

Period Dignity Policy and Guidance for Schools

(Updated April 2023)

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Background

What is period dignity?

1. Period dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods. Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.
2. The pilot scheme to address period dignity in schools aims to promote period dignity and tackle period poverty, helping learners to reach their potential.
3. Period poverty generally refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products.
4. [Plan International](#) describes what it calls a toxic trio of:
 - the cost of sanitary products;
 - a lack of education about periods; and
 - shame, stigma and taboo.
5. There have been significant developments in the rest of the UK in relation to schemes to provide free period products and promote period dignity through education programmes in schools and other educational establishments.
6. On 17 December 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to fund a pilot programme to provide free period products to all schools in Northern Ireland with effect from September 2021.
7. Funding has been secured to continue with the pilot programme in 2023/24, and its continuation will be good preparation for the implementation of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in May 2024.
8. The pilot scheme addresses the specific needs of the school sector and is supported with curriculum materials and an online Teacher Professional Learning programme for schools, thereby improving period dignity through addressing all three elements of Plan International's toxic trio.
9. The free products are not aimed at providing a blanket provision, but the scheme aims to ensure products are available to learners where and when they need them.
10. Schools have asked for additional products to be added to the **existing** contract, such as pants or tights. Unfortunately that is not possible at present but, going forward, when a new contract is procured, we would be keen to progress this on schools' behalf. For the moment, if schools wish to order pants or tights, they must pay for these from within their own separate school budget.

Period Dignity Survey Results (February 2022)

11. CCEA's Data Science and Statistics and Research Unit developed two surveys – one for teachers and another for pupils – to gauge the effectiveness and functionality of the Period Dignity Scheme in Northern Ireland.
12. Online surveys were made available to pupils and teachers in primary and post-primary schools between 10 January and 24 January 2022.
13. 1,722 pupils and 391 teachers responded to the surveys.
14. A summary of the responses is provided below.

Pupil Survey – responses received: 1,722

- A large proportion of respondents were aware of the term Period Dignity (N=1043, 60.6%).
- The Period Dignity Scheme is evident in 64.8% (N=1116) of respondents' schools, with the majority of these pupils finding out about it in school (N=934, 83.7%).
- Access to period products has improved for the majority of pupils (N=972, 71.1%).
- Respondents agreed that having access to more period products will reduce absenteeism due to period poverty (N=1543, 89.6%).
- The most common period products provided in schools are 'Pads' (N=984, 88.1%), followed by 'Tampons' (N=896, 80.3%).
- Toilets are the most common places pupils can access period products (N=1015, 90.9%).
- Lessons on Period Dignity have been delivered to over a quarter of respondents (N=467, 27.1%). These lessons commonly take place in assembly (N=210, 44.9%).
- 38% (N=181) had lessons that included boys and girls.
- A quarter of respondents (N=479, 27.8%) feel confident talking to their teacher about Period Dignity and/or Menstrual Wellbeing.
- 'More open conversations in school generally' (N=734, 59.0%) would increase pupils' confidence to talk to teachers about Period Dignity.
- Over half of respondents (N=930, 54.0%) were 'Not sure' if their school had a Period Dignity Contact/Teacher or member of staff.

Teacher Survey – responses received: 391

- The majority of respondents (N=356, 91.0%) were aware of the term Period Dignity.
- A large proportion of respondents (N=304, 77.7%) had been informed about the Period Dignity Scheme in their school.
- Parents had been informed in over a quarter of respondents' schools (N=102, 26.1%).
- 61.4% (N=240) of schools had purchased period products as part of the Period Dignity Scheme.
- The majority of respondents (N=183, 76.2%) agreed that period products are more accessible to pupils as a result of the Period Dignity Scheme.
- Almost a quarter of respondents (N=95, 24.3%) reported challenges to running the Period Dignity Scheme.

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- 66.2% (N=259) of respondents' schools had a designated Period Dignity Contact/Teacher.
- 80.3% of respondents (N=314) were confident talking to pupils about Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing.
- A quarter of respondents (N=96, 24.6%) have taken part in CCEA's training on Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing for schools.
- The training/webinar(s) on Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing had increased respondents' confidence talking to pupils about Period Dignity (N=74, 77.1%).
- A quarter (N=100, 25.6%) of respondents have a school Period Dignity Committee or Steering Group which includes pupils in decision-making and implementation of the scheme.
- Over half of respondents (N=57, 56.4%) agree that the allocated budget was sufficient to meet the needs of pupils.
- Key Contacts (N=92, 91.1%) felt 'Spare clothing, e.g. tights and pants' should also be covered in the allocated budget.
- 94.1% (N=95) of Key Contacts agreed pupils were allowed out of class to retrieve period products.
- Key Contact respondents (N=33, 32.7%) agreed their school developed or was planning to develop a Period Dignity policy.
- Key Contacts reported a 'good' (N=56, 55.4%) understanding and awareness of the Period Dignity Scheme in their school.
- Key Contacts mostly had a 'good' (N=55, 55.4%) understanding and awareness of issues around Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing in their school.

15. The full Period Dignity Survey Report is [available online](#).

What Schools Need to Do

- If you haven't already done so, nominate Period Dignity key contact(s) to implement the scheme in your school and/or attend training. Larger post-primary schools may wish to nominate two members of staff. Where possible, these key contacts should be from the school senior leadership team to ensure implementation of a whole-school approach and cascade relevant training to other staff members. Thank you to those who have already provided contact details.
- A form to submit the details of [Period Dignity key contact\(s\)](#) is available online.
- A list of school budgets for the purchasing of period products by post-primary, special schools and EOTAS settings has been published on the [DE website](#).
- Primary schools and prep schools will be supported through a stock allocation of period products in September each year, instead of being allocated a budget. These schools can still order further products in the usual way and their own school budget will be charged.
- Schools should familiarise themselves with their earmarked budgets.
- Period products are available to order now on the EA iProcurement portal or, for schools who do not use iProcurement, directly with the appointed supplier, John Preston Healthcare.
- The product range was extended from September 2022 to include reusable period pants, wet wipes and disposable wet bags. Schools should consult with pupils around

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their needs before placing orders for reusable period pants, as they are at a higher price point than other products in the range.

- Details on how to place an order for period products are provided below.
- The delivery timeframe for receipt of your period products from John Preston Healthcare is generally five working days from the placement of your order. However, delivery of reusable period pants may take a little longer.
- Guidance on purchasing spare pants and tights (these are not available through the John Preston Healthcare contract) is included below. These should be paid for through school budgets.
- Educational professionals (male and female), support staff and pupils all need to understand:
 - the policy behind this initiative;
 - how it links to Relationships and Sexuality Education within the curriculum;
 - the ordering processes; and
 - how the period products are utilised.
- We will continue to collect information to evaluate if the period products and processes involved are meeting your needs and those of your pupils.

Available Budget and How this Has Been Calculated

16. The Department of Finance has approved the continued funding of this scheme, subject to ongoing evaluation of its effectiveness in meeting its objectives.
17. Based on the experience of similar schemes elsewhere, we have estimated a modest 20% overall uptake of period products each year. By uptake we mean percentage of pupils using the scheme for all their needs throughout the academic year, including taking products home.
18. Provision does not include school holidays; however, if their budget allows, schools may wish to consider providing period products to pupils for whom this is essential. Of course, uptake is likely to vary between pupils and schools depending on affordability. See below.
19. It is not the scheme intention to provide a blanket provision of period products for all pupils. The scheme aims to ensure products are available to learners when they need them. Affordability will be more of a factor for some learners than others, and they may wish to avail of the scheme to meet their needs throughout the academic year, in school and by taking products home. Other learners may need to access the scheme because they have started their period in school unexpectedly or have forgotten to bring period products with them. Many learners will of course sit somewhere between these two scenarios.
20. Budget for period products has been set aside for a primary school stock allocation exercise, based on numbers likely to be menstruating (calculated at 12.5% of Year 6 and Year 7).

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21. The remaining total available budget for period products has been allocated between schools, based on the total number of learners enrolled in the school who are likely to be menstruating, based on their age.
22. A weighting has also been applied based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Therefore, all pupils who have periods should have access to the scheme, regardless of socio-economic status, but the increased need due to affordability has also been taken into account.
23. A small amount of budget has been allocated to 'boys only' schools to support pupils from other schools who may be attending for lessons under the Entitlement Framework.
24. A full list of schools and budgets can be found on the [DE website](#). The budget for period products is earmarked and is for spending on period products with the appointed supplier for the scheme (John Preston Healthcare). Schools should plan to spend this budget by the **end of March**.
25. Ordering procedures for both period products and spare pants/tights are provided below.

Allocation of Budget for Period Products by the EA

26. The **post-primary, special school and EOTAS budgets** for period products are earmarked, i.e. specifically set aside for purchasing period products through iProcurement (or directly with the supplier for schools not using iProcurement), and these are allocated by the EA through the budget allocation process.
 - **LMS schools** receive the funding directly into their LMS Budget and schools should use their cost centre when placing orders.
 - **VG/GMI schools** receive their allocated payment for period products and should procure period products **directly with the supplier** by emailing orders@johnpreston.co.uk.
 - **Special schools** receive the funding for period products centrally and should use their school cost centre and the project-specific function code when placing orders.
 - **EOTAS centres** receive the funding for period products centrally and should use their cost centre and the project-specific function code when placing orders.
 - **Special schools and EOTAS centres** will be advised directly of the correct function code to use when ordering.
27. Should schools spend all their budget before the end of March, they may, if they wish, purchase period products using their own school budget.
28. To ease the administrative burden, **primary schools will be allocated stock of period products in September**. They may, if they wish, purchase further products through iProcurement and these will be charged to their own school budget.

Ordering Procedure – Period Products (through the John Preston Healthcare Contract)

29. All schools who use iProcurement must create orders on Oracle iProcurement and choose from the iProcurement store. A valid purchase order is required to place an order with the contractor.
30. Schools can search for specific items by entering the Contractor Item Reference 'FMM-21-002' into the search bar in the main store on iProcurement. Additional products have been added to this contract, i.e. reusable period pants, wet wipes and disposable wet bags.
31. Further details on how to place an order and useful links are provided in the FAQ on page 13.
32. Information on placing an order can be found in the iProcurement Requisitioner's User Guide on the EA website. The EA also provides a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document.
 - A copy of the schedule for Feminine Hygiene Products is available on [EA Procure](#). This schedule is commercially sensitive information and must not be shared with any supplier. You will require login details for EA Procure to have access to the contract schedule.
 - The [FAQ document](#) above explains how you can request login details or you can email EAProcure@eani.org.uk. Schools must ensure they receipt the products once received to ensure prompt payment of the contractor.
33. Schools who do not use iProcurement, such as Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated schools, can use the instructions at paragraph 32 to obtain a schedule and prices and then email the supplier orders@johnpreston.co.uk. Ordering with the appointed supplier will allow these schools to benefit from competitive pricing and ensure demand is captured during monitoring of the pilot.

Ordering Procedure – Spare Tights and Pants

Note: This will incur a cost to the school's budget.

For schools who have access to the iProcurement system to place orders (i.e., all schools except VG and GMI):

34. Tights and pants are not available through the contract with John Preston Healthcare. If you decide to purchase these items, before placing an order, you are required to secure a minimum of two quotations. Once a suitable supplier has been identified, schools using iProcurement should create a non-catalogue requisition to procure the items. See page 26 of the [iProcurement Requisitioner's User Guide](#).
35. Requisition type: goods I can provide, description, item price and quantity.

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36. Requisition category: when you are prompted to select a category please choose 'Facilities Management Inc Utilities. Facilities Management'.
37. Type in details as required, including item description, price and quantity and then add to cart.
38. Select view cart and checkout.
39. Function code 80432 should be applied to all applicable lines on the purchase orders that relate. (LMS schools should select resource code 'D' (delegated) and special schools/EOTAS centres should use resource code 'N' (non-delegated).)
40. When your budget holder approves the requisition, a member of the Operations Team in Procurement will generate a purchase order number.
41. This approved purchase order will be sent to the supplier and all relevant invoices should include the purchase order number for reference.
42. When the goods are delivered to the school, please receipt on the iProcurement system to allow for the payment of the invoice.
43. You can check if the supplier you wish to use is already set up on iProcurement by searching in the supplier field or by contacting Procurement@eani.org.uk.
44. If the supplier you wish to use is not already set up on iProcurement, you will need to set them up by requesting that the supplier completes the New Supplier Template and submits a headed paper document. Once completed and received, the school should send the documents to Procurement@eani.org.uk for the first stage of the set-up process. The second stage of the process is facilitated by the Supplier Maintenance team in Finance.

For VG and GMI schools (not using iProcurement):

45. Schools who do not use iProcurement (such as Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated schools) should make their own arrangements to purchase tights and pants through their own procurement procedures. Note that period products should still be purchased through the John Preston Healthcare contract. Before placing an order, you are required to secure a minimum of two quotations.

Respect for Dignity, Privacy and Confidentiality

46. Period products should be obtainable in a way that respects the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of the individual obtaining them.
47. While progress has been made in recent years to tackle the stigma associated with menstruation and period products, people who need to access period products for free

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may still find this an embarrassing situation and any potential embarrassment should be minimised as much as possible.

48. Therefore, the ways in which and places where products are made obtainable should consider the needs and wishes of users in relation to privacy (including for religious and/or cultural reasons) and avoid anxiety or embarrassment, for example by using discrete packaging.
49. A dignified approach would ensure that products could be easily accessed in a place where individuals are comfortable doing so, as identified through consultation. It would not generally be considered a dignified approach if individuals have to:
- ask someone for products;
 - justify why they need them; and
 - justify the amount that is needed.

However, different arrangements may be put in place to access free reusable products which may require individuals to ask for these products, given the significantly increased cost over single-use products.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

50. Tampons are associated with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). TSS is a rare but very serious illness that can develop rapidly in anyone. There are about 20 cases reported each year in the UK that are associated with people using tampons. TSS is so rare that most doctors will not come across TSS during their medical careers. Further information on TSS is available at www.tssis.com.
51. Symptoms of TSS include a sudden high fever usually over 39°C, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle aches, a sunburn-like rash, a sore throat, dizziness and/or fainting, and severe flu-like feeling. Not all symptoms of TSS may occur simultaneously.
52. In the unlikely event that symptoms of TSS occur, remove the tampon, consult a doctor urgently and inform them that a tampon has been used. If left untreated, TSS can be fatal. The following actions will help reduce the very small risk of TSS occurring:
- At night, insert a fresh tampon before going to sleep and replace it first thing in the morning. Change your tampon every 4 to 8 hours or more often if needed.
 - Think about switching between tampons and towels, pads/liners from time to time during your period.
 - Always wash your hands before and after inserting a tampon.
 - Only use tampons during menstruation. Use only one tampon at any time and ensure the removal of the last tampon once menstruation has finished.
53. To help the environment, remember to dispose of tampons, applicator tubes and wrappers in a waste bin. Please **do not** flush tampons, applicator tubes or wrappers
54. If you decide to make tampons available in your setting (not recommended for primary schools), you should ensure good stock rotation, that instructions for use are available

and visible, and that tampons are kept in their original packaging, for protection against damage.

Teacher Professional Learning

55. Teaching staff involved in teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education, pastoral staff and, potentially, school nurses may want to undertake training for the implementation of the scheme, period dignity, period poverty and menstrual wellbeing, as well as gain an understanding of what advice should be given to all pupils, regardless of gender.

56. Topics covered will include:

- Overview of the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme in Northern Ireland schools
- The toxic trio and its impact on menstruating pupils
- Challenging negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequality around periods
- Facts about menstruation
- Menstrual wellness – physical and emotional wellbeing, leading up to and during periods
- Menstrual hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations
- Challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment and myths
- How Period Dignity links to Relationships and Sexuality Education within the curriculum
- Developing a Period Dignity School Policy.

57. Dates, times and content of the TPL sessions will be communicated to Period Dignity key contacts in schools. Registration will be available through Eventbrite.

58. Teacher Release is available for participating teachers through NISTR. The code for the Period Dignity Scheme Teacher Professional Learning teacher cover will be made available to participants upon registering for webinars or other learning events.

59. Schools are expected to develop their own internal Period Dignity policy using this document as a base. A framework is available to schools (see Annex 4) and the content covered in the school policy can be discussed during the online Teacher Professional Learning session(s).

60. Non-teaching staff involved in the ordering of period products will also wish to familiarise themselves with the ordering process, budget limits, and promotion and managing of products in school.

Classroom Resources

61. CCEA is developing new teaching resources on these topics, which will be added to the [CCEA website](#) over the academic year. Examples of the resources will be explored through the TPL sessions. Topics include:

Primary Schools

- Changes in the Bodies of Boys and Girls during Puberty
- The Female and Male Reproductive Systems
- The Menstrual Cycle – The Facts
- Period Wellness – Physical and Emotional Wellbeing
- Period Hygiene and How to Deal with Related Situations

Post-Primary Schools

- Facts About Menstruation
- Menstrual Wellness – physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing, leading up to and during periods
- Period Products – different types, advantages, disadvantages and how to dispose of them
- Menstrual Hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations
- Challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment and myths
- Toxic Shock Syndrome
- Endometriosis – symptoms, support and treatment
- Other menstrual cycle issues, for example Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) or Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).

The resources will also include approaches to challenging negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequality around periods.

Frequently Asked Questions

School budgets

How do I find out my school budget for free period products?

62. School budgets for the purchase of period products are available on the [DE website](#).

How has my school budget for free period products been calculated?

63. The total available budget has been shared between schools, based on the total number of learners enrolled in the school who are likely to be menstruating, based on their age. A weighting has also been applied based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Therefore, all pupils who menstruate will have access to the scheme, regardless of socio-economic status, but the increased need due to affordability has also been taken into account.

My school budget seems too low/high – what do I do?

64. This budget is to cover the period to 31 March each year. Budgets will continue to be adjusted as the pilot scheme becomes embedded and we begin to understand levels of demand, based on school ordering levels and survey feedback. There are a range of products at variable prices, and each product has availability to order either individual packs or large supplier pack size (which will include a number of the individual pack sizes). Schools can order either, depending on their individual needs.

65. If you still have queries on the budget that has been calculated for your school, you can contact the Department (see contact list).

My primary school has not been allocated a budget to purchase period products – why is this?

66. Feedback from the first year of the scheme was that the effort of ordering products was not commensurate with the level of funding made available to primary schools. Budgets were small because of the low numbers likely to be menstruating. A successful stock allocation exercise took place in February 2022 to bring primary schools on board and the Steering Group agreed that we should proceed on this basis in the future. Primary schools will receive an allocation of stock in September. Should you wish to order additional stock, you can do so in the normal way and the products will be charged to your school budgets.

Ordering products

How do I order period products?

67. Schools can search for specific items by entering the Contractor Item Reference 'FMM-21-002' into the search bar in the main store on iProcurement. See above paragraphs for detail.

Which period products should I order?

68. Schools should decide which combination of products is most suitable for the pupils in their setting and within their available budget. As a guide however, in the first year of a similar scheme in Scotland, 73% of products ordered were towels, with 27% being

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tampons and other products. 75% of products ordered in the first year of the scheme in Northern Ireland were towels. Schools should consult with pupils around their needs before placing orders for reusable period pants, as they are at a higher price point than other products in the range.

For primary schools

69. We do not recommend tampons for primary schools and would suggest that the Boots branded regular towels without wings would be most suitable for this age group. This is the line that will be allocated to primary schools in September.

Tampons versus towels

70. Towels accounted for over 70% of products ordered during the first year of a similar scheme in Scotland. In Northern Ireland 75% of products ordered by schools were towels in the first year of the scheme. In CCEA's recent survey of schools, 76.6% of pupils and 71.9% of teachers said tampons should also be made available.

Toxic shock – potential risk

71. Tampon use can be associated with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This is a rare but serious disease that can be fatal. If you decide to make tampons available in your setting, you should ensure good stock rotation, that instructions for use are available and visible, and that tampons are kept in their original packaging, for protection against damage.

How often should I order?

72. Schools need to balance available storage space with the need to consider environmental footprint (for example ordering once or twice a year). Where budgets are very small, it is recommended that one order, for the full amount, is placed.

Can I use my Period Dignity budget to buy related items like wet wipes, spare pants and spare tights?

73. Wet wipes and disposable wet bags are being made available to order through John Preston Healthcare. The period product range has also been extended to include reusable period pants.

Teacher Professional Learning

How will the TPL be delivered?

74. Teacher Professional Learning on developing a school Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing policy will be delivered as online sessions. Other topics may be covered as the need arises or as new resources become available.

How will we be notified about the dates and content of the TPL sessions?

75. The dates and content of the sessions will be notified to key contacts within each school via email.

Will there be separate sessions for primary and post-primary schools?

76. Yes – primary and post-primary schools will have tailored sessions.

Who should attend the sessions?

77. Where possible, participants should be from the school senior leadership team to ensure implementation of a whole-school approach and cascade relevant training to other staff members. Teaching staff involved in teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education, pastoral staff and, potentially, school nurses may wish to undertake training. Larger post-primary schools may wish to nominate two members of staff.

How do we register?

78. Period Dignity key contacts within each school will be notified of the registration details and links to the appropriate Eventbrite page via email.

How long will the sessions last?

79. The online sessions will be available as 2-hour or 3-hour sessions.

What if none of the dates suit our nominated key Period Dignity staff?

80. We will endeavour to ensure key staff from as many schools as possible can participate in the live online Teacher Professional Learning sessions, as they will provide opportunities for discussion and questions. However, if some teachers are unable to participate in the live sessions, they can access PowerPoint presentations by contacting CCEA.

Is there teacher release available and how do we claim for this?

81. Teacher Release is available for participating teachers through NISTR. The code for the Period Dignity Scheme Teacher Professional Learning teacher cover will be made available to participants upon registering for webinars or other learning events

Are nominated key Period Dignity staff expected to cascade the training to others in the setting?

82. Yes, key Period Dignity staff can use the Teacher Professional Learning PowerPoint presentations and supporting materials (which will be shared following the sessions) to cascade learning to other members of staff, ensuring a whole-school approach to the implementation of the scheme.

Useful Contacts

The following contacts can assist with queries, should they not be addressed in the policy document and FAQs.

EA

Operational queries should be addressed to EA.

Queries regarding pricing and ordering should be directed to facilities.procure@eani.org.uk

Contract-specific queries and queries on budget allocation method by school type, codes, switching to draw from main school budget, or day-to-day operation of the contract, please contact perioddignity@eani.org.uk

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CCEA

CCEA will answer questions on relevant curriculum materials and support to embed the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme within schools and Teacher Professional Learning on the scheme.

Deidre Coffey: Education Manager – Period Dignity Project dcoffey@ccea.org.uk

Roisin Radcliffe: Programme Manager rradcliffe@ccea.org.uk

perioddignity@ccea.org.uk

DE

DE will answer wider policy questions about the overall purpose and funding of the pilot scheme, including how the available budget to March 2023 has been calculated and shared between schools.

Ashleigh Mitford: Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team Ashleigh.Mitford@education-ni.gov.uk

Dale Heaney: Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team Dale.Heaney@education-ni.gov.uk
attendance@education-ni.gov.uk

Annexes

Annex 1: Case Studies of Good Practice

These case studies are from schools in another region of the UK. As the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme becomes embedded in schools in Northern Ireland, local examples of good practice will be shared through the [CCEA website](#).

Importance of the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme

Access to free products can:

- promote equality;
- help keep young people in school;
- increase concentration in class through not having to worry about lack of period products or leaking;
- increase confidence to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities;
- support good health; and
- prevent menstruating young people from having to make decisions to either wear the wrong product, substitute a poor-quality product or toilet roll, or wear a product for longer than is safe.

Case Study 1 – Primary School (600 male and female pupils)

- Conversations held with all female Year 4–Year 7 pupils to launch the programme.
- Education about menstruation with all pupils in Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHRE).
- Letters sent to parents to inform them of the programme.
- Period pads and baby wipes were made available in drawers in Year 4–Year 7 toilets with extra products available at Pupil Support.
- Pupils in Year 4–Year 7 who needed them were given period products home for the holiday periods.
- Parental communications of vital importance, especially for parents of younger pupils.
- Basic education for pupils below Year 4 may be necessary if toilets are shared across several years.
- Close liaison between primary and post-primary schools allows for a smooth transition.

Case Study 2 – High School (945 male and female students)

- The school engaged with students to agree the best method to distribute period products during a pilot project.
- A steering group was formed from pupils from lower and upper schools to decide how to roll out the free products. The steering group has grown to include new members, including many male students.

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- A gender-neutral mascot was adopted to raise awareness of the fact that not everyone who has a period identifies as female.
- Assemblies and a high-profile poster campaign using the mascot accompanied the launch of free product provision.
- A whole-school approach was implemented with a focus of removing the stigma associated with periods and making access fun.
- Period products were placed in drawered storage units in all female toilets, PE changing rooms, pupil support offices and in a named classroom on each corridor.
- To help destigmatise access to the storage boxes, they are also stocked with wipes, cotton pads, bobbles, deodorants, body spray, nail files and tissues.
- Before and after surveys found that 84% of students felt more comfortable talking about their periods after the pilot.
- The pilot project created strong leadership opportunities for students who have grown in confidence.

Case Study 3 – High School (880 male and female students)

- The school engaged with students to determine the best method of distribution and a steering group of senior students was formed. This group decided how and where to place the products.
- The scheme was announced in an all-female assembly delivered by the student steering group.
- They framed the scheme in terms of period equality and dignity rather than period poverty.
- The steering group also raised awareness of the scheme and established a rota to monitor stock levels.
- They decided to make the period products available in each toilet cubicle rather than in the public areas of bathrooms. They felt that privacy and student-ownership was key to a successful uptake and student buy-in.
- Student buy-in has also reduced vandalism and misuse of the period products with only one instance of pads down a toilet.
- The steering group also received training to deliver period education and hosted a conference for other local schools on period poverty.
- New students were recruited to take over leadership roles in the steering group the following year.
- The school plans to involve male students more formally in the scheme.

Annex 2: Key Considerations

When setting up the scheme in your school, think about the following actions:

1. Consult with your students at an early stage

- The scheme is for them, and their ideas and concerns should be listened to.
- They are best placed to say which period products they would like to see provided, as well as how they would like them distributed and accessed.
- Student toilets have their own unique social dynamics. Listening to your students can reveal hidden barriers to access.
- This project creates leadership opportunities for young people. Creating a student steering group empowers young people and ensures student buy-in.
- If students are invested in the project, then they are more likely to support it.
- Engaged groups of young people monitor each other and help prevent abuse and vandalism.

2. Ordering and practicalities – keep the needs of your menstruating students at the forefront

- Make a range of products and different qualities available, giving students choice about the products they want to use.
- Ensure:
 - there are sufficient period products available, and they are routinely restocked;
 - period products are easily accessible; and
 - anyone who menstruates can access products, including transgender men or non-binary individuals, and that language is gender neutral.
- Allow students, where possible, to lead on the roll out of the pilot scheme, raising awareness, monitoring provision and restocking.
- Above all, protect students' dignity, avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma.

3. Raise awareness

- Inform all students (male and female) about the project.
- Inform parents and all staff about the project.
- Ensure everyone knows what period products are available and where they can be accessed.
- Students should be aware of the school's Period Dignity key contact (member of staff).

4. Education

- Complement free period product provision with education about periods, period dignity and menstrual wellbeing.
- Awareness raising and education should:
 - promote the availability of free period products;

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- increase knowledge about the menstrual cycle, periods and menstrual wellbeing; and
- challenge negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequality around periods.
- Consider opportunities for peer-led learning.

Annex 3: Findings from Other Pilot Projects

- Young people in schools do not want to ask staff for products – in the classroom, in the school office, in pastoral care. It is embarrassing.
- Young people can find using the toilet at school embarrassing – many will avoid going to the toilet altogether. Changing a pad can be noisy, and pupils in neighbouring stalls might hear the rustling and know they have their period.
- Locking toilet doors during lesson times prevents pupils from changing their period products in privacy.
- Young people often feel unable to collect products from communal sinks and public areas for fear someone sees them take one.
- Sometimes products are stocked in some toilets but not others, resulting in a long walk to fetch products from the opposite side of the school site.

Annex 4: Framework for Developing a Period Dignity School Policy

1. Contextual information	
School details	
Date of policy	
Overall school aims and objectives of the Period Dignity policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the aims of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy support the values, ethos, and moral and ethical framework of the school • How this will inform education and awareness around Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing in the school in an inclusive and equitable manner • How the policy links to the School Development Plan 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the policy takes account of The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. This is available at www.legislation.gov.uk • Reference to the relevant sections of UNCRC, available at www.unicef.org.uk • How the policy contributes to Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy. These documents are available at www.education-ni.gov.uk • How the policy supports the Children and Young People’s Strategy for Northern Ireland 	
2. Policy formation and consultation process	
How the policy was drawn up – who was consulted (for example staff, governors, pupils and/or parents) and how	
How the policy will be disseminated – who will receive it and where it can be accessed	
How and when it will be reviewed	

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Contact person for comments or feedback on policy	
<p>How the policy is linked to other school policies, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection policy or Safeguarding policy • Pastoral Care Programme • RSE policy • SEN policy • Positive Behaviour policy • Anti-Bullying policy • Environmental policy • Policy on using outside agencies and vetting arrangements • Confidentiality policy 	
3. Key staff and roles and responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Leader with responsibility for Period Dignity • School Governor with oversight of the Period Dignity Programme • Pastoral Care lead • Period Dignity key contact • SENCO • SEN staff • Safeguarding and Child Protection lead 	
4. Whole-school approach to period dignity	
<p>i. School ethos How the school supports period dignity through its provision, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visibly promotes the importance of period dignity • challenges negative views, stereotypes, gender inequality and stigma around periods • communication about period dignity and related issues is through a whole-school approach • how the school approaches education for young males on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing • education around periods, period dignity and menstrual wellbeing complements the provision of free products 	

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<p>ii. Child-centred provision How the school supports pupils through its provision, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral Care – addressing issues that affect young people in relation to periods or period dignity • how the school provides for pupils with SEN • considering the gender, culture, religion and age range of pupils in the school • engaging with pupils when determining how and where period products are made available • evaluating the impact of the period dignity scheme through pupil feedback 	
<p>5. The period dignity scheme</p>	
<p>Early consultation carried out with pupils on the period dignity scheme</p>	
<p>How free period products are chosen and purchased for use within the school</p>	
<p>Types of products available for menstruating pupils</p>	
<p>How free period products are made available to those who need them during the school term</p>	
<p>Arrangements for period products to be available to those who need them during school holidays</p>	
<p>Where period products are stored</p>	
<p>Process and people involved in monitoring and replenishing period product supplies, including checking expiry dates</p>	
<p>Identity of staff member(s) who pupils can approach with any issues they may have</p>	
<p>Pupil and parental involvement in the period dignity scheme</p>	

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6. Period dignity and menstrual wellbeing education and learning	
How the teaching about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing supports the school's ethos and reflects the moral and religious principles held by parents or carers and school management	
The objectives of education about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing within the school – what the school is setting out to achieve	
How the school will ensure inclusive learning for all pupils through education about period dignity/menstrual wellbeing	
The management and co-ordination of period dignity/menstrual wellbeing education in the school	
Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education co-ordinator	
Classroom or teaching arrangements, for example single-gender classes, mixed-gender classes or both	
Approaches to learning and teaching – teaching methodologies that will be used	
Provision for pupils with SEN	
Period dignity/menstrual wellbeing resources used and criteria for selection (to ensure they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and values framework)	
Strategies for gathering and disseminating the most current and relevant information and related research to inform planning and ensure relevance	
How to deal with sensitive issues and respond to pupils' questions	
Teacher Professional Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who • How • When • How often 	

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<p>Monitoring and evaluation of period dignity/menstrual wellbeing education provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for gathering data • Who will be involved • How often evaluation takes place 	
<p>7. Involving and consulting with parents or carers</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents’ or carers’ rights and responsibilities • Engagement with parents or carers, for example policy consultation, information, support sessions or providing materials for home use • Parents or carers with learning difficulties • Withdrawal from lessons on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing 	
<p>8. Links across the curriculum and to the wider life of the school</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the learning and teaching about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing links across the curriculum to other areas of learning in the different key stages • How elements of the wider pastoral programme support and complement education about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing, for example school assemblies • How other school initiatives support and complement education about period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing, including RSE, Health and Wellbeing, Personal Development, and the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award 	
<p>9. Managing issues</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning signs that staff will watch for which may indicate a pupil may be experiencing emotional or physical distress due to having a period • Ensuring staff are supportive and non-judgemental • How the school responds to absences due to period issues • What additional items and facilities are available to menstruating pupils should they be needed, for example heat pads, somewhere to lie down or a change of clothes 	

10. Possible appendices

Relevant documentation could be signposted, for example:

- Parent- or carer-friendly summary of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy
- Pupil-friendly summary of the Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing policy
- Pupil-friendly and/or parent-friendly list of contacts, websites and organisations related to period dignity or menstrual wellbeing (CCEA website)
- Relevant Department of Education circulars
- Northern Ireland Curriculum link
- Outline programme across the key stages
- Brief details of outside agencies or individuals the school uses to support the delivery of period dignity or menstrual wellbeing and an outline of the session.