

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Scotland's Rural College Students' Association

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**

Having run a successful pilot scheme (Period Poverty) across our 6 campuses over the last two years, we have found that students benefitted from this in numerous ways. By making a free supply of tampons and sanitary pads readily accessible in the main women's and disabled toilets at each campus we have helped students gain access to sanitary items where previously student's found this difficult due to the location of our campuses. Most of our campuses are some distance from the shops and have no shop on site, this makes students decide (especially residential students) between going to class or accessing the shops. Another issue faced by students is the time taken out of class to address period related needs. By locating the free sanitary items in the toilets students are able to quickly go to the toilet, sort themselves out and return to class without complication, stress and the fear of not being able to find a supply of tampons or pads on campus or amongst friends. By openly advertising the Period Poverty campaign we have also helped to break down the stigma that surrounds periods by encouraging students to discuss the provision and what it means to themselves, friends and others. By making this provision free we are helping our students by ensuring they have a basic need provided for without the stress of having to make the decision between having a safe, hygienic and dignified period and eating or getting the bus home. This helps to provide items for our students who are having financial difficulties discreetly. Whilst those who have periods carry sanitary items with them around the time that they think they might be on their period, this is not always guaranteed, and the supply brought with you might not always meet the demand of said persons period. Periods can start at any time of day and by complete surprise, ensuring that there is a dedicated place free tampons and pads can be accessed for free removes the fear and stress women and others often face when they suddenly discover they are on their period. The amount of issues providing free and accessible sanitary items can address is wide reaching. By providing free and accessible sanitary items the Scottish Government can help to reduce stress, fear, stigma, distraction, discomfort, chances of Toxic Shock Syndrome, embarrassment and loss of dignity. This can only help to improve time spent in education, the welfare and success of people with periods in education in Scotland.

## 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?

No

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

C-cards used for condoms are used to help give advice and monitor use by students especially due to the fact that it is illegal to have underage sex and the dangers that surround having unprotected sex. By implementing a "P - card" (Period - card) the Scottish Government would be adding to the stigma that surrounds periods and insinuating that a natural bodily function that happens to 50% of the nation needs to be monitored like an illegal act and is associated with transmitted diseases. Implementing a "P - Card" would also make accessing the free sanitary items at any time of day a challenge, where staff are unavailable to check a card in order to distribute tampons and sanitary pads. Students would be less likely to use the free sanitary items if it was going to cause them embarrassment, require identification, identify them as having financial or other personal issues, or identify to others around them that they are on their period (especially relevant to transgender and non binary students).

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

There is no need for a card scheme

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

The card would put many students off using the scheme as this would identify them as being on their period, as aforementioned this would be discriminatory to transgender students. This would also add a stigma to those

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

who hold a card as being from a low income house hold, identifying them to others where they would rather their financial status is kept private. Having your period is not a purely "adult" experience nor is it illegal at any point in the UK therefore enforcing a card scheme would only add to the stigma that already surrounds menstruation. Also requiring a card would limit access to products only when a qualified staff member is available. Every persons period is different, for those who have very heavy, more frequent or prolonged periods they would be at a disadvantage if they'd needed to access the products multiple times throughout their period and had gone over the limit. Any student at college or university (no matter their house hold income) could be struggling with access to tampons and sanitary pads due to a number of factors not just financial. This could be due to physical location, immediate access to cash and buy-able products not an option (no campus shop / sanitary item vendors), their culture, not having a friend they can ask for one for. Often students need sanitary items fast, in an emergency in the moment that they unexpectedly find themselves on their period with no own supply accessible at that time, this applies to people from all financial backgrounds. Students also often find themselves at financial risk just before bursaries and SAAS loans come in, if they have their period at that time often students are left making the decision between a meal and the dignity, comfort and hygiene of having sanitary items and pain killers fro menstrual cramps. Throughout our pilot scheme at no point was the provision (un-monitored, topped up weekly / bi-weekly) misused or taken advantage of, only a few tampons and pads were used each week. The scheme was respected as students appreciated the provision. If there is an issue with miss use that should be a matter followed up by the institution.

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)?

From the perspective of a rural educational institution, having products on campus would be the best option as many of our students would have to take a considerable time out of their educational day to travel to a town and access a GP / pharmacy/ health clinic, the students at UHI would also face similar problems. If you are on your period and need immediate access to products (morning, noon, night), you need products available at that time in the building in which you are located be that your college, university, student union, sports facility or halls of residence.

## 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**

To provide an equal access to education for all so that those on their periods are not missing out on their educational experience due to a lack of provision for a fairly unpredictable bodily function.

## 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)

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Yes, frequently

**Please explain or give an example of your experience if you feel able to do so.**

Personally as a student regularly panicked and had problems accessing sanitary items due to an unexpected period, an empty bank account, having forgotten to top up my bag with a stash, having bled through my bag stash, not having a shop near by to buy tampons or pads, not having coins for a tampon vender (there isn't one on my campus) or the vending machine being empty, my moon cup leaking and not having a spare emergency pad on me. I often had to ration my tampons and pads as I couldn't afford to buy another pack or I couldn't easily access a shop to buy tampons and pads (nearest is a an hours walk from and back to the campus). This also led to me risking TSS or missing out on lunch to make sure I didn't miss class. I also often found myself without products when I need them most because they are in a bag which required me to McQuiver a pad out of toilet paper (never ends well) to nip back to the class to get a pad from my bag, to then leave class again before I leak through, to sort myself out. The alternative scenario where I discover my bag is all out of sanitary items, would see me desperately trying to see if one of my other two female classmates had any and if not having to hope for the best that I didn't leak resulting in a stained seat, jeans, embarrassment and a loss of dignity. That kind of anxiety happened to me regularly and I know many friends who also experienced this, and the distraction and worry made it very difficult to concentrate in class.

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

I would expect to claim free products occasionally

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

I would only use these products when in an emergency situation, like an unexpected period, running out of my personal supply or my period coming when I'm super skint and struggling; just before my SAAS loan and pay day.

## 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:

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

If the government implement this there would be a very small cost as whole sale tampons and pads would not cost that much to help supply schools. For universities and colleges there would be a small increase cost for their supply orders. Having run a period poverty across 6 campuses we have spent less than £30 on this project per a year. Due to competition companies will probably reduce their premium prices to encourage more people to buy them. For the customers this will decrease their purchase cost.

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

Instead of putting in venders or implementing a c card scheme, supply the products and flat pack (net design) boxes for each institution to put in their toilets along with posters explaining the campaign. Also encourage institutions to provide posters encouraging those struggling financially to seek help. Even better encourage more institutions to have gender neutral and inclusive toilets reducing the number of locations for boxes and making it more descreet for transgender students to access the supply.

## 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**

This would be a massive step towards allowing people who have periods to access an equal education.

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

Ensuring that those from minorities are also taken into consideration and that the campaign truly and openly helps to fight the stigma that surrounds periods.

## 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:**

By using environmentally friendly tampons and pads (they exist) and finding a solution to how institutions can dispose of soiled tampons and pads in a more environmentally friendly manner. In the future it would nice to see all 1st year academy students who can potentially or do have periods supplied with a starter pack including

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?

but not limited to a menstrual cup and tampons and pads of various flow sizes.

## Page 19: General

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

Accessible and free provision through the government to homeless women and those from deprived back grounds.