



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:**  
**Michele Hassen and Louise Nunn**

**Tel:** 0114 2735861

**Report of:** Director of Policy, and Democratic Engagement

**Report to:** Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

**Date of Decision:** 12 March 2024

**Subject:** Period Equity and Menopause Awareness Charter

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken Initial  Full   
 Ref no 2556

Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place? Yes  No

Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken? Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes  No

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below: -

### Purpose of Report:

This report sets out, for approval by Strategy and Resources Committee, the Council's Period Equity and Menopause Awareness Charter. It explains the background to and development of the charter and asks for the committee's support in taking forward the commitments set out in the charter.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that Strategy and Resources Committee:

1. Consider and adopt the draft Sheffield City Council Period Equity and Menopause Awareness Charter (draft charter at appendix 1).
2. Agree that further work should be undertaken to identify a sustainable approach to funding the provision of free menstrual products in Sheffield City Council buildings that are accessible to customers.
3. Recognise and thank the partners, organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of the charter over the last 18 months (list of partners at appendix 2).
4. Note that Sheffield has a strong tradition of partnership activism to address matters of period equity and that the city council recognises and wishes to contribute to this work.

**Background Papers:**[Equality Framework 2023](#)[Equality Annual Report 2021-22](#) and [Workforce Report 2021 -22](#)[Equality awareness days report](#), 19 April 2023[Our Statement of Climate Commitments](#) – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022

See annex B for references

Lead Officer to complete: -		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: Liz Gough – Head of Service Finance & Commercial Business Partnering
		Legal: Nadine Wynter Legal Services Manager
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer
		Climate: Laura Ellendale Sustainability Programme Officer
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	James Henderson
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	Councillor Tom Hunt, Leader of the Council
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Louise Nunn	<b>Job Title:</b> Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer
	<b>Date: 27 February 2024</b>	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 2 November 2022, Full Council passed a motion resolving to take action in relation to menopause awareness and period poverty in the city.
- 1.2 Period poverty is the lack of access to the right menstrual products due to financial constraints; this can be caused by a wide range of life events that negatively impact on a girl or woman's ability to access menstrual products to manage a most sensitive and regular occurrence in her life.
- 1.3 Period poverty can have a profound impact on mental health and wellbeing as well as the physical health of women and girls.
- 1.4 Menopause is when a woman's periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, but can also be earlier or later, and can cause a range of physical and psychological symptoms.
- 1.5 Menopause awareness is focused on promoting the understanding of what the menopause means for women, their families, friends, and colleagues. Some women will go through years of unpredictable periods and bleeds because of HRT and the menopause, also when experiencing changes to hormones due to medical conditions or transitioning. This can leave them with significant disadvantages of not being able to afford menstrual products or accessing them due to them being housebound or disabled.
- 1.6 With both period poverty and menopause, there are differences between people that need to be acknowledged, some based on how someone identifies and some based on income or circumstance. In particular, period poverty and menopause can be an issue for some who are non-binary or trans, and the charter is clear that the commitments it makes extend to all of those experiencing period poverty or the menopause.

## **2. PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This report seeks Strategy and Resources Committee's commitment and support by adopting the Period Equity and Menopause Awareness Charter (attached as Appendix 1) which will be discussed on International Women's Day on the 8 March 2024.
- 2.2 The charter sets out a number of commitments that the Council will make to improving period equity and menopause awareness, including:
  - Championing and encouraging discussion and literacy about period equity and the menopause amongst all employees.
  - Ensuring the effectiveness of our policies, particularly taking into account the recently published EHRC guidance on menopause in the workplace.
  - Providing access to advice and support for women and girls affected and working towards the provision of access to free period products across the council's worksites.
  - Supporting other organisations in the city to make similar commitments for their employees and service users (including schools, businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations).
  - Continuing to work with Government to improve access to information, advice and free products for women and girls in the city.

- 2.3 The Charter also set out the importance of providing access to free period products – recognising that they are a necessity, not a luxury, and that lack of access can be a major barrier to education, work and other opportunities for some women and girls. It is recommended that the committee agree that in approving this protocol, further work should be undertaken to identify a sustainable approach to funding the provision of free sanitary products across SCC worksites, with a focus on those that are accessible to customers.
- 2.4 Further, by agreeing the Charter, it will enable the Council to demonstrate leadership and provide support to other businesses and organisations in Sheffield to assist women, girls, trans and non-binary people who experience period poverty or in supporting awareness of the menopause.

### **3. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

- 3.1 The Charter helps meet the Council's proposed ambitions relating to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) for the next four years as we seek to fulfil the vision set out in the new Council Plan, which commits us to listening, involving, and working with the people in our city, and to celebrate and stand up for the diversity of Sheffield, maximising the assets and strengths of communities, connecting more people into the city's success, and creating opportunities for everyone.
- 3.2 The Charter supports the Council Plan's focus on equalities by considering the differential impacts between and across communities and groups in relation to period poverty and menopause. Its goals support the Council Plan's policy drivers and strategic aims to improve equality, diversity and inclusion and reduce disparities and inequality.
- 3.3 Our Equality Framework provides more detail about our specific commitments around equality, diversity and inclusion. At the heart of the Equality Framework are the proposed new statutory Equality Objectives for Sheffield City Council. The Objectives are focused on themes in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Charter links to all four themes.
1. Leadership.
  2. Service provider.
  3. Communities.
  4. Workforce.
- 3.4 Currently HR are finalising the Council's new menopause policy, this is currently going through the usual governance arrangements and has been discussed with trade unions and should be agreed and adopted soon.

### **4. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 4.1 There have been several city and community events, commencing on the 7 March 2023 to discuss and agree an approach and contents of the Charter following the Full Council resolution on the 2 November 2022. Attendees have included a range of organisations and individuals from the voluntary, community and faith sector, businesses, government, campaigning organisations and individuals.
- 4.2 It has also included people who share the broad range of protected characteristics including women, men, disabled people, young and older people, people of different religions and cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, sexual orientations and gender identities and other

backgrounds. However, the focus is on women and girls from all backgrounds.

- 4.3 The Charter contributes to the development of the Council's Equality Framework that involved senior leaders and teams across the Council. It has also drawn on stakeholder feedback gathered via the Equality Partnership, insights from our consultation and engagement exercises and awareness-raising events held.

## **5. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **Equality Implications**

- 5.1 We have conducted an Equality Impact Assessment as part of developing the Charter. It notes positive impacts across protected characteristics as a result of the increased focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion. It further notes the importance of the intersectionality of characteristics. Different characteristics will be differentially impacted across the different measures included. It will have most positive impact on women and girls although it will impact on men, boys, and trans and non-binary people.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.2 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 5.3 The Act recognises 9 protected Characteristics those being, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Everyone shares protected characteristics.
- 5.4 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:
- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
  - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
  - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 5.5 There are also other implications outside of the Equality Act protected characteristics that the Council commits to responding within our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process such as socio-economic disadvantage, armed forces, carers, and people who care experienced.
- 5.6 This report does not have any specific legal implications beyond what is set out above.

### **Financial implications**

- 5.7 This report does not contain any financial commitments but notes that consideration should be given to funding costs associated with providing free sanitary products in Council worksites, especially the ones that are customer facing. If the committee approve adoption of the charter, further work will be undertaken to finalise the costs associated with the

commitment around free sanitary products and a plan put in place to support the delivery of this from within existing SCC resources.

## **Climate Implications**

- 5.8 This report sets out the Period Equality and Menopause Charter and as such the report does not have many direct climate implications and a full scored Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has not been deemed necessary. We have included in the Charter reference to ensuring we have sustainable period products available, and it is important to acknowledge that some groups, especially the most vulnerable, are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts. There is a clear area of cross-over between EIA's and Climate Impact Assessments, therefore the climate implications of the report have been considered.
- 5.9 It is widely recognised that climate change will have a more negative effect on people with protected characteristics, particularly people living in poverty, people with some long-term health conditions and disabled people and Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic people, who are disproportionately likely to both experience disability and poverty. Young people are also impacted, by being more impacted by climate change throughout their lifetimes.
- 5.10 The transition to a net zero society is happening independently of any decision of Sheffield City Council, but the council has an ambition to reach net zero by 2030, well ahead of the national target, and this creates additional challenges. The Council has a key role to play in ensuring that the transition happens in a way which ensures both climate and social justice.
- 5.11 The impacts of climate change on equality, inclusion and diversity, and the role each policy committee has in supporting a just transition was set out in "Our Statement of Climate Commitments" at Strategy and Resources Committee on the 13th of December 2023. The statements also draw attention to the socioeconomic, health and wellbeing and other benefits to acting on climate change, increase understanding that failing to act to address climate change will likely result in wider and greater inequality, and that activity taken to address climate change can also address social justice to deliver strong co-benefits.
- 5.12 We are committed to ensuring that our action on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion is aligned, supportive and complementary of our response to the climate emergency. As decisions are made on specific decisions, as the objectives in the Framework are implemented further climate impact assessments may be necessary and will be undertaken as appropriate.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 This is a project that came from a resolution passed by Council on 2nd November 2022, and the Charter has been created in partnership with other organisations in the city, supported by Sheffield City Council. Due to the fact that this ask for a Charter was from a resolution that was passed we have not considered a 'do nothing' option.

## **7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 In adopting the Period Equity and Menopause Charter, the Council will take a significant step forward in its commitment to improving the lives of women and girls in the city, as well as clearly setting out our commitments to women in the workplace. The Charter actively supports the achievement of the Council's new Equality Objectives which are aligned to the Council Plan commitments.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **DRAFT Sheffield City Council Period Equity and Menopause Charter.**

For far too long issues around periods and the menopause have been brushed under the carpet, seen as a taboo subject that should not be spoken about, but women and girls primarily need our support, and we need to act.

These are not just women's or girl's issues, periods and the menopause affect everyone including their family, friends, and work colleagues.

While in this Charter we refer to women and girls, we recognise that the experiences and needs of women and girls are different for many reasons such as due to age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or belief etc. Also, some people who do not identify as women such as non-binary and some trans people also require access to the support and services and will benefit from the Charter. Groups with specific needs and experiences will be considered alongside the differing needs of all women and girls.

Our approach to women and girls' health issues is one of life's course, where support is not limited to interventions for a single issue, but instead is wrapped around the needs of an individual girl or woman, which in some cases may be multiple needs.

Our ambition is to work in partnership to make Sheffield a Period Equity and Menopause Aware City and be clear in our commitment as an employer, provider of service and community partner about what we will do to contribute.

#### **Working in Partnership Sheffield City Council will:**

1. Acknowledge the impact on mental health and wellbeing on those women, girls and others who menstruate and experience the menopause.
2. Put in place a workplace menopause policy and provide support and information for employees for both menopause and period equity.
3. Encourage discussion about period equity and menopause awareness.
4. Have a senior leader, an employee network, and young people champions for period equity and for the menopause.
5. Work to improve menstrual and menopause literacy throughout the council and the city by learning and sharing best practice and to ensure support and advice is available on period equity and menopause.
6. Call on other employers and organisations across the city to have a menopause policy.
7. Work to provide access to a variety of free period products including sustainable options and disposal bins throughout its worksites, including customer facing facilities such as libraries and cost of living hubs. Work with others through our partnerships to do the same.
8. Work with, learn from and support the city's schools, businesses, VCF and other organisations around period equity and menopause awareness.
9. Commit by leading by example including by challenging the government for free products and applying for relevant grants/funding and to support others to put forward applications to undertake work in this area.
10. Host information on our website and work collaboratively to bring organisations together annually in an event to increase visibility and celebrate Sheffield successes.

## APPENDIX 2

### PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- African Womens Health Group
- Citizens Advice
- Community Youth
- Disability Sheffield
- Faith leader, Hindu Samaj
- Faithstar
- Family Voices
- Firvale Community Hub
- Healthwatch
- I Rise
- I Rise
- IDAS
- IDAS
- LACs
- MA Consultancy
- Mums United
- Orthodox Jewish Community
- Period Positive
- Radio Sheffield
- Reach up Youth
- Reform Jewish Congregation,
- ROSHNI Sheffield
- SAYiT
- Sheffield Buddhist Centre
- Sheffield Chinese Community
- Sheffield Drugs and Alcohol Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team
- Sheffield Feminist Hub
- Shelter (and invite peer researcher)
- Shipshape
- St Mary's Bramall Lane Church
- Thalassaemia South Yorkshire (TSY)
- Together Women
- Young Carers