

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

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Hugh Hill. Simon Community Scotland

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?

Simon Community Scotland believe that period poverty in which ever form should not exist. Our experience informs us that the impact of not having the means, knowledge or facilities to manage your periods can be distressing and humiliating. The women we work with experience multiple levels of exclusion and being on the street and having your period is another factor that can rob a women of dignity. We would welcome sanitary products being free and accessible for women and girls wherever and whenever they need 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?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your response

Yes, and our feedback is that women who can afford to purchase and choose particular products would be happy to continue doing so whilst at the same time fully supportive of free products being available to women and girls who need that additional support

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.

Our feedback suggests that women who can afford to purchase products will continue to do so. By making it universally available there is a reduction in the potential stigma the 'poverty card' might create. If we want women to feel valued and supported we should avoid identifying them as special cases by issuing a card suggesting in need.

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 homeless facilities, schools and colleges, public building accessible to women (libraries), train and bus stations, and any toilets of facilities retailers, employers might want to make available.

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

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)

Yes, frequently

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

Women who are homeless experience significant additional issues. Often their periods are irregular as a consequence of their diet, lifestyle, drug use and living in a stressful survival environment for long periods of time. The women often don't talk about their periods because they are ashamed, mostly because they know little about their menstrual cycle and in some cases have Victorian attitudes about being dirty, shameful, hidden. The main reason is that many of the women did not have a positive relationship with their mother, or even have a mother, school didn't feature highly in their experiences and you are unlikely to find a more digitally excluded group so Google/YouTube do not feature in their worlds. The majority of the women we spoke to did not know what a period was, no one had told them so their experiences from being young were to work it out as you went along. Some women thought a tampon should be used for 2 hours, some 24 hours. Some unique approaches, but not safe, dignified or healthy. In terms of women on the street we are not aware of women stealing or shoplifting for product however we know they will go into toilets and make towels or tampons out of tissues, will use money from begging or will borrow from someone who has products. None of these approaches promote self esteem, dignity and wellbeing.

Q7. If sanitary products were available for free, which of the following would apply to you?

I would not expect to claim free products

Please explain the reasons for your response

We receive donations and for the last three years we have provided free sanitary products to staff and service users in our accommodation services. We frequently purchase sanitary products to ensure we have supplies available and will continue to do this. Ideally manufacturers could do more and sell to us at cost rather than retail.

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			X			

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

(including suppliers/retailers of sanitary products)						
(d) Individuals (including consumers of sanitary products)				X		

Please explain the reasons for your response

There is a huge range of products available and it is likely that manufacturers will produce 'premium' or luxury products with the free products being, functional. The cost of products is not high so manufacturers will make up for in premium products what they will lose in basic free products. Colleges and schools can expect to experience an initial outlay but the annual cost is unlikely to be very high. Largely depend on the cost of the vending products, not a high cost item. For government it will be about supporting the initiative and getting the message out there. There is room to 'negotiate' with manufacturers of cost/volume. Individuals, for some it's the accessibility than will be the huge benefit, for others they will spend more money on branded items.

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

Working with producers to deliver low cost high volume products.
 Improving awareness of disposal so used products aren't flushed away, Scottish Water should be on board here and could experience significant cost saving.
 Recognising most women who can afford products, will continue to purchase their brand.

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

It's first and foremost about dignity, and here it will deliver.

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

Other than cost we don't see significant negative impact. The ability for women to continue to purchase products will help and we believe a lot of women will stand up and confirm this

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:

Work with Scottish water on disposal of products, probably the main aspect. There are health impacts of keeping a tampon in longer than you should, perhaps figures from NHS Scotland might suggest a reduction in use on NHS services. Unlikely to reduce begging activity but potentially it might. As commented earlier we don't know of women committing a crime to access products but if they were free then there might be a reduction in criminal justice usage, small but perhaps.

Page 19: General

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

We fully support the proposal. Our staff and service users are universally in favour of a scheme that is accessible, free and non stigmatising.

We welcome the debate and consideration of education and the wider social impacts of providing a period of dignity.