

SEMH SPOTLIGHT – Menstrual Health

This spotlight accompanies the Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service short webinar on the experiences of menstruation in school and implications for mental health. The webinar can be accessed through the website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/educationalpsychology>

When can difficulties arise?

Difficulties can arise when the challenges associated with menstruation and attending school begin to outweigh the support available and a young person's ability to cope. Difficulties may arise when a young person:

- Experiences menstruation as a stressor, which may impact areas such as mood, energy, and cognitive capacity. This may also impact on concentration and engagement in school.
- Experiences difficulties managing pain, fatigue, and emotional changes.
- Experiences reduced resilience, with typical stressors feeling harder to manage during menstruation.
- Worries about managing periods in school and associated stigma (e.g. fear of leaks).
- Feels unable to seek support due to stigma, embarrassment, or a culture of silence, leading to unmet needs.
- Faces barriers within school systems, such as restricted toilet access, limited period product availability, or lack of flexibility.
- Experiences poverty.
- Has additional needs (e.g. neurodiversity), increasing vulnerability.
- Develops patterns of disengagement or non-attendance associated with difficulties managing menstrual needs.

Resources that may help to explore a young person's menstrual health:

- Use curious, non-judgemental questions (e.g. exploring patterns in mood, attendance, or wellbeing across the month).
- Gather pupil voice through activities such as discussion, questionnaires, or reflective activities to understand individual experiences, including how pupils experience the school environment.
- Consider bio-psycho-social factors (i.e. 'the whole picture'). Consider how things like physical symptoms (e.g. pain), emotions, friendships, and the school environment might all be impacting a young person's menstrual experiences.
- Where appropriate, provide support for pupils to track patterns (e.g. cycles, energy levels, emotional changes) to support understanding and aid planning of support strategies.

Key support ideas to be aware of:

Please see the Spotlight session for key areas of support and ideas. Key ideas include:

- Develop staff confidence and understanding, supporting open and informed discussions around menstruation.
- Promote relational practice (e.g. responding to menstrual health needs with empathy, validation, and curiosity, and avoiding minimising or dismissing experiences).
- Ensure accessibility to menstrual health facilities, holding young people's dignity at the centre e.g. flexible toilet access and easy, discreet access to a range of menstrual products.
- Address stigma and silence e.g. through creating safe spaces for menstrual health discussions and promoting inclusive and open language.
- Strengthen menstrual education e.g. Include practical and emotional aspects (not just biological), and use interactive, pupil-informed approaches.
- Support whole-school menstrual health systems e.g. reflect on menstrual health within policies (e.g. attendance, behaviour) and consider implicit messages within school culture.
- Provide targeted support to pupils experiencing difficulties, which may include:
 - Flexibility, reduced demands or adjustments
 - Support for sensory, emotional and executive functioning needs
 - Collaboration with families where appropriate
- Encourage pupil voice and peer support approaches to reduce stigma and increase a sense of belonging.

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Key guidance and legislation to be aware of:

There is a general, growing national focus on reducing stigma, improving education, and addressing inequalities, though gaps between policy and practice remain (Brown, 2022; Women’s Health Strategy for England, 2026).

- **Women’s Health Strategy for England (updated 2026)** – now recognising menstrual health as both a physical and mental health priority.
- **RSHE statutory guidance (DfE, 2021)** – includes menstrual education, with increasing focus on earlier and more comprehensive education.
- **Free menstrual products scheme (extended to 2026)** – aims to reduce barriers to access in schools.

Wider reading and resources:

Shore Centre	Talking-about-Menstruation-in-the-Classroom.compressed.pdf	Talking about menstruation in the classroom guidance.
University centre for excellence in developmental disabilities	Period Education Guide OHSU	Period Education Guide.
Period Education UK Lesson Plans	Resources Period Education	Variety of free lesson plans and resources currently being piloted.
HOPE Lesson plans and resources	HOPE lesson plans HOPE Centre for Reproductive Health	Two lesson plans with resource signposting for further resources.
Healthwatch Leeds	Period resources.pdf	List of PHSE Menstruation resources with links (December 2020).
Make Well	Neurodiversity and Menstruation: Why Periods Can Be So Hard - and How to Help - Makewell Health and Wellness Clinic	Neurodiversity and menstruation information and strategies.
YouTube videos to support teaching	Kids Explain Periods Flex Sanitary Pads, Tampons and Panty Liners - Girl Talk Episode 4	Resources to support education and destigmatisation of menstruation.
Twinkl resources	70 Top "Menstrual Cycle" Teaching Resources curated for you The Menstrual Cycle Board Game - Puberty - Interactive	Resources to support education and destigmatisation of menstruation.

Local Organisations:

School Nursing Service, Warwickshire	Connect for Health - Warwickshire school nursing service Compass	
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Action Menopause Warwickshire	Council champions women's health this October - Warwickshire County Council	Focus on menopause awareness and staff wellbeing.
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National Organisations:

Irise International	Resources Irise International	Variety of resources and guidance including a UK schools toilet policy toolkit, faith-informed menstrual health resources, 'Period Peers' toolkits, worksheets for young people and a menstrual health evaluation toolkit for schools.
National Autistic Society	Menstruation	Guidance on menstruation for autistic young people, considering common difficulties including sensory differences, emotional regulation, executive functioning skills, stress and communication needs.
Health Optimal Periods for Everyone (HOPE)	What is HOPE? HOPE Centre for Reproductive Health	Scottish charity whose purpose it is to inform and educate everyone about menstruation and its impact. Provides information on policy, free lesson plans and resources, including targeted neurodivergent menstrual health education support.
Endometriosis UK	https://www.endometriosis-uk.org	Supports people with endometriosis, provides awareness and education.
Freedom4Girls	https://www.freedom4girls.co.uk/	Challenges stigma, taboos, inequalities. Provides menstrual education workshops to organisations including schools (including trauma-informed and neurodivergent-inclusive sessions).
Brook	https://www.brook.org.uk	Sexual health charity for under-25s; offers RSE resources to school, free handouts, online paid video lessons for schools. Offers clinical services, counselling, and training to promote healthy relationships and combat stigma around sexual health.

Supporting Parents:

Health Optimal Periods for Everyone (HOPE)	Periods and Neurodivergent Children	Periods and neurodivergent children guide.
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Please note that information is subject to change and the authors cannot take responsibility for any advice obtained from third parties. Information collated May 2026.