

# 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 would like this response to be anonymous (the response may be published, but no name)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

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**

Menstruation is not a choice, and access to sanitary products like pads and tampons is vital to ensure that those who menstruate can manage their period safely and with dignity. It's therefore unacceptable that there are some individuals who face barriers to accessing these products which are essential to their continued good health and wellbeing. Those experiencing poverty and financial hardship should not have to face the situation where they have to go without sanitary products during the course of their period purely because of their lack of income. That's why I believe it is essential that sanitary products should be made freely available to all. Access to sanitary products should be a human right, so I fully support the introduction of a universal access system to free 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?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

I believe that a universal system of free access to sanitary products, modelled on a similar scheme used by some health boards across Scotland to provide free condoms, would be an excellent means of providing free sanitary products to those who need them. No-one chooses to menstruate, and yet we have a situation in Scotland where sanitary products are only available, for the vast majority of people, if we purchase them in supermarkets or other locations. Free provision of sanitary products is not something which is widely available - despite the fact that over half the population requires the use of these products for a few days every month for several decades of their life. In the same way that some health boards provide free condoms to individuals, sanitary products should also be made available for free. A card system would be easy to administer. It would be available to everyone, and could be designed in such a way that would make it discreet. A card system available to all would also prevent situations where women have to 'ask' for free products, and could potentially remove any stigma or embarrassment. Instead all they would have to do is show their card, indicate which products they would prefer and receive what they need with ease. I think it's important that the system is universal - there should be no income test or added barriers that would prevent women from accessing what they need. Access to sanitary products should be a right for all - so regardless of income, free provision should be made available to everyone.

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.**

I believe that access to sanitary products is a basic human right, so I believe the card should be available to everyone and that there should be no income test or additional barriers put in place that would prevent women from getting what they need. Putting a barrier or limit on who can access the system or how much they can access would be an unnecessary invasion of privacy and violation of human dignity. For example, there could be a situation where a parent needs to access products for more than one menstruating individual in a household - for example, if there is a mother and two or more daughters of menstruating age in one house. A limit on the amount of products which can be accessed would be an additional barrier in a situation like this. People may also have health conditions which mean they require more products than others. Any limit on the number of products that could be claimed would be arbitrary and difficult to administer. For this reason I believe there should be no limit on the number of products an individual can access.

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, in additions to schools, colleges and universities.

I think partnership working with the public sector, third sector and private sector would also be hugely beneficial for deciding locations of dispensing free sanitary products. For example, I think that locations like supermarkets should be able to register their interest in becoming a dispensing point.

Libraries and community centres/hubs is another area that should be carefully considered.

## 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**

No-one should have to miss out on their education or face the stress of having to manage their period at school, college or university without having the adequate means of access to sanitary products.

## 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.**

Like all people who menstruate, I have experienced occasions where I have been caught short due to my period starting unexpectedly - both during time spent in education and in the workplace. On one particular occasion at work, my period started unexpectedly. I had no sanitary products in my bag, and there was no dispenser (at all - not even one that could be paid for) in the workplace toilet. As there were no other female colleagues of similar age present that I could ask for assistance or find out if they had some spare products, I had to leave work and visit the nearest shop to purchase some sanitary items - all of this meaning extra time spent out of the office and added stress due to the inconvenience and uncomfortable nature of the situation. There have been other times, particularly when I was a student and money was tight, when the added cost of having to buy sanitary products was a particular strain. I am fortunate to never have been in a situation where I was unable to afford sanitary products at all - but although they can be bought cheaply, I appreciate why those on low incomes who don't have a lot of cash to spare would feel the squeeze on their budgets when factoring in the cost of their monthly period.

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**

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

I would expect to continue to purchase my preferred products as I do now, but I think a universal free system should be in place as a safety net.

## 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	

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

There will be some financial impact of the Bill on Government and the public sector. However, this will have a very positive effect on the cost to individuals. The reduced financial penalty on individuals, in addition to the health and wellbeing benefits which this Bill would bring by making products available to those who are struggling to afford them at present, would I believe have an overall positive effect on savings to the Government and public sector. The overall financial savings which could be met from a reduction of lost working days or time in education due to poor access to sanitary products is likely to have an overall positive effect to the public purse. Finally, although there will be some financial impact - the take-up rate of the c-card system is very low and I believe most people would continue to use their preferred products. It is unlikely therefore that the overall financial cost to Government would be unmanageable. If we are to consider it a human right that these products should be provided for free as a collective good, then it is only right we meet this cost collectively as a society.

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

Further regulate sanitary product manufacturers to ensure they are pricing their products fairly.

## 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?

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Positive

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

The inability to access sanitary products is a gendered inequality, so improving access to sanitary products for all is likely to reduce this gendered inequality and have an overall positive impact on Scottish society.

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

There would be no negative impact.

## 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:**

This Bill will likely improve the general sustainability of the economy by ensuring women do not suffer ill-health or lost working days because of an inability to manage their period effectively because they don't have adequate access to sanitary products. Consideration can also be given as to how provision is made for sustainable or re-usable sanitary products for those who prefer them, to ensure that provision of products is environmentally friendly where possible.

## Page 19: General

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

This Bill is a welcome step towards improving access to sanitary products for those who menstruate in Scotland. I believe it will reduce gendered inequality and is a welcome step towards improving women's rights in Scotland.