

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.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

This is one way to address the attainment gap and gender inequality. If girls are excluding themselves from education as a result of access to free sanitary products this is fundamentally unfair, not only from a gender perspective, but also from the perspective of economic inequality.

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

Whatever method is used for distribution has to be accessible and stigma-free

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

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Any qualifying criterion that is imposed raises issues in relation to potential delay in access, change of circumstances, ease and stigma of application or interpretation of what is 'normal', all of which may disadvantage the very people the scheme is being established to help. Even with universal access women may still choose not to use the products provided, just as I choose to buy ibuprofen from Boots rather than get it on prescription because the ones I buy are easier to swallow and available without prescription.

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 are not appropriate as it 'medicalises' periods and contributes to the 'weaker sex' stereotype. Pharmacies or supermarkets might be more appropriate as a point of distribution - women can then pick up basic products as part of their shop but no one would know the price (or no price) they were scanned at other than them.

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

Maybe could do a deal with manufacturers that they have to provide dispensers which dispense a certain proportion of free basic products as well as their premium products

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.

More from the perspective of unexpected circumstances - when period started unexpectedly and was nowhere near working dispenser or had no change for it

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

Would probably only use in emergency situation but would welcome the security of knowing that was an option.

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

At an individual level there would be some balancing out - for some there would be no difference and for others a significant reduction depending on take-up. For businesses including manufacturers and retailers it might lead to a reduction in their profits if shelf-space was taken up with free products or some demand was switched from premium products to basic free products, although someone is still 'paying' for the product even if it is free at the point of collection. For colleges and universities my feeling is that they should not incur the cost of

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

providing the products so the cost should be neutral. For the public sector there may be an increase in relation to initial outlay, but the macroeconomic benefits or better educational engagement and achievement, more working days and hence greater productivity of a proportion of the workforce may offset this increase.

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

Work with manufacturers - just as drugs companies use profits from their 'star' performing drugs to fund generic, non-brand medication for NHS, there must be opportunities to secure large savings due to economies of scale. At the very least, there has to be an end to VAT - these are not luxury products!!!

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

Given that only women or trans are affected by this, anything that economically or socially disadvantages them is inherently unfair.

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

Most important thing is how it is communicated. I am sure that more conservative elements in society will see this as either a product of the 'nanny state', evidence of white-van-man being deprived or discriminated against (by not getting something for nothing) or bringing to public attention something 'dirty' or not worthy of discussion.

Instead we have to see this as not just a moral issue but an economic one - just as the NHS was born out of both a desire for greater social equality but also better economic performance from a healthier workforce, this needs to be cast in the same light.

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:

Unclear why there would be any environmental impact - women are not going to start using sanitary products in significantly greater proportions! There are ways to offset the cost to the public purse although any additional

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cost should be seen as social investment.

Page 19: General

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

No Response