

Simon Stevens
Chief Executive
NHS England
NHSE Skipton House
80 London Road
London, SE1 6LH

1 February 2019

Sanitary product provision in hospitals

Dear Mr Stevens,

The BMA's (British Medical Association) representative body passed a motion last year on the importance of making sure that sanitary products are readily available to any inpatient who requires them. New research undertaken by the Association's Board of Science has revealed that this standard is not being met consistently at hospitals in England. Action must be taken to ensure that patient experience of care is not jeopardised by the non-availability of these essential items.

Through FOI (freedom of information) requests to all trusts and health boards providing inpatient care across the UK, trusts in England told us:

- **Universal access** – a significant number of trusts (42% of respondents) either do not provide sanitary products for their inpatients at all, or they would only supply them in case of an emergency
- **Hospital policy** – no trust has a policy in place dedicated to covering the provision of sanitary products to inpatients
- **Availability to purchase** – only 22% of trusts said that sanitary products are readily available to purchase. Nearly half (48%) said that access was limited in some regard, and some trusts said it was not possible, at all, to purchase sanitary products on site (15%).

Patients must not be deterred from undergoing necessary treatment, or hindered in their recovery, because they are unable to access, or embarrassed to request, sanitary products. With patient experience and quality of care being such a clear priority for the NHS, sanitary products, which are relatively inexpensive, should be provided for free and readily available to all inpatients at hospital.

I do hope you will be available to meet me and my team to discuss our findings further, and the role that NHS England could play to implement the BMA's recommendations to address this issue. Please contact Holly Weldin, Senior Public Affairs Officer (hweldin@bma.org.uk / 0207 3836515), who would be pleased to arrange this meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dame Parveen Kumar
Chair, BMA Board of Science

