	48%	£494	£349	71%
East Midlands	1,920	55%	£404	£268	66%
West Midlands	2,208	52%	£497	£346	70%
East of England	2,306	52%	£468	£329	70%
London	2,462	51%	£609	£402	66%
South East	2,986	47%	£576	£379	66%
South West	2,220	49%	£442	£306	69%

9 Pupil premium bands are defined as follows: Less than 10% = Very low, 10% to 15% = Low, 16% to 23% = Medium, 24% to 37% = High and 38% + = Very High

There is considerable variation by local authority. Organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire were most likely to have ordered in 2021 (75%) and those in Islington were least likely to have ordered (30%). A full breakdown of the data by local authority is included in the accompanying tables (see table A6).

Organisations in Wokingham had spent the highest proportion of their spend cap (92%) while those in Kensington and Chelsea had spent the lowest proportion (16%).

A list of all the schools and colleges that ordered products in either 2020 or 2021 is included in table A10.

5. Percentage of spend cap spent

As seen earlier, the organisations that had ordered had spent an average of 68% of their spend cap. In 2021, 69% of organisations who ordered had spent most (90% or more) of their spend cap, compared to only 38% of organisations in 2020. In 2021, 11% of organisations had spent less than half of their spend cap (22% in 2020) and 20% had spent between 50% and 89% of their spend cap (40% in 2020).

There were considerable differences in the proportion of the spend cap spent by organisation type (see table 6). The majority of primary schools, special schools and alternative provision organisations have spent most of their spend cap (82%, 74% and 75% respectively). The proportions of secondary schools and post-16 organisations who have spent most of their spend cap are lower (39% and 52% respectively).

Table 6: Percentage of spend cap spent by organisation type, 2021

Organisation Type	Number of organisations who ordered	Spent up to 49% of their spend cap	Spent 50% to 89% of their spend cap	Spent 90% or more of their spend cap
Primary schools	6,373	1%	17%	82%
Secondary schools	2,711	34%	27%	39%
Special schools	592	6%	19%	74%
Alternative Provision	190	11%	14%	75%
Post 16	347	22%	26%	52%

There were also considerable differences in the proportion of the spend cap spent by size of spend cap amongst those that ordered (see table 7). Organisations with a small spend cap were more likely to have spent most of their spend cap while those with a larger spend cap were much less likely to have spent most of their spend cap.

Table 7: Percentage of spend cap spent by spend cap of those that ordered

Spend cap	Number of organisations who ordered	Spent up to 49% of their spend cap	Spent 50% to 89% of their spend cap	Spent 90% or more of their spend cap
£16	4,988	0%	11%	88%
£17 to £25	1,379	3%	36%	62%
£26 to £100	615	7%	17%	75%
£101 to £1000	1,150	24%	21%	55%
£1001 to £2000	1,397	39%	30%	30%
£2001 +	684	27%	29%	43%

6. Types of products ordered

Table 8 shows the number of organisations ordering each type of product. Almost all organisations who ordered bought some pads and almost half (49%) bought some tampons – this is an increase from 36% in 2020 which suggests that in 2021, more organisations bought a mix of products. Only 9% of organisations who ordered bought menstrual cups.

Over a third (35%) of organisations who had ordered bought some environmentally friendly or reusable products[10] and the majority also bought standard products (96%). These figures are similar to those for 2020.

Table 8: Number of organisations who ordered each type of product, 2020 and 2021

	2020		2021	
Type of product	Number of organisations who ordered	Percentage of all ordering organisations	Number of organisations who ordered	Percentage of all ordering organisations
Pads	9,664	100%	10,134	99%
Tampons	3,487	36%	5,026	49%
Menstrual cup	718	7%	917	9%
Standard	9,438	97%	9,845	96%
Eco-friendly/reusable	3,435	35%	3,604	35%

Table 9 shows a breakdown of the number of packets of each type of product ordered. In 2021, pads accounted for three-quarters (75%) of all products ordered[11] which is considerably higher than in 2020. Tampons accounted for most of the rest (22%).

In 2021, 48% of products ordered were environmentally friendly or reusable products, which is considerably higher than in 2020 (30%). This suggests that although organisations were no more likely to order environmentally friendly or reusable products in

10 Environmentally friendly products include environmentally friendly pads and organic tampons. Reusable products include reusable pads and menstrual cups.
11 Note that packets vary in the number of products they contain. This does not take account of differences in number of products per packet.

2021 than in 2020, where organisations did order these products, they made up a greater proportion of their order.

Table 9: Number of packets of each type of product ordered[12], 2020 and 2021

	2020		2021	
Type of product	**Number of packets ordered**	**Percentage of all packets ordered**	**Number of packets ordered**	**Percentage of all packets ordered**
Pads	458,023	66%	615,064	75%
Tampons	221,656	32%	179,723	22%
Menstrual cup	9,477	1%	22,619	3%
Standard	483,551	70%	423,331	52%
Eco-friendly/reusable	205,605	30%	394,075	48%

7. Types of products ordered by characteristics of organisation

Table 10 shows the types of product ordered by type of organisation. This shows that most organisations, regardless of type, ordered some pads. Most post-16 organisations and many secondary schools and alternative provision organisations also ordered some tampons. Primary and special schools were much less likely to order tampons. 55% of post-16 organisations and 25% of secondary schools ordered other types of product.

Post-16 organisations and secondary schools were more likely than other types of organisation to order environmentally friendly or reusable products, though most also ordered standard products. A small proportion of primary schools did order environmentally friendly or reusable products but most only ordered standard products.

Table 10: Types of products ordered by organisation type

Organisation Type	Pads	Tampons	Other	Standard	Eco-friendly/ reusable
Primary schools	99%	36%	1%	97%	16%
Secondary schools	99%	76%	25%	95%	74%
Special schools	99%	36%	3%	98%	41%
Alternative provision	97%	81%	2%	98%	29%
Post 16	99%	89%	55%	95%	84%

Table 11 shows the types of product ordered by spend cap. This shows that most organisations, regardless of spend cap, ordered some pads. The likelihood of ordering other types of product increases with the spend cap. However, this may reflect differences between types of organisation by spend cap (that is, organisations with a low spend cap tend to be primary or special schools who were less likely to order products other than pads).

Similarly, the likelihood of ordering environmentally friendly and reusable products increases with the spend cap. However, as above this may reflect differences between types of organisation by spend cap.

Table 11: Types of products ordered by spend cap

Spend cap	Pads	Tampons	Other	Standard	Eco-friendly/ reusable
£16	99%	37%	0%	97%	13%
£17 to £25	100%	36%	1%	97%	20%
£26 to £100	99%	43%	3%	97%	38%
£101 to £1000	99%	71%	13%	97%	64%
£1001 to £2000	99%	77%	28%	96%	77%
£2001 +	99%	81%	48%	92%	89%

Department for Education

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