

# 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

Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Scottish Trades Union Congress

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**

The STUC is concerned about increasing reports that women and girls affected by low incomes, benefit sanctions and other austerity measures are unable to afford period products and are experiencing detriment to their health, dignity and wellbeing as a result. The Trussell Trust has reported that thousands of food bank users received feminine hygiene products through its services in the past year and that some women have resorted to using toilet roll, socks or newspaper because they are unable to afford period products. The STUC notes that access to period products in educational establishments is variable across Scotland, with some schools having a policy of supplying these through the main office, which might put girls off asking for supplies; and some colleges having only one vending machine in a ten-storey building. The STUC believes that not having enough or suitable products to manage menstrual bleeding effectively is associated with health risks including toxic shock syndrome, and also with shame, embarrassment and distress. The STUC also notes that publicity around the Bill discourages stigma around menstruation and encourages people to talk about issues which were historically hidden as "women's issues." The STUC believes that this is healthy in a broader sense of tackling misogyny and sexism.

## 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)?

The STUC believes that the potential of free sanitary products being provided in any and all public buildings should be explored.

## 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)

Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products

**Please explain or give an example of your experience if you feel able to do so.**

N/A as answering on behalf of STUC.

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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

N/A as answering on behalf of STUC but we do not believe that access should be restricted to a certain number of claims.

## 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		

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

In terms of sustainability of products, other sanitary products which are not tampons or sanitary towels e.g. menstrual cups, could also be provided for free.

## 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**

The Bill is likely to have a positive impact on the normalisation of menstruation, stopping it being a "hidden women's issue". In turn, this can have an effect on challenging sexism and misogyny. A broad range of sanitary products should be available for free, including maternity pads.

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

*No Response*

## 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:**

Although other products e.g. menstrual cups should also be provided for free in order to alleviate current and future environmental impacts.

## Page 19: General

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

*No Response*