

Background Note on the Free Provision of Period Products Bill 2020

In 2019, according to CSO figures, 17.8% of people were living in enforced deprivation in Ireland. However, women more likely to experience enforced deprivation – in 2019 18.3% of women experienced enforced deprivation, compared to 15.6% in 2018. Period poverty can have a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of women, girls and trans people. Period poverty is further exacerbated where people are experiencing period related health issues e.g. endometriosis.

Using period products for longer periods of time than is recommended or using unsuitable alternatives can lead to infections and health issues. Women, girls and trans people may feel they have no choice but to miss out on educational activities, work or recreation due to not having appropriate products. Period poverty can interfere with access to education for young women. This is particularly relevant for younger women and teenagers who may not have access to their own incomes. Ultimately, there remains a stigma associated with periods (and indeed all health issues affecting menstruation). No law in Ireland deals with the free provision of period products, despite the passing of a cross party motion in 2019 and promises in the most recent Programme for Government.

The objective of this legislation is that all who menstruate should be able to access period products, at no cost, as and when they are required. Ease of access and choice is at its heart.

Our Bill essentially converts Monica Lennon's successful Scottish legislation to an Irish context.

Rebecca's Bill will place an obligation on the Minister to secure the general availability of period products free of charge. Those period products will be available in schools, educational facilities and in the premises of public service bodies.

The Bill also places an obligation on the public service bodies and schools to consult with all potential users of the period products to determine what products they want supplied and the way those products should be provided throughout the building.

Finally, the Bill also places an obligation on the Minister to engage in an information campaign so people know that the products are available for free and how the arrangements in each educational institution/public service body will work.