

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

David Thomson - Freelance Journalist

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

Please explain the reasons for your response

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

The reason why I am taking part in the consultation for Proposed Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill is that I am fully supportive of the bill. The main reason why I am fully supportive is that I am hoping that the bill will help to bring down the stigma of discussing women periods. In August 2017, I have written an opinion piece for the Scotsman (<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/david-thomson-campaigns-may-spell-the-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-menstruation-taboo-1-4533646>) that found that four in five women in the UK aged between 16 and 39 "felt uncomfortable discussing their periods in some capacity". The poll commissioned by ActionAid also showed that one in five women "felt uncomfortable discussing their periods with their mother, partners and female friends" and nearly 50 per cent said that they would not be happy talking periods with their fathers. Meanwhile, I have been following the issue over the last year as a journalist for the CommonSpace. Starting from interviewing Ms Lennon previous year about her period poverty campaign (<https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/10052/labour-msp-period-poverty-could-put-womens-lives-risk>) through to more recently the interview with Scottish Government Cabinet secretary, Angela Constance about the pilot in Aberdeen in giving out free sanitary products (<https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/11854/podcast-interview-scottish-government-cabinet-secretary-angela-constance>) The reason why I have been involved with the period poverty campaign as a journalist is that it is my job is to make awareness of an issue that would more than 50 per cent of the population. One of the main problems for young women and girls is that they cannot afford to buy their tampons. The consequence of for women who cannot afford to buy tampons is that they are health implications for women who do not change their tampons. According to the NHS, toxic shock syndrome "is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by bacteria getting into the body and releasing harmful toxins". I firmly believe that if women have free access to sanitary product, this will help the health of young women and girls in Scotland.

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

If it has been set up in such a way that it is dignified for women to receive the sanitary product in a pharmacy then I would support the policy. The film I, Daniel Blake shone a spotlight on the embarrassment felt by women in poverty who end up stealing sanitary products because they cannot afford to buy them during their period.

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

The card should be available only to those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits; card-holders should have unlimited access to free sanitary products

Please explain the reasons for your response.

If you make the system universal, you are going to have similar situation to free prescription where it will benefit those who are going to be high income. If you target those on on low incomes or receipt of benefits, it would mean that free sanitary products would go to those who need it most.

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 best places would be GP surgeries, pharmacies and health clinics. They would enable to have the dignity of giving out the sanitary products to women.

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

If girls and young women cannot afford to buy sanitary products, then at least at schools, colleges and universities do have an obligation to provide free sanitary products. By not providing sanitary products, it will affect their education and in some case, they might drop out of college or university.

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					X	

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

consumers of sanitary products)						
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Please explain the reasons for your response

The reason why I think that there is a significant increase in cost for colleges, universities, business and public sector because extra money would need to be found to pay for the sanitary products to be placed in the toilets as it will be an extra expense that will come out of existing budgets. As a result, there will be a reduction for those women who use sanitary products because they would know that they can get free access to sanitary products, whether it is at school, colleges and at work.

achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

to make sure that business and the public sector go for the lowest priced sanitary product. A easy search on the Tesco website will find that you can
[products/258279522?sc_cmp=ppc*GHS%20-%20Grocery%20-%20All%20Products%20+%20Tesco%20Brand*PRODUCT%20GROUP258279522*&gclid=EA1aIQobChMI6dbDsZuY1wIVohbTCh3WaAa](#)

use women in an emergency, sanitary products in college, universities etc will have to be bought at the most cost-effective way.

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?

Neutral (neither positive nor negative)

Please explain the reasons for your response

The only concern would be is how they would deal with those who have had gender re-assignment. There are some cases that those who are in the process of gender re-assignment are confused to which toilet that they should go to. As the free sanitary products will be in female toilets, some of those people will miss out because they might go to the gentleman toilets.

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

Lack of involvement in decision-making
 Women and girls are often excluded from decisionmaking and management in development and emergency relief programmes. At the household level, they generally have little control over whether they have access to a private latrine or money to spend on sanitary materials. Even when gender inequalities are addressed, deeply embedded power relations and cultural taboos persist; most people, and men in particular, find menstrual hygiene a difficult subject to talk about. As a result of these issues, WASH interventions often fail to address the needs of women and girls.

Lack of information and awareness
 Young girls often grow up with limited knowledge of

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

menstruation because their mothers and other women shy away from discussing the issues with them. Adult women may themselves not be aware of the biological facts or good hygienic practices, instead passing on cultural taboos and restrictions to be observed. Men and boys typically know even less, but it is important for them to understand menstrual hygiene so they can support their wives, daughters, mothers, students, employees and peers. In the development sector, there is a lack of systematic studies analysing the impact of menstrual hygiene and resources for sharing best practice. This resource aims to address the latter.

Lack of social support

Taboos surrounding menstruation exclude women and girls from many aspects of social and cultural life as well as menstrual hygiene services. Such taboos include not being able to touch animals, water points, or food that others will eat, and exclusion from religious rituals, the family home and sanitation facilities. As a result, women and girls are often denied access to water and sanitation when they need it most.

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:

Yes the Bill can be delivered sustainably because as with free soap and toilet paper in toilets for a number of years through different social and environmental impact.

Page 19: General

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

No