

Free period product scheme for schools and colleges extended

The Government has today extended its fully funded scheme providing tampons, pads, and menstrual cups and other environmentally-friendly products until the end of the academic year.

The programme, which launched in January 2020, aims to make sure girls can access period products when they are needed, reducing stigma and keeping young people attending school and college and engaged in education, when they might have otherwise missed out.

A study by PHS Group with 250 young people suggests 35% of girls aged 13-18 have taken time off school or college because of their period, with 11% of those claiming they missed school due to lack of affordability of period products.

The scheme helps young people make the most of every possible day in the classroom, particularly following the pandemic when most young people spent time learning from home rather than in class.

Will Quince, Minister for Children and Families, said:

I'm delighted that the incredibly important scheme providing free period products for schools and colleges across England is to continue running.

Nothing should get in the way of students spending every possible moment in class, and no girl should ever be ashamed of being on their period.

Any school or college that has not yet ordered through the scheme should do so at the first possible opportunity.

State funded organisations in England can order free period products for the remainder of the academic year, from supplier PHS Group.

Each school or college has a budget that will remain intact until the end of the calendar year, after which it will be renewed with a new spend cap in January 2022.

Gemma Abbott, Director of #FreePeriods, said:

Young people have already had so many hours away from the classroom – this scheme is an amazing opportunity for all schools and colleges to ensure that no young person has to miss out on their education for lack of access to period products.

We want to urge every school and college in England to place orders for free period supplies as soon as they can. We're glad to see the scheme has been extended to the end of the academic year – let's take the chance to show just how valuable it is, so we can secure its continuation well into the future.

Sharon Common, Head of Portland Academy, said:

Having access to free period products with no questions asked has made our female students feel more comfortable and confident, and as the products are visible around school, boys have also increased their understanding of menstruation.

Some of our autistic young ladies have sensory difficulties and find wearing sanitary protection a challenge which can lead to absence from school each month. Using school supplies means staff can work with students to work on improving this.

Having free stock also means parents and carers do not have to ration what they send in to school with their daughter which reduces impact on low-income families and increases personal hygiene.