Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021

Argyll and Bute Council Report

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Introduction

Argyll and Bute Council has been providing access to free period products in the community and schools since 2018. This initiative is funded by the Scottish Government and is driven by the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021. This means that the Council must develop a way of providing period products free across communities by the time the new Law (Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021) (the Act) comes into force in August 2022. The new Act places duties on the Council to provide free access to period products in a way that protects the dignity of anyone requiring them. Guidance was issued by the Scottish Government in September 2021 which tells us what actions that must be taken prior to its start date.

Guidance Key Messages

The Act states that everyone in Scotland who has a period should have reasonably convenient access to period products, free of charge, as and when they are required. This includes visitors to Scotland for the duration of their stay. Section 1 of the Act places a duty on Local Authorities to make sure that people can access period products free of charge for anyone who needs to use them.

Meeting individual needs and dignity by default

Period products should be available in a way that respects the dignity of the people who pick them up. This principle has been in place since Scottish Government first made a commitment to make period products available for free. Dignity should always be at the forefront of delivery, however it becomes a statutory requirement when the Act comes into force.

Consultation and Statement on Exercise of Functions

Argyll & Bute Council must publish a written statement setting out how they will exercise their functions under the Act. The Council must publish their first statement as soon as is reasonably possible after receiving the Guidance and can publish further statements at any time in the future. Before drafting a statement, Argyll and Bute Council must undertake consultation as set out below:

- Make it gender neutral and inclusive who has a period so men or women can collect them.
- Involve individuals who may find it more difficult to pick up these products.
- Pay regard to particular groups of people who have been identified as being most in need.
- Consider what information needs to be provided to the public for example safety information regarding Toxic Shock related to use of Tampons.
- Ability for others to collect products on behalf of individuals.

Consultation

The Guidance tells us who we must consult with and what we must ask them about. Here are some of the specific things we are told to do within the guidance. Before preparing a statement we must consult the persons mentioned in the guidance, and any other organisation or individual we feel appropriate.

Who we needed to consult:

• People that use period products who live or are otherwise likely to be present in the local authority's area;
• Persons who may want to collect period products on behalf of product users;
• People facing additional barriers to access.

What we needed to include:
• Ways in which people could get hold of period products free of charge;
• Dignity and ease of access;
• With a reasonable choice of different types of period products available.

How we achieved this:

Two consultations were drafted, one for community provision aimed at over 18's, and one for school and community provision aimed at under 18s. Online versions were made available, as well as print versions, which could be collected from Customer Service Points at 12 locations Argyll and Bute. A provision to phone and request a survey was also put in place. Prepaid envelopes were also made available so individuals did not need to purchase a stamp to return. The consultation was widely publicised across various Medias. Responses were anonymous which allowed people to be candid, was an important given the nature of the subject, where people may be embarrassed to discuss the subject matter. Both survey consisted of thirty questions each. As Argyll and Bute Council has been providing period products in communities and schools for over two years, it was important that the consultation included questions about current provision, in order to measure successes and identify issues going forward. There were 213 responses across the two consultations, 177 from community and 36 from young people. Questions 1 to 5 covered current provision, questions 6 to 12 covered future provision, questions 13 to 22 covered branding, questions 24 to 27 asked about online provision and other products, question 28 to 30 were on demographics.

The Survey Results

All percentages have been rounded up or down for ease of reading. Where highlighted, we asked about young people the same question, but around provision in school, rather than in the community.

Question 1: Do you know you can get free products for periods at the moment in community spaces (schools for <18 survey), e.g. council buildings and sports centres?

	Yes	No
Community 18+	**44%**	**56%**
Young Person <18 (school)	**94%**	**6%**
Total	**52%**	**48%**

Outcome: More work needs to be done on advertising to improve awareness around community provision in Argyll and Bute.

Question 2: Have you accessed our Community (school <18 survey) Provision of Free Period Products in Argyll & Bute?

	Yes	No
Community 18+	**18%**	**82%**
Young Person <18 (school)	**32%**	**68%**
Total	**20%**	**80%**

Question 3*: If you answered Yes to Question 2 please tell us more about where you accessed these free period products (please select all that apply)

Community Venue	Council Building	Ordered Online	Food Banks	Doctors Surgeries	Other
19%	**30%**	**32%**	**0%**	**0%**	**19%**

***** Asked to 18+ only

Other responses to this question included:

- "College Building"
- "Work place school"
- "I was unaware of products being available."
- "Library"

Question 4: If you answered no to question 2 – what has stopped you? (please select all that apply)

	Not knowing where to get them	Embarrassment/ being shy	Don't go to school, shops or other buildings	Don't have access to online ordering	Not sure how much I can take at any one time	Other
Community 18+	44%	12%	9%	1%	9%	26%
Young Person <18	11%	39%	0%	0%	8%	25%
Total	**36%**	**15%**	**7%**	**0%**	**8%**	**24%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "I can buy my own so don't need to access free products"
- "I was not aware that I could access them"
- "Thought the communities scheme was just for those in period poverty, I can afford to buy my own"
- "I didn't have to ask as they are available from the girl's toilets in school but would be too embarrassed."

Outcome: Work needs to be done to raise awareness that this scheme is for anyone who needs to access it and to be clear on where products are accessed.

Question 5: If you answered yes to Question 2 please tell us what free period products have you used? (please select all that apply)

	Disposable Pads	Tampons	Menstrual Cup	Reusable Pads	Period Pants	Reusable liners	Other
Community 18+	36%	25%	7%	17%	10%	5%	0%
Young Person <18	33%	31%	6%	8%	14%	3%	0%
Total	**15%**	**12%**	**3%**	**6%**	**5%**	**2%**	**0%**

Question 6: If you were to access free period products, who would this be for? (please select all that apply)

	Myself	A family member	A friend	Carer For	Other
Community 18+	85%	26%	7%	2%	4%
Young Person <18	78%	22%	22%	6%	0%
Total	**84%**	**26%**	**9%**	**2%**	**4%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "Families working with Social Work"
- "To donate to good causes in the local area."
- "Parents of the service they use."
- "Only if emergency /unexpected need arose."

Outcome: The majority of people accessing the products, do so for themselves, however provision needs to be in place for those accessing on behalf of others.

Question 7: When needing period products, would having to ask someone for them stop you from getting them?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Community 18+	49%	29%	22%
Young Person <18	42%	26%	32%
Total	**47%**	**29%**	**24%**

Outcome: The majority of people find having to ask someone for products to be a barrier. The provision should therefore be discreet, without barriers, wherever possible.

Question 8: What free period products do you think should be available in community spaces/school? (please select all that apply)

	Disposable Pads	Tampons	Menstrual cups	Period Pants	Reusable pads	Other
Community 18+	87%	83%	46%	51%	50%	4%
Young Person <18	92%	75%	31%	47%	44%	0%
Total	**87%**	**82%**	**43%**	**50%**	**49%**	**3%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "Perhaps hygiene wipes"
- "organic, natural, compostable etc if these things exist. As environmentally friendly as possible"
- "Anything which helps people, should be a variety of products available free"
- "I don't believe that they should be freely available"
- "Disposal bags"

Outcome: Tampons and pads should be made available in community spaces.

Question 9: Where would be the best place to get [specified product] from? (please select all that apply)
This section focussed on where individual products should be available. We have broken this down to the top location choices, this is just 18+ data:

	Choice 1	**Choice 2**	**Choice 3**	**Choice 4**	**Choice 5**	**Choice 6**	**Choice 7**
Disposable Pads	**Online 78%**	Postal 72%	Doctors 60%	Community Venue 58%	Food Bank 57%	Council Building 43%	Other 16%
Tampons	**Online 75%**	Postal 70%	Doctors 60%	Community Venue 59%	Food Bank 56%	Council Building 42%	Other 17%
Menstrual Cups	**Online 67%**	Postal 64%	Doctors 49%	Food Bank 43%	Community Venue 36%	Council Building 25%	Other 15%
Reusable Pads	**Online 70%**	Postal 65%	Doctors 52%	Food Bank 47%	Community Venue 40%	Council Building 28%	Other 15%
Period Pants	**Online 69%**	Postal 66%	Doctors 48%	Food Bank 45%	Community Venue 35%	Council Building 25%	Other 17%

Other responses to this question included:

- "Disabled toilets in shops"
- "Chemist"
- "supermarkets, chemists"
- "Supermarkets, train stations, public toilets, youth clubs, carer centre, cafes, restaurants"

Outcome: For all products, there should be an online provision for those needing to access products, with products also available in the majority locations listed above, wherever possible.

Question 10: Where in the following venues listed would you be happy to see free period products? (please select all that apply) - (Community Venue (sports centre, swimming pool, and village hall), Council Building, Food Banks, Doctors Surgeries)

	In toilets where it is discreet (including Male/Female and Disabled toilets)	In reception areas even if they are visible to others	On a display stand that is easy to access	Somewhere out of the way so no one can see me pick them up	Other
Community 18+	92%	33%	44%	43%	6%
Young Person <18	75%	17%	25%	56%	8%
Total	**89%**	**30%**	**41%**	**45%**	**7%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "In female toilets, not in unisex"
- "A notice in reception saying that period products are available in the toilets would also help"
- " Somewhere you can walk past and take them without having to go somewhere special"
- " In female toilet cubicles"

Outcome: The products should be accessed from toilets wherever possible, they should also be out of the way but easily accessible for those that need to access them.

Question 11: Would you use a postal delivery service?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Community 18+	**86%**	**5%**	**9%**
Young Person <18	**74%**	**6%**	**20%**
Total	**84%**	**5%**	**11%**

Outcome: A postal service should be made available. However, the Scottish Government has highlighted that they won't allow any extra funding to be made available for excessive postal charges.

Question 12: If you answered yes to the previous question and would use a postal service, please tell us why you would use a postal delivery service?

	Convenience (I don't have time to visit other places)	I live in a remote/rural area where I can't access these products easily	I am home schooled*	I am disabled and/or struggle to get to out and about	I'm too embarrassed to ask/look for these products	Other
Community 18+	74%	45%	n/a	6%	25%	2%
Young Person <18	42%	28%	0%	0%	47%	3%
Total	**68%**	**42%**	**0%**	**5%**	**29%**	**2%**

*<18 survey only

Outcome: The majority of people would access a postal service for convenience, however, it would be likely the rural/remote community have a higher need for this service and that postal costs need to be a deciding factor.

Branding

The following section of the results surround branding. For ease of understanding we will report on only relevant data here and on the chosen brand.

Question 13: Do you think it is important that the period product initiative available in Argyll and Bute is easily recognisable?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Community 18+	**78%**	**13%**	**9%**
Young Person <18	**65%**	**6%**	**29%**
Total	**76%**	**12%**	**12%**

Outcome: The majority of people believe that the period product initiative should have its own, bespoke branding.

Question 14: If you saw distinctive period product branding in a building, how would this make you feel? Select all that apply:

	Confident I can access products in that place if I needed to	Embarrassed it is obvious these products are available	Happy to see it but I would still need to know from where, exactly to collect products	Other
Community 18+	64%	7%	57%	1%
Young Person <18	22%	31%	53%	0%
Total	**57%**	**11%**	**56%**	**1%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "Doesn't matter"
- "I would be pleased they were there, however it might make young people feel uncomfortable"

Outcome: People would feel confident about accessing products if the initiative has its own distinctive brand.

Question 15: How do you think period product branding should look? Select all that apply

	Subtle and discreet	Obvious but not "in your face"	It should have a distinctive name but not something related to periods	The name of the brand should be clear and obvious what it is about
Community 18+	27%	60%	10%	32%
Young Person <18	17%	58%	19%	14%
Total	**25%**	**60%**	**11%**	**29%**

Outcome: People would like the scheme brand to be obvious but not pushy or obtrusive.

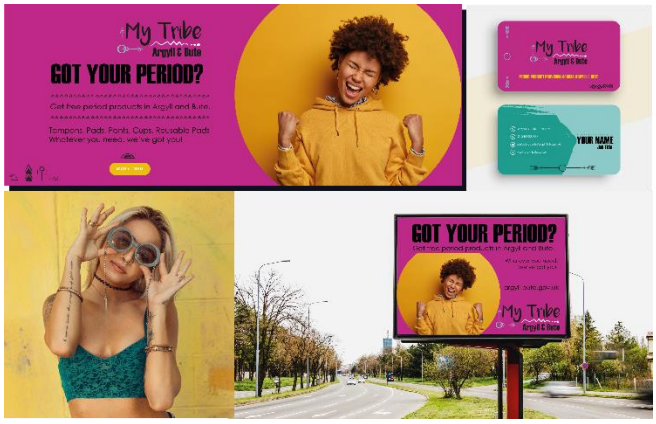
Question 16. How does the "My Tribe" mission statement make you feel?

"A tribe, is simply, a group of people with something in common that brings them together. My Tribe is about inclusivity amongst those who have periods, creating a language and ethos that is empowering and enabling. We feel it important in Argyll and Bute, that the message around free access to period products is a strong one. Having its own brand identity, My Tribe means that people can talk about, and request products, without fear of, or perceived sensitivities around language. It allows someone to

have the confidence to ask, "Do you do My Tribe?", rather than "Do you have free period products/tampons/pads?"

	I like it	I don't like it	I neither like nor dislike it	I'm not sure
Community 18+	35%	31%	22%	12%
Young Person <18	21%	24%	24%	32%
Total	**33%**	**30%**	**22%**	**15%**

Questions 17 & 18 focussed on branding that wasn't first choice favourite.



Question 19: Considering the image above and thinking about the brand My Tribe, how does this make you feel?

	I like it	I don't like it	I neither like nor dislike it	I'm not sure
Community 18+	**39%**	**24%**	**27%**	**10%**
Young Person <18	38%	18%	32%	12%
Total	**39%**	**23%**	**28%**	**10%**

Commentary & suggestions on this brand choice:

The Good	The Bad	Suggestions
Really like this one - clean, modern, inclusive	It's ok - other than the image of someone modelling sunglasses, that looks a bit weird and out of place.	Its modern and bright. Not sure about the massive "got your period?" though.
Its bright, bold and empowering	I don't think women celebrate having their period and this is how this image came across to me.	I like it but I would emphasise the brand name in bold and leave "Got your period?" unbolded to make it discreet.

It's trendy, simple and informative.	trying too hard, images are identifying females only, periods are not fun	It's aimed too much at young people
Love it, feels modern, woman empowerment vibes but still clear it's about period products - no shame in periods after all!	Hoodie image is positive. No need for scantily clad model...	I think this appeals to young women, but could also be inclusive for middle aged women. It's modern and inclusive.
Empowering, strong, unashamed, natural	Too woke and snowflakey	Contradictory because it says My Tribe which is supposed to be a confidential concept however it says "GOT YOUR PERIOD?" in bold

Questions 20 - 22 focussed on branding that wasn't chosen as the favourite

Question 23: Brand Preference

1st Place – My Tribe
2nd Place – Got Your Period, Scottish Government Advert
3rd Place – Aunty Val
4th Place – Argyll and Bute Period Products

Outcome: My Tribe is first choice brand and will be the brand used moving forward. Imagery chosen was an example and age appropriate stock photos and style/colours will be used depending on the audience.

Question 24: Do you think there should be a dedicated website that consumers can go to relating to period products?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Community 18+	84%	5%	11%
Young Person <18	79%	3%	18%
Total	**83%**	**4%**	**13%**

Questions 25: Do you think this website should offer an option to order products online?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Community 18+	92%	3%	5%
Young Person <18	85%	6%	9%
Total	**91%**	**4%**	**5%**

Questions 26: What would you like to see on this website?

Well presented, easy to use site with: Online ordering, Personal accounts - diary/tracker/preferred products, Tips on looking after yourself during menstruation.	Much more focus should be on reusable products - more sustainable and much cheaper in the long run. Information about places likely to have products should be available. For those in poverty then they should be easy to collect or order. I think however if you can afford them you should buy them.
A really positive and welcoming message to everyone who would like to access the service regardless of age or social circumstances.	Variety of products How to use Where to get them Where to go for birth control/condoms etc
Advise on how to cope with period pain & emotions.	period products, basic feminine hygiene products like feminine wipes, soap etc possibly even basic hygiene products for those who need them and cannot access easily or who cannot afford them.
help for younger people that dont know much about periods -information about how to deal with period symptoms -information about what is not usual when on your period so people can see a doctor if they need to.	information about periods maybe for younger girls
true stories	

Outcome: A website will be developed to provide access to products, information and details on the period product initiative in Argyll and Bute.

Question 27: Are there any other healthcare products you would like to see offered in this scheme?* (please select all that apply)

Incontinence pads	Sexual health items (e.g. condoms)	None	Other
56%	72%	14%	4%

* asked in community 18+ survey only

Other responses to this question included:

- "Period wet wipes"
- "products that can help with menopause symptoms"
- "I think my mother would appreciate this.(incontinence pads) She's embarrassed about buying them, but a free online service would be great for her."
- "none but please consider putting them into men's toilets too as a number of trans men menstruate"
- "maybe some info for young mums with incontinence issues. It's a bigger problem than we realise!"

- "Leak proof, nappy/zip lock/similar bags, for people to put dirty underwear/used products into."

Outcome: Information on other products can be made available to the Scottish Government should they wish to consider extending the scheme to other health care issues.

Demographics

Question 28: What area of Argyll and Bute do you live in?

	Bute & Cowal	Helensburgh and Lomond	Mid-Argyll, Kintyre & the Islands	Oban, Lorn & Isles
Community 18+	16%	20%	44%	20%
Young Person <18	9%	15%	53%	24%
Total	**15%**	**20%**	**45%**	**20%**

Question 29: In order 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 select all that apply *(18+ and <18 total)*

Needs to use period products now	**77%**
Has a family member of someone who needs these products	**26%**
Low income	**22%**
Lives in remote location	**21%**
Has caring responsibilities	**9%**
Single parent	**9%**
Other	**7%**
Doesn't use period products now but may need to use them in the future	**5%**
Has a disability	**4%**
Transgender or non-binary person	**0%**
Currently homeless	**0%**

Gypsy/Traveller	**0%**
In the care system	**0%**
Cultural reasons for not being able to access these products	**0%**

Other responses to this question included:

- "Social Worker"
- "I don't drive."
- "Even on higher wages, with sometimes irregular periods, it can be costly to anyone."

Question 30: What is your age group?

8-10	**0%**
11-14	**7%**
15-18	**8%**
18-24	**7%**
25-34	**16%**
35-40	**20%**
41-45	**14%**
46-50	**13%**
51-55	**11%**
55+	**4%**

Question 31: About your gender - are you (both surveys combined):

Female/Woman	Male/Man	Transgender	Non-binary	No response
92%	1%	0%	0%	7%

Statement on Exercise of Functions

Argyll and Bute must prepare a written statement describing Argyll and Bute Councils' plan to provide period products to local residents and visitors.

Outcomes based on the Consultation Results:

- More work needs to be done on advertising to improve awareness around community provision in Argyll and Bute.
- Work needs to be done to raise awareness that this scheme is for anyone who needs to access it and to be clear on where products are accessed.
- The majority of people accessing the products, do so for themselves, however provision needs to be in place for those accessing on behalf of others.
- The majority of people find having to ask someone for products to be a barrier. The provision should therefore be discreet, without barriers, wherever possible.
- Tampons and pads should be made available in community spaces.

- For all products, there should be an online provision for those needing to access products, with products also available in the majority locations listed above, wherever possible.
- The products should be accessed from toilets wherever possible, they should also be out of the way but easily accessible for those that need to access them.
- A postal service should be made available. However, the Scottish Government has highlighted that they won't allow any extra funding to be made available for excessive postal charges.
- The majority of people would access a postal service for convenience, however, it would be likely the rural/remote community have a higher need for this service and that postal costs need to be a deciding factor.
- The majority of people believe that the period product initiative should have its own, bespoke branding. People would feel confident about accessing products if the initiative has its own distinctive brand.
- People would like the scheme brand to be obvious but not pushy or obtrusive.
- My Tribe is first choice brand and will be the brand used moving forward. Imagery chosen was an example and age appropriate stock photos and style/colours will be used depending on the audience.
- A website will be developed to provide access to products, information and details on the period product initiative in Argyll and Bute.
- Information on other products can be made available to the Scottish Government should they wish to consider extending the scheme to other health care issues.

Argyll and Bute Council's Statement on Exercise of Functions (Draft)

In line with the requirements of the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021, Argyll and Bute Council will ensure that period products will be made available to those who need them, in a way that protects people's dignity while avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma. As part of this approach, the Council will carry out a range of awareness raising and education activities to promote product availability and to help change the cultural norms whereby people find it difficult to talk about periods.

A range of products will be available to people in a range of different ways, including via online ordering, so that anyone who needs products can access them, regardless of where people live, or their personal circumstances. Products will be available in an inclusive way, so that they are available to anyone who menstruates, regardless of their gender, and language used will be gender inclusive.

The provision of products is being designed in keeping with the feedback received during the initial public consultation exercise, and future changes will be made on the basis of feedback from communities as this work progresses. This will include the promotion of products through a dedicated 'My Tribe' brand, to ensure equity and discretion, as well as compliance with the Fairer Scotland Duty.

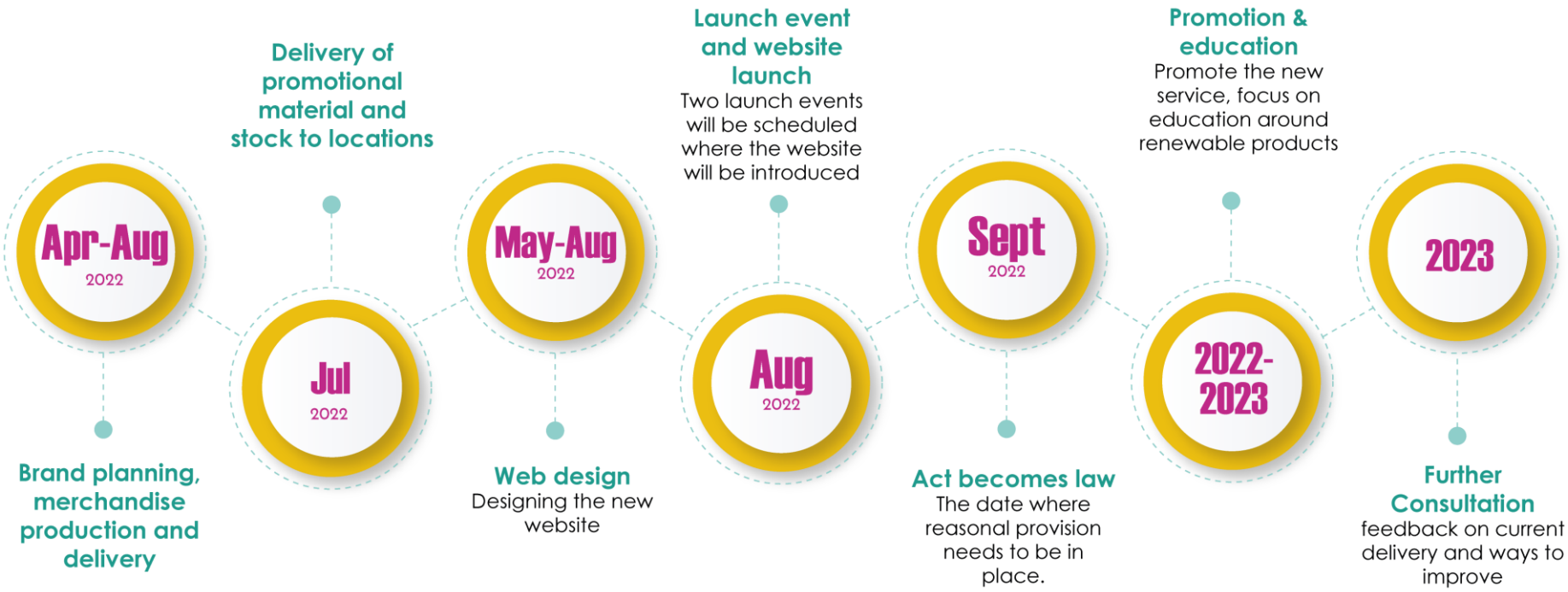
A range of partners will assist the Council with delivering this roll out, and where possible, other Council priorities such as Climate Change will be considered, with reusable products and non-plastic products being prioritised, on the basis of feedback received.

Individuals will be able to access as many products as best suits their own needs, and where products are ordered on line, there may be a delivery charge for this service.

Argyll and Bute Council will create individual branding and promote the period product initiative across the local authority area, both within the community and in schools. Based on feedback, this service will be expanded to have a dedicated website and launch an awareness campaign of the new brand. Once launched, we aim to focus on improved access, continued awareness, and education around reusable products.

The main focus of this initiative will be around inclusivity, improving awareness and enabling and empowering those who require access to period products.

Timeline for delivery of outcomes

My Tribe Period Products
Argyll & Bute

PERIOD PRODUCTS TIMELINE