

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".)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.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

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?

As an academic, and in my pastoral care capacity, I come into contact with many students who are experiencing/have experienced financial difficulty. The impact of this financial difficulty on the student and their ability to engage with their studies is wholly negative, resulting in many feeling pressurised to work additional hours or apply for emergency loans in order to make ends meet. The proposal of free sanitary products would go some way to address one of the costs that females experience, and would ensure that females were not choosing between spending their money on their basic sanitary needs, or something else. The provision of free contraception is common practice across universities in Scotland and the UK, because of the numerous health benefits associated with doing so - the same should be done for sanitary products. The health of a student shouldn't be dependant on their financial situation, whether it is in relation to protecting themselves from STIs as a result of unprotected sex, or protecting themselves from a wide range of reproductive diseases as a result of being unable to afford sanitary products.

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

A similar system would possibly be appropriate, however consideration would have to be given to the amount/type of sanitary products that would be available to each student per visit, and the frequency that they would be expected to attend so as to have minimum impact (disruption) on their studies, and unfortunately the potential stigma that is still attached to using this type of service.

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.

In an ideal world, I would choose the top option. However due to the huge cost associated with this proposal, there probably need to be some restrictions on it. As the c-card system is open to all, so too should this be. Therefore the restrictions would unfortunately result in a limit on the number of products being claimed each month. It is important that females who access this system should have a choice re. the type of product that they use also.

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 of the above, and possibly Student Associations also, so as to be consistent with the c-card system.

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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Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response

Yes to the provision of the products, but unsure about the location of them. Unfortunately there may be the risk of the service being misused if it was so readily accessible - machines could be vandalised, or products misused to block toilets in some schools. Also when girls first start their periods they often wish to conceal it, and may not wish to access the products from such a visible place initially.

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.

When I was a student I often felt the pinch financially. I remember feeling frustrated and aggrieved that females had to endure this additional cost, when males didn't.

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

My initial response would have been number 3 because I am able to afford sanitary products and wouldn't expect to access them freely. I would prefer to make them available for those most in need. However the lack of gender equality linked to such an expense has influenced my choice above. Women already suffer due to a lack of equal pay (along with other experienced inequalities), and as this cost only applies to women (totalling over £18,000 over their lifetime), it is too large a factor to ignore.

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					

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

(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

The Government etc. would experience the most significant increase in cost as they are starting from ground zero in relation to this provision. Colleges and universities would potentially have expense associated with installing the machines etc. Businesses may be expected to provide their products for a reduced cost to support the provision of these at a national level, with the users of the service experiencing a decline in their costs.

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

The only ones that spring to mind at the moment would include the provision of more basic/limited range products (e.g. non-applicator tampons, pads without wings etc.).

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

As discussed in a previous answer, the cost associated with sanitary products is borne by females, so therefore the protected characteristic of sex is addressed. There is the potential for it to impact pregnancy and maternity too with the inclusion of maternity pads in the provision.

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

The focus of the Bill should be on addressing the inequality that females have been experiencing for years. Rather than the perception being that the government is taking on additional cost (and that females are to blame!), the focus should be on redressing the balance.

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

Page 19: General

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

No Response