

Proposed Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

Page 2: About you

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

an individual

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".)

Politician (MSP/MP/peer/MEP/Councillor)

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

No Response

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Elaine Smith MSP

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?

Women should be able to access products needed when they are menstruating without being out of pocket. This is particularly vital for those who are living on extremely limited incomes or in poverty for example women sleeping rough. Its also important that young women have access at school to products since most of them will have no personal income and shouldn't have to be reliant on parents or guardians to provide these important products. I believe that this is an inequality that needs addressed.

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

This would mean that the inequality around accessing sanitary products could be tackled in a reasonable way. Making it similar to condom distribution would mean that a system already exists to take this forward. Universal provision is the easiest way to ensure everyone who needs these products can get them.

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.

Those who can afford to buy sanitary products will no doubt continue to do so but a system of universality eliminates any stigma and provides access for everyone at time of need.

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)?

I think all of the mentioned locations would be beneficial but if one has to be identified then pharmacies would probably be best due to accessibility.

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

This would ensure that young people have access to the products they need during the school day. It would provide dignity and as mentioned earlier would help stop reliance on parents/guardians for young people with no personal income.

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)

Yes, occasionally

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

When younger it was sometimes difficult to access products without the right change or when out without enough money. This was a particular issue when I was at school that had to be dealt with by seeking out the school nurse.

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	

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

I don't believe the financial implications would be high in comparison to the benefits for individuals and society as a whole.

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However, suppliers/ manufacturers of sanitary products could donate some of their product to schools and other educational institutes as well as homeless shelters and anywhere else that it would be socially beneficial. This would show good will and social responsibility from big companies

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

There are many ways that the proposed bill benefits equality. By its very purpose itself it addresses a specific gender inequality between men and women. However, it also has a positive impact on girls and young women who may find it harder to access products due to no personal funds. In terms of pregnancy and maternity, periods can be erratic, frequent and heavier following miscarriage and birth itself. Also for women with some disabilities this can be a particular issue e.g. thyroid disorders can also cause difficult and heavy menstruation. Overall I believe that the bill will help to end stigma associated with menstruation. It has already got people talking about periods in a way that normalises what is, after all, a perfectly normal bodily function experienced by more than half the population at some point.

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

I don't believe there will be any negative impact but I do think that the positive publicity around the bill can be used to tackle inequality.

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?

Menstruation is a normal, natural bodily function but it is only experienced by women and therefore there still seems to be some stigma surrounding it. In a civilised society we should ensure that everyone who needs products can access them at no cost and that period poverty becomes a thing of the past. It will also help with total household budgets which is important at a time when so many families are struggling to cope. For girls at school, they should not have to depend on their parents or the kindness of teachers to access sanitary

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

products or indeed face the alternative of having to stay at home when they are menstruating. Homeless women have difficulty accessing GPs and preventative medicine as it is, and this should not be added to by being unable to afford sanitary products.

I fully support the bill proposal and hope that in the interest of gender equality, tackling other inequalities and sending a positive message about 'periods' it is successful.