



Report of the Director of Health and Wellbeing to the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 6th February 2020

AD

Subject:

Period and Hygiene Poverty

Summary statement:

The following report will provide an update to the Corporate Overview and in the Bradford District Scrutiny Committee regarding the provision of support services for women and girls in the Bradford District who may be experiencing period and/or hygiene poverty

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Corporate**

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The following report outlines services and work available across the Bradford District to support women and girls who may be experiencing period poverty. For the purposes of the report the definition of period poverty used is that which has been formulated by 'Plan International UK' a leading registered charity in this field and has come about as a result of a representative survey of 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21.

1.2 This definition has been adopted by the United Kingdom and the Scottish Government, the National Assembly for Wales and others, it is the following;

'Period poverty means being unable to access sanitary products and having a poor knowledge of menstruation often due to financial constraints In the UK'

1.3 The report includes information on services delivered by the Council across a range of settings, local activity and the supporting agencies that distribute sanitary wear and other materials and local and national support mechanisms for period poverty. It will also address the additional complexity of these issues as they are faced by women and girls who may be homeless and/or have other vulnerabilities.

1.4 There are no definitive statistics for households or individuals experiencing period poverty in the Bradford district. Work is planned to obtain figures through various survey routes; talking to food poverty networks, food banks and youth based surveys for instance however the hidden nature of the issue makes this a complex and sensitive topic.

1.5 Appendix 1 details Office of National Statistics (ONS) data regarding the population of Bradford. This shows that in 2018 there were approximately 27,078 females aged 14-21 resident in the district. At 9.9 % this is higher than the national average of 8.7% for this age and gender split.

Bradford also has 10% (51) of the most deprived lower super output areas (LSOA) nationally indicating that significant numbers of children (26,400) aged 0-15 years old are living in households with income deprivation. Unsurprisingly these are predominately located in inner city areas of Bradford City and Keighley and across some of the outer housing estates.

Education does not record period poverty or its effects as part of its routine sickness absence data collection. However absence records due to illness for females have been rising steadily from 2.53% in 2014/15 to 2.65% in 2018/19. This is less than the concurrent rise in males' absence due to illness during this time which is less at 2.33%.

There is a likely correlation between poverty and deprivation levels overall in households and period poverty as part of that however this is not proven. ONS figures would indicate that period poverty is probably going to affect some of the districts' population of women and girls, specifically those residing in low income and LSOA areas, this will impact in a variety of ways including in lost days in education however the exact details of this are unknown.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A report was taken to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14th February 2019 which outlined work relating to period poverty in the Bradford District. As a result officers were requested to return in 12 months time with a further report which also includes details of period poverty services for homeless women and girls and those with

additional vulnerabilities as well as clearer information on period poverty needs in the area.

There are differing approaches to supporting women and girls in period poverty in the District. The three below are directly supported by the Council to some degree, two are delivered by independent organisations and one is entirely Council funded and delivered.

2.2 Red Box

Red Box project was set up on the 21st May 2018 in the area with the aim of supporting women and girls in period poverty; they operate in line with other such projects nationally. Red Box is not funded by public bodies and their work is supported on a voluntary basis by people who care passionately about stopping the impact that this type of deprivation can have on young women and girls.

2.3 The Red Box model offers access to sanitary wear (pads and tampons) tights, new underwear and wipes. Every effort is made to ensure that access is free and unfettered however they have found that having these supplies managed through a 'champion' role in each school helps to try and make sure that there is someone on hand to also help young women and girls to understand their periods and their bodies better.

One of the volunteers at Red box said that 40 of their school bases have been topped up regularly, which indicates good use of their services and that in this last year 2019/20 they have received enquiries from a range of new organizations, in particular a rise in Youth Clubs and services wanting to access their facilities and Red Boxes.

2.4 They currently have 164 'live' boxes based in a range of venues including; primary and secondary schools in the district. This is laid out in the below table;

Table 1 Red Box

Venue	How many
Primary schools	63
Secondary	43
Colleges	11
Special provisions	6
Disability settings	7
Youth / out of school / Ladies groups	27
Sports settings	4
Out of area	3
Total	164

2.5 Bradford Council has provided storage facilities for some of the Red Box donations in Bingley Sports centre and pool, this came via together with short term funding for the worker from Wellsprings Together to help and support their work.

2.6 Period Dignity

Sponsored by the Unite Union, Period Dignity is one of their formal campaigns and was launched in June 2018 to offer support around period poverty. A decision was taken at the

meeting of full Council in October 2018 to investigate the adoption of a Period Dignity scheme by Bradford Council.

2.7 Period Dignity offers a similar service to Red Box in that sanitary products are made available in women's toilets in office buildings which are accessed by employees and the general public which owned and managed by the Council. The following sites were chosen for this reason;

Margret McMillian Tower
City Hall
Sir Henry Mitchell house
Keighley Town Hall

2.8 The products are made freely available placed in a small basket in the female toilets most likely to be accessed by the public and staff. This excludes those facilities in restricted areas.

2.9 Since its inception from June 2019 to October 2019 the products supplied are;
178 pads (Always brand)
373 tampons (Lillets brand)

There was a peak in uptake of these in June and July (129 and 197) respectively however since that time it has slowed and levelled out to an average of 42 per month. The scheme continues and is being used regularly.

2.10 Hygiene Poverty donation scheme

The Hygiene poverty donation scheme started in March 2019 as a result of concerns raised by staff. It is based in Britannia house and is for staff to donate personal hygiene products. This includes shaving equipment, sanitary wear; shampoo; hair products; baby supplies such as nappies, tooth brushes and dental equipment and incontinence pads. Aerosols are not accepted.

There are boxes in all the larger kitchen facilities in Britannia House and once these are full the caretakers collect the goods and they are then distributed by Innchurches a 'not for profit' voluntary sector organisation through their base at the 'Storehouse' and via their networks of 'pay as you' can markets and food banks. In the last year 1534 different items were collected in 30 boxes which is a substantial increase on 2018/19 when 823 items were collected.

2.11 From January 2019 to December 2019 the Storehouse has supplied 235 markets with 2820 sanitary products. (The higher figure is a result of additional donations being received from residents associations', school collections and sister poverty projects.) The markets are delivered from schools; community centres; specific women's services and other community facilities.

Sanitary wear has also been given to 17 'ad hoc' case workers and to community projects such as the Day Shelter, Street Outreach services and the Palm Cove.

2.12 Vulnerable and/or homeless women services

2.13 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV)

A new contract was commissioned jointly by the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to deliver the new whole systems approach for DASV specialist services in

Oct 2019. Called Survive and Thrive this is delivered by a consortium of organisations and encompasses; ‘safe accommodation’, refuges and dispersed units; support within the community; a children and young people’s services and a prevention arm. Currently the majority of service users are women and girls and when period poverty needs arise sanitary wear is supplied in what ever setting/s they may be. Provider/s are also acutely aware of the stigma associated with period poverty and support women and girls to understand more about their menstruation cycles; dispelling some of the mis-information which can often contribute to these concerns.

A spokesperson for the consortium also noted that period poverty can lead to much wider problems for women and girls;

‘Recent research has linked struggling to afford sanitary products with a reduced likelihood of completion of A-levels and/or GCSE’s. This in turn can impact on future employment and financial matters for women contributing to the maintenance of cyclical poverty. Additionally poor understanding of periods and menstruation can lead to hygiene issues thereby increasing vulnerability to renal and/or reproduction systems infections’.

2.14 Food Poverty services and period poverty

There are a range of food poverty providers across Bradford. These include those that offer food parcels, fresh food markets, holiday hunger schemes, pay as you can café’s and hot street food. This is a large sector which counts amongst it community based organisations; faith based groups, national and regional organisations and those supplying food stuffs, fresh and otherwise. Across this diversity of providers the majority offer sanitary products for women and girls however distribution methods vary.

Some prepare food parcels tailored for women and girls which automatically include sanitary products. Others allow individuals some choice in the goods included in food parcels so hygiene and period poverty products can be made part of them as they’re made up. In others recipients would need to ask for these.

Many of the ‘pay as you can’ markets offer open access to sanitary wear as they are in the range of good displayed. The hot food provider, community café facilities and many of the holiday hunger schemes respond to requests from people using their services for support.

2.15 Distribution options are difficult to get ‘right’ in these networks because period poverty and the lack of access to appropriate sanitary products can feel like a very personal and therefore hidden issue. Younger women and those with limited understanding or knowledge of menstruation can feel intimidated asking for support, let alone the wider emotions that declaring ‘poverty’ can foster. Projects are constantly looking at ways to overcome these concerns in order to reach those most in need and furthest away from service. One suggestion is to offer all women using services irrespective a discreet bag of goods however this could be unnecessary, wasteful and seen as based on incorrect assumptions. This approach also does not engender offering support to dispel ignorance and lack of understanding about menstruation which is part of period poverty work.

2.16 Housing Options

There is little evidence to suggest that the Council’s main Housing Options service is approached regarding period poverty needs regularly. This is likely due to a lack of record keeping and also the very public nature of the offices in which these are based. The majority of women using this service will also be more concerned about a lack of suitable housing which may well eclipse other needs.

2.17 Statutory Temporary accommodation

The Council have three sites of temporary accommodation; Octavia Court, Jermaine Court and Clergy House, these accommodate a mixture of single people and/or families and there are up to 40 bedspaces although this can fluctuate depending on placement numbers.

These are delivered on commission from the Council by a voluntary not for profit organisation that provide a full range of support services, furnishings and equipment which includes toiletries and sanitary wear.

2.18 Asylum Seekers

There are a range of families and individuals housed in the Bradford District who are classified as asylum seekers and are therefore supported by the Homes Office through a third party contract. These are comprised of families and single people and are dependant of governmental support for all their needs, including sanitary wear. It is difficult to know the numbers of people in this cohort as there is a constant movement of people resulting from case resolution.

2.19 Destitution

There are a number of services working with those who are destitute in Bradford. The Destitution Project houses people in this situation and can accommodate up to four women at any given time. In the absence of any individual means of support the project fulfils all the service users' needs including sanitary products.

Hope Housing works with destitute people also and although many of their service users are men they do support up to 5 women regularly and this includes support for their period needs

2.20 Young People's substance misuse

The Bridge Project supports young people aged up to 21, this includes amongst other services sanitary wear and toiletries when identified as a need.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are a range of national projects and programmes as the issues for period poverty are becoming more visible these are listed below. Bradford Council has not been directly involved with these however will respond to any requests for data and/or direct participation from these routes should they arise

National Initiatives

3.1.1 The Department of Education (DFE)

DFE has agreed direct investment in period poverty products for all schools, primary and secondary and colleges. This is a funding stream of between £10 million and £20 million (dependant on take up). The original start date for this to be operative was September 2019 however this was delayed. It was announced by DFE that from 20th January 2020 all primary and secondary schools would be able to order sanitary wear direct from PHS

services and that government funding would be available to cover the costs. This is calculated as 35% of female pupils numbers registered in each school requiring this type of support.

Red Box projects have been expecting these changes for some time now and are in the process of winding down their activities to hand over direct to schools for the future.

3.1.2 Period Poverty Taskforce

Central government has established the Period Poverty Taskforce which met for the first time on the 23rd July 2019. This announced it will focus its efforts on tackling the issue of period poverty and wider stigma around menstruation nationally. The group is co-chaired by Plan International UK (Voluntary not for profit organisation), Procter & Gamble and the Minister for Women & Equalities. Following this first meeting several convenors were appointed to lead specific areas of the taskforce's work including:

- Bloody Good Period – focusing on improving access for to period products for everyone
- Phs Group – also focusing on improving access
- Irise International – focusing on providing improved data and evidence on period-related issues
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – also focusing on providing improved data and evidence
- Binti International – focusing on breaking down stigma, shame and taboos around menstruation
- PSHE Association – also focusing on tackling stigma
- Sport England – also focusing on tackling stigma

3.1.3 Working with these new convenors and a host of other membership organisations, the taskforce is set to begin working on three main workstreams:

1. *Improved data and evidence* –This will produce a research paper re existing information on period poverty, menstrual health and the associated stigma. It may also lead to new research where necessary to identify gaps and will encourage other bodies to do the same.
2. *Tackling stigma, shame and taboo* –This will focus on creating an action plan setting out how the taskforce can take meaningful steps to end stigma and taboo across the UK through knowledge, awareness and education.
3. *Ensuring access for all* – there is already a number of productive initiatives working towards the same goals as the taskforce, this will seek to identify these and set out examples of what good access looks like. It will also seek to identify gaps and develop new approaches to improve access to period products.

3.1.4 The National Health Service (NHS)

NHS Chief Executive, Simon Stevens also announced that free sanitary wear would be available from summer 2019 in all hospitals.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 The Council has made storage facilities available to the Red Box project at no cost in a disused section of one of the sports facilities.

4.2 Wellsprings together has continued to support their work helping with access into the school networks and raising awareness. Once the Red Box Bradford Project is wound up following the new approach from the DFE this support will be needed to help redistribute remaining stock.

4.3 Money for the provision of all or some non food items remains available from the Local Welfare Assistance fund administered by the Council through the Revenues and Benefits department.

4.4 Officer time from the Council is invested via the Health and Wellbeing department; Facilities Management; Schools/education and Revenues and Benefits.

4.5 Support for the scheme from Council staff in Britannia House and Argus Chambers has been steady; with a regular collection of personal hygiene products being received and redistributed. Picking up the items and distributing them via food poverty networks and the pay and you can markets by the Storehouse is free

4.6 The Period Dignity project also used Facilities Management staff time which has increased as the project has extended to Sir Henry Mitchell House and both Bradford and Keighley Town Halls.

4.7 The financial outlay which Facilities Management has covered this year to supply sanitary products via the Period in Dignity Scheme is the following:

Box 18 Tampons £2.49 x 21 £52.29

Packet of 3 Sanitary Pads £1.19 x 60 £71.40

Total of £123.69

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

There are a range of formal governance systems in place which support activities in relation to period poverty. Discussions and work across the not for profit sectors are managed within the Food Poverty networks and the new Hot Food Providers networks which operate independently from the Council

The spend and resource inputs are agreed and managed through Council Standing Orders and senior management governance arrangements.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to identify, assess and make provision to meet the special educational and wider needs of children within its area and to monitor progress against outcomes taking account of educational, health and care needs, outcomes and appropriate provision

6.2 The Local Authority has statutory duties to ensure that efficient education is available to meet the needs of the population of the area, ensure that its education functions are

exercised with a view to promoting high standards ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and learning, and promote the fulfilment of learning potential;

6.3 The Children Act 1989 sets out the provision of services for children and their families. Section 17 places a duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area.

6.4 The Local Authority has duties under the Childcare Act 2016 to improve well-being of young children & reduce inequalities between them.

6.5 The Public Health Role of the Local Authority is set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which received Royal Assent on 27 March 2012. This was a critical step in the transition towards the establishment of a new public health system. It reflected the Government's vision for the new public health role of Local Authorities and to summarise the new legal framework for local government that underpinned that vision.

The statute requires Local authorities to embed these new public health functions into all their activities, tailoring local solutions to local problems in order to improve health and reduce inequalities. It created a local public health system, based on localism, democratic accountability and evidence. The role of director of public health, under the Health and Social Care Act, was established to support local political leadership in improving public health.

The Director of Public Health has a leadership role spanning all three domains of public health

1. Health improvement,
2. Health protection, and
3. Healthcare public health.

Section 12 of the Health and Social Care Act inserts new section 2B into the NHS Act 2006 to give each relevant Local Authority a new duty to take such steps as it considers appropriate to improve the health of the people in its area.

6.6 In exercising its statutory responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 towards those 16+ years of age the Local Authority has a duty to promote the individuals well-being, including in matters relating to personal dignity, physical and mental health and emotional well-being, control by the individual over day-to-day life, participation in work, education, training or recreation.

6.7 Homeless and housing legislation; Part 7 Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 all require Local Authorities to provide support and help to those in housing need, this includes as noted elsewhere in this report the need to offer temporary housing and support when assessed as being in statutory need.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The legislation addressing Equality and Diversity issues is primarily contained within the Equality Act 2010. The aim of the legislation is to protect individuals from discrimination in the workplace and or wider society based on 9 protected characteristics 1, Age, 2, Disability, 3, Gender reassignment, 4, Marriage and Civil Partnership, 5, Pregnancy and

Maternity, 6, Race, 7, Religion or Belief, 8, Sex, 9, Sexual Orientation

It is clear that period poverty has a disproportional impact on women and girls and those in low incomes and those with disabilities. The Local Authority along with partner organisations and agencies are proactively attempting to address this inequality through actions and plans identified and set out in this report.

7.1.1 Tackling gender inequality underpins the work in respect of period poverty. As noted above these issues if not actively challenged can act as additional barriers to accessing work; education and school.

7.1.2 Hygiene poverty affects a wider population including men and boys due to its often hidden nature

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.2.1 Tackling period and hygiene poverty strengthens the wider social, education and economic position of women and girls. It removes additional barriers to education, study and employment supporting stronger communities overall.

7.2.2 The dialogue that supports and encourages discourse relating to menstruation and women's health can also help tackle mis-information and the embarrassment that young women can feel in relation to this routine and natural part of life.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

7.3.1 The packaging of sanitary wear and disposable personal hygiene products can cause environment issues. This can be minimised through recycling packaging and encouraging the disposal of used sanitary goods through the appropriate routes.

7.3.2 There are reusable sanitary products available on the market however these are more expensive and harder to source than the products sold from local retailers. They also may not suit all women particularly those living in insecure, shared or temporary housing settings

7.3.3 In the recent government announcement on the implementation of the new period poverty scheme for all schools it has been made clear that both disposable and reusable sanitary wear may be purchased for the supply in schools which is a positive step for both sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions

7.3.4 No aerosols are accepted as part of the Council collections in Britannia House.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every individual.

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) protects these rights and allows individuals to challenge authorities if they violate them.

The HRA incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. This means that if there has been a breach of human rights, an individual can take a case to a British Court rather than having to seek justice from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Particularly in relation to this report the following ECHR article rights apply

- Right to a private and family life (Article 8)
- Right to an education (Protocol 1, Article 2)

7.6 TRADE UNION

Period in Dignity has been spearheaded by Unite and could be seen as a demonstration of their commitment to dealing with poverty on a practical level

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

In those wards with higher indices of deprivation period poverty is more likely to be an issue

7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

N/A

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

It is part of the Council's Corporate parenting role to ensure that those young people for whom the Council is the 'parent' are well looked after in relation to not only appropriate sanitary ware but also education, knowledge and understanding of menstruation and periods

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Issues relating to menstruation and periods still carry some stigma and embarrassment for many women and girls. Considering the definition used however much of the work undertaken in this field aims to tackle these and educate both the public and individuals

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

9.1 That members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report

9.2 That members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report and request a future report be prepared for the committee including more detailed information on service needs and responses re period poverty locally.

9.3 That officers are asked to liaise and work with The Red Box Project; The Storehouse;

Fareshares and other local organisations to understand the impacts of period poverty better in the Bradford district

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that;

- That members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report and request a future report be prepared for the committee including more detailed information on service needs and responses re period poverty locally
- That officers are asked to liaise and work with The Red Box Project; The Storehouse; Fareshares and other local organisations to understand the impacts of period poverty
- That officers are asked to work closely with current providers across the district to better understand the impacts of period and/or hygiene poverty and that a further report be prepared for this committee in 12 months time

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1-ONS population details Bradford district

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None