

Period Dignity Roundtable meeting

Date: 18 May 2023

Time: 11:15-12:45

Attendees:

Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip
Women Connect First (WCF)
PadMad Kenya
Coleg y Cymoedd
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales (FTWW)
NHS Collaborative
WINGS Wrexham
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Welsh Government:

Equality officials
International Relations official
Nursing Directorate officials

Guest Speakers:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC)
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council (VoGC)

Item 1: Welcome

The Minister welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining. The Minister apologised for not being able to attend the previous meeting but stated that from the minutes she could see that it had been a productive discussion. The Minister also recognised that it was the first meeting since the Period Proud Wales plan had been published in February.

The Minister re-iterated gratitude to all members of the roundtable for their support with the plan and implementing its actions. She further mentioned that officials would be reviewing and updating the 'Terms of Reference' for the group, and that these would be published after the meeting for comment.

Item 2: Update from Period Dignity team – Senior Gender Policy Manager

The Minister introduced the Senior Gender Policy Manager.

The group were updated with the progress of the evaluation of the Period Dignity Grant by M.E.L Research. The final report will be published in September/October 2023.

As a result of the interim key findings, Welsh Government were able to implement some changes to the grant for the current financial year:

- Including administration costs up to 12.5% of the total grant, or up to £40,000, whichever is the lowest.
- Updated guidance to make it clearer what is eligible and not eligible within the terms of the grant.

The Period Dignity team are setting up monitoring meetings with each local authority to take place in June 2023. This will provide an opportunity to go through the changes in the grant and will be part of a more regular monitoring process.

The Period Dignity team are also working with the Communications team to develop a Communications strategy for the current financial year and are working with officials in Education looking at the possibility of developing educational workshops in schools.

It was explained that a highlight report will be made available to roundtable members prior to each quarterly meeting for future meetings. This will detail progress/activity to date against each action on the Period Proud Wales Action Plan.

Issues/queries raised by roundtable included:

- Whether the research is looking at end users
- The fact that there has been an increase in demand in community settings due to the cost-of-living crisis.

It was confirmed that the research will be contacting end users and are currently at this stage in the evaluation.

ACTION:

Equality officials to contact the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty team to discuss and work out a forward plan to look at the increase in uptake in community settings.

Item 3: Bloody Brilliant update on research with Children in Wales - NHS Wales Health Collaborative

The Minister then welcomed an update from the NHS Wales Health Collaborative.

Their latest project is in partnership with Children in Wales, and they are undertaking research to inform the next phase of the Bloody Brilliant campaign. In 2020 NHS Wales and Welsh Government set out to create a resource and campaign which aimed to open up the conversation around menstruation and provide information on period health for young people. Bloody Brilliant / Mislif Fi was produced through co-creation with young people in Wales which included a large-scale Wales-wide survey. The survey gathered the views, understanding and attitudes towards periods of all 11-16 year olds - the aim of this was to use these findings to create a bespoke resource that would break down barriers and stigma while raising awareness and education on period health.

NHS Wales and the Welsh Government have commissioned Children in Wales, to carry out another round of research. Children in Wales is the national umbrella body for organisations and individuals who work with children, young people and their families in Wales. They are about listening to young people & empowering their voices.

Following recent focus groups and insights from young people in Wales they are taking a very strategic, targeted approach in disseminating the survey.

Item 4: Update from Period Dignity Leads -, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) Borough Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council (VoGC)

The Minister then welcomed Period Dignity leads from BGCBC and VoGC to update the roundtable on feedback from the Period Dignity Leads meeting and the work taking place in each local authority area.

BGCBC explained that the Period Dignity Leads meeting took place 2 weeks before the roundtable meeting. They shared the following updates:

- Some local authorities are experiencing difficulties with supplies being delivered promptly.
- All local authorities welcomed the addition of the administration costs to administer the Period Dignity Grant. This has resulted in some local authorities being able to appoint a dedicated/additional staff lead.
- Demand in community setting has increased in most local authorities in Wales.

Update/progress in schools

BGCBC has 10 Primary, 2 Middle, 2 Secondary and 2 Special Schools.

All schools have products available to both pupils and staff. Take up within the school estate has been slow and with Covid, priorities in schools have focussed on other things. However, over the last 18 months they have seen schools take a more proactive approach towards period dignity.

Schools have been provided with posters to display which lets pupils know where they are able to access products. In primary schools, access to products differs across the estate with some making products available in the school office, others have them in the KS2 toilets and wellbeing rooms.

Products are available within secondary schools via dispensers in all toilets, student services, nurture rooms.

Products are available from youth workers, family support workers, school nurse team.

Working with PHS a 'blue bag' was developed and a Lil lets teen pack, which has been given to every pupil, so that pupils can keep products in their school bag.

At the start of last year, every school was given a selection of reusable products, initially interest was limited but requests for reusable products is increasing with pants being more popular than pads.

Community

BGCBC linked with the Youth Service, Aneurin Leisure trust, Blaenau Gwent Neighbourhood Network, Abertillery and Blaina Rotary, Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service and Early years setting. This has resulted in them providing 100 settings with products.

Request for products has increased over the last 6 months and they could have spent their whole grant allocation on providing products to the community sector.

Plans for future

Members from Love your Period campaign are attending BGCBC's next project group. Working with the Welsh Rugby Union, they are planning a collaboration day, this is still in planning stages so they will update at the next all Wales meeting.

A number of councils have installed pick n mix stands, this is something BGCBC are interested in and they met with PHS on Monday to discuss this.

BGCBC are developing a questionnaire for schools/pupils/parents/community settings/community setting users to find what they like, do not like, what could be improved and what BGCBC could do better. Using this data, they will be able to develop an action plan to ensure we are meeting everybody's needs.

Focus going forward is on addressing dignity and stigma. BGCBC would like to highlight that there is no shame in requesting products, periods are normal, and that people need to stop being embarrassed/ashamed for having their period. The message is getting out into the community, but they have work to do in schools.

BGCBC are attending the next Blaenau Gwent Childrens Grand Council meeting and Youth Forum meeting to gauge their views on what we are doing well and what we could improve on.

BGCBC are also planning on showcasing Period Dignity at 2 secondary and 2 primary schools where they would like to have a dedicated area in the school which shows the products available and has information about period dignity. Ideally it needs to be in an area of the school that pupils/parents/visitors can see that the school is an ambassador for Period Dignity.

They are also regularly posting on social media and hopefully this is getting the message out.

Period Dignity Update – (VoGC)

Period Dignity Leads meetings very useful for sharing information and good practice.

Work with schools

VoGC is a medium size authority, they only buy 100% eco-friendly items - if they delegate funds, they emphasis this desire to focus on eco-friendly products.

VoGC contacts all schools at the beginning of each term. Progress with schools has been slower and less committed than they would have envisaged. Most schools say they are stocked with enough products, there is still confusion on period poverty.

Training of staff - 34 staff attended training delivered by City of Seas – this was a mixture of youth workers and school staff. They held twilight sessions to get staff to attend and training involved working through a resource pack with the teacher.

Training/workshops with pupils

A part time teacher has been employed to deliver training to 25 schools. Over 1000 pupils have been seen and 760 bags of free products distributed.

600 pupils surveyed showed huge knowledge growth in topics such as menstruation, 97% said they found the sessions helpful. Workshops include demonstrating products, VoGC also give out period pants if appropriate.

Only 8 primary schools requested funding.

5 of the 8 secondaries had mixed bags (2000 bags) and this term VoGC are delivering workshops to years 7 and 8. To date they have 7 of the 8 secondaries booked in for that.

A Cowbridge school pupil as part of her campaign to be head girl did work in the school to promote the scheme as a project.

Estyn to add to part of their wellbeing review in schools.

Community

There has been a lot of interest in the community and community settings are approaching VoGC to act as a Period Dignity outlet. VOGC are supporting; 6 foodbanks, 7 libraries and 18 community centres.

Home delivery service

Mixed bags go out with staff, Youth service groups, housing, education etc.

Marketing

BGCBC are advertising 3 period product pick and mix stands and these are all appearing in local Facebook pages.

They are refreshing their webpages.

Adding QR codes on machines so people can access further information.

Looking at article for school governors.

Members raised the following points:

- Reusable products, the uptake can be low due to the lack of washing facilities.
- Replenishment of products in community settings as the uptake has increased.
- Experience in Kenya is to make products accessible in smaller quantities and they have enough kit for 5 years. This helps people look after the kits they buy.

No other business:

There was no other business, and the Minister closed the meeting.