

# 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".)

Member of the public

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Grace Knight

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?

Since menstruation is unavoidable, it seems unfair that the completely essential tools to live a normal life during your period is not free. Women are paid, on average, less than men, and yet they have this additional cost laid at their door as well. As a society we should be practical and active in our support of vulnerable groups of people. Period poverty affects some of the most vulnerable. Let's end it.

## 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**

I think any system that requires a group of people to have a specific card that can only be used in specific locations makes things very difficult for the user, and carries the risk of potentially attracting stigma. It also creates a gate keeper to an essential item, which will presumably make it difficult for illegal immigrants, for example, from using the service. It would be better if they could just be collected from the local doctors' surgery, for example, or 'bought' from a local pharmacy for free.

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.**

Limiting use of the cards to specific quantities of sanitary products would make it difficult for people who want to collect items for other members of their family, or who have a heavy flow, or lose things sometimes. It would also create a gatekeeper system in which women are held accountable for the length of their periods to a government agency, which seems politically really dicey. As for making them free for all or only free for the poor, I'm honestly not sure what I think. On the one hand, making it available for everyone sends a political message that we as a society think women should not carry this extra financial burden. It is also much easier to administrate, doesn't create a stigma and doesn't risk leaving out people who are poor but not poor enough, or people whose financial circumstances fluctuate. On the other hand, it involves spending a lot of money giving free sanitary towels to rich people. I think I'd be inclined to work out how much it costs to administrate making it only available to poor people, and go from there.

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)?

All of the above. This should be as easy as possible to access. Personally as someone who is poor, I would either want to buy it from a pharmacy in a way that would look to anyone watching like I had paid, or pop in and get it from the doctors'.

## 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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Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Yes, because teenagers often have difficulty talking to their parents about things like this, and a school is very accessible, but it should be government funded. Schools are stretched enough.

**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.**

I have often been poor enough that buying sanitary products was a real stretch. Fortunately, I discovered the concept of the menstrual cup quite early, found £20 for one of them, and that has saved me a great deal of difficulty. I can't imagine how I would have managed in the years I was living on £7 a week if I'd had to manage sanitary towels as well.

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 use a menstrual cup, which lasts pretty much forever. I would expect to occasionally (once every few years) buy a new one. Also, it can't really be used if you have thrush, so I would go back to towels then.

**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			Y			

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

(including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)						
(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)					X	

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Obviously it will cost the government money. That's fine, it's what government money should be spent on. As I said before, I think schools and colleges should be funded for the extra supplies they need to provide. Businesses will presumably arrange to sell their products to the government at a bulk rate, which will be a lucrative contract for them and a good deal for us. Individuals will get sanitary products for free.

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

I would be very interested to know whether it would cost more to give everyone free sanitary protection, or to administrate a means tested system. I think you should do whichever of these is cheapest.

I don't think you should cut costs by only providing bottom of the line sanitary towels, because they are rubbish and it will be humiliating to have to use them.

## 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**

It will stop people who have periods being placed under an unequal financial burden.

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

By not having stigmatising cards or a complicated and humiliating means testing system.

## 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

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?

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

Equality always works out cheaper for society in the long run. The money people save on periods will be spent on other essential things that will benefit the economy and our society as a whole: the poor will spend it on more nutritious food and richer lives. In terms of environmental impact, it would be good if environmentally friendly options such as menstrual cups were encouraged. People should be free to choose though.

## Page 19: General

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

This is brilliant. I will be astonished if you manage to push it through, but I will also be proud and delighted. Good luck!