

Keeping Women & Girls Active in Sport

Welfare, Safeguarding & Period-Positive Practice *with*



Key learning themes and reflections from the Menstrual Health in Sport & Coaching webinar, delivered by Sam, Founder of The Period Coach,

About this learning resource

This learning resource explores how periods and menstrual health affect participation, wellbeing and retention of women and girls in sport and physical activity. It is intended for anyone working or volunteering in sport from a welfare and safeguarding perspective.

The focus is not on medical diagnosis, but on:

- ▶ Listening and empathy
- ▶ Reducing stigma
- ▶ Removing practical barriers
- ▶ Creating environments where young people feel safe to get involved

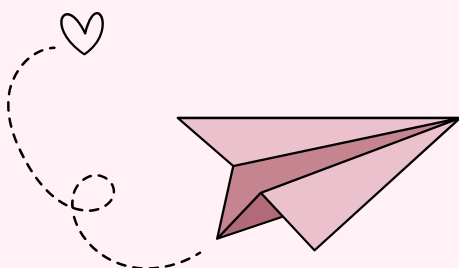


“ This webinar provides real-life examples from sports and community settings. Watching it is recommended but not essential to complete this learning. ”

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**Scan the QR
Code to watch
the webinar**



Periods and Participation in Physical Activity

Periods can affect young people physically, emotionally and socially, and these effects can vary from person to person.

Common experiences discussed include:

- ▶ Heavy or painful periods
- ▶ Fatigue, headaches and nausea
- ▶ Emotional withdrawal, irritability or low mood
- ▶ Lower back pain and muscle cramps (including thighs)



Stop & Reflect

- ▶ How confident do I feel recognising when periods may be affecting participation?
- ▶ Do I notice changes in behaviour, energy or engagement?
- ▶ How might periods be contributing to disengagement or drop-out in my setting?

“Periods are normal, but that does not mean they are easy, or that they are one-size-fits-all.”

Moving Away from “Just Get On With It”

We are challenging older attitudes in sport where young people, particularly girls, are expected to push through discomfort without support.

While physical activity remains important, messages such as “just get on with it” can:

- Increase embarrassment or anxiety
- Discourage young people from asking for help
- Undermine trust in adults such as coaches



Stop & Reflect

- What could you do in your setting to discourage messages such as this?
- Do you create a safe space for young people to openly talk about their issues?

“ Greater awareness of menstrual-related health conditions also means flexibility and understanding are essential. ”

Recognising When Someone Needs Support

Young people may not openly say they are on their period or explain how they are feeling. Signs shared during the webinar include:

- ▶ Sudden withdrawal from activities
- ▶ Defensive or closed-off behaviour
- ▶ Looking tired, pale or unwell
- ▶ Asking for “a minute” without explanation



Practice Scenario

A young person who usually takes part fully, becomes withdrawn at the start of the session. They avoid eye contact and say they “just need a minute” and want to sit out. No explanation is given.

Pause & Consider:

- ▶ What is my instinctive response?
- ▶ How might they experience that response?
- ▶ What could I say or do that prioritises welfare and keeps them connected to the activity?

“Often, this behaviour is not poor attitude or lack of motivation, but a quiet request for help.”

The Role of Trusted Adults

How adults respond in the moment can have a significant impact on a young person's confidence, wellbeing and willingness to stay engaged in physical activity.



Young people don't necessarily need solutions straight away. What matters most is:

- Someone calm
- Someone who listens
- Reassurance that they haven't done anything wrong

“Simple, supportive language such as “Don't panic, we'll sort it out together” can reduce fear and restore confidence.”

Stop & Reflect

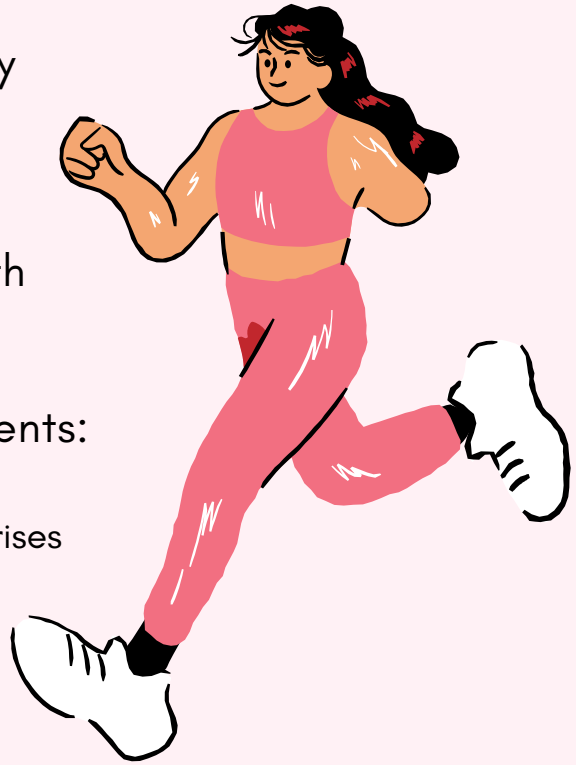
- Would a young person feel safe coming to me for help in this situation?
- How do I usually respond when someone asks to slow down or stop?
- What message might my response send, even if I don't intend it to?

Keeping Girls in Sport: Reducing Drop-Out

Drop-out of girls in sport, especially during adolescence, remains a significant challenge. Periods, physical changes and fear of embarrassment often sit underneath this disengagement.

Retention improves when environments:

- ▶ Anticipate needs rather than react to crises
- ▶ Normalise conversations about periods
- ▶ Male welfare visible and consistent



Stop & Reflect

- ▶ Who tends to drop out of activities in my setting, and at which point?
- ▶ Have we considered periods or body changes as a factor?
- ▶ What might help someone feel confident enough to return next week?

“ Creating safe, supportive spaces can be something as simple as accessible resources around topics young people may be curious about. Simple actions can often have huge impact. ”

Keeping It Simple: What Young People Actually Need

Support does not need to be complicated.

At a basic level, young people want:

- A space to play
- Appropriate kit and equipment
- Access to a toilet and sink
- A supportive adult who listens



“These are welfare essentials, not optional extras.”

Stop & Reflect

- How would you feel if one of these basic wants wasn't being met at an activity you were involved in?
- What impression would you have of that environment or activity if they didn't have suitable facilities, equipment or supportive individuals?
- Would you return to that environment if the lack of supportive resulted in you feeling vulnerable, embarrassed or concerned?

Facilities, Kit and Reducing Anxiety

Fear of leaking or not being able to manage hygiene is a common barrier to participation.

Practical steps discussed included:

- Access to toilets and basic washing facilities
- Period-specific sports underwear or undershorts
- Normalising layered kit where appropriate
- Darker kit options



Stop & Reflect

- Would I feel comfortable managing my period in this environment?
- Are period products visible and accessible, or would someone have to ask?
- What small practical change could make the biggest difference here??

“ Simple changes can reduce anxiety and help people stay engaged in sport. ”

Period First Aid and Everyday Support

The webinar shared examples of period first aid kits in clubs and teams.

These may include:

- ▶ Pads and tampons
- ▶ Period underwear
- ▶ Wipes and deodorants
- ▶ Heat patches
- ▶ Simple, clear information



Period Poverty and Access to Products

Period poverty remains a safeguarding and inclusion issue and can directly affect attendance and participation.

Examples of support discussed include:

- ▶ Local authority funding (e.g. Crisis and Resilience Funds)
- ▶ Partnerships with foodbanks and community organisations
- ▶ Discounted product suppliers
- ▶ Community and business donations

“

*Making support
visible helps
normalise use and
reduces
embarrassment.*

”

Education, Choice and Empowerment

Periods should not only be discussed in schools. Sports settings also play an important role.

Effective education:

- ▶ Is factual and non-judgemental
- ▶ Supports choice and autonomy
- ▶ Helps young people understand their own bodies



“ This supports confidence, trust and long-term engagement. ”

Shared Responsibility and Sustainability

Period support is most effective when it is:

- ▶ Embedded into welfare practice
- ▶ Treated as essential, not a one-off project
- ▶ Shared across clubs, schools and communities



“ Small, ongoing actions create sustainable change ”

One Simple Action

Before finishing this learning, pause and consider:

What is one small change you could make that would help a woman or girl feel safer, more confident, or more likely to stay involved in physical activity?



This might be:

- Improving access to facilities or products
- Making welfare support more visible
- A change in how you respond to someone sitting out
- Starting a conversation within your club or organisation.

Key Takeaway

“ Keeping women and girls in physical activity does not require complex systems. It requires listening, empathy, practical adjustments and trusted adults who prioritise welfare and safeguarding. ”

Signposting & Support

For more information about The Period Coach, scan the QR code or visit the website [here](#).



Women in Sport has lots of useful resources and support. Check them out [here](#).



The 'This Girl Can' campaign has a range of projects and support. Follow the [link](#) for more info.



Lancashire Women support women & girls across the county with a range of services. Take a look [here](#).





Gwen and Nathan are Sport Welfare Officers for Active Lancashire. For more information on how they can support your club, get in touch at

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