

# Huntingdon Labour

## Period Poverty / Red Box Project

### THE FACTS

“Period Poverty” describe the inability to properly take care of menstrual needs due to lack of affordability. A survey by the charity Plan International UK ([www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org)) found that:

- **1 in 10 girls aged 14 to 21 can't afford the menstrual products they need:** 1 in 7 have borrowed menstrual products from a friend; 1 in 10 have improvised, for example using socks or toilet roll; 1 in 5 use unsuitable menstrual products because they are cheaper.
- **49% of girls surveyed missed at least one full day of school** due to their period, and 68% said they were unable to pay attention in class. Girls also spoke of the stigma and embarrassment surrounding their periods, the lack of education in how to properly take care of themselves and the difficulty sometimes in accessing toilets due to school rules
- **There are at least 68,000 women in the UK currently homeless** living in shelters, temporary housing or on the streets. Even if women have access to menstrual hygiene products, there are few opportunities to find somewhere to change them, to wash underwear and trousers or to adequately maintain their own hygiene.

Menstrual products can cost over £18,000, in a women's life (an average of £13 every month). This cost includes not only sanitary towels/cups/tampons, but also pain relief medication, replacement underwear and toiletries.

**Labour Party policy:** In 2017 Shadow Education Secretary **Angela Rayner** announced Labour's commitment to set aside £10 million to end period poverty in schools.

**Dawn Butler MP, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities**, announced that the next Labour Government will provide funding for free sanitary products for secondary schools, foodbanks and homeless shelters. *“The Labour Party wants all women, regardless of age, social status or background, to be able to easily access the sanitary products they need.”*

**Cambridgeshire Labour MEP Alex Mayer is calling for free sanitary products to be made available in all public toilets.** She told the European Parliament: *“No one questions the cost of toilet roll in public loos or suggests everyone should carry one around with them just in case. Just like loo roll I'm not suggesting well known brands, just a supply of basic pads and tampons.”*

The Euro MP believes the move would help stamp out period poverty and period stigma. In a speech to the Chamber she said, *“So, I think it's time to go a step further and, I call on European governments to fund free sanitary protection in all public buildings. Just as it is for loo roll in toilets, so let it be for pads and tampons.”*

**Alex is strongly supporting various 'end period poverty' campaigns across the Eastern Region.**

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## THREE THINGS WE CAN DO

- 1. Bring up the issue with local councillors and with your MP.** Write to them explaining why it matters and how they can help. Don't be embarrassed. They need to know. Scotland was the first country in the world to give free sanitary products to low income families. The Welsh government has pledged £1 million to tackle period poverty. **The Labour Party, The Liberal Democrats and The Green Party have all pledged to address period poverty.** Theresa May's government must step up.
- 2. Normalise menstruation.** Many girls and women are afraid to ask for help because of the stigma. This shame about a natural body function directly affect a girl's self-esteem and her potential to succeed. If a girl misses school every time she has her period, she is set 145 days behind her fellow male students. There's also a risk to health with issues like toxic shock syndrome and health risks associated with not being able to change or wash pads or underwear regularly. **As well as changing government policy on periods, we need to break down the taboo and normalise the conversation surrounding periods, we can only do this by talking about it ourselves.** Tackling the issue of period poverty can seem fairly overwhelming but talking is a good starting point and don't leave men out of the conversation. Although it might be embarrassing initially that soon goes.
- 3. Support individuals and charities making a difference:** Get involved with <http://redboxproject.org/> Set up a Red Box in your local school and be a part of the **Movement!** Their aim is to provide free menstrual products to any young person that may struggle to access it. If you'd like to coordinate a Red Box in your local school, send an email to [newvolunteers.rbp@gmail.com](mailto:newvolunteers.rbp@gmail.com) Alternatively, support an existing Red Box in your local area – currently Peterborough and Bedford. Email [redboxprojectuk@gmail.com](mailto:redboxprojectuk@gmail.com) for more information. **There are many ways to campaign for change.** Sign petitions, volunteer with period poverty charities, buy products from Hey Girls ([which are then donated to girls who need them](#)), or just generally talking about periods more openly. **If you would like to donate money or products towards a charity for women and girls in the UK, here are a few that are available:** [Amika George](#), a prominent period poverty campaigner – see [www.crowdjustice.com/case/freeperiods/](http://www.crowdjustice.com/case/freeperiods/); the [Cup Effect](#), which makes menstrual cups more widely available around the world; [Freedom For Girls](#), a sanitary towel project in Africa; and [Proud Pad](#), which creates sustainable and washable pads. Also look at [Bloody Good Period](#) [The Monthly Gift](#) [The Homeless Period](#) [The Trussell Trust](#) **LOCAL ACTION:** [The Medway Centre](#) is a hub for 'Sue's Essentials' <https://www.huntspost.co.uk/news/pilot-project-launched-in-huntingdon-to-help-tackle-poverty-1-5759095>. When a food parcel is being arranged, toiletries will often be added in as essential items. (They also have a community shop to which you can donate various items, including clothes)

Facts are taken from various sources including [www.freeperiods.org/mission/](http://www.freeperiods.org/mission/)  
<http://www.globalwomenconnected.com/2017/11/5-facts-period-poverty-uk/>

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If you can help or would like more information please contact the Huntingdon CLP Women's Officer either by emailing her: [suzannehuntslabour@gmail.com](mailto:suzannehuntslabour@gmail.com) or text/phone her mobile 07789762122

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