

Period Dignity Roundtable Meeting

Location: Microsoft Teams

Date: 12 July 2022

Time: 09:15 – 10:45

Attendees:

Minister for Social Justice
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales (FTTW)
Keep Wales Tidy
Colegau Cymru
Children in Wales
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
WINGS Wrexham
PadMad Kenya
Love your Period Campaign
KIRAN Cymru
Children in Wales
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Plan International UK

Welsh Government:

Welsh Government Equality officials
Social Partnership and Fair Work officials

Agenda item 1: Welcome and introduction – The Minister for Social Justice

The Minister for Social Justice thanked everyone for attending and re-iterated the importance of the group. The Minister then provided an update on work undertaken since the last meeting, including updating the plan in line with feedback from the consultation, preparing a draft communications strategy and tendering for the creation of case study videos demonstrating different experiences of menstruation.

Agenda item 2: The Period Dignity Strategic Action plan - revised draft

The Minister for Social Justice invited members to provide feedback on the draft plan.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The plan should make it clear about where you can access products.

- There should be a user-friendly version of the plan.
- How will we measure the success of the plan and that the actions are appropriate.
- We need to ensure there is cross-governmental support for the plan with shared budgets.
- Need to ensure there is a link between the work of bloody brilliant, the Severe Period Pain is Not Normal (SPINN) project and Endo Cymru.
- Important to measure the impact especially in relation to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Pleased to see more involvement of disabled and neurodivergent people in the plan – FTTW have offered support with this.

The Minister informed members that they could send any further feedback in writing by 29 July.

Action: Members to provide any further feedback on the revised draft of the plan to PeriodDignity@gov.wales by 29 July.

Agenda item 3: Communications – renaming the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan, branding, and campaign planning

The Minister invited feedback on the draft communications plan. Members were asked to especially consider the suggested new title.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- There was support for using real stories as case study films.
- Education is key to overcoming myths about periods – in South Asian communities there is a belief that if a woman is on her period, she is impure, should not enter the kitchen, or it is presumed that she cannot attend religious buildings. Men need to be involved in the targeting of the communications activity too to address this societal/cultural issue.
- We need to reach the people in power – for instance Head Teachers, Governors etc. In some schools there is resistance as to the importance and/or need for period products. Stigma is reinforced. Some pupils still aren't being allowed to go to the toilet.
- Social media works well but young people do not really use twitter – Instagram, snapchat and TikTok are more popular.
- Getting the right communication out is key.
- The communications plan needs to be co-produced with patients.
- Support for the new title of the plan.
- Support for including 'severe period pain is not normal' as a key message. The plan should also include the emotional and mental health impact of periods - including in relation to leaking and heavy bleeding.
- Schools need to listen to and involve young people.
- All staff need to be educated on the varying experiences of having a period – to support students to recognise symptoms that are not normal.

- In Flintshire, youth workers have introduced a phone line for young people to request products however take up is low – strategy to reduce stigma key to increase up-take.
- The plan needs peer group influence – they can develop different strategies for how to communicate with peers. Adults giving a one-off talk is not enough – it needs follow up. Peer group influence needs to be centre of the comms plan.
- We must consider socio-economic status, cultural difference, age and gender in our planning.
- Girls and Boys need to be taught about periods.
- Involve celebrities.
- Teenage children need to have a safe space where they can have dialogue.
- Involve religious leaders.
- We need to change the dialogue and be the change – bringing in sensitization.
- Power of choice to the user
- In the PadMAp project in Kenya, there are Community Health Workers who go into communities with appropriate information.
- Support for an interactive map to locate period products – which is easy and quick to update.
- Idea for branded stickers to be displayed in windows to indicate that they have products available.
- Guidance could include looking at the design of toilets in 21st century schools and also FE colleges - open plan, mixed gender toilets can cause embarrassment for the girls when they are on their period. There needs to be a balance between opening toilets to prevent bullying and making girls comfortable. Bathrooms need mirrors for girls to be able to check their clothes.
- Important to look at existing networks in Schools - such as eco committees which include teachers and links in with the community.
- Important not to overlook Further Education lecturers and to consider how to reach young people in work-based learning settings. For instance, how can we reach apprentices – through assessors for instance.
- Teachers are under so much pressure – unless this project is made mandatory or monitored it is going to be hard to ensure that communications activity reaches the right people. Could it form part of the Estyn Inspections - could they measure well-being of students in relation to period dignity.
- Cardiff University are leading on SPINN project is currently running a survey to ask young people about how they speak about periods – the results from this could be helpful in our comms planning.
- Information and messaging on periods should start from the menarche, then on to periods, including what is a health condition, then on to perimenopause and menopause.
- Important to keep the stories period positive – much of the population think a period is dirty.

- Information should include what does a heavy period look like, what information is appropriate and what product is of the right quality,
- Promoting period positive talk – we have to keep the dialogue positive, how can we then promote everyone to carry on with their normal activities unless they have a gynaecological problem.
- Mental Health Matters (MHM) advocates.
- We can't miss this chance to break the silence through people in the community.
- Pyramid – we need to speak from the grassroots to the hierarchy, and we need to make the environment key. Communities need to be educated on products.
- Reusable products – there are some misconceptions about affordability. If you have enough water to wash your underwear, then you have enough to wash a reusable product.
- Time-off work - seeing what this looks like, not having time off just because you have your period.
- Boys really want to be allies.
- Own your Period – book recommendations for educational resource.
- Running workshops has been really helpful in the PadMap project.

The Minister thanked members for their contributions and informed the group that a Task and Finish group for communications would be established. The Minister asked members to let us know if they would like to be part of the group or to nominate someone.

Action: Members to email perioddignity@gov.wales by 29 July to let us know if they would like to join the Communications Task and Finish group.

The Minister explained that as an interim measure whilst the communications strategy is developed, officials are currently working to procure a series of short films to raise awareness of periods, their potential impact and the different types of experiences people can have when they menstruate.

The films will be used to tell varied stories of a wide range of people – we hope to make 5 films for use across social media, on the Welsh Government website and to be placed on Hwb for use in schools. The Minister asked members to consider if they or anyone they work with would like to be featured in the films- or share their story more anonymously, to contact the PeriodDignity mailbox. We hope that the films can show the experience of periods in our younger and later years, for a diverse group of people, with a diverse range of experiences.

Action: Members to contact the PeriodDignity@gov.wales by 29 July if they know anyone who would like their story to be shared as part of the short films.

The Minister plans to hold bi-lateral meetings with the following Ministers on the plan:

- The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language
- The Deputy Minister for Social Services

- The Minister for Health and Social Services
- The Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- The Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip

Action: Officials to arrange bi-lateral meetings

The Minister also intends to make a statement in the Senedd in the Autumn and suggested adding the plan as an agenda item to the following forum's:

- Race Equality Forum
- Gender Equality sub-group
- Faith Forum
- Disability Equality Forum
- Third Sector Partnership Council

Action: Officials to arrange Autumn statement and for the Period Proud Wales Plan to be added as an agenda item to the above forums

Agenda Item 4: PadMad Kenya

The Minister highlighted the importance of working internationally as Period Dignity is a global issue. While the plan is 'A Period Proud Wales' it is a 'Period Proud Wales in the World'. The Minister acknowledged that many of the roundtable members have work beyond Wales and have parallel international practice and thought it would be useful to invite PadMad along to the roundtable to share more on their project – PadMad Kenya.

PadMad is committed to manufacturing 100% biodegradable, affordable, long-lasting and sustainable products. PadMad works across Kenya and has recently opened a manufacturing unit in the largest maximum-security prison for women in Kenya. PadMad has impacted over 29,000 beneficiaries and has saved over 300 million pads going into the landfill.

PadMad has achieved impressive outcomes, it enables marginalised women to be financially independent. It has reduced absenteeism for those who menstruate and has reduced the amount of girls and women forced to use transactional sex for pads.

The Minister highlighted how this project demonstrates the broader links our work has, not just across the globe but in terms of its fit with broader issues of gender equality and violence against women – a point also raised in the work Mela Cymru did as part of the consultation. The Minister invited the group to explore these links and collaborate where possible and invited PadMad to share more about the project.

PadMad provided an update on the project and highlighted the below points:

- The project has a focus on products, education, environmental impact, and health. For instance, if alternative period products are used what impact might this have on health.
- The project supports Menstrual Health Management in the workplace – they will assess their bathroom set ups and advise on products.
- As part of the project, they manufacture reusable products and run education workshops.
- Workshops include information such as that a period does not have to come every 28 days, they explain the signs of a Urinary Tract Infection or Respiratory Tract Infection and what you should do as well as hygiene information.
- Natural products can help with cramps.
- Kenya has embraced that gynaecological conditions, such as Polycystic ovary Syndrome and Endometriosis, should be taught in schools.
- The consumer should have a choice when it comes to products and should be equipped with the appropriate information. For instance, they should know whether a product contains Dioxin and the consumer can then make an informed choice about whether to use a product that contains it or not. It is also important to demonstrate that environmentally products are not a step back.
- Accountability and logistics – important to consider how to make sure that the people who need the products are the one receiving them and how to sustain this. If you are giving a reusable product, how do you make sure people do not come back for more.
- If we are producing reusable sanitary products how can we look at the environmental impact.

The Minister thanked PadMad for the update and highlighted the importance of the roundtable in learning from international practice.

Action 1: Members to provide any further feedback on the revised draft of the plan to PeriodDignity@gov.wales by 29 July.

Action 2: Members to email periooddignity@gov.wales by 29 July to let us know if they would like to join the Communications Task and Finish group.

Action 3: Members to contact the PeriodDignity@gov.wales by 29 July if they know anyone who would like their story to be shared as part of the short films.

Action 4: Officials to arrange bi-lateral meetings.

Action 5: Officials to arrange Autumn statement and for the Period Proud Wales Plan to be added as an agenda item to the above forums.