

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Alex Harris-MacDuff

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**

Monica Lennon MSP has worked very hard to get the bill to this stage, and I can think of nothing at this point that could be added to improve it. Period poverty is a real issue that primarily affects women by a significant margin. It is a gendered political issue, and it is something that should be unacceptable in any society for a woman to go without the necessary sanitary requirements just because they cannot afford it.

## 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?

Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

I think it is unnecessary to have the service as an opt-in registration based one. Naturally the most vulnerable in society, who are most in need of free sanitary products, may well be missed out/be unaware the programme exists. A system that would ensure no one is left out would be to provide all sanitary products completely for free in all publicly owned buildings, all public bathrooms, schools, universities, and doctors surgeries.

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

There is no need for a card scheme

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

As per my previous answer, an opt-in card scheme naturally leaves out those who may be unaware of such schemes or lack a fixed address (if it works in the same way as the c-card system). Means testing itself is very inefficient and always ends up costing more than universal 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 public bathrooms (e.g. in shops, restaurants etc. as well as in publicly owned buildings) should be required to provide free sanitary products. In the case of privately owned businesses, the onus of this should be on the business owner, much in the same way that all sanitation is the responsibility of the business owner. All schools should provide them for free due to the particular effect period poverty can have on young women. Pharmacies, community centres, GP surgeries and health clinics should all provide free sanitary products as well. They should be as widely available as possible, to ensure no one is left out.

## 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**

Period poverty can have a particularly damaging effect on young women, who may even be completely caught off guard by a period. They are far less likely to be well prepared for it, so schools should absolutely provide every assistance necessary to ensure this doesn't happen at all.

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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

There will likely be some increase in cost for business if they are made to implement free sanitary products in their bathrooms due to the obvious logistical contingent. However, this need not be viewed any differently to

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

any other health & safety regulation in a publicly accessed business, and will have an enormous societal benefit. The significant increase in cost will come from the loss of profit from the suppliers and retailers of sanitary products. Loss of profit is something that need not even be remotely considered when concerned with the health and welfare of a specific portion of society. This issue is gendered, and to refuse to fix it out of concern for the profits of a business is outrageous and sexist. The long term cost to the government and the public sector will likely be neutral, since money will be saved in other areas involving period poverty, such as treating those with infections. Individuals will obviously see the biggest reduction in cost, which is the entire point of the bill.

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

Universally applying these principles in the broadest possible scope, while initially more costly, will save money in the long run. Means testing is costly and inefficient, whereas a card based system, while slightly cheaper initially, could prove to not have enough of an effect on period poverty and not reduce the cost to the NHS/local government as much as if the products were more widely available.

## 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**

The issue of period poverty is a gendered one, and is something that most men will never have to worry about in their entire lives. To address this inequality at every level, not just for those in poverty, will greatly improve equality. Women will no longer have to spend more on the absolute necessities of life than men, since they will be provided sanitary products for free.

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

As far as I can see, there is no negative impact on equality. The only claims of a negative impact will be the claim that men are not getting free stuff, which is an invalid argument. Sanitary products are not a luxury, and there is no analogous men's issue that would require provision for. As such, there is no negative impact on equality, only an increase in the equality women have to live life freely and without worry.

## 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?

Unsure

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

This bill is unlikely to have any disproportionate environmental impact, since the sanitary products are already made, the only issue is of getting them into the right places. The economic and social impact would necessarily be large. This bill ought to be implemented to such an extent where the societal impact would be large enough that sanitary products no longer need to be purchased at all by anyone, and the economic impact of that would be that suppliers and retailers of sanitary products would no longer be able to profit from the necessities of a woman's life.

## Page 19: General

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

Any attempt to water down this bill or to restrict the provision of sanitary products in any way is a direct attack on women's rights. The issue is not only one of period poverty, but of equality in general. Addressing period poverty is a very important goal, but no woman should be forced to spend more on the necessities of life than most men ever will.