

**Whilst we applaud the decision to extend the period product scheme in England to July 2025, far more needs to be done to end period shame and stigma, and to drive period equity in the UK.**

### **Department for Education Overview**

Despite the introduction of the Period Product scheme, we know that period inequity remains the main driver of school absenteeism in the UK. Young people still struggle to access period products at school, and 61% face barriers to toilet access during their period. The State of Period Equity in the UK report found that lack of access to period products holds people back from getting an education with 47% of 16-24 year olds in the UK having gone without period products at some point since they started their first period. Not having the right product at the right time impacts students' wellbeing, school attendance, and ability to engage with education without embarrassment or worry. Cycles of exclusion caused by period inequity start early and can follow people all the way through education to the workplace and beyond. Providing access to period products in schools and colleges, alongside comprehensive education and shame-free support, not only allows pupils to manage their periods with dignity but also stops these cycles before they start.

In 2023, the Department for Education invited collaborators across the menstrual sector to share knowledge and experiences to advise on the future of the UK Government's Period Product scheme in schools. Since the roundtables were held, we are delighted to see that a wider variety of period products have been made available to schools (this includes reusable menstrual cups of varying sizes), as well as improved access to advice provided to schools on how to tackle period stigma.

Based on our wealth of experience, our joint recommendations are that the scheme should be:

- 💧 Extended beyond July 2025, via a permanent commitment.
- 💧 Robustly evaluated for both effectiveness and reach, ensuring enrolled schools are using the scheme effectively, and identifying why unenrolled eligible schools are not taking part.
- 💧 Accompanied by a clearer set of evidence-based guidelines for how schools themselves should adopt, implement and manage the scheme.
- 💧 Implemented equitably across the UK's devolved nations.

We also know that period inequity doesn't end or begin in schools. 1 in 5 people who went without period products in childhood also went without in adulthood. Nationally, £3.25 billion is lost annually because of those missing work because of period inequality. Across the UK, millions of people can't access the products, education, and shame-free support they need to manage their period with dignity. We are disappointed to find that there is almost no mention of periods, period poverty or menstrual equity in party manifestos. We want to see the UK government adopting this as a priority justice issue by:

- 💧 Legislating for free period products in public places across England and Wales.

🔴 Providing accessible menstrual healthcare for everyone.

🔴 Ensuring shame-free, inclusive education about periods - so we can all have normal period conversations and get the support, information and products we need.

“My boyfriend is given free condoms because no one wants me to get pregnant. They all want me to keep getting my period, but no-one cares if I am clean or free-bleeding at my desk.”

*A 17-year old student - All Yours*

**Signed by:**

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