

Press release: Period Poverty Taskforce – Minister announces next steps on Menstrual Hygiene Day



On Menstrual Hygiene Day (28 May) Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt, has announced two co-chairs to help lead the government's new Period Poverty Taskforce.

- Taskforce to be co-chaired by Plan International UK, Procter & Gamble and Minister for Women & Equalities, Penny Mordaunt
- Group to tackle stigma and education around periods, alongside accessibility of period products
- News comes after recent government announcements on free period products in schools, hospitals and police custody

Plan International UK, Procter and Gamble, and the Government Equalities Office (GEO) will work together with charities and businesses across a range of sectors to develop a comprehensive and sustainable response to period poverty in the UK.

In recent months the government has announced that period products in schools, hospitals and police custody will be free for women and girls. Taskforce will build on this work, looking at where accessibility is an issue for women and girls, but also seeking to tackle the issue of stigma and education around periods.

Research from co-chair of the Taskforce, Plan International UK highlights that tackling stigma and shame around periods is just as important as creating access to related products, the research shows:

- 71% of girls reported that they had felt embarrassed when buying period products,
- 1 in 7 even girls have also admitted that they “didn’t know what was happening” when they started their periods

- 27% of girls have overused a sanitary product as they couldn't afford a fresh one

Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt said:

“For too long women and girls in the UK have faced unnecessary adversity around their periods, that is why we have formed this new Taskforce.

“Our two new co-Chairs, Plan International UK and Procter & Gamble, have already produced impressive work around the country to improve access to period products and change old-fashioned attitudes to menstruation and break down taboos.

“Now, working together on the Period Poverty Taskforce, we can take action to create a strong and viable solution to period poverty in the UK.”

Tanya Barron, Chief Executive at Plan International UK, said:

“We warmly welcome the chance to co-chair the Government's new Taskforce committed to tackling period poverty and stigma.

“This is a golden opportunity to tackle the root causes of period poverty here in the UK, namely the high-cost of period products, lack of education and the stigma and shame that surrounds periods.

“As co-chairs, we'll be working hard to make sure the voices of UK girls are heard and that any course of action reflects their needs and concerns. Together we can put an end to period poverty and stigma once and for all.”

Aimee Goldsmith, Company Communications Director, Procter & Gamble Northern Europe said:

“Always aims to champion girls' confidence through puberty education, access to products and tackling societal barriers. This ambition is in line with the Government's new Taskforce initiative and we feel privileged to be able to work together to eliminate period poverty in a sustainable way.

“We look forward to co-chair the Taskforce and partner with all participants across sectors to build on the breadth of knowledge and experience, in order to empower girls in the UK to unleash their full potential. Without period poverty and taboos holding them back.”

The Taskforce will also look at the evidence and data around how period poverty affects different groups in society, as well as considering the role of education, access, costs, communications and role models in shifting social attitudes.

Alongside Plan International and Procter & Gamble the Taskforce will include members from grass-root organisations, businesses, public bodies and consult with academics, social enterprises, retailers and manufacturers, using their expertise to drive this vital work.

Further information:

Research by Plan International found that:

- 79% of girls and young women have experienced symptoms linked to their period that concerned them but they haven't seen a doctor or health professional
- 27% haven't seen a doctor or health professional about their concerns because they felt too embarrassed
- 22% in the UK feel comfortable talking about their period with their teacher
- One in 10 girls have been asked not to talk about their periods with their mother

Notes to Editors:

- Announced shortly before International Women's Day, the Taskforce is the first of its kind in the UK. It will meet for the first time shortly
- The Taskforce areas are: tackling stigma and shame through education, working on data and evidence, and improving access to period products for all women and girls
- Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt launched the seed-funding for the Period Poverty Taskforce in March this year. Her speech can be found [here in full](#)
- Plan International data comes from Opinium Research of representative weighted sample of 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21, carried out online between 22-24 August 2017 and 23 February to 2 March 2018

Press release: Offender rehabilitation drive boosted by new ROTL rules

- One year since prison Education and Employment Strategy, 230 additional businesses have joined the New Futures Network to hire ex-offenders
- 81% of firms say employing offenders has helped their business
- New rules to widen prisoner access to employment through widened use of release on temporary licence (ROTL)
- Evidence shows ex-prisoners in work less likely to reoffend – cutting the £15 billion cost to the economy

Also announced today is a change in rules to allow prison Governors greater autonomy to grant Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) to offenders following a rigorous risk assessment. This will allow them more opportunities to work and train with employers while serving their sentence and increase their chances of securing an immediate job on release.

[Research shows](#) time spent working in the community before release significantly reduces a prisoner's likelihood of reoffending – cutting the £15 billion cost to the taxpayer each year and helping to keep the public

safer. Ex-offenders in employment are up to nine percentage points less likely to commit further crime.

The drive to reduce reoffending through rehabilitation has worked alongside investment of hundreds of millions of pounds since the beginning of 2018 to increase stability in prisons – with latest statistics showing an 11% fall in violence in the last quarter of 2018 compared to the previous quarter.

Earlier this month, the Justice Secretary announced a fundamental reform of the probation system to ensure that rehabilitation, support into work, treatment and housing is continued for ex-offenders when they leave prison.

The changes to probation will also ensure that community sentences focused on security and rehabilitation and will enable a move away from ineffective short prison sentences – after which two thirds of offenders go on to commit more crime – and allow more effective treatment for issues such as addiction and mental health problems.

As part of the wider drive to enhance rehabilitation, the Education and Employment Strategy, launched in May 2018, set out a series of measures to boost prisoners' skills while in custody and improve their chances of securing work on release. One year on from this:

- More than 230 businesses have registered to work with prisons and set offenders on a path to employment. This is further to the 300 businesses around the UK already seeing the benefits of employing ex-offenders.
- Prison Governors have been given greater autonomy to grant Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) to offenders following a thorough risk assessment.
- The New Futures Network was launched in October 2018 as a new specialist part of the Prison Service, to build partnerships between prisons and employers. This is designed to fill local skills gaps in companies by providing job opportunities for men and women on release from custody. The Network will have an employment broker in every geographical prison group by July 2019.
- A new £250,000 construction academy opened at HMP Leeds last week – to equip offenders in Yorkshire with valuable skills ahead of release.
- Jails now have access to the Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System – giving Governors power to commission services from a wide variety of educational providers, charities and businesses. So far more than 230 suppliers have successfully been added to the system and 30 contracts have been awarded by Governors.
- Suppliers will aim to drive more offenders into the classroom with nearly 88% of prisoners achieving a recognised award from educational bodies in the 2017/18 academic year.

New polling from YouGov suggests that businesses are supportive of employing those with a criminal record:

- 81% of employers agree that employing ex-offenders has helped their business
- two thirds of companies that employ ex-offenders would recommend others

do the same

- 79% of people think that businesses employing ex-offenders are making a positive contribution to society
- three out of four people would be comfortable buying from a business that employs ex-offenders

Research shows time spent working in the community before release significantly reduces a prisoner's likelihood of reoffending – cutting the £15 billion cost to the taxpayer each year and helping to keep the public safe. Ex-offenders in employment are up to nine percentage points less likely to commit further crime.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Broadening access to training and work opportunities is a vital part of our strategy to steer offenders away from a life of crime and ultimately keep the public safe.

Many organisations are recognising the value of giving offenders a second chance, and we have carefully listened to their feedback before making these changes.

I urge more businesses to join this movement and help ex-offenders turn their backs on crime for good.

As part of the Education and Employment Strategy, prison Governors now have greater flexibility to get prisoners from open and women's jails into the workplace.

Offenders will now be eligible for paid work immediately after they have passed a tough risk assessment. Getting offenders into work earlier will boost their prospects of securing immediate work on release.

Leading hospitality and hotel business Greene King has committed to employing 50 offenders by the end of 2019, working with prisons in the North West and London.

Explaining how employing offenders through ROTL can benefit their business, Greene King's Greg Sage, said:

We've started working with ex-offenders and people coming towards the end of their sentence because it allows us to secure a pipeline of talent coming into our business, at the same time as helping people start again as they leave prison.

In the hospitality industry there is a nationwide shortage of kitchen staff – kitchen managers and chefs particularly – that we at Greene King are not immune to.

Press release: New UK aid for safe and dignified burials to tackle Ebola in DRC

Harriett Baldwin MP, UK Minister for Africa, has announced new funding to help deal with the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on a four-day visit to the country.

It is the first visit by any UK Minister to the country since the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu and Ituri provinces began last August. The UK remains one of the largest donors to the outbreak and has taken the threat of Ebola seriously since the start.

On Monday she announced that new UK aid funds would be provided to the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to help carry out safe and dignified burials.

Bodies of Ebola victims are particularly infectious, with transmission of the disease often occurring at funerals where people help wash their loved ones before interment. Burials have been a contentious issue in DRC as Ebola victims are put in body bags and cannot be touched.

The new DFID support will provide IFRC burial teams with essential equipment – including gloves, hand disinfectant, masks, protective gowns, goggles, decontamination sprayers, stretchers and rope, as well as biohazardous body bags. The newly introduced body bags will also come with a clear plastic window so that relatives can see their loved one as they're laid to rest.

One of the major barriers in tackling the Ebola outbreak has been a breakdown of trust between the affected community and those trying to lead the response. This new support will help local people better understand the precautions and preventative measures they need to take at funerals.

Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin said:

The situation on the ground in DRC is extremely precarious. Health workers are operating in a dangerous context, but there is also a lot of mistrust among the community, with some believing that Ebola is not real. We must help change that.

We learnt from the West Africa outbreak that safe burial practices were a real turning point in gripping the crisis. This new UK aid funding I'm announcing today will help build trust in affected communities by improving local understanding of the work of the burial teams.

We are also calling on our international partners to step up to help fill the funding gap. The UK has been a major donor to the response and we need others to follow our lead – after all, disease does not respect borders.

IFRC Secretary General, Elhadj As Sy said:

This outbreak has reached a tipping point. We need to double down on our efforts to contain, control and end this outbreak. Community engagement and accountability will be critical for an effective response.

We thank the UK government for its support. It will ensure that Red Cross volunteers – all of whom come from the affected area – can maintain their engagement with communities, understanding their fears and concerns and adapting our response accordingly and appropriately.

DRC is battling the second largest Ebola outbreak in history and the first-ever in a conflict zone, with more than 70 armed groups operating in the east of the country. The number of cases has surpassed 1,800 and the death toll has exceeded 1,200.

Given the deteriorating situation, the International Development Secretary announced last week that the UK would be providing more funds and sending more UK experts to help strengthen the response.

After the West Africa outbreak in 2014, DFID funded the trial of a vaccine, which has been used during the current outbreak to great effect to vaccinate people who have been in contact with confirmed Ebola cases. The UK has also provided technical expertise through the UK Public Health England Rapid Support Team, and funding to help neighbouring countries prepare should the deadly virus spread across borders.

Notes to editors

- The Government of DRC has requested that donors do not announce specific funding figures to avoid putting first-line responders at further risk of attack.
- The UK is calling for a new, stronger approach to responding to the Ebola outbreak, including tackling the mistrust of communities, which have suffered decades of conflict, and in some cases do not believe Ebola is real.
- The World Health Organisation assesses the risk of regional spread as

very high, particularly to neighbouring countries (South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi).

- Public Health England considers the risk to the UK to be very low/negligible.
- To download photos from IFRC activities in North Kivu please click [here](#).
- The IFRC's Safe and Dignified Burial teams tend to comprise of six specially trained volunteers. The kits provided will enable them to carry out 20 burials.
- Kits for burials in North Kivu contain:
 - 200 disposable gloves
 - 200 metres of rope
 - 120 masks
 - 100 biohazardous material bags
 - 80 hoods with integrated masks
 - 80 hooded coveralls
 - 50 disposable protective gowns
 - 6 goggles
 - 6 heavy duty reusable aprons
 - 6 chemical protection gloves
 - 1 stretcher
 - 1 backpack sprayer that can contain 12 litres of disinfectant

ENDS

News story: Education Secretary: "Character and resilience are key to social mobility"

Having a go at new activities and learning from failure will boost children's character and resilience, the Education Secretary has said today.

A new advisory group of experts in character education has been set up to look at how best to support schools to run more activities, which will help build character and resilience.

Alongside this Mr Hinds has called on young people, parents, teachers and community groups to give their views on what they think are the best non-academic activities to offer young people and how to make the most of them, as well as the traits and skills they need to get on in life.

Finding the right balance between academic study and other activities is crucial to helping young people achieve their goals, overcome challenges and develop their readiness for adulthood, aiming to help the most disadvantaged to compete more equally with their advantaged peers in the labour market.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It's a good time of year to remind pupils that in 10 years' time their exam results might be a distant memory – but the life skills they acquire will stay with them forever.

Of course, I want every child to excel at school and do well in their exams – but this is just one part of how education prepares them for the future. Through school and college, young people gain the skills and qualifications they need to get a well-paid job, but to truly prepare for adult life we also need to make sure our young people build character and resilience.

Life lessons are learned by having a go. With all of us – but particularly young people – spending more and more time online, we should all put our phones down, look up and get involved in activities that stretch and challenge us.

The reason character and resilience matter so much to me is that they are key to social mobility. Social mobility starts with giving young people the unstoppable confidence that they can achieve amazing things, teaching them to cope with the challenges life brings and recognise their achievements – because they each have their own, unique potential to fulfil.

Research published by the Department for Education suggests that activities pupils are most interested in include sports, fitness and outdoor pursuits. In a survey of more than 2,500 pupils aged 11 to 16 and their parents or carers, sports and fitness was the most popular kind of activity, chosen by 50 per cent of school pupils and 43 per cent of college students. This was followed by 'outdoor pursuits in both age groups (27 per cent), with creative activities coming in third (22 per cent and 23 per cent).

It comes as families mark the May Bank Holiday, and follows the launch of the Department for Education's activity 'passport', a list of encouraged activities for different age groups to try new life experiences endorsed by the National Trust, Scouts and Girlguiding UK.

The call for evidence will help shape the recommendations the group makes later this year on character education, to reflect the voices and experiences of teachers, young people, educational professionals and the organisations that offer the kind of activities the Education Secretary has identified in his 5 foundations for building character.

The 5 foundations for building character encompass an extensive list of activities, which help young people build character. They are:

- Sport – which includes competitive sport and other activities, such as running, martial arts, swimming and purposeful recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, orienteering, gym programmes, yoga or

learning to ride a bike.

- Creativity – this involves all creative activities from coding, arts and crafts, writing, graphic design, film making and music composition.
- Performing – activities could include dance, theatre and drama, musical performance, choir, debating or public speaking.
- Volunteering & Membership – brings together teams, practical action in the service of others or groups, such as volunteering, getting involved in the #iwill campaign, litter-picking, fundraising, any structured youth programmes or uniformed groups like Beavers, Brownies, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh.
- World of work – practical experience of the world of work, work experience or entrepreneurship. For primary age children, this may involve opportunities to meet role models from different jobs.

The advisory group is chaired by Ian Bauckham CBE of the Tenax School Trust and includes James Arthur OBE, Director of Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and Dame Julia Cleverdon, Co-founder of Step up to Serve.

This builds on the approach schools already take on character education. It seeks to provide a framework to help schools consider how delivering these 5 foundations can best build character, alongside the ethos set by the school, its curriculum and wider offer it makes to its pupils.

Press release: Readout of PM call with Prime Minister Modi: 25 May 2019

The Prime Minister spoke to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to congratulate him on his success in the election.

The leaders agreed that the election was a significant exercise in democracy and that the authorities should be commended for delivering it so efficiently.

They also discussed the upcoming Cricket World Cup which the UK will host in June and July, and the passion for the sport that is shared between our two countries.

Both leaders looked forward to continuing the close cooperation between our

countries, including at the G20 Summit in Osaka next month.