

Empowering
People through
Period Equality.



An update from our CEO on Irise's Empower Period Initiative- *empowering young people to end period poverty and shame in the UK by 2025.*



Hello!

I'm getting in touch to update you on the impact your donation to our "Empower Period Initiative" is having on the lives of young people and their mission to be the generation to end period poverty and shame for good.

This year we launched the Empower Period Programme South Yorkshire to support young champions to tackle period poverty and shame in their own communities.

Meet the champions

First, I wanted to introduce you to our amazing champions and the work they have been doing.

Local youth-led campaign group 'Power Over Periods' have teamed up with girls' rights charity Chula to develop and deliver peer-led period education in 10 schools in and around Sheffield.

Power Over Periods Co-Founder, Caitlin, an A-level student whose period education videos have reached over half a million people on TikTok, shared why she is championing the issue:



"I think the current issues facing young people when it comes to periods is the stigma and lack of role models for anyone experiencing periods. I believe that giving young people a platform and role models to talk and relate to further helps to end stigmas around periods. I hope that in my role as Period champion I will be a role model for young people teaching them that there is absolutely no shame in speaking openly about their period."

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Power Over Period and the Chula Team

Community hub organisation, Ship Shape, are working with four teenage girls from their Sports Programme to create a dedicated space for girls to come and access peer-support and free period products. The girls painted and decorated the space which will be launched at a special wellbeing and self-care event for girls and their mothers, alongside a formal opening with local community leaders. One of the champions, 14 year old Sabiha, told us why she got involved:



“I have chosen to be a period champion because I saw the lack of knowledge in the community not only for women but also the men and large families. I also saw the way girls are fearful because of it and would want that to change. I hope that in my role as period champion I can help break some of these barriers and make people feel comfortable with their periods. I hope we can get some knowledge to the men and families and I hope we can make a safe place for women to come to.”

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The Ship Shape champions and Ship Shape CEO, Tanya Basharat

Survivor led, mental health charity, Adira, worked with Irise to provide a pampering and self-care event to their community alongside some conversations to tackle stigma around periods and free goody bags with period products, toiletries and education materials. Irise also included Adira in a series of social media posts highlighting Black Feminists championing period health and wellbeing as part of Black History Month. Their champion Eunice, shared why she got involved:



“I chose to become a period champion because I want to educate myself on how to better support those less aware in the community and help tackle period poverty as well as advocate for those who don’t have a voice in the community. I hope in my role as a period champion more education and knowledge on how to apply myself in the community to support issues around periods for example changing negative perceptions and making periods accepted in a positive light.”

Irise is also working with Sheffield and Hallam Football Association to train coaches to provide more support to young people when they start their period so that keep playing sport.

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Influencing local policy

We brought together young people, local organisations and councillors to discuss how we could all work together to end period poverty and shame in South Yorkshire. Sheffield Lord Mayor, Sioned Mair-Richards, also attended and thanked the young people for their amazing work.



Champions, organisation representatives with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Sheffield following a roundtable discussion about how to work together to address period poverty and shame.

This led to local councillor, Jayne Dunn, working with our champions to propose a motion to the local council to tackle period poverty and shame in Sheffield, including more efforts to support schools to use the government's free period product scheme, co-ordinate distribution of free period products to foodbanks and create a Period Equality Charter to map out cross cutting action on the issue.

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Councillor Jayne Dunn stands with representatives of partner organisations and champions, alongside a month's supply of period products and the equivalent amount of food.

Responding to the cost-of-living crisis

We've worked with our amazing volunteers and Sheffield Friends of Irise student society to step up our efforts during the cost-of-living crisis. Having a period shouldn't be an economic penalty. We're currently supplying 50 organisations in South Yorkshire and around the UK with environmentally friendly, reusable Modi Bodi period pants with plans to reach more people over the coming months.

Bringing together young activists from across the UK to share learning and plan their next big campaign

"Young people hold the power to break intergenerational cycles of period shame."

We brought together young activists tackling period poverty and shame to plan their next big campaign for period equality in the UK. They took part in a training session on how to effectively work with politicians delivered by Eleri Kirk-Patrick who was elected to youth parliament age 16 and is part of the G20 Youth Summit delegation 2022, alongside working for a local MP. They also heard from representatives of organisations and networks committed to working with young people including Mellissa Symonds, who is an autistic person and lead of Sheffield Autism Network, about autistic people's unique challenges managing their periods, Charlotte Walsh, Partnerships and Impact Director at In Kind Direct, who shared their latest data on period poverty and Lindsey McFadden from Girl Friendly Society.

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Thank you for everything you do to help make period equality a reality. We look forward to continuing the fight for a fairer society for all young people with you in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "EW", written in a cursive style.

Emily Wilson
CEO Irise International

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