

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill Financial Memorandum – Colleges Scotland Response

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 26% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

On behalf of the college sector in Scotland we wish to express our support in principle for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and the core vision it presents, of a Scotland wherein the rights of children and young people are respected and protected in the law in Scotland and whereby public authorities are legally required to respect and protect the rights of children and young people in all the work that they do.

Key Points

At this stage we would wish to make the Finance and Constitution Committee aware of the important role that the college sector should play in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and of the need to ensure that this role is recognised in ongoing discussions around both ensuring the appropriateness of the measures and the costs associated with the bill.

The Committee members will be aware that through, for example, the Foundation Apprenticeship programme, wherein senior-phase school pupils are on college campuses, or participating in work based placements through their local college, colleges have the responsibility to ensure that the rights of children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled, as would be the case in other senior-phase, secondary school environments.

With regards to point 23 regarding the duty of local authorities in Scotland to report every three years on what steps they have taken to secure better or further effect within its areas of responsibility of the UNCRC requirements, we would question whether colleges as public bodies should also have a similar duty.

We note under point 27 that “a fund will be provided to support health boards and other public services to embed children’s rights in their decisions, policies and practices to ensure their duties under the Bill can be fulfilled”. We would contend that colleges as public bodies should be in receipt of any available resource through this fund to support compliance with their duties.

Conclusion

As the Committee moves ahead in scrutinising the financial memorandum, and looking at both the costs and wider issues of the bill we would welcome the opportunity to consult with the Committee, given the role that colleges will play in supporting the implementation of the UNCRC in practice, and in ensuring that this implementation is carried out in a financially sustainable manner, meeting both the current and future costs associated with the bill.

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