Motion to support the provision of menstrual products

Officer responsible – Chloe Newbold, Cambridge SU Women's Officer

Cambridge SU Notes:

1. Over 25% of the 31 colleges at the University of Cambridge fail to provide any menstrual product provision for their students.
2. Of the colleges providing menstrual products to students, 47% have less than £100 a year for the scheme. Over 70% of colleges have less than £200 a year.
3. According to PLAN International (2017), a single year of menstruation costs approximately £128 a year, or just under £11 a period.
4. Of the colleges that provide menstrual products, only five provide any form of menstrual products other than sanitary towels and tampons.
5. Alternatives such as menstrual cups have an estimated lifetime of up to 10 years and over the period of their usage save a person who menstruates approximately £770. Reusable products such as menstrual cups and leak-proof period pants also significantly reduce the plastic usage involved in single use tampons and sanitary products.
6. Of the colleges that provide menstrual products, 30% do not provide products in the men's or gender neutral toilets, and 40% do not provide products in disability-access toilets.
7. Many college's locate these products in public and inaccessible locations that many students may find intimidating. (i.e. Porter's Lodge, Laundry Room, available on request, etc.).
8. Most of the University departments and library facilities, where many students spend a significant proportion of their time, do not provide free menstrual products. This means many students may be forced to return home or attend teaching hours without access to menstrual products.
9. No exam venues currently provide access to menstrual products.
10. In a survey conducted in 2019 by CUSU Women's Campaign, colleges are showing substantial resistance to implementing schemes, arguing the scheme "favours one gender", or "not something colleges are willing to give us money for".

Cambridge SU Believes:

1. That accessibility and student welfare should be central to the Cambridge SU's principles.

2. Menstrual products provision is a vital step for gender equality, but also for accessibility and challenging taboos around menstruation.

3. All menstruating students should feel able to access college provisions for period products, recognising that not all people who menstruate are women, and not all women menstruate.
4. Students in colleges with no menstrual product provision who begin menstruation at particular times of the day face serious emotional distress and health concerns if they are forced to resort to unsanitary short term measures. A lot of colleges that are providing free menstrual products do not have an appropriate budget for their schemes, and do not currently provide products in places accessible to all menstruating students.
5. College Women's/Welfare/Gender Equality Officers are struggling to keep up with the demand of distributing menstrual products.

Cambridge SU Resolves:

1. To campaign for menstrual products to be freely accessible to all students in all colleges, departments and libraries.
2. To liaise with College Women's/Welfare/Gender Equality Officers to ensure menstrual products are provided in all toilets across college/the department, including disabled, gender neutral, and men's toilets.
3. To campaign on period poverty as an issue that impacts students with all gender identities - making sure that provisions are targeted at all menstruating students, and that our language remains fully inclusive.
4. To campaign for provisions that cover a range of menstrual products - including both single-use products and schemes for providing more sustainable alternatives (e.g. leak-free period underwear & menstrual cups, etc.).
5. To campaign with the goal of menstrual products being regularly provided by colleges and departments as toilet paper is provided in all facilities.
6. To campaign for menstrual product provision schemes to be provided and distributed directly through college funds, not through JCR/MCR, welfare budgets or college Feminist Societies.