Children's Commissioner's Advisory Board
Terms of Reference

Purpose

- To provide strategic support, advise on and challenge the Children's Commissioner creation and delivery of strategic and annual business plans, and the process by which the Childrens Commissioner's priorities are arrived at and delivered.

- To 'scan the horizon' across the broader context within which the Children's Commissioner operates and to advise on matters of opportunities and risks at the strategic level and with a particular view to external stakeholder perceptions of and support for the Children's Commissioners.

- To help to further the positioning and increase the influence of the Children's Commissioner within Parliament, across the public sector, with NGOs and voluntary organisations, the media and other influencers, children and young people, and wider society.

- To advise on how the powers of the Children's Commissioner can be utilised to best effect to promote and protect children and young people's rights, and thereby to improve outcomes for children and young people in England.

- As experts in their own fields, to provide advice, support, scrutiny and challenge to the Children's Commissioner, so as to secure the effective delivery of the Children's Commissioner's statutory responsibilities.

- To advise the Children's Commissioner from the standpoint of their own organisations, on key issues and challenges facing children, families and the sector at large.

- To act as a critical friend and sounding board for the Children's Commissioner regarding policies and proposals, informing the policy and strategic priorities.

- To strengthen relationships between the Children's Commissioner and the wider children's services network across the statutory and voluntary sectors as appropriate.

Constitution

The establishment and running of an Advisory Board is a requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014. It is expected to be made up of representatives from across Children's Services and wider sectors.

- The Children's Commissioner will chair meetings.

- Secretariat will be provided by the OCC.

- This Advisory Board is not accountable for the policies or financial or other management affairs of the Office.

- Individual members carry no personal liabilities or risks.

Membership, including mechanisms for ending membership on either side

- The Advisory Board will comprise a group of influential figures from across the children's sector and wider civil society, each member bringing specific expertise and knowledge

- Membership is by the formal invitation of the Children's Commissioner, members being approached and invited to be members on the basis of the following considerations, to be taken across the Board membership as a whole:

    - A proven track record of excellence at a strategic and/or operational and delivery level in policy and/or practice in Children's and Young People's Services in the public, voluntary or private sectors;

    - A proven track record of equally high level performance in services relevant to children young people and families, provided by organisations other than those directly connected to children's and young people's services;

    - Proven knowledge and experience of the policymaking process at local and/or national levels;

    - Thorough knowledge of the role, remit, powers and duties of the Children's Commissioner as defined in legislation.

- The work of the Advisory Board will be undertaken paying due regard to the seven principles of the Code of Conduct for those in Public Life, attached.

- Board members will be expected to undertake, and successfully to complete, Security of Information training in accordance with standard expectations in place for staff and others working for or with the Childrens Commissioner's Office.

- Board positions are not remunerated. Expenses incurred as a member will be reimbursed on proof of their having been incurred. All expenses claims must comply with the regulations contained in the Children's Commissioner's Office published Financial Procedures

- A member of the Board may at any time and in writing stand down from the Advisory Board by giving three months' notice of the intention to leave.

- In the unlikely event that such an issue should arise, as a result of exceptional circumstances and only on the grounds of firm evidence, if the Commissioner deems it necessary to remove an Advisory Board member because of substantial risk to the Children's Commissioner by their continued membership of the Advisory Board, the Children's Commissioner has the right to signal that she intends to terminate a member's

position on the Board.

- Such a process would be initiated by the Commissioner writing to the individual concerned stating in detail the reasons and evidence for terminating membership, and giving twenty working days allowing the member to respond in writing.

- The independent Chair of the Childrens Commissioner's Audit and Risk Committee would, at the end of that twenty day period, consider the matter, ensuring that the member's response was considered in an impartial manner before advising the Commissioner on what action should be taken after due consideration.

- Such consideration would include an opportunity for the member concerned to meet the Chair of Audit and Risk without the Commissioner being present.

- The Commissioner and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee would meet to consider the case, as any proposed termination would be on the basis that continued membership could represent a severe or undue risk to the reputation or the conduct of business of the Children's Commissioner's Office.

- A decision would then be communicated by the Commissioner to the member concerned in writing.

Duties and Authority

Role and expectations

- As set out in the section of these Terms of Reference headed "Purpose," to provide expert support, advice, scrutiny and challenge to the Children's Commissioner.

- To ensure, notwithstanding the Commissioner's independent status and individual legal responsibility for her work and that of the OCC, that the activity of the Children's Commissioner is aligned with as well as appropriately commenting on that of the children's services and other relevant policy and practice sectors and wider civil society, so that the impact and capacity of the Children's Commissioner's work is maximised to help secure the best outcomes for children and young people in England.

- To offer considered advice to the Childrens Commissioner as necessary, so that their effectiveness is enhanced and the Children's Commissioner's remit is fulfilled.

- To expect that the Children's Commissioner will take due account of the advice and opinions of the Advisory Board.

- To promote the work of the Children's Commissioner.

- To attend a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 4 meetings per annum and be available between meetings via email or phone, on a limited basis and only as strictly necessary

- To treat all Board business, and communications with the Commissioner in their roles as Advisory Board members as confidential, unless it is clearly indicated that a public statement will follow their discussions.

Frequency of meetings and attendance expectations

- The Advisory Board will meet 4 times per annum. Dates will be published a year in advance and not subsequently changed unless in exceptional circumstances

- Members will also agree to be available between these meetings, for example by telephone and e-mail, to provide views, advice and guidance to the Commissioner from time to time as the need arises. Such contacts will be proportionate

- Board members will be expected to attend every meeting unless in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. Notice of inability to attend should be given at the earliest opportunity after dates are agreed. The Children's Commissioner's Annual Report to Parliament will be expected to record and publish records of attendance

Term of Office

- Board members are appointed for a 1 year term.

- A decision about the extension of any term will be at the discretion of the next Children's Commissioner for England.

Date of Next Review

April 2017