

# Proposed Sanitary Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

## Page 2: About you

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

on behalf of an organisation

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".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Commercial organisation (company, business)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Kalitasha Ltd

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**

Kalitasha is a visionary company that is dedicated to bringing dignity to women everyday. We do this by applying common sense and ingenuity to the everyday problems associated with the health and well being of women and girls across the world. We have designed a unique, ergonomically designed, externally worn, re-usable feminine hygiene product which we believe will go along way in solving period poverty across the globe. It has been created to specifically give women and girls the physical and psychological security they need everyday of their period. However, well designed products need to be able to reach the end user that really needs them. We are fully supportive of the proposed Bill because it can act as a gateway for women to new products that could radically benefit and transform their experience of menstrual hygiene management. As Kalitasha is a company that was founded in Scotland, we are keen that Scotland can lead the rest of the world in taking ownership over the problem of period poverty and providing the solutions to 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**

A card based system seems like a practical way of giving access to free sanitary products when needed. The only concern would be making sure that there is no stigma attached to using the card (shame about not being able to afford them, shame about being exposed as in need). It could be very positive if the card could be introduced to users in schools, and have a teacher that talks them through the process.

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.**

If the card is in association with income/receipt of benefits then this might contribute to stigma associated with period poverty. Rather than putting every user on a level footing, it attempts to level the ground without actually making sure that everyone can approach menstrual hygiene the same way. Furthermore, by limiting the number of products that may be claimed each month, this is imposing an understanding of what is 'normal'. Many studies show that experience of menstruation can contract vastly from person to person. By limiting, this immediately puts pressure on those who are at one end of a spectrum to not necessarily be fully honest about their experience of their cycle. It can contribute to stigma by giving the impression to that user that they are not 'normal' if they have a heavy flow for example. If a user has learning difficulties and struggles to get to grips with managing menstrual hygiene, then an external voice exercising judgment on their menstrual hygiene without being fully aware of their needs might be distressing and confusing. There has been no indication that when offered for free, access to menstrual hygiene devices is abused and therefore considering limits would potentially be better as a response to difficulties that arise rather than assuming that might occur. Additionally, if there is no limit on the access to products, this gives those that do struggle with menstrual hygiene related disease such as endometriosis an opportunity to manage these problems with increased dignity.

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)?

Yes, all of the above examples. Schools are a neutral ground that could help prevent unnecessarily stigmatizing. Public toilets would also facilitate this.

## 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**

As this issue is only recently being considered in the public forum, then imposing a duty on schools, colleges and universities is necessary in order to make sure that new policy is implemented and not the 'first thing to go' if budget cuts are required. Also these are neutral places that will not negatively associate anyone if they are dependent on free sanitary provision.

## 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)

No

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**

Although I am very fortunate not to have financial stress associated with triggering period poverty, if any reusable free products were on offer I would claim them. I would do this as a statement that I consider myself an equal to every person that menstruates. I would use reusable products as this is an economical, environmentally friendly option that puts less strain on the government to provide products so regularly.

## 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 |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| <b>(a) Government and the public sector (e.g. local authorities, the NHS)</b> | X                            |                       |                      |                        |                               |        |
| <b>(b) Colleges and universities</b>  |                              | X                     |                      |                        |                               |        |
| <b>(c) Businesses (including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)</b>    |                              |                       | X                    |                        |                               |        |
| <b>(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)</b>             |                              |                       |                      |                        | X                             |        |

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

If the Government and public sector relies on disposable menstrual hygiene products, this will be a colossal increase in cost to make sure that there are enough supplies. There will need to be a strict waste management implementation to make sure that products do not get discarded unnecessarily. If the government imposes a duty on colleges and universities, this will have to be factored into any budget and will increase cost. If the Bill simply results in extracting the customer from the end user, then there will not be a great impact on businesses. It merely means that the customer has changed. It might benefit businesses if the new customer (government) has to cater for every kind of individual rather than a specific user. For individuals, the financial impact will be a significant reduction in day-to-day cost of living.

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

The Bill could mean that the Government needs to open up an unprecedented amount of money within a budget to make the amount of sanitary items available as required, without further stigmatizing those who struggle with period poverty. A viable solution to this is to invest in reusable products that are innovative and suited to the UK market, and provide them to people that are new to their menstrual cycle. Young adolescents are the most likely to be open to using products as they do not carry preconceptions of reusable devices, and have not been affected by the culture of menstrual hygiene management in the UK yet. In the UK culture, people that are menstruating have been drawn towards disposable products as this psychologically allows them to go about their day without constantly thinking about their period. As the market has been directed in this way, there has not been enough investment and innovation with regards to reusable products. For many who are older, reusable is associated with inadequate menstrual hygiene methods from a few decades ago. However, increasingly there is greater desire to create products that are environmentally friendly and relieve economic pressure of replacing menstrual hygiene products every month. In developing countries period poverty has been tackled with heavy emphasis on reusable products, as the NGOs that are providing them wish to empower the girls to not have to remain dependent on their provision so frequently to manage their menstrual hygiene. Currently, the only reusable menstrual hygiene device that is becoming part of the mainstream menstrual hygiene management in the UK is the menstrual cup. However, this is quite an intimidating device to get used to when an 11 year old, or younger, is coming to terms with managing their period. Kalitasha Ltd has designed a product that is economically viable, made well, and environmentally friendly. The aim is to retail this product at approximately £6. The shell (anti-leakage device) will be replaceable every 3 years, and the pads every year. (x6 pads = approximately £4). To put this into context, using the statistics provided in Monica's proposal (the estimate cost to the SPS for female prisoners to have sanitary provision annually) and the current female population on the SPS website (367), rather than £9000 annually, a Koree Product would cost £2,202 annually. For just replacing the pads, it would be £1468

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annually. Reusable products that work, are comfortable, and provide dignity are a lasting and economically viable solution that governments should be investing in.

## 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**

Any adolescent finds transition difficult. The support of the government in entering a transition as they start menstruation will boost their confidence in embracing this change, and reducing the stigma around it. Menstruation is something that so many people from a variety of stories and backgrounds have in common, and establishing an equal footing in this area with so many of the population is an opportunity to remove a layer of disparity in the culture that we live in. Anyone who menstruates should be able to have the same variety of choice in how they manage it. Even in the formation of this Bill and bringing the discussion into the public sphere will help reduce the stigma. Humiliating circumstances are the direct consequence of lack of education and access.

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

A potential negative impact of the Bill would be on the quality of products. The market might lean towards sourcing cheaper products to counteract the financial pressure and this could actually lead to greater disparity. Finding sustainable solutions (such as well made reusable products) must be at the forefront of the Government's mind if the Bill is implemented. Potentially placing stricter regulations on the products that are used could protect the integrity of the product's quality.

## 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:**

I think that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably if there is an increase in innovation around menstrual hygiene products that satisfy the demands of a UK end user, as well as being reusable.

## Page 19: General

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

*No Response*