

Period Dignity Roundtable

30 November 2023

10:15 – 11:15

Attendees:

Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Coleg y Cymoedd
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales (FTWW)
Keep Wales Tidy
NHS Wales
Padmad Kenya
Plan International UK
Sport Wales
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Women Connect First (WCF)

Welsh Government:

All Wales Public Services Graduate
Equality and Human Rights
Health and Wellbeing
International Relations
OFM – Cabinet Division
Social Research Officer
Women's Health Team

Guest speakers:

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Pembrokeshire County Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council

Item 1: Welcome and Introduction – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

The Deputy Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, members had received a copy of the progress report detailing the work being undertaken on the implementation of the Period Proud Wales plan. The Deputy Minister was pleased to see that progress is continuing to be made against the actions.

Members were asked to confirm if they content to approve the minutes from the last meeting and this was agreed.

Item 2: Period Dignity Grant Evaluation, Senior Research Officer, Welsh Government

An update on the evaluation of the Period Dignity Grant was provided to the group. The evaluation was undertaken by M.E.L Research and the report was published on 26 October 2023. Overall, it highlighted the positive impact of the Period Dignity Grant. Using a variety of primary and secondary data, the evaluation had looked at the efficiency of the grant and the impact of the grant on those who had received free period products.

There were limitations to some findings due to small sample sizes. Findings show that learners in low-income families are now more knowledgeable about period products.

The evaluation report details 12 recommendations, six of which are for Welsh Government and others to be progressed by organisations working with the Period Dignity Grant.

The six recommendations for Welsh Government are:

1. Map out the community networks and grassroots organisations within communities to make sure the grant is reaching those areas most in need.
2. More flexibility in how and when money is spent e.g. carrying monies over, using more of the grant on information and education etc. within a given financial year is needed, alongside the range of items the grant can fund.
3. Due to the growing amount of resource required to manage the grant, the Welsh Government should look to include administration costs especially for local authorities.
4. Provide a standardised training and educational offer which all organisations can adopt. But within this, offer tailored, accessible information to suit those with literacy or language barriers.
5. Look at offering a centralised ordering system, but this offer would need to be scoped out and co-designed by organisations for it to work effectively.
6. Improve the way the grant is monitored – in terms of the outputs - and the overall feedback.

The group had no questions or comments regarding the evaluation.

Item 3: Neath Port Talbot Child Services and their work with HOPE Engagement & Participation Officer, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

The Engagement and participation officer from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council introduced the work of HOPE that has been set up in Neath Port Talbot. It is

a group which is made up of girls and young women who receive support from Child Services.

The HOPE project focusses on girl's rights and girls and women's issues, specifically for care experienced young people. The girls created an animation which is championing care experienced girls and the difficulties they have faced with asking foster parents questions around periods and menstruation. The animation was shown to the Roundtable.

One of the girls involved in the creation of the video, shared her personal experiences of being uncomfortable and nervous to ask for period products in a foster family setting. The ambition of the girls, through this work, is to raise awareness and educate foster parents and professionals about the importance of ensuring products are provided in foster care settings, information is provided about their location and the girls can use them privately. They are planning to achieve this through informational content about what is best practice for girls and women's health.

The video is now accessible to foster carers and included in and incorporated into the induction training for new foster parents within Neath Port Talbot.

Group members had no questions or comments about the work but thanked them for a very powerful presentation.

Item 4: Update from Local Authority Period Dignity Leads – Pembrokeshire and Vale of Glamorgan Council

The Period Dignity Leads from every local authority met on 28 November to discuss issues and share best practice about how they are administering the Period Dignity Grant.

Pembrokeshire Period Dignity Lead:

The Period Dignity Grant in Pembrokeshire is being spent in a number of ways. The majority is used for a subscription service with the remainder used for education projects, small grant awards and administration costs.

The subscription service provides three options for products – a mixed bundle, a pad only bundle and a tampon only bundle. This has had a positive impact on uptake. There are approximately 400 monthly subscriptions.

They are piloting a peri-menopausal bundle which is adapted to the specific needs of people at this stage of life.

They are working to provide both products and information to users and have developed a monthly magazine which is issued with the products. The magazine has a different focus each month and includes practical information, signposting, a symptom tracker, testimonials and information on products and vocabulary. It has been well received and the information provided has proved useful with GP appointments.

The 'pick and mix' stands were initially focused on young people but are now also used in community-based settings. The stands provide information on products

along with information and guidance and enable people to take whatever products they need.

They have invested in training for a range of professionals to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to speak confidently to young people and others needing information and advice.

A number of small grants are awarded via the Youth Bank. Young people participate in the development of the projects. The aim of the projects is to support young people.

Feedback is currently being captured on the pilot projects around peri-menopause and the Youth Bank.

The importance of sharing good practice and remaining open to ideas about how work can be taken forward was highlighted.

Vale of Glamorgan Council Period Dignity Lead

21 pick and mix dispensers are the main method of supporting period dignity in schools and communities (foodbanks, leisure centres, library, family centres).

There are no limits on the products people can take. Reusable products are available by request from the local authority or relevant professionals. Approximately 100 people, mainly school age, are using a home delivery service and a wider subscription service option is being explored.

A qualified teacher was employed to create workshop sessions for all pupils who menstruate across year groups 6-8 around re-useable period products and general menstrual information. 49 schools took part in this project which involved 2477 pupils. The aim of the workshops was to tackle the stigma and taboos, provide information and enable pupils to take home period products. The sessions received positive feedback.

City to Sea was engaged to provide informative two-hour online training sessions which were accredited by the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) association. 55 professionals from schools and youth services attended the training which explored the issues surrounding the environmental impacts of single-use period products. Attendees were provided with a comprehensive range of teaching resources and a full range of reusable period products. City to Sea will be undertaking more training sessions for up to 30 professionals from schools and youth services in the new year.

Members of the Roundtable raised the following questions/comments:

- Products are being provided via dispensers. Is any guidance being issued to ensure products are also available in toilets?
- FTWW have worked with Learning Disability Wales on new easy read guides about menopause <https://www.ldw.org.uk/easy-read-wales-launches-new-easy-read-guides-about-menopause/>
- High schools can have gender neutral toilets. Feedback is that accessing products in toilets can be embarrassing.

- Research that NHS Wales have been collecting around gender neutral toilets could be presented to the roundtable at a meeting in the future.
- Often get requests for products in NHS settings.

Response from speakers/officials:

- In the Vale of Glamorgan, products are kept in the toilet areas of building.
- Pembrokeshire County Council highlight good practice to schools rather than issuing specific guidance.
- Feedback from young people in Pembrokeshire is that the subscription service means less reliance on emergency supplies as needs are met reliably and consistently which means it is the preferred approach.
- Welsh Government guidance for schools, which will detail recommended best practice and where to purchase reusable products, will be sent out in the next few weeks.

ACTION: Welsh Government to review current provision of period products in NHS settings.

Item 5: Any other Business – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

The Deputy Minister thanked all for contributions and opened discussion for any member of the Roundtable to highlight or raise any further points. Members were encouraged to share any feedback regarding meeting content and suggestions for future agenda items with Welsh Government.

Any information which members wish to share with the Roundtable or with the Period Dignity Lead officers in local authorities can be sent to Welsh Government officials for circulation.

The next meeting is scheduled for 29 February 2024.