

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Neil Bibby 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**

The region that I represent, West of Scotland, is one of the most populous areas of Scotland. Three authorities in the area- Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde – jointly contain over 6% of the Scottish population, almost half of whom are women and girls of menstruating age. These local authorities also contain some of the most deprived areas of Scotland, such as Ferguslie Park in Paisley, which has Scotland's most deprived datazone. Foodbanks in the area are also amongst the busiest in the country and nearly a quarter of all children live in poverty. Benefit sanction rates are also amongst the highest in the country. Deprivation is known to hit women disproportionately and, in the areas that I represent, period poverty is a real and growing problem.

## 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**

Recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that in-work poverty is growing. This is confirmed by the rise in use of foodbanks. Women in these circumstances may not be in receipt of benefits but may still be unable to afford the cost of sanitary protection. Menstruation is a natural bodily function, but for far too long it has been a secretive subject, with women often feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable in acknowledging any difficulty in managing it, even to those closest to them. The universal access as suggested above will allow women who are on low income but not on benefit - or are in a crisis situation - to have the products they need.

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.**

Provision should be universal in order to avoid further poverty-related stigma. The c-card system for condoms suggests that the take up will be self - restricting.

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)?

The locations for dispensing free sanitary products should be as wide ranging as possible. Not all communities have a doctor's surgery or health clinic and travel can be costly and worrying if a woman's period has started suddenly. Use of local stores should also be 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)?

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Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

The Scottish Government's own statistics on school attendance indicate that attendance is lower in schools serving deprived communities than in those serving more affluent ones. Whilst, more research is needed on all of the reasons for this, it has been indicated that period challenges are a factor. No young woman wants to, or can, learn effectively when worried about period hygiene. Many young women are also embarrassed or worried about approaching their teachers on what is a private matter and therefore avoid the situation by staying at home. This goes to the heart of the raising attainment agenda to which the Scottish Parliament is committed. Young people need to attend classes in order to learn and Parliament should do all that it can to ensure that they are able to do so. In the region that I represent, Scotland's largest college – West College Scotland – serves some 22,000 students. One third of the college's activity is directed to students from the 10% most deprived areas. Female students attending the college are amongst those most vulnerable to period poverty and should receive assistance to ensure that they are able to attend and successfully complete their courses. The only caveat is that, due to the increasing cuts suffered by both local authorities and the college sector, this initiative would need to be fully funded by Scottish Government.

**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)

Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products

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		X				

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

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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

There will be a cost to the public sector that will require to be funded by the Scottish Government, however, as previously indicated, that needs to be viewed in the context of the commitments to raise attainment, to ensure gender equality and to afford women and girls dignity in their daily lives.

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

Efficient public procurement

## 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**

This Bill will allow women to have dignity and not be financially penalised for the physical consequence of their gender. Similarly, some trans people would benefit from not having the additional cost.

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

There will be no negative impact on equality.

## 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:**

There will be positive social impact as a result of this Bill. Environmental impact should be neutral. Any economic impact will be offset by the benefits to society of improved well-being amongst women and girls,

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?

including greater educational engagement.

## Page 19: General

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

No