

Period Dignity Roundtable
Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff
9:30 – 11:00am on 6 February 2020

Chairperson: Deputy Minister and Chief Whip

Attendees:

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Swansea Takes On Period Poverty (STOPP)
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Children in Need
Cardiff and Vale College
Environmental Activist
Keep Wales Tidy
PHS Group
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Colleges Wales

Welsh Government Officials:

Equality and Human Rights Division

Apologies from representatives of:

Newport City Council
Trussell Trust
WINGS Wrexham
NUS Wales
Disability Wales
Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST)
Love Your Period Campaign
Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales
BAWSO
Women's Aid
Stonewall Cymru
University Wales
Llamau

Item 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Deputy Minister welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Period Dignity Roundtable.

The Deputy Minister reminded everyone of the announcement made on 3rd January confirming that Welsh Government has committed over £3.3 million for period dignity for the 2020/21 financial year, matching the funding of the current financial year. The Minister said that with so many competing priorities for funding, this commitment clearly demonstrates the importance we place on addressing period dignity.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting and update on actions.

The minutes and actions from the last meeting held on 24 October 2019, were agreed.

The Deputy Minister thanked WLGA, for compiling a report on the issues raised by local authorities regarding the current funding arrangements. She acknowledged that the information was shared with attendees at the workshop on 23 January and as part of the papers for this meeting. The Deputy Minister stated that it is vital to hear about the issues so that Welsh Government can ensure we are getting the resources to where they can make a real difference to people's lives.

The Deputy Minister said that she was very pleased to see that there was strong support from local authorities for the grants to schools and communities and that this funding is having a positive impact, both in terms of tackling period poverty and addressing period dignity across Wales.

One of the main issues raised by local authorities in both the feedback provided to the WLGA and to officials was that the funding criteria was too strict.

The Deputy Minister confirmed that one of the action points from the last meeting in October 2019 was to consider introducing more flexibility.

As a result, in November, revised guidance was issued to local authorities to confirm that the funding could be used to purchase sanitary disposal bags; storage purses & wet bags for use with reusable products; and spare clothing.

Another action point was for feedback from the Cross Government Group to be shared at this meeting. The main focus of the meeting was on the development of an action plan and how officials could take this forward. It was agreed that a workshop would be held with stakeholders which led to the workshop in Cathays Park which, many Round Table members attended on 23 January.

Action : The Deputy Minister said that following the announcement on 3rd January of the funding commitment for next year, she will be making a statement after Easter to highlight the action plan, when it is finalised.

Item 3. Presentation: Practice, Learning and Recommendations from the 2019/20 period dignity funding. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

The Deputy Minister invited Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to share their experiences, learning and recommendations from the 2019/20 period dignity funding.

They gave an overview of the methodology adopted by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to deliver the period dignity project through the Period Dignity Grant:

- This is the second year of the project implementation.
- A project group was established with representation from relevant Council services, health, private and third sector groups and organisations, along with Trade Unions. A review of education toilet and sanitary facilities was undertaken.
- A schools and Youth Service engagement plan was established which focused on:
 - children and young people's views on the types and suitability of products, along with product location and storage;
 - awareness and communication methods;
 - establishing a designated lead in each school; and,
 - the development of a baseline assessment.
- School Councils and the Youth Forum were engaged in promoting awareness and understanding around access to products, peer support and to inform education and training requirements. Working in partnership with PHS Group, the Council has sourced and is committed to providing eco/environmentally friendly products from 2020 onwards.
- The project reach includes: schools, co-located sporting and leisure facilities, youth centres, childcare and early years settings and community centres. Alternative funding has been sourced by groups and services in order to compliment delivery i.e. the Rotary Club.
- Learning to date has included the following key issues:
 - Investment in sanitary and toilet facilities
 - There are inconsistencies in the delivery of the Growing up Resource and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in both primary and secondary schools.

- School staff attitudes and perception, has affected both access to and up-take of the Period Equity Project. A number of education professionals allowed their views on period poverty to influence their support for the scheme and access to products.
- It was found that knowledge and use of sustainable products was not common place among the pupil population. A high proportion of children and young people were unaware of menstrual cups, re-usable knickers and pads. Education, awareness and support are required in order to promote safe and hygienic use of these products.
- There is a danger that re-usable products become a class-based resource, and create further stigma and barriers for families.
- Teacher and school leader buy-in is required in order to create sustainability. This needs to be an essential focus in addressing education and knowledge gaps, and ensuring equality of access for pupils.
- Wider community focus is essential in securing a positive impact for children and young people, to ensure that their access is not impinged by the needs of their wider family and community networks.
- Pupils often access offsite education, training and leisure provision throughout the school day. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to supporting continued access and support regardless of site or location.
- Marketing and promotion needs to be a focus at Welsh and Local Government level, in order to create project identity and support awareness and understanding of the project, associated funding and its aims.
- Products need to be located in areas where children and young people feel comfortable to access them – not just in school toilets i.e. wellbeing and recreational areas with a degree of privacy.
- Contingency plans and links need to be established, to ensure continuity of access during school holiday periods, i.e. links to the School Holiday Enrichment Programme, and promotion of access via health settings and others.

Action: A case study produced by Blaenau Gwent will be emailed to members of the roundtable, for information, following the meeting. The secretariat to take this action forward.

Item 4. Presentation: Period Dignity Action Plan. Head of Gender Equality.

The Deputy Minister invited the Head of Gender Equality to give a short presentation in relation to development of a Strategic Action Plan for period dignity in Wales. This has been developed as a result of the workshop and in conjunction with Roundtable members and other stakeholders. The Deputy Minister said that if we are to ensure the funding is targeted in the most effective ways and in the right areas, we need to hear from Round Table members to identify priorities, barriers, gaps and solutions.

A workshop was held in the Cathays Park office on 23rd January with stakeholders to explore a range of the issues which will inform the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan, including:

- Defining of period dignity
- The 'vision'
- Priorities / issues / barriers / gaps
- What should be included in an action plan?
- What should a Strategic Action Plan look like?

The definition of period dignity was developed from the feedback at the workshop:

Period Dignity is:

- The recognition that periods are not a choice and period products are not a luxury.
- Eradicating the stigma, taboos and myths which exist so that no-one is ashamed or embarrassed about period.
- Ensuring all those who have periods fully understand their period; know how best to manage it to ensure it does not negatively impact on their life; have an understanding of the different types of products available, their correct use and disposal, and can choose the most appropriate product for them; can access the product of their choice, as and when needed, and in the most dignified way possible; have access to appropriate facilities to enable them to manage their period in privacy, with dignity and in a hygienic way.

Feedback from the workshop favoured a simple, visual plan. There was a consensus that there needs to be more flexibility in the next round of funding. The key themes emerging were: products, education and resources, storage and facilities, sustainability.

The Vision Plan statement: We want a Wales where:

- Periods are fully understood and accepted and normalised by all; and
- All those who have periods have access to products of their choice, when and where necessary, in the most dignified way possible.

The 'vision' is in the centre of everything with five key points feeding into it: Equality; Tackling Poverty; Health; Education; Environment. The Head of Gender Equality invited comments from the roundtable to consider: where are we now? Where do we want to be in future? (The vision map was shown at the meeting.) The map and definition came out of the discussions at the workshop in January.

There are some key areas where we feel there is more to do and asked the roundtable to feedback on the issues through the five key headings: Equality, Tackling Poverty, Health, Education, and Environment.

Equality and Tackling Poverty

- To establish a strategic action plan for period dignity – the Minister commented that the use of the phrase ‘period equality’ is a positive statement.
- Future funding to be flexible
- Cross government officials need to be included in the discussions.
- The voices of young people (girls and boys) of school age should be included in the discussions/planning policy
- Explore links to youth organisations such as Guides; Scouts; Girls’ & Boys’ Brigade to ensure their views are included at future meetings.
- Seek agreement for the proposal to provide free sanitary products for staff and visitors across Welsh Government public services estate. This should be in the plan. Actions by Welsh Government will encourage other public offices to follow our example – within their own budgets.

Health

- To consider menstrual health: period pains, allergic reactions to some products
- Social Care teams to be included to consider young carers, looked after children, out of school term times, post 18 years into FE Colleges.
- Building regulations and 21st Century Schools to consider enclosed units for cleaning reusable products alongside unisex toilets.
- Wales Unions should be included in future policies including the TUC, CBI and Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
- The vision should include a holiday enrichments programme: foodbanks, community groups etc.
- Accessibility of products in hospitals need further consideration.

Education (Schools/FE & HE)

- Provide products in education establishments within the current period dignity grant funding
- Funding flexibility within the period dignity grant
- Explore options for HE settings
- Provide access to educational resources related to period dignity in schools, FE & HE education.
- Teachers are increasingly taking on the ‘parenting role’. ‘Education’ should include public health issues and a public awareness campaign.
- Caerphilly CBC has produced a short film with young people as the actors to highlight the issues of menstruation.

Environment

- Understand the impact of single use products
- Work with agencies like Eco Schools to provide educational resources in relation to period products

- Work with UK Government and manufacture to reduce plastics in sanitary products.
- Most vending machines provide premium priced products
- PHS - Public awareness of eco-products is growing – but demand is not growing at the same pace (PHS Group). The Head of Gender Equality shared information about National Procurement Service.
- Caerphilly CBC has committed to 100% eco-sustainable products.
- Blaenau Gwent CBC are linking with Eco-schools programme.
- Carbon Reduction Cabinet Committee (Chaired by Minister for Environment) to be included in discussions

Actions:

- The Deputy Minister to meet with the Ministers for Education and Environment to give feedback on some specific issues at the round table.
- Officials to upload the film produced by Caerphilly County Borough Council on the Welsh Government website and to be included in the period dignity communications campaign.
- Officials to consider ways to make sure that the views and voices of young people and youth organisations are heard at the round table.
- Officials to invite Wales TUC representative to be invited to the round table.
- Officials to invite representatives from Social Care to the Cross government group.
- Officials to email the Action Plan to members of the Roundtable to collect feedback before the next meeting.

Item 5. The way forward

The Deputy Minister thanked everyone for their thoughts, reflections and suggestions. The Deputy Minister invited ideas as to how this Group can support this work and encouraged everyone to provide feedback on the Strategic Action Plan. The Deputy Minister said that she wants the Roundtable to continue to meet quarterly, with the next meeting to be held in May. The Deputy Minister suggests that if there is agreement around the table, the next meeting can be held in another location: Mid or North Wales.

At this point, the Deputy Minister left the meeting to attend another engagement. Before leaving, the Deputy Minister handed the chair to The Head of Gender Equality.

Item 6. AOB and next meeting

AOB: Access to sanitary products in hospitals

An equalities official said the Minister for Health had made an announcement that free products would be made available in hospitals in Wales. Currently, Health Boards are

sourcing their own products and brands. A request for feedback on the current policy – is it working? Who will benefit from getting the products?

During a short discussion it was agreed that patients, outpatients, patient visitors and NHS staff would all benefit from this policy. But accessibility should be dignified – not to make girls and women request a key to storerooms. Contact details will be emailed to the roundtable members for further feedback on this issue.

Next Meeting

Officials will write a note of the meeting and take forward some of the actions agreed. Details of the next meeting in May and location will follow.