

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
ON TUESDAY 29th MARCH 2022**

Access to Free Period Products

Members may be aware that I committed to report back to the Assembly on the issue of access to period products in Jersey. This commitment was made in response to an online petition in December 2020 on this matter and I am pleased to be able to fulfil that commitment today.

Challenges in access to period products is a global issue, and Jersey is no exception. An increasing number of jurisdictions, including those closer to home, are recognising the impact that difficulties in accessing period products has on young people, whether that be on their mental health, physical health, or their education.

Research conducted in the U.K. by Plan International in 2017, the first of its kind, found that:

- One in ten girls (10%) have been unable to afford sanitary wear
- Almost three quarters (71%) of girls admitted that they have felt embarrassed buying period products
- 49% of girls have missed an entire day of school because of their period, of which 59% have made up a lie or an alternate excuse.
- 64% had missed a PE or sport lesson.

These findings are shocking, but sadly they are issues which are affecting our own children and young people here in Jersey. The findings from our local survey, which I set out in my answer to WQ 85/2022, highlight that there is a clear need.

This is further demonstrated by the valuable work of volunteers from the Red Box Project Jersey, who are providing products to the majority of our schools; as well as from anecdotal reports from teachers, past and present, that they have been buying products themselves to give to students who need them.

I am sure members will agree that our children and young people should not miss out on their education, nor feel shame or stigma, because of something that is a natural and normal part of life for half of our population.

That is why I am delighted to announce today, that following agreement from the Minister for Children and Education, free period products will be available in all schools in Jersey from September 2022.

Products will be available for all learners in schools who need them whether that's because they have forgotten their products, cannot afford products, or have come on their period unexpectedly.

This commitment is a positive step in removing barriers to healthy, active, educational outcomes for our children and part of our commitment to putting children first. It will also help to reduce the unacceptable stigma around the issue of periods and address the overarching gender equality and dignity issues that affect all learners who menstruate.

I hope members will agree is a positive contribution towards further ensuring that all our children and young people in schools can learn and achieve their potential.

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 7th MARCH 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 14th MARCH 2022**

Question

“Further to the Minister’s response in December 2020 to the e-petition entitled ‘[Follow Scotland and make period products free for all](#)’ in which it was stated that she “*has, therefore, asked officers to undertake further research on this issue with a view to reporting findings to the States Assembly within the term of this Government*”, will the Minister advise –

- (a) what research, if any, has been conducted into period poverty since the response; and
- (b) if research has been conducted, what data were collected and what the results were?”

Answers

- (a) Desk-based research has been undertaken by officers to understand the approaches of other jurisdictions to this issue and the associated costs of those approaches. Discussions were also held with the Red Box Project Jersey to understand more about their work in schools.

In December 2021 a survey was sent out to schools, and promoted on social media, to better understand whether pupils were having difficulty accessing products when they needed them, and any associated impacts related to this.

- (b) Key findings from the survey are as follows:

- Over 50% of respondents reported experiencing difficulty accessing period products.
 - The main reason stated for struggling to access products was being ‘caught short’ – not having the products on hand when needed.
 - With affordability being an issue for 10% of those reporting difficulties accessing products.
- Over 10% of respondents reported missing school or college due to difficulty accessing period products when they needed them, whilst 23% of respondents reported attending school or college late, and over 25% of respondents reported leaving school or college early.
- Nearly 60% of survey respondents reported having missed an activity such as sport, socialising or a hobby etc., whilst 35% had been late to an activity, and 37% reported leaving an activity early.
- Over 60% of respondents reported feeling embarrassed as a result of having difficulty accessing products, with 60% stating they felt anxious or worried, and 50%¹ feeling unable to concentrate at school or college.

¹ NB: For some questions respondents were able to select more than one answer that applied which means totals will exceed 100%.

Caution must be applied in interpreting the local survey results as this was not a representative survey. As such the findings cannot be used to demonstrate the scale of the issue in Jersey, rather they reflect the views and experiences of some students who chose to respond to the survey. However, the findings do reflect the issues and challenges identified in other jurisdictions.

I will update the Assembly on the next steps for this project on the 29th March.