

ACCESS TO FREE SANITARY PRODUCTS WORKING GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING, 12 OCTOBER 2017

Present:

Shirley Laing, Deputy Director, Social Justice & Regeneration Division (Chair)
 Rosie Whelan, Social Justice & Regeneration Division
 Graeme MacLennan, Social Justice & Regeneration Division (Secretariat)
 Leia Fitzgerald, Higher Education and Science
 Joanne Briggs, Education Analytical Services
 Catriona Rooke, Communities Analysis Division
 Phil Alcock, Health & Wellbeing Unit
 Moira McNaught, Collaborative & Scottish Government Procurement Division
 Jonathan Moore, Empowering Schools Unit
 Dan Wedgwood, Universities Scotland
 Jane O'Donnell, COSLA
 Risga Carson, National Union of Students

Apologies:

Jackie McAllister, Head of Social Justice Delivery Unit, Social Justice & Regeneration Division
 David McArthur, Social Justice & Regeneration Division
 Liz Shevlin, Colleges, Young Workforce and SFC Sponsorship
 Vonnie Sandlan, Colleges Scotland
 Laura Caven, COSLA
 Shuwanna Aaron, National Union of Students
 Fiona Burns, Scottish Funding Council

	Discussion/Decisions taken	Action
1.	<p>Welcome/introductions Shirley Laing (SL) welcomed the Group, followed by round-table introductions.</p>	
2.	<p>Purpose SL confirmed that the purpose of the Working Group was to support the implementation and delivery of the Programme for Government commitment to provide access to free sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities and to consider further action following the completion of the Aberdeen pilot.</p> <p>To give further background and context, SL noted the proposed Private Members Bill from Monica Lennon MSP which would place duties on local authorities (LAs), colleges and universities to provide free sanitary products, and on Scottish Ministers to implement universal access.</p> <p>SL also highlighted the significant media interest in the “period poverty” campaign.</p>	
3.	<p>Terms of Reference Rosie Whelan (RW) spoke to this item. There was broad agreement from the Group on the Terms of Reference.</p>	

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	<p>The following additional Group memberships were suggested: suppliers of sanitary products, a representative for young people, such as the Scottish Youth Parliament or Children’s Commissioner, and from the transgender network. RW confirmed that she was already in touch with transgender colleagues and that other relevant interests would be consulted as required as the work develops. It was therefore agreed that core members were already in place. Jonathan Moore (JM) noted that his team has previously worked closely with the Children’s Commissioner and could lend the benefit of that experience.</p> <p>A discussion followed on what dignified provision might look like and whether providing access through dispensers would achieve this, particularly in schools. RW confirmed that SG is not proposing a prescriptive approach; rather, it would be for local partners to agree local delivery arrangements, ensuring alignment with the policy principles (which would be agreed by the working group). Scottish Government also highlighted the small-scale local activity already underway in response to the issue e.g. schools in North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire College and the opportunity to learn from and build on these. Early indications are that local approaches will be the most effective way forward. Additionally, Catriona Rooke (CR) noted that the pilot scheme in Aberdeen will provide feedback from students on different approaches. Jane O’Donnell (JOD) welcomed the proposed local approach, which others endorsed.</p> <p>On timescales, SL noted that the First Minister stated at SNP Conference that the commitment “will be delivered from the start of the new academic year next August.” SL acknowledged the challenging nature of the timescales around that commitment – whilst the Scottish Government ambition and aspiration is 100% coverage by August 2018 there is recognition that this is dependent on local circumstances and infrastructure hence the need for information and support from working group members to identify the current position, local delivery trajectories, and any issues or obstacles which either working group partners or Scottish Government can help remove. Such information will inform whether full coverage is achievable by August 2018, and if not will provide us with a clear understanding of what is achievable and when 100% coverage will happen.</p> <p>JOD highlighted provision in primary schools and during holidays as other issues to be considered (see items 4 and 6 below).</p>	
4.	<p>Policy Requirements</p> <p>There was some discussion about which schools should be in scope of the commitment; RW suggested that existing funding arrangements for schools offered an established model. JM indicated there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some 2,500 LA-administered schools funded by SG via the block grant to COSLA; • around 10 grant-aided schools funded by SG to provide special education services; • Jordanhill School, which is wholly funded by SG; and 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approximately 100 independent schools that receive no SG funding. <p>SL confirmed that early thinking is that the PfG commitment relates to those schools currently funded by SG (so independent schools would likely be out of scope), but that the Empowering Schools Unit would investigate and report back to the working group. From the group discussion the general view was primary schools should be in scope. SL stated further work will be done on all of this and flagged that final decisions on scope would be a matter for Ministers informed by working group thinking.</p>	<p>JM to confirm info on SG grant funded schools.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Engagement Approach & Galvanising Action</p> <p>SL noted the importance of a collaborative approach across the sectors to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place to facilitate delivery from August 2018. She indicated that the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities would hold a meeting with key stakeholders soon after autumn recess – COSLA, Scottish Funding Council, Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland – to galvanise their support both at leadership level, and with practical support to mobilise their respective sectors. Ms Constance would also write to sector leaders in LAs, colleges and universities setting out her expectations and seeking their support and action to make the commitment a reality. Directors of Education, College Principals and University Secretaries were identified as the appropriate leaders.</p> <p>Reflecting on the positive pre-meet Social Justice colleagues had with the SFC, SL asked that COSLA and Universities Scotland also support SG by gathering information, specifically in relation to local implementation plans. COSLA and US confirmed their support, cautioning the need for Scottish Government to be precise and proportionate about the information requested.</p> <p>SL committed to SG colleagues analysing the data already gathered about activity currently underway in schools, colleges and universities and producing a brief for circulation in the next few weeks. It was agreed that all working group members would consider what extra information or local data they could provide to further inform that analysis, also in advance of the next meeting.</p>	<p>CR to produce a brief. WG members to submit any extra info to the secretariat before next meeting.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Draft Work Programme and Critical Milestones</p> <p>RW gave a rundown of the draft work plan. JOD queried if funding to LAs would be part of the block grant or a separate funding stream. RW noted that funding arrangements were still being considered, but that she expected separate funding would be put in place initially.</p> <p>In order to maintain momentum given the very challenging timescales, it was agreed working group members would work either individually or with Scottish Government in between working group meetings. SL</p>	<p>RW to confirm funding distribution options with SG Local Govt Finance.</p>

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	<p>indicated her expectation that different working group members will lead on different agenda items as our collective work progressed. She also acknowledged that working group members had not had much time to consider the meeting papers and requested that they consider aspects of the work plan such as evaluation, risks, etc. and feedback on these to the working group secretariat in advance of the next meeting.</p> <p>On delivery options, PA highlighted (1) the potentially different approaches that would be taken by schools depending on rural/urban location; (2) the gap in provision during school holidays; and (3) potential risks around the use of dispensers due to behavioural issues/ vandalism in schools.</p> <p>Dan Wedgewood (DW) queried whether ‘access’ to free products is defined as being <i>in</i> schools, colleges and universities or for students of these establishments. SL noted the distinction and confirmed that Scottish Government will would clarify this point.</p> <p>There was some concern that the use of dispensers may be stigmatising rather than dignified – particularly for primary school pupils and those who may need to get products regularly. Moira McNaught (MM) suggested that focus groups should be run to identify pupils’ preferences around dignity and choice; it was noted that Ipsos Mori had experience of this sort of sensitive issue, should SG wish to pursue this.</p> <p>DW asked why delivery could not be universal from the outset. SL explained that due to the lack of data around the scale of the issue, Scottish Government wants to take an incremental approach informed by learning from the evaluation of the Aberdeen pilot and learning in delivering the schools/college/university commitment.</p>	<p>WG members to consider work plan and feed back to WG secretariat.</p> <p>RW to clarify.</p> <p>SG to consider merit of asking YoungScot/ SYP/Ipsos Mori/others of running focus groups with young people</p>
7.	<p>Funding Distribution Model</p> <p>CR talked through elements required to develop an appropriate funding distribution model and asked if there was any other elements to consider. Other than take-up, which it was noted could only be estimated at this stage and which Scottish Government would review as necessary, no additional elements were suggested by working group members.</p> <p>DW asked if Scottish Government funding for the commitment was guaranteed. SL reiterated that this is a key priority for PfG and the expectation is that it will be funded at least for an initial period, but noted that this is a matter for Ministers as part of the on-going Spending Review process and so details could not be confirmed at this stage.</p>	
8.	<p>AOB</p>	
9.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The Working Group secretariat will circulate a Doodle poll to identify the date of the next meeting – in approximately one month’s time.</p>	<p>GM to issue Doodle poll</p>

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