

HEFCW: Tackling Period Poverty and Ensuring Period Dignity for all those who menstruate at Bangor University

Period Poverty and Dignity Pilot Scheme Report 2021

HEFCW Improving safeguarding policies and practice and
the promotion of period dignity

Initiatives.





Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the pilot scheme's success in tackling period poverty and achieving period dignity for all those who menstruate at Bangor University, informed by student experience and feedback from Campus Service's, in order to make recommendations for a long-term period poverty and dignity scheme.

The Period Poverty and Dignity Pilot Scheme was launched in January 2020 by The Student's Union, Undeb Bangor, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and a Graduate Internship Project Officer was appointed to help manage the pilot scheme.

Its primary aim was to tackle period poverty by ensuring all students have access to free period products as a necessity. This included offering a range of plastic free, single-use and reusable products. Secondary to this, as part of a journey to achieving period dignity for all those who menstruate, it launched a campaign to educate, empower and inspire students on menstruation.

To provide students with safe and discreet access to products during the Coronavirus pandemic, period products were offered through home delivery as a short-term solution. Students were able to order a range of plastic free, single-use and reusable products through completing an online form for supplier Hey Girls and have period products delivered directly to their doors.

Alongside the easing of restrictions in May, on campus provision of period products was launched, providing access to plastic free pads and tampons in a range of gender-neutral, male, female and accessible toilets across campus. This was to support students 'caught short' on campus and those struggling financially who require more consistent access.

A total of 463 students accessed products through the Home Delivery Scheme, with 73% ordering reusables. On campus provision was launched 2 weeks prior to the Final Student Survey, with a total of 90 students completing it who accessed products. According to survey results, 387 students who menstruate and 75 who don't menstruate have viewed the social media campaign.

941 students completed the Final Student Survey to gather feedback on the scheme, of which 774 menstruate and 167 don't. A focus group was held with the Student Steering Group to gather more in-depth feedback from a student perspective and another with Campus Services to gather feedback from a more operational perspective.

In summary, the Period Poverty and Dignity Pilot Scheme, from all indicators, appears to be successful and has been positively received by staff and students at Bangor University. The Project Officer was able to gather sufficient evidence of its success to support the need for a long-term scheme, along with feedback from students and Campus Services to inform recommendations for its implementation.

Prepared by Josie Ball, Graduate Internship Project Officer, July 2021.

Contents

Executive Summary - I

Table of Contents - IV

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 – The Context of this Report
 - 1.2 – The Scheme’s Values
 - 1.3 – Product Provision
 - 1.4 – The Campaign
2. Evaluation of Success
 - 2.1 – The Student Experience
 - 2.2 – Campus Service’s Feedback
3. Conclusions
4. Recommendations
5. References
6. Appendix

1. Introduction

1.1. The Context of this Report

Initial research into the issue of period poverty in the UK, both generally and within the context of the student population, highlighted a need to investigate the issue of period poverty at Bangor University.

Period poverty can be defined as a lack of access to period products due to financial constraints and can be caused by a wide range of life events that negatively impact on a person's ability to access period products to manage a most intimate and regular occurrence in their life. During lockdown, 3 in 10 people who menstruate have experienced issues with either accessing or affording menstrual products, with 54% using toilet paper as an alternative to menstrual products. Of those who were unable to access products, 30% felt too embarrassed to seek a source of free products (Plan International, 2020).

Bloody Good Period (2021), a charity working to provide menstrual products and education to those that need it, noticed an increase in the number of requests for menstrual products from university students during the Coronavirus Pandemic (EAUC, 2020). Self-isolation, combined with the ongoing financial impact the pandemic has had on students, has left many struggling to afford products (ibid.). Maintenance loans no longer cover the average rent paid by students, leaving many struggling to buy basic food items (Murray, 2020) and consequently, having to make very difficult real-life choices about whether to buy food or menstrual products.

Lack of access to such products negatively impacts students in a variety of ways by affecting their self-esteem, physical and mental health, economic welfare and their ability to engage successfully and consistently in their studies (EAUC, 2020). Experiencing period poverty may also affect students' ability to engage socially and in sports and extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, there exists a cultural 'taboo' around periods and a stigma attached to talking openly about periods which in turn, prevents people from accessing the support they need to manage menstrual problems (NUS Wales, 2019).

Findings from an Initial Student Survey confirmed the need for a pilot scheme to tackle period poverty at Bangor University. Open between 15th December to 13th January, 956 students completed the survey. The survey, in part, gathered feedback on the issue of period poverty and dignity at Bangor University and how this and menstruation in general, affects students' education and experience:

- 36% had experienced difficulty in accessing products on at least one occasion during their time at university. Of which, 20% couldn't afford products and 75% didn't have products to hand on campus.
- 78% felt they would benefit from free access to products
- Lack of access to products had prevented 140 students from attending lectures or seminars and 224 students from participating in sports, volunteering or society activities
- 27% felt uncomfortable talking about menstruation and period products, particularly with cisgender male students
- 38% felt embarrassed when asking for period products and 4% felt ashamed

Secondary research into existing period poverty and dignity initiatives in the UK highlighted best practice examples, which often addressed the 'toxic trio' of period poverty; the cost of period products, the lack of education around periods and menstrual health and the shame and stigma associated with periods and period conversations (Plan International, 2018). Similarly, Binti International (2021), a charity working to tackle period poverty, emphasise the need to achieve period

dignity for all, defined as ensuring all students have access to education on menstruation, the products they need to manage their periods and freedom from the stigma and taboos associated with menstruation.

Therefore, the availability of funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) came at a vital time. It has facilitated the implementation of a needed and successful pilot scheme to address period poverty and achieve period dignity by ensuring all students at Bangor University have access to free period products and launching a campaign to educate, empower and inspire students on menstruation, reducing the stigma associated with menstruation and normalising conversation around it.

Thanks needs to be given to all those in Undeb Bangor that have supported the pilot scheme and campaign especially the VP Societies and Volunteering Katie Tew, who's ensured the scheme was truly student led, thanks also needs to be given to the Student Steering Group for their dedication, input and support, and Campus Services for their assistance in organising and implementing on campus distribution, including the Maintenance Team, Cleaning Team and Waste Management and Sustainability Team.

1.2. The Scheme's Values

Financial Sustainability

Ensuring the economic sustainability of the scheme was an integral part of decision making around suppliers and products. For the scheme to provide as many students as possible with products, the price of products was considered and compared across suppliers. Whilst a price comparison for the applicator tampons highlighted similar prices across suppliers, a comparison of pads highlighted a significant difference; night-time pads from Hey Girls were over 50% cheaper than pads from any other supplier.

Environmental Sustainability

The Project Officer worked closely with the University's Waste Manager and Circular Economy Coordinator to evaluate suppliers and period products from an environmental perspective. This involved looking closely at the materials used in period products and packaging. Environmental recommendations, together with financial considerations, informed the decision to work with two suppliers:

Hey Girls: a range of 100% plastic free single-use and reusable products, available through home delivery. 100% plastic free heavy pads for on campus provision.

TOTM: 100% plastic free cardboard applicator tampons for on campus provision.

It was agreed that a 'do not flush' message, printed on the wrapping of pads from Hey Girls, should be communicated to students through the campaign to ensure products and packaging are disposed of in the correct way by students.

Additionally, clear plastic dispensers chosen for on campus provision are made from recycled materials.

Social Sustainability

Secondary research into existing period poverty and dignity initiatives across the UK, and best practice examples, highlighted the benefit of using student feedback to inform implementation. Therefore, the pilot scheme became largely student-led to ensure product provision and access, together with the social media campaign, met students' needs.

Student input was facilitated by:

- Regular meetings with a Student Steering Group to discuss the implementation of the pilot scheme, progress made, and any ideas and suggestions students had
- A focus group with International Students to discuss the environmental and waste element
- Working with a 1st year Graphic Design student to design logos for the campaign
- An Initial Student Survey to inform the implementation of the scheme
- A Final Student Survey to evaluate the pilot scheme's success and inform recommendations for a long-term scheme
- Student polls on Undeb Bangor's Instagram to inform the type of events offered
- The sharing of student experiences with menstruation as part of the campaign
- The participation of members of the Student Steering Group and Student Voice Team in live events

In addition, feedback in the Initial Student Survey from students who menstruate and don't identify as female, highlighted a need to ensure the scheme and campaign was inclusive of all students, regardless of gender. Consequently, period products were placed in a range of male, female, accessible and gender toilets. Additionally, neutral language, graphics and images were used throughout the campaign. Phrases such as "to all those who menstruate" were used when addressing students, in place of "female students" or "women".



1.3. Product Provision

Setting up Home Delivery

In the Initial Survey, 56% expressed interest in accessing period products through home delivery. This, together with Coronavirus restrictions, informed the decision to offer a Home Delivery Scheme between January and April, as a short-term solution to provide students with access during the pandemic.

The Project Officer worked with supplier Hey Girls to set up the scheme. Students were able to order a variety of product bundles independently through an online form and have them delivered. Based on student feedback, a range of single-use and reusable products were available, including reusable period pants, pads and menstrual cups. Spreadsheets with orders were sent by Hey Girls to review every two weeks and the Project Officer confirmed for orders to be processed and delivered to students.

Initially, vulnerable students who may be struggling financially were made aware of the availability of products through targeted emails. Following this, it was promoted more widely on Undeb Bangor's social media and website, the student and staff bulletin and the newsletter. Due to concerns around funding, it was promoted to "all those struggling financially" in place of "all students who menstruate". Students were able to access the online form to order products via a link on posts.

The scheme was put on pause in late April as Hey Girls were experiencing unprecedented demand causing significant delays in the processing and delivery of orders. This allowed the remaining funding to be allocated to on campus provision.



Organising on Campus Provision

On campus provision was organised and implemented in partnership with Campus Services, to develop a system that was sustainable operationally. The Project Officer worked closely with the Cleaning and Facilities Manager to explore and test potential dispensers for products, with the assistance of the Maintenance Supervisor and guidance from Health and Safety. Clear plastic dispensers from TOTM were chosen and have been installed on walls or placed on available surfaces in toilets.

A combination of heavy pads and regular applicator tampons was offered to cover the majority of students' needs highlighted in feedback.

The Project Officer carried out audits of all toilets on Wrexham and Bangor Campus, with the assistance of Facilities Shift Leaders, which informed the creation of a spreadsheet for Campus Services use, outlining the buildings, floors and toilets that required period products. In addition, male toilets that required additional sanitary bins alongside provision were identified. The Project Officer then placed requests with Maintenance to install period product dispensers. Following this, products were distributed by Campus Services.

Initially, orders for products and dispensers were placed directly with suppliers TOTM and Hey Girls and delivered to campus, with the assistance of the Operations and Planning Coordinator. More recently, products have been ordered through Bunzl, a distributor company who have an established relationship with Campus Services and who are familiar with the locations and times to deliver to campus.

For period products placed in Halls Offices and shops, hand sanitisers and posters encouraging good hygiene practices, were displayed next to the dispensers. The Project Officer worked with the Head of Residential Life to organise product provision in Halls Offices and the Food and Beverage Manager to organise provision in shops.

The Project Officer worked with the Communications Coordinator to design and create stickers for dispensers, which were approved by Campus Services and the Student Steering Group. Stickers with the "Planet Friendly Periods" logo on were placed on all toilets doors with products in to help students locate them.



On campus provision was launched on the 23rd April and students were informed of the availability of products on multiple platforms; the Student Bulletin, newsletter, Undeb Bangor's website and social media and through an all student email. As part of Phase 1, products were placed in toilets across Main Arts, Pontio, New Arts, Old Arts, Weldon and Deiniol, in addition to the Halls Offices, Bar Uno and shops. Phase 2 is currently being implemented. Products have been placed in Wrexham, Ocean Sciences, Fron Heulog, Informatics, JP Hall, Brigantia, Brambell on Bangor campus. Products are yet to be placed in Normal Site and plans include placing products in Brailsford next academic year.

1.4. The Campaign

The aim of the campaign was to educate, inspire and empower students on menstruation as part of a journey to achieving period dignity for all those who menstruate. The campaign used multiple platforms to engage students. This included the newsletter, student bulletin and Undeb Bangor's website and Facebook and Instagram accounts, which offered an established following and the potential for posts to reach students of all genders. Posts were bilingual.

Two separate logos were created for the campaign (see example posts below). The "Planet Friendly Periods" logo represents the environmental campaign and the "Students for Periods" logo represents the more general campaign around menstruation.

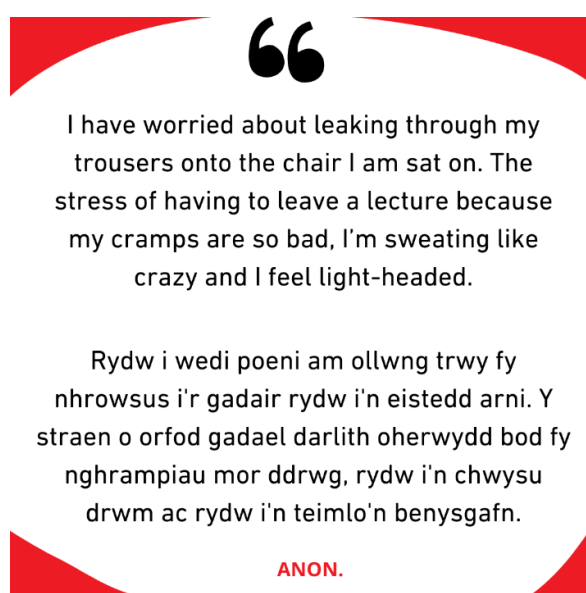
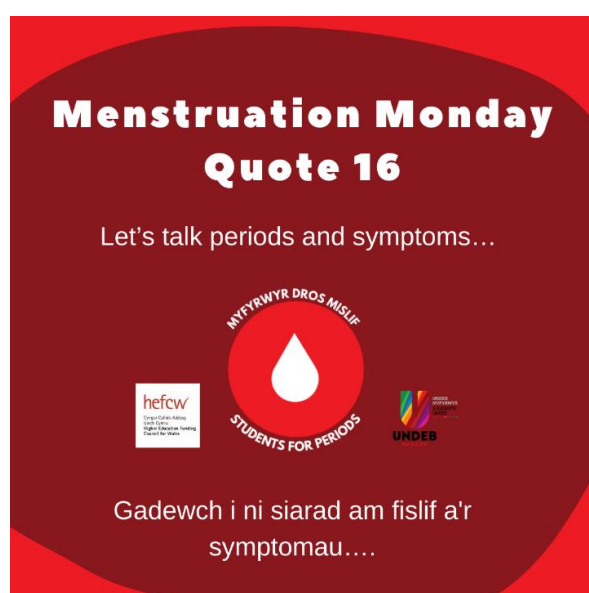
According to Final Survey results, the campaign reached 57% of students who menstruate and 55% of students who don't menstruate on social media.

In addition to educating students on period poverty and dignity and how they relate to what the scheme set out to achieve, the campaign had 5 key elements:

1. Menstruation Monday Quote Series

The sharing of student experiences with menstruation every Monday on Undeb Bangor's Facebook and Instagram accounts. Students could submit menstruation experiences, anonymously if preferred, through an online form. This created a student movement and built a sense of community for students who menstruate, empowering students by encouraging them to talk more openly about their periods and period issues as other people have. It also aimed to raise awareness of menstruation experiences among students who don't menstruate, highlighting their diversity and the challenges some individuals face with menstruation.

29 menstruation experiences have been shared to date and a further 98 students expressed interest in doing so in the Final Student Survey. Some students communicated their menstruation experiences in a short video.



2. Environmental Campaign

The environmental campaign was designed to educate students on the correct disposal of period products, the effect single-use products have on the environment and how to use and take care of reusable products, inspiring students to give them a go through the Home Delivery Scheme. The Student Steering Group also participated in activism around the #AxeThePeriodPantsTax campaign, raising awareness of the VAT the government is still charging on period pants and inspiring others to get involved and sign a petition.



**Cymorth cwpan mislif
A menstrual cup 101**

P'un a ydych chi'n rhoi cynnig arnyn
nhw am y tro cyntaf neu'n gallu gwneud gydag
ychydig mwy o wybodaeth

Whether you're giving them a go for the
first time or could do with a bit more
information

UNDEB
hefcw
Planet Friendly Periods
MISLIF CYFELLGAR I'R BLANED

**Why period products
shouldn't be flushed.**

A pack of conventional pads contains up to 4-5 bags
worth of plastic

3.8 pieces of litter found per 100m of beach in
the UK are identified as menstrual waste

An estimated 4.6 million period products are
flushed down UK toilets everyday

UK water blockages cost the UK £6.5 million
annually

UNDEB
hefcw
Planet Friendly Periods
MISLIF CYFELLGAR I'R BLANED

GADGWCH I NI STARAD AM MISLIF CYFELLGAR I'R BLANED...
LET'S TALK PLANET FRIENDLY PERIODS...

WITH ALEX GILL
HEFO ALEX GILL

UNDEB
hefcw
Planet Friendly Periods
MISLIF CYFELLGAR I'R BLANED

3. Education on Health Conditions

The campaign aimed to normalise health conditions associated with or affecting menstruation by providing more information on them and their associated symptoms, in addition to sharing student experiences with them through the Menstruation Monday Quote series. Health conditions included Endometriosis, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD). It encouraged students who suspect they may suffer from any of the above to access the help they need and feel confident in doing so, in addition to encouraging others to be supportive and empathetic of those experiencing them.

1 in 10 people who menstruate suffer from Endometriosis

Mae 1 o bob 10 o bobl sy'n cael mislif yn dioddef o Endometriosis

UNDEB hefco

Symptoms of Endometriosis

1. Pain in lower tummy/back (pelvic pain), which usually gets worse during your period
2. Period pain that stops you from doing your normal activities
3. Pain when peeing or pooing during your period
4. Difficulty getting pregnant- 50% of those with Endometriosis have difficulty becoming pregnant
5. Pain during/after sex
6. Feeling sick, constipation, diarrhoea, or blood in your pee during your period

4. Raising awareness of Periods Beyond Gender

Additionally, the campaign raised awareness of the term “not all those who menstruate identify as female and not all females menstruate”, to ensure transgender and non-binary students felt supported and included. It also explained why period products were placed in male toilets and encouraged students to be aware of the additional challenges transgender and non-binary students face with menstruation.

"Some cisgender women (assigned female at birth) don't have periods due to menopause, stress, disease or a hysterectomy. They may have never started menstruating due to a variety of medical conditions or they may be transgender or intersex. At the same time, there are people who menstruate who aren't cisgender women. They might be trans men, intersex, genderqueer or nonbinary." - Jen Bell (2017)

"Nid yw rhai merched cisryweddol (cisgender - merched a bennwyd yn fenywaidd adeg eu geni) yn cael mislif, a hynny yn sgil y menopos, straen, afiechyd neu hysterectomi. Efallai na wnaethant erioed ddechrau cael mislif oherwydd un o nifer o gyflyrau meddygol neu efallai eu bod yn drawsryweddol neu'n rhyngrywiol. Ar yr un pryd, mae rhai pobl nad ydynt yn ferched cisryweddol yn cael mislif. Gallant fod yn ddynion trawsryweddol, yn rhyngrywiol, genderqueer neu'n anneauaid (nonbinary)." - Jen Bell (2017)

Gender Dysphoria and Periods

"Gender dysphoria happens when a person experiences distress because of a mismatch between their anatomy and their gender identity. Getting your period as a person who doesn't identify as a woman can cause discomfort and anxiety—especially when many people equate menstruation with femaleness." - Jen Bell (2017)

"Dysfforia rhywedd yw'r term a ddefnyddir i ddisgrifio cyflwr rhywun sy'n profi trallod oherwydd diffyg cyfatebiaeth rhwng eu hanatomeg a'u hunaniaeth rhyw. Gall cael mislif achosi anghysur a phryder i berson nad yw'n hunan-ddiffinio fel merch - yn arbennig o gofio bod llawer o bobl yn cyfystyru'r mislif â benyweidd-dra." - Jen Bell (2017)

5. Events

5 events were delivered live on Undeb Bangor's Facebook page, the most popular being the Menstruation Myth Buster and Sports and Periods Q&A (with the Rugby Engagement Officer at Coleg Llandrillo), which 1.2k students tuned in to watch. Other live events included a Period Quiz, Period Pictionary and a Q&A with Tara Leanne Hall, Founder of Cylch Coch (a small grassroots project working to tackle period poverty and taboo in North Wales). Members of the Student Steering Group and cisgender male members of the Student Voice Team participated most live sessions.

3 organised events were delivered, which students could sign up to and join via a link to Zoom:

- Talk with Environmental Activist Ella Daish about her #EndPeriodPlasticCampaign and journey to becoming an activist
- Menstrual Cycle Session with a Practice Nurse on understanding the emotional and physical ups and downs of the menstrual cycle and how to work with your cycle rather than have it work against you
- Environmentstrual Workshop with a Women's Environmental Network Ambassador on the range of reusable products available and the environmental and health impacts of single use products

These events provided students with an opportunity to ask questions and engage in further discussion. Student feedback on events was positive:

"All events have been super informative and after every talk, I come out feeling more empowered."

2. Evaluation of Success

2.1. The Student Experience

Product Provision

Results indicate that the scheme has been successful in ensuring students who menstruate have appropriate access to free period products. Since the scheme's launch, 9% of students have experienced difficulty in accessing products, down from 45% in the Initial Survey. Access has benefited students in a variety of ways, including preventing 45% from getting 'caught short' on campus to providing 36% with more consistent access if struggling financially.

However, some students are yet to access products as they were unaware of the provision (47%) or simply hadn't had the opportunity to access products yet due to remote working, not being on campus or isolation (87% of comments). This highlights the effect Coronavirus restrictions have had on access on campus and the benefit continued product provision could have for many students as more return to campus. Students emphasised the importance of ensuring access to products doesn't diminish:

"...make sure that the access to products doesn't diminish - it really has helped a lot of students who would otherwise have to improvise."

On Campus Provision

90 students accessed products on campus in the two weeks between their availability and the launch of the Final Survey. Results indicate that provision has been successful so far in providing students with access to products suitable for their varying needs. Findings from the Initial Survey highlighted a preference for applicator tampons and pads, in addition to products for medium to heavy flow. Regular applicator tampons and heavy pads were therefore distributed on campus. Consequently, 91% were able to access enough products to meet their needs, 84% were able to access their preferred type and 95% described their experience using the products as good.

Results also highlighted the schemes success in providing appropriate access to products for students. Initial feedback highlighted a preference for accessing products in toilets on campus, including male toilets. Consequently, products were distributed in a range of gender neutral, male, female and accessible toilets on campus. As a result, 93% have felt comfortable accessing products and 90% have found it easy to access products. Additionally, 15% of students who don't menstruate have accessed products for others in male toilets and students who identify as non-binary or transgender have expressed their appreciation for having access to period products in male toilets. These findings suggest products should be universally available as access can benefit students of all genders.

Despite this, 27% raised concerns in comments around the lack of products in dispensers and the need to fill dispensers more regularly. Many suggested additional ways in which the locations of products on campus could be communicated better. These included maps, posters in Halls of Residences and Common Rooms, screens in Pontio, emails and reels to communicate locations.

Home Delivery

The Home Delivery Scheme proved very popular with students, with 463 accessing products. 99% described their experience with products as good and 81% submitted positive reviews on the Home Delivery Scheme:

"Amazing scheme-period products, especially reusable ones, can be quite expensive and although I've always wanted to try them, I've never been able to afford them myself. This scheme has let me try them (and find out I love them!) And I'm really grateful to the uni for making that possible!"

This pilot scheme has successfully made reusable products more accessible for students. In the Initial Survey, 54% stated they would try reusable products and 18% would consider using them. 73% of products ordered through home delivery were reusable, confirming significant interest in environmentally friendly options. As a result of the scheme and campaign, 99% stated they would recommend reusables to a friend and 93% said they would consider using them over single-use products, suggesting their experience using the reusables was positive. Furthermore, students expressed their appreciation for being able to experiment with reusable products, without the added risk of cost.

Although only 6% of reviews submitted on the scheme were negative, students raised valid concerns around the time taken to receive products from Hey Girls and the lack of communication around delivery, further supported by similar feedback from the Student Steering Group. This is reflective of the operational complications encountered through working in partnership with Hey Girls as a supplier. They often experienced unprecedented demand for period products, leading to significant delays in the processing and delivery of orders. Additionally, some students raised concerns around

the brand name “Hey Girls” in relation to the social sustainability of the scheme and its aim to be inclusive of all students, regardless of gender

The Campaign

Results indicate the campaigns success in working to achieve period dignity for all those who menstruate through combining product provision with education and awareness raising around menstruation.

Opening-up the Conversation and Reducing Stigma

“I love that this campaign has made the subject of periods become less of a taboo subject. It’s made me feel so much more comfortable.”

Prior to the campaign, 27% of students who menstruate felt uncomfortable talking about menstruation and period products. 38% felt embarrassed and 4% ashamed when asking for period products. Feelings of discomfort and embarrassment were often exacerbated when talking to male students. Since then, 37% of students who menstruate have felt encouraged by the campaign to talk more openly about periods and period issues. As a result of the campaign, 47% have been involved in open conversations with a variety of individuals (including family, friends, partners and flatmates) around menstruation. Moreover, 11% have had conversations with cisgender male students and 43% of people who don’t menstruate have had open conversations since the campaign started:

“I had an in-depth conversation with my male housemates about periods after they saw Katie Tews period poverty campaign posts and it was nice to be able to openly discuss the environmental benefits of reusable period products.”

This highlights the campaigns success in not only opening up the conversation between students who menstruate, but between those who menstruate and those who don’t, helping reduce the stigma associated.

Furthermore, feedback indicates the campaigns success in engaging students of all genders and in creating a safe space for students who menstruate and identify as non-binary or transgender to talk more openly. 60% of students who selected the ‘other’ category (for gender) have been involved in open conversations since the start of the campaign and 100% feel comfortable talking about periods, period issues and menstrual products, up from 88% in the Initial Student Survey. 44% of students who identify as male but were registered differently at birth feel comfortable, up from 0% in the Initial Survey.

However, some students still feel more progress could be made to remove the stigma attached to menstruation, particularly when cisgender male students are involved in conversations (11%). Equally, some transgender and non-binary students still face issues of dysphoria and anxiety, highlighting the complexity of their relationship with menstruation and the challenges they face in overcoming negative feelings associated with menstruation.

Education and Awareness Raising

In addition to reducing the stigma attached and opening up the conversation around menstruation, the campaign has been successful in educating both students who menstruate and students who don't on a variety of topics relating to menstruation, period poverty and the scheme. 47% of students who menstruate have learnt about the issue of period poverty, 40% on the environmental impact of periods, 40% on the health conditions associated with menstruation, 37% on period issues and 22% on periods beyond gender. All organised events have been described by students as "informative".

In addition, 75% of students stated that they would benefit from more information on reusable products in the Initial Survey. Since then, 82% of students who accessed reusable products through home delivery saw information provided on reusables through the campaign. Of which 97% found it useful.

27% of students who don't menstruate have learnt something new through the campaign. In comments, 49% elaborated on what they'd learnt, including the availability of free products, abolishment of period tax, the importance of ensuring people who menstruate are comfortable, the need for products in male toilets, the environmental cost of disposable products and how periods affect people differently. The campaign has also changed the way 29% think about menstruation. For example, some students feel products should be freely accessible, that stigma around menstruation shouldn't exist and conversation normalised and that products are too expensive. They are also more aware of the different symptoms people who menstruate experience and of the negative effect single-use products can have on the environment. Lastly, 91% of students who don't menstruate feel the campaign should continue to raise awareness and educate on menstruation, highlighting their willingness to learn more.

However, 13% of students who don't menstruate felt the information provided in the campaign lacked detail or new information and 61% hadn't learnt anything new from the campaign for various reasons such as carrying out independent research or living in a female environment. Therefore, to educate those who don't menstruate more effectively, the type of information or content that would benefit students should be considered carefully, with their input.

Student Involvement

It is evident from the successes outlined above that student feedback and input through surveys and regular meetings with the Student Steering Group has been fundamental to the success of the pilot scheme.

Feedback from the Student Steering Group highlighted ways in which student participation could be improved further. For example, through the creation of a volunteer group of students, who would have additional responsibilities. For example, supporting the team at Undeb with the long-term social media campaign by creating social media posts and assisting Campus Services by monitoring stock levels in dispensers, informing them of any low stock. Additionally, ensuring more diversity in the group of students working on the scheme would improve student representation and input. For example, by having Welsh speaking students and students of all genders in the group to ensure all students needs are communicated.

Comments in the survey also highlighted student interest in helping tackle period poverty beyond the Period Poverty and Dignity Scheme, both nationally and within the local community. For example, through volunteering and fundraising opportunities.

2.2. Campus Service's Feedback

The focus group held with Campus Services to discuss on campus distribution, offered feedback from a logistical perspective. Campus Services are by all indicators supportive of the scheme and the need to provide students with access to free period products:

"You go to a toilet and expect toilet paper to be available so why not pads?"

"I think it's a brilliant idea.... It's something that should have been given free forever and it's wrong that the government charge the VAT and tax on these things- it's wrong. It's brilliant now that it has started off and it's coming across the country. It should have already started."

The general consensus was that they would like to continue to ensure products are available for students for as long as possible.

Campus Services feel the process of ordering and delivering products through distributor Bunzl has been successful and are supportive of placing products in toilets across campus, including male toilets:

"By having products everywhere, you're changing attitudes."

Whilst they praised what had been achieved and implemented in such a small space of time, the need to learn and adapt over time, making necessary changes and improvements, was discussed. For example, considering an alternative supplier to Hey Girls due to the delays with deliveries. Additionally, concerns around the fragility of dispensers were raised and staff suggested monitoring their condition and considering alternative dispenser options in the long-term.

Whilst they were able to identify areas that may have higher uptake than others, they felt uptake is difficult to monitor at present and that it should be monitored more closely next academic year as more students return to campus.

Lastly, Campus Services feel the current system of replenishing stock is effective and allows stock to be monitored closely. Facilities shift leaders are responsible for managing stock in different areas. Stock is then made available in a central location, after which small amounts of products are distributed in cleaning cupboards across campus for cleaning teams to access.

3. Conclusions

- The student led nature of the scheme was integral to its success. Results from the Initial Survey and regular meetings with the Student Steering Group informed the implementation of the pilot scheme, ensuring it was tailored to students needs. In turn, product uptake has been successful and feedback on product provision positive. Similarly, engagement with the campaign has been successful, with students engaging in open conversations around menstruation as a result and learning more about menstruation, period products and period poverty.
- The availability of free period products has had little impact on student's attendance at lectures and seminars and participation in sports and volunteering activities to date. This is largely due to Coronavirus restrictions and remote studying, which has made it difficult to measure.

- Distributing products in a range of male, female, gender neutral and accessible toilets across campus suits student's needs. Whilst the scheme should consider student suggestions to extend provision to all buildings and toilets on campus, this may not be possible on a financial and operational level.
- The Home Delivery Scheme was popular among students and the majority would like to see it continue. However, it was offered as a short-term solution to access during the pandemic. Additionally, providing 463 students with products over approximately 3 months cost a total of £5,924.68. Just under 50% of this figure can be attributed to postage and packaging. In comparison, approximately £4,699.16 has been spent on 16,128 products for Wrexham campus and 24,192 for Bangor campus (+ VAT and delivery costs). This amount is estimated to last 6-12 months depending on footfall and uptake.
- The popularity of reusable products is evident, with 73% ordering them through the Home Delivery Scheme. The Student Steering Group has also requested that access to reusable products continues. Whilst offering home delivery may not be possible, providing access to reusable products on campus could offer a more financially sustainable alternative.
- Hey Girls as a supplier, has been largely popular with students but working in partnership with them has been challenging operationally. Students have experienced significant delays in the delivery of their products, often receiving products up to 6 weeks after ordering. Delivery of pads to campus has also been delayed. For students to access products comfortably and confidently, access should be stress free, quick and easy. In addition, concerns raised around the brand name "Hey Girls" suggest continuing with Hey Girls as supplier could work against the scheme's aim to be inclusive of all students, regardless of gender.
- On campus provision has proved successful to date. However, there is a need to ensure product provision doesn't diminish and to monitor uptake, ensuring dispensers are restocked regularly enough. Based on Initial Survey results, it is estimated that it may cost between £3,647.68 - £4,697.12 (+delivery) to buy period pads and tampons for Wrexham and Bangor campus next academic year. Alternatively, based on the number of female students at Bangor University, it could cost up to £8,344.8 (+ delivery). However, uptake is likely to be uneven between Bangor and Wrexham campus, which should be considered. Additionally, these estimates are based on current prices of products from Bunzl and an estimation of uptake, which has been difficult to accurately measure this academic year.
- There is a need to continue to promote locations, using different methods to engage students. For example, posters in Halls Offices and Common Rooms, screens in Pontio, maps, recorded tours, emails and reels on social media.
- To improve student involvement, representation from students should diversify, to ensure all students needs and interests are considered. This includes students of all genders and Welsh speaking students. Furthermore, fundraising, volunteering and donation opportunities could be offered to students to help tackle period poverty on a wider scale, in both the local community and on a national level.

- The educational and awareness raising element of the campaign, in combination with product provision, has been successful and students would like to see it continue. Based on feedback, specific emphasis should be placed on the environmental element, health conditions associated with or affecting menstruation and content aimed at educating male students.

4. Recommendations

1. Continued access to free period products for all students.

Home delivery and on campus provision has provided 553 students with access to free period products to date. Survey results have highlighted a need to provide one off access to students who are 'caught short' and more consistent access for those struggling financially. Focus must now shift onto ensuring products provision doesn't diminish to ensure both students who have accessed products and students who have yet to, due to coronavirus restrictions or being unaware of the scheme, are able to.

2. Ensure the availability of products in student facing locations across campus.

Products should continue to be available in a range of male, female, gender neutral and accessible toilets across Bangor and Wrexham campus, in addition to the Halls Offices and shops on Bangor campus. The scheme should aim to respond to the needs and requests of students regarding product distribution but decisions to place products in additional areas should be considered on an operational and financial level too.

3. Campus Services becomes responsible for on campus provision as a whole.

Campus Services have played an integral part in organising and implementing on campus provision. Members of the Cleaning Team have been responsible for receiving deliveries, distributing products and replenishing stock. Towards the end of the pilot scheme, the Project Officer ordered products through distributor Bunzl, a company that Campus Services has an established relationship with and who currently supply them with other products.

Therefore, it is recommended that Campus Services is ultimately responsible for on campus distribution as whole, with the additional responsibility of ordering products. For this, Campus Services would require direct access to a proportion of the funding available. This may be a budget within the region of £4,697.12 - £8,344.8 depending on further calculations and uptake next academic year.

As Campus Services have consistent presence on campus, it is recommended that they are responsible for monitoring stock levels in dispensers. To ensure products are available for students at all times, the Student Campaigning Group could assist Campus Services by informing them of any areas with low stock.

It is advised that alternative suppliers to Hey Girls are considered. To facilitate this, the team at Undeb Bangor should share information with Campus Services on suppliers and the environmental values of the scheme, allowing informed decisions around alternative suppliers to be made. Additionally, if the need to install different dispensers in the long term should arise, Campus Services should lead on researching and testing dispensers based on their expertise and information shared with them on students' needs regarding access.

4. Set up a Student Campaigning Group.

The student-led nature of the pilot scheme and campaign contributed significantly to its success and its ability to meet the needs and interests of students. Focus on student engagement should therefore continue through the creation of a Student Campaign Group with additional responsibilities. For example, to assist in creating content for the long-term social media campaign (lead by Undeb Bangor). In addition, community links could be developed to provide students with volunteer, fundraising and donation opportunities in order to campaign or educate beyond the Period Poverty and Dignity Scheme. For example, working with primary schools to educate on menstruation or working with local grassroots charity, Cylch Coch, to tackle period poverty in North Wales. The long-term scheme should draw on links already established through the pilot scheme such as relationships with Gwynedd Council and charity Cylch Coch.

Furthermore, a diverse range of students should be encouraged to join the Student Campaign Group. This includes students of all genders, Welsh speaking students and students from different societies and courses. This will ensure the needs of all students are communicated and considered but also that a more balanced approach to inclusivity is adopted when making decisions about the pilot scheme and campaign.

5. Continue to supply reusable products on campus.

Given the popularity of free reusable products and the environmental campaign, the long-term scheme should continue to provide access to a choice of reusable products on campus. This offers a more financially sustainable option than home delivery as products can be bought and delivered in bulk to campus, reducing postage and packaging costs. Products could be available for collection from the Students Union and the team at Undeb Bangor could create an online form which students could order products through and pick them up.

6. Continue to promote locations of products.

The campaign should continue to promote locations using a multifaceted communication strategy, finding new ways to engage and reach students. This is to ensure new students are informed of the availability of free period products and that all students are able to access products quickly and easily. Locations of products should be communicated through posters in student facing locations such as Halls of Residences and Common Rooms. Additional methods to communicate locations include on screens in Pontio, a map, recorded tour, through an all student email and in reels on Undeb Bangor's Instagram.

7. Continue educational campaign alongside provision.

The campaign has been successful in working towards achieving period dignity for all those who menstruate by educating and raising awareness on menstruation through the campaign. In light of this, the educational aspect should continue alongside provision to build on this success, led by Undeb Bangor with the input of a Student Campaign Group. Educational content should reflect students' interests from feedback. Results from the Final Student Survey and feedback from the Student Steering Group indicate that the environmental campaign should continue, together with the sharing of menstruation experiences, education on health conditions associated with or affecting

menstruation and content aimed at male students. Content aimed at male cisgender students should be based on student feedback to ensure they are able to learn or take something from the information provided.

8. Campaign on a national Level, in partnership with other institutions.

Work in partnership with NUS, HEFCW and other Welsh universities to lobby the Welsh Government and secure long-term funding for period poverty and dignity initiatives. For example, a document could be created and shared with the Welsh Government to showcase different period poverty and dignity initiatives across universities and outline their success.

Undeb Bangor should continue to develop relationships with other Student Unions and encourage discussion between Sabbatical Officers to share best practice and collaborate on events, education and awareness raising.

5. References

Binti. 2021. *Binti*. [online] Available at: <<https://bintiperiod.org/>> [Accessed 23 June 2021].

Bloodygoodperiod.com. 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bloodygoodperiod.com/>> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

Murray, J., 2020. Testing times for students: food banks open at universities. *The Guardian*, [online] p.1. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/24/testing-times-for-students-food-banks-open-at-universities>> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

National Union of Students Wales, 2020. *Ending Period Poverty Once and For All*. National Union of Students Wales, pp.1-38.

Plan International, 2018. *Girls Experience of Menstruation in the UK*. Break the Barriers. [online] Plan International. Available at: <<https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-break-the-barriers-report-032018pdf/download?token=Fs-HYP3v>> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

Plan International UK. 2021. *3 in 10 girls struggle to afford or access sanitary wear during lockdown*. [online] Available at: <<https://plan-uk.org/period-poverty-in-lockdown>> [Accessed 25 June 2021].

The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, 2020. *Period Poverty in Universities and Colleges*. EUAC, pp.1-21.

6. Appendix

To view survey results in full or minutes from focus group sessions, please contact Mair Rowlands (m.rowlands@bangor.ac.uk).