

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Unite the union 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?

Fully Supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response

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

Unite Scotland fully supports the proposals put forward which would see sanitary products available to women at the point of need. Unite has campaigned to provide women with dignity during menstruation and more generally have supported the campaign to remove VAT from sanitary products.

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

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.

Unite believes that sanitary products should be available to those most in need with unlimited access. While recognizing the merits in a card scheme, we would require more detail on how this scheme would operate in practice before commenting on this system.

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)?

Unite supports the dispensing of free sanitary products in all locations where those most in need regularly visit including GP surgeries, pharmacies, community centres and health clinics.

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

Unite has shown its support for the actions of North Ayrshire council that introduced a scheme to make sanitary products available for free in all schools in the area. Such a scheme should be extended to colleges and universities and rolled out across the country.

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)

No Response

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

No Response

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:

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

Please explain the reasons for your response

Unite accepts that there are likely to be initial costs to implement the proposals. However we believe this will be off-set over time through a reduction in NHS costs associated with insanitary practices, increased access to employment and increased productivity as women are increasingly able to access the labour market without fear of menstruating with no access to sanitary protection.

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

Unite would support approaching the UK government to consider ways to access the funds made available from the VAT on sanitary products to reduce costs to local authorities and educational establishments to provide free sanitary products, available at point of need. At present the fund, introduced by George Osborne when Chancellor, is being used to provide financial support to organization like Women's Aid and Rape Crisis. While women's health and refuge services are a lifeline for so many women across the country, the funds raised from VAT on sanitary products should not be used to fund such vital services. These services should be fully funded through general taxation, not from a tax on women's sanitary products.

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

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

No Response

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

Page 19: General

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

No Response