

Scotland can lead world with Labour's plan to end period poverty

14 August 2017

"Scotland has the opportunity to be a world leader in ending period poverty."

"Access to sanitary products should be a basic right but sadly in Scotland we know not everyone can afford or obtain what they need."

"Have your say at periodpoverty.scot"

MONICA LENNON MSP

 **FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW**

Access to sanitary products should be a basic right, but too many people in Scotland can't afford or obtain what they need.

That's why Labour MSP Monica Lennon is proposing world leading legislation to end period poverty.

Monica has launched a consultation on her Member's Bill which proposes:

- Put a duty on Scottish Ministers to introduce a universal system of free provision of sanitary products.
- Put a duty on all schools to provide free sanitary products in school toilets.
- Put a duty on all colleges and universities to provide free sanitary products in campus toilets.
- Introduce measures to allow Scottish Ministers to extend these duties to other bodies in future, following a period of review, if deemed appropriate or necessary.

You can have your say in the consultation by visiting www.periodpoverty.scot

A wide range of experts, organisations and charities, including the Children and Young People's Commissioner, have spoken out in support of the proposal

Children and Young People's Commissioner, Bruce Adamson said:

"Period poverty is a human rights issue. Having proper access to sanitary products is an essential element of human dignity and impacts on the ability to access other rights such as education, leisure and cultural activities."

I welcome this consultation which is particularly important for young people. It is important that as many young people as possible make their views heard

through this consultation."

EIS President, Nicola Fisher said:

"At its AGM in June the EIS passed a motion to campaign for free sanitary products to be made available for pupils and students in all schools, colleges and universities. We fully welcome this consultation and look forward to engaging in open and constructive discussion to investigate how best these products can be made easily accessible in educational establishments. We would also encourage many teachers and pupils to take part in order to help put an end to period poverty. It is shameful that in this day and age, many women and girls struggle to access basic sanitary products, which can have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. This is a matter of basic human dignity, to which we should all be entitled, regardless of income."

The Trussell Trust Scotland Network Manager, Ewan Gurr said:

"The Trussell Trust network of foodbanks work at the frontline where we see the shame and embarrassment that the inaccessibility and unaffordability of sanitary items creates for many women and girls."

It has been a pleasure to work alongside Monica and others to raise the profile of period poverty and we fully support the launch of the consultation. It is our hope and belief that it will add weight to the call for approaches that place dignity at the heart of provision."

Suki Wan MSYP for Glasgow Shettleston, and Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament said:

"This event, and the consultation being launched today, goes to the very heart of the Scotland we all want to live in. An overwhelming majority (99%) of the Scottish Youth Parliament's members, which democratically represents young people across Scotland, believe that access to menstrual hygiene products is a basic human right. The proposed bill would facilitate access to this right, particularly for young people who struggle financially, those who are homeless, or those who live in extreme poverty. It will help break down the 'taboo' status of menstruation in everyday conversation, and the multiple discrimination women and trans people who menstruate experience as a result of period poverty. On this pressing issue, SYP stands in support of the bill and ending period poverty for good – so Scotland can really become the best place in the world to grow up."

NUS Scotland Women's Officer, Shuwanna Aaron said:

"This consultation will be welcome news to people in Scotland who have periods. No one should have to experience the indignity of having to go without vital sanitary products they simply cannot afford and it's important to remember that as well as impacting women, period poverty can also affect non binary people and members of the trans community."

"We've already seen great examples of students' associations and community organisations providing free products but with limited resources and ever

declining budgets this is simply an unsustainable solution. The unfair cost of sanitary products can have significant financial impact on households, individuals and students struggling financially. In turn there can be a hugely negative impact on health and wellbeing, and it's imperative to ensure that everyone in this country has access to the sanitary products they need."

Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire CEO, Heather Russell said:

"We have been enthused by Monica Lennon's address of this issue which is reflective of wider challenges faced by women.

"Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire have always distributed donations including sanitary wears to those we support, however, following meeting and discussions with Monica we moved to a more respectful 'help your self' approach. This allows any person who requires sanitary wears to take what is required without having to ask from readily available stocks of donated goods in our office toilets, and all refuge accommodations.

"In understanding the challenges those we support are faced with we feel it important to lighten the load in any way that is practicable. With this in mind our 'help your self' approach has been extended to all generously received donations including clothes, toiletries and food.

"Whilst we do what we can as an organisation, we have our limits. As such, we fully support Monica's proposed Members Bill which seeks to make access to essential sanitary products a legal right and look forward to further supporting her in this endeavour."

As Scottish schools come back from their summer holidays, Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, is this week focused on education and schools.

To read more about our campaign, click the image below.

