

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".)

Professional with experience in a relevant subject

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.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

a.

Page 7: Your views on the proposal

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

Fully opposed

Please explain the reasons for your response

I absolutely agree that there should be free provision of menstruation products through education providers but

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

also through other means for people on lower incomes or who are in receipt of certain benefits (available through pharmacies, job centres, food banks, GP surgeries etc.) Coming from an Environmental Management & sustainability background, I believe that we should also offer re-usable options such as the mooncup (or equivalents) or re-usable (washable) cotton pads. These will not admittedly be 'everyone's cup of tea' but they are less harmful to the environment and would reduce the costs of implementing the proposals long-term. It's also a good opportunity to include good advice on health and disposal methods in any leaflets or literature produced (i.e. toxic shock syndrome, not flushing tampons or wipes down the toilet). Indicating the various benefits of each option (in a handy table) could also include their green credentials and help people to make an informed choice. Here's an interesting article to read: Mazgaj, Marta & Yaramenka, Katsiaryna & Malovana, Oleksandra. (2017). Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Sanitary Pads and Tampons GROUP 6. If you're going to be procuring huge quantities of products, it would also make sense to stipulate that cotton used is free from pesticides (such as glyphosate) and products are BPA-free. We should not be offering free products which present risks to gynaecological health. Tampons with wasteful single-use plastic dispensers should be off the menu!

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

This could work - would you want to call it a P-card though? Maybe M-Card works better. If you do go ahead with this, it would also be a good opportunity to invite people to the Organ Donation register on the application form. A card system could potentially add to the costs and hassle of administration at Schools etc. (where cards are lost or forgotten).

Q3. Which of the following best expresses your view in relation to a card-based system?

The card should be available to anyone; its use should be restricted (e.g. by limiting the number of products that may be claimed each month)

Please explain the reasons for your response.

It's already quite a taboo subject and difficult for some people to come forward and ask: there's no need to make this more difficult. Denying a sanitary product to someone who's family may have had their benefits sanctioned would not be acceptable. If someone genuinely needs a sanitary product, there should be no need to prove their entitlement or eligibility. The service could be promoted as 'for people on low incomes' without the need to prove this (especially for teenagers). The income of one's family does not necessarily reflect the funds available to a young person either. Given that funding and public services are already stretched, there may need to be some limits in place (a reasonable and generous monthly supply) so that those most in need have the access they require but it shouldn't be difficult to get help.

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)?

GP Surgeries, community centres, pharmacies, health clinics and local libraries would be good places. The Job Centre would be a very good place - ***.
Using community health services (such as district nurses, health visitors) to make supplies available for

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)?

people who can't get out the house would be a great idea.

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)?

Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response

Yes - there should be an obligation to provide these but also funding to help schools make this provision. A girls' school will be affected twice as much as a mixed school and infinitely more than a boys school! A dispenser that gives out free products with no coupon could be trouble in some places (leading to all the stock vanishing quickly or sanitary towels stuck to the ceiling). Might be good to have some sort of plastic coupon or system where you enter a unique pin number where trust is an issue.

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.

I struggled to afford and obtain sanitary products years ago when I experienced issues with my mental health and couldn't work. I couldn't even do the paperwork for applying for benefits or leave the house so I'm not sure I could have accessed these services if they had existed then: unless my community psychiatric nurse had brought them round. Using community health services (such as district nurses, health visitors) to make supplies available for people who can't get out the house would be a great idea.

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

I use my Mooncup and re-usable (washable) pads - made by a women's cooperative in Nepal from organic cotton. I don't need to buy anything on a monthly basis thankfully - I wish I had tried these alternatives sooner. I wish there was more dialogue and information out there for women to come across these options and make an informed decision.

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

Option (c) is confusing since some sanitary product suppliers could see an increase in revenue (or a change from where it comes from). I would suggest some carefully coordinated national procurement strategies! Most retail businesses sell a huge variety of products so a slight reduction in sanitary products would have a negligible impact.

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

Promote reusable options such as Mooncup /alternatives and washable pads.
 Schools could do a 'make a re-usable sanitary pad' project in sewing as a cross-curricular project with sewing/technology and PHSE: good chance to talk about the issue, gynaecological health and how the issue affects women globally. Good to talk about the design elements - absorbency etc.
 Could be a good touring workshop to take around Schools for willing participants (maybe better not to force this on any unwilling teachers or pupils)!

There are some good resources:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Your-Own-Reusable-Menstrual-Pads>

<https://www.treehugger.com/style/bleed-with-pride-make-it-yourself-menstrual-pads.html>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLXnTbi0_7c

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

I can only imagine it being positive for people who menstruate. Hopefully the boys and men will not be jealous.

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

I can't think of negative impacts.

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:

It can be delivered sustainably if you build sustainability into the core delivery: raise awareness and make re-usable options available and attractive. Make the stats clear over how many tampons or pads a women would go through in a lifetime on average and how much carbon that represents. Schools and colleges are under tremendous pressure so be careful with how you legislate for this: provide extra funding if needed.

Page 19: General

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

It's a great idea: best of luck with it!