

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Rebecca Clarke

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

Every girl and woman deserves the dignity to be able to access free sanitary products, especially when they cannot afford it. It needs to be universal. Whilst it is good that there's talk of free sanitary products being available in schools, colleges and universities, it's still not good enough. A lot of women face period poverty. Period products can be expensive, especially when you're having to struggle with paying for other necessities like rent, food, heating, etc and when wages aren't rising high enough to match the true cost of living, let alone inflation, not to mention if you have a family to feed and take care of too. The Government needs to do more as this is a health issue as well as a societal one. We cannot expect those who are struggling to make ends meet or who are homeless, to try and make do with whatever they can find or try and scrape together what little they have so that they can menstruate safely and hygienically. It's undignified and should not be happening in 2017. Females can't help but get their period, but we as a nation can help them with it by making sanitary products free and readily available to those who cannot afford 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 certainly think that's one of the ways to go about providing sanitary products, the only thing that might be a problem is providing a post code as sadly not everyone who needs sanitary products has a home. Other than that, if it was anonymous and easy to use and encouraged women to use these services then I think something like the c-cards could be good. On the other hand, not everyone has access to a c-card point, especially if you live in a more rural area. I think pads, tampons, etc should also be readily available from your local GP's surgery, pharmacies, health centres, wherever it would be appropriate, so that every woman has access, no matter where they live.

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.

They should be available to anyone, however I'm not sure if they should be unlimited or limited. It depends what the limitations are as a lot of women, like myself, require a lot of products due to heavy flows. Restrictions tend to only cause more problems. I would love for them to be unlimited so women who aren't in a position to buy them, can do so and get a few more than they need in case of any problems (as a sanitary pad user, they can have a bit of a problem of sticking and staying in place), but I'm aware that this costs money. If the Government were committed to raising the higher tax rate for those with vast amounts of wealth, then this wouldn't be an issue.

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)?

As I said previously, they should be available in wherever it is appropriate, so basically all of the above. The more places that have these services, the better it is for women everywhere in the country.

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

Absolutely. To be honest, sanitary dispensers should be free in every public toilet, not just those in education sector, but places of education is a definite start. It also will make young women more likely to use these if they were free in the bathroom, instead of having to do what I and many other girls I knew had to do when I was at school which was ask the receptionist for a spare pad, it was never discreet and you then had to make your way to the bathroom to apply the product. As a young, developing woman, this was always an embarrassment. If they were free and in dispensers within the bathrooms, it would make girls feel less guilty about having to ask for help, and also normalise the period.

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.

There was a time in 2009 and in 2011 when both my now husband and I were unemployed, we had a budget of 50p a day if we were lucky and there were times where we had to scrimp and scrape to find enough money for me to buy sanitary pads, let alone the pain relief that I needed as my periods were especially heavy and painful when I was younger. It was a very uncertain and troubling scenario. I counted myself as one of the lucky ones though as I managed, unlike so many women across the country and further.

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

I would not expect to claim free products

Please explain the reasons for your response

I am currently unemployed due to a degenerative illness but luckily my husband is in a permanent job so he's able to take care of me financially so I wouldn't expect to need free sanitary products, however it's good to have the option in case something happens within a month (large unforeseen bill or something).

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:

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	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

I'm not going to pretend that this wouldn't cost the government, however, if the Scottish Government used its new tax powers and taxed the most wealthy in our country that little bit extra (not, as they've hinted at, an increase in tax for the majority of us), then the cost of providing these services would be covered. The redistribution of wealth needs to be sorely addressed. The additional rate of tax needs increased. As for businesses, it wouldn't be much of a difference, as people who can afford period products would still likely buy them from their local chemist or supermarket, like a lot of people do with condoms. Condoms are available for free yet the industry is still booming. I do strongly feel though that the sanitary dispensers in public toilets should be free as anyone can get caught out by their period and not have any change to put in the machine, so have to go without and face leaking.

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

Not that I can think of at the moment.

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

Absolutely positive. Women of all ages should be able to live a normal life without having to fear about whether or not they can afford to buy another pack of pads or tampons, or have the fear of getting caught out whilst they are out away from home, if they have one.

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

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I honestly can't think of any negative impact, other than the potential cost, but as I've said previously, the Government has the power to raise taxes, so surely they can raise the additional rate of tax, seeing as they keep talking the talk of redistributing wealth across this country.

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?

Something like what is being proposed needs to be put in place now, not next year. Whilst we're all discussing it, thousands of women are struggling to afford basic sanitary needs. In a country like ours in 2017, this is simply unacceptable. The Scottish Government HAS to do more to make things fairer for everyone in Scotland, not just for those who can afford it.