



## Children's Commissioner

### Annual Business Plan 2015–16

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[About the Children's Commissioner](#)

The Children's Commissioner for England is Anne Longfield OBE.

She has a statutory duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children and Families Act 2014 gives her special responsibility for the rights of children who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services.

She speaks for wider groups of children on non-devolved issues including immigration (for the whole of the UK) and youth justice (for England and Wales).

It is her job to make life better for all children and young people by making sure their rights are respected and realised and that their views are taken seriously.

### **Our vision**

Our vision is of a society where all children and young people have the support and opportunities they need to flourish. A society where children's rights are recognised and realised and where their views, experiences and best interest shapes decisions made about their lives.

### **Our mission**

Our mission is to promote and protect the rights and interests of children in England. The Children's Commissioner uses her statutory powers to undertake research and investigations and her statutory position to raise awareness, engage, advise and influence those who make policies and decisions that affect children and young people. We deliver this by working with children and young people to ensure their voices and experiences are heard and represented.

### **Our values**

**Participation and engagement with children** – we listen to, understand and learn from children and young people, particularly those least likely to be heard, in all our work.

**Positive in promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** – The UNCRC is our framework to improve all aspects of children's lives.

**Equality** – we value diversity and respect the dignity of everyone with whom we engage. We acknowledge, champion and celebrate diversity, difference, tolerance and open mindedness.

**Promoting positive childhoods** – We work to maximise the positive experience of childhood for all children. We raise awareness and identify the barriers and challenges that hold children back from their potential – especially vulnerable children. We work strategically using evidence to influence decision makers to make the best interests of children a priority.

**Foreword from the Children's Commissioner**

I am delighted to present my first Business Plan as Children's Commissioner for England. The plan sets out how I will promote and protect the rights and represent the views and interests of all of England's 12 million children and young people and particularly the most vulnerable in the year ahead.

I felt immensely privileged to have been appointed to the post which I took up at the beginning of March. I have spent my first few months continuing to deliver the many projects already underway, meeting and listening to people who work with or for children and young people and children and young people themselves, and considering the strategic direction of my work for the years ahead.

All children deserve and have the right to a good childhood. Most children will grow up and develop with the care, love and opportunities they need to thrive. But we know that too many children are held back and limited by their experiences. Some children do not get the support they need when they need it; some children have poor and inadequate experiences of some of our institutions and some, sadly experience neglect and abuse.

I am determined that by the end of my term as Children's Commissioner, the work undertaken by my team and I will achieve real progress, tangible and measurable improvement to the lives and outcomes of children and young people in this country – particularly the most disadvantaged. This Business Plan sets out an ambitious work programme for 2015–16 to deliver on this promise. In July, I will publish a five-year strategic plan which will include the longer term goals I want to achieve for children and young people in England.

All of my work will promote and protect children's rights – seeking to put children's best interests and needs at the heart of decision making and practice. Some does so for all children in England but in line with our remit, one of our major focuses is on achieving real improvements for those who are in or leaving care; living away from home; receiving social care; or who are most likely to have their rights infringed for other reasons.

I have identified the areas on which to concentrate on the basis of: what the law says I and my staff team should do; what children and young people and the organisations which support them have told us we should do; and our experience and knowledge of the issues that affect children; as well as where we know can make a real positive difference to their lives.

I want to ensure that all decision makers take children's interests into account in all that they do. From decisions about local areas and housing to decisions about care placements, support at school and health advice. All the evidence shows that children will benefit and flourish best if their needs have been considered and if their views and best interests help shape the environment and services that affect them. I am determined to make this a reality.

Some of the activity included in this plan is ongoing work I have inherited from my predecessor Maggie Atkinson. I am very grateful to her, the team of staff

who supported her and who now support me, for beginning these important projects. I am as determined and committed to ensuring this work is seen through as I am to delivery of the new work we are about to begin. I am also grateful to the children and young people who give their time to my advisory groups, provide advice, inspiration and challenge to all of us to make their voice heard.

Inevitably the plan does not capture all that we do on behalf of children and young people. Nor can we plan for things that may arise during the year which are so important that we consider we must address them. However, I am confident that we are using public resources wisely and cost-effectively to embark on a dynamic and impactful programme of work which will benefit the children and young people who need it the most.

Anne Longfield  
**Children's Commissioner for England**

## Introduction

The Children's Commissioner's Annual Business Plan sets out the activities she will undertake to promote and protect children and young people's rights and interests during 2015–16.

Last year the Children and Families Act 2014 strengthened the Children's Commissioner's primary function<sup>1</sup> to promoting and protecting the rights of children in England. It also made her responsible for promoting the rights of children who are looked after, living away from home or receiving social care services. It says the Commissioner should have 'particular regard' to the rights of these groups of children and that we may also provide them with individual advice, assistance and representation. These responsibilities are now integral to all aspects of work.

All of our work furthers our ambition for England to be a society where children are valued, listened to, supported and able to flourish and reach their potential. The work is carried out by a small team which is strengthened by the positive partnerships we have with charities, academic institutions, children's groups and many other practitioners and professionals who dedicate their commitment and expertise to improving children's lives.

#### **Our strategic priorities 2015–16**

- 1. We will create a positive climate for children to flourish by raising awareness of children's needs, views and the importance of childhood through impactful dissemination of our evidence; communication campaigns; and by being a leading exponent of children's engagement in decision-making.**
- 2. We will put the views and experiences of children and young people at the heart of public debate and decision-making. We will ensure their experiences, views and interests are taken seriously in informing decisions that affect their lives.**
- 3. We will promote and protect all children and young people's rights and best interests, with particular regard to children living away from home or receiving social care and to other groups of children who we consider to be at particular risk.**
- 4. We will commit to the protection from violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation as a key priority, with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC.**
- 5. We will ensure the organisation delivers on its objectives efficiently and effectively.**

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<sup>1</sup> The Children's Commissioner's statutory duties and functions are defined in Part 1 and Schedule 1 of the Children Act 2004 as amended in Part 6 and Schedule 5 of the Children and Families Act 2014

In identifying our priorities and developing our actions we have used a robust evidence base we have developed across our work with and for children and young people. It suggests that children will benefit most if:

- their views, experience and best interests are at the heart of services
- the needs of the whole child are considered and met
- support is available as early as possible before problems escalate
- services and agencies provide support in a joined up and integrated way.

## Future strategy

It is important to note that this Business Plan occurs in a year of transition, as 2015 represents the final year of the previous Commissioner and the start of Anne Longfield OBE's term. As such some work has been carried over from the previous Business Plan.

This interim Business Plan must also be viewed in the context of a wider five-year strategic plan which is currently being developed promote and protect children's rights and improve outcomes for children.

**Our strategic objectives, in line with our mission and values, reflect the UNCRC's General principles:**

- **Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights outlined in the Convention (Article 1)<sup>2</sup>**
- **The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say and whatever type of family they come from (Article 2)**
- **All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child (Article 3)**
- **All children have the right to life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily (Article 6)**
- **Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously (Article 12).**

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<sup>2</sup> We also work with some groups of young people such as those who have been in care and who are in higher education up to the age of 25 years.

## Strategic objectives for 2015–16

The following table outlines the major activities that the Children's Commissioner will undertake during 2015–16.

Strategic objective 1 – Increasing recognition of the importance of children's rights and positive childhoods	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will create a positive climate for children's rights by raising awareness of children's needs, views and the importance of childhood and children's rights through impactful dissemination of our evidence and communication campaigns.</li><li>• We will maximise the potential of our research and evidence, surveys, consultations and events to secure increased levels of interest and commitment to achieving children's rights and positive childhood experiences for children - from stakeholders, policy makers, and decision makers and in the media.</li><li>• Our fifth periodic submission to the UNCRC and our impact assessments will inform judgements on how children's rights are being met in England and highlight and secure support for positive change.</li><li>• We will disseminate our good practice evidence to positively influence policy and practice for children and young people.</li></ul>	
We will	This will result in
Create a <b>positive climate for children's rights</b> by raising awareness of children's needs, views, the importance of childhood and children's rights through dissemination of our evidence and communication campaigns	Increased levels of reference to and commitment to achieving children's rights and positive childhood experiences from stakeholders, policy makers, decision makers and in the media
<b>Raise awareness of children's experience of growing up in England</b> by publishing the results of the 2014–15 Care Monitor Survey, and by launching a new annual 'State of the Nation' survey of children and young people's views. We will launch the survey with a Young Amplify national summit in July.	An annual high profile national benchmark of children and young people's views and experiences gained through our 'State of the Nation' survey
Undertake a programme of <b>quarterly stakeholder events</b> to inform the debate on childhood and children's rights.	Increased levels of awareness and debate on children's rights and more stakeholders and professionals recognise the importance of

**Raise awareness of the impact of policy on children's rights** by undertaking and disseminating child rights impact assessments and encourage decision makers to adopt this approach

**Aid the realisation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child** by submitting evidence and advising the UN Committee in their examination of the UK's compliance with this treaty during 2015-16

Engage with professionals and children and young people to identify best practice in **promoting and protecting children's and young people's rights** and to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Disseminate information and good practice on how the **education** system can place children's rights at its centre.

realising children's rights in their policy and practice  
Government policy proposals are more consistent with children's rights and Government is encouraged to use impact assessments

Our submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will inform judgements on how well children's rights are met in England

We will disseminate best practice gathered from our visits, research, programmes and wider work through a programme of briefings to key professionals groups and agencies to inform policy and secure a positive change in practice

Greater understanding of and commitment to rights-based schools

## **Strategic objective 2 – Promoting the views, experiences and engagement of children and young people**

- We will put the views, and experiences of children and young people at the heart of public debate and decision making to promote and protect children's and young people's rights to expression, to be informed and to be heard and understood.
- To achieve this we will undertake an extensive programme of engagement and consultation with children and young people through our expert participation groups, through policy engagement, through consultation with children and young people living away from home and through national communication campaigns. We will publicise children's views, experiences and recommendations in a new *Insight* resource.
- We will extend our annual Takeover Day to raise further awareness and build engagement with children and young people. A new Takeover Challenge Award will be launched to recognise and celebrate children and young people's engagement.

<b>We will</b>	<b>This will result in</b>
<p>Work with our children and young people's advisory groups <b>Amplify</b> (11–18), <b>Young Amplify</b> (7–11) and <b>Young Expert Groups</b> (7–25) and our wider participation network to identify and publicise issues of key concern, trends, views and recommendations for change for issues which affect children and young people's lives. This will include quarterly and themed <i>Insight</i> bulletins</p> <p><b>Extend the annual Takeover Day into a Takeover Challenge</b> with extended activities and a national award</p>	<p>Increased numbers of children and young people participating in our work. Increased understanding and reference to children and young people's views through <i>Insight</i> web resource and <i>Insight</i> bulletins</p>
<p><b>Help organisations and groups that directly work with children and young people</b> to support their own participation work through a national network and best practice dissemination</p>	<p>More organisations and individuals are involved in Takeover Challenge to highlight children and young people's engagement in their work. We will promote and drive forward national awareness of the value of involving young people in decision-making.</p> <p>More organisations effectively involve children and young people in their work to influence decision making</p>

Gather and publicise the **views and experiences of children and young people living away from home** and receiving social care through our advice and assistance work, visits and work with Children in Care Councils to inform national and local decision making

**Publish an Amplify report** into access to information on **mental health services for children and young people** and launch with a high level stakeholder event

Publish a Young Amplify report on **safety and security for children**

High levels of recognition of the survey. National and local policy and practice is informed by the key issues and concerns for children living away from home and receiving social care

By raising awareness of children and young people's experience of mental health support with key stakeholders and policy makers. We will ensure that the views and experiences of children and young people in receipt of mental health services directly inform the way those services are designed and delivered

Promote children's views to policy makers and decision makers

**Strategic objective 3 – Provide evidence and ensure that the needs and rights of children are met especially those that are most vulnerable**

- We will undertake research and investigations and develop policy analysis and recommendations in response to promote and protect all children's and young people's rights. We will use our statutory position to raise awareness, engage, advise and influence those who make policies and decisions that affect children and young people to secure support for our proposals.
- We will have particular regard to those within the section 8A of the Children Act 2004 (children living away from home or receiving social care) and to other groups of children who we consider to be at particular risk.

<b>We will</b>	<b>This will result in</b>
Raise awareness and develop policy proposals to promote and protect the rights of <b>children on the internet</b>	Increased understanding and commitment to empowering and protecting children in their use of the internet.
Disseminate evidence and secure support for <b>PSHE</b> in schools	Support for PSHE to become a statutory requirement
Commence an assessment of the extent to which the rights of <b>care leavers</b> are being met as they transition out of care, and review their support needs including those with SEN and disabilities and those at risk of offending	Identification of best practice and compliance with statutory duties. Recommendations to improve policy and practice
Identify good practice and produce policy proposals for <b>improvements to the provision of therapeutic support for children in care</b>	Good practice briefings on therapeutic support for children in care
Examine how the <b>education system can improve its support for children in care and in need</b>	Increased understanding about educational outcomes for children in care

<p>Promote and provide informed <b>advice, assistance and representation</b> to children and young people who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services and expand and develop the service.</p>	<p>We will increase awareness of the advice, assistance and representation service and ensure it is high quality and impactful</p>
<p>Publish evidence on local strategies and services to reduce <b>child poverty</b> in the early years, and devise an influential follow up strategy</p>	<p>Increased understanding and support for strategies to eradicate child poverty in early years by local and national decision makers so that children living in poverty see a fundamental and positive change in the approach taken and quality of local services in place to support them.</p>
<p>Produce guidance for non-specialist local authority practitioners on the <b>asylum system for unaccompanied children</b> and how asylum processes and care planning for should work together in the best interests of the child.</p>	
<p>Actively monitor how children and young people are affected <b>by the immigration and asylum process</b> and respond to any gaps. Assess the impact of the <b>Family Migration Rules</b> on children's rights, particularly 'minimum income requirement'.</p>	<p>Improved understanding by the corporate parent in relation to policy and practice of the asylum claim and support needs of unaccompanied children. Policy makers recognise, and are in a position to ameliorate, the impact of Family Migration Rules on children and young people</p>
<p>Conduct research to understand the <b>impact of advocacy services</b> and make recommendations for best practice</p>	<p>Increased understanding of the prevalence of mental health needs of young people involved in gangs and the extent to which this informs appropriate services and support</p>
<p>Conduct research to better understand the experiences of groups of young people for whom <b>gender</b> expectations may have particular significance</p>	<p>Work towards better access to improved support for children and young people e.g. advocacy services and mental health services</p>
<p>Continue membership of the National Preventative</p>	<p>Increased understanding about gender inequality by central and</p>

<p>Mechanism (NPM) visiting places of detention to assess and report on children's rights, views and experiences, and as a priority, understand use of <b>segregation in youth justice system</b> and promote alternatives</p>	<p>local policy makers</p> <p>Improve the conditions of detention in England across the secure estate and help prevent cruel or degrading treatment</p>
<p><b>Strategic Objective 4 – protecting children from violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation</b></p> <p>We will promote and protect children and young people's right to protection from violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC. We will build on our work on child sexual exploitation to increase understanding and recognition of child sexual abuse.</p>	
<p><b>We will</b></p> <p>Review and assess our <b>See Me Hear Me</b> Framework to provide a child-centred approach to protection for violence, abuse and exploitation.</p> <p>Continue our Inquiry and examinations of <b>child sexual abuse</b> linked to the family context and assess inter-agency and individual practice for preventing and responding. We will produce an interim report</p> <p>Work in collaboration with other key child protection partners to protect children and vulnerable adults from potentially harmful or otherwise <b>unsuitable media content</b> and empower consumers, particularly parents, to make informed viewing decisions</p>	<p><b>This will result in</b></p> <p>A credible and robust evidence base to support the implementation of the Framework.</p> <p>Increased understanding with recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse</p> <p>Influencing of policy and practice decisions nationally and locally. Better understanding and recommendations for improving prevention by parents and consumers</p>
<p><b>Strategic Objective 5 – An efficient and effective organisation</b></p>	

We will ensure our organisation is efficient and effective and able to deliver the Business Plan

We will	This will result in
Devise, develop and publish a <b>five year plan</b> to promote and protect children's rights and improve outcomes for children	Strategic clarity to our work
Ensure that the organisation has <b>robust policies and practices</b> in place to ensure that it's staffing; governance; finances; risk management, information and other corporate responsibilities are fit for purpose	Effective and appropriate use of resources.
Ensure we have in place a <b>research strategy and data collection plan</b> that will maximise our ability to hear the voices of children and young people, and use our tools such as data capture powers effectively to build our evidence	Data and other evidence is robust, well managed, and utilised fully to leverage influence over policy decisions
Ensure we have a <b>participation and engagement strategy</b> in place to gather the views and experiences of children and young people including vulnerable children	We assess and improve how we effectively engage children and young people in and through research/evidence gathering We are able to gather a wide selection of views and experiences of children
Ensure we have the <b>policy expertise and strategic know how</b> to effectively analyse our evidence and propose meaningful change	We have the expertise to lead the work and develop impactful policy proposals
Ensure we have a <b>communication strategy</b> in place	We are able raise awareness and use our statutory position to achieve

<p>that will maximise our ability to raise awareness, influence and secure support for our proposals</p> <p>Ensure that <b>levels of awareness about the Children's Commissioner</b> are high, particularly among children in care or living away from home with regard to our role in providing advice, assistance and representation and opportunities such as Care Monitor to raise issues and concerns</p> <p><b>Involve children and young people formally in decision making</b> when we recruit staff and on our advisory board.</p> <p>Run a <b>work placement</b> programme for young people</p>	<p>influence and change</p> <p>We are able to advise, assist and represent the rights of the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Children and young people's views inform key organisational decisions</p> <p>Six work placements are offered and delivered during the year</p>
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# Budget and resources 2015–16

## Introduction

As Children's Commissioner for England, I have a budget of £2.924 million to fulfil my legal responsibilities to promote and protect the rights and best interests of the 12 million children in England.

In my first few months of office my priority has been to meet and listen to children and young people, continue, and in some cases review, the work already in place and identify my priorities and plans for the coming months and years.

In summer 2015, I will be publishing my five year plan which will provide the framework for all forthcoming activities and budgeting decisions.

At the heart of the plan is an ambition to extend the reach and impact of the role and increase the transparency, efficiency and value for money of the office. A decade on and with new and strengthened statutory powers embedded, the Children's Commissioner is in a unique position to raise awareness, advocate for, and secure change and improvements for children wherever they are needed. It is my intention to maximise these opportunities.

All of our work furthers our ambition for England to be a society where children are valued, listened to, supported and able to flourish and reach their potential. The work is carried out by a small team which is strengthened by the positive partnerships we have with charities, academic institutions, children's groups and many other practitioners and professionals who dedicate their commitment and expertise to improving children's lives.

## Strategy

This year is a transition year as we move into a new five year plan. During this year I will continue and build on existing programmes and start up new areas of activity to extend and deepen our reach.

Early decisions to flatten and simplify the management and governance structure of the organisation in the last financial year will bring in a saving of £165,000 from next year onwards. These changes follow a Governance Review in 2014 which recommended that the a number of posts, including the Deputy Children's Commissioner and Chief Executive were merged with the Children's Commissioner role. Those gains will start to be seen in 2015–16.

Whilst I have particular duties in relation to vulnerable children, I am ultimately responsible to all children and a number of new areas of work and themes will be introduced this year to take this aspect forward. This will include work on children and the internet as well as a series of activities to raise awareness of children's rights and enrich the public debate about the importance of childhood.

Fulfilling my statutory duty around advice, assistance and advocacy for children in care or living away from home is a central area of responsibility. A review into priorities for the service to develop is about to report and I will be considering the findings shortly. This is an area of activity which is likely to develop over coming years as the service is successfully promoted and increasingly taken up by children.

I will continue to undertake visits and inspections of institutions where children are living away from home to listen to and act on children's experiences.

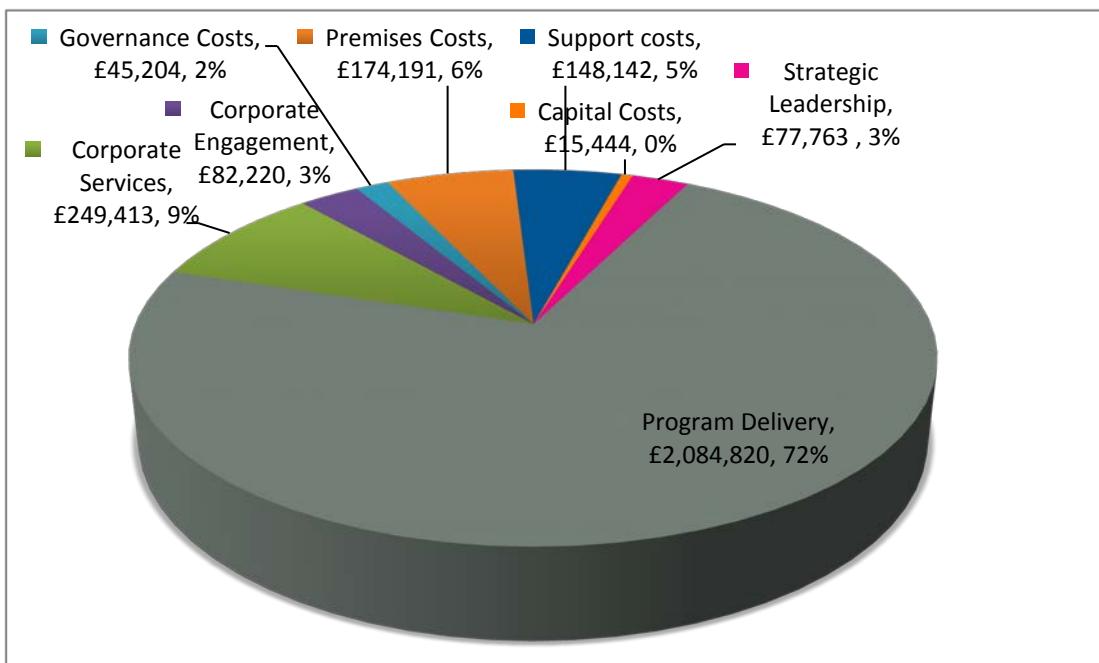
Strategic spending will continue on areas of particular childhood vulnerability including youth justice, children and asylum, children growing up in poverty and children and young people's mental health. This includes academic research to deepen our understanding and evidence, the development of new approaches and models – often with our delivery partners – and advocating and influencing to shape policy thinking and secure support from decision makers.

We have led the debate in many areas of child sexual exploitation through our reports on gangs and groups and this year we will continue our high profile inquiry into child abuse linked to the family environment. This important piece of work has the support of survivors groups, the police and national charities.

Listening to, and engaging with children and young people is a vital element in all our work and is crucial to understanding children's experience of childhood and the context in which it is lived. Children's participation continues to be built into all our research and policy priorities throughout the year and takes on an enhanced strategic role during the period with extended reach to dramatically increase our levels of awareness and participation with children.

We will be reviewing all aspects of the organisation to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver these demanding plans. Ensuring a high impact and cost effective approach throughout will be a core concern over this year.

## How available resources have been allocated



## Resources

The resource allocation for 2015–6 is confirmed by our Sponsor, the Department for Education (DfE) as £2.924 million (2014–15 was £2.924 million).The allocation of available resource is set out in the above pie chart.

### ***Administration***

The administration budget of £1.083 million is allocated to meet the costs of governance, premises, support costs, and capital costs.

Staff costs in respect of the Corporate Services team for 2015–16 are budgeted at £203,683, (2014–15, £375,016).The staff costs for 2015–16 represent 9% of the annual resources allocated from the administration budget. The Corporate Services team is led by a Director and a team of 3 FTE (2014–15, 6 FTE) that support me in my role on financial management, human resources, risk management, business planning and performance measurement, information governance, internal and external audit, premises, and IT.

Following the DfE-led Governance review of 2014 which recommended an organisation redesign and the removal of unnecessary layers of management and bureaucracy I have deleted the posts of Deputy Children's Commissioner/ Chief Executive and the PA support to the role. This decision was taken in order to migrate to a flat structure to support timely and improved decision making and to reallocate resources to my work for children and young people. This will result in efficiency savings from 2016–17 of £169,000 per annum.

The human resources function that forms part of Corporate Services has

recently been outsourced to DfE and the headcount reduced by 1 FTE resulting in savings of £50,000 per annum.

### ***Programme expenditure***

Programme expenditure represents my work and that of the staff in my office on front line facing work, at national and local level, to seek positive outcomes for children and young people. Programme expenditure represents 72% of the available resources.

The *See me, Hear me* pilot which resulted from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) represents work that will continue for much of this year.

The Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment (CASFE) represents the continuation of work commenced in 2014.

There are a number of projects that span two years and include work on advocacy for children in care, gender, segregation and separation and the impact of family migration rule.

New initiatives to begin after this year include research into mental health services, transition of care leavers, and educational outcome for care leavers.

### ***Corporate and external engagement costs***

Corporate engagement assists me in my external role to influence change at local and national level and is critical to my work being disseminated to a wide audience and acted upon.

Resources of £82,220 have been allocated to corporate engagement costs, representing an increase of 45% from the prior year (2014–15 was £44,889). This is to support my strategy and commitment to children and young people in receipt of social care by actively promoting the advocacy service provided by the Advice and Assistance function. A review of the current Advice and Assistance function was recently commissioned at my request. Additional resources have also been allocated to maintain and support on-going development of the new website, parliamentary activities and events.

The Communications team is led by a Director and a team of 3.8 FTE that support the work of my office. The budgetary staff costs are £247,000, prior year (2014–15, £197,735). The increase in staff costs forms part of my strategy to develop Takeover Day into a wider challenge and engagement programme over the coming year. I have created a new FTE post on a fixed term to assist me and my staff with taking my new strategy forward. Takeover Day had been outsourced in previous years. The net effect of bringing Takeover Day back in-house is cost neutral.

### ***Governance costs***

Governance costs of £45,204 are represented by the cost of internal and external audit and low level travel expenses for members of the Audit and Risk Committee.

The internal auditors' audit programme and the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit can be found in Governance Statement in my Annual Report and Financial Statements to Parliament. The internal audit programme is set by the Audit and Risk Committee on an annual basis it includes: financial management and budgetary control, risk management, information governance and business planning and performance measurement. The work of internal audit is reviewed by my Senior Management Team (SMT) and by members of my Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

Internal auditors work with me to provide assurance on the effectiveness of governance, financial management, risk, and internal controls. Changes to the audit programme can be made by ARC if necessary during the year. The internal auditors attend the meetings of the ARC.

The National Audit Office (NAO) is responsible for the delivery of external audit to my organisation. The NAO conduct two audits per year, the first of which is an interim audit to review the first nine months financial management, governance and internal controls. The final audit is conducted to provide an opinion on my Annual Report and Financial Statements that are laid in Parliament. Representatives from the NAO attend the meetings of ARC and are kept fully informed of the activities of the Children's Commissioner.

The current members of the ARC were recruited in 2012 for three years until September 2015. I have commenced recruitment for new members. A succession plan has been developed to ensure a smooth handover. Attendance at ARC is not remunerated; only reasonable travel expenses are reimbursed.

### ***Premises costs***

Premises costs of £174,191 have been reduced by 2% from the prior year (£177,960). This is as a result of the migration of office equipment over from our supplier to a service level agreement with DfE.

The former Commissioner signed a licensing agreement in April 2014 with the Department for Education (DfE) for a three year period to 2017. Sanctuary Buildings is a tenanted building that accommodates over twenty organisations. My office forms part of an adjacent building accessed through the DfE main reception. The office has a secure separate entrance to maintain the independence of the office.

The licensing agreement includes the costs of rent, rate, services charges and cleaning. The annual costs of the licensing agreement are £153,350.

### ***Support costs***

Resources of £148,141 have been allocated to support costs. This represents an increase of 41% from the prior year (2014–15, £83,903). This is due in part to Cabinet Office requirement that Third Party IT Suppliers systems are formally accredited through a Risk Maturity Assessment Documentation (RMAD). The average costs of an accreditation are £32,000. The remainder of the increase in support costs are represented by maintenance costs of the new accounts system and the current CRM, subscriptions, travel and staff welfare.

***Capital costs***

Capital costs are represented by the amortisation and depreciation of equipment and software over its useful economic life.

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