

# TOILET POLICY TOOLKIT



**A TOOLKIT DEVELOPED BY  
YOUNG PEOPLE &  
EDUCATORS TO HELP  
SCHOOLS REVOLUTIONISE  
THEIR TOILET POLICY FOR  
PERIOD EQUITY**

**AND BEYOND...!**



**Irise International**

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOILET POLICY TOOLKIT?

TO SUPPORT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS COLLEGES AND 6TH FORMS, IN FULFILLING THEIR LEGAL OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE TOILET ACCESS TO ALL STUDENTS BY EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE TOOLS NEEDED TO CREATE AN ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE, WORKING TOILET POLICY TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS CAN USE THE TOILET FACILITIES AS AND WHEN THEY NEED.

## WHY ARE PRIMARY SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN THIS?

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE AVERAGE AGE OF A FIRST PERIOD IS GETTING YOUNGER? IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO START THEIR PERIODS DURING PRIMARY SCHOOL.



“The never-ending debate of accessing toilets in schools must be addressed if we want to create inclusive education for all. The best way to do that?

Include us.

Young people have to be involved to ensure we have everlasting change for all involved in the schooling system.”

Young woman aged 22



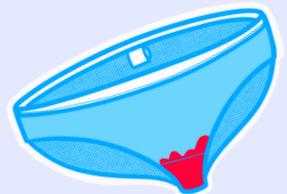
# WHO ARE WE TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO?

Irise International is an award-winning global leader in period equality programming and advocacy. We bring young people and their allies together to create change in their own communities and wider society.

Young period equality advocates and their allies from across the UK came together as part of a year-long consultation process to highlight the issues of toilet access in schools. They co-produced this Toilet Policy Toolkit to enable schools to create a Toilet Policy that works for both students and staff.

Organisations who contributed to this toolkit include Girls Friendly Society, Love Your Period, PeriodPower, Plan UK, Power Over Periods, Reach Up Youth, Sex Ed Matters, The Adeno Gang, and The University of Sheffield.

## WHY DO TOILET POLICIES MATTER ANYWAY?



Hundreds of young people have shared with Irise the challenges they experience when trying to access toilets at school. Many are not able to access toilet facilities and provisions in school as and when they need.

Educators have shared with us that toilet facilities are often made inaccessible at school as a way to manage challenges unrelated to toileting, such as vaping, bullying and class avoidance.

Making toilets inaccessible at school means young people with periods and/or bowel and bladder conditions are unable to manage their bodily needs. This causes high levels of anxiety and stress amongst students, leading to a lack of concentration, engagement, and attendance at school.

# WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY:



"I was 8 when I started my periods... there was 1 bin in primary school, so everyone knew why you were going to that toilet."

22 year old woman

"My school has now put on shutters on our school toilets on every single toilet."

16 year old pupil

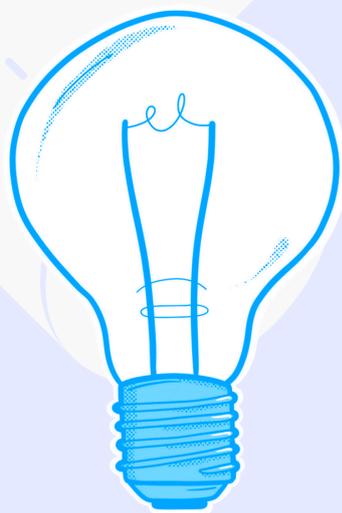
"TOILET PASSES DON'T WORK, ANYWAY, TEACHERS WOULD REJECT THEM, THEY'RE NOT BEING ACCEPTED"

28 YEAR OLD WOMAN



# IDEA #1

BE YOUTH-LED



# BE YOUTH-LED

Before you do anything **talk to your students** about the issues they are facing with toilet access in school. Although this toolkit provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by young people across the UK, as well as their suggested solutions, some difficulties in accessing toilets and provisions may vary depending on the context and nuances of your school.

- **Consult with students** - organise consultation meetings with pupils from every year group to identify what challenges they face when accessing toilets and to discuss potential solutions with teaching staff.
- **Elect pupil champions** - young people support the idea of electing pupil champions within every year group to receive student concerns about toilet access (either directly or anonymously). These concerns can then be discussed with staff to break down communication barriers between young people and educators.



"LET'S CREATE A SCHOOL CULTURE WHERE PUPILS FEEL EMPOWERED, STAFF CONSULT WITH STUDENTS, THE PEER-LED WAY"  
STUDENT AGED 19

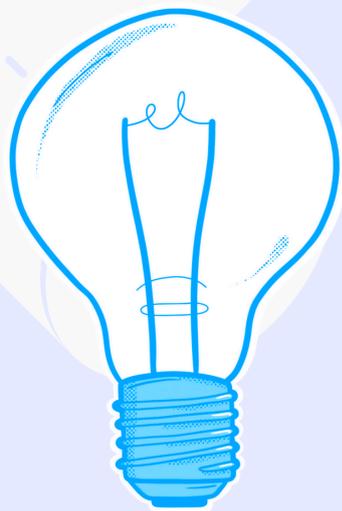
"We need a year group champion who can communicate the needs of the pupils"

Young woman aged 22



# **IDEA #2**

**CHANGE SCHOOL CULTURE -  
EMPOWER YOUR STAFF AND  
STUDENTS**



# CHANGE SCHOOL CULTURE - EMPOWER YOUR STAFF AND STUDENTS

**“Education is needed for the staff before the children”**

Founder of The Adeno Gang

**Training for staff** - As key gatekeepers to toilet facilities, it is vital that school staff understand the importance of young people being able to access toilets during school time. Educate your staff on what it's like to have a period, why immediate toilet access is necessary, the types of products available including both reusable and disposable, as well as the physical and emotional impact of periods on the body and moods. For example, do they know what a period poo is? Encourage staff to leave their own internalised period and toileting stigma at the door to create an open space where toilet access can be discussed.

**Menstrual health conditions** - Those suffering from menstrual health conditions may also need to access toilet facilities and provisions more frequently due to heavy menstrual bleeding and symptom management. It is therefore vital that the experiences of menstrual health conditions are understood by staff, with conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, PCOS and PMDD affecting over 1 in 10 girls[1]. Staff should be made aware of the symptoms of menstrual health conditions so that they can support students who may be experiencing these conditions and encourage them to advocate for themselves to seek medical advice.

More than a third of girls are missing school due to menstrual health-related pains[2]. As well as allowing students to visit the school nurse to receive painkillers, young people would also like access to heat packs in class.

“THERE IS A SCHOOL CULTURE OF JUDGING PEOPLE WHO HAVE PERIODS... WE DON'T WANT TO USHER PEOPLE AWAY WHO FEEL THAT SHAME”

24 YEAR OLD TRANS MAN



“I have to take time off school because it's painful...we need pain relief in schools”  
16 year old student

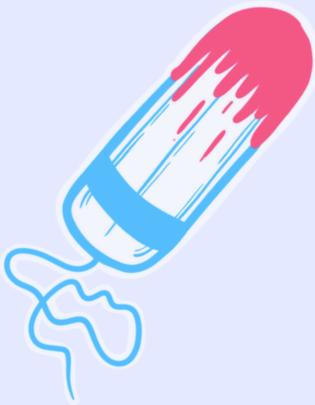
**Intersecting Identities** - Empower your staff team with understanding the intersections of gender, culture, religion and disability within menstruation, and how this can affect the experiences and frequency of some pupils accessing toilet facilities. For example, trans pupils and those experiencing gender dysphoria may struggle to access toilets during busy break times and prefer to use toilet facilities during lesson time.



"(TRANSGENDER BOYS/MEN) WOULD NOT WANT TO BE IN THE MEN'S (TOILETS) IF THEY'RE IN THE CLOSET... THEY WILL USE TOILETS AFTER BREAKS, WHEN OTHER PEOPLE AREN'T IN THEM." - 24 YEAR OLD TRANS-MAN

Up to 28% of children of all ages will experience bowel and/or bladder problems [3], with 1 in 12 living with a bowel or bladder condition [4].

*"I got really bad incontinence too, and then having to go through that in school was horrifying... but we know that people younger and younger are getting incontinence, whether it's bladder or bowel or both"*  
22 year old young woman



**Elect staff toilet champions** - Select a staff member to champion the issue of toilet facilities and product access. This staff champion will be the 'go to' for young people to approach to discuss their concerns, ideas and solutions, alongside the year group champions. We suggest that the staff champion be the member of staff who orders period products and ensures that a wide variety of products are available for all students. This includes students with sensory challenges and cultural or religious needs who may prefer a particular type of product.

"SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL. THEY HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO CHALLENGE THINGS, STAFF DEPARTMENT MEETINGS, CURRICULUM REFORMS, THESE SPECIALISTS CAN CHAMPION AND CHALLENGE IDEAS"

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER



[2] Wellbeing of women and census wide survey 2023

[3] Bowel and Bladder UK 2024 <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/>

[4] ERIC 2024 <https://eric.org.uk/>

## Integrate holistic menstrual health-focused education into your PSHE/RSE curriculum:

"I RECEIVED PERIOD EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL WHERE WE WERE SHOWN A VIDEO OF A WOMAN GIVING BIRTH... IT WAS TERRIFYING... IT WAS TOO BIOLOGICAL, WHAT ABOUT EMOTIONALLY, MENTALLY? EDUCATION NEEDS TO START SOONER AND CONTINUE THROUGHOUT SCHOOL"

16 YEAR OLD STUDENT



Go beyond the biological and empower your students with a more holistic, inclusive menstrual health education that incorporates symptoms, management, products, disorders, gender, disability, culture and religion.



"WE NEED EDUCATION AROUND HOW TO USE PRODUCTS"

22 YEAR OLD WOMAN

"GROWING UP TRANS, THERE WAS SO LITTLE INFORMATION ON PUBERTY... WE NEED A QUEER APPROACH TO PERIODS"

24 YEAR OLD TRANS MAN



Whilst educating your pupils, provide school-specific context to empower all students to access products and facilities, e.g. where to access products in school, who to go to for pain management during school etc.



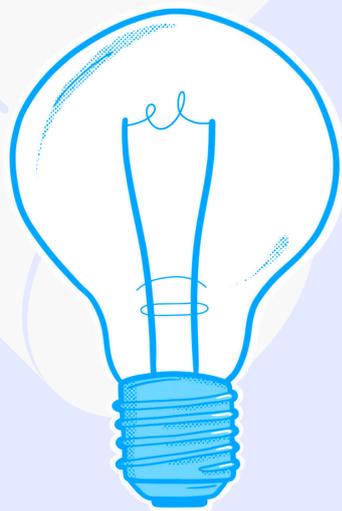
*"There is a lack of empathy between sexes"*

*24 year old trans man*

Lastly, include boys and non-menstruators within this education to ensure they have the opportunity to become allies. Removing boys, men and non-menstruators from the conversation only worsens period shame and stigma.

# **IDEA #3**

**EMPOWER PUPILS  
WITH PERIODS  
PRACTICALLY**

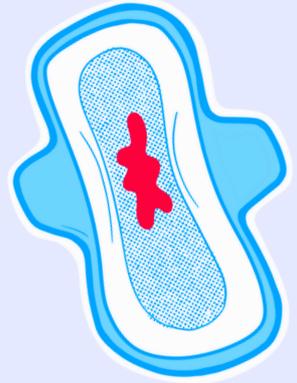


# EMPOWER PUPILS WITH PERIODS PRACTICALLY

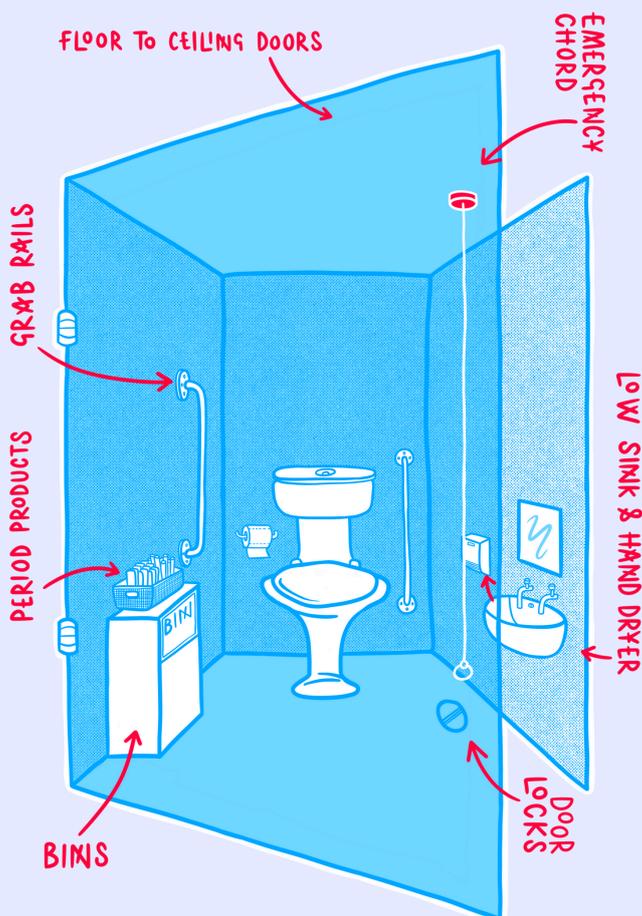
**Products and bins** - young people want period products and bins to be in every toilet cubicle to ensure that all students, regardless of their gender, are able to access the provisions they need.

**“Bins and menstrual products should be placed in all bathrooms (women’s, gender neutral, accessible, and men’s). This is not only of benefit for transgender people who menstruate but also those who use other products that are usually disposed of in bathrooms. For bins in accessible bathrooms, it is important to bear in mind that not everyone is able to operate a pedal bin.”**

*Committee Chair and Co-Author of the ‘Menstruation, Menstrual Health and Menopause’ standard from the British Standards Institute*



“YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH A TEACHER TO GET PRODUCTS, THEY GIVE OUT ONE PACK A MONTH. THIS DOESN'T WORK FOR PEOPLE WITH A HEAVY FLOW WHO LEAK THROUGH MULTIPLE PADS... IT'S REALLY INCONVENIENT”  
16 YEAR OLD STUDENT



## THE GOLD STANDARD LOO

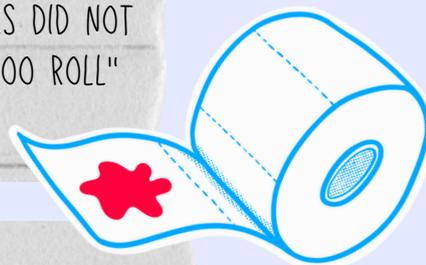
We understand that most schools do not have the resources to rebuild their toilet facilities. However, these elements are what young people imagine safe, accessible, inclusive toilets to look like at school.

**Exams** - during exam time, pupils may not be accessing the same toilets as during teaching time. Consider offering products on a table outside of the exam hall or in the nearest toilet cubicles. Ensure that students have been made aware of all product types available to support periods during exams, including use of reusable products for longer protection. Pupils are not always aware whether they can bring products into exams.[5] To relieve some of their anxiety, ensure that pupils are aware in advance of exam season as to how they can access products during their exams.

Consider that during exam time pupils may not be accessing the same toilets as during teaching time. Ensure that students have been made aware of all product types available to support periods during exams, including use of reusable products for longer protection and access to disposable products during exams, such as being offered on a table outside the exam hall or in the nearest toilets. Pupils are not always aware whether they can bring products into exams.

[5] Tomlinson, M. (2024) The Menstrual Movement in the Media: Reducing Stigma and Tackling Social Inequalities. Palgrave. Open Access.

"I LEAKED DURING AN EXAM BECAUSE I COULD NOT BRING IN PADS AND THE TEACHERS DID NOT HAVE ANY. MY SCHOOL DOES NOT KEEP THEM IN THE TOILETS, SO I HAD TO USE LOO ROLL"  
17 YEAR OLD STUDENT



"YOU CAN'T TAKE PADS INTO EXAMS, I JUST FINISHED MY GCSES, HAD A 2 HOUR 15 MIN EXAM, I COULDN'T BRING IN PADS. I COULDN'T GET THE PADS FROM MY BAG OR BLAZER, THEY SEARCHED MY BLAZER. I HAD A PASS THAT THEY LET ME USE, BUT HAD TO USE TISSUE UNTIL THE END OF MY EXAMS"  
16 YEAR OLD STUDENT

"time going to the toilet is cut out of exam time... Do i prioritise my grade for university? or would i rather bleed through? or go to the toilet? A lot of people choose to bleed through as those exams mean a lot to them. You put a lot of hard work into them" 19 year old student



**"THERE IS A LOT OF SHAME STILL WITH PERIOD PRODUCTS... COULD WE HAVE A TABLE OUTSIDE OF EXAM HALLS WITH PRODUCTS?"  
20 YEAR OLD WOMAN**

# HOW CAN SCHOOLS MANAGE THE BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES THAT OFTEN EXIST WITHIN TOILET FACILITIES?



**Students taking all the period products** – Period products are there to be used and we must ensure all students have access to them as and when they need them. If you find that you are reaching the spend cap on period products, please contact The Period Product School team at the Department of Education, or let Irise know.

“YOU WANT PRODUCTS BEHIND THE CUBICLE DOOR. PEOPLE WITH PERIODS CAN TAKE AS MANY PRODUCTS AS THEY LIKE, THERE’S SO MANY PRODUCTS AVAILABLE, RIDE THE WAVE OF ‘FREE STUFF’  
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE UK’S PERIOD PRODUCT SCHEME’S PRODUCT PROVIDER

**Safe spaces** – Some students use toilet facilities to take a ‘breather’ from a busy school day. Consider providing students with a designated private space where they can take 10 minutes out of their day to recalibrate. This is especially important for students with mental health issues, additional needs, and those who may need to take a break due to emotional or psychological distress.

“Some people just use the toilet a lot when they are anxious.”  
Deputy Mayor of Rotherham

**Vaping** – Toilet facilities are sometimes used by young people to vape. Instead of denying toilet access, challenge vaping through school policy, education, and awareness. [Here](#) are some fantastic resources to deliver to your young people on how to challenge vaping.



# AND THAT'S PROBABLY ENOUGH TO BE GETTING ON WITH FOR NOW!

We hope that this toolkit will help schools to develop their own toilet policies that work for both students and staff. Please get in touch with Irise International if you would like to learn more about this work.

[info@irise.org.uk](mailto:info@irise.org.uk)



## THIS TOOLKIT WAS CREATED BY



**Irise International**



### Irise International

A Sheffield-based charity and global leader in menstrual justice programming, policy and research

### Reyt Good Illustration

Keeping it local with original illustrations from Sheffield's own Andy of Reyt Good Illustration.



A reminder that all schools are eligible for free period products via schemes in the four nations and schools are automatically opted in to period equality initiatives. For further information about how to access schemes in your area contact [periodproducts@phs.co.uk](mailto:periodproducts@phs.co.uk).



# MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCES

## Menstrual health education resources recommended by Irise International:

### General Menstrual Health Education:

**Brook** - <https://www.brook.org.uk/education/teaching-about-periods/>

**Bloody Brilliant Wales** - <https://bloodybrilliant.wales/>

**Wellbeing of Women** - <https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/health-information/>

**phs Group** - <https://www.phs.co.uk/resources/free-period-products-and-schools-everything-you-need-to-know/>

### Disability and Menstruation:

**National Autistic Society** - <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/menstruation>

**Hello Period Equity** - <https://helloperiodequity.com/printable-resources>

**Clue** - <https://helloclue.com/articles/cycle-a-z/menstruating-while-disabled>

### Menstrual Health Conditions:

**Menstrual Health Project** - <https://www.menstrualhealthproject.org.uk/toolkits>

**The Adeno Gang** - <https://www.theadenogang.com/what-is-adenomyosis>

**Endometriosis UK** - <https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/what-endometriosis>

**Fumble** - <https://fumble.org.uk/polycystic-ovary-syndrome/>

**Mind** - [https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/premenstrual-dysphoric-disorder-pmdd/about-pmdd/#:~:text=Premenstrual%20dysphoric%20disorder%20\(PMDD\)%20is,phase%20of%20your%20menstrual%20cycle.](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/premenstrual-dysphoric-disorder-pmdd/about-pmdd/#:~:text=Premenstrual%20dysphoric%20disorder%20(PMDD)%20is,phase%20of%20your%20menstrual%20cycle.)

### Advocating for Yourself:

**Wellbeing of Women** - <https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/health-information/how-to-prepare-for-your-doctors-appointment/>

**Wellbeing of Women** - <https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/health-information/what-to-do-if-youre-feeling-dismissed-by-your-healthcare-professional/>

### Gender:

**Transhub** - <https://www.transhub.org.au/menstruation#:~:text=Having%20a%20period%20is%20not,thing%20that%20some%20bodies%20do.>

**Scarleteen** - <https://www.scarleteen.com/read/bodies/transmasculine-flow-lets-talk-periods>

**Clue** - <https://helloclue.com/articles/cycle-a-z/tips-for-using-clue-when-youre-trans>

### Culture and faith:

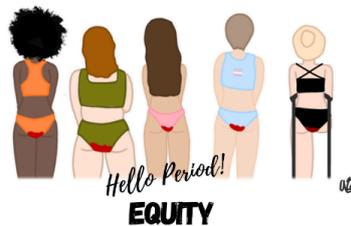
**Ricebox** - [https://871cdb0a-33cb-4db4-acf6\\_a5a419704da2.filesusr.com/ugd/fb31c0\\_acce57d3e30646409e971c273e6b4d7a.pdf](https://871cdb0a-33cb-4db4-acf6_a5a419704da2.filesusr.com/ugd/fb31c0_acce57d3e30646409e971c273e6b4d7a.pdf)

**Jean Hailes** - <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/translated-fact-sheets>

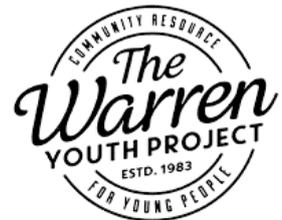
# WE ARE PROUD THAT THIS TOOLKIT HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY



**modibodi**



**MENSTRUAL HEALTH  
PROJECT**



**PERIODS  
MATTER.**



*All Yours*



*Endo Buddies*



**Irise International**

