

Turning period poverty into period positivity

Partners

Dundee and Angus College, Angus Community Planning, Free Period Angus, 'Any time of the month' Ireland, Hey Girls, Dundee City Council and Perth College

Focus

This project addresses the issue of how to tackle period poverty whilst maintaining the college's values around sustainability, such as decreasing the use of single-use plastics. Whilst the Scottish government had created a fund to supply schools and colleges with menstrual products to support their students, the college realised there were issues with sustainability when using these products.

Menstrual products are largely created from plastic and Dundee & Angus students cause around 350 tonnes of plastic waste involving menstrual products annually, which caused the college to mix the ideas of period poverty and sustainability into one project.



The college also appreciates that sustainability and education come hand in hand. For the past 3 years they have worked with key community partners to develop and deliver education to over 1000 students and people in the Dundee and Angus communities with a key focus on making sustainable choices and adopting sustainable behaviours.

Success factors

- **Partnerships** – adopting a regional approach to period poverty by joining forces with Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Perth College. They launched a dynamic Tay Cities working group to share best practice on activities and events in our regions, and taking it one step further, created the very first regional Period Dignity Lead Officer role, to commence in August for 2 years. This role ensures that the college are fully maximising government funding and really empowering positive changes in their communities.
- **Activity** – A breadth of activity supporting the sustainability agenda including period pad sewing classes, donations to local and international charities, partnership working with Hey Girls and donation of period pants to all new students.
- **Social media campaigns** – broadcasts educating people on how menstruation can affect both people's lives and the environment.
- **Inclusivity** – creating a gender-neutral period campaign allowed for LGBTQIA+ students to be involved without feeling isolated.

Description

Dundee and Angus College have realised that a large amount of their students struggle with the issue of period poverty, which impacts highly on their education. Period poverty is a huge issue in society and, with around a third of Dundee and Angus students living in the most deprived 10% of postcodes in Scotland, it has been a major issue that needed to be relieved by the college. However, they are also aware of the environmental effects that single-use menstrual products have, as supplying students with free disposable menstrual products would solve one issue but exacerbate another, and thus have created a project to reduce the two issues simultaneously.

After being made aware of the environmental damage of single-use menstrual products, the college began to create a multi-faceted project plan with the help of partnerships and their students to amplify conversations around period poverty whilst encouraging their students and staff to follow a more sustainable lifestyle.

Their first decision was to ditch the moniker 'period poverty' in favour of 'period positive' to help banish the stigma around the former phrase and to allow the opportunity to promote the idea of the UN's Global Sustainable Development Goals. The 'Period Positive' campaign has been a great vehicle for helping to introduce the Sustainable Development Goals into the college, which, as an organisation with a sector-leading green agenda, is incredibly important to them.



By partnering with 'Hey Girls' and 'Wuka', two sustainable menstrual product companies, 90% of the products on offer to the college's students are the best, sustainable option. Additionally, 'Hey Girls' agreed that, for every box the college had bought for their students, the company would donate a box of sustainable period products to those who cannot afford to buy them.

Additionally, the college recognised that there was a lack of education involving the menstrual cycle, its effects on the human body, and the environment. Partnering with Irish trailblazers 'Anytime of the Month' and their very own D&A Performing Arts students, they created bold workshops lasting between 1-4 hours. These workshops have been fully embraced by students and staff alike, as well as various community groups. To support legacy planning, the workshops have been filmed. Full dissemination across Angus and Tayside will commence in August, equipping any school, college and community group with the resources needed to get the period conversations flowing!

Challenges and Solutions

During the 2020-21 lockdowns and school holidays, many students suffered from being unable to access the free sanitary items provided by the college. This was rectified by the college delivering products to those who needed it. Additionally, to cut down on the use of single-use plastics, the college hosted online sewing classes to create sustainable sanitary products. Recognising that their students may not have access to a sewing machine or fabrics, they sent out machines and materials to those who needed it.

Impact

- Social media campaign - the 'Period Positive' Facebook had over 3,000 views, with excellent participation in live streams on menstruation.
- Students enjoyed the sewing lessons and reported that the project helped their mental and physical wellbeing.
- Over 1,000 students and young people have benefited from the period education workshops, with 95% completing evaluations positively, stating that the sessions have educated them, made them think and will influence future decisions on products and actions.
- Research was conducted with 232 students across our 3 main campuses and outreach centres harnessing feedback on the service. 83% of students access free, sustainable period products (provided by Hey Girls). This can be broken down to 63% accessing single use sustainable pads, 31.2% accessing washable period pants, 16.1% accessing menstrual cups in academic session 2021-2022.



Moving Forward/Next Steps

Dundee and Angus College, like all other institutions, worked independently during the first year of funding. They held successful social media campaigns, events, education sessions and much more. The college then realised that true, lasting social change happens when people act together. D&A initiated the Period Dignity Tay Cities working group (collective energies, ideas, resources) and proposed the idea for a Lead Officer to coordinate and streamline the approach to Period Dignity across Perth & Kinross, Dundee, and Angus. They are about to embark on a really exciting phase as a strong and informed collective.

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