

Jane Hutt AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: JH/05678/19

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Chair of the Petitions Committee
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Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 18 November seeking further information on the funding we provide to local authorities to help tackle period poverty.

In my previous correspondence dated 16 January I explained that we had allocated over £1million over three years up to 2020 in grant funding to local authorities to help tackle period poverty and ensure period dignity.

I would like to begin by providing more detail about this funding before explaining about the subsequent action and additional funding we have allocated to address this very important issue.

Revenue funding of £440,000 was allocated to local authorities to enable them to provide period products (tampons, sanitary towels, or sustainable alternatives) to women and girls from low income households who could not afford them in each local authority area. The funding was split between the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years.

Local authorities were given the freedom to decide on the most appropriate action to take which fitted the needs of their communities. This included partnerships with third sector organisations, food banks, community hubs or in schools and other educational establishments.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Feedback from the first year of this funding revealed a range of positive ways in which local authorities utilised this revenue. A number of local authorities worked with school bodies and other young people's groups. These included youth clubs, school councils and Educated Other than at School (EOTAS) establishments as well as Youth Services and local education departments.

Some local authorities worked with external partners such as Red Box, Always, Urdd, Health4Kids and Guides to identify the needs of young people. A number of local authorities provided products to third sector organisations such as women's refuges, food banks and homeless shelters. Some engaged with community groups to identify need. These included the Trussell Trust, Solas, Llamau and Victim Support. Some also worked with organisations to support provision to women with mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems and with a Syrian refugee Support Group. A few local authorities used some of the funding to purchase reusable products for community groups.

Capital funding of £700,000 was provided to support local authority purchasing of feminine hygiene hardware and toilet facilities for schools. Local authorities informed us that they had used this funding for a range of purposes including the purchase or rental of additional sanitary disposal bins, purchase or rental of additional period product vending machines, changes to cubicle layouts to integrate wash basins with toilets, shelving and cupboards to accommodate baskets or boxes of period products for young people to help themselves, and additional signage to indicate where period products and disposal bins can be found.

In addition to the funding outlined above, there were two further announcements made in April this year relating to tackling period poverty and addressing period dignity. These were supported by over £3.1million of additional funding.

£2.3 million has been allocated to local authorities for the Period Dignity Grant for Schools in 2019/20 which will provide over 141,000 girls in Welsh primary and secondary schools with a range of period products. As well as being free-of-charge, products will be made accessible in the most practical and appropriate way possible. Schools will also be encouraged to support reusable, environmentally sustainable products to allow maximum choice for learners.

Providing the option of using reusable products can help address period poverty and the impact that disposable products are having on our environment and support the action we are taking to reduce the volume of single use plastics that we use. Encouraging a move away from disposable options towards reusable and plastic free options is a relatively small measure which could have an important environmental impact.

In addition, £845,000 of revenue funding was provided to Further Education Institutions to make period products available free of charge to learners.

In March, the Minister for Health announced that free period products will be available to all women in Welsh hospitals.

Welsh Government is working with Eco Schools to provide resources for schools which will promote open discussion with young people and help break down the social stigma and taboos around periods and period products. The resources will educate students about sustainable alternatives to single use period products and the impact these can have on the environment. The resources will be posted on Hwb, the Digital Learning for Wales website.

Our 21st Century Schools programme has also been engaged in talks about toilet design in schools and Further Education colleges to ensure period dignity is a key consideration in any redesign of toilet facilities, particularly where washrooms are gender neutral.

I have recently formed a Roundtable group comprising of stakeholders from across Wales. The aim of the group is to provide expert advice to the Welsh Government on the development of policy and strategy. The group first met in October and the next meeting will take place in February.

We are currently seeking feedback from local authorities regarding the existing funding arrangements and to inform any future initiatives. A Cross Government group has been formed to look at how the funding has been allocated and spent, and where any improvements need to be made, as well as options for sustainable provision of products. The work of this group will link with the work of the Roundtable.

Our approach to tackling period poverty and supporting period dignity has been multi-faceted. It extends beyond simply providing funding and free products, although clearly this is an important and necessary element. We want to ensure that our actions are targeted in the right areas to make a difference to the women and girls most in need in Wales.

Yours sincerely,
Jane

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