



MY PERIOD[®]

TEACHERS' GUIDE
PRIMARY SCHOOLS
2019 EDITION

HEY THERE!

Here at Hey Girls we are working hard to end period poverty in the UK. Our Buy One Give One model is helping increase access to period products – with 2.3 million donated in our first year – but this is not enough. We need high quality education about periods that breaks down the stigma and taboo surrounding menstruation.

We know that talking about periods can be difficult, which is why we've partnered with schools and community organisations to create My Period – an education resource designed to break the ice and get you chatting about menstruation.

This Teachers' Guide contains everything you need to implement My Period in your Primary School, and get the conversations flowing!

THE HEY GIRLS TEAM

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WHAT IS 'MY PERIOD'?

My Period is a new resource to help schools have positive conversations with their pupils about periods.

The Primary School pack includes:

- Pack of 50 Conversation Starter cards¹
- Teachers' Guide, including advice on integrating period education across your school
- 2 Activities (complete with handouts)
- 4 Lessons (complete with handouts)
- Full Learning Spiral linked to Curriculum benchmarks in Scotland, England and Wales
- Hints and Tips for Assemblies, Extra Curricular Activities, running a Period Poverty campaign, and distributing period products in your school

A separate Teachers' Guide is available for Secondary Schools.

My Period is intended to achieve the following overarching learning outcomes:

- Stimulating discussion to reduce stigma
- Empowering people and boosting confidence
- Sharing practical tips
- Conveying biological facts

WHY PERIOD EDUCATION?

We believe that every child has the right to high quality education about periods. Here's a few reasons why:

1) GENDER EQUALITY

Research around the world shows that when girls start their periods

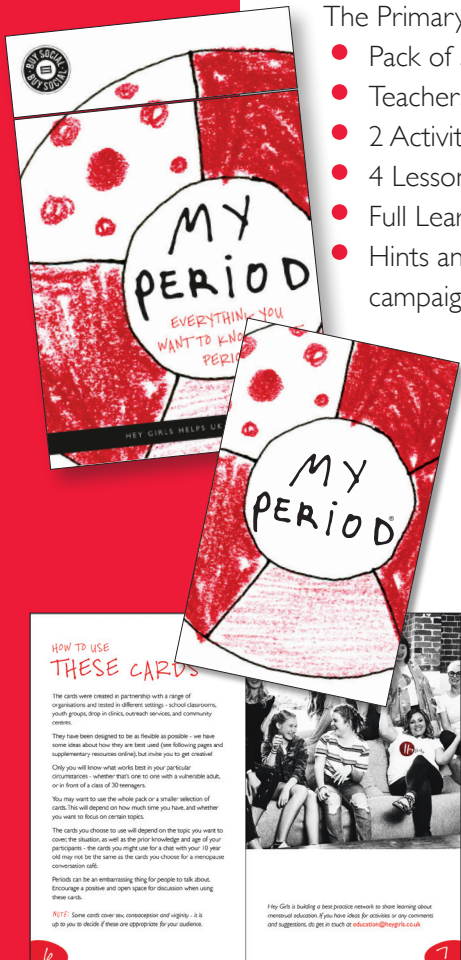
they are more likely to start missing school – because they lack access to products, are in pain, or because of cultural stigma. As girls hit puberty they are also more likely to stop participating in sports and other extra-curricular activities. Empowering girls to feel confident throughout their periods is really important in ensuring that all pupils have equal access to education and opportunities.

2) DISMANTLING TABOO

Menstruation is still a taboo in the UK. Although periods are experienced by roughly half the population, they are rarely talked about except among close groups of female friends. Although this is gradually changing, research by Plan International UK shows that 48% of girls are embarrassed to talk about their periods.²

The way that periods have been taught in school – often only once, and only to female pupils – reinforces the message that periods should be kept secret. This needs to change. By having open conversations with pupils of all genders – including boys – we can break down the stigma around periods, and work to prevent bullying and shaming behaviour.

1. My Period cards are available to purchase through the Hey Girls website, or in bulk directly – orders@heygirls.co.uk
2. Break the Barriers, Plan International UK, January 2018



3) PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A lack of quality menstrual education, combined with the silence that surrounds periods, can create a lack of understanding of what is normal. Crucially, it means that many women are never taught what is not normal, and when to seek medical help. This has been shown to result in the underdiagnosis or late diagnosis of related medical conditions like endometriosis. Women are often reluctant to visit a doctor about their periods – when they do, they are often caught between not being taken seriously or being overmedicated, often with hormonal contraceptives. The menstrual cycle plays a huge roll in health, wellbeing and an empowering education about periods can help women navigate various treatments with confidence.

4) PERIOD POVERTY

Research shows that as many as one in 10 girls across the UK³, and one in 4 in Scotland⁴ have been unable to afford period products. This problem is attracting growing attention, and is the core focus of various campaigns and donation projects. Hey Girls was set up specifically to eradicate period poverty in the UK. We believe that breaking down taboo is crucial to ending period poverty. Our consultation has shown that girls from disadvantaged backgrounds – especially those growing up in care – are less likely than their peers to get supportive education about periods at home. It is likely (although not proven) that poverty in access to products is correlated with poverty in access to education. For this reason, it is so important that this learning happens at school.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE?

In 2018, Hey Girls undertook consultation to find out what the gaps were in period education. We spoke to pupils, teachers, schools, stakeholders and the general public. Our research showed that current provision of period education at the end of primary school is often quite good. The problem is that learning is often delivered only once, and often only to girls. We're calling on Secondary Schools can do more to continue the conversation and create positive environments for pupils to ask questions about the changes happening to their bodies.

In the meantime, Primary Schools asked us to share supplementary resources to support the amazing work they already do.

Hey Girls supports education that:

- Explains the practical and emotional side of periods
- Is positive about menstruation
- Acknowledges a range of experiences
- Encourages body confidence and body positivity
- Includes everyone in the conversation (those who have periods and those who don't)
- Interrogates existing attitudes towards periods
- Dismantles stigma and taboo
- Is fun!

3. Break the
Barriers, Plan
International UK,
January 2018
4. Access to
Sanitary Products
in Scotland, Young
Scot, March 2018

THE HEY GIRLS LEARNING SPIRAL

We know that there is a very wide spectrum of what, how and when education about periods is delivered in schools. Existing PSHE / RSHP guidelines and programmes mention periods, but often not in great detail. This comprehensive Learning Spiral covers all aspects of menstrual education from primary through secondary and offers guidelines on what to teach and when. Each stage is supported by Lesson Plans, matched to curriculum benchmarks in Scotland, England and Wales (see *Curriculum Links PDF*).

Age 15+

Pupils understand the physical and emotional changes across the menstrual cycle, and when to seek help.

Pupils understand that many factors related to menstruation can be detrimental to mental health and how to challenge these (including gender identity, period poverty, culture, religion, ability).

Pupils continue to develop self-care and empathy around menstrual experiences.

Age 13+

Pupils understand that there are many myths and taboos associated with periods and how to use facts to form their own opinions.

Pupils understand that advertising and the media influence opinion about periods and the menstrual cycle.

Age 11+

Pupils understand and can describe what the menstrual cycle is and how periods fit within it.

Pupils are able to develop self-care and empathy around menstrual experiences.

Pupils know and can describe how to prepare for and manage periods and are aware of all the available options, including reusables.

Pupils understand the physical and emotional changes of puberty for male and female bodies, that some people get periods and that this is normal.

Age 8-11

Pupils know and can describe how to prepare for and manage periods.

Pupils understand the changes of puberty for male and female bodies, that some people get periods and that this is normal.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES & LESSONS

To be integrated across your Primary School as you see fit. We would recommend that all pupils get two lessons about periods in the final year of Primary School (Year 6 in England and Wales and P7 in Scotland), and that all pupils have at least one lesson on puberty which mentions periods per year from the age of 8.

	OVERVIEW	GREAT FOR	AGE
ACTIVITIES			
1: True or False	Teacher calls out a series of statements and students must decide whether they are true	Exploring menstruation; covering a wide range of topics; breaking down misconception and myths	ALL
2: Period Bingo*	Using the My Period cards, pupils play bingo, discussing periods along the way	Exploring menstruation; covering a wide range of topics; having fun	ALL
LESSON PLANS			
1: Changes	Pupils use a range of art materials to transform human shapes into adults	Exploring puberty in a creative way	8+
2: Puberty: Physical & Emotional Changes	Pupils explore puberty in more depth drawing changes on human body outlines, and exploring true and false statements	Covering the basics of puberty	9+
3: What are Periods?*	Pupils explore periods using the My Period cards and create posters to explain their learning	Covering the basics of menstruation	9+
4: Period Products	Pupils get messy with different types of period product	Exploring the variety of period products available	10+

Hey Girls also provides a list of games that can be played with the My Period cards to complement learning – see the booklet that accompanies the pack of cards.

*My Period cards are required for these lessons – for other lessons they are a useful bonus

MY PERIOD CARDS

The My Period cards were designed to help start conversations about periods. We've found that one of the best ways to tackle this previously taboo topic is to get students talking and asking questions. The cards can be used by themselves during small group work or as teaching aids within lessons.

The cards are an ideal resource to use whenever the topic of menstruation arises, constantly reinforcing the message that it's ok - everywhere in school - to talk about periods. We have devised a range of activities you might want to use in either mixed or single gender groups, both large and small (see the booklet enclosed within the card box).

My Period comprises 50 cards covering every aspect of menstruation. Each card has an image on one side and an explanation on the other. For ease they are grouped into three categories:

THE BASIC BIOLOGY	LIFE WITH PERIODS	
1. What is a period?	14. PMS & Period Symptoms	33. Looking after yourself
2. Female genitalia	15. Normal period pain	34. Hygiene
3. Female reproductive organs	16. Red flags	35. Exercise
4. Eggs	17. Colour of blood	36. Swimming
5. The menstrual cycle	18. Quantity of blood	37. Sex on your period
6. Cycle length	19. Flow of blood	38. Contraception
7. Cycle variation	20. Control of blood	39. Pregnancy
8. Hormones	21. Clots	40. Post-partum
9. Female life cycle	22. Period poos	41. Virginity
10. Life phases - puberty	23. Discharge	OTHER CONVERSATIONS
11. Life phases - menarche	24. Product Overview	42. Taboo
12. Life phases - peri-menopause	25. Disposable Pads	43. Stigma
13. Life phases - menopause	26. Tampons	44. Secrecy
	27. Toxic Shock Syndrome	45. Trans* periods
	28. Menstrual Cups	46. Periods and disability
	29. Reusable Pads and Pants	47. Periods around the world
	30. Disposing of products	48. Period Poverty
	31. Leaks	49. Mythbuster Card
	32. Stains	50. Quiz Card

NB: It's up to you to choose which cards that are appropriate for your class. Cards 37-41 cover sex and contraception and we understand that Primary Schools may choose to remove these.

USING MY PERIOD IN YOUR SCHOOL: FAQS

HOW DO WE ROLL THIS OUT?

These resources have been designed to be flexible to your needs. We have given lesson plan suggestions for particular age groups, but you may find you want to use them at different times. Some classes or year groups will be more ready than others (emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually) to cover the material, so use your discretion when planning which lessons to use.

Each lesson can be stretched or contracted to fit the time available. Please adapt them to suit your school, your style of teaching and what your pupils already know. However, we have put a lot of care and time into developing these resources and ask that you please respect our copyright by only using My Period for the purpose it was intended – to educate and start conversations - and not to offer for sale or copy any aspect of our work.

MIXED OR SINGLE GENDER CLASSES?

All of the lessons and activities are designed to be used in mixed-gender classes. Students who will never have periods benefit by gaining insight into the experience of those who do, and ensuring they also attend these lessons avoids the ignorance that can often lead to bullying and shaming behaviour. By teaching pupils all together you can send a powerful message that periods are not secret or shameful. They are not “girls’ business”, they are normal and natural.

DID YOU KNOW!

The only other animals to have periods are some monkeys, bats and elephant shrews!



HOW DOES THIS FIT IN WITH OTHER PSHE / RSHP SUBJECTS?

These resources are designed to be flexible to fit into your existing provision. It may be that you only need a few ideas for games to complement what you already teach. Or it may be that you want to adopt all these lessons into your provision.

We are aware that curriculum guidelines for RSE /RSHP in England and Scotland, and the national curriculum in Wales, are in the process of being updated. We will update these resources in line with advice when it is issued.

WHAT IF I WORK FOR A BOYS' SCHOOL?

We understand that all-boys' schools are unlikely to dedicate as much curriculum time to periods as to other aspects of human biology and puberty. However, it is really important that boys are educated about periods. Some of the more hands-on activities like Lesson 4 can work well to allow boys to experiment and ask questions about periods.

WHAT ABOUT THE BOYS?

INFORMING PARENTS

It is up to you to inform parents before you discuss menstruation with pupils, following your school's guidelines. It is important to note that education about periods is not the same as sex education.

Teaching about periods is a matter of health, not of reproduction and should be treated separately. It may help to clarify this distinction if you think parents are likely to want to withdraw their children.



BEFORE YOU START...

SELF-REFLECTION

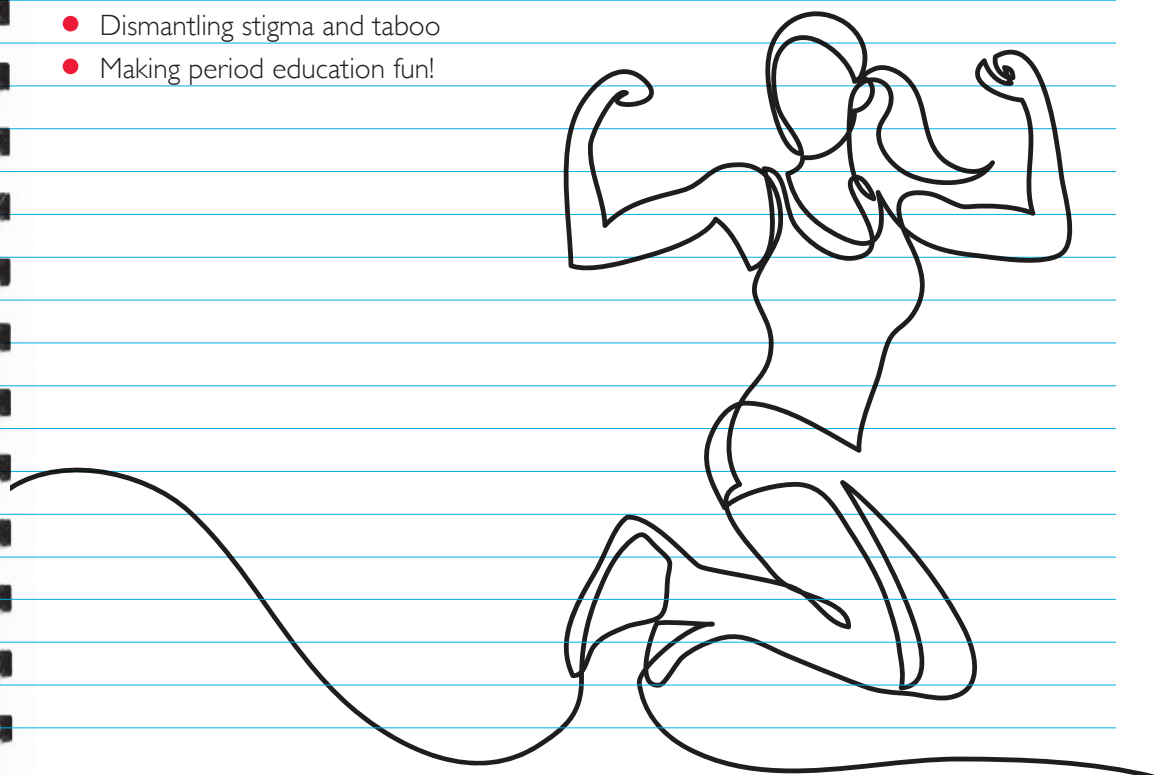
Before you begin to use these resources, take a moment to reflect on your own experiences of and attitudes towards menstruation. It's important to think through your opinions (positive or negative) and how they were shaped by the education you did or didn't receive. What do you wish you had been told about menstruation? What do you think it is most important to convey in the conversations that you lead?

Many people are very negative about periods and view them as an unnecessary inconvenience – especially if they do not want children. Other people see periods as a natural part of the human experience and a way to connect meaningfully with their bodies. Both approaches are valid.

KEY MESSAGES

Hey Girls supports the following key messages when teaching about periods:

- Being positive about menstruation
- Acknowledging a range of experiences
- Encouraging body confidence and body positivity
- Including everyone in the conversation (those who have periods and those who don't)
- Interrogating our attitudes towards periods
- Dismantling stigma and taboo
- Making period education fun!



ENSURING A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCUSSION IN LESSONS

We know that teaching about periods can be tricky, and that some classes are likely to present challenges in terms of behaviour management. Before you begin, have a think about ways in which you can make lessons easier for pupils who may be experiencing awkwardness or embarrassment. Humour can be a great icebreaker, but should be inclusive – laughing with rather than at someone or something. If pupils are likely to be reluctant asking or answering questions in front of the whole class, encourage small group work with friends or neighbours, and/or allow pupils to record ideas in private. If the physical classroom space is unlikely to be conducive to an open discussion, consider rearranging furniture, or hosting these lessons in another space – e.g. a drama studio, school hall or somewhere else.

Embarrassment, shame and disgust are common responses to this topic so it may be necessary to keep reminding pupils that periods are a natural and normal part of life and not something to be mocked or shamed. Boys may need reminding that although they may not experience periods themselves, their mothers, carers, siblings and peers will, and that they, along with their future partners and children will thank them for their awareness and support.

In each lesson, after clarifying the learning objectives we recommend you establish ground rules to ensure a safe space for discussion. If your school has existing ground rules that you use for your PHSE / RSHP lessons, please use them as the students will already be familiar with them. If not, we suggest using ROCK:

- **Respect** – Active listening, no judging or shaming
- **Openness** – Open to new information, new opinions, difference of opinion
- **Confidentiality** – All comments and questions made during the class are confidential - everyone agrees not to talk about them with others afterwards or use them in shaming or teasing behaviour (NB be clear that if a student is at risk confidentiality cannot be assured). No personal questions - of students or staff
- **Kindness** – Importance of kindness in our communication and in supporting each other



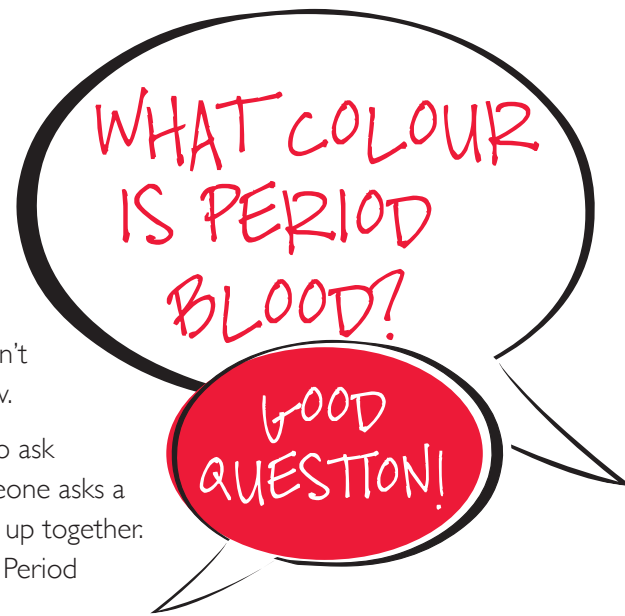
FAQS & HOW TO RESPOND

People of all ages and genders have questions about periods. Your pupils may think they know all about periods until they are part of a lesson and suddenly learn something new that they hadn't thought of – we don't know what we don't know.

It's important to keep an open space for pupils to ask questions (and to ask questions yourself!) If someone asks a question you don't know the answer to – look it up together. Please see the booklet that accompanies the My Period Cards for further guidance.

There are huge number of myths and misconceptions about periods. It's important to recognise these and work hard to debunk them.

It's also important to remember that sometimes pupils think of questions after a session, and may need an opportunity to ask them a few days later. If possible, make yourself available to pupils who may need extra support – or point them to the appropriate person in your school. Keeping a box for confidential questions in each class can help with this.



SAFEGUARDING

Hey Girls recognises that menstruation can be a sensitive topic for some people to talk about, and that in discussing menstruation and menstrual health other related sensitive topics may be brought up by participants (including gender identity, sexual health, contraception and pregnancy). We recommend appropriate sensitivity when approaching these topics and handling questions and disclosures in line with your school's safeguarding policies.

MENSTRUAL STIGMA & SHAME

Cultural attitudes towards periods in the UK are gradually shifting – mostly thanks to a huge amount of campaigning. But for a long time, menstruation has been surrounded by stigma. Many women have experienced everything from mild teasing about their periods, to workplace discrimination and bullying. It's worth bearing this in mind before you begin your teaching. By modelling positive and open conversations, and calling out teasing or shaming comments, you can help pupils feel confident about menstruation.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Many different societies and cultures approach menstruation in different ways – for example, some cultures are against the use of tampons. As a teacher, you will know who is in your class and whether there are certain issues you may need to be aware of when managing the discussion.

PERIOD POVERTY

Please discuss this topic sensitively. Research by Plan International (Breaking the Barriers, December 2017) has shown that one in ten girls in the UK have been unable to afford period products. The figure rises to one in four in Scotland (Young Scot, March 2018). This means there is a reasonable chance that someone in your class may be affected by period poverty.

When discussing period poverty overseas, be aware that there are many amazing activist movements, and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) projects all over the world. Some are working to break down taboos (e.g. #HappytoBleed in India), others are grassroots projects to increase access to products (e.g. AfriPads in Uganda). This can be an interesting topic to research and explore with your class. Remember to look out for projects led by inspirational local people, as well as international aid projects.

TRANS* MENSTRUATORS

It's really important to recognise that for a range of reasons, not all women have periods, and also that not all people who have periods identify as women – some trans* and non-binary folk do too.

For this reason, we need to be careful about the language that we use when discussing periods, and teach in mixed-gender groups as far as possible. As a school, or as a class teacher, you will know your pupils best, and can hopefully work to support non-binary pupils through these discussions.

SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH SEND

There are many different ways that people can find periods difficult, either physically or mentally. Having periods is a reality of life for most females of reproductive age and people living with a disability may need extra support. For some the sensory experience of having a period and using products can be overwhelming, while for others the physical side of changing products could be the area that needs support.

If you are working with people with Anxiety, Autistic Spectrum Disorders or Learning Difficulties, be aware that education about periods may need to be delivered one to one. You will need to be aware of the individual's needs such as word triggers and the impact they can have. If you need any support in this area, please see www.autismandadhd.org/



FURTHER SUPPORT FOR STAFF

If you feel you need a refresher on periods, don't worry. We know that not everyone is an expert on menstruation (especially if they didn't receive a good education about periods themselves). Many adults (male and female) feel that they need more information. That's why we've put together a refresher's guide to get you started – please see the booklet accompanying the My Period cards.

Get in touch with education@heygirls.co.uk if you need any help with anything.

HINTS & TIPS

ASSEMBLIES

Assemblies are a great way of sharing information with pupils, but they don't often leave a chance to ask questions. If you're using an assembly to teach about periods, period poverty, or the distribution of products, please follow up with time in form classes or lessons to allow for questions and further discussion. It might work well to consult with pupils in advance – you could ask them to submit anonymous questions which could you then answer in assembly, or use to shape the content.

tip...

Ask students to submit anonymous questions which could you then answer in assembly

hint...

Younger pupils can feel more comfortable talking to older pupils rather than staff members

EXTRA-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Some schools we've worked with have developed amazing peer-led learning programmes to discuss menstruation during lunch or after school. Younger pupils have told us they can feel more comfortable talking to older pupils rather than staff members. Creating a space to facilitate discussion about periods can be really valuable. We recommend using the My Period cards to start conversations – see the booklet found within the card box. Alternatively, use one of the five Activities, which can be adapted for small group work.

DISTRIBUTING PERIOD PRODUCTS IN YOUR SCHOOL

Hey Girls has been working closely with Local Authorities and schools across Scotland to collect examples of best practice distributing period products. In most cases the best way forwards is to get pupils involved in the design and delivery of the distribution – this not only creates an amazing opportunity for pupils to build confidence and leadership skills, it also ensures pupil buy-in reducing 'misuse' of products to zero. If you're planning to distribute products get in touch with education@heygirls.co.uk and we can send over Case Studies of schools doing amazing work to distribute products in a way that is dignified, educational, empowering, and fun!

Hey Girls is a key provider of plastic-free period products to the public sector. We match all school purchases with a donation, effectively doubling your order. If you are interested in providing products in your school contact orders@heygirls.co.uk for the public sector wholesale price list.

ABOUT HEY GIRLS

Hey Girls CIC launched in January 2018 with the aim of eradicating period poverty in the UK. We make and donate plastic-free period products (pads, tampons, cups, and reusables).

Hey Girls has a Buy One Give One model, so for every box of period products that we sell, we donate a box to someone who needs it. In our first year of trading (2018) we donated an amazing **2.3 million period products** via our amazing partners (women's centres, youth groups, food banks, schools etc.). We are a key partner in the Scottish Government's provision of free period products in schools, colleges, universities and public buildings, and are increasingly working with councils across England. We work closely with our public sector partners – from Local Authority education and procurement departments, to school staff – to ensure products are distributed with dignity.

Hey Girls believes that alongside access to products, everyone should have access to high quality education about menstruation. My Period is a physical resource (50 conversation starter cards) as well as a range of free online session plans and activities. We also offer training to schools, women's centres and community groups to help them deliver high quality workshops that address the biological process of menstruation, as well as tackling stigma and shame.



We are in the process of creating a Best Practice Network to share learning and ideas – both in the distribution of free period products, and in providing empowering education. Please get in touch at education@heygirls.co.uk



Hey Girls has put a lot of care and time into developing these resources and ask that you please respect our copyright by only using My Period for the purpose it was intended – to educate and start conversations - and not to offer for sale or copy any aspect of our work.

This resource was created by Hey Girls CIC



visit us on our website www.heygirls.co.uk or on social media [@heygirlsuk](https://twitter.com/heygirlsuk)
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In partnership with:

- Social Bite
- Simon Community
- Canongate Youth
- Active Communities
- Autism and ADHD
- SHE Scotland
- YWCA Scotland
- Sexpression Glasgow
- Healthy Respect
- MsMissMrs

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