

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.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

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Fully Supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

I think this is an excellent proposal, partly because discussing menstruation as a public policy matter will make such a huge difference to normalising it, and partly because enhanced access to period products would enhance women's and girl's lives and their ability to fully participate in education, work, and public life. People who have traditionally held power and made decisions about what is needed in e.g. public buildings, have more often than not, not got lived experience of having a period, which is probably why provision of sanitary items is so poor. If they truly understood that having a period unexpectedly, or that is heavier than usual, can be embarrassing, painful, and very stressful, I am sure provision would be better. Most of all we need to be thinking about girls and women for whom accessing period products is hard, whether because they are young and lack confidence to express their needs, or experiencing poverty, or cultural barriers. A universal scheme will benefit all but will doubly benefit women and girls facing disadvantage.

## 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**

Universalism speaks to the universality of the experience of menstruating for 52% of the population. It suggests that these items are widely needed. It should de-stigmatise accessing these products, if done well, with minimal bureaucracy.

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.**

As before. We wouldn't limit access to toilet paper or to soap. This is about women's healthcare needs, their dignity and their shared experience of having periods - a universal scheme open to anyone who needs these products recognises that. You can't ration these products, as everyone has different needs at different times.

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)?

Places where women and girls are - soft play centres, swimming pools, shopping centres, large supermarkets, community centres, toddler groups, large workplaces etc. It is important to meet people where they are and not expect them to go too far out of their way, especially if thinking of people experiencing disadvantage such as poverty. Be careful not to overly medicalise - GP's/pharmacies etc might suggest this is a medical issue and not a normal part of life.

## 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**

Having been a kid and teen at school who couldn't access what I needed, and having used bundles of toilet paper, or gone home to change with blood stains on my uniform, and felt deep shame, embarrassment and upset, I think it is vital to supply what girls and young women need. Health and wellbeing underpins everything else that happens in school. How can you concentrate and enjoy learning when you are worried about not having pads or tampons and not being able to either find any functioning machines or find the money for them? This would be transformative for girls and young women.

**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, frequently

**Please explain or give an example of your experience if you feel able to do so.**

Unexpected and erratic periods caused by stress and anxiety or after childbirth - you can't always find the items you need when you need them if on public transport or at work or in a building that has no provision. I have always been fortunate to be able to afford these items but access is another matter and I have had many occasions when I have been caught out and had to improvise. It is demeaning and upsetting to have to do this.

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 would probably still buy items during my shopping trips to the supermarket but from time to time I might get some stocks for free if easy to access. I might get them when out and about if I needed them unexpectedly. I would definitely not use free products if they were scented as I strongly object to the artificially scented pads, which I believe to be harmful to women's health.

**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		x				

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

<b>public sector (e.g. local authorities, the NHS)</b>						
<b>(b) Colleges and universities</b>		X				
<b>(c) Businesses (including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)</b>						X
<b>(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)</b>				X		

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

Not sure. Bulk buying could be an important factor.

## 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**

Very positive for sex equality, for equality for people with some health conditions, for people who are trans but who have periods, for people whose mental health causes erratic periods, for pregnant women who have breakthrough bleeds, positive for women experiencing coercive control perpetrated by men who seek to limit their access to period products, positive for women from different ethnic backgrounds for whom periods are more taboo to discuss than for others, and who might benefit strongly from easier access...in summary I see this as wholly positive for equality in Scotland. (NB - it will also be positive for boys to see periods as part of public discourse and know they are normal and be enabled to be more informed, supportive partners to women when they are older, if they enter relationships with women)

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

I don't foresee any 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?

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Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response:**

All the more so if a mooncup or washable pads are among the options available to women and girls.

## Page 19: General

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

Thank you for bringing this issue into the light. I still remember getting the book about periods put on the end of my bed when I was 12 and getting a strong sense that we don't talk about this, just get on with it. I found my period really hard to manage as a teen, and very distressing.

I have tried to be much more open with my kids, and this kind of public discourse helps so much.

I hope now that we move forward into a new phase of periods being seen as normal, natural, manageable and something that public bodies will take account of and properly provide for.