

## Equality Period Limited

Annual Report for the period ending February 2024

Equality Period Limited

Charity No: NIC108424

Address: c/o Coast Road, Drains Bay, Larne BT40 2LF

Equality Period is a limited company, registered as a charity, that exists on a 'Not-for-Profit basis to carry out charitable purposes that benefit the community rather than private shareholders.

### **TRUSTEES**

Suzanne Oag

Colleen Gardner

Shannon Taylor

Tracy McClean

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

We recognise the trauma, stress and anxiety caused by not having access to the products of appropriate knowledge needed to manage our periods, menstrual, sexual and peri-menopausal health. We work to create menstrual equity within society by providing those pulled into poverty, homelessness or otherwise displaced people and their dependents with access to free period products of their choice as well as any other essential hygiene and personal care products.

We recognise that hygiene poverty is not a standalone issue. We work in partnership with a varied range of statutory and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland who have appropriate safeguards and ongoing comprehensive supports in place. This includes but is not limited to Health and Social Care Trusts; Primary and Post-Primary Schools, Youth Groups; Trussell Trust and independent Food Banks; Women's Aid; Simon Community Northern Ireland; Libraries Ni; Refugee services and Family Support Programmes.

Feedback from our network of community partners and testimony from beneficiaries tells us that the ability to access period products and other essential hygiene items via the organisations that clients and service users are already involved with or are familiar with makes a huge difference to their overall wellbeing.

### **ACTIVITIES FEBRUARY 2023 – FEBRUARY 2024**

We continued to support our community partners working with people affected by the legacy of the pandemic and continuing cost-of-living crisis. We provided on average 300 individual care packages per month across our community partner network.

Equality Period pride ourselves on making a big impact with a small budget. We are entirely volunteer-led and volunteer run. We don't have office space or storage facilities as minimum overheads means maximum support for beneficiaries.

- **Small budget BIG impact**

During the final week of August, we packed 48 care packages for Larne Foodbank; each containing period products, shampoo, shower gel, deodorant, soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste. Purchasing these items from high-street retailers would cost £575.82 -- Thanks to the partnerships we have built over the last 3 years we were able to reduce this by more than £450; partnership working also avoids our charity directly contributing to the issue of hygiene poverty by reducing availability of essential hygiene products in stores.
- **Plastic Promise**

In 2021 we made a pledge to reduce the amount of pads and tampons containing plastic that we distributed and increase the availability of sustainable, reusable products for everyone. Thanks to grant funding and building brand partnerships we have ended our reliance on public donations of period products. Since March 2023 95% of period products distributed by Equality Period have been plastic free or reusable.
- **Period Product (Free Provision) Act NI 2022**

Legislation received Royal Assent in May however as Northern Ireland has no working Assembly progress cannot not be made regarding implementation.

November 2023 Northern Regional College student union contacted us for help as period products were no longer being provided under the Department for Communities pilot scheme. Over 800 packs of pads and a range of reusable sensory friendly products were provided for students.
- **Period Dignity**

Despite 'Period Dignity' launching in September 2021 schools and parents continued to reach out to Equality period and projects within The Hygiene Bank NI network requesting period products for pupils.

Lack of promotion, poor communication and barriers faced by pupils trying to access products led to unclaimed an unspent budgets. In May funding for the Period Dignity scheme was cut by 40%
- **National Teen Self Esteem Month (Rathcoole Library)**

Thanks to an award from Arnold Clark Community Fund we were able to partner with Libraries NI and provide hygiene essentials and well-being packs for teenagers in Rathcoole and Glengormley
- **Period Parade – Menstrual Health Day**

Laura and Erin joined campaigners and 17 charities from across the UK for the #EveryPeriodCounts march through Westminster to raise awareness of period inequality. Hundreds of period stories, including many contributions from Northern Ireland were delivered to 10 Downing street.
- **Computer Equipment Grant – National Lottery Awards For All**

Thanks to TNL Community Funding Equality Period have a computer and laptop which allow us to create and deliver improved Period Positive workshops both remotely and in-person. Grant underspent: TNL NI approved repurposing remaining funds for charitable objective.

- **International Women’s Day & OCN Stress management**  
 Equality Period were invited by Women’s Aid ABCLN to deliver a series of in-person empowerment workshops with service users in Larne and Carrickfergus. Feedback was very positive. We hope to maintain this partnership with Women’s Aid ABCLN over the next year.
- **‘Here if you need’**  
 We continue to pro-actively encourage local businesses, workplaces and hospitality venues to include period products within their washroom provisions.  
**Council-run pilot**  
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council’s ‘Here if you need’ pilot scheme was deemed “well received”. Council have agreed Period Products will be included in existing washroom supplies budget for council owned community centres in Larne, Whitehead and Carrickfergus as well as visitor attractions in Ballygally and Islandmagee. The scheme is also to be extended to council owned community centres in Ballymena.
- **Community Cluster Event**  
 Fantastic public engagement at Larne Market Yard. The team loved being able to have frank and open conversations about periods and menstrual health in a public space.
- **December – 1099 people supported.**  
 In partnership with Larne Foodbank and Christians Against Poverty we provided a total of 692 people (328 adults and 364 children) with 480kg of hygiene and personal care essentials.  
 Larne Foodbank Committee awarded Equality Period a partnership grant of ringfenced funds to provide hygiene essentials specifically for Larne Foodbank  
 In addition to this a further 407 individuals were supported by contributions made to agencies working with local families as well as adults and young people experiencing crisis, homelessness and displacement.
- **Professional Development**  
 Thanks to a previous Brighter Futures Training grant Suzanne has completed CPCAB Level 2, CPCAB Level 3 and a HE Certificate in Counselling. In-line with Equality Period’s longer-term goal of being able to provide counselling services for those experiencing menstrual health conditions that impact mental and emotional wellbeing, she has progressed to study FdSc Integrative Counselling with Ulster University.
- **PickUpMyPeriod App**  
 New locations across Mid and East Antrim created on the PickUpMyPeriod App in partnership with Hey Girls. Volunteers continued promotion of the app and restocking pick up points as and when needed.
- **Brighter Futures w/ Sure Start**  
 Brighter Futures at Larne Football club provided a £500 grant to help us maintain an on-site hygiene pantry as well as provide menstrual health packs and fresh food vouchers for service users at Horizon Sure Start, Larne.

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Equality Period are incredibly grateful to Larne Football Club and their supporters, Prestige Flooring & Bathrooms and the team at Danny Donnelly's constituency office for their assistance with December Hampers.

We also would like to express our gratitude to the committee at Larne Foodbank; our 'Here if you need' partners at The Hygiene Bank Moira and The Arnold Clark Community Fund for their continued support.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

We move forward into the new year once again hopeful that the Period Product Free Provision legislation will be implemented and reduce our need to exist in a product provision capacity.

We also hope our continued partnership with Hey Girls and improving our Period Positive workshops will reduce the use of single use plastic period products in Northern Ireland.

Project duplication continues in the Larne area however, we have still to see this translate in any reduction in need from our community partners.

As co-founder and chairperson I would like to extend my gratitude to Colleen, Shannon and Tracy once again for their roles as volunteer trustees – never underestimate the difference you are making, not just at a local level but as part of a global menstrual equity movement.

This report was approved on behalf of the trustees at a meeting on 8/5/24 and signed on it's behalf by:



**Mrs Suzanne Oag**  
**Trustee Equality Period Limited**