

# Proposed Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

## Page 2: About you

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)

Please choose one of the following; if you choose the first option, please provide your name or the name of your organisation as you wish it to be published.

I am content for this response to be attributed to me or my organisation

Please insert your name or the name of your organisation. If you choose the first option above, this should be the name as you wish it to be published. If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

NUS Scotland

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. We will not publish these details.

## Page 7: Your views on the proposal

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

Partially supportive

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

We welcome the introduction of free provision of sanitary products as a vital health care necessity for people who menstruate across Scotland. Among students, access to free sanitary products will relieve ever increasing financial insecurity.

## Page 8: Universal provision of sanitary products

Q2. Do you think a universal, card-based system (modelled on the c-card system for free condoms) would be an effective means of providing sanitary products for free to those who need them?

Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

We have concerns about access for some groups under this model and ultimately believe that a variety of approaches may be needed. • Additionally, requiring a card-holder to collect products in-person will disadvantage people with limited mobility, caring responsibilities and student parents, who may not be able to make it to a collection point when needed. We would encourage other models, such as one similar to the free postal method offered on NHS prescriptions. • We would, again, not want this method to be reliant on providing a postcode and would encourage other proofs of eligibility to be found. In the case of tertiary education institutions, this could be through using the institution's postcode. • We also believe that it is essential that access to free sanitary products should not require proof of immigration status as this could have an adverse impact on international students, asylum seekers or others with precarious immigration statuses. Access to sanitary products is vital for the health of those who menstruate, regardless of their immigration status. • It is also worth noting that requiring a postcode to register for the card-based system will exclude some of the people with the greatest need for support, such as those who are homeless or in temporary and inconsistent accommodation.

Q3. Which of the following best expresses your view in relation to a card-based system?

Other (please specify)

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Provision should be universal. In the case of universities and colleges, it should be available to all students and staff linked to that campus, regardless of whether they are physically present or not. • Where necessary, priority should be given to those most at need and provision of sanitary products should reflect that need, acknowledging the different requirements of different people.

Q4. Do you have a view on which locations would be most suitable for dispensing free sanitary products (e.g. GP surgeries, pharmacies, community centres, health clinics)?

We would welcome wide availability as one location may not suit all needs, this should be balanced with discretion.

- Collecting via educational institution staff should be avoided to minimise embarrassment.
- Provision solely via toilet dispensers risks outing transgender students if there are not gender neutral toilets, as

Q4. Do you have a view on which locations would be most suitable for dispensing free sanitary products (e.g. GP surgeries, pharmacies, community centres, health clinics)?

addressed in our answer to question 11.

- We would suggest a diversity of strategies which mirror that currently used by NHS and students associations, for example, through the post, Un-staffed collection points, etc.
- Out of hours and holiday provision is also vital

## Page 11: Schools, colleges and universities

Q5. Do you agree that there should be specific obligations on schools, colleges and universities to make sanitary products available for free (via dispensers in toilets)?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

We believe that sanitary products should be available for free in schools, colleges and universities. • How this is funded is a matter for the government, but to ensure that free provision can be implemented and that funding is not taken from other areas benefitting students, we do not believe this obligation should solely be on the institutions. • Period poverty is ultimately a health issue and therefore provision should be finance by the Government, not individual educational institutions. • Consideration should also be given to the disposal of sanitary waste, by ensuring that all toilets that may be used by people who menstruate regardless of gender identity have hygienic means to do so

## Page 12: Personal experience (questions 6 and 7 are for individual respondents only)

Q6. Have you ever struggled to access or afford sanitary products during menstruation? (e.g.financial barriers, unexpected circumstances, health issues)

Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products

Q7. If sanitary products were available for free, which of the following would apply to you?

Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products

## Page 14: Financial implications

Q8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

Q8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

	Significant increase in cost	Some increase in cost	Broadly cost-neutral	Some reduction in cost	Significant reduction in cost	Unsure
<b>(a) Government and the public sector (e.g. local authorities, the NHS)</b>		X				
<b>(b) Colleges and universities</b>			X			
<b>(c) Businesses (including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)</b>						X
<b>(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)</b>					X	

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Decisions regarding funding costs are ultimately a decision for the Government. • It is reasonable, however, to assume there will be some increase in cost for the Government and public sector as they fund this program. • We would like to see the establishment of a minimum spending per student. o If institutions do not have figures on the number of trans students studying at their institution, these figures may be inaccurate in terms of the number of students who need funding.

Q9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

Depending on what level purchasing is done at (whether nationally, regionally or locally), there should be opportunities to share best practice.

- If purchasing is being done at a regional or local level, guidance should be available to ensure that students associations/institutions have ways to source materials.
- The government should consider investment in sustainable and reusable forms of sanitary products, in the short run this will require significant investment but will prove more effective in the long run.

## Page 16: Equalities

Q10. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

Q10. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation?

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

As discussed above, institutions who do not hold figures on the number of trans students enrolled may not be able to accurately assess need, this can be used as an incentive for increased data gathering at institutions. • Tackling period poverty will help to address an inequality faced by people assigned female at birth, improving access to education and improving overall life chances. Period poverty has a negative impact on attendance and levels of stress which can adversely impact achievement in education. • It was also help to address racial inequality as those who are most disadvantaged are from BAME backgrounds. • We would also hope that the national attention the topic of period poverty is receiving may help to make women's health less of a taboo subject

Q11. In what ways could any negative impact of the proposed Bill on equality be minimised or avoided?

Implementation must be carefully considered in regards to trans students as there is the potential for students to be inadvertently outed as trans if they are seen to be accessing products. As addressed in our response to question 2, provision must be designed in a way that does not exclude those who cannot physically be on a campus, such as students with disabilities and student parents.

- The sanitary products provided should be suitable for religious needs, for example by being kosher and halal.
- It is necessary to ensure that those who menstruate do not face discrimination as a result of their immigration status or homelessness.
- It is also important to investigate any barriers to access for BME people and those from religious minority groups.

## Page 18: Sustainability

Q12. Do you consider that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response:**

If purchasing is done as a group, this can act as an opportunity to pressure manufacturers to make their products more sustainable through influence as a large buyer. • Sustainable and reusable options such as mooncups or reusable fabric pads should be seriously considered as a means of redressing these issues. While more expensive as an initial-cost, these are less expensive in the long-term. This initial cost could be subsidised so that they can be offered at a discounted rate compared to RPP. • Providing environmentally-friendly, non-chemical and non-petrol brands should also be considered, such as Natra Care who offer organic products online

## Page 19: General

Q13. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

Many colleges and universities do not have gender-neutral toilets so these cannot be relied upon for provision. More consideration needs to be given to the impact of the proposal in regards to race, religion and ethnicity