

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1177
Ein cyf/Our ref: JH-/10313/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
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6 August 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 22 July regarding Petition P-06-1177: Provide Free Period Products for all Menstruating People in Wales.

Period poverty and period dignity are important issues which, directly and indirectly, affect the lives of so many people across Wales. For too long, having a period has meant that some people miss out on education, employment or social activities. It can affect physical or mental health. This is unacceptable.

Periods remain a subject which is often misunderstood, not talked about and linked to stigma, myths and embarrassment. We are working to change this. Our Programme for Government includes commitments to embed period dignity in schools and to expand out free period provision in communities and the private sector. This demonstrates our continued commitment to tackle this issue and builds on the work we have been doing over recent years.

We have provided funding to tackle period poverty and address period dignity since 2018 and currently provide over £3.3million per year to ensure free period products are available in schools, further education colleges and communities across Wales.

We ask that period products are made available in the most dignified way possible to ensure that situations such as that described by the petitioner, when an individual has to ask for a period product, can be avoided whenever possible. We have not been prescriptive

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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.

in how this is achieved and know that a range of methods are being used across Wales which include, for example, coin free dispensers and subscription services where products are dispatched directly to an individual's home address.

We are also driving a move towards reusable and plastic-free period products through our funding. This is a relatively small measure which could have an important environmental impact. Such change often takes time but the progress we have already made in this area demonstrates that there is clearly a demand for eco-friendly product options.

Whilst the provision of free products to those most in need is an essential first step in tackling period poverty and addressing period dignity, I know there is more to do.

I chair the Period Dignity Roundtable which comprises stakeholders from the public, private and third sector across Wales. The work of the group has been invaluable as it enables Welsh Government to hear directly from the people on the ground across Wales – to hear what the issues are, to learn more about what is working well and what we could do better.

Last year, prior to the pandemic, Welsh Government officials held a workshop with a range of stakeholders, including members of the Period Dignity Roundtable, to inform future policy. From this, we began to develop a draft Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan. Unfortunately, the final development of the plan was impacted by Covid-19 and its publication was delayed. My officials are now working at pace to revise the plan and publish for consultation later this year.

It is crucial that the Strategic Action Plan sets out the Welsh Government approach to ensuring period dignity in Wales and that the Plan is grounded in a commitment to work across Government, and with stakeholders, to develop and deliver a series of wide ranging, holistically intersecting actions.

Provision of free products in as wide a range of settings as possible is an important part of our vision as this helps ensure access to products whenever needed. However, we know that we will not move towards period dignity without addressing a broader range of issues. The Plan will include a wide range of actions linked to education, health, tackling period poverty, access to appropriate facilities and environmental issues. It will aim to tackle the stigma, myths, misunderstandings and lack of knowledge which persist as this will be key to ensuring people understand periods, are confident to talk about them and seek help or advice when needed, whether they have periods or not.

I would welcome the views of the petitioner as part of the consultation on the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan in the autumn.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke above the first letter.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

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