

Intro

Hello, thank you for inviting me today. I'm Megan, Head of Partnerships at City to Sea – an environmental charity on a mission to prevent plastic pollution at source.

About City to Sea and our campaigns

City to Sea has been getting people talking about periods since 2017. Breaking taboos, changing the narrative and raising awareness of the hidden plastic in our periods, and of course championing the solutions!

Our Plastic Free Periods campaign is designed to tackle barriers, change behaviour and improve accessibility of plastic free and reusable period products.

We're also behind Rethink Periods, a nationwide education programme changing the way primary and secondary schools teach young people about periods.

So what's the problem? Why are all these campaigns and programmes needed in the first place?

- **Over 150 million tonnes of plastic have accumulated in the world's oceans.** It is no longer an idyllic place to splash about as a kid, or indeed, safe for our sea life.
- **Around 6.2% of plastic found on all beaches** in the UK has been flushed down the loo
- **Period products are the 5th most common item littering European beaches**
- **3 out of 10 adults are flushing plastic down the loo**, treating our toilets like a bin. I used to be one of these people! I had no idea that tampons had plastic in them and that they wouldn't degrade like loo paper when it goes down the loo.

Why are period products causing such a problem?

- **Flushed menstrual products can create blockages** which in turn lead to sewage overflows flooding our rivers and oceans creating an environmental and human health crisis.
- There's currently a **lack of awareness about what's in our period products**. Most people aren't aware that period products contain plastic or that these shouldn't be flushed down the toilet.
- **Affordable, accessible alternatives to single-use products are not easily available for most people**. Those who haven't switched to plastic-free products say

that their main barrier was the lack of availability of plastic-free products where they shop.

- **Period education is outdated and non-inclusive.** Most people haven't been taught about the full range of products and how they work for different lifestyles, bodies and backgrounds. Boys are mostly left out of the conversation.

What really is in mainstream disposable period products?

- The average pack of period pads contains as much plastic as five carrier bags
- and did you know that most tampons have plastic in them (not just in the packaging)?!

Progress made so far?

- Tampon tax has finally been scrapped, with the recent addition of reusable period pants, meaning that most retailers are able to pass on approx. 16% saving to their customers, making plastic free and reusable period products more affordable.
- The likes of M&S and Primark have introduced own brand reusable period pants, and many supermarkets such as Sainsbury's have introduced own brand organic plastic free period products.
- Over 211,000 students have received period education through Rethink Periods – we want to reach more schools once we secure funding to continue delivering this programme.
- 86% of teachers trained through Rethink Periods have changed their language to make it more gender-inclusive and avoid language that contributes to period stigma.
- 30% of consumers 2023 said that they had been encouraged to talk to friends and family about reusable period products because of the PFP campaign.
- We ran a successful panel event on '[Periods and Disability](#)', co-created a '[Period Product Guide for Additional Needs](#)' and co-created a blogpost on '[Using a Menstrual Cup whilst Disabled](#)'.
- Almost one third (31%) of consumers in 2023 said they had stopped using traditional period products altogether, up from 17% two years earlier, with 10% of Brits now using reusable period products.

How you can you make a difference?

- **Reduce:** Don't litter the loo, just flush pee, paper and poo!
- **Rethink:** Redesign our bathrooms – not one bin but two! One for recyclables and one for things like wet wipes and period products. Even if you don't menstruate any more, make sure you have a bin in the bathroom for guests and family visiting.
- **Reuse:** Switch to reusable or plastic free, organic alternatives and encourage your friends and family to as well.