



AGENDA PAPERS MARKED 'TO FOLLOW' FOR HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday, 7 March 2019

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Place: Committee Room 2 and 3, Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford,
M32 0TH

AGENDA	PART I	Pages
10.	TASK AND FINISH GROUP WORK	
(a)	COMMUNITY SERVICES (Verbal Report) To receive an update from the Chair of the Committee.	Verbal Report
(b)	PERIOD POVERTY (Pages 1 - 16) To receive a report from the Task and Finish Group.	1 - 16

SARA TODD
Chief Executive

Membership of the Committee

Councillors R. Chilton (Chair), S. Taylor (Vice-Chair), S.K. Anstee, J. Bennett, J. E. Brophy, Mrs. A. Bruer-Morris, A. Duffield, Mrs. L. Evans, Mrs. D.L. Haddad, S. Longden, J. Slater, D. Acton (ex-Officio) and D. Western (ex-Officio).

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact:

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Health Scrutiny Committee - Thursday, 7 March 2019

This agenda was issued on **Wednesday, 27 February 2019** by the Legal and Democratic Services Section, Trafford Council, Trafford Town Hall; Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 0TH

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TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Health Scrutiny Committee
Date: 7th March 2019
Report of: Task and Finish Group of the Health Scrutiny Committee

Report Title

Period Poverty in Trafford.

Summary

The report provides an overview of investigations by a Task and Finish group of the Health Scrutiny Committee. The group looked at the scale, work being done, and possible actions of the Council regarding Period Poverty within Trafford.

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee agree the recommendations and refer the report for Consideration by the Executive:-

- 1) That funding be committed to support the establishment of the Red Box Project within Trafford.**
- 2) That a small annual budget (between £500 - £1000) be created to support the Red Box Project and other projects that address the issue of period poverty within Trafford, to be managed by the Officer Group.**
- 3) That the Council make a pledge to end period poverty within Trafford**
- 4) That the Council write a letter to the Government in support of abolishing VAT on sanitary products.**
- 5) That funds raised from an annual dress down Friday be donated to Everymonth.**
- 6) That the Executive Member for Wellbeing supports the Officer Group working on period poverty.**
- 7) That an annual survey on period poverty be carried out amongst schools and food banks.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Alexander Murray

Extension: 4250

1.0 Background

1.1 The issue of Period Poverty was raised as a potential item for a task and finish group by Councillor Taylor. Period Poverty is where women and girlsⁱ cannot afford sufficient sanitary products for use during their period. Period poverty can result in missing work or school through to social isolation and health issues such as septic shock. Period poverty has been identified as a national issue in recent years and in the summer of 2018 the Scottish Parliament pledged to end period poverty within education and pledged £5.2M to achieve this. The issue has been covered broadly within the media with one article called 'let's make period poverty history' which contained research from Children's Charity Plan International UK suggesting 1 in 10 young women (aged 14 – 21) had been unable to afford period products. The British Government has also pledged £1.5M to support the brook project to address period poverty.

2.0 Membership, Scope, and Direction

2.1 Councillor Taylor, Councillor Bennet, Councillor Duffield, and Councillor Slater all volunteered to take part in the Task and Finish group and a meeting was arranged for the 12th September 2018 to discuss the scope of the group. Councillor Taylor brought copies of the Guardian article 'let's make period poverty history' to the meeting and explained that while period poverty had become a large issue nationally she was not aware whether there was an issue in Trafford or whether Trafford were doing anything within the Borough.

2.2 The group agreed they would try to work out the scale of the issue within Trafford, what was being done in the area, and what support could be offered. The group discussed the ways in which they could gather information about the need for sanitary products and the impact that period poverty was having in the area. It was agreed that Members should contact food banks within the area to check the demand for sanitary products and whether the demand was being met.

2.3 The group wanted to know whether period poverty was impacting Trafford Schools and Colleges. They agreed to contact the Corporate Director for Children's services in order to send out a survey to schools in Trafford and to Trafford College. The group suggested a list of questions to be sent to the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

2.4 The group then discussed what was being done across the Country to tackle the issue. Prior to the Meeting Councillor Duffield had made contact with a national charity called the red box project to see if they had a presence within the area. The Councillor had been informed that there was not a red box project set up in Trafford and the group agreed that this was something that should be looked into as part of their work. Councillor Taylor had heard about a series of events that had been held across the Country called the bloody big brunch which was used to raise awareness of period poverty, tackle the stigma surrounding periods, and raise money to support charities. The group wanted to find out whether anything like this was being done within Trafford and whether the Council could support it.

3.0 Trafford food banks

3.1 Councillor Slater and Councillor Bennet both contacted food banks within Trafford. The following questions were posed to the food banks;

1. How long has the foodbank been open?
2. In that time have you seen an increase in users asking for sanitary protection?
3. When did the need to include sanitary protection items start to be requested.
4. Do you service Stretford only? If not where else do you provide support?
5. Is there anything else you can tell us about period poverty that will help us?

3.2 The responses that were received outlined that all food banks in Trafford had a demand for sanitary products from the point that they were set up and that this demand was increasing. The food banks all said that they had an adequate supply for the current demand. These food banks supported people in Urmston, Flixton, Davyhulme, Stretford, Gorse Hill, Firwood, and Old Trafford. This indicated that period poverty was an issue across a large area of the borough and that it was escalating. Responses to the final question stated that period poverty was not been something that food banks had collected information on, but they would start to do so.

4.0 Working with charities

4.1 The task and finish group and the officers who were working on period poverty recognised the need to engage with charities to tackle period poverty. Two charities were identified by the group as possibly providing support in the area. These two charities were the red box project which provided support more than 750 schools nationwide and Everymonth which was a Greater Manchester based charity.

4.1.0 Everymonth

4.1.1 A meeting was set up with a member of Everymonth on the 8th November 2018 to discuss their work. The group were told that Everymonth were providing 800 packs to 12 food banks across Greater Manchester. Each of the packs contained a month's worth of sanitary products and some comfort items such as a chocolate bar.

The packs cost roughly £1.50 to put together and distribute and this was all done by a workforce of volunteers.

4.1.2 At the meeting the group were told that Everymonth required places in order to store their supplies and to put the packs together. The group offered to see whether the Council could provide these facilities free of charge and Everymonth were given a number of options. However, they also received and accepted the offer from a Church in Chorlton to provide these spaces. This may be something that the Charity need at a later date and so it would be good if the Councils could make an open offer to provide such support if needed.

4.1.3 The representative of Everymonth told the group that according to their estimates every food bank required roughly 100 packs per month in order to have an adequate supply. As there are 7 food banks in Trafford this would mean 700 packs per month at £1.50 per pack which would total £12600 per year. The group realised that this amount of funding would be beyond the Councils resources but it was felt that a number of charity events including dress down Friday fundraising could help to support the charity and the work that they do.

4.2.0 The Red Box Project

4.2.1 The red box project is a national charity which has a presence in over 750 schools across the UK. The charity supports individuals who want to set up red boxes in their area. At the start of the groups work there was no red box project presence within Trafford and Councillor Duffield made contact with a woman who was looking to start one. The contact was passed onto an officer in partnerships and communities and the Officer invited the volunteer to attend a meeting of all the officers who were working on period poverty.

4.2.2 At the meeting the officers were informed of how the red box project worked. It consisted of two parts. The first part was putting out red boxes and red wheelie bins in order to collect donations of sanitary products. These could be placed in public places such as libraries and super markets or in business offices, anywhere people would be walking past on a regular basis. These donations were then collected by the person running the red box project. The second part involved sorting the donations and putting them, along with other items, into a red box to be placed within a school. When a red box was placed within a school a launch is held which tells the pupils what the box is and why it is there. This launch increases period poverty awareness within the schools and opens up conversations amongst pupils and staff. Feedback had been received from one Trafford primary school where a red box was placed in October 2018. The feedback said that while there had been a limited use of the products within the box its presence had opened up dialogue around periods and girls felt more at ease in approaching and talking to teachers. Through this dialogue the school identified that there was an issue around PE lessons and periods which is now being addressed.

4.2.3 The officers were informed that there were a number of ways that the Council could support the red box project in this work. Although the red box project relies mainly upon donations of sanitary products there are still a lot of costs in setting up the project in the area. Appendix 3 gives a list of all the costs related to setting up the red box project from providing donation boxes through to creating a full red box for a school and launching the box in schools. As you can see from Appendix 1 the cost of providing every school with a red box and providing all of the publicising materials required to launch the red boxes in schools would be roughly £1583.

4.2.4 Another area that the red box project needed support in was increasing awareness of their work making contact with both business and schools within the area. A good way of doing this would be through holding an event like the bloody big brunch. These are events where a brunch is held and attendees pay for their food and drink with sanitary products which go to the red box project. At these events speakers tell their stories of their experiences of periods and period poverty and representatives of charities speak about how they are working to reduce period poverty in the area. An officer from Partnerships and Communities has looked into the possible costs associated with running such an event and the estimates range from £410 to £821 depending on the size and location (Appendix 1).

4.2.5 When asked about the cost of maintain the red box project once it had been launched and had a presence in all schools the representative stated that, provided that sufficient donations were received, around £500 annually would enable the project to run in all schools in the area.

5.0 School survey

5.1 Councillor Taylor contacted the Corporate Director for Children's services about creating a survey to go out to schools. The Councillor was informed that the Council's Public Health team were looking at period poverty in the area and they offered to create and distribute the survey to schools. A set of questions were agreed and made into a survey monkey survey (Appendix 2) which was circulated via a bulletin and email in December 2018. The survey was sent out to all 85 Trafford Schools and 16 (19%) provided responses. At least 7 of these schools were secondary schools which represents 47% of secondary schools in Trafford.

5.2 The responses received indicated that 95 young women were known to be affected by period poverty. This was a much lower number than expected which could mean that period poverty is a much smaller issue within Trafford than across the UK in general. Given the feedback received by the red box project it would seem likely that issues around periods and period poverty within schools is under reported. However, due to the large negative impact that period poverty can have on those who suffer from it having an impact on just 95 instances within Trafford would have significant long term financial benefits for the Council and its partners, especially in Health Services.

6.0 Work ongoing within Trafford Council

6.1 The timing of the creation of the task and finish group was extremely serendipitous as Trafford's Public Health team had identified tackling period poverty as a priority at around the same time. As noted above the Public Health Team first got involved with the work that the Task and Finish group were doing through the creation and distribution of the survey to schools. When supporting this work the team shared a report that their apprentice had written (Appendix 3) which gave an overview of period poverty and the estimated scale of the issue within Trafford for young women aged 14 - 21.

6.2 In addition to the public health team a member of the partnerships and communities' team had been made aware of the work that the councillors were doing through contact with an officer supporting the Task and Finish group. These Officers have come up with a set of aspirations for Trafford to achieve in relation to period poverty. These aspirations are;

- Ending period poverty in Schools - for free sanitary products to be offered in all schools in Trafford.
- Ending period poverty amongst new mothers - for free sanitary products to be available to all new mothers who need them.
- Ending period poverty in Trafford – That free sanitary products be available community buildings and food banks so that they can be accessed by anyone who needs them.

6.3 The Task and Finish group met with the officers on the 16th January to discuss their progress. The Councillors informed the Officers that they were thinking of recommending that Trafford make a pledge to commit to ending period poverty within Trafford and that the Council hold an event to help launch the red box project within Trafford. Councillor Duffield passed the contacts details for the red box project onto the Senior Partnerships and Communities Officer so that they could progress the work further. The Officers told the group about their aspirations and asked the Councillors whether they would be able to help lobby central government to abolish VAT upon sanitary products.

6.4 Since that meeting an officer group has been formed which consists of staff from Public Health, Partnerships and Communities, and Pennine Care. As covered above the group met with the Trafford representative from the Red Box Project and discussed ways that they could help them to set up within all the schools in the area.

6.5 The group have used school nurses provided by the Council to approach schools about launching red box projects. The group are also keen to ensure that all health visitors in Trafford have a supply of sanitary products that they can take out with them on health visits, especially to new mothers in the area. One way that this need

could be met is through any surplus or inappropriate donations made to the red box project being sent to Trafford's Health Visitors.

6.6 Going forward the group is looking at how they could have sanitary product provision supplied within libraries, community centres, and early help hubs. These buildings could also be utilised by the group to publicise the issue of period poverty and spread awareness across the whole of Trafford.

7.0 Summary

7.1 From the discussions with food banks, the survey responses, and every month it is clear that period poverty is an issue within Trafford although the scale of the issue is largely unknown. Work needs to be continued in order to discover the true impact it is having in the area. The work that Everymonth do is already helping hundreds of women across Trafford and the Council should do what they can to support them to continue this work. The Red Box Project offers great value for money as for an initial investment of less than £2000 with further funding of £500 annually period poverty could be ended with schools and colleges within Trafford.

7.2 The efforts, commitment, and aspirations of the officers who are involved with tackling period poverty in Trafford are greatly appreciated by the task and finish group and it is hoped that they receive adequate support to continue their work.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 The Task and Finish group propose the following recommendations for Consideration by the Executive.

1. That funding be committed to support the establishment of the Red Box Project within Trafford.
2. That a small annual budget (between £500 - £1000) be created to support the Red Box Project and other projects that address the issue of period poverty within Trafford to be managed by the officer group.
3. That the Council make a pledge to end period poverty within Trafford
4. That the Council write a letter to the Government in support of abolishing VAT on sanitary products.
5. That funds raised from an annual dress down Friday be donated to Everymonth.
6. That the Executive Member for Wellbeing supports the Officer Group working on period poverty.
7. That an annual survey on period poverty be carried out amongst schools and food banks.

ⁱ Period poverty is a gendered issue, however, Trafford Council recognises that females who identify as males will be included in this initiative.

Period Poverty Campaign

Costings

1. Event Venue Costs for Bloody Big Brunch

Option 1:

Lancashire County Cricket Club

Venue: Free

Catering: £581

Screen and Projector: £240

Total for 64 guests: £821

Option 2

Limelight, Old Trafford

Venue: £98

Catering: £336

Total for 56 guests: £434

Option 3

Sale Waterside Arts Centre

Venue: £75

Catering: £270

Screen and Projector: £65

Total for 60 guests: £410

2. Publicity Costs

Printing of 90 posters A4 Posters: £20

Printing of 90 A4 box fronts: £20

Printing of 25 A3 posters: £10

Design of pull up banners: £73.50

Printing and delivery of 3 pull up banners: £164

T-Shirts for launch event (for staff) x10: £140

Laminating Pouches x 200: £6.34

£433.84

3. Donation Bins/Boxes

5 wheelie bins for donations in business/at the launch event: £192.25

30 red boxes stocked with products for high schools and colleges: £318.30

66 red boxes stocked for primary schools: £568.26

15 donation boxes for businesses: £70.80

£1149.61

In Trafford, approximately 950 girls and young women aged 14 to 21 are affected by period poverty. This can have a negative impact on mental wellbeing, and educational outcomes, and increase social isolation. Young women who experience period poverty are less likely to complete their GCSEs or go on to further education.

Period poverty is defined as '*young women not being able to afford sanitary products*'. Although Trafford is generally affluent, there are significant inequalities within the borough, and areas affected by deprivation.

Trafford Council would like to understand how period poverty impacts on education, and to work with schools and colleges to improve this. This project aims to allow young women to continue their education without having to worry about their periods. We would expect this to improve attendance, among other outcomes.

Please complete this by Friday 14th December.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Megan Skelhorn, tel: 0161 912 1936 or email Megan.Skelhorn@trafford.gov.uk

Thank you for your time.

* **1a.** Are you aware of any students whose attendance is affected by period poverty?

Yes

No

* **1b.** Can you estimate how many students this affected in your school/college in the last academic year?

* **2a.** Are sanitary items available to young women during the school/college day?

Yes

No

* **2b.** How do students access these products?

* **2c.** Is there a charge?

Yes

No

* **2d.** How much do they cost per item?

* **3.** How does your school or college support young people to understand periods and associated issues including period poverty?

Covered in PSHE/RSE curriculum

School nurse availability

Trained office staff

Trained teaching staff

Other (please specify)

* **4.** What additional support about period poverty would you like to receive?

5. Any further comments

Trafford Young Women and Period Poverty

Contact Details

Name of school/college

What type of educational establishment is it?

Primary

Secondary

College

Other (please specify)

Contact Details

Name

Job role

Email Address

Telephone Number

Thank you for completing the survey, and helping to enhance the picture of period poverty in Trafford's schools.

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Period Poverty in Trafford Brief

Background

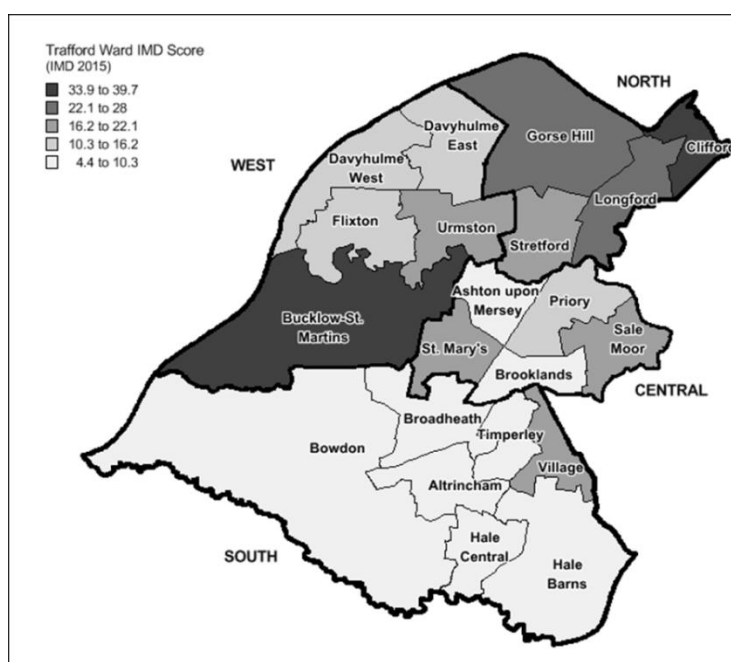
Period poverty has come more into light over the course of recent years, particularly since the release of data from Plan International UK, based on a survey which they held in August 2017.² The survey was taken a representative weighted sample of 1000 girls aged 14 to 21 in the UK, stated that one in ten girls were unable to afford sanitary wear. If this were mapped onto 14 to 21 year olds in Trafford based on Mid-2017 Population estimates³, this would impact approximately 950 girls – possibly more if those who started their periods before the age of 14 were included.

The impact of period poverty can also be very negative, as found in another survey of 1000 women⁵, of which 500 were personally affected by period poverty. The main impacts were discovered to be upon mental health, the ability to socialise, and on education. For example, it was found that of those impacted by period poverty out of the survey's respondents, they were less likely to complete their GCSEs, or go on to further education (such as A Levels).

As defined by the Department for Education, period poverty is '*the suggestion that some economically disadvantaged girls are unable to attend school during their periods as they cannot afford sanitary products*'.¹ From this definition, it can be inferred that those living in the most deprived areas of Trafford are more likely to be impacted by period poverty than those in the least deprived areas.

Period Poverty in Trafford

Looking at a map indicating the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2015) scores of wards in Trafford where a higher score means the area is more deprived, this would imply that girls and women living in the West area of Bucklow-St. Martin's and the North area of Clifford are much more likely to be impacted than, for example, girls in the South area of Bowdon or Central area of Ashton Upon Mersey.



Examples of best practice

Scotland is the first government to implement a scheme to aid in tackling period poverty amongst female students.⁴ The scheme costs £5.2 million, and involves the provision of free sanitary products for students and pupils in any Scottish school or university – and with £500,000 being used by the charity FareShare to distribute sanitary products to an estimated 18,800 people.

Recommendations

From the pilot scheme in Scotland, Trafford could build a similar scheme for dealing with period poverty. A survey could be sent to places such as schools around the borough, to scope out what the current provision for sanitary products is and to identify where people are less likely to be able to afford sanitary products, before considering how would be appropriate to assist in providing such products.

References

1. Department for Education, (15 March 2018), '*Absence rated by gender, age and free school meal status*', https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690457/Absence_rates_by_gender_age_and_free_school_meal_status.pdf
2. Plan International UK, (20 December 2017), '*Plan International UK's research on period poverty and stigma*', <https://plan-uk.org/media-centre/plan-international-uks-research-on-period-poverty-and-stigma>
3. Office for National Statistics, (28 June 2018), '*Analysis of Population Estimates Tool*', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/analysisofpopulationestimatestool>
4. Scottish Government News, (24 August 2018), '*Students to get free access to sanitary products*', <https://news.gov.scot/news/students-to-get-free-access-to-sanitary-products>
5. Emma Elsworth, The Independent (18 July 2018), '*Women who experience period poverty more likely to suffer anxiety or depression, study claims*', <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/period-poverty-anxiety-depression-study-women-mental-health-sanitary-products-a8452581.html>

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