

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY SCREENING

FOR

**PERIOD PRODUCTS (FREE PROVISION) (DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION) REGULATIONS**

Tackling Educational Disadvantage
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Equality Screening: Period Products (Free Provision) Regulations – Department of Education Public Service Bodies

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PART ONE - BACKGROUND

1.1 Title of policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

Period Products (Free Provision) Regulations – Department of Education public service bodies

1.2 Type of policy

New policy

1.3 Click here to enter description of the policy including:

- Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
- What is the policy trying to achieve? (aim/outcomes)
- How will this be achieved?

Pat Catney MLA, considered that: '*... there is an undeniable need to provide sustained free access to period products in education settings and other public buildings*'¹; and introduced the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill in the Northern Ireland Assembly in October 2021.

The Bill had broad support in the Assembly and received Royal Assent on 12 May 2022 and is now the [Period Products \(Free Provision\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#). (The Act).

The Act places a duty on the Executive Office to ensure that period products are available free of charge, on a universal basis, in appropriate locations.

Further, each Government Department in Northern Ireland must (by 11 May 2023) specify by Regulations 'Public Service Bodies,' which must ensure that period products are obtainable, free of charge, for use on their premises.

¹[Period Products \(Free Provision\) Bill - Explanatory & Financial Memorandum As Amended at Further Consideration Stage](#)

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The Department of Education (DE) is required to specify bodies with functions that would enable them to discharge this duty in relation to school premises.

Schools and other educational premises are specifically referenced in the Act and it was acknowledged during the Assembly's consideration of the Bill that nobody should miss out on their education because they don't have access to period products. This resonates with [DE's Pilot Scheme to address Period Dignity in Schools](#) which seeks to support confident attendance at school, primarily through the provision of free period products.

The Department is also required to consider specifying any other Public Service Body that is constituted by or under a statutory provision and has functions that consist of or include providing public services or otherwise serving the public interest.

As well as specifying Public Service Bodies, the Regulations may also provide for descriptions of premises and people to be treated as 'in scope' for the purposes of the Act.

It is important to note however that nothing in the Act itself limits the free provision, other than products are to be sufficient for use on the premises and provided specified Public Service Bodies meet the definition under the Act. The Act is therefore wide reaching in its provision. At Final Stage debate, the Bill's sponsor said:

*'The impact on those who cannot get access to period products is huge. Giving that to pupils, workers and all people will improve access to education and work and will allow them the level of dignity that they all deserve'*².

DE's proposals for the Regulations are summarised as follows:

- Proposals will ensure that all schools in Northern Ireland are captured so nobody misses out on their education due to insufficient access to period products;

² [Official Report – Northern Ireland Assembly 24th March 2022](#)

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- Proposals place as few limitations as possible in relation to descriptions of premises, descriptions of persons and provisions about when premises are to be treated as ‘in use’;
- To ensure provision is in all schools, DE is proposing to specify the Education Authority as manager of controlled schools; all voluntary schools; all grant-maintained integrated schools; and all independent schools. The legal duty will sit with ‘managers’ of these types of schools;
- DE is proposing to specify the Education Authority in relation to Youth Settings, EOTAS settings, pupil referral units and office accommodation;
- Other Arms-Length Bodies that meet the definition of Public Service Body under the Act, specifically, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the NI Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), and the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI), are also included in the proposals in relation to their office accommodation;
- There are a small number of Public Service Bodies which could be specified in the regulations, but, for practical reasons, DE is not proposing to do so. These are: Diocesan Education Committees of CCMS, Youth Council for Northern Ireland and the Exceptional Circumstances Body. Supporting rationale is provided in the consultation document;
- Other DE NDPB’s that cannot be included as they are not statutory are: Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Comhairle na Gaelscholaíochta, Middletown Centre for Autism, Catholic Schools’ Trustee Service, Controlled Schools Support Council and the Governing Bodies Association.

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- DE is proposing to limit provision in schools, EOTAS Settings and pupil referral units, to pupils and staff, as well as visitors to each setting, who have good reason for being there, such as attending organised school events and meetings. This would ensure the general public are not entitled to go into these settings to obtain free period products, given the importance of safeguarding children and young people;
- DE's proposed descriptions of premises do not place limits on provision and ensure products are available at all times when the building is in use, which is a requirement under the Act.

1.4 What factors could contribute to, or detract from the intended outcome of the policy?

Legislative – The Regulations are subject to approval in the Assembly under the affirmative procedure. Without an Executive and functioning Assembly they cannot be made.

Financial – funding for the provision is to be agreed by the Assembly however this policy is limited to the specification of Public Service Bodies in Regulations rather than the actual provision of free period products.

1.5 Main stakeholders affected (Please delete as appropriate)

Pupils (actual and potential), teaching staff, other school staff, visitors to school, including parents.

People on the premises of DE's specified Public Service Bodies, including young people attending Youth Settings, EOTAS Settings and pupil referral units.

1.6 Who is responsible for?

(a) Devising the policy

DE

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(b) Implementing it

DE

(c) Explain the relationship?

DE devises the Policy, consults on it and seeks approval of Executive and Assembly for the Regulations.

The Policy is implemented once the Regulations are in place, specifying Public Service Bodies who must make period products available on their premises.

The next step in the implementation of the Act will be for DE to issue guidance to the specified Public Service Bodies and this will be subject to a separate screening and consultation.

1.7 Other policies or objectives with a bearing on this policy

- What are they? (E.g. Programme for Government, Public Service Agreement targets etc.)
- Who owns them?
- Are there any links to other NI departments/NDPBs?

Every Government Department in Northern Ireland is required to have Regulations in place in relation to their own Public Service Bodies within the same timescales (by 11 May 2023). The Executive Office have responsibility for the universal provision under Section 1 of the Act.

Addressing Period Poverty / Period Dignity is relevant to

1) draft PfG Outcomes

“We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect” and

“Our children and young people have the best start in life”.

2) Other relevant Executive strategies and frameworks include:

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[Child Poverty Strategy](#), [Children and Young People's Strategy](#), [Making Life Better 2013-2023](#), [development by DfC of Gender Equality Strategy](#), and [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#).

3) DE Strategic Priorities

- a. Strategic Priority 3 - Look after our children & young people.**
Addressing period poverty/period dignity has the potential to support and promote positive physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
- b. DE Strategic Priority 6 - Tackle Disadvantage and Underachievement.** Addressing period poverty/period dignity has the potential to promote confident school attendance through provision of free period products.

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EVIDENCE

1.8 What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy in respect of each of the categories?

Religious Belief

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision in making the Regulations.

Total population

Table 1 Religion Brought Up In: All usual residents

Total Population	Catholic	Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)	Other Religions	None
1.81M	45.14%	48.36%	0.92%	5.59%

Source [NI Census 2011](#) (2021 NI Census data will be available Autumn 2022)

Female School Enrollments Table 2 – year 6 – 14 female school enrollments, by religion

School Type	Religion			
	Female	Protestant	Catholic	Other
Primary (Y6-7)*	24,692	7,861	12,628	4,203
Post-Primary (Y8-14)	73,135	25,830	37,701	9,604
Total	97,827	33,691	50,329	13,807
Percentage	100.0%	34.4%	51.4%	14.1%

Source – Screening for period poverty pilot scheme, data taken from October 2019 NI [school census](#)

'other' category includes pupils that are classified as other Christian, non-Christian, no religion or where religion is unknown or not provided

Data has been provided for total female enrolments in years 6 and 7 although only 12.5% of pupils of this age are likely to be menstruating on the basis that 87.5% pupils do not menstruate until secondary school^{1,3}

³ <https://www.bmjjournals.org/doi/10.1136/bmjjournals-2019-100000>

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Political Opinion

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their political opinion. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

Total population

Table 3- National Identity (Classification 1) continued Table population: All usual resident

Total Population	British only	Irish only	Northern Irish only	British and Irish only	British and Northern Irish only	Irish and Northern Irish only	British Irish and Northern Irish only	Other
1.81M	39.89%	25.26%	20.94%	0.66%	6.17%	1.06%	1.02%	5%

Source: [NI Census 2011](#) (2021 NI Census data will be available Autumn 2022)

Female School Enrollments

The political opinion of pupils is not known as it is not collected. See religion as a proxy for political opinion

Racial Group

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their racial group. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

Total population

Table 4 Ethnic Group Table population: All usual residents

Total	White	Chinese	Irish Traveler	Indian
1.81M	98.21%	0.36%	0.07%	0.34%
	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Black Caribbean
	0.06%	0.03%	0.28%	0.02%
	Black African	Black other	Mixed	Other
	0.13%	0.06%	0.33%	0.13%

Source: [NI Census 2011](#) (2021 NI Census data will be available Autumn 2022)

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Female School Enrollments

Table 5 – Female School Enrollments by racial group

School Type	Female	Ethnicity							
		White (ex. Irish Traveller)	Chinese	Irish Traveller	Indian / Sri Lankan	Pakistani	Black	Mixed ethnic group	Other ethnic group
Primary (Y6-7)	24,692	23,411	84	109	133	27	143	457	328
Post-Primary (y8-14)	73,135	69,632	291	129	361	85	433	974	1,230
Total	97,827	93,043	375	238	494	112	576	1,431	1,558
%	100%	95.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.6%	1.5%	1.6%

Source – Screening for period poverty pilot scheme, data taken from October 2019 NI [school census](#). Data has been provided for total female enrolments in years 6 and 7 although only 12.5% of pupils of this age are likely to be menstruating on the basis that 87.5% pupils do not menstruate until secondary school¹⁴.

Age

Free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their age. Although citizens of menstruating age will benefit directly from the provision, their households are likely to be indirect beneficiaries given pressures on household budgets.

The provision will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in work and school, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation on provision in making the Regulations.

Total population data

According to the [2021 Census \(first results\)](#) there are 484,000 females in Northern Ireland between the ages of 10 and 50 (proxy for menstruating age, which is typically 13 – 50/55). This represents 25.5% of the population.

⁴ <https://www.bmjjournals.org/content/322/7294/1095>

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Female School Enrolments

The median age of menstruation is 13 and it is estimated that 12.5% of pupils are likely to be menstruating before secondary school⁵. All schools in Northern Ireland would be captured by the proposed Regulations.

Table 6 – female enrolments

School Type	Female
Primary (Y6-7)*	24,692*
Post-Primary (Y8-14)	73,135
Total	97,827
Percentage	100.0%

Source – Screening for period poverty pilot scheme, data taken from October 2019 NI [school census](#). Data has been provided for total female enrolments in years 6 and 7 although only 12.5% of pupils of this age are likely to be menstruating on the basis that 87.5% pupils do not menstruate until secondary school¹.

Teaching workforce

According to [2021/22 Teacher Workforce Statistics](#) 77.2% of Northern Ireland's 20,936 were female i.e. 16,163 (FTE 14,224).

9.9% of female teachers were over 55.

Therefore, estimated number of teachers menstruating is 14,562.(FTE approximately 13,210).

Youth Settings

Approximately 28,228 girls and young women aged 9-15 engaged with the Youth Service in 2020/21. The approximation in Table 7 demonstrates that the gender split of young people engaging with the service is representative of the overall population i.e. 51% female.

⁵ <https://www.bmjjournals.org/doi/10.1136/bmjjournals-2020-100952>

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Table 7 – estimated girls engaging with Youth Service (9-25 yrs)

Estimated 9-25 year olds engaging 2021/22 (male and female) (Q1+Q2) x 4 ⁶	Estimated 9-25 year olds engaging 2019/20 (female) ⁷	Female %
55,152	28,228	51%

Marital Status

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their marital status. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

Total population

Table 8 - Marital and Civil Partnership Status Table population: All usual residents aged 16 and over

Total	Single (never married or never registered a same-sex civil	Married	In a registered same sex civil partnership
1.81M	36.14%	47.56%	0.09%
	Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a same-sex civil partnership)	Divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	Widowed or surviving partner from a same sex civil partnership
	3.98%	5.45%	6.78%

Source: [NI Census 2011](#)

(2021 NI Census data will be available Autumn 2022)

Female School Enrollments

N/A

⁶ Q1 and Q2 data provided to DEx2

⁷ Statistical Returns for Legacy Funding in 2021 for the 2020-2019 period.

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Sexual Orientation

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their sexual orientation. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods in school and work and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

The Office of National Statistics have indicated that 1.2% of the household population in Northern Ireland identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

The 2021 NI Census data included a question on sex and gender identity and data will be available in Autumn 2022.

Table 9 Post primary experience of LGBT pupils

Proportion of respondents who said the impact of their experience as an LGB&T student had a negative impact on ...	%
Educational Achievement	19.4%

Source: [Post-Primary School Experiences of 16-21 year old people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender](#)

Men And Women Generally

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their gender identity. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

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Population level

According to the [NI Census 2021](#) the total population of Northern Ireland is 1.9M, of which 51% are female, however households/families of girls and women will also benefit from the provision given pressures on cost of living.

The 2021 NI Census data included a question on sex and gender identity and results will be available in Autumn 2022).

Teaching workforce

According to [2021/22 Teacher Workforce Statistics](#) 77.2% of Northern Ireland's 20,936 were female i.e. 16,163 (FTE 14,224).

9.9% of female teachers were over 55.

Therefore, estimated number of teachers menstruating is 14,562.(FTE approximately 13,210).

Youth Settings

Approximately 28,228 girls and young women aged 9-15 engaged with the Youth Service in 2020/21. The approximation in Table 10 demonstrates that the gender split of young people engaging with the service is representative of the overall population i.e. 51% female

Table 10 - % females engaging in Youth Service

Estimated 9-25 year olds engaging 2021/22 (male and female) (Q1+Q2) x 2 ⁸	Estimated 9-25 year olds engaging 2019/20 (female) ⁹	Female %
55,152	28,228	51%

Source – Education Authority Youth Service

Impact of gender identity of educational achievement

Table 11 Post primary experience of LGBT pupils

⁸ Q1 and Q2 data provided to DEx 2

⁹ Statistical Returns for Legacy Funding in 2021 for the 2020-2019 period.

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Proportion of respondents who said the impact of their experience as an LGB&T student had a negative impact on ...	%
Educational Achievement	19.4%

Source: [Post-Primary School Experiences of 16-21 year old people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender](#)

Disability

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of whether they have a disability. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

Population Level Data

The Northern Ireland Census 2011 indicated that just over one in five of the usually resident population (21 per cent) had a long-term health problem¹⁰

School Data

Over 67,000 pupils in schools have some form of special educational need; this is 19.3% of the entire school population. Of this, more than 19,000, or 5.5% of pupils, have a statement of special educational needs¹¹.

SEN data used as a proxy for disability: All female pupil scenario

Table 12 female SEN enrolments

School Type	SEN			
	Statement	SEN Stages 1-4	Total SEN	No SEN
Primary (Y6-7)	638	3,414	4,052	20,640
Post-Primary (y8-14)	1,866	7,534	9,400	63,735
Total	2,504	10,948	13,452	84,375
Percentage	18.6%	81.4%	13.8%	86.2%

¹⁰ [2011 Census - Key Statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistics Bulletin \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/school-enrolments>

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Notes: Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day i.e. The Friday of the first full week in October (In 2019/20 this was the 11 October 2019) Enrolments count as per the pupil's main registered school. In most cases this is a mainstream school as opposed to a school with a learning support centre or a special school. Total female enrolments are provided for years 6-7 but it is expected that only 12.5% of this number will be menstruating.

Dependents

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of whether or not they have dependents. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods in school and work and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations.

The [2011 NI Census](#) indicated that 34% per cent of households in Northern Ireland contained dependent children and 40% contained at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability; made up of those households with dependent children (9.2 per cent) and those with no dependent children (31 per cent).

The 2011 Young Life and Times Survey (of 16 year old young people) reported one in ten of their respondents had caring responsibilities. The average age of a young carer is 12 (Barnardo's).

At 31 March 2018, there were 3,109 Looked After Children in Northern Ireland

NEEDS, EXPERIENCES AND PRIORITIES

1.9 Taking into account the evidence gathered at 1.8 what are the needs, experiences and priorities of each category in relation to this particular policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project?

Religious Belief

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their religious belief. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of this provision, in making the Regulations, therefore provision should reflect, as far as possible, the total population breakdown in table 1¹² at 2.8. i.e. 45.14% Catholic, 48.36% Protestant/other Christian, 0.92% other, 5.9% none.

Educational Perspective

Table 17 of Annex G of the report “A Fair Start” illustrates that Catholic pupils were slightly more likely than Protestant to get 5+ GCSEs (A*-C) including English and maths, but this masks the effect of multiple factors that can affect attainment. Table 17 breaks down the data by gender and FSME status and some more disturbing results emerge. In each of the last three years, Protestant FSME boys had the lowest rates of attainment, less than half of that found for Catholic non-FSME girls. In 2019, just 37.9% of Protestant FSME boys gained 5+ GCSEs (A*-C) including English and maths, while 85.3% of Catholic non-FSME girls met this standard. In contrast, the gap between non-FSME Catholic girls and non-FSME Protestant girls was 3.5 percentage points. The gap in attainment between Catholic and Protestant non-FSME boys was

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smaller (5.0 percentage points) than that of Catholic and Protestant FSME boys (8.8 percentage points)¹³.

It is clear from the data outlined at Table 2 that this provision will benefit more catholic children in schools (51.4%) than protestant children (34.4%). However children who define themselves as “Other” (14.1%). will also benefit and the proportions are not dissimilar from overall school population.

Religious breakdown at an overall school level is¹⁴:

Protestant: 112,637 / 348,928 = 32.2%

Catholic: 176,408 / 348,928 = 50.6%

Other: 59,883 / 348,928 = 17.2%

Political Opinion

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their political opinion. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations and will therefore, as far as possible, reflect the political opinion breakdown at table 3 in 1.8, which indicated 39.9% identifying as British only, 25.26% Irish only, 20.94% Northern Irish only and 15.45% other¹⁵.

For pupils in school, see Religious Belief as a proxy for political opinion.

¹³ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/A%20Fair%20Start%20Final%20Report%20and%20Action%20Plan%20Annex%20G%20-%20Final.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revised%203rd%20March%202020%20-%20Annual%20enrolments%20at%20schools%20and%20in%20pre-school%20....pdf> (Table 5)

¹⁵ [2011 Census](#). 2021 data will be available in Autumn 2022.

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Racial Group

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their racial group. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations; and so provision should, as far as possible, reflect the total population statistics set out in Table 4 in 2.8, i.e. White 98.21%, with 11 other groups totaling 1.79%.

Educational Perspective

PISA 2018 results showed that first- and second-generation immigrant pupils performed significantly less well than non-immigrant pupils, in line with the international trend. Pupils who spoke a language other than English at home scored significantly less well in the reading assessment than pupils who spoke English at home.

Based on the data in table 5 in 2.8, 4.9%¹⁶ of female pupils benefiting from the schools' period dignity pilot scheme are Non-White or Irish Traveler. This is broadly aligned with the total school population.

Age

According to the [2021 Census](#) (first results) there are 484,000 females in Northern Ireland between the ages of 10 and 50. This represents 25.5% of the population.

The median age of menstruation is 13 and it is estimated that 12.5%¹⁷ of pupils are likely to be menstruating before secondary school. Menopause typically occurs between 45 and 55 years of age.

¹⁶ 2019 [school census](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.bmjjournals.org/lookup/doi/10.1136/bmjjournals.2019.72941095>

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Free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their age. Although citizens of menstruating age will benefit directly from the provision, their households are likely to be indirect beneficiaries given pressures on household budgets.

The provision will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation on provision in making the Regulations so the provision, as far as possible, reflects the total population.

Educational Perspective

The median age of menstruation is 13 and it is estimated that 12.5% of pupils are likely to be menstruating before secondary school¹⁸. All schools in Northern Ireland would be captured by the proposed Regulations.

The regulations will provide a legislative basis for provision already being piloted in Northern Ireland schools through the Period Dignity pilot Scheme, which launched in September 2021. The scheme supports confident attendance at school, primarily through the provision of free period products.

During development of the scheme, analysis indicated that, although girls' attendance rates tend to be better than boys' overall, absence rates (due to illness) catch up and rise above boys' rates, at median (commencement of) menstruation age. The pattern is the same regardless of fsm status, indicating a need to support girls' confident attendance at school when they start their period.

¹⁸ <https://www.bmjjournals.org/lookup/doi/10.1136/bmjjournals-2021-105942>

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As set out in 2.8, 77.2%¹⁹ of Northern Ireland's teachers were female²⁰ and 90.1% of teachers were under 55. This represents a significant workforce likely to have periods, based on their age.

The EA Youth Service estimates in 2.8 demonstrate that females of menstruating age, engaging with the youth service (51%) reflect the male/female split of the total population, which is also 51%.²¹

Marital Status

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their marital status. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations, so provision, as far as possible, reflects the total population set out in Table 8 in 2.8.

Sexual Orientation

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their sexual orientation. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations, so provision, as far as possible, reflects the needs of the overall population.

Men and Women Generally

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of their gender identity. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation.

¹⁹ *Teaching workforce*. According to [2021/22 Teacher Workforce Statistics](#) 77.2% of Northern Ireland's 20,936 were female i.e. 16,163 (FTE 14,224). 9.9% of female teachers were over 55. Therefore, estimated number of teachers menstruating is 14,562. (FTE approximately 13,210).

²⁰ [2020/21 Teacher Workforce Statistics](#)

²¹ [Census 2021](#)

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While 51% of the total population are female²², households/families of girls and women will also benefit from the provision given pressures on cost of living. The 2021 NI Census data included a question on sex and gender identity and results will be available in Autumn 2022.

Educational Perspective

The regulations will provide a legislative basis for provision already being piloted in Northern Ireland schools through the Period Dignity pilot Scheme, which launched in September 2021. The scheme supports confident attendance at school, primarily through the provision of free period products.

During development of the scheme, analysis indicated that, although girls' attendance rates tend to be better than boys' overall, absence rates (due to illness) catch up and rise above boys' rates, at median (commencement of) menstruation age. The pattern is the same regardless of fsme status, indicating a need to support girls' confident attendance at school when they start their period.

While females in school and youth settings reflect the overall gender split in Northern Ireland, it is note-worthy that over 77% of teaching staff are female.

The policy aims to minimise any limitation of the provision in making the Regulations.

The Act requires that arrangements to provide period products respect dignity, privacy and confidentiality. While this applies to all groups, it is particularly relevant in the case of gender identity and this can be addressed through Guidance to be issued under the Act, to Public

²² [NI Census 2021](#)

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Service Bodies by Departments, which is subject to a separate screening and consultation.

Disability

The Northern Ireland Census 2011 indicated that just over one in five of the usually resident population (21 per cent) had a long-term health problem²³. Further 19.3% of pupils in schools have some form of special educational need. These are significant.

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations.

Educational Perspective

The proportion of school leavers with a statement of special educational need (stage 5 of the statementing process - SEN) who achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A* - C or equivalent was 60.3% in 2017/18, compared with 90.2% for those pupils without a statement of SEN. A 29.9% point differential.

19.3% of the total school population in NI have SEN. Based on the data in Table 12 at 2.8, in the all (female) pupil scenario, 13.9% of the children supported are SEN. The difference between this figure and the NI average is explained by the gender breakdown for SEN. Female learners account for just 27.5% of learners with a SEN statement and 38.7 % of SEN learners without a statement²⁴.

²³ [2011 Census - Key Statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistics Bulletin \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2011-census-key-statistics-northern-ireland-statistics-bulletin)

²⁴ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/school-enrolments>

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Dependents

Provision of free period products will have a positive impact on citizens, irrespective of whether or not they have dependents. It will support and increase confidence in managing periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during menstruation. The policy aims to minimise any limitation of their provision in making the Regulations.

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PART TWO – SCREENING QUESTIONS

LIKELY IMPACT

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2.1 What is the likely impact of this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on equality of opportunity for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Religious Belief None

Political Opinion

Age None

Sexual Orientation None

Men And Women Generally Minor

Disability None

Dependents None

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OPPORTUNITIES TO BETTER PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

2.2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Religious Belief No

Political Opinion

Racial Group No

Age No

Marital Status

Sexual Orientation No

Men And Women Generally Yes

Disability No

Dependents No

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LIKELY IMPACT ON GOOD RELATIONS

2.3 To what extent is the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious belief None

Political opinion None

Racial group None

2.4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious belief

Political opinion

Racial group No

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MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

2.5 Please provide details of data on the impact of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on people with multiple identities and specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

Provision includes all schools, statutory Youth Settings, EOTAS settings, pupil referral units and office accommodation of DE's specified public service bodies. Guidance to be issued (which is subject to separate consultation and screening) has potential to support people with multiple identities.

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PART THREE - SCREENING DECISION

3.1 Please select as appropriate and provide details and reasons:

- a) The decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment.

Provision of free period products under the Act will enhance equality of opportunity, regardless of Section 75 category.

Access to free products helps citizens to manage their periods, in school and work, and to carry out normal activities during their period. The Policy for these regulations does not present a significant departure from what is provided for in the Act, only limiting provision to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people.

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MITIGATION

3.2 If option b was chosen.

N/A – policy ruled out, however Guidance to Public Service Bodies can ensure support for S75 groups. This will be subject to a separate screening and consultation.

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TIMETABLING AND PRIORITISING

3.3 If option c was chosen.

N/A – policy ruled out

PART FOUR - MONITORING

Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on any of Section 75 equality categories:

Under the Act, Departments will be required to provide Public Service Bodies with Guidance on their duties. Public Service Bodies will be required to consult with product users and publish a statement on arrangements. The statement must include how the arrangements have had regard to Departmental Guidance, and the body's consultation with product users.

Guidance will be subject to separate consultation and screening but will provide a further opportunity to ensure S 75 groups are supported.

PART FIVE - DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

5.1 Will the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project in any way discourage persons with disabilities from participating in public life or fail to promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities?

No

5.2 Is there an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities or encourage participation in public life by making changes to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project or introducing additional measures?

No

5.3 Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project with reference to the disability duties.

Departments will be required to provide specified Public Service Bodies with Guidance on their duties under the Act and Public Service Bodies will be required to consult with product users and publish a statement on arrangements. The statement must include how the arrangements have had regard to Departmental Guidance and the consultation with product users.

Guidance will be subject to a separate consultation and screening but will provide a further opportunity to ensure S 75 groups are supported.

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PART SIX - HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

6.1 Does the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project review/revised policy/pilot/project affect anyone's Human Rights?

Particularly consider:

- [The Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

No

6.2 If you have identified a negative impact; what Human Right is impacted, what is the nature of the impact and who is affected and how?

N/A

At this stage you should determine whether to seek legal advice and to refer the issue to the Equality Unit to consider:

- whether there is a law which allows you to interfere with or restrict rights;
- whether this interference or restriction is necessary and proportionate; and
- what action would be required to reduce the level of interference (restriction).

9.3 Outline any actions which could be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project.

N/A

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PART SEVEN - RURAL NEEDS

The undertaking of a [Rural Needs Impact Assessment \(RNIA\)](#) is an integral part of the development, adoption, implementation or review of a policy, strategy or plan or the design or delivery of a public service.

Will a separate RNIA be completed? Yes

Completed RNIA's are published on the Department's Internet site and shown under [Rural Needs Impact Assessments](#).

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PART EIGHT - APPROVAL AND AUTHORISATION

FOR COMPLETION BY POLICY TEAM

Screened by: Ashleigh Mitford Grade: DP Date 17 June 2022, updated 25 August 2022.

Approved by: Dale Heaney Grade 7 Date 25 August 2022

Notes:

The Screening Form must be approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

The TRIM version of the completed Screening Form must be sent to the Equality Team (DE.Equality@education-ni.gov.uk) for quality assurance

FOR COMPLETION BY EQUALITY TEAM

Screening Decision Agreed

Quality Assured by: Catherine Service Date **25th August 2022**
Team Informed:

RECORDING AND PUBLISHING BY POLICY TEAM

Content Manager Ref No: ED1/22/202016

Placed on Internet by policy team Date 25 August 2022