

Green
+ Healthy
Frome

LEARNING INSIGHT #1
PLASTIC FREE. PERIOD.
MAY 2026

Plastic Free. Period.



Green and Healthy Frome is a partnership made up of the following



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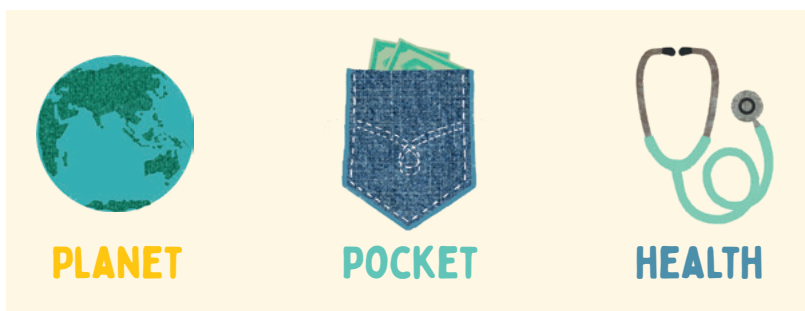


WHAT IS GREEN AND HEALTHY FROME?

Green and Healthy Frome¹ is a partnership of Frome Medical Practice², Frome Town Council³ and Edventure Frome⁴ (a community, learning and social enterprise hub). The project is funded by the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund⁵. After a two year development phase (April 2021 to March 2023), we achieved a three year full award (April 2023 to March 2026) to upscale our programme.

Our mission is to engage our community to make changes which are good for the planet by highlighting climate, health and/or cost of living benefits. We do this by:

- Modelling and embedding sustainable practices into existing systems and structures, both at community and organisational levels
- Promoting community engagement and network building by working with community groups, individuals, and other organisations to enable action on climate and to amplify our impact
- Providing free resources to individuals, families and households, enabling them to make choices which are good for their health and good for the planet, often saving money too
- Using storytelling to promote behaviour and culture change within and beyond Frome
- Using evaluation to share our insights, learning and impact

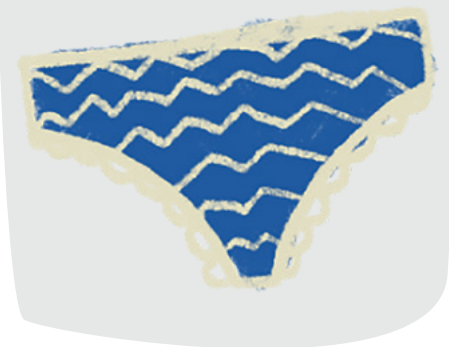


GHF's core message is that 'people's health and the health of the planet are firmly linked - if we improve one, we'll also improve the other - enabling everyone to share in a better future'.

You can explore Green and Healthy Frome⁶ to find out more about what we did, what we learned and what happened next in Frome.

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¹<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/>

²<https://www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk/>

³<https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/>

⁴<https://edventurefrome.org/>

⁵<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/climate-action-fund-our-shared-future>

⁶<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/>

WHAT IS PLASTIC FREE.PERIOD.?

Plastic Free.Period. (PFP) is a project which promotes reusable and plastic free period products to menstruators in Frome with a particular focus on Year 8 and 9 students. The Project educates young menstruators and their peers on the health implications of using conventional, often toxin-filled, plastic products, instead promoting safer and environmentally-friendly alternatives. The changes we were hoping to achieve were:

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This learning insight is for Local Authorities, organisations, schools, health providers and community groups interested in starting similar projects. It might also be interesting for menstruators of all ages and peers, partners, parents and carers who want to find out more about period products.



CLIMATE

- Reduced plastic, water use and waste
- Reduced CO₂ emissions from production and disposal



HEALTH

- Reduced exposure to plastic
- Reduced exposure to harmful toxins
- Better longer term health



COMMUNITY

- Menstruators and families able to make informed choices
- Professionals able to give accurate advice
- Sharing stories to remove stigma and empower choice



FINANCIAL

- Reduced spending on period products
- Reduced spending on disposal and waste
- Savings to health services

WHY PLASTIC FREE.PERIOD.?

Around 15 million people are of menstruating age in the UK alone⁷, with an average person using 11,000 single use period products (e.g. tampons and pads) over their lifetime⁸. The need for education and equal access to safe and sustainable period products is not widely recognised and the health and environmental impacts of conventional products are rarely explained.

By using the trusted voice of the Medical Practice and the wider context of women's health to promote the benefits of safe and sustainable menstrual products across our community, we

have shown the value of a wider conversation about women's health, highlighted the harm of conventional products and advocated for healthy and sustainable alternatives including menstrual cups and washable period pants and pads.

Around 1.5 billion period products are flushed or thrown away in Britain each year⁹. The financial cost of period products can be reduced by up to 88-98% by using reusable products¹⁰, with further savings for health services in the longer term by reducing exposure to dangerous chemicals.

⁷https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358548749_An_exploratory_study_of_the_impact_and_potential_of_menstrual_hygiene_management_waste_in_the_UK

⁸<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SEEING-RED-BRIEFING-V3-OCTOBER-2024-1.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1771952372554149&usg=AOvVaw18TvHKw72CodqxsFO0Mr7>

⁹https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/21/flushing-tampons-toilet-blocks-drains-sanitary-products&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1771952372555148&usg=AOvVaw0VMNJIIPkvsQ6wZZxtZ_0-c

¹⁰<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Environmenstrual-Factsheet-2024.pptx-1.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1771952372555476&usg=AOvVaw2rVH-ysqVWn4Utplcs3uBx>

NEW MOON PHASE

Plastic Free. Period. (PFP) started in Frome to address the environmental impact of conventional period products, such as mixed plastic sanitary pads or pantyliners and tampons with or without applicators. The project was initiated at Frome Medical Practice (FMP) which has been working on the [Green Impact for Health Toolkit](https://greenimpact.nus.org.uk/green-impact-for-health/)¹¹ since 2017 and was the first Practice to earn a platinum award in 2025. The Toolkit guides healthcare settings through measures to reduce their environmental footprint whilst improving patient wellbeing. This includes moving away from language such as 'period poverty' towards a more empowering approach focused on dignity, choice and women's health.

At the same time, [Frome Town Council](https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/our-community/our-sustainability-work/waste/plastic-free/) (FTC) was strengthening its focus on young people and wider community health, recognising that access to period products, education and stigma-free support plays a vital role in participation at school, work and in community life. By working together, both organisations were able to increase the reach, impact and ambition of the project.



WHAT WE LEARNED

During this phase we built our learning, networks and capacity by:

- Connecting with local and national projects championing safe period products and menstrual health, especially the [Women's Environmental Network](https://www.wen.org.uk/)¹²
- Exploring the links between period access, dignity, stigma and the impact of mainstream period products on health and the environment
- Reviewing existing language and approaches to ensure inclusivity and empowerment (e.g. moving from 'period poverty' to 'period action')
- Engaging healthcare partners (e.g. GP practices) in conversations about women's health and sustainability
- Using frameworks such as the [Green Impact for Health Toolkit](https://greenimpact.nus.org.uk/green-impact-for-health/)¹³ to guide our thinking
- Aligning the project with local priorities and partners in education, community health and wellbeing
- Connecting PFP to wider environmental campaigns e.g. [Plastic Free Frome](https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/our-community/our-sustainability-work/waste/plastic-free/)¹⁴
- Agreeing shared values and aims: dignity, choice, empowerment, health of people and planet and saving money

We approached suppliers of plastic free and reusable period products to explore incentives such as discounts for people in Frome. We found that clear communication about our project and purpose, and a commitment to publicly promoting the supplier's products, were key to engaging suppliers.

¹¹<https://greenimpact.nus.org.uk/green-impact-for-health/>

¹²<https://www.wen.org.uk/>

¹³<https://greenimpact.nus.org.uk/green-impact-for-health/>

¹⁴<https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/our-community/our-sustainability-work/waste/plastic-free/>

WAXING MOON PHASE

Plastic Free. Period. (PFP) began to take shape when we successfully applied for £300 from Mendip District Council's Climate Action Fund to purchase reusable period pants. We partnered with a local Women's Environmental Network (WEN) Environmental Ambassador to deliver sessions in schools and began contacting schools and the local College to generate interest. At the same time, we researched both local retail and online suppliers to create a directory of sustainable period products and to promote discount codes for Frome residents to provide an incentive to switch. We also put together a demonstration kit showcasing products from a range of suppliers. These early actions laid the foundations for the project by building resources, generating interest and making key connections.

Our one hour sessions delivered by the WEN ambassador in Frome schools and home schooling networks covered:

- Anatomy, environment, health and menstrual product choices
- Opportunities for anonymous questions
- Quizzes, hands on products and games
- Most schools elected to have boys and girls in separate classes to give the opportunity for questions without embarrassment.

Workshops for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were delivered in smaller groups with more opportunity for tailored conversations.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Funding for a project like PFP could sit under a number of categories including inclusivity/equity, climate action, young people, health equality, water and waste
- Partnering with a WEN Environmental Ambassador enabled us to mobilise school sessions - alternatively schools or other organisations can undertake WEN training to deliver sessions themselves
- Schools and Colleges are stretched, so it is important to align your proposal with the curriculum and especially Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PHSE) learning
- Finding a champion in a School or College can help, this might be via eco-councils, PHSE leads or at academy trust levels
- Explore other routes, for example training professionals who connect with patients in young people's clinics and/or sexual health clinics
- Research local and online suppliers to create a directory of sustainable products and promote your project in local outlets
- Assemble a demonstration kit featuring products from multiple suppliers
- Think about key audiences and make use of existing communication resources from national experts:
 - www.wen.org.uk
 - [Plastic-Free Periods - City to Sea - Better for your body, and the planet](#)
 - [Reusable Menstrual Products Made In The UK - The Period Lady](#)
 - [Period Positive - It's about bloody time.](#)

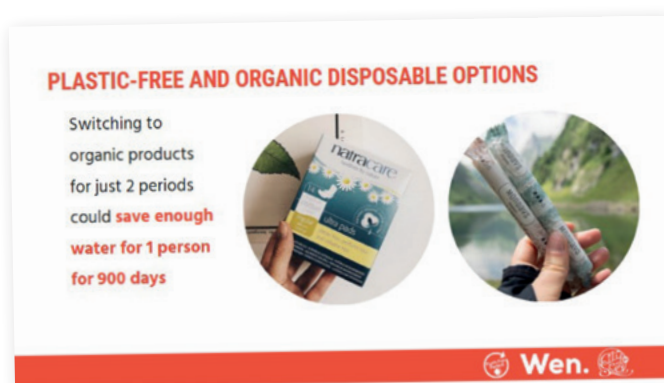


Figure 1: slide from school workshop

FULL MOON PHASE

During our full award phase from 2023-2026, we needed to ensure that we had the capacity to reach our key target audience of Year 8 and Year 9 students in Frome, as well as developing professional and community awareness of Plastic Free.Period. (PFP). In order to achieve this we ringfenced staff capacity in *Frome Medical Practice* (Community Sustainability Lead) and *Frome Town Council* (Resilience Officer) as well as funding for sessional work with our WEN Environmental Ambassador.

The PFP team developed workshop content for Y8 and Y9 school sessions in Frome along with accompanying information to parents and carers about the PFP scheme, the health, climate and cost benefits and how to look after the period packs. The team organised a programme of sessions in mainstream Frome schools for Year 8 and Year 9 groups and tailored sessions for the specialist SEND academy in Frome as well as linking into home schooling networks. The team also supported schools with Government's [period products scheme](#).¹⁵



Figure 3: an excerpt from our PFP 'zine

Figure 2: Some quotes from workshop participants

"It went really well, it was very cool and exciting. It helped me learn more things that I didn't know before"

"Made me aware that a period was coming, I was having cramps, great that there are free pads and period pants!"

"They tackled sensitive subjects very effectively with good humour"

"Wonderful presentation! I would do it all over again. Nothing to improve on. Thank you so much for the period pack!"

Over time, these sessions were revised and improved in response to feedback and learning. For example, a focus group of teens told us that the personal health harms of conventional period products represented the most compelling and motivating message for them. In line with other Green and Healthy Frome work strands, we can forefront health, climate and/or cost of living in our messaging and it is important to know which of these lands with our audience.

PFP also created learning materials for our cohort of informed professionals including education professionals, social prescribers, the Frome Medical Practice nursing team and care navigators, so that they could become ambassadors for the scheme and for plastic free and reusable products more broadly, e.g. [information pack for schools](#)¹⁶. Through the Medical Practice's links to Somerset's Integrated Care Board, PFP was able to align the Project's purpose and messaging with the regional Women's Health Strategy.

¹⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england>

¹⁶<https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Plastic-Free.-Period-info-pack-for-schools.pdf>

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Plastic Free.Period. (PFP) collaborated with local designers, poets and artists who supported the Project to amplify our message including:

- Video [Why Switch to Plastic Free Period Products?](#)¹⁷
- A [zine](#)¹⁸ which was handed out in print with period packs and at events
- Posters with QR code links to discounts on reusable period products for local people
- A poem by Liv Torc of [Hot Poets](#)¹⁹ titled [May The Pants Be With You](#)²⁰
- A [blog post](#)²¹ by GHF's Communications Lead about the harmful toxins often found in conventional period products

The PFP team linked with local organisers of allied events such as Frome Families for the Future's River Festival, joining the dots between disposal of period products and the health of the river Frome. We came up with some wild and whacky ideas for engaging people in conversations about women's health and breaking down stigma! For example, a game about naming parts of the vulva and a game where participants could place balls in tubes which represented the type of period product which they currently use. Frome Medical Practice even hosted 'Adventures in Menstruating' with [Chella Quint OBE](#)²², an expert on menstruation literacy - one example of how grant funding can enable a Medical Practice to step outside of the constraints of business as usual.

By sharing our campaign with the wider team at Frome Medical Practice, including linking to the Young People's Clinic and to initiatives promoting women's health both locally and Somerset-wide, we were able to harness the reach of trusted messengers in health services.



Figure 4: the PFP team with a young participant

One young participant was so inspired by PFP that she organised book and cake sales, raising £300 for the project... *"I had a talk...about the impact that plastic has on the environment and on our bodies... it was really shocking to see how much further we needed to go to see the change."*

In Frome College our team delivered parallel workshops to boys in years 8 and 9. These sessions were framed around the fact that they may have sisters, girlfriends, and in the future wives or daughters - so understanding choices, health considerations and the environmental impacts of mainstream period products is really valuable learning. Workshop leaders felt that the boys were surprisingly receptive and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One of our team said *"delivering a session to Frome College boys who stood up and clapped and asked questions after the session is definitely a highlight of my career"*!

¹⁷<https://vimeo.com/1020980041?fl=pl&fe=sh>

¹⁸<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/plastic-free-period/>

¹⁹<https://hotpoets.org/>

²⁰https://youtu.be/596Yg_AE2fM?si=RmLDOQyI8YnP04rL

²²<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/the-plastic-problem-in-period-products/>

²²<https://chellaquint.com/>

RESOURCING CONSIDERATIONS

The Climate Action funded Green and Healthy Frome programme provided £14,000 to PFP over three years which included sessional worker fees, period packs and communications resources but excluded Frome Medical Practice and Frome Town Council staff time which was provided 'in kind'. International Women's Day was the context for a crowdfunding campaign for additional period packs which raised £1,650 and saw the front elevation of our Town Hall covered in pants!

Each free period pack contains three pants, one pad, one waterproof bag and one 'zine'²³. The cost to the project is around £15 per pack. In total PFP has handed out 635 packs in Frome schools, clinics and community events.



Figure 5: Frome Town Council staff and Councillors outside the Town Hall

WHAT NEXT?

As the Lottery funding draws to a close we are considering our options for PFP based on our learning. We know from our focus group with teens that the health benefits of plastic free period products are compelling, but that the upfront investment in reusable period products can be off-putting even when lifetime financial savings are explained. We also know that young people of all genders want more detailed and honest information about health, sexual health and menstruation. The feedback from young people is that they really value an external and expert facilitator of workshops. Now that the scheme is established, we are exploring light touch co-ordination for the scheme alongside sessional workers (e.g. environmenstrual ambassador) to deliver school workshops. If necessary we would explore a less costly 'cascade' model where staff in schools would be trained to deliver the sessions themselves.

For the next phase of this project, we will be gifting vouchers to young menstruators so that they can select their own period products, whether pants and pads from different manufacturers or menstrual cups.

Frome Medical Practice has also undertaken recent research into women's health and their findings echo the views of young people. Recommendations include the need for health professionals to partner with schools and provide comprehensive menstrual education, normalise conversations about menstruation and address stigma. This might include delivering fun, engaging events for young people such as 'period parties' with speakers or activities to encourage openness and awareness.



²³<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/plastic-free-period/>

Fluxies 20% off

Cheeky Wipes 15% off

The Period Lady 15% off

Wuka 15% off

Revolundies 15% off

Moocup 10% off

The Shop Next Door 10% off

Acorn Pharmacy 10% off

AllMatters 25% off

DISCOUNTS FOR PERIOD PRODUCTS

Look online for offers of cheaper and sustainable period products


Visit this webpage or scan the QR code for the above offers and MORE:
www.bit.ly/Plastic-Free-Period
Part of Green & Healthy Frome

DID YOU KNOW?
There are 200,000 tonnes of waste each year from single use period products in the UK, costing each person about £5000 over a lifetime

ACTIVITY AND IMPACT

Between 2023 and 2026, Plastic Free.Period. delivered nine workshops in Frome Schools, hosted four community workshops, took part in nine events and pop-ups and engaged with young people in Frome Medical Practice clinic sessions. More than 1,500 people were involved in these activities, which raised awareness of the benefits of switching to plastic free and reusable products. In total, 635 young people received menarche packs (pants, pad, bag and 'zine) while 317 school pupils and 13 teachers engaged in school workshops.

In terms of positive impacts on planet, pocket and health, the shift to reusable period products is significant - particularly over a lifetime and at scale. If all of the 605 participants who were gifted a period pack adopted reusable products across their menstruating lifetime, the savings would be:


15,632KG or over
15.5 tonnes CO₂e


£252,640 or a
quarter of a million
pounds

EDUCATION SESSIONS IN NUMBERS

9

Education sessions in schools

13

Community events to support systemic change

8

Community workshops

225

Frome Medical Practice Youth Clinics

GHF's Sustainability and Evaluation Project Lead at Frome Medical Practice used the following evidence-based impact measures, which may be useful to other projects looking for funding or measuring their impact.

CARBON

As well as tackling plastic waste from period products, it's important to track the reduction in carbon emissions (CO₂e) to show full environmental benefit. Switching from single use plastic items like disposable pads to reusable alternatives like menstrual underwear naturally lowers the CO₂e footprint associated with production, transport and disposal. Monitoring these CO₂e savings not only shows that the project helps meet broader climate goals beyond plastic reduction, but also offers an easy way to compare the environmental cost of different product choices.

Table 1 Comparative CO₂ emissions for period products per annum²⁴

Product	CO ₂ e (kg) per person per annum
Nonorganic disposable tampons	4.98
Organic disposable tampons	5.14
Menstrual cup	0.03
Nonorganic disposable pads	9.94
Organic disposable pads	4.5
Reusable pads	0.49
Menstrual underwear	0.39
Regular underwear	0.21
Menstrual underwear - regular underwear	0.18

WATER USE

Water is a significant resource consideration for period products. Manufacturing materials like cotton and paper pulp, which are used in disposable products, are highly water intensive. The production of plastic also requires water. By evaluating the reduction in water use when switching to reusables, we can highlight freshwater conservation alongside plastic and carbon reduction.

Table 2 water use in production of menstrual products²⁵

Product	Water use, m ³ per person per annum
Nonorganic disposable tampons	6.9
Organic disposable tampons	5.9
Cup	0.07
Nonorganic disposable pads	4.39
Organic disposable pads	2.14
Reusable pads	6.01
Menstrual underwear	4.16
Regular underwear	2.7
Menstrual underwear - regular underwear	1.46

²⁴<https://www.ahpma.co.uk/>

²⁵https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/plastics_unflushables_-_submitted_evidence.pdf

FINANCIAL COST

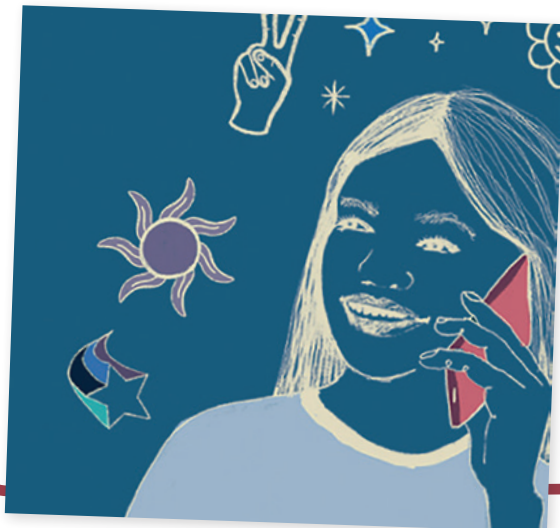
Using lifecycle data²⁶ from France, we adjusted the values to represent one year's spending on each type of product. These figures can be used to calculate whole lifetime savings for people who switch.

Table 3 financial cost of period products per annum

Product	Cost per person per annum US dollars
Nonorganic, disposable pads	160.8
Organic, disposable pads	58.3
Reusable pads	37.94
Nonorganic tampons	55.2
Organic tampons	91.2
Menstrual cups	5.52
Menstrual underwear	21.3

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information about Plastic Free.Period. please reach out to the team via our page [Plastic Free.Period.](#)²⁷ You can also find our short films, including the poem about PFP, on this page.



You can find out more about the research and campaigning for safer period products at [Women's Environmental Network Environmenstrual campaign](#)²⁸ including their excellent [resources](#)²⁹.

Thanks to Charlotte Carson and Dan Tucker at Frome Medical Practice, Jo Morris at Frome Town Council, Cecilia Allon at Women's Environmental Network and all of the volunteers, designers, poets, menstruators, movers and shakers who supported this project. Thank you to the National Lottery for funding our Project and for your support along the way.

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You can find our other learning insights and toolkits in Green and Healthy Frome's '[Our Learnings](#)' resource.²⁷

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²⁶<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cesys.2022.100096>

²⁷<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/work-together/>

²⁸<https://www.wen.org.uk/our-work/enviroenmenstrual/>

²⁹<https://greenhealthyfrome.org/our-learnings/>

