

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

The Trussell Trust

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?

Partially supportive

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?

Please explain the reasons for your response

We welcome the interest in period poverty that this Bill has generated and the attention it will bring to addressing the impact of period poverty. The Trussell Trust supports a network of 52 foodbanks in Scotland based in 119 locations across 28 out of the 32 local authorities. This network is made up of multiple partnerships between The Trussell Trust and charitable organisations, often churches. The network of foodbanks in Scotland provided 76,764 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis - including 24,142 for children – during this first half of the 2017-18 financial year. The experience of The Trussell Trust Network in Scotland tells us that need for toiletries, including sanitary items, is wide spread. 92% of the network (which covers 28 local authorities) confirmed that their foodbank provides non-food items alongside the nutritionally-balanced three day food parcel. That foodbanks need to provide such a range of items, from tin openers to toilet roll, gives an indication of the sheer scale of destitution felt by individuals and families across the country, unable to afford the basics. We are supportive of the aims of the Bill generally but would need to know more about how some of the details would work before endorsing all aspects of the Bill. We support the proposal that encourages schools, colleges and universities to make sanitary products more available and accessible for people who need them. However, we would like more detail about plans for an S-card. We would welcome results of a trial to assess its cost, uptake, and impact, as well as to understand how people's reactions to an S-card compare to current engagement with the C-card scheme.

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

We would welcome more detail about plans for an S-card, including results of a trial to assess its cost, uptake, and impact, as well as to understand how people's reactions to an S-card compare to current engagement with the C-card scheme. Research into period poverty among the Trussell Trust Network in Scotland identified that people were 10 times more likely to accept an offer of sanitary products than to ask for them. This could reflect the stigma associated with menstruation, which may also prove a barrier to the success of an S-card scheme. However, a universal form of provision should, in theory, reduce stigma, and universal welfare provision tends to be cheaper than means tested-support overall. It will be necessary to first pilot the scheme to assess cost, uptake, and impact.

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.

A universal card would, in theory, reduce stigma, and universal welfare provision tends to be cheaper than means tested-support overall. However, this should first be piloted to assess cost, uptake, and impact.

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)?

Ninety-two percent of Trussell Trust Foodbanks in Scotland give out toiletries but foodbanks cannot be relied upon alone. Over a third of respondents to a survey recently conducted with The Trussell Trust foodbank network in Scotland indicated that it can be difficult to secure the amount of non-food items necessary to meet

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 needs of those approaching their foodbank for help – 24% only sometimes have enough, while 12% never have enough . The stigma surrounding the topic of menstruation means that although many foodbanks stock the required products, it is sometimes difficult to ensure that these reach the women and girls that need them. This research into the Trussell Trust Scotland Network has revealed a very mixed picture of the items that foodbanks are short of, reflecting again the diversity in local context, donations and need. For example, while a respondent from a Highland Foodbank expressed the need for "more personal items like sanitary products", another near Glasgow noted that they always have plenty. Potential reasons for a disparity in donations could be the latter's proximity to a city in which several well-publicised campaigns encourage the public to donate feminine hygiene products to foodbanks and homeless shelters, and where the items can be accessed more cheaply to buy and to donate. It may also reflect a situation where cheaper items are more accessible for people who therefore don't need them from the foodbank.

Foodbanks are seeing and responding to a significant need for both food and non-food items. However, they are reliant on varying levels of donations, have limited resources and despite efforts to reach as many people as possible, are aware that there are still some who do not access their service for diverse reasons.

Therefore, it is clear that foodbanks and their volunteers cannot alone ensure that people's essential needs are met.

Good locations would be public venues where someone can be privately advised about availability of products and where someone can privately take up the offer (without external attention). Those suggested within the question above seem appropriate. Additional suggestions could be:

Local authority offices/Council buildings; Hospitals; Citizens Advice centres; and shopping centres might also be a good option if it is a universal card.

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

Research into experience of period poverty among foodbanks in the Scottish Network identified areas where teachers were having to pay for sanitary products for their pupils. One local foodbank was able to step in and redistribute products from one oversupplied school to other schools that lacked availability of 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)

Not applicable: I do not need or use sanitary products

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

No Response

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

Government - Increase could be significant but a pilot would help to analyse this further. It would be important to consider an average cost as well as a minimum cost. We have some concern about using uptake in prisons as a guideline as the female population of prisons is a much smaller proportion than the general female population. Uptake of condoms will also have a different impact as it is important to consider regularity and amount of uptake for such different products. It would be helpful to have a pilot of the S-card to have strong evidence to estimate scalability. Schools, Colleges and Universities - cost may vary depending on whether a school is co-ed or single-sex. It could be helpful for schools to have Government support in terms of funding. Businesses – We would welcome more detail in the Bill about the role of business. It would depend on how the products are paid for, e.g. whether they are bought in bulk and discounted and who bears the cost ultimately. Individuals - accessing free sanitary products could lead to a significant drop in the costs associated with period poverty. Foodbank volunteers have highlighted that for people who are unable to afford food and other household essentials, the relatively high cost of feminine hygiene products poses a challenge for many low income females.

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

We would always urge action around insufficient incomes to help address the root causes of poverty, which in turn could have an impact on the situation targeted by this proposed Bill.

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 would enable more people who might otherwise experience period poverty to have improved access to

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education and work opportunities, as well as increased engagement in other forms of positive social interaction (eg. involvement with local community activities).

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

- Piloting the S-card first
- Engaging with projects that provide sanitary projects in schools, colleges and universities to learn from their experience
- Taking into consideration the findings of the current Scottish Government trial with CFINE in Aberdeen as well as The Trussell Trust's most recent report 'Non-food provision' in The Trussell Trust network in Scotland

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

Please explain the reasons for your response:

Currently costs are based on the cheapest products, which tend to be the least sustainable. The finances are also based on current costs and need and do not take account of future costs or need. There is also a lack of clarity on the role of business.

Page 19: General

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

'Period poverty' cannot be disconnected from poverty and deprivation, so more must be done to make sure women and girls have sufficient and stable incomes so they can afford essentials such as sanitary products. We would always urge action around insufficient incomes to help address the root causes of poverty.