

Report of:	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care
To:	Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15th February 2022

Progress Report on Implementation: Tackling Period Poverty and Raising Period Awareness

Review Information

Date approved at City Council:	5 th November 2019
Member who led the original review:	Councillor Rob Pocock
Lead Officer for the review:	Rose Kiely
Date progress last tracked:	N/A

Introduction

'Period poverty' (or menstrual hygiene management, MHM) refers to having a lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints. WHO/UNICEF (2012) has defined MHM as:

- Women and adolescent girls being able to use clean materials to absorb or collect menstrual blood, and to change them in privacy as often as necessary throughout their menstrual period.
- Being able to use soap and water for washing the body as required and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials.
- Women and girls having access to basic information about the menstrual cycle, and how to manage it with dignity without discomfort or fear.

Period poverty is a harsh reflection of poverty and inequality.

The report of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee into Period Poverty is welcomed. Action against the recommendations to date is detailed below. Unfortunately progress against a number of these actions has been deferred as Public Health resources are being diverted to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. In approving this Review the City Council asked me, as the appropriate Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, to report on progress towards these recommendations to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. Details of progress with the remaining recommendations are shown in Appendix 2.
3. Members are therefore asked to consider progress against the recommendations and give their view as to how progress is categorized for each.

Appendices

1	Scrutiny Office guidance on the tracking process
2	Recommendations you are tracking today
3	Recommendations tracked previously and concluded

For more information about this report, please contact

Contact Officer:	Dr Marion Gibbon
Title:	Assistant Director of Public Health
Telephone:	
E-Mail:	marion.gibbon@birmingham.gov.uk

Appendix ①: The Tracking Process

In making its assessment, the Committee may wish to consider:

- What progress/ key actions have been made against each recommendation?
- Are these actions pertinent to the measures required in the recommendation?
- Have the actions been undertaken within the time scale allocated?
- Are there any matters in the recommendation where progress is outstanding?
- Is the Committee satisfied that sufficient progress has been made and that the recommendation has been achieved?

Category	Criteria
1: Achieved (Fully)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has been fully implemented within the timescale specified.
2: Achieved (Late)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has been fully implemented but not within the timescale specified.
3: Not Achieved (Progress Made)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved, but there has been significant progress made towards full achievement. An anticipated date by which the recommendation is expected to become achieved must be advised.
4: Not Achieved (Obstacle)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved, but all possible action has been taken. Outstanding actions are prevented by obstacles beyond the control of the Council (such as passage of enabling legislation).
5: Not Achieved (Insufficient Progress)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved and there has been insufficient progress made towards full achievement. An anticipated date by which the recommendation is expected to become achieved must be advised.
6: In Progress	It is not appropriate to monitor achievement of the recommendation at this time because the timescale specified has not yet expired.

Appendix 2 : Progress with Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Original Date For Completion	Cabinet Member's Assessment
R02	That the City Council should: (1) declare its support for the pledge promoted by Girlguiding Birmingham to prevent stigma around periods; and (2) initiate a programme to tackle stigma around periods in the workplace centred on the City Council workforce and that ways of developing a wider programme for partner organisations and Small and Medium Enterprises, with special reference to sectors employing significant numbers of female employees in low pay sectors, be pursued.	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	September 2020	2
Evidence of Progress (and Anticipated Completion Date if 'Not Achieved')				
<p>(1) A paper outlining the Pledge and organisational expectations and actions for delivering on the Pledge, has been developed and is timetabled to go to Birmingham City Council's Corporate Leadership Team to discuss on 28th February 2022.</p> <p>(2) Birmingham City Council have now reviewed our family friendly offering. As part of that review, further workplace guidance has been issued about reproductive health in general, this includes reasonable adjustments for those experiencing menstrual pain and Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS). Manager guidance has been produced and approved by Cabinet for it to be implemented with the Health and Wellbeing Passports.</p> <p>In addition to this, progress has been made to meet this recommendation through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of period equality articles have begun, covering Menstruation and disability, LGBTQ+, pregnancy and post-partum, peri-menopause, cultural shame, period poverty, climate change, and myth busting. The first one can be found here: https://intranet.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/1457/period_equality%E2%80%93raising_awareness_to_tackle_the_stigma_of_menstruation The articles will be co-produced with internal staff Diversity Alliance Networks, including the Menopause, LGBTQ+ and Allies, and New Parent networks We are exploring opportunities to provide free period products for BCC employees in Council buildings Future discussions with HR about influencing HR policies, around time off for health issues relating to menstruation Links have been made with colleagues at the West Midlands Combined Authority, Thrive at Work Programme to understand how their workplace health and wellbeing accreditation addresses period poverty. They have identified that their accreditation does not currently cover this topic but that they would like to explore including it in their 'toolkit for employers' and also explore the possibility 				

of putting together a webinar on period poverty as part of a series of webinars that they are developing. Now that links have been made, it is hoped that best practice and innovation will be developed and shared going forward.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Original Date For Completion	Cabinet Member's Assessment
R03	That the feasibility of commissioning a research programme aimed at establishing the nature and extent of period poverty in Birmingham be explored. A further focus of this review should be on the impact of cultural attitudes and ways of widening 'period awareness' within a super-diverse city.	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	September 2020	3

Evidence of Progress (and Anticipated Completion Date if 'Not Achieved')

The topic of period poverty has been discussed with one of the seldom heard groups as to how we might take forward some research into this topic. However, at this time the focus for their work is on cultural compassion. We have agreed that the next piece of work that they undertake could consider this topic.

It has been agreed that one of the schools in West Birmingham will be holding a focus group to discuss periods and will include the topic of period poverty. A short report will be prepared which will be fed back to HOSC.

For information:

Papadopoulos [1] has defined culturally competent compassion as the human quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it using culturally appropriate and acceptable nursing/healthcare interventions which take into consideration both the patients' and the carers' cultural backgrounds as well as the context in which care is given.

<https://jcompassionatehc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40639-015-0012-5#article-info>

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Original Date For Completion	Cabinet Member's Assessment
R04	That ways of establishing a more collaborative approach to providing co-ordination and support to third sector organisations working to alleviate period poverty across the city be developed, with particular reference to accessing marginalised communities. This should include examining whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a programme to provide free period products to the full spectrum of homeless people and those in temporary or supported accommodation can be developed through the relevant support agencies; and (2) a central location in Birmingham for the storage of donated products by third sector organisations can be provided. 	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety & Equalities Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods	September 2020	3

Evidence of Progress (and Anticipated Completion Date if 'Not Achieved')

The November 2020 Tracking Report updated how R04 had been progressed:

'Reflecting the changing landscape of the past six months, and the evidence of period poverty being met across homeless services, including with TAWS as a significant distribution point...'

However, it identified further actions around an enquiry via Female Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

Thea Raisbeck an Honorary Research Fellow from the University of Birmingham prepared a supplementary briefing paper, which incorporated findings from her research not published within the *Violence Under Quiet Conditions* report. Recommendations from this paper have now been shared with and are being considered by colleagues from City Housing.

In addition, colleagues from City Housing (via Birmingham's Financial Inclusion Partnership) are now working with a community organisation named Cyster ([Our Campaigns – Cysters](#)). They run a campaign dedicated to alleviating period poverty and supplying free products. Advance Credit Union (BFIP partner) have agreed to provide city centre (Corporation Street) storage for Cysters donated products. The timeframe for continuing this provision is unknown at this stage as they are allowing use of some unused space in their new offices but it will be at least 6 months.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Original Date For Completion	Cabinet Member's Assessment
R05	That where a service is commissioned by the City Council the possibility of including a clause about alleviating period poverty and raising period awareness be considered for inclusion in future contracts wherever appropriate.	Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	September 2020	2

Evidence of Progress (and Anticipated Completion Date if 'Not Achieved')

The paragraph below has been added to the Charter guidance document available on BCC website pages [here](#) and available to all bidders.

'Period poverty' (or menstrual hygiene management, MHM) refers to having a lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints. It is a harsh reflection of poverty and inequality which is often suffered in silence. Consider donating products to food banks and working with schools to provide free products to those who need it. The Active Wellbeing Society (theaws.co.uk) can provide more information and provide ways that you can donate locally.

The guidance document is also posted on the MS Teams Social Value Channel. This channel is used to inform commissioning and procurement colleagues and will ensure that they consider, where relevant, including period poverty as a specific area for attention in their social value specification.

Appendix ③: Concluded Recommendations

These recommendations have been tracked previously and concluded.

They are presented here for information only.

concluded

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility	Date Concluded by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Tracking Assessment
R01	That a plan be developed, aimed at supporting schools and teachers in educating and informing students about period poverty and period awareness. This plan should, in particular, deal with stigma and provide information about the range of products, including reusable products available and their use and disposal.	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills & Culture	November 2020	1
R06	That an assessment of progress against the recommendations in this report be presented to the Health & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	November 2020	1