

# 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

Public sector body (Scottish/UK Government/Government agency, local authority, NDPB)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Eddie Fraser, Director of Health and Social Care, East Ayrshire Council

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

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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Menstruation is a natural bodily function, therefore, access to free sanitary products should be a right and not a luxury. Giving all people access to free sanitary products will help to reduce inequality as those on the lowest incomes will no longer have to worry about the financial and practical challenges associated with managing menstruation. It will assist to ensure the health and wellbeing of women by improving access to 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?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Having a universal card-based system in place would ensure that sanitary products would be freely available for all, enabling those who need them to access products whenever needed.

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

The card should be available to anyone; card-holders should have unlimited access to free sanitary products

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

The card-based system for providing free sanitary products should be available to anyone as menstruation is a natural bodily function, therefore, access to free sanitary products should be a right, not a luxury. It is recognised that this will have financial implications however, the C- card system has demonstrated that uptake is generally taken by those in greatest need. If access was limited to those on low income this would further stigmatise increase inequality and may prove difficult to implement and administer.

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)?

Sanitary products should be widely available to access in as many local communities as possible. Those who need to access free sanitary products will most likely be on a very limited income, therefore shouldn't have to pay additional travelling expenses to get to a dispensing centre. Therefore, free sanitary products should be available to access in as many communities as possible in local pharmacies, GP surgeries, health clinics, youth projects and/or community centres.

## 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)?

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Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

There should be a specific obligation on schools, colleges and universities to make sanitary products available for free as students have much less flexibility to independently go to a shop (or free dispensing centre in the future) to access sanitary products as they are expected to attend classes. Those who attend school, college or university are less likely to have access to their own income or be in full-time employment, therefore affordability may also be an issue for students. Therefore all students should be able to access free sanitary products in schools, colleges and universities. It is recognised that this may have a financial implication on local authorities to implement. There is an opportunity to include this as part of general health and wellbeing for students and reduce the stigma attached to menstruation for women and girls

**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:

	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	

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

products)						
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**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Government - If there was to be a specific obligation on schools to provide free sanitary products to students, there would be a slight increase in cost for local authorities in order to fund the cost of this free provision. It is not anticipated the take-up rate will be 100%, similarly to the take-up of the C-card system, meaning that the financial impact on the public sector shouldn't result in significant cost implications. Colleges/Universities - If there was to be a specific obligation on colleges and universities to provide free sanitary products to students, there would be a slight increase in cost for these institutions to fund the cost of this free provision. It is not expected that the take-up rate will be 100%, similarly to the take-up of the C-card system, meaning that the financial impact on colleges and universities shouldn't result in significant cost implications. Businesses - If the free provision of sanitary products was to be implemented, including specific obligations on schools, colleges and universities, there would be a cost to suppliers to make and distribute more products. However, these would then be sold to retailers and other agencies which would bring in income to the suppliers. Therefore, the financial impact to businesses would be broadly cost neutral. Individuals - If free provision of sanitary products was to be implemented, for those who made use of the provision, there would be a significant reduction in cost as they would no longer have to pay for sanitary products. It would also reduce stress and increase equality for women and girls on low income who at this point find it economically difficult to access these products and have to resort to 'homemade' solutions.

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

N/a

## 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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Positive: Age – The Bill is likely to have a positive impact on women and girls of reproductive age as they will be able to access sanitary products for free, without having to consider any of the financial, practical and emotional challenges that can often be associated with menstruation. Positive: Gender re-assignment – The Bill is likely to have a positive impact on people who have undergone gender re-assignment as menstruation is also experienced by some trans-people therefore, the proposals in the Bill to make access to sanitary products trans-inclusive, would mean that trans-people would also be able to access free sanitary products. Positive: Sex – The Bill is likely to have a positive impact on women, as they will no longer be disadvantaged by the cost of menstruation. The proposed Bill would reduce this inequality associated with the cost of sanitary products as a universal system would be established which would allow women and girls to obtain these products for free and would place a duty on schools, colleges and universities to provide these products.

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

N/a

## 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?

There is an opportunity to encourage suppliers to provide products at a lower cost or a proportion free recognising that this is a health issue for women and girls. Given that there is still a strong stigma attached to menstruation in developed countries, including Scotland, the majority of women and girls who do not currently have difficulty accessing sanitary products will continue to purchase as before. It is important that this is delivered as a universally accessible service to increase equality of access for all women and girls.