

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Iain Gray 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

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

Please explain the reasons for your response

I support the proposed legislation because I believe people who menstruate should have access to sanitary products as and when they require them with no cost attached. Periods are a natural bodily function, and not the choice of the menstruating person and therefore it is an inequality that these products are not affordable to some in our society. I commend efforts, such as that of 'Hey Girls' based in East Lothian, a social enterprise which is aiming to supply schools with enough products to support female pupils by offering consumers a 'Buy One, Give One' deal on boxes of sanitary pads. It is also important to note that Local Authorities recognise this as an issue, as was highlighted by East Lothian Council's recent Equality Plan. While there has been welcome progress recently, we must go further and ensure that there is free, universal access to these 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

Universal access is important, it will ensure the products get to all those who need them and will not miss out those on low incomes and perhaps not in receipt of benefits. People who menstruate should have access to period products as and when they require them with no cost attached. Periods are a natural bodily function, and not the choice of the menstruating person. Most of the people experiencing menstruation identify as women and girls. Lack of access to sanitary products is considered to be rooted in gender inequality and economic disadvantage.

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 free condom scheme is well established but has a relatively low take-up rate – with those who can afford it choosing to purchase items. The reasons for supporting a universal system of free sanitary products follows the same logic – these products should be available for free for anyone who needs them, but this does not mean that every individual will choose to take up the free scheme. However, keeping a system of universality will help to prevent stigma and ensure all will have access to sanitary protection should they need it.

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 believe that it is vitally important for free sanitary products to be accessible within schools. Due to the nature of the school day, little flexibility exists for pupils to access products outwith the school estate, either from a shop or from an access point. Similarly, due to their age and that they are in full time study, school pupils are less likely to have access to their own income to purchase sanitary products.

It is also clear that unexpected menstruation can cause anxiety to students during the school day and lack of income for products can lead to school days being missed for disadvantaged students.

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

Young people in Scotland should not be taking days off school because they don't have adequate period products. Access to products via dispensers in school toilets would be a good way to ensure the dignity of young people is a priority. As noted by the EIS, who recently backed the campaign for free sanitary products to be made available for pupils and students in all schools, colleges and universities, 'It is shameful that in this day and age, many women and girls struggle to access basic sanitary products, which can have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. This is a matter of basic human dignity, to which we should all be entitled, regardless of 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)

No

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				

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

(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)				X		
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Q9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

The financial implications of this will be low compared to the positive effect it will bring to society.

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

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

No Response

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?

Women, girls and people who menstruate deserve to be able to access period products as and when they are required and with no cost attached. Menstruation is not a choice, it's a natural, bodily function yet it is spoke about in hushed voices and menstrual healthcare and hygiene is not yet embedded in our health and education systems.

Women, girls and people who menstruate should not have stress or anxiety or be forced to make a choice between food and managing their monthly period. Those in education should not have to miss out because they can't get access to period products. Homeless women should be able to have their periods with some dignity. And household budgets should not be put under strain because period products have to be purchased

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

for 2, 3, 4 or more people menstruating in the home.