

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Christine Thomson

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?

It's a basic female right to be able to have the tools to cope with periods. Some women suffer more than others and sanitary products are expensive. I also think the VAT should be removed on shop bought sanitary 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?

No

Please explain the reasons for your response

People are embarrassed about using a card based system. I also personally only found out about the condom one on Monday of this week (not that I need it) so it's not been well publicised in my opinion. I'm still not even entirely sure how it works! Do you pick up a card and hand it over? Surely some sort of discussion over exactly what you need, be it condom or sanitary, has to exist, which would negate the point of having to pick up a card in the first place. Perhaps I've picked this up wrong, which again highlights the issue of how unclear the condom one is.

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.

A woman can take a bleed at any time and regardless of situation, they can't guarantee they'll always have cash on them for sanitary products. The means based system would also rule out homeless women, who would have a greater need than anyone

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)?

Chemists, gp surgeries, schools, colleges, universities. Also some sort of organisation widely available that has opening hours outside Monday to Friday 9-5pm. Periods come at weekends too!

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

Girls proportionately are more embarrassed about discussing periods than any other age group of women. This idea would remove this issue for them. Also older girls at college or university in most instances will be on

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)?

reduced incomes.

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.

My personal preference is tampons but based on my size and flow, I can only use mini/light ones. These are notoriously difficult to get, with supermarket own brands only starting at regular size. I generally need 2 boxes per period and find Boots are the only shop I can reliably get them in. When on maternity leave and now that I'm unable to work due to a disability, this can run at £12 A time for the 2 boxes in boots, which is a lot for someone not working. It's worse if you're unfortunate enough to have extra bleeds for whatever reason.

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 am not working due to a disability so my income is heavily reduced. I have a young son and my husband is self employed so if i had a particularly bad month financially, I would use the service if I had to. I would hope to be able to continue buying in shops as I need though. My situation makes it difficult to get out and access places anyway so it's probably easier all round for me to buy online as I do currently and have it delivered.

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)			X			

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

sanitary products)						
(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)				X		

Please explain the reasons for your response

I would hope that by making them available free of charge that shops would be forced to reduce their prices of them, therefore encouraging individuals to still buy them rather than get them for free. There would be an initial outlay for educational institutions in terms of installing dispensing machines but after that I think the products themselves would carry a very nominal cost. Again I think the provision of these products by the health service would carry a nominal cost; I don't see it being astronomical for them when they're so cheap to make. They carry a phenomenal mark up in shops.

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

I think the quantity available could be limited, similar to the minor ailments scheme, although women do have very varying flows so I'm not sure how easily this could be achieved. Homeless women with no way of proving a zero income must be protected with this bill. Perhaps an option to put pressure on retailers to introduced a maximum pricing for paid sanitary products and the VAT dropped? This would encourage more people to buy them rather than take them for free. People will inherently take the path of least resistance where possible and if that means paying for it while doing their shopping, no questions asked, then that's what they'll do.

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

Too many women have had or regularly have instances where they get caught short with a period and have to rely on layers of rolled up toilet roll. This bill would bring all women together, regardless of class or income. Everyone would have access to the same basic products, which currently are all too often exclusively for those with money.

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

Simply that any women can take a period anywhere and anytime. Regardless of class or income, women can't always guarantee they won't be having a hard month financially where every penny is a prisoner. This bill would remove a stigma and unite women from all backgrounds. Periods are embarrassing enough without having to panic about whether you can afford to properly deal with it using the correct sanitary products or not.

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:

Towels especially are so cheap to produce. Women who can't afford them are using significant volumes of toilet paper from public places as it stands, which will be damaging the environment just as badly if not worse than these women swapping to towels or tampons. At least these are designed to hold high volumes in one item. The equivalent flow in toilet roll would be significantly more in volume, and costs.

Page 19: General

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

Remove the VAT in shops on sanitary products and introduce a maximum price. This will encourage people to pay for them. When considering the bill, please take into account varying shapes and sizes of women. As previously mentioned, I can only use mini/lite Tampax but these are very difficult to source. I would happily use a shop own brand but again most don't offer that size. I would imagine younger girls especially would also appreciate this option.