

Period dignity strategic action plan

The Board of Community Health Councils (the Board) is pleased to submit this consultation response on behalf of the Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales.

CHCs are independent bodies that reflect the views and represent the interests of people living in Wales in their National Health Service (NHS). CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design, planning and delivery of NHS services.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one is made up of local volunteer members who live in the communities they serve, supported by a small team of paid staff. Each CHC:

- Carries out regular visits to health services to hear from people using the service (and the people providing care) to influence the changes that can make a big difference
- Reaches out more widely to people within local communities to provide information, and to gather views and experiences of NHS services.
- CHCs use what they hear to check how services are performing overall and to make sure the NHS takes action to make things better where this is needed
- Gets involved with health service managers when they are thinking about making changes to the way services are

delivered so that people and communities have their say from the start

- Provides a complaints advocacy service that is free, independent and confidential to help people to raise their concerns about NHS care and treatment.

The Board of CHCs (the Board) exists to support, assist, advise and manage the performance of CHCs. It represents the collective views of CHCs across Wales.

Consultation questions

Question 1 - Do you agree with the vision for period dignity outlined in the plan? What suggestions would you make to improve it?

We agree with the vision. We feel the impact of the vision and proposed actions will demonstrate how important this issue is for anyone who experiences a period.

We are pleased that the vision supports the recognition that period education should not end in the brief teenage years. We also support the recognition that many people suffer in silence until other health issues present themselves in later life. This demonstrates that problems relating to the cycle of a period are misunderstood or missed entirely.

We agree that the stigma or shame associated with periods, whether that is period poverty or period related health issues, should end and people need access to the right information and products wherever they find themselves.

CHCs would be interested in understanding the membership and terms of reference for the Ministerial Period Dignity Roundtable especially in terms of how their continuous engagement with children and young people will develop over the 5 years.

Action (1) `via the membership of the roundtable group, children, young people and adults will have a voice and a platform through which to engage with Welsh Government and Ministers and to raise emerging issues

and issues that matter to them and consider possible solutions'

Question 2 - How achievable is the vision within the next five years? What will prevent achievement of the vision and what may help to realise the vision?

We think that the vision is achievable within 5 years with the necessary in-depth education resources being delivered upfront across all Welsh business/education/public/private sectors.

We also recognise that there is a possibility that the vision may not be realised without:

- properly resourcing
- awareness/education raising
- culture change
- access to products and,
- leadership buy in.

The action plan could go further to acknowledge the reality that some children reach puberty and start their period before secondary school. The action plan could offer more detail on the early years support / education on periods that will be offered to children under the age of 11, their parents and educators.

Question 3 - The Plan is structured by policy theme. Are there themes or specific actions missing from the plan? What are these and whose responsibility are they?

We support the actions within the plan.

We look forward to seeing more information in relation to action 5 which looks to develop a period dignity communications strategy: aimed at ending stigma and taboo related to periods, open up wider conversations around periods for all regardless of age or gender. Also, we are interested in how the communications plan will be drafted with direct input from those who have periods and how these individuals will be reached.

As part of the communications plan, it would also be interesting to hear the views of others affected indirectly to understand the impact it may have on those individuals living, working and/or studying with those who have periods.

We think the role of educators and supporting how parents inform their children (of all genders) about periods will have an impact on changing the culture and ending the stigma. This has the potential of a longer term influence in the work place and society in later life.

Question 4 - Does the Period Dignity Strategic Action plan adequately respond to the intersection between period dignity and period poverty with protected characteristics and the experience of socio economic disadvantage. If not, how can we improve this?

Yes, we agree the action plan responds to the intersection between period dignity and period poverty with protected characteristics and the experience of socio economic disadvantage.

The continued targeting and engagement with those who have protected characteristics and a focus on people's life experiences is key to bridging the gap and allowing everyone the same opportunities.

Question 5 - What more should the Welsh Government do in relation to broader health based issues such perimenopause, the menopause, endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) and gynaecological cancers. Do you believe these actions should be included in the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan or in other policy work?

It is helpful to see other period related health issues highlighted such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), and gynaecological cancers.

It's worth highlighting that the impacts of severe period experiences/related health issues are physical and mental. Any policies developed should be clear that ease of access to products, health services or reasonable adjustments in education or the workplace should recognise physical and mental health needs.

Period related issues or other health issues related to periods is a silent dominating issue for people who have severe experiences. A current lack of understanding or support in the workplace is likely to mean people who require additional support may keep quiet about the real issue being experienced.

Some women spend years not realising they suffer from endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), or another major health problem because they have confused it with Pre-Menstrual Stress (PMS).

CHCs have highlighted that workplace policies are needed to support employers and employees about these issues.

Question 6 - We would like to know your views on the effects that the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

We support the need for those people with period related issues to be able to access products and/or health care in their chosen language. We agree that the Welsh Language should be treated no less favourably than English. Services and information related to period dignity and period poverty should be bilingual where possible.

We support the need for those people with period related issues to be able to access products and/or health care in Welsh or English.

Question 7 - Please also explain how you believe the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Explore the possibility for the Ministerial Period Dignity Roundtable and Welsh Government Equality and Communications teams to work with/link in with the Welsh Language Standardisation Panel to ensure parity and standardising of mainstream terminology of both languages.

Question 8 - We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

We support the need for those people with period related issues to be able to access products and/or health care in their chosen language. This also includes providing written information in other languages (not just Welsh and English) and an easy read format.

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