Scotland's Colleges is pleased to provide written evidence to the Finance Committee on the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill.

Creative Scotland

Much of the work of Scotland's 43 colleges includes the promotion, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts and culture – this is also one of the general functions of Creative Scotland.

Scotland's Colleges is pleased that Creative Scotland must exercise its functions "with a view to increasing the diversity of people who access and participate in the arts and culture". Widening access and participation across all courses is a longstanding principle of Scotland's college sector and creative industry courses are treated no differently. Scotland's colleges should be regarded as a key vehicle for increasing the diversity of people accessing the arts in Scotland.

In terms of Section 28 (1), Creative Scotland will require to provide Scottish Ministers with "such advice, information and assistance as they may reasonably require" in relation to a range of matters, including, "industries and other commercial activity the primary focus of which is the application of creative skills." It is unclear whether Scotland's colleges will be required to act under this definition as organisations that deliver skills-based training but where it is not a "primary focus". Scotland's Colleges would like assurances that should colleges be included within this provision, the task of reporting to Ministers shall not be an onerous one.

Social Care

Part 4 (Chapter 1) of the Bill deals with Social Care and Social Improvement Scotland. Many colleges run nurseries for the children of students and as such may be defined as a "care service" under Section 37 1(l). As before, we would expect that any additional regulations imposed on colleges as a result of this section would not be onerous, particularly given the very tight margins under which college nurseries operate.

Indemnity Insurance

Section 99 deals with the issue of charity trustees' indemnity insurance. All the colleges in Scotland are charities so have a particular interest in this area. This is a positive reform as there is currently doubt about whether or not charity trustees can have such indemnity insurance.

General Powers
Section 10 of the Bill allows Scottish Ministers to make “any provision” which they consider would improve the exercise of public functions. This is a very wide ranging provision and we would seek clarification on the potential impact this could have on Scotland's colleges.

Neil Cuthbert
Public Affairs Manager