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I: There we go, that's working. Right then, [REDACTED], can you tell me first of all...can you give me a bit of background about the work that you do, and which area of Wales is it again that you're...that you cover?

R: I work for Conwy Education, so it's Conwy County Borough Council, and [REDACTED] is our head of service and it was [REDACTED] that asked me to participate in this interview.

I'm a health and wellbeing officer for Education and my role really is to work strategically. So, I work with all the...we have 52 primary schools and seven secondary schools, three referral units and Ysgol y Gogarth, you know, the special school as well. And so I work with all the schools, so the different age groups, but also my main sort of point of contact with the schools are the health and wellbeing leads who...or Healthy Schools leads within the schools. And in my remit obviously I'm health and wellbeing so I look at every aspect of health and wellbeing and I'm a link person really because I've been in post now for two years but I work very closely with other partners.

So, I set up...established like a steering group for Conwy Education which is made up of educational psychologists, CAMHS, which are the child health mental health services, child and adolescents, work with school based counsellors, school nursing, oh just the whole range of...police, you know, all the different people that you would need to act as a...pharmacy as well, to act as advisors really. So, we link in and obviously the other organisations or charities such as Barnardo's, Beaver, which is an LGBTQ charity, we work with CAIS, which looked at substance misuse and use. So, lots of different partners really as part of this steering group, social services as well.

And then what we do then is...we're very lucky in Wales, we have data because we're part of the School Health Research Network data typically for secondary schools. So, we get schools to complete an online survey on a...every two years all the secondaries complete an anonymous online survey which is then collated by Cardiff University and SHRN. And then SHRN is part of this research centre in South Wales and they then produce...the sort of...the network produces reports for each secondary school. And then we have a bespoke...but...so each school gets a bespoke report every quarter and then we then have a county wide report as well. So, basically, in a nutshell, the survey looks at how young people live their lives and personally I see this as an opportunity for those pupils who may not have found their voice to be able to express themselves in the survey.

And that links to then...it gives us a lot of information and we use that data through the steering group, new services and other partners of that steering group. And then we recognise areas of need in particular schools but also working with the clusters. So, we make sure that the clusters are familiar with the information as well so we can work

collectively to look at early interventions which might address some of the areas we need to look at, and also it helps us with applying for funding.

So, you know, we...and we also produce our own primary online survey as well which gives us an idea of how...but that measures more of the provision in schools. So, it basically asks the pupils what they think about the provision in school.

So, we have...we probably manage more of the primary online survey because it's our own, whereas the SHRN one is a national. But we've got an idea of how you...people are feeling, you know, just lots and lots of very useful data that we can then help to steer or prioritise areas that we need to be maybe building on or accessing funding.

So...and then we get other funding. You know, we apply for funding, income sources but we also do receive funding for very...you know...well agenda...you know, sort of issues that we need to be supporting young people in Conwy. And one of them is the Period Poverty Grant, or it's now known as the Feminine Hygiene Grant.

I: Oh dear.

R: The authority in Wales receives a certain amount of money then to address that issue.

So, a working group was set up for the...for this particular grant in the last two years and that group is made up of representatives from the steering group, so, for example, school nursing, social services. So, you know, it's almost like a sub-branch really of the health and wellbeing steering group. And that group then came together initially to decide how to allocate...well how to make best use of the funding. And that was led...

I: Are you on that group?

R: ...by my line manager who's now...that responsibility's been handed down to myself now. So, the...so that was...so basically, you know, my role is to facilitate programmes, facilitate the partnership working and to help to keep an eye on, you know, what's going on in Conwy and how we can introduce early intervention initiatives as well as, you know, making sure that our children...young people in Wales...sorry, in Conwy are getting what they need in terms of support.

I: Do you...how come it was changed to feminine hygiene, do you know?

R: I'm not sure why it was. It's not...it's referred to as the Feminine Hygiene Grant. That's the actual name of the...I'll just have a quick look now. But then I've heard that there's period dignity now, that they've...but to be honest...let me just have a look now.

- I: It's just I'm just being nosey because there're lots...we've done a lot around trying to get away from using the phrase 'feminine hygiene'. So, it's odd for it to be, well it was period poverty and then someone changed it to feminine hygiene. It's like, oh dear. Don't worry about it if you can't find it. As I say, it's just me being nosey. I have...
- R: Actually I'll just...because I can put the phone down and we can get back to that.
- I: ...I have heard...quite a few people in Wales that I've spoken to have talked about period dignity. So, yeah, that's...I think there's...oh I can't remember where it is but someone got in touch to say there was a launch of it in December. Like whatever they're doing in...I can't remember which part of Wales it is but they're doing a launch of their period dignity work in December. So, yeah, I've definitely...period dignity I think is probably the way that it's going to start moving forwards because there have been rumblings about even calling it period poverty for a while.
- R: I think that's the reason why, yeah, but it wasn't something that we'd adopted, it was the way it was worded from the grant.
- I: Yeah, but anyway.
- R: I've been involved more with the education, so I'll explain a bit more. I've adopted this because of change in my line manager's commitment. So, in the last...to be honest I've taken on more now since just pre-COVID and...but I have been involved because I've been on the working group and because I've been...I'll explain a bit more about the emphasis on how we've been delivering and making good use of the funding. So, I'll wait and see if you've got a question and then if not I'll add to that maybe how we deliver in Conwy.
- I: Well, yeah, the next question is what...you know, what does your kind of normal pre-lockdown service provision look like, what were you doing, who was it...you know, what groups were you working with? So, yeah, if you...that...I presume that comes into how you've been using the funding?
- R: Yeah. I've been...well, as I say, I work with all the primaries, secondaries and [inaudible 00:09:09] and then partners I listed earlier and youth service. So...and that has continued really but obviously the way we've been working...because my role is also to make sure that we upskill staff within schools so they're better informed and...about health and wellbeing and that any interventions that we offer or training is evidence based. So, it's making sure that school staff, teachers and TAs, and all staff really, know...say, you know, have the accurate information so they can then make a contribution in terms of the health and wellbeing of children in schools. And also because I work obviously with the...with experts such as CAMHS and educational psychologists they're more involved with the

targeted approach working with...possibly with individuals or more serious cases. Whereas my job is really to look at universal provision.

So, it's about making sure that we look at every aspect of health and wellbeing, and there are seven areas, that, you know, there's a good sort of universal whole school approach to every aspect of health and wellbeing and then we then chair it in terms of the universal and then there's targeted and then there's expert. So, you know?

I: So, where does...have you got specific stuff around menstrual health then within that?

R: Yeah. Right, so there're seven areas. So, in my remit I look at nutrition, food and fitness. Emotional and mental wellbeing, which is a massive part of my work. Hygiene, so that can cover hand hygiene, food hygiene, every aspect of hygiene. Relationships and sexuality education is another part of my work. So, I work a lot on supporting...you know, and tying in with that things like...that's why we have the data, the SHRN data, highlights. You know, we look at bullying, we look at behaviour and then, you know, we... So, yeah, so relationships and sexuality education is a really important part of my agenda at the moment. So, it's looking at how [inaudible 00:11:39]. And then...so emotional and mental wellbeing, food and fitness. Actually I'm a qualified dietitian by profession so that's where the food and fitness comes into it. And then the relationships and sexuality education, hygiene, substance use and misuse, the environment. And then there's one more, I can't remember. Well it's about, you know, making sure...it's again environments and staff health. So, they're the areas that I cover.

I: Right. So, how does the...so you've said that you do...there's menstrual health education as part of that, so where does...and is the...the grant, does that cover education or is it just for products?

R: Right, so the grant...so each authority is given a grant and then the authority then decides how to deliver on that. And when we felt in Conwy...it basically comes under the relationships and sexuality education but also in terms of mental health but also in terms of hygiene. So, basically we've...our...you know, I don't ever really look at any...you know, it's looking at how they interconnect really.

So, we felt that...we'd done some consultation groups with young people when the funding initially came out, so we really drew up like a questionnaire type of audit really to...and we asked some schools to sample the audit just to find out the pupils' perspective because, as I've mentioned, with the SHRN data and the primary online data people voice is really important for Conwy. And we...they always come...you know, when you look at the jigsaw of any health and wellbeing agenda item we need to make sure that people voice, staff, you know, that everybody's involved really who make the decisions.

So, the...we did...as I say, we created an audit, a questionnaire really, just asking people how they felt about the situation in terms of the provision and accessing as well. And then we then look...we looked into the different companies and products available and tying in with the idea that people wanted reusable and the eco-friendly products as something really important. So, having formed the working group, consulted with young people, had samples to discuss as well with young people we then...based on the feedback and a very short report, this is at the very beginning, we then decided on one particular company which produce recyclable, reusable sanitary products.

And the other thing that's very important as well if we're looking at dignity and respect and, yeah, there's that we have in Wales it's very important that we have bilingual materials to explain the use of the products. So, the company agreed to produce bilingual, user friendly information to complement the actual product. So, that was for the initial stages.

But also I felt very strongly in the group that we...you know, to send out sanitary products wasn't sufficient really, especially because our focus...because of data that we have on relationships and sexuality education there's lot of information from the SHRN report that was...and also the emphasis from Welsh Government. There was a White Paper that came out from [REDACTED] from Education Welsh Government about looking at...relooking at sex education and changing the wording and looking at relationships and sexuality education and the new curriculum as well about, you know, respect and dignity. So, we...I felt very strongly that we needed to be...what I didn't want was...and I was aware of this although I was...you know, I've only been...I've been in post now for three years in January, but what I knew in some schools, and I'm, you know, not blaming them, but I think some schools didn't feel comfortable maybe...I'm not saying this is just Wales, I think in general some people feel more comfortable delivering relationship education than others.

I: Yeah, definitely.

R: But that's not to judge people because it's all about how people have been taught and their own experiences. But we needed to do something about this and based on the data that we had we knew that early intervention is really important. We also felt that young people needed to understand a bit more about the changes to their bodies. You know, so it's just...and this...I do a lot of training and this...the intro I presented at the training was, you know, what we don't want is young people having a crash course on growing up and just make sure they have the education a fortnight before they leave primary school and then have all summer, you know, for them trying to mull through what this condensed them to one week or so was just not, you know, what we wanted. And we...it was really important that we introduced relationships and sexuality education early on. So...and that meant delivering as [coached 00:17:22] from the

new curriculum developmentally appropriate education from Year 2 upwards really.

So, looking at accessing resources we talk about growing up and puberty and making sure that information, when they were ready to present information, about menstruation that it wasn't just for the girls.

So, the training that we decided to deliver is using a resource called Tyfu Fyny, which is Growing Up, which is a resource produced...bilingual resource which is available on Hope, which is like a central point that folks in Wales can access. So, this is a fantastic resource. It has an electronic element, so it's done online and it's available free on Hope for teachers to use. But to complement that there are packs then which have, you know, maps with just figures on the maps and then there are cards. And then the cards then...it's delivered through Circle Time and then they talk...you, the teachers are trained, this is how we split the training really, to run the Circle Time sessions talking about growing up and puberty. But also in the pack there're things about sort of the organs, internal organs, as well, so, you know, covering everything. And then there are names which you can name parts of the body. So, they...so it's all done...you know, we train the staff to deliver. So, [voices overlap 00:18:52].

I: Does it include examples...?

R: ...came to the training. Then...

I: Sorry [REDACTED], does it...does that...?

R: ...that will be all...sorry, can you hear me?

I: Yeah.

R: Hello, you can... So, practically all the...we had representation from all the primaries and then they then went back and we had...we produced like a mapping document as well. So, basically that schools had an idea that they needed to introduce Growing Up, the subject was growing up, and teaching about growing up from Year 2 right upwards but building into that respect and dignity and forming healthy relationships. And then we have a mapping document which gives ideas on how to...when to introduce the teaching but what we found is...so we do this in the last two years now and what we found is that the...and I've managed to access funding to buy the packs now, so every school has a pack because I felt it was really important because some of the pupils might not have because of the COVID situation, you know, some schools have started the teaching from September onwards, the development of the appropriate teaching. So, Year 2 and 3 is normally sort of just talking about the body, different parts of the body, naming parts of the body.

My role was to make sure that the training was available for the teachers and that I, you know, supported the teachers but then my role was really to visit the

schools to speak to governors and parents, explain to them because they...you know, I needed to support the school to say, this is the way forward. And I must say, you know, that...again showing there's consultation and in that we obviously talked about the sanitary products as well but we need to...

And the other thing that's really important, when we...so basically Year 3 and 4...sorry, 2 and 3 and then 3 and 4 it depends on how, you know, the age group...not age group but they have...developmentally, you know, what stage they were at and just to give you...and then 5 and 6 would definitely be talking about menstruation and growing up and about changes to the body both...you know, for everyone really and then the useful cards. So, it'd be revisiting what they've learnt and building on what they've learnt the previous year. But obviously we've just been delivering this now over the last two years so...but I think what was exciting about a couple of the schools, they just got it after the training and said, right, we're just going to...we've got the confidence now, we're going to be able to go out and teach, because of the resources as well made it a lot easier for them.

I: Yeah, that's brilliant.

R: And I think it was just fantastic to have feedback from the schools and they could see how it would fit in. And one particular school I went to support, just do the session for the governors and parents, and it was decided as a group because the teachers that had been on the training said that some of the Year 3 and 4 pupils were asking about, you know, what are periods, what...you know, and they wanted to know because older siblings were, you know, menstruating or...and they just...they felt...you know, wanted to know what this taboo was and the teachers felt confident.

I: Oh that's great.

R: Said, right, we've...and do you know, I had a lovely email back saying, do you know, this has made a big difference, you know, we've got two really...it's alleviated any concerns, any...you know? And it was just lovely to have that to share that delight really that, you know...? So, I'm encouraging schools. Now they've been trained they know their schools so they know, you know, when to bring out the packs and teaching about...cover the Growing Up pack. And what's fantastic as well in terms of...it was [REDACTED] my manager who was coordinating the sanitary products and I was focusing more on the education and as part of the education and training as well, you know, I invited people, like safeguarding officers and educational psychologists and all the partners from the steering group I mentioned earlier were invited to the training as well...

I: Oh that's excellent.

- R: ...so they knew, because I think what's really important with every aspect of health and wellbeing is consistency...
- I: Yeah, definitely.
- R: ...maybe because I'm a clinician, you know, I've got an NHS background, public health background and also education. You know, it's about bringing the experts in but...
- I: Yeah, definitely.
- R: ...then witnessing and giving confidence to people who are providing evidence based safe information. So, you know, every...I think maybe, in a nutshell, you know, I feel everybody has a role and a duty to do...to make a contribution big or small but, you know, they're the link. You know, it's all about that continuity really of learning.
- I: So...
- R: So, I think it's...yeah, and then what's been...I've been delighted with...you know, a lot of them have been...the schools have been then using the reusable...handing out the reusable products.
- I: Ah, I was just going to ask you about the products.
- R: [Voices overlap 00:23:55] the training, you know, so the...the teaching, sorry, the teaching in Year 5 and 6. So, what we've also built into our grant is we've...last year we invested in the teaching and the training but also made sure that we purchased one reusable pack based on the consultation we had previously with young people about which ones they liked and what they thought and based on the fact that they wanted reusable ones. And then we made...so we bought a pack for each of the Year 5 and 6s girls to have a pack.
- I: Oh wow. So, for each of them to have?
- R: But then [voices overlap 00:24:37] teaching when we're talking about menstruation that's everybody, it's not just the girls whisked off. And school nurses don't go in to do sex education anymore, they do...because we don't call it that anymore anyway, relationships and sexuality education, but they're aware they can do the training as well. So, they know that the onus is on the school because that's where, you know, the children are growing up. But then the school nurse...if there are any questions there's like a box then...after the teaching there's a little...after they've done the Circle Time and about confidentiality and, you know, all the things that we would teach you when you're teaching through Circle Time there's a box then that all the pupils can put a...write down a question if they wanted to or they can just scribble a line. You know, there's no pressure on anyone. And then the teacher then looks through

the questions and then can either answer the questions themselves or they can then call the school nurse in and then that's the link then.

And then the secondary, we've invested in some work with the secondaries as well. It's training building on the work that we've done in the primary, developed lesson plans on menstruation in a bit more detail, you know? So, we...but again that's through consultation because I work with the health and wellbeing leads from each of the secondaries because I...you know, because it's...I haven't got a team so my team really is the people that I work with in the schools. So, I have to consult with them, I have no right to dictate or...but I think it's about trust and agreed goals really. And also the other thing that's really important is revisiting and making sure, you know, are we doing...are we...you know, are we going in the right direction and to admit if we're not and, you know, try and learn from what we're...these small steps that we're making really.

The other thing...so, yeah, so the...I was going to say something else about...yeah, so...and obviously we do a lot of work on gender identity and about accepting who we are and, you know, my body's mine, and, you know, it's about learning to...again respect and dignity and that built in as well through the learning.

We need...there was something else I was going to... Yeah, so with COVID of course some of the schools had started in the September and had been doing the teaching. So, it was quite...so some of the Year 5 and 6s had had a lot of the teaching sessions on growing up and relationships and sexuality education and they'd been given just before lockdown...some of...I'm really proud to say that some of the schools who just really got it and understood the value managed to do the...you know, complete the teaching and give each pupil, the girls, a pack to take home.

I: Oh that's excellent.

R: Yeah, so that was fantastic. We did have some supplies of the reusable ones as well as a back-up in schools which we also purchased. We also bought some tights and the pull up pants as well. So, each school had a choice of what they wanted as like a box.

Oh yeah, I must remember...mention the Red Box idea. Before...you know, we've been very lucky. I don't know whether you're familiar with the Red Box...

I: Yeah, I am, yeah.

R: ...but a lot of schools were given...and they...you know, I must...although now that doesn't...that's...from what I understand that stopped but I think their contribution has been invaluable as well before we had funding to buy in stock. And, you know what I...over the last sort of two and a half years I think, you know, what I didn't want was just supplies sitting in a store somewhere for people to have to ask for them. We need to be

talking about it well before they start menstruating really so they understand what's happening...

I: And do you...?

R: ...and obviously the impact the hormonal changes have on. You know, so that's another bit that we talk about in the training, is about changes. Yeah, go on.

I: So, do you have sense that the products are being...are easily accessed by people that would need them like within schools or is it still that they are kind of hidden in like reception in a box and people have to ask for them? Do you know how schools are making them available at all?

R: Yes. So, in the secondaries we use the audit tool and the school consults with young people in the school as to how they want them to be available.

I: Right, okay, great.

R: You know, since we've done that work the schools have said they've learnt...they've realised...you know, there's a lot more openness about it now. Some...we have seven secondaries and two of the secondaries have commented on the calibre of knowledge of Year 7s coming...this is before...this is last September they were saying, wow, just in that short space of time with the training and the teaching in...I say training, I mean teaching in school, not training, but, you know, the pupils were coming in in Year 7 a lot more knowledgeable...

I: Wow, that's amazing.

R: ...a lot more, you know, willing to talk about it openly...

I: And that is in a really short space of time, isn't it?

R: ...about menstruation and growing up and they were...the...because we also delivered the training for secondaries running alongside the primary they also had their resources then ready to build on the work that we'd done in the primary.

I: So, what...?

R: But, you know, obviously now with COVID and what happened then obviously COVID struck and I was looking forward then to, you know, doing a bit of an audit then, to have an audit to then to check what they've done in school in terms of the relationships and sexuality education, and that includes the sanitary products. But the...what we wanted...what I was looking forward to was an audit to then just see where they're at, you know, whether they can move across the sort of...you know, they were moving in the right direction and doing some evaluation.

But obviously when March came we then had...we'd already sent supplies for secondaries of reusable and the disposal supplies but we had to...you know, it was pointless them being there because the schools were closed and it was just... So, I then...we have...we're very lucky in Conwy, we have family centres but they were also closed but then I approached the food banks and they were...I've never met any of these people but they were...you know, just met them virtually over the phone, but they were all fantastic. And we had managed to get seven food banks mapped across the county more than willing to receive the resources...not the resources, the sanitary products, but not only that, they wanted to be respectful with the distribution. So, once the schools had shifted their supplies to the food banks the schools were then asked to inform families that they could pick up.

I: Oh wow.

R: We went with three months' supply...

I: Yeah, that's great.

R: ...we just thought it would be easier. But obviously with the reusable ones with the information, there's like a little card with the...so it's self-explanatory really. And then the food banks then wanted to be discreet, well just wanted to be respectful really, just, you know, made arrangements to...well parcel them up and then just leave them but they knew if there were students coming to collect. So, it was all done with respect and dignity.

I: Yeah, that's great.

R: And then...of course then we got the stage where we went back in September but I...and I've been...but as you can...I have other areas of work that I have to address and the emotional and mental wellbeing's become massive. So, at the moment that's taken over quite a bit and then I have other. So, at the moment I decided because of the situation that I would leave some of the...well sent some of the products back but just have some supplies at the food banks as well as a back-up because not knowing whether we were going to have another lockdown or not, you know, to try and be economical with time and energy. So, we're in the process now of ordering supplies so that schools...but I've also sent them the Growing Up bags which complement the online resource just...and sending out.

And the other thing that we've been doing [inaudible 00:33:37], because I've been working with another colleague who works in another department, we've been setting up Teams for primary and secondary, wellbeing Teams for primary and secondary. I don't know if, you know, everybody's using Teams at the moment?

I: Yeah.

R: So, basically we're planning to...I'm in the process of making arrangements to deliver webinars for schools to...a relation webinars really built on...you know, building on the training that we've offered or the teaching...the training we've offered for staff to upskill them and then to just do a reminder really of, you know, how to use the resources and also obviously talk about the sanitary products. So, we...because we've got a secondary Teams and a primary Teams they're the platforms now but it all takes time and the person organising. You know, at the moment I'm drafting a questionnaire to send out to the schools just to check what their stocks are like in schools, in the primaries in particular, because it was the secondaries that sent their supplies to the food banks.

So, it's...you know, it's a big project and that...and...but we are committed to it and we know that, you know, we might not get it right all the time but it's about making sure...but I think if I'm...as I say, I would have liked to have evaluated really the impact of the introduction of the training for staff and the teaching in schools and how that, you know, complements the period dignity grants really in terms of the products. But, you know, we use some of the...we asked...because at the time it was just for buying products and I argued the case, well there's little point in providing a product unless we're, you know, discussing the product.

I: Yeah, definitely.

R: And I think the other thing that...and maybe again because I'm...you know, a science background, you know, I feel that it's really important when we look at the products that are coming out these are produced by...you know, it's not just...they're just not for [inaudible 00:35:40]. You know, everybody needs to understand the science behind these products, if they're eco-friendly or if they're disposable ones...

I: Definitely.

R: ...you know, because somebody might be working for one of these big companies who looks at absorbency, you know, about the safety element or... So, people need to know about them. You know, it's not something that should just be hidden in a cupboard and people are embarrassed to talk about them because they're products that people use daily if not...you know, all the time but, you know, they are...they're in use, aren't they, and I think...

I: Yeah, if you can choose a different kind of toothbrush why...you know, what's the big deal about being able to choose different kinds of menstrual products?

R: Exactly. So, I think...and I think it helps as well because the other thing that we felt with the teaching as well if it was delivered developmentally appropriate, you know, at that level some of the feedback as well was that there was less of sort of giggling on the school yard then, the play...you

know, the older...because the...well to be honest because we were talking about a little...teaching about the changes to the body early on now there's no embarrassment so there's no making fun. So, there's...

I: Yeah, that's great.

R: ...you know, obviously we're still in the early stages and I'm really keen to build on what we've already put in place but it's about...

I: Yeah. It sounds like you've had...

R: ...building on that confidence really.

I: ...yeah, it sounds like you've had huge progress just within those two years though if you're saying the schools are saying there's such a big difference like between that transition between primary and secondary in terms of knowledge and, you know, those kind of...like you say, things like finding it embarrassing or giggling or all those sorts of things. It's all part of, you know, getting rid of the stigma, isn't it, around menstruation and just making it as normal as having to blow your nose?

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah, so that's brilliant, that's really brilliant.

R: And the other thing that we've had is we had...during COVID, or during this sort of episode where, you know, you're just responding to so many things, an email came to our authority, because we had to split...streamline how messages were conveyed. And one day I had an email that had been sent back just saying...from a parent saying how delighted she was that her daughter had gone to school, she was secondary, so Year 7 pupil, and that the school...the secondary school had been teaching about growing up. Like we...you know, it's in the plan, we're getting in the lesson plans, and everything, and how delighted the parent was for her daughter to come home with a...with the reusable pack.

So, that's an example of where the original primary school obviously hadn't had time to do...maybe not...hadn't been as proactive than maybe some of the other schools but still had the training...well, you know, the teachers will have been trained but maybe not started the delivery as soon as. Yeah, there's...but in fact the secondary school...because this is something I was worried about, was that there would be a group...you know, there'd be a...there would be young...some Year 7s who missed out. And this is just, you know, out of the blue lovely email from a parent just saying how delighted she was and how lovely the product was and that for the first time in a long time her daughter had come home feeling happy and reassured.

I: Aw, that's lovely.

R: And that was just, you know, such a compliment to the teachers. Obviously we made sure we sent...you know, because that's what it's all about, it's about...

I: Yeah, exactly.

R: ...just being equipped with the knowledge and skills to be able to deliver at the right time and to make that difference between delivering it and making somebody anxious and delivering it and making them feel, you know, reassured and peace of mind really.

And there is another one I was thinking of and I can't remember. It was like another message thing, how lovely the product...oh I know, yes, I know somebody else had some that was sent to the...they'd sent to the company that we work with because...and the company had sent it back because that parent was a parent of one of our schools and just saying how lovely the product was and wanted to know more. Ah that was right, that parent was working in another school, so a public school, so it wasn't...but it's that...just...you know, it's just nice that somebody can make the time to...make time to email and thank them, well the company as well, for the product. But again we...

I: Yeah, that's great.

R: ...you know, saying that the way they were introduced in school as well.

I: So, given that we're now back in a lockdown do you feel like you're in a position to kind of carry on with things as they are? So, you said that you were setting up webinars and it sounds like the products are going back into schools and they're...that's being picked up again. So, are you...do you feel like you're in a good position to be able to carry on with what was...what you were doing pre-lockdown even though we're still in a lockdown, if you see what I mean?

R: Yes, we're just using a different...well the good news is that we have...schools have the tools now, they have the Growing Up bag resource, which I reallocated funding so that they could have a bag each in the primary. So, they've had the bag each which they can use now and it'll last. It avoided then having to return bags. At the time we only had a few to loan out and I didn't want things going and coming because of, you know, obviously hygiene reasons. So, each school has had a Growing Up bag which complements the online teaching.

And then...and this year our grant is a lot less so we have to buy the products but then because I don't have to...because we delivered as much training as we could I don't have to buy in that training now, which is... And then the other thing is I don't have to pay supply now which I would have done before, not that that was built in, that's just a supply from other...actually I didn't pay supply for the relationships and sexuality

education, they just...because it cost to deliver the training so in fact it was up to the schools. So, they made time to release staff to come. So, it's a measure of how important they must have felt, you know, because it cost the school to release a member of staff.

But what I really need to do now is to build on that, you know, possibly...not rebuild but because, as we know, you know, the situation in schools is very...it can't be easy for staff and as much as we'd like to support and think, you know, we're not there witnessing. So, I think emotional and mental wellbeing is a big thing at the moment and that's why we're focusing on that. But whenever I'm delivering training or offering interventions I always remind the providers that we need...they need to be aware that we are talking about relationships and sexuality education and growing up and, you know, so they can keep that in mind when they're delivering.

I: Yeah, it's part of the same thing, isn't it?

R: So, I think it's about...you know, we talk about blended learning, I think it's about blending the delivery as well. You know, you can't look at one thing in isolation...

I: No, of course not.

R: ...because life isn't like that. So, it has to...you know, you can be cross-curricula in a way and...you know, but with wellbeing it's about talking about different things at the right time and bringing other things in at the same time [voices overlap 00:43:47].

I: Yeah, completely. Yes it does.

R: But that takes a lot of skill and that takes...that's why it's so important to work with teachers to get them to think in that way. And that's what the new curriculum is all about, it's about the child, it's about a holistic approach really and about, you know, the basic life skills that children need to develop into responsible, well informed young people who can make decisions for themselves.

I: Yeah. When did the new...when did this new curriculum come into effect from?

R: Well the new curriculum in Wales is fantastic. It's been a, you know, progressive sort of piece of work. So, Welsh Government have introduced it slowly and obviously with COVID now it's stalled things but the view is it's still...you know, some schools are adopting now the best they can, so, under the circumstances. But it is, it's all about the holistic approach and it's about creating...there are four areas, so ambitious, capable learners, creative and entrepreneurial, healthy and...oh gosh I need to think about the four areas. So, there are four areas of the new

curriculum and I've just mentioned three of them now, I can't remember...oh ethical and informed.

I: Is that from this September or has that been in from...you said it was...it's been brought in slowly, so has that been over a couple of years?

R: Yeah, there are pioneering schools that have been delivering the new curriculum. And so it's been a gradual introduction really. So, it gives schools an opportunity to, you know, adjust.

I: But is it...so it's mandatory?

R: If you go...if you look into Welsh Government and you'll see everything about the new curriculum.

I: I'm just trying to work out if it's the same as the...so in England it's been mandatory from this September so...

R: Oh the relationships and sexuality education or...?

I: Yeah.

R: Well Welsh Government are saying more or less that, you know, it's part...because there was a consultation...because of our...there was a consultation document I think this...earlier on, I think January, because obviously people were...you know, some people were questioning whether it should be introduced but, yeah, it's part of the new curriculum. It's just part of it, so, you know, it's not a matter of opting in.

I: Yeah, it's mandatory, isn't it?

R: That's part and parcel of the new curriculum.

I: Yeah, okay. So, it sounds like you're in quite good nick then, doesn't it?

R: Well we try our best.

I: Yeah. Do you think that you'd be able to do all of this if you didn't have that grant money?

R: Oh yeah, no because I think it took a lot of investing the last two years, I think it's not just financial investment, it's people investment as well. You know, the fact that we couldn't offer supply so people had to...schools had to make that investment as well. But I think to be able to...the big...having the funding made a difference in terms of we wouldn't...you know, being able to offer the training to upskill staff, to buy the resources to complement the teaching and then the other bit is obviously the actual products themselves.

You know, we did...to be honest when we...especially...well from personal experience I know that if we do receive money and if I'm...you know, we have to question why we're doing what we're doing all the time because it's...you know, it's specialist money and it's important that we can see the mileage as well, which is really important. You know, if we're going to invest in something we need to think about the legacy, you know, how we...what do we get out of it and more.

I: Yeah. How long is this funding for, do you know? Is it like rolling indefinitely or is it for a fixed period?

R: Oh, yeah, well, you know, because, as I say, I inherited the...not inherited but the work...the...[REDACTED], my line manager, led on the accessing the funding and the budget side of things really in terms of buying the products and dealing with the company and that was through consultation with the working groups that I mentioned. But my role is, as I say, the making sure that...the teaching side of things but since there's a slight change now with...since COVID [REDACTED] has asked me to manage that. So, I...that's why I'm more involved now in terms of the...but I would need to do my homework and maybe just remind myself because at the moment we've had...you know, we've had funding over the last two years, two/three years, but I haven't had time to see if we're getting another money next April, which is probably...you know, I do need to take the time to look into that but it's just, you know, at the moment.

I: Yeah, and yeah, it's you never know when's a good time to start asking those questions at the moment either, do you, with the constantly changing situation?

R: No.

I: So, yeah, it's tricky.

R: I think what's really important is sharing. I think people who are responsible for handing out the funding I think it's important again consultation, they consult as well just to make sure that they know. The fact that we have to feed that back anyway we do that, which is good.

I: Yeah, that's really important. Well I think I've...you've told me everything that I needed to ask you without me even asking you, which is great. So, thank you so much for your time.

R: That's fine.

I: Is there anything else that you wanted to add just before...because I'm conscious we've been talking for nearly an hour, so I don't want to take up anymore of your day, but if you do have anything else that you wanted to add just...?

- R: I've done some similar interviews recently for some of the other things...work that I'm delivering on and they have offered a transcript, which I think is...not that I'm comfortable with everything I've said but I think it's important because obviously I'm only a dot in this organisation and I always think it's important...
- I: Oh yeah, of course, yeah.
- R: ...for me to log this interview if possible. So, I would like to have, please, a transcript.
- I: Yes, that's no problem.
- R: And also I assume that we would be getting a copy of the...yes, I'm sure...sorry, I'll have a look, yeah, we would get the findings of your work?
- I: Yes, the findings will be shared. I'm hoping to do like a number of different ways of sharing like the findings and the outcomes as we go throughout the project instead of it just being one big report at the end. So, that might be like some online events or like kind of brief reports and that type of thing. But, yeah, certainly everyone that's taken part will be kept in the loop of all of that. So, yeah, that's no problem.
- R: Okay.
- I: And I will make sure...I'm going to send copies of transcripts to everybody for them to check anyway, so that's no problem either. I will make a note to make sure that I do that for you.
- R: I'm just looking now to see about the feminine hygiene then because that's just the term that's been passed on to me but, as I say, you know, I refer to it as period dignity but I'm sure that they...yeah, that's the email. I have got a file on this. I mean I can send this separately if you've got another interview now.
- I: As I just said, I was just being nosey. So, yeah, just send it over when you get a chance.
- R: But you can see that, you know, obviously the way we work is that we're inclusive and basically our approach is always as best we can [voices overlap 00:53:01] approach.
- I: Yeah, that's why I was really surprised when it was like, oh, feminine hygiene grant. It's like well that's a step backwards.
- R: Yeah, but I think it's a term used sometimes.
- I: I know it still gets used, yeah.
- R: [Inaudible 00:53:16].

I: But, yeah, send it...when you find it and get a chance just send it over. As I said, it's just me being nosey.

R: Yeah, I'll have to have a look.

I: Well...and if you do think of anything else just drop me a line. And thank you so much for your time and for everything that you've said, it's been really, really useful. It's really nice to...as I say, you know, to finally get all of this amazing stuff that Wales has been doing, which seems to have been missed for whatever reason. So, it's really great to be able to speak to people like yourself as part of the project. And I will keep you updated with, yeah, findings, and the transcript I will send over as soon as I've got it back from the transcription service, that's no problem.

R: Okay.

I: So, I will let you get on with your day.

R: Right, thank you very much, thank you.

I: Okay. Thanks so much for your time, Nia.

R: And [voices overlap 00:54:17], yeah. I've just found something here now just very quickly. Yeah, it was called...in 2018 to 2019 it was called that but that would be something you'd need to ask Welsh Government maybe.

I: Yeah, we'll see.

R: Yeah, okay.

I: Alright then.

R: I'll look through the file now. I've got the file. But that was '18/'19, so, yeah, I think this...I need to just look at the title. I'm not very good looking at the title, I don't know what it's on about. Anyway that's fine. If I come across anything else I'll send it to you.

I: Brilliant. Thank you so much.

R: Okay.

End of transcript