

Press release: Free sanitary products in all primary schools

Free sanitary products will be offered to girls in all primary schools in England from early next year, under plans announced today by the Department for Education.

The Government committed to provide access to free sanitary products in England's secondary schools and colleges in last month's Spring Statement, and today Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi confirmed access to the free products will also be fully-funded by the Department for Education in all primary schools across the country.

Extending the programme to all primary schools follows feedback from teachers, students and parents, and the DfE is now working with key stakeholders in the public and private sector to roll-out the programme in a cost-effective manner that supports girls and young women across the country.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

This Government is determined to ensure that no-one should be held back from reaching their potential – and wants everyone to lead active, healthy, happy lives.

That is why earlier this year we committed to fully-fund access to free sanitary products in all secondary schools and colleges in England.

After speaking to parents, teachers and pupils, we are now extending this to more than 20,000 primary schools so that every young person in all our schools and colleges gets the support that they need.

The announcement builds on bold new relationships, sex and health education, published earlier this year, to ensure every pupil learns about leading healthy lives, including menstrual wellbeing, as part of a well-rounded education on mental and physical health.

It also follows other steps taken by the Government, including the introduction in 2015 of a £15 million annual Tampon Tax Fund to support women's charities – and a commitment to end period poverty globally by 2030.

This commitment included the creation of a government-wide taskforce, backed by £250,000, to work with businesses and the third-sector to develop new ideas to tackle period poverty.

Today's announcement – which will see all primary and secondary schools and colleges offered fully-funded products at the earliest possible opportunity

to roll-out the scheme nationwide in early 2020 – has been welcomed by charities and campaigners who have heralded the “fantastic news”.

Amika George, founder of #FreePeriods, said:

This is fantastic news, and we’re so glad that the government has extended this pledge to primary schools. Period poverty should never be a barrier to education.

With free access to menstrual products for every child in compulsory education, every student can go to school without the anxiety or stress of worrying where their next pad or tampon will come from. This commitment will ensure that all children can fully participate in lessons and focus in class, and their period will never hold them back.

Isla, 19, a member of Girlguiding’s panel of Advocates, said:

A third (30%) of girls aged 11-21 told Girlguiding they have missed school or college because of their period. That’s unacceptable. Every girl should have access to something so basic – and I am so excited that the government is making sure that they do. Free menstrual products in primary schools will help make period poverty a thing of the past.

It’ll also help break down the stigma girls deal with every month. Too many people think periods are a secret or something to be ashamed of. But giving primary school girls access to tampons and pads will help break the taboo of periods from a young age.