

Ending period poverty once and for all

**A toolkit for students' unions to
campaign locally and nationally to
put an end to period poverty**

2019

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Introduction

No woman or girl should have to worry about whether or not she can afford basic sanitary products.

Chisomo Phiri, NUS Wales Women's Officer



Foreword



It's hard to believe that in 2019 and in one of the world's wealthiest countries, more than 137,700 girls have missed school in the last year because they couldn't afford sanitary products.

When I first came across the term 'period poverty', I was shocked to hear that the problem goes deeper than not being able to afford sanitary products. Lack of education on menstruation is also a key part of the issue. I began to ask myself how this could be.

What I've learned is that period poverty is yet another form of gender inequality and this inequality is costing girls their livelihoods, health, and education.

I was fortunate enough to have been educated on periods, at school and by my mother, so I knew exactly what was happening to my body when mine started. I was able to access sanitary products and medication for stomach cramps. My first cycle was as pleasant as it could be. I couldn't imagine going through that experience without that support and knowledge.

It breaks my heart knowing that not everyone is fortunate enough to have the same experience that I had. Girls are starting their periods without having the right support or products, feeling embarrassed and ashamed because they don't know what's happening to their own bodies, and being forced to improvise by using tissue paper or socks. This is inhumane. Every girl deserves to bleed with dignity and in the 21st century; this should not be too much to ask.

The shame and stigma attached to periods is ridiculous. Periods are a totally normal and natural part of life and we shouldn't be ashamed of them. The taboo around periods is stopping girls from getting the help they need. This needs to change now. We need a radical culture change in our attitudes towards periods and this includes men being part of the conversation as well. All pupils need to be educated on the menstrual cycle at school – not just girls. Periods are extremely powerful and we women are *badass* for bleeding every month without dying!

Ending period poverty has become my passion and that is why I have created this toolkit. I want every students' union in Wales and beyond to have the confidence to talk about periods freely and campaign for free periods. We need a strong, collective voice to lobby Welsh Government to take this issue seriously and invest in ending period poverty once and for all.

Chisomo Phiri

NUS Wales Women's Officer

No girl should be faced with the indignity and constant stress of knowing she's bled over her uniform in front of her class because she can only afford one tampon or pad, or worse still, no tampon or pad.

Amika George, free periods activist



Background

Research and statistics

What does the research say?

The term 'period poverty' is often used to discuss girls who are missing school due to being unable to afford menstruation products.

However, period poverty is fully defined as "poor menstrual knowledge and access to sanitary products". Lack of education on menstruation is also a key part of the issue and this is important to keep in mind when campaigning to end period poverty.

Plan UK have recently conducted some ground-breaking research into how period poverty impacts young girls' lives. These statistics are currently the only quantitative research into the extent of period poverty in the UK. The results are quite shocking.

- One in ten girls (10 per cent) have been unable to afford sanitary wear
- One in seven girls (15 per cent) have struggled to afford sanitary wear
- One in seven girls (14 per cent) have had to ask to borrow sanitary wear from a friend due to affordability issues
- More than one in ten girls (12 per cent) has had to improvise sanitary wear due to affordability issues
- One in five (19%) of girls have changed to a less suitable sanitary product due to cost

Further statistics on taboo and stigma surrounding periods and menstruation

- Nearly half (48 per cent) of girls aged 14-21 in the UK are embarrassed by their periods
- One in seven (14 per cent) girls admitted that they did not know what was happening when they started their period, and more than a quarter (26 per cent) reporting that they did not know what to do when they started their period
- Only one in five (22%) girls feel comfortable discussing their period with their teacher

- Almost three quarters (71%) of girls admitted that they have felt embarrassed buying sanitary products
- One in ten had been asked not to talk about their periods front of their mother (12 per cent) or father (11 per cent)
- 49 per cent of girls have missed an entire day of school because of their period, of which 59 per cent have made up a lie or an alternate excuse
- 64 per cent of girls have missed a PE or sport because of their period, of which 52 per cent of girls have made up a lie or excuse

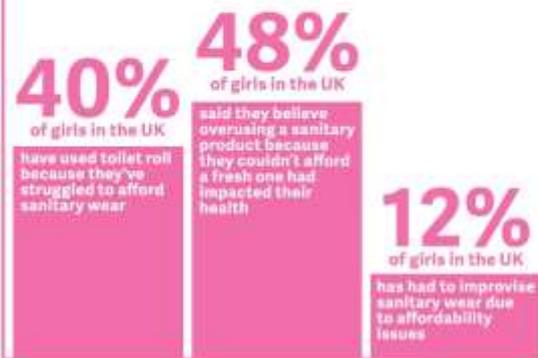
The findings are based on an Opinium Research survey of a representative weighted sample of 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21, carried out online between 22 and 24 August 2017.

This research shows that period poverty is heavily impacting girls' lives. Their health, self-esteem and wellbeing is being affected and this is devastating. There needs to be a real culture change in attitudes towards periods and this must start with education.

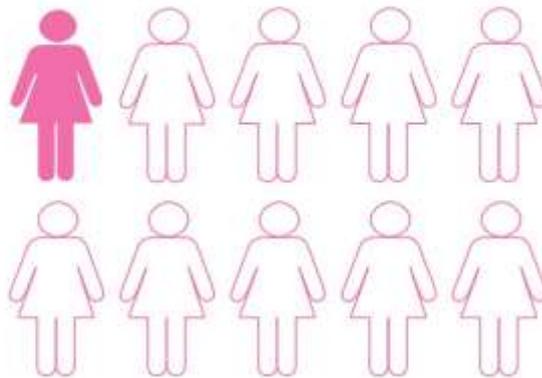


The statistics speak for themselves

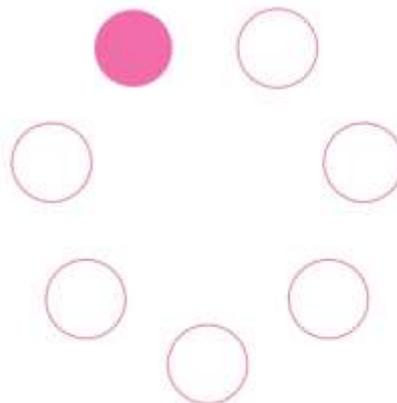
Period poverty affects more people than you think



As many as 1 in 10 girls in the UK have been unable to afford sanitary products at one time or another



All statistics courtesy of Plan International UK



1 in 7 girls in the UK has struggled to afford sanitary products

Our plan to end period poverty

Countless women and girls face the indignity of not being able to afford essential sanitary products.

This causes them extreme anxiety and embarrassment, and stops them from doing important things such as attending school, college, or university.

Period poverty isn't just the inability to afford sanitary products. It's also about having a lack of menstrual knowledge.

Sadly, too many girls grow up not knowing about menstruation, how to manage it, and how to look after their own bodies.

It doesn't have to be this way. Here are three key steps to ending period poverty once and for all.

Invest in sanitary products

With an estimated 400,000 women and girls in either compulsory or post-compulsory education in Wales, we assume around 10-15% of them have experienced period poverty.

Take the most basic cost of a menstruating in a given year to be £100, and that gets a figure of £6 million needed every year to provide for around 60,000 women and girls.

We believe the Welsh Government's current allocation of £1 million to be spent by local authorities during 2018-20 simply doesn't go far enough.

We call for annual funding at the required scale to be made available to local authorities and education providers to provide sanitary products to women and girls in any kind of education in Wales who need them.

Teach menstruation

Plan International UK has done some excellent research into women and girls' experience of periods. Sadly, they found huge numbers

simply didn't understand periods, or were embarrassed by them.

Almost half of girls were embarrassed by menstruation; and 14% didn't know what was happening and 26% didn't know what to do when they had their first period.

The financial side of period poverty is just that: one side. The other side is a poverty of knowledge, understanding and empowerment.

We call for the curriculum to provide for regular and thorough lessons about menstruation. These should be integrated (boys and girls) as well as inclusive of all genders. They should provide a safe space for girls to discuss their experiences and receive support from their peers and their educators.

Empower women and girls

They are the experts in their own experiences. We should ask them what they want to learn and amplify their voices. Our own practices should be ethical and realistic, and we should all make an effort to break down stigma.

We call for all those who have a platform – political, social, cultural, economic, or otherwise – to use that platform for good by raising women and girls up, and changing the way we as a society think and speak about menstruation.



Case studies

The human stories and real-life impact of period poverty

Laura, South Wales



Laura started her period a lot earlier than a lot of her peers.

She says it was a shock, "because no one else was talking about it".

At the time, her family wasn't

well off. Her mother had to try and make ends meet with things like food and clothing, but the money didn't always stretch. Sanitary products were an added expense which came earlier than expected.

Laura says that time of her life was "very difficult", not least because of all the other changes to her body at that time. Worrying about how she was going to buy sanitary products was an added stress at the "worst possible time".

Unfortunately, Laura's mother was anxious and distracted. Her mother had told her about periods so she knew what was happening, but there weren't many sanitary products in the house. Laura says she had to "take money and go to the pharmacy" herself.

At just 10 years old, Laura was embarrassed and scared. She didn't feel old enough to take all that on.

Now, she says she is upset looking back because her mother didn't help her in the way she would have expected.

Struggling with buying sanitary products alone at a very young age, Laura received no support.

She was too embarrassed to ask for help, so she simply didn't get it. There were no posters

or leaflets around, and no information available anywhere. As a 10 year old girl, she didn't feel she could go to the family doctor or ask in school.

Laura was focused and determined, and was fortunate to find that she was able to push away the distraction of her situation while she was in education.

The portion of her life when Laura experienced period poverty knocked her confidence and self-worth, and her situation didn't really improve until she was older and started working.

Luckily, she eventually became more confident, and could earn money to buy products. But that wasn't until many years later.

Note: Laura's name was changed at her request to protect her identity.

Our view

Laura's case isn't rare. All around Wales, and indeed the wider UK, there are young girls starting their periods not knowing where to turn for help.

Some have supportive families, and some don't. But most feel embarrassed by their period – because of the stigma attached to it.

Even if they're not embarrassed, many struggle to pay for sanitary products. They don't know where to get them, or how they could possibly afford them.

This inevitably leads to the situation we're currently in, where 49% of girls have missed an entire day of school as a result of period poverty.

While Laura was able to push away the distraction, many can't, and period poverty is having a seriously negative affect on their education and attainment.



Samantha, Mid Wales



Samantha is a current student and lives in Mid Wales.

She grew up with her family and her older brother.

She says her family were pretty normal – not rich, but not struggling either.

When her older brother went to university, her parents were determined to help him out as much as they could, paying for his accommodation and living costs so that he didn't have to rely on a student loan.

Naturally, that put a strain on the family finances. There was always food on the table, but making sure everyone was fed meant there wasn't much money left over.

As a result, there were times when Samantha couldn't afford to buy the sanitary products she needed, like pads.

She said that made her feel "really embarrassed and alone." She didn't know who to turn to or where to get help.

What made it worse was that she experienced terrible cramps and nausea when she had her period. And because she sometimes had to go without pads, she didn't want to go to school because she feared she would leak through her uniform.

That did happen to her once. One time, she was using tissues instead of pads, and leaked while travelling on the train. She says she was "mortified" by this, and now gets scared that it will happen again every time she has her period.

She started to get help when she went to the school nurse because she had sickness while on her period. The nurse gave her pads and clean underwear. She explained to her that she sometimes couldn't afford sanitary products, and the nurse offered to help her as much as she could.

At 17, Samantha got a part-time job, which gave her some financial independence, meaning she was able to buy her own sanitary products rather than rely on the family purse.

Note: Samantha's name was changed at her request to protect her identity.

Our view

What Samantha experienced when she was growing up happens to all too often.

The striking thing about this case is that Samantha doesn't come from a background where one would think she would struggle to afford basic sanitary products.

But the truth is that with all of life's other costs, proper sanitary products are an additional expense to be incurred, when sometimes, the money just doesn't stretch far enough.

Inevitably this leads to the use of unsuitable items such as tissue paper or even socks in place of the correct sanitary products.

We believe that no one should ever have to face such indignity. It's degrading and wrong.

In one way, Samantha was lucky to have a supportive school nurse, but the embarrassment stays with her.

In any case, no one should have to depend on luck to find support when they're in need.

Resources

Use these resources to make a difference locally and nationally

Write to your Vice-Chancellor

Summary

This is a template letter for you to send to your Vice-Chancellor asking them to work with you to end period poverty. The letter sets out what period poverty is, how it affects women and girls, and why it's a problem that needs their attention. It invites them to meet you to discuss your ideas, including setting up an Ending Period Poverty Working Group. You may wish to amend the letter somewhat before sending, or add your own ideas. Remember to change the general details such as addresses, names, and titles.

Students' union address
Students' union address
Students' union address
Students' union address

Date

Vice-Chancellor's name
Vice-Chancellor's address
Vice-Chancellor's address
Vice-Chancellor's address
Vice-Chancellor's address

Dear Vice-Chancellor,

Ending period poverty at [institution]

I'm sure you will have seen stories in the media over the past year or so about how period poverty is affecting women and girls all around Wales and the UK.

Period poverty is commonly defined as having a lack of access to menstruation products due to financial constraints. It also encompasses poor menstrual knowledge.

It cannot be underestimated how much period poverty can affect women and girls' lives. For example, research by Plan International UK has found that 49 per cent of girls have missed an entire day of school because of their period, of which 59 per cent have made up a lie or an alternate excuse.

This translates into women students' experience of college or university. There is still stigma and embarrassment attached to menstruation, which, combined with the financial cost, means there are undoubtedly women students at our university right now who are experiencing period poverty.

This will mean that women students at our university will have missed lectures and seminars because of the natural process of menstruation. This means women students at our university are facing anxiety and indignity.

Sadly, stories of women and girls re-using sanitary products, or using such items as kitchen paper or even socks in place of sanitary products, are all too common.

The annual cost of managing menstruation can be anywhere between around £130 and £500. Even £130 a year doesn't sound like much, that figure is huge for a woman on a low income, or in households where there is more than one woman.

It doesn't have to be this way.

While action must be taken at a national level, and I fully support the efforts of NUS Wales to work with the Welsh Government on this agenda, I also believe that there is action that can be taken locally – on campuses.

I invite you to work with the students' union to come up with a solution to period poverty which helps women students at our university.

We are keen to work with the university to examine what we can do together to listen to women students, hear about their experiences, and take concrete, tangible action to make sure that no woman at our university faces the indignity of period poverty.

Some ideas we'd like to consider with you include:

- offering all students free access to sanitary products
- supplying sanitary products to all first-year students in residential halls
- developing a sanitary box crisis provision for women students in immediate need
- partnering with local and/or national organisations such as Red Box Project
- developing a sanitary bank for women students here as well as young girls in the locality

As you know, working in partnership with you is important to us, and we'd like this to be a joint piece of work. We believe we can be more impactful, and make more of a difference to our women students' lives, that way.

In the first instance, I would appreciate a focussed meeting with you to discuss this. Going forward, I believe that establishing an Ending Period Poverty Working Group, to include all relevant senior colleagues at the university and the students' union, charged with leading the work on this agenda, would be a good step towards progress.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature]

Your name here
Students' union president

Write to your representatives

Summary

This is a template letter for you to send to your local Assembly Members asking them to take action to tackle period poverty nationally. It explains what period poverty is, how it affects women and girls, and what government action is needed. You may wish to amend the letter somewhat before sending, or add your own ideas. Remember to change the general details such as addresses, names, and titles. Contact details for local politicians across Wales are available in the Annex.

Students' union address
Students' union address
Students' union address
Students' union address

Date

Assembly Member's name
Assembly Member's address
Assembly Member's address
Assembly Member's address
Assembly Member's address

Dear Assembly Member,

Ending period poverty

I'm sure you will have seen more and more stories in the media over the past year or so about how period poverty is affecting women and girls all around Wales and the UK.

Research by Plan International UK sadly found that 15% of girls have struggled to afford sanitary wear, and 10% of girls have actually been unable to afford sanitary wear altogether.

What's more, around 12% of girls have had to improvise sanitary wear due to affordability issues. This includes using such items as socks or kitchen roll in place of proper sanitary products.

The Welsh Government has already allocated £1 million to be spent by local authorities during 2018-20 in the most deprived parts of Wales, and I welcome that.

However, this does not extend to learners and students in post-16 education, and in any case, I do not believe this funding goes far enough.

A very basic reading of the numbers of girls and women in education in Wales, and the rough annual cost of menstruation, suggests an annual figure in the region of £6 million would be more appropriate.

For information, the Scottish Government last year launched a £5.2 million fund to offer free sanitary products to pupils, students and learners at schools, colleges, and universities throughout Scotland.

Of course, not all women and girls who have experienced period poverty struggle every time they have a period, so there is clearly more work to be done to ascertain exactly how big this problem is.

But one thing is clear: this is a problem affecting women and girls in every constituency and region in Wales right now. And it requires action.

I am supporting NUS Wales' End Period Poverty campaign, and am hoping to work with colleagues at my university to take steps to tackle period poverty on our campus.

But as one of my Assembly Members, I am asking you to join me in taking action nationally to end the scourge of period poverty once and for all.

You can support this important work by doing the following:

1. Ask questions in the National Assembly about how effective the national funding is.
2. Put pressure on decision-makers to increase the funding that is available to local authorities and education providers.
3. Advocate tackling period poverty among all girls and women in education in Wales.
4. Advocate the regular, thorough, and inclusive teaching of menstruation as part of the school curriculum.
5. Use your position to empower women and girls, amplify their voices, and change the way we as a society think and speak about menstruation.

If you would like to discuss any of this further, I would be happy to meet with you at a time and location convenient for you.

Otherwise, I would be happy to put you in touch with my colleagues at NUS Wales, who would be happy to meet you in Tŷ Hywel at a convenient time.

I hope I can count on your support to be a strong advocate of women and girls.

Together, I know we can end period poverty once and for all.

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature]

Your name here

Your position here

Pass policy at student council

Summary

This is a template motion for you to take to your student council/parliament. It briefly sets out what period poverty is, how it's a problem, and how it relates to other barriers faced by women students. It mandates your students' union to provide a free stock of sanitary products, among other actions.

Motion Title:	#FreePeriods
Proposed by:	*insert name here*
Seconded by:	*insert name here*
The students' union notes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitary products are a necessity not a luxury. Plan UK (an international woman and girl's organisation) has found that one in ten girls in the UK are unable to afford sanitary products. The Welsh Government is currently investigating the impact of period poverty in Welsh schools, and the results are expected to coincide with reports from England of girls missing school due to the shame of being unable to afford products. Women already face multiple barriers in education, including fewer women believing they are capable of STEM courses at university, and make up under 15% of the workforce. 	
The students' union believes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of sanitary products is an unfair burden. Sanitary products should be free for all girls in education. 	
The students' union resolves:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To mandate *insert student union here* to provide a free stock of sanitary products that are replenished each term. *Insert student union here* to make use of the training provided by NUS Wales on how to run effective period poverty campaigns. To work with the NUS Wales Women's Campaign to lobby the Welsh Government on this issue. To look at providing a wider selection of sanitary products including organic and eco-friendly products. 	



Host an event

Bloody Brunch

Thanks to the University of Wales Trinity St David Students' Union for allowing us to use their Bloody Brunch event plan here.

Why not host a brunch whilst raising awareness of period poverty?

Become a host to help end period poverty and kickstart a national conversation about menstruation in homes and businesses around the country.

You could serve bloody or virgin marys, red smoothies, red velvet cake and anything else that's red! But there's one string attached – guests must pay for their drinks with period products.

Most universities then use these donations and distribute them to charities such as The Red Box Project.

Other organisations use TRBP, Bloody Good Period, Girlguiding Scotland, YWCA and Freedom4Girls.

Top tip: if you host the brunch on the 3rd of March you can get download everything you need to take part [here](#).

Before the event

Find a date that works for you, whether that be the national event date or different days throughout the year.

Connect with the people you want to donate to. For example, the students' union at the University of Wales Trinity St David's Lampeter campus set up a Red Box on-site to donate to the local school. Is there a certain charity you want to work with?

Advertise. The bloody big brunch is something that you need to highlight to your students. Be transparent. State what is taking place and that

you don't want students or staff to pay with cash. Instead, aim for people to pay with a pack of sanitary products which will then be distributed to your chosen charity.

Get the discussion going. Post about period poverty. Talk about how it affects at least one in ten girls. Community matters.

Make sure you have everything ready for the event, such as food and drinks.

Top tip: talk to local businesses, cafes, bakeries, and shops. They may just want to help you! They may donate in products or in drinks and cakes for your events. Every little helps!

The event itself

Identify an area where you will see a lot of traffic of students and staff. It could be a lecture building, café or the students' union.

Set up your table with the items: the collection box and any merchandise.

Top tip: it's always handy to continue with the theme. Bring some red napkins and table cloths with you. Make it as obvious as you can that it's for period poverty. We can't shy away from talking about it.

Bring a cash collection tin with you just in case. Some staff and students may not have seen your post but still want to get involved without running into town to get products. Although products are desirable any donation is a good donation!

Try and stay there for a few hours; different students and staff have different timetables so try and catch as many as you can.

Top tip: ask for volunteers for your event. It doesn't have to be just one person – get your student reps in. You may find they



have ways to advertise to students that you didn't realise.

After the event

Publicise how well you've done! Put social media posts up about all the donations you have.

Write a blog post with what happened, how much you had donated, who you're donating it on to, and so on.

Top tip: if you had help from businesses, give them a shout out.

Take the products to the donation point. If it's Red Box you may be able to take it to your partner school.

Don't forget to thank everyone who got involved. Without them, some girls would still be struggling with period products.

Now... why not plan another?

Panel discussion

Panel discussions are a highly-effective but relatively easy way to start conversations with your students, assisted by well-selected panellists, about a wide range of issues.

They aren't always the best format, and you should certainly consider what event format would work best for your audience.

If you think a panel discussion would work for you, here some top tips to help you plan a great event.

Before the event

Think about your audience. What do they want to learn? What do they want to say? Who do they want to hear from? Who do they want to speak to?

Think about your resources. Do you have a venue available or will you need to find one? Do you have someone who can help you

communicate about the event? Do you have a network of people who would be interested?

Think about what you want to achieve. Do you want a big, flashy event with big names and lots of top quality catering? Do you want something a bit more low-key? Do you want an output (e.g. a set of recommendations) after the event?

Think about how your event fits into your wider work. How will you keep the conversation going after the event? How will you keep people engaged? How will you use the event's discussions to support your ongoing work?

1. Define your objectives.
2. Form an organising committee and share out responsibilities.
3. Agree a format. Will panellists give an individual presentation each before answering questions? Who will be the chair?
4. Choose and book your venue for a date and time that is convenient for you and your students. Consider whether you'll need any audiovisual equipment e.g. PowerPoint, microphones. Will you want to decorate the venue in a particular way?
5. Approach potential speakers. Aim for a diverse panel who are able to speak from different perspectives. They should have expertise or experience. Ideally, you'd have 3 or 4 panellists plus a chair (you?).
6. Consider whether you want to invite a 'keynote listener' i.e. the Vice-Chancellor. If you do, approach them.
7. Get the message out there! Use social media, email, flyers, and event listings to get people to come to your event. You may or may not want the event to be ticketed.
8. Use your networks to spread the message about the event. Make sure you're making clear what attendees will get out of the event e.g. is it about learning, networking, or maybe getting some free nibbles?
9. Keep checking in with your agreed speakers to make sure they're still on



board and offer any support or briefings they may want about the audience or the event.

10. Keep talking about the event, and keep talking with your organising committee.

During the event

It will feel like the planning stages have taken forever, and you'll be thankful that your event is finally happening.

No doubt, you'll have last-minute nerves. Will everything go to plan? Will people turn up? What if someone says something they shouldn't?

Don't worry – events rarely run smoothly. But you're a pro. You've got this. You care enough about this issue to organise a whole event about it, so you'll find a solution.

1. If you're the chair, make sure the event runs to time. Start when you need to start.
2. Check if you have to make any safety announcements (e.g. fire alarms and exits).
3. Welcome the guests and the speakers. Introduce the speakers. Keep your introduction short and to-the-point.
4. Explain the purpose of the event and what's going to be happening when, so that guests (and panellists) know what to expect.
5. Keep to time! You should be aiming for around 45-60 minutes depending on how many speakers you have. Add more time if there's food and drinks. Don't be afraid to take charge, and cut people off if time is getting on.
6. Make sure the speakers all have a chance to say what they want to say – fairly.
7. Open it up to questions from the floor. Ask people to introduce themselves and to keep their questions short.
8. Give the panellists the opportunity to respond. Depending on time, you may want to ask one or two to respond, or all of them.

9. Encourage guests to take part in the wider discussion by tweeting the event using your chosen hashtag.
10. At the end of the event, thank the panellists for their time, thank the guests for attending, and let them know if there are any next steps e.g. a report, photos on Facebook, etc.

After the event

Well done on hosting your event!

Once the event is done and you've packed everything up, you might be tempted to think that's it, and you can forget about it now.

You're almost there, but not just yet. There are a few more things you could do to make the most out of your event and the networks you built by organising and hosting it.

1. Send the panellists a thank-you card. This is a nice personal touch to let them know how much you appreciated their time, and it will help them remember you.
2. If you used an online ticketing platform, get in touch with the guests to thank them for attending.
3. Catch up with social media. Hopefully your guests will have tweeted and posted a lot about the event. Get in there and respond!
4. A great way to catch all the great social media coverage of your event is to make a Twitter Moment or a Storify. These capture a range of text, pictures, and video that you can share with wider audiences.
5. If you took photos, make sure to upload these to your usual platforms such as Facebook, Flickr, or your website.
6. If you have access to a newsletter, make sure to include a roundup of the event, including pictures.
7. A great way to keep the conversation going is to blog about your event. Try not to make it a report as such, but focus more on your thoughts and the things you learned.



8. If you have a student newspaper, get in touch with them to see if they'd like to interview you about the event. You could send them a quick note and some photographs to get them interested.
9. Make sure you've paid any outstanding bills e.g. venue costs, catering costs, expenses.
10. Now, what's next? Get planning the next one!



Survey your students

Because those who experience period poverty are often embarrassed by that fact, it's hard to get an accurate picture of who it affects and how.

Perhaps once of the most useful things you could do is spend some time surveying students on your campus, so we can build up a national picture of students' experiences.

You can conduct your survey using a simple online tool such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey.

However, if you're successful in reaching a large number of students, you may need to make use of more sophisticated software.

Your students' union might already have access to this, or your university might be willing to support this exploratory work.

Another effective way to survey your students is to get out there and speak to them. Not only will this give you the data you want, but will also give you the opportunity to talk to students face-to-face about this important issue.

Once you've conducted your survey, we'd be really keen to see the results, if you're willing to share them with us.

Below are some sample questions that you might want to consider asking as part of your survey.

Introduction

We (name of students' union) are conducting a survey of students at [institution] about period poverty. Period poverty is commonly defined as having a lack of access to menstruation products due to financial constraints. It also encompasses poor menstrual knowledge.

This survey is anonymous. The results will be used to build a national picture of how period poverty is affecting students, and to make the case for increased support and resources to tackle period poverty across Wales. The results may be shared with NUS Wales. Do you agree to take part in this survey?

- Yes – I agree to take part in this survey
- No – I do not agree to take part in this survey

Questions

1. In an average month, how much would you say you spend on sanitary products?
 - a. £0-5
 - b. £6-10
 - c. £11-15
 - d. £16-20
 - e. £21+

2. In general, do you feel that the cost of sanitary products is...
 - a. Too high?
 - b. About right?
 - c. Too low?



3. In the past year, would you say you have found it difficult to afford sanitary products on at least one occasion?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
4. In the past, would you say you have found it difficult to afford sanitary products on one or more occasion?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
5. In the past, have you ever improvised sanitary products because of affordability issues?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
6. If yes, can you tell us more about this e.g. what you used?
7. Since starting your course, have you missed any sessions (e.g. lectures, seminars, etc.) because you were on your period?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
8. When you first had a period, did you understand what was happening to your body?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
9. If you were struggling to pay for sanitary products and needed them, where would you go for support?
 - a. Friends
 - b. Family
 - c. Coursemates
 - d. Personal tutor or lecturer
 - e. Students' union
 - f. GP
 - g. Family planning clinic
 - h. Other. Please expand:
 - i. Don't know
10. How do you feel about periods?
 - a. Ashamed
 - b. Embarrassed
 - c. Angry
 - d. Neutral/No feelings
 - e. Happy
 - f. Proud
 - g. Empowered
 - h. Other. Please expand:
 - i. Don't know
11. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about periods, your experience of menstruation, or period poverty, that you haven't already been able to tell us?



Get cooking!

We suggest using these recipes at your Bloody Brunch.

Red berry smoothie



Ingredients

- 1 small ripe banana
- 140g blackberries, blueberries, raspberries or strawberries (or use a mix), plus extra to serve
- Apple juice or mineral water, optional
- Runny honey to serve

Method

1. Slice the banana into your blender or food processor and add the berries of your choice. Whizz until smooth.
2. With the blades whirring, pour in juice or water to make the consistency you like. Toss a few extra fruits on top, drizzle with honey and serve.

Source:

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/3117/breakfast-smoothie>

Virgin Bloody Mary



Ingredients

- 120ml ounces tomato juice
- 15g beef stock or bullion
- Dash of lemon juice
- 2 drops of Tobasco (or, to taste)
- Pinch of celery salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Pinch of fresh ground black pepper (optional)

Method

1. Pour everything right into the glass and stir well.
2. Serve with a celery stalk.

Source: <https://mixthatdrink.com/virgin-mary-non-alcoholic/>



Red velvet cupcakes



Ingredients

For the cupcakes

- 125g plain flour
- 250g Carnation Squeazy Condensed Milk
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 85g buttery spread
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 5-6 tsp natural red food colouring

For the cream cheese frosting

- 200g icing sugar
- 55g butter, softened

- Few drops vanilla extract
- 1-2 tbsp Carnation Condensed Milk
- 85g full fat cream cheese
- Edible red glitter (optional)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, (160°C for fan ovens), Gas Mark 4.
2. Place the cupcake ingredients in a bowl and beat with an electric hand mixer for 2-3 minutes until light and fluffy.
3. Spoon into the cupcake cases and bake for approximately 15-18 minutes until springy to the touch and golden brown. Cool slightly then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.
4. Beat the icing sugar, butter and vanilla with the condensed milk and cream cheese until very thick and creamy. Spread or pipe onto the cakes and sprinkle with edible glitter to decorate!

Source:

<http://www.foodnetwork.co.uk/recipes/red-velvet-cupcakes-1-0.html>

Have a sustainable period

One side of period poverty is the financial cost.

The other side is about the stigma attached to periods, which leads to misinformation, a lack of knowledge and understanding, and embarrassment.

This stigma encourages the use of disposable products because it perpetuates the myth that periods are dirty. This stigma would have you believe that a disposable product is better, or more hygienic.

That simply isn't true. While sustainable products can cost more to buy up-front, they can save you a lot of money over time.

Our friends in the NUS Sustainability team have helped us pull together this information about how to have a sustainable period.

Why is it important?

Health:

- The additives to tampons and pads, often in the 'fragrances added', can be irritants for many women and girls. Additives do not need to be declared but it is thought that bleach and other harmful chemicals are widely used. These are known to cause health issues.
- Non-organic pads and tampons may contain pesticide residues, which could be harmful for health (although this hasn't been proved).

Costs:

- Disposable pads & tampons cost at least twice as much as reusable products, because you have to keep buying them month after month. Sanitary product manufacturers want you to keep buying these products as it makes them money.

Environment:

- An average woman will use 11,000 tampons in her lifetime. The time it takes for a tampon or pad to degrade in a

landfill is centuries longer than the lifespan of the woman who used it, particularly when wrapped in a plastic wrapper or bag.

- The process of manufacturing these products – turning wood pulp into soft, cotton-like fibres – is both resource- and chemical-intensive.

Sources: [Guardian](#), [Lunapads](#), [Safe Cosmetics](#)

Alternatives

Re-usable cups

A menstrual cup is a flexible rubber or silicon vessel that a woman places inside her vaginal canal during her period to catch the flow. The cup collects blood from the menstrual flow for you to discard at regular intervals instead of absorbing blood from the normal not-so-eco-friendly feminine hygiene devices – tampons or pads. The use of menstrual cups could help the environment by reducing the number of feminine products in our landfills since you can reuse the same cup for up to 10 years. ([ref](#))

Brands to look at: Nice review of the key brands [here](#), personally I love my MoonCup.

Re-usable pads

Cloth pads can cost more up front than a pack of disposables, but they last for a very long time. In addition to saving you money in the long run, reusable pads are more comfortable, are better for the environment and come in some nice patterns ([ref](#)).

Brands to look at: [Bloom & Nora](#) and [Luna pads](#). Review [here](#).

Period pants

Most of them provide leak-proof protection; some can actually be worn instead of a pad or tampon or as a backup for cup/tampon use, meaning you don't have to use extra pads 'just in case'.

Brands to look at: [Review here](#).



Communicate

Let's make some noise

Social media plan

We've put together this social media plan for you to make some noise about period poverty.

Feel free to use this on your own channels. The graphics are optimised for Instagram, but will also work on Twitter and Facebook.

You should use free analytics tools in your social media platforms to see when your followers are most active. As a general rule, you should avoid early mornings and when there are big events or TV shows on. A lot of young people are active online after 9 pm.

You could use a free tool like Buffer to schedule your content if you're planning on being away from your laptop or phone at the time you want to post.

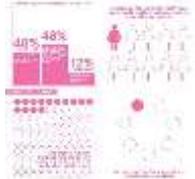
Also – please pass these on to your communications staff and ask them to schedule the content as recommended.

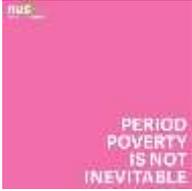
We want to get as much attention as possible, so please tag or mention your campus influencers and other local personalities in your posts.

If you know of local organisations interested in this agenda, why not give them a ring or drop them an email to let them know you're going to be sharing this content and ask them to retweet/repost it?

Don't forget to update your profile pictures and cover photos to support the campaign and post on your Instagram story! There are plenty of story posts for a whole week – you could do one every day.

Date	English	Welsh	Image
4 March 2019	1 in 7 girls has struggled to afford sanitary products. 1 in 10 has been unable to afford them. We say no more. We want to #EndPeriodPoverty.	Mae 1 ymhob 7 merch wedi ei chael yn anodd fforddio nwyddau glanweithdra. Mae 1 ymhob 10 wedi methu eu fforddio. Ry'n ni'n dweud dim mwy. Byddwn yn #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf.	
4 March 2019	We're proud to be joining NUS Wales' campaign to #EndPeriodPoverty. Check out our posts over the coming 10 days to find out more!	Rydym yn falch o gefnogi ymgyrch UCM Cymru i #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf. Dilynwch ein pyst ar hyd y 10 diwrnod nesaf i gael gwybod mwy!	Post campaign video to Facebook: 
5 March 2019	When you start your period, money's the last thing you want to be thinking about. No one should have to go through their period worrying about whether or not they can afford to buy basics like pads and tampons. #EndPeriodPoverty	Pan wyt ti'n dechrau dy fisglwyf, arian yw'r peth olaf rwyf ti am feddwl amdano. Ddylai neb orfod mynd drwy'r misglwyf yn poeni am a ydyn nhw'n gallu fforddio pethau sylfaenol fel pads a thampons. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	

5 March 2019	We hear lots these days about period poverty, but what is it, and what can we do about it? #EndPeriodPoverty @nuswales	Ry'n ni'n clywed llawer am dlodi'r misglwyf dyddiau `ma, ond beth yw e, a beth gallwn wneud amdano? #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf @nuswales	Post explainer videos to Instagram: 
6 March 2019	Period poverty isn't just about £. It's also about a poverty of knowledge, information, and empowerment. Women and girls deserve to know about perfectly normal things that happen to their bodies. #EndPeriodPoverty	Nid yw tlodi'r misglwyf a wnelo ag £ yn unig. Mae hefyd a wnelo â thlodi gwybodaeth ac ymrymusiad. Mae menywod a merched yn haeddu gwybod am bethau perffaith normal sy'n digwydd i'w cyrff. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf	
6 March 2019	There are literally young girls in this country right now using socks and kitchen roll because they can't afford pads or tampons. #EndPeriodPoverty @keepingupwithchiz @nuswales	Yn llythrennol, mae merched yn y wlad hon nawr sy'n defnyddio sannau a phapur cegin am eu bod nhw'n methu â fforddio padiau a thamponau. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf @keepingupwithchiz @nuswales	Post campaign short video to Instagram: 
7 March 2019	If you think period poverty isn't a problem, think again. #EndPeriodPoverty @PlanUK	Os wyt ti'n meddwl nad yw tlodi'r misglwyf yn broblem, meddylia eto. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf @PlanUK	
7 March 2019	Too many girls grow up believing they should be ashamed of their periods. We say <input type="checkbox"/> to shame. #EndPeriodPoverty	Mae gormod o ferched yn tyfu ian yn credu dylen nhw fod yn gywilyddus am eu misglwyf. Dywedwn <input type="checkbox"/> wrth gywilydd. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf	
8 March 2019	If anyone has ever experienced this, we have a message for you. Don't be embarrassed. Don't be ashamed. We're not judging you. #EndPeriodPoverty	Os yw unrhyw un erioed wedi profi hwn, mae gennym neges i chi. Peidiwch teimlo embaras. Peidiwch teimlo cywilydd. 'Dyn ni ddim yn eich barnu. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf	
8 March 2019	It's not dirty and it's not unhygienic. #EndPeriodPoverty	'Dyw e ddim yn frwnt a 'dyw e ddim yn fudr. #RhoiDiweddArDlodiMisglwyf	

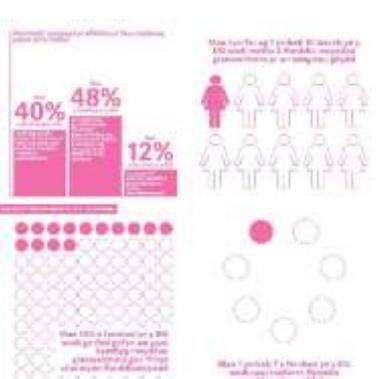
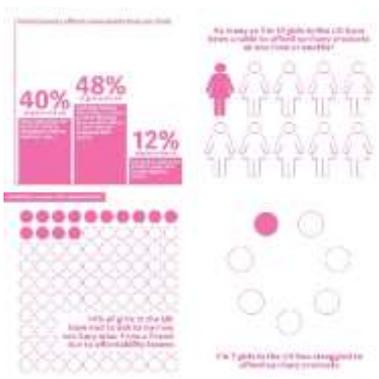
9 March 2019	Don't let anyone tell you you should be embarrassed because you bleed. #EndPeriodPoverty	Peidiwch caniatu i unrhyw un ddweud wrthoch chi dylech chi deimlo embaras am eich bod chi'n gwaedu. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	
11 March 2019	No one should have to suffer in silence because they can't afford the kind of period that best suits them. #EndPeriodPoverty	Ni ddylai fod yn rhaid i unrhyw un ddioddef yn ddistaw am eu bod nhw'n methu fforddio'r math o figslwyf sy'n eu siwtio nhw orau. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	
11 March 2019	In one of the world's richest countries in the 21st Century, that some girls are using things like socks and kitchen roll in place of sanitary products because they can't afford the real thing should make us all ashamed. #EndPeriodPoverty	Yn un o wledydd mwyaf cyfoethog y byd yn yr 21ain Ganrif, dylai'r ffaith fod rhai merched yn defnyddio pethau fel sLaurau a phapur cegin yn lle nwyddau glanweithdra, am eu bod nhw'n methu fforddio'r peth go iawn, godi cywilydd arnom ni i gyd. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	
12 March 2019	Our mission: #EndPeriodPoverty.	Ein nod: #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	
12 March 2019	Blood is nothing to be ashamed of, no matter where it comes from. We've all got it. #EndPeriodPoverty	Nid yw gwaed yn rhywbeth i deimlo embaras amdano, dim ots o ble mae'n dod. Mae gwaed gan bawb. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf	
13 March 2019	It may seem like too much of a challenge. It may seem like too much work or effort. It may seem impossible. But we know that, together, we can #EndPeriodPoverty.	Efallai mae'n edrych fel gormod o her. Efallai mae'n edrych fel gormod o waith neu ymdrech. Efallai mae'n edrych yn amhosibl. Ond ry'n ni'n gwybod y gallwn ni #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf gyda'n gilydd.	

<p>13 March 2019</p>	<p>"Monthlies." "Time of the month." "The curse." ☐ Let's get used to calling it what it is. #EndPeriodPoverty</p>	<p>"Amser y mis." "Monthlies." "Y felltith." ☐ Dewch i ni ddod i'r arfer o'i alw yr hyn ydyw. #RhoiDiweddArDludirMisglwyf</p>	
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Digital content plan

You should use these graphics in your social media posts. But you should also feel free to use them any other way you want.

Facebook/Twitter/Instagram posts

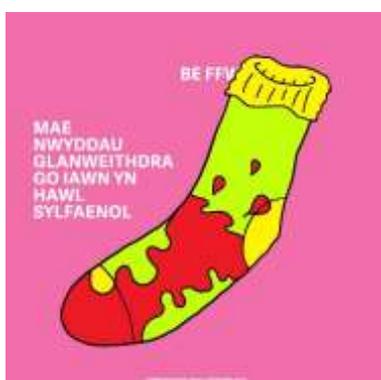
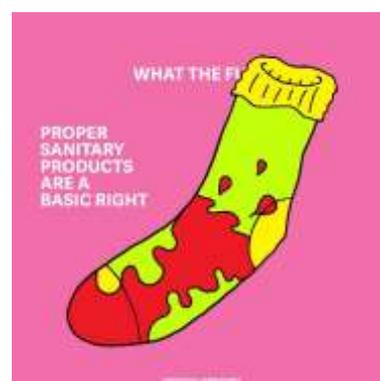
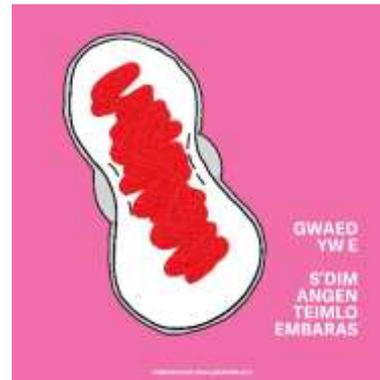
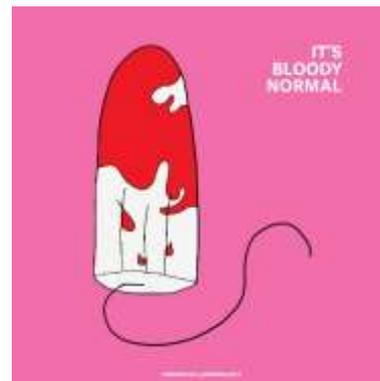


THERE'S NOTHING SHAMEFUL OR EMBARRASSING ABOUT PERIODS

PERIOD POVERTY, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS A F*****G DISGRACE

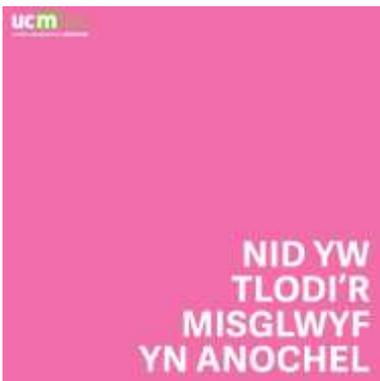
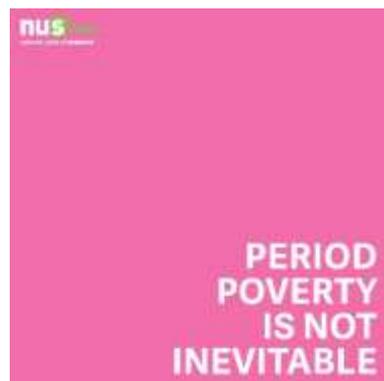
S'DIM BYD AM Y MISGLWYF
DDYLAI GODI CYWILYDD
NEU EMBARAS

ARY LLAW ARALL,
MAE TLODI'R MISGLWYF
YN FF...N GWARTH O BETH



nus
NO WOMAN OR GIRL SHOULD HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT SHE CAN AFFORD THE BASIC SANITARY PRODUCTS SHE NEEDS FOR HER PERIOD

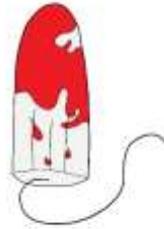
ucm
NI DDYLAI UNRHYW FENYW NEU FERCH ORFOD POENI AM EI GALLU I FFORDDIO'R NIWYDDAU GLANWEITHDRA SYDD EU HANGEN ARNI AT EI MISGLWYF



Instagram story posts



*Na grol yu e yu tampon a
baah a small, small stain*



*It's literally just a tampon
and a bit of blood, small stain*



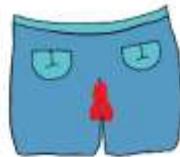
*Oh yeh weh weh afef afef
homon am lo rku a small
fforble tampon*



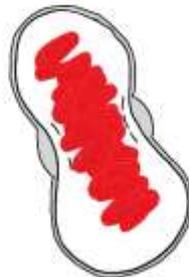
*No one should have to use a
sock because they can't afford
a tampon*



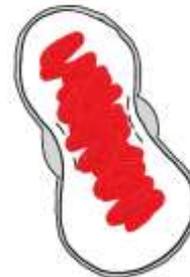
*Na afef weh weh afef
unwashed strygo i fforble
nyabba fforble*



*No one should have to face the
indignity of struggling to afford
sanitary products*



*Point a phoni, ground an
brkyn a afef weh weh*



*It's blood on a bit of material,
don't worry about it*



*Oh weh e weh afef
moway, weh weh. Dye a
afef weh a fforble weh weh*



*Yes it stinks if you want to
use a tampon, it's no one else's
business*



Men provide us fforble



Bleeding is fforble



How would it be better if there was an option to get a product like this?



How would you prefer to receive a product like this?

Profile pictures (Twitter)



Profile pictures (Facebook)



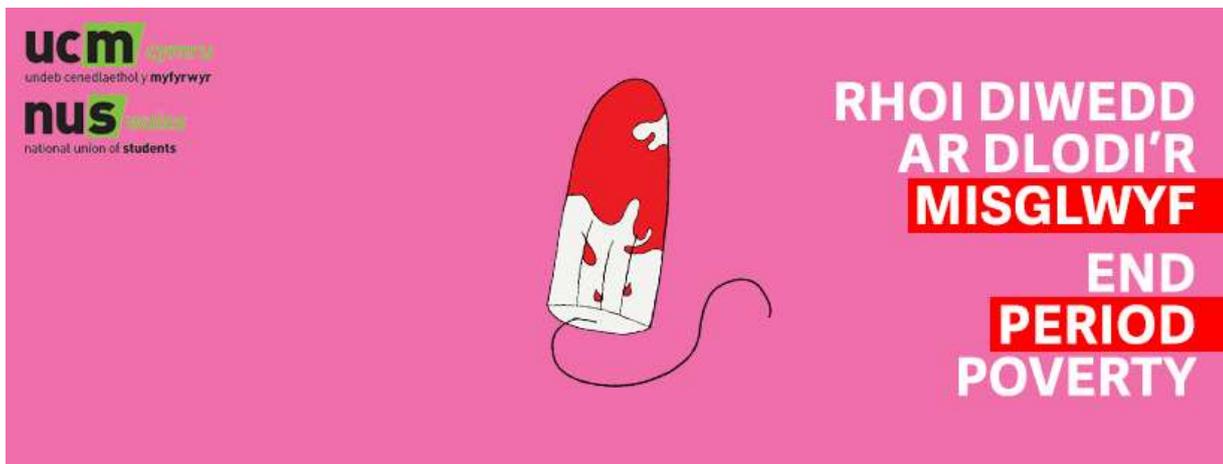
Profile pictures (Instagram)



Twitter header photo



Facebook cover photo



Videos

Explainer videos

These short videos are perfect for your social media channels, particularly Instagram. In just one minute, we explain what period poverty is, the effect it can have, and what needs to be done about it. Plus – you don't need to have sound on to get the message!



Campaign video

In this video, NUS Wales Women's Officer Chizi Phiri explains what period poverty is, how it affects the education of women and girls, and what action we want to see taken to end period poverty once and for all. She also explains how students' unions can get involved in our End Period Poverty work and this toolkit. This video is optimised for Facebook.



Short campaign video

This short video is optimised for Instagram.



More info

Here's what we've been looking at. Let us know if you find anything else interesting!

Annex

Contact your local politicians.

Abertawe / Swansea

Geraint Davies AS / MP (Llafur, Gorllewin Abertawe / Labour, Swansea West)
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
geraint.davies.mp@parliament.uk

Julie James AC / AM (Llafur, Gorllewin Abertawe / Labour, Swansea West)
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Aberystwyth

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Bangor

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hywel.williams.mp@parliament.uk

Siân Gwenllïan AC / AM (Plaid Cymru, Arfon)
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Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA
sian.gwenllïan@assembly.wales

Llyr Gruffydd AC / AM (Plaid Cymru, Gogledd
Cymru / Plaid Cymru, North Wales)
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Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA
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Gogledd Cymru / Conservative, North Wales)
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Plan International's research on period poverty and stigma:
<https://plan-uk.org/media-centre/plan-international-uks-research-on-period-poverty-and-stigma>

Plan International's Menstrual Manifesto:
<https://plan-uk.org/blogs/our-menstrual-manifesto>

Welsh Government announcement of £1 million to tackle period poverty among school-aged girls:
<https://gov.wales/newsroom/people-and-communities/2018/180323-tackle-period-poverty-dignity/?lang=en>

Scottish Government announcement of £5.2 million to tackle period poverty among school-aged girls and women students:
<https://news.gov.scot/news/students-to-get-free-access-to-sanitary-products>

Channel 4 Fact Check on the cost of periods:
<https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/period-poverty-is-real-but-the-average-woman-isnt-spending-500-a-year-on-menstruation>

Plan International UK's campaign for a period emoji:
<https://plan-uk.org/act-for-girls/join-our-campaign-for-a-period-emoji>

The Independent article on period poverty on International Women's Day 2018:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/international-womens-day-period-girls-missed-school-uk-sanitary-products-menstruation-a8244396.html>

Comment Is Free piece by Amika George in The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/19/british-girls-period-poverty-menstruation-sanitary-products>

Comment on numbers of girls studying STEM subjects in the International Business Times:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/girls-stem-these-figures-show-why-we-need-more-women-science-tech-engineering-maths-1540590>

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