

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Eleanor Gall, Girls' Globe

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

I'm a young Scottish woman in my mid 20s and I support this Bill absolutely. That any woman or girl would be held back in the world because of a natural biological process that humanity depends upon for survival is utterly absurd to me. For too long, women have been told that our periods are unpleasant at best and shameful at worst. As girls we are taught that menstruation is something to keep as quiet about as possible so as not to disgust or disturb others. Stigma is such an incredibly powerful form of oppression because it robs individuals of the vocabulary they need to talk confidently and comfortably about how they experience life. And stigma around menstruation is so heavy, so widespread, so suffocating, that it can even go unrecognised. It can feel so normal to be silent, and to be silenced. In many ways, I feel that by being Scottish I have been born a female in one of the easiest or luckiest places to be a female in the whole world. The ways in which my gender limits me are relatively few compared to others elsewhere. But earlier this year, when the news came out about the girls in Leeds who were missing school because of their periods, I felt so incredibly angry. I was moved to tears. I wasn't shocked to learn that there are women and girls unable to afford sanitary products - although it's awful - it makes sense with the number of families using food banks in the UK. What shocked me was the shame, confusion and worry these girls reportedly experienced in connection to menstruation. The fact that a girl in the same UK I grew up in could get her first period and have no idea what was happening floored me. How could she have been failed so badly by so many different people? In a country with education and healthcare systems that are supposedly among the best in the world, I can see literally no excuse for any young girl to look down at her underwear one day and not understand why she sees blood there. Why hadn't she been taught about periods in school? Why aren't teachers talking to girls and boys about what will soon be happening to their bodies as part of their basic education? Why were none of her peers talking about it? There are obviously a plethora of answers, but I am pretty confident that they all come back to one key factor: stigma. While there is much work to do to get to a place where menstruation is seen and celebrated as the incredible, natural and immensely powerful process that it is, I believe that the proposed Bill is an important and necessary step on the road to gender equality. I want to feel proud to be Scottish, and to be a young woman in Scotland. We can and must do so much better.

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

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

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)?

No Response

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

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 don't know if you'd be able to find a woman who hasn't experienced the shame of being a girl caught out by her period at school. Who hasn't felt hot tears threaten to spill on to burning cheeks as she's told that if she wants to use the bathroom she'll have to wait til the end of class. Who hasn't spent a whole day with cheap rough school toilet roll stuffed in her underwear because she didn't have any products in her bag. Who hasn't tried to check the back of her skirt in a mirror or window hoping no one notices her. I really believe it's a universal female experience of shame and worry.

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 am in a position where I am able to purchase sanitary products and to plan for when I'll need to use them.

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				

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

(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)				X		
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Q9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

Sustainable and environmentally friendly sanitary products like menstrual cups should be prioritised over pads and tampons.

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

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

Boys and men need to be educated on menstruation.

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

Page 19: General

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

No Response