

Report No. TC00419 Appendix: E Agenda Item No. 12	Council 13th February 2019
Oakham Town Council	
Report Author: Zoë Neal	Title: Councillor
Subject: Support the Red Box Project Rutland	
Strategic Aim No.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that Oakham remains a viable and pleasant environment in which to live, work and play. 2. Improve and increase facilities within the town. 	

The Red Box Project quietly ensures that no young woman misses school because she has her period. Working as a nationwide community The Red Box Project seeks to provide free sanitary items for the young women in our local schools. The project has been so successful in the U.K. that it has now started spreading worldwide.

The following statistics, from girls' rights charity Plan International UK, are the only current UK-wide quantitative estimate of the extent of period poverty in the UK.

- One in ten girls (10 per cent) have been unable to afford sanitary wear
- One in seven girls (15 per cent) have struggled to afford sanitary wear
- One in seven girls (14 per cent) have had to ask to borrow sanitary wear from a friend due to affordability issues
- More than one in ten girls (12 per cent) has had to improvise sanitary wear due to affordability issues
- One in five (19%) of girls have changed to a less suitable sanitary product due to cost

Further statistics on taboo and stigma surrounding periods and menstruation

- Nearly half (48 per cent) of girls aged 14-21 in the UK are embarrassed by their periods
- One in seven (14 per cent) girls admitted that they did not know what was happening when they started their period and more than a quarter (26 per cent) reporting that they did not know what to do when they started their period
- Only one in five (22%) girls feel comfortable discussing their period with their teacher
- Almost three quarters (71%) of girls admitted that they have felt embarrassed buying sanitary products
- One in ten had been asked not to talk about their periods front of their mother (12 per cent) or father (11 per cent)
- 49 per cent of girls have missed an entire day of school because of their period, of which 59 per cent have made up a lie or an alternate excuse
- 64 per cent of girls have missed a PE or sport because of their period, of which 52 per cent of girls have made up a lie or excuse

*The findings are based on Opinium Research survey of representative weighted sample of 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21, carried out online between 22-24 August 2017.

Oakham resident Gemma Maxwell set up The Red Box Project in Rutland to tackle period poverty which affects disadvantaged girls. The scheme places red boxes of sanitary products in schools which girls can ask for if they don't have access to them at home. Staff at Catmose college told Gemma that girls often come to them for sanitary products in an emergency, but the school doesn't have the resources to offer a long-term solution. Gemma's aim is to get a box in to every school in Rutland that wants one in order to remove embarrassment and shame from periods and help girls to continue in their education.

Gemma has organised six donation points across Oakham and red boxes have already been delivered to Catmose College, Oakham C of E primary school, Jules House, Visions, New College Stamford and Casterton Community college. Further boxes are required in other schools throughout the town and all red boxes need to have their stock replenished regularly. Gemma co-ordinates this project as a volunteer and is dedicated to making a difference to families living in Rutland. Her efforts have already been recognised by local press including the Rutland and Stamford Mercury, Rutland Radio and BBC Radio Leicester:

The cost of providing one completely stocked box to a school is approximately £85, costs of replenishing are currently unknown but could be as much as £85 a month. The project is run on donations of products and funds which go straight in to a separate business bank account.

Gemma is seeking support from Oakham Town Council in her efforts to raise awareness of the project and access to the boxes, specifically using the town council name and logo in approved advertising, correspondence and media coverage. The project is also in need of support from regular funding and access to printing facilities.

Decisions:

- (1) The Council agree to support The Red Box Project Rutland.
- (2) The Council resolve to provide four boxes at a cost of £85 a box.
- (3) The Council resolve to support The Red Box Project Rutland annually