

Edinburgh Leisure joins Hey Girls in ending period poverty

Edinburgh Leisure has joined forces with award winning Scottish community interest company and social enterprise, Hey Girls to provide free period products to customers.

A range of sustainable products including tampons and period pads are now available across all Edinburgh Leisure sites. The period products are in changing and toilet areas, as appropriate, for customers to help themselves as required.

Wendy Avinou, Leisure Manager and lead for this project said: "We're delighted to be partnering with Hey Girls whose mission is to eradicate period poverty in the UK by providing quality period products in our venues to everyone who needs them.

"Edinburgh Leisure is a charity on a mission to help people lead healthier, happier, more active lives and anything we can do to eradicate people's barriers to this, including period poverty, we are only too delighted to get involved with. Free period products can encourage participation in sport and support good health.

"Our Active Communities programme harnesses the power of physical activity and sport to tackle inequalities and combat the effects of inactivity. Each year we support around 10,000

people affected by health conditions, disabilities, inequalities, and poverty to get active – empowering them to improve and protect their health, wellbeing, and quality of life.”

According to the Joseph Rountree Foundation UK Poverty Report 2020/21, 14.5 million people in the UK are caught up in poverty, equating to more than one in five people. The fact that period poverty still affects people in the UK in 2021 shocks many people.

Plan International UK research found that period poverty affects 1 in 10 people across the UK. In Scotland, the number is thought to be closer to 1 in 4. More research is needed to understand exactly what is happening, but period poverty is a real problem for many people. Period products are a necessity, but they are expensive. Tight budgets can leave people forced to prioritise other purchases, leaving them without the right period products, without enough period products, or without any period products at all.

Campaigns to address period poverty have gained momentum, and UK governments are now stepping in to help solve the problem. Last year Scotland became the first country in the world to make period products free for all. The City of Edinburgh Council have been responsible for implementing the legislation within the capital on behalf of the Scottish Government and have enabled the partnership with Edinburgh Leisure.

Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan, Culture and Communities Vice Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: “We’re delighted that Edinburgh Leisure is one of the first of our partners to roll out free period products for all as this should be a basic right. We’re committed to achieving this goal as we showed last year when they were made available in community centres, libraries, schools and early years centres and we’re hoping to make them more widely available in a range of venues in 2022. We would urge everyone to look out for, and take part in, our

public consultation for the Scottish Parliament bill on the roll out of the free period products next year.”

Celia Hodson, CEO & Founder of Hey Girls, added: “Increasing access to period products is really important. Free products can improve concentration, encourage participation in sport and support good health. They prevent people having to make dehumanising choices – to wear the wrong product, or a worse quality product or to wear a product for longer than is hygienic or safe.

“At Hey Girls we believe that access to quality period products is a right, not a privilege. Being able to access free period products at the Edinburgh Leisure sites will allow people to conveniently pick up products they need with no questions asked. What’s more, all our period products are sustainable and chemical free; being made with materials including sustainable bamboo and organic cotton, for a planet and body-friendly period.”

Hey Girls was initially established in 2018 by Celia Hodson and her two daughters Kate and Bec as a kitchen table start up after experiencing period poverty themselves. The company has donated over 19 million products to people in the UK facing period poverty through its ‘buy one, donate one’ pledge.

With 21 employees, they’ve grown into a UK wide operation with dispatch teams in Musselburgh in East Lothian, Diss in Norfolk and Sydney in Australia. They are proud to be multi award winning and have celebrity supporters including Michael Sheen and Caitlin Moran.

For more information: www.edinburghleisure.co.uk

