



Department
for Education

Period product scheme

**Management information:
2023 to 2024 academic year**

January 2025

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Background

The period product scheme launched on 20 January 2020 to ensure that no girls or women¹ miss out on education due to their period. It covers all state-funded schools with female pupils in year 5 (aged 9 or 10 years) or above and DfE-funded 16-19 education organisations² in England and enables these organisations to provide free period products for pupils and students in their place of study.

Each eligible organisation was allocated a maximum amount of spend (a 'spend cap') for the 2023 to 2024 academic year. They received separate spend caps for each of the previous years³. The spend cap was based on 35% of the number of students in the organisation⁴ whose recorded gender was female and who, based on age⁵, were likely to have started their periods. 35% is an assumed take-up rate, reflecting the fact that not all students will use products all the time. This figure is multiplied by an estimate of the number of products each would use throughout the year and by the average cost of a single product. A minimum spend cap of £20 was set⁶ to allow all organisations to order a reasonable range of products. In the 2023 to 2024 academic year, the spend cap was £1,667 for an average secondary school and £23 for an average primary school.

Personal Hygiene Services Limited (phs) supply period products for the scheme. Organisations order products online and the products are delivered directly to the organisation free of charge. Organisations can order at any point in the year but are encouraged to wait until stocks are running low before re-ordering. The smallest organisations are expected to make a single order within the year whereas larger organisations may place orders more frequently.

Schools are able to select from a wide range of period products⁷, varying in type, size and brand. They do not need to order the same products throughout the year. Products available include:

- period pads, including environmentally friendly and reusable period pads

¹ References to 'girls and women' also includes a reference to pupils and students who menstruate (or may later start menstruating) who may not identify as female but, instead, identify as transgender or non-binary.

² Including but not limited to further education and sixth form colleges, maintained school and academy sixth forms, 16 to 19 academies, higher education institutions delivering 16 to 19 provision, independent learning providers and special post-16 institutions. It does not cover organisations delivering apprenticeships.

³ The scheme now operates on an academic year basis. In earlier years, it operated on a calendar year basis.

⁴ Spend caps for 2023-24 were based on female pupil numbers reported in the January 2023 School Census for organisations that completed it and DfE forecasts of 2023-24 female student numbers for those that didn't.

⁵ 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](#).

⁶ Any organisation with a calculated spend cap below this level will have their spend cap increased to £20.

⁷ 26 different products were available in 2023-24. Not all these products were included in previous years.

- applicator and non-applicator tampons, including environmentally friendly tampons
- menstrual cups
- reusable period underwear
- tights

We receive regular management information from phs on the number and value of orders placed and the type of products ordered. This note summarises data for the 2023 to 2024 academic year but also includes some statistics covering the whole scheme since its introduction. Data for all years is included in the [accompanying tables](#).

Scheme statistics

Overview of take-up since the scheme began (table 1)

17,014 organisations had made at least one order since the scheme began in January 2020. This represents 83% of eligible organisations. 99% of secondary schools and 87% of post-16 organisations had ordered since the scheme began. The equivalent figure for primary schools was lower (79%).

Summary for the 2023 to 2024 academic year (table 1)

8,567 organisations made an order in the 2023 to 2024 academic year which represents 42% of all eligible organisations. This figure is slightly lower than the 2022 to 2023 academic year, which saw 47% of organisations ordering.

Organisations made 19,300 orders during the year. The total value of orders placed was £5,417,000 which was 81% of the available budget for those organisations that ordered and 73% of the total budget for all eligible organisations. Care should be taken when making comparisons to previous years due to the change in the scheme's operation from calendar year to academic year.

Variation by characteristics of organisation (table 2, 3 and 4)

Secondary schools and post-16 organisations were most likely to have ordered (88% and 81% respectively) in the 2023 to 2024 academic year and the percentages of these type of organisations who used the scheme were the highest ever. Primary schools were least likely to have ordered (28%).

Larger organisations were more likely to have ordered - 95% of organisations with a spend cap of £2001 or more had ordered, compared to 23% of those with a £20 spend cap.

Similarly, organisations with higher levels of disadvantage were more likely to have ordered - 47% of organisations with very high levels⁸ of pupil premium had ordered compared to 28% of those with very low levels of pupil premium.

These broad patterns are similar to those seen in previous years.

⁸ Very high pupil premium is defined as at least 38% of pupils and very low pupil premium as less than 10% of pupils.

Percentage of spend cap spent (table 6)

Organisations that ordered in the 2023 to 2024 academic year spent an average of 81% of their spend cap. The majority (77%) of organisations that ordered had spent over 90% of their spend cap.

Types of products ordered (table 7 and 8)

In the 2023 to 2024 academic year, almost all organisations that had ordered bought pads (97%) and almost half bought tampons (47%). Pads accounted for 41% of total product spend, while period underwear accounted for 35% and tampons accounted for 18%.

49% of organisations ordered environmentally friendly or reusable products and 44% of total product spend was on these products - this is slightly lower than the equivalent figure for the 2023 to 2024 academic year (49%).



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