

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Date: 26th September 2019
Report for: Information
Report of: Public Health/Partnerships and Communities

Report Title

An update on work to tackle period poverty in Trafford

Summary

This report provides an update on the work being undertaken to tackle period poverty in Trafford.

Recommendation(s)

To note the information in the report

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1. Introduction

The work on tackling Period Poverty in Trafford commenced when a group of Councillors with an interest in the topic area wished to carry out a piece of work and contacted the Public Health team for assistance.

This report provides an update of the work undertaken so far and the next steps.

2. Understanding Period Poverty in Trafford

The Public Health team prepared a briefing to provide an overview of the picture of period poverty in Trafford and examples of best practice elsewhere.

Using data from a survey held by Plan International UK where a weighted sample of girls aged 14 to 21 were asked questions surrounding Period Poverty, it was estimated that approximately 950 girls within the 14 to 21 age range in Trafford would be affected. When compared to ward-level Index of Multiple Deprivation scores, it was indicated that Bucklow-St Martin's and Clifford wards were most likely to have people affected by period poverty.

During November/December 2018, a survey was circulated to all schools in Trafford to gain a better understanding of the actual situation of period poverty in the borough. Of 85 schools, 16 responded to the survey, with a balance between primary and secondary schools in addition to two anonymous ones.

Only two of the 16 schools reported having pupils impacted by period poverty, with an approximated total of 95 pupils between them. The low response rate to the survey, and the small number of schools identifying this as an issue, may indicate that period poverty is a minor issue in Trafford. Equally, it could indicate a societal taboo regarding period poverty and students not using this as a reason for absence, or a lack of knowledge surrounding period poverty.

The survey also indicated that all schools that responded had provisions of sanitary products available for pupils; the majority of schools provided products for free, however, some schools charged an average of £1.50 per product.

Many respondents requested support for more sanitary products to be available to schools in order to support students.

Members of the Public Health team, Partnerships and Communities team and Democratic Services team met with the Councillors to discuss how we could launch a period poverty campaign in the borough.

3. Red Box Project

In February 2019, members of the Public Health team, Partnerships and Communities Team, School Nursing team and Democratic Services team met with the Volunteer Coordinator for the Trafford Red Box Project with the aim of working in partnership.

The Red Box Project is an initiative which provides schools with a box containing items such as sanitary products, clean underwear, and other useful items. Most products are donations and the Volunteer Coordinator collects donations and distributes them to the participating schools.

As a result of these conversations, a donation bin was set up at Trafford Town Hall for Council staff to donate products, whilst work was done to identify schools which could be provided with red boxes.

4. Aspirations

Trafford's aspirations for tackling period poverty were agreed as:

- Provision of free sanitary products to be offered in all **schools** in Trafford
- Free sanitary products to be offered to **new mothers** via the Health Visiting Team
- Free sanitary products to be available in libraries and Early Help Hubs for **general accessibility**
- All **Food Banks** could provide sanitary products to those requiring it

5. Funding

In order to achieve these aspirations, funding would be required for donation bins, red boxes, initial provision of products, publicity and a launch event.

A proposal was taken to by the Health Scrutiny Committee to the Executive who agreed that funding should be allocated to this initiative.

£2,000 was identified within Partnerships and Communities to support the initiative; this was agreed by the Executive Member for Partnerships and Communities at the time.

£200 of this funding has been spent so far on publicity items to use at a future launch event, and on red boxes which have been provided to organisations working with Care Leavers (see below).

6. Current Situation

The launch of the initiative in Trafford and the provision of sanitary products to all schools relies heavily on the Red Box Project Volunteer who collects and distributes the donations. Unfortunately this post is now vacant which has hindered the progress of the initiative however the following actions are being taken:

- The Partnerships and Communities Team are working with the Red Box Project UK Head Office and Thrive Trafford to advertise the volunteering post in order to recruit another Volunteer Coordinator
- All schools in Trafford are being contacted to understand which schools currently have a Red Box and which schools would like a Red Box. We will work with those who have an existing box to ensure donations are provided via the School Nursing team in absence of a Red Box Volunteer Coordinator
- A donation bin has been organised for Trafford Town Hall and donation bins will also be placed in the following locations over the next couple of months: Sale Point (Trafford Housing Trust), Limelight, Sale Waterside and Irwell Valley.
- Pure Innovations and the Care Leavers Team are using the donations from the donation bin at the Town Hall to hand out provisions to Care Leavers from Trafford
- Donations from the Town Hall are also being used by Stretford Foodbank who will be providing a red box to so products are freely accessible to those who need them

A launch event will be organised once a Red Box Project Trafford Volunteer Coordinator is recruited.

