



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Cabinet paper: A Period Proud Wales

Cabinet paper CAB(21-22)100: The Welsh Government plan to end period poverty and achieve period dignity in Wales.

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## Decision required

1. To agree the actions set out in the plan.
2. To agree that the plan is published via a written statement as soon as the BSL translation has been completed.

## Summary

1. I am committed to publishing this plan to support our Programme for Government commitments to the expansion of free period provision in communities and the private sector and to embedding period dignity in schools. Wales has a unique opportunity to work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to achieve a period proud Wales and to do this without the need for legislation which has been the route taken in Scotland. Using this Plan, I am confident that Wales can achieve true period dignity without the need to legislate.

2. Welsh Government has been providing funding via local authorities in Wales since 2018 to enable schools, further education establishments and community settings to provide free to access period products to learners and those on low incomes. Initially this was a drive to eradicate period poverty and has developed into a broader objective to achieve period dignity across Wales.

3. I chair a Period Dignity Round Table which was set up in 2019 to develop an understanding of the needs of those accessing period products as well as the broader educational and communications needs related to periods. The aim of education and communications related to periods is to de-stigmatise them and to enable a greater understanding of periods by all – thereby encouraging uptake of products.

4. The plan was drafted with significant stakeholder input in early 2020. Due to the onset of the Covid Pandemic in March 2020 the plan was put on hold while resources were directed to deal with the immediate crisis. As the response to the immediate crisis eased, the plan was prepared for formal written consultation in October 2021, closing to responses in January 2022.

5. ARAD research was commissioned to provide a formal analysis of the consultation responses. The Welsh Government received a total of 250 unique responses to the consultation, covering a variety of themes, summarised below.

- Most respondents agreed with the vision for period dignity and supported greater efforts to ensure period dignity in Wales.
- A third of respondents raised concerns about a perceived absence of references to women and girls in the plan. These concerns related to describing health issues linked to biological sex, concern that women were dehumanised through use of 'wider language, such as 'people with periods' and for ease of understanding for those who are not fluent in English / Welsh or have learning difficulties. The draft plan did refer to women and girls but most often used the phrase 'people who menstruate or people with periods'.
- A major theme across the answers to all consultation questions was the need to raise awareness and include period dignity as part of education for all; this was raised in just under a quarter of the responses. This theme included points made about what is taught in schools and the links with the curriculum.
- The training and professional development of health practitioners was raised by around 10% of respondents. Some respondents also shared their experiences of dealing with health professionals and instances of not receiving the advice or treatment that they needed. There were recommendations around access to expertise, more research into menstrual health and ensuring GPs are up to date in their understanding of women's health issues, including periods.
- Around a fifth of respondents identified a need for actions to reduce the embarrassment and stigma associated with periods among the general

population. A small number (some dozen respondents) felt that ensuring period dignity required employers being more informed and having more understanding of periods, and for more actions around changing workplace policy around periods.

- A final theme was the importance of access to free products where needed. Respondents went on to request that any free products take into account cultural differences, individuals' product preference and plastic-free and / or reusable products as well as the needs of disabled people. A project undertaken by Women Connect First and Mela Cymru as part of the consultation set out the ethnic difference in menstrual length and variability as well as differences in views and experiences.

6. To respond to these themes, the following changes to the plan have been made:

- a. The themes of the plan have been amended to reflect the themes of the consultation exercises.
- b. We have revised and developed the actions on education and work will begin early in the plan's implementation to begin developing the ask for educational resources around menstrual wellbeing with stakeholders, to ensure these materials reflect the needs of diverse learners across Wales.
- c. We will also work to ensure the educational resources integrate into wider communications materials, including a national campaign on period dignity to integrate education and public awareness.
- d. The plan will refer to women, girls and people who menstruate.

7. Since the initial draft of the Period Dignity Strategic Action plan was published for consultation, the Welsh Government has committed to publishing a Women's Health Plan. Many specific suggestions within the consultation responses referred to health, including recommendations for training, research, practice change and new infrastructure. The consultation also asked where respondents thought broader health matters, related to period dignity, should be addressed. Feedback on this was clear that most respondents felt that these broader issues

should be housed in a different document. We suggest that the Women's Health Plan is an appropriate vehicle for most of these issues; the Period Proud Wales plan makes links with the forthcoming plan and the aligned Quality Statement. All relevant consultation responses have also been provided to those developing the Women's Health Plan for consideration and inclusion where appropriate.

8. Access to products remains a priority for many respondents. Alongside the launch of this plan, we have increased the Period Dignity grant to £3.7 million in 2022-2023 to target products to those most in need across schools and communities in light of the cost of living crisis. MEL Research has been commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the Period Dignity Grant. The contract started in November 2022 with the final findings from the research expected in September 2023.

## Objective of paper

9. The plan sets out specific actions for policy areas across Welsh Government and external partners.

10. A national campaign is being developed to support the plan's aim of eliminating the shame and stigma associated with periods and to encourage people to feel confident discussing periods, whether they have them or not. By having these conversations openly, the intended outcome is that more people will:

- discuss any concerns with their GP
- feel comfortable asking for products and support
- ensure that products are available in more settings
- increased understanding and knowledge

11. Officials in Equality, Education and Health are working closely together on

these shared policy aims - including through the NHS Wales Bloody Brilliant website, the commitment for menstrual well-being to be part of the RSE code and the Period Dignity Grant funding. Bloody Brilliant is aimed at children aged 11-14. A Period Proud Wales and its accompanying campaign will complement and expand the reach of Bloody Brilliant to all age groups in Wales.

12. As the plan requires cross-government action and support to achieve its vision of Period Dignity for all by 2027, it is crucial that the plan receives support from Cabinet to be published.

## Impact

13. Many of the actions included within the plan contribute to achieving broader Welsh Government policy aims and ambitions. In particular, the plan supports the Programme for Government commitments to embed period dignity in schools and to expand our free period provision in communities and the private sector. It also contributes to the child poverty objective to reduce economic inequalities by improving the outcomes of the poorest in the Child Poverty Strategy.

14. Encouraging understanding of, and opportunity to try, reusable or plastic free products is another aim of the plan. This both increases choice for the user and is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to legislate to abolish the use of more commonly littered, single use plastics and a commitment to phase out unnecessary single use plastics in our Circular Economy Strategy.

15. Most of the actions in the plan will be led by officials working in the Equality team. Where actions are supported or led by other departments, the respective policy leads have been involved in drafting those actions. As indicated above, the actions contribute towards existing government priorities and the plan captures what is happening across Welsh Government to achieve period dignity

- from education, health, sport and culture to the environment, employment and tackling poverty.

16. The plan sets out what actions are required to become a Period Proud Wales and to achieve our vision for period dignity for all by 2027. Progress against actions in the plan will be monitored via the Period Dignity Round Table and an annual update report to them.

## Communications and publication

17. The policy decision will be communicated through publication of the plan via a written statement. Easy Read and Youth Friendly versions of the plan have been drafted. The BSL translation of the plan cannot begin until the plan has had final clearance. This will take 2 to 3 weeks to complete.

18. Communications work to promote publication of the plan will include setting up a campaign page which will link to the plan, resources and information about the grant. An animated video highlighting the aims of the policy is also in development, along with lived experience videos – which feature women talking openly about their experience of having a period in a bid to normalise the conversation and encourage others to ‘start the conversation and be period proud’. We’ve been working with Women Connect First, Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales, schools, Welsh Netball and others to put together these films.

19. This paper should be published 6 weeks after the Cabinet Meeting takes place.



# Recommendation

1. Cabinet should agree to the actions set out in the plan (set out in Annex B) and
2. Cabinet should agree that the plan is published via a written statement as soon as the BSL translation has been completed.

Jane Hutt MS  
Minister for Social Justice  
December 2023

## Annex A: Statutory, finance, legal and governance matters - statutory requirements

### Equality Act 2010

The Welsh Ministers have a duty under the PSED set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to consider how their policies affect those who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Under that section, the Welsh Ministers must, when carrying out their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct which is unlawful under the Equality Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The plan would support achieving all 3 of the points above.

## Well-being of future Generations

The Welsh Ministers also have relevant duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

The plan maximises the Welsh Government's contribution to 9 out of ten of our well-being objectives, including to:

- Provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare.
- Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise.
- Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people.
- Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms.
- Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation.
- Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work.
- Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.

Implementing the actions in the plan will deliver against all the well-being goals.

## Welsh Language Standards

No discernible impact on the Welsh Language has been identified.

## Finance requirements and governance implications

There are no additional financial implications from this advice. Funding plans for the Plan 2022-23 for £200,000 were approved via MA/JH/1077/22. This is in

addition to the £3.7 million funding already approved for the provision of products in schools, colleges and communities. Fulfilment of other actions will be met from existing budgets.

The Period Dignity Roundtable, chaired by the Minister for Social Justice, and which includes internal policy leads as well as external stakeholders, will oversee implementation and accountability of the plan. Actions will be taken forward by each of the responsible policy leads and will be internally overseen by officials in the Equality team.

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