

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

6 NOVEMBER 2018

UPDATE ON PERIOD POVERTY IN MEDWAY

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Summary

On 11 September 2018, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered a report on period poverty in Medway following referral of the matter by the Council. This report outlined the results of the initial research and investigation into the prevalence and impact of period poverty in Medway.

At this meeting the Board requested a briefing note be provided within 28 days setting out the outcome of a mapping exercise to determine schools based provision and requested a further update report be presented to the Board on 6 November 2018.

This report provides an update on current provision of advice and support in relation to access to sanitary products for girls in Medway's Schools.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 This report is consistent with the Medway Council Plan which outlines the Council's ambition to support all of its residents and including young people to realise their potential through the provision of services and initiatives that will help Medway become a healthier and safer place to live. Supporting healthy resilient families and the ambition that every child achieves their potential in schools.

2. Background

2.1 The term 'period poverty' is defined as 'women not having sanitary products because they cannot afford them or do not have adequate access to them'.

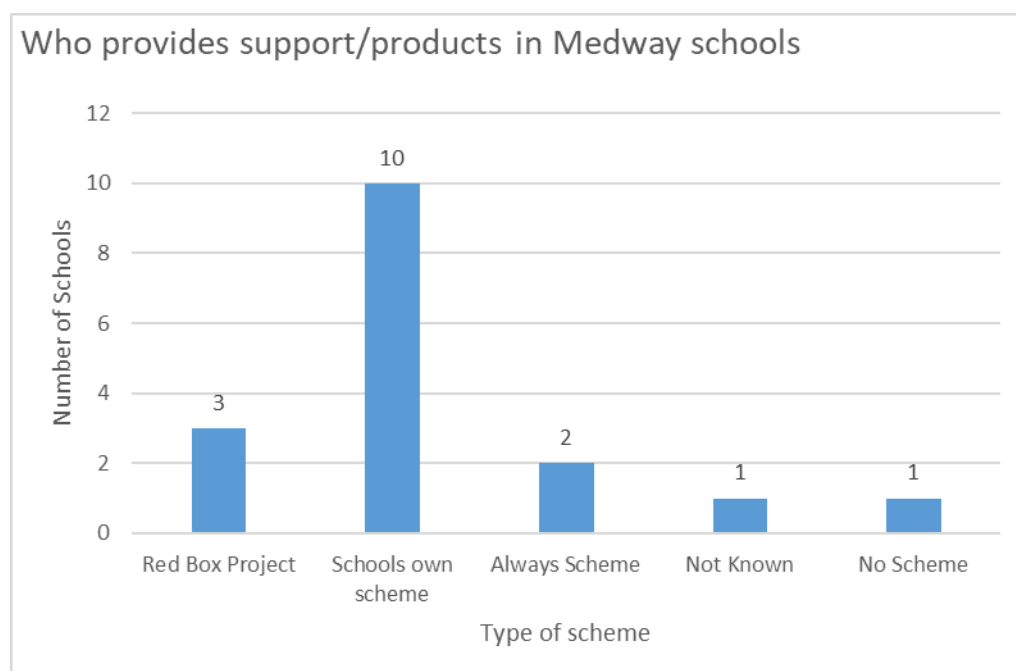
- 2.2 At their meeting on 26 April 2018, the Council recognised the importance of the issue of period poverty and resolved to refer the matter to the Health and Wellbeing Board for further in depth discussion (item 970A).
- 2.3 On 11 September 2018, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered a report which outlined the results of the initial research and investigation into the prevalence and impact of period poverty in Medway, the minutes of which are set out at minute no. 358 of agenda item 2. At this meeting the Board requested a briefing note be provided within 28 days setting out the outcome of a mapping exercise to determine schools based provision and requested a further update report be presented to the Board on 6 November 2018.

3. Advice and analysis

3.1 Following the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 11 September 2018, the Public Health Team have undertaken additional research on the availability of sanitary products in Medway secondary schools and the protocols that schools used to facilitate access to such products for pupils attending schools. The findings are as follows:

3.1.1 All 17 Medway secondary schools were contacted during September/October and all responded to the survey questions. Out of the 17 settings only one school did not have in house provision of sanitary products for pupils. This was an all-boys school, however it did have a cohort of sixth form girls (as set out in Figure 1 of the report). This school said they would happily work with the Council or another provider to develop an offer for the sixth form if this was required.

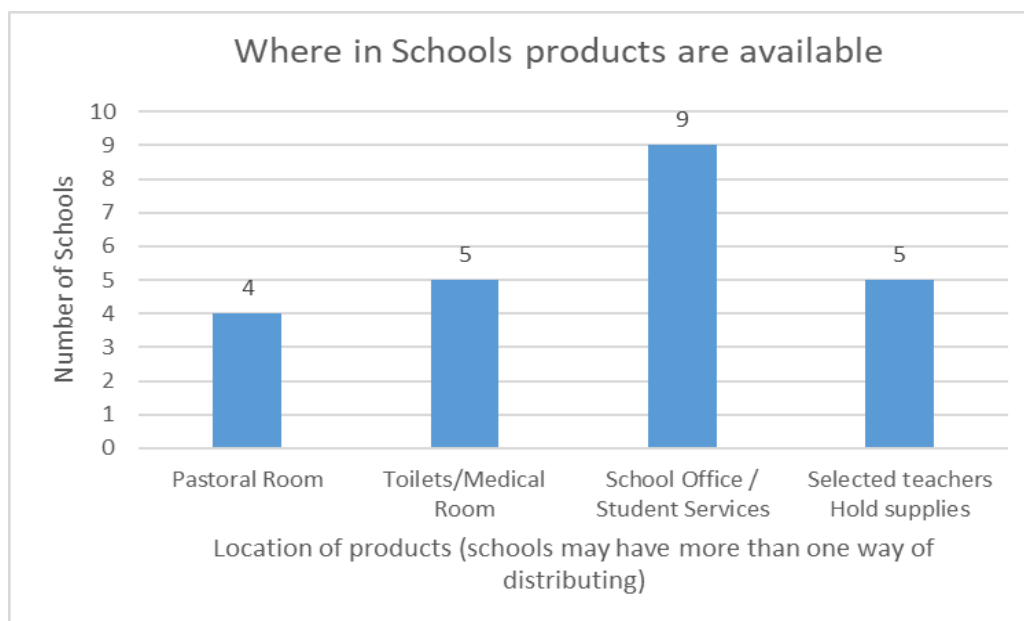
Figure 1



3.1.2 The majority of Medway schools have their own schemes which involve different ways of sourcing girl's sanitary products. This includes schools purchasing products themselves, teacher donation, parent donation, young person donation or taking up free trials with some of the large manufacturers e.g. Tampax/Always.

3.1.3 Where schools provided sanitary products, they are available in a variety of locations (as set out in Figure 2 of the report).

Figure 2



3.1.4 All 17 schools said they would be happy to work with Medway Council to enhance their offer and would be interested in any training programmes if available.

3.1.5 Most schools said they do not monitor take up of products but refresh stock when they are low. Schools that did monitor, said its uptake was between 10 and 15 products a week. Two schools also allow parents to access products but do not know if they are for their own use or for the young people.

3.1.6 Some schools advertise that products are available with posters and leaflets, others make them available on request.

3.1.7 Two schools clearly stated that although products are available for students in their setting they did not feel that Period Poverty was an issue locally for their pupils.

3.1.8 Some schools stated the Red Box Project had been in contact since the start of the autumn term to discuss new projects.

3.2 In conclusion, schools in Medway already do a lot of work to ensure pupils can access sanitary products. These products are made available in different parts of the school. The majority of schools have proactively tackled this issue themselves, whilst others have made use of schemes such as the Red Box Project and Always "About You" campaign. Schools were all keen to work with

Medway Council to further enhance the offer and improve accessibility for pupils and understanding of the issue for staff and parents.

- 3.3 Using this information, the Public Health Team are proactively discussing the next steps and looking at ideas on how to enhance the significant amount of work that is already happening locally in schools, Early Help hubs and other settings. Further meetings have been arranged with MY Trust and Medway Foodbanks both who are keen to work closely on this agenda, and so we can collaboratively look at developing this area of work further. We hope to engage with other organisations such as Red Box Project and Always community scheme to further enhance the local offer.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Young People missing school as a result of Period Poverty	There is a risk that if products are not available and that staff and young people are not educated about supporting/managing issues surrounding menstruation then young people may miss school/education.	Schools have been surveyed and all mixed or girl's secondary schools are providing products free at the point of access. Some learning materials are available in the RSE and PSHE package that is available to all Medway Schools.	D3

5. Consultation

- 5.1 As discussed at the September Health and Wellbeing Board, professionals and young people have been consulted on this research project. The findings show some evidence that Period Poverty maybe present in Medway but its prevalence appears to be low. In the main Schools and settings are doing very positive work to support young people in Medway around this agenda.
- 5.2 Future work needs to be built into existing health work undertaken in schools and should look at the issues around awareness and understanding of periods from young people and professionals and supporting settings to develop schemes to access products easily and discretely where and when required. Co-production with young people will be key to future work on this issue and plans to work with MY Trust and Medway Youth Service are being developed.

6. Financial and Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial and legal implications arising directly from this report.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

7.1.1 note the updated research and feedback from schools set out at section 3 of the report; and

7.1.2 support the next steps including:

- mainstreaming the provision of advice and support in relation to access to sanitary products and normalising menstruation through the development of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) support for Medway's schools; and
- taking a systematic, multi-agency approach to continuing and developing the good work already happening in Medway as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

Record of the meeting Council - 26 April 2018

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=17939>

Record of the meeting Health and Wellbeing Board – 11 September 2018

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=19546>