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## **Who are we and what we do**

Anne Longfield is the Children's Commissioner for England. She was appointed in March 2015.

The Children's Commissioner is the 'eyes and ears' of children in the system and carries out her duties without fear or favour of Government, children's agencies, the voluntary and private sector. We work with and on behalf of all children and young people in England to influence decision-making and to improve children's lives. Listening to what children and young people say about the things that affect them, and encouraging policy makers to take the views and interests of children into account is at the heart of our work.

Our priority is to change children's lives for the better by building their aspirations and resilience, particularly those who face a difficult start in life, and to shine a light on the hidden issues affecting the most vulnerable. We believe that all children are capable of greatness, and that each child should be given the support they need to meet their ambitions.

The role of Children's Commissioner was created in 2004 following Lord Laming's review into the death of Victoria Climbié, a little girl killed in February 2000 following months of horrific abuse by her great aunt and a male friend. The inquiry concluded that Victoria was let down by local services which were underfunded, inadequately staffed and poorly led. Victoria was described as having being 'abandoned, unheard and unnoticed'. The Children's Commissioner was established to promote awareness of the views and interests of children in England, and later given a duty to promote and protect children's rights and to provide advice and assistance to children living away from home or receiving social care. The Commissioner has unique data gathering powers and powers of entry to talk with children and gain evidence to support changes that will improve children's lives.

Over the last year the Children's Commissioner has carried out 'lightning reviews' which have revealed gaps in child mental health provision and the identification of young carers by local councils; published a major report into the role of the internet and social media on children's lives, *Growing Up Digital*, which challenges policy-makers and social media companies to give children the resilience, power and information they need to navigate their way through the digital world; created a new measure of stability to identify where children in care are being 'pinged' around the system; and launched the *Growing Up North* project to look at how the ambitions and aspirations for children in Northern England can be at the centre of the regional devolution debate. We also provide practical advice to hundreds of children in care through our advice service, *Help at Hand*.

Some of our priorities for the next year include a focus on children who are under-represented, unheard or 'invisible' to policy makers and service providers. Children have told us that mental health – particularly issues of anxiety and self-esteem in primary school age children – are their top concern. Our aspiration for children will continue to drive everything we do –

from those in care, to those behind the closed doors or young offender institutions or secure children's homes, to children grappling with the complex digital world.

## **Children's Commissioner's organisational structure**

**Pictogram of Governance Model** (Appendix 1)

**Staff Organisation Chart May 2017** (Appendix 2)

The **Children's Commissioner** is a corporation sole. Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner, is the Accounting Officer for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

The **Children's Commissioner** ensures that her work and the team that supports it deliver on the remit set out in the Children Act 2004 as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014. To assist with her work, the Commissioner has the following teams of staff.

The **Business Support** team provide human resources, finance and administrative support to the Commissioner and organisation that supports her work. The team also run the Takeover Challenge and external events.

The **Strategy** team support the Commissioner to identify and research issues of importance to children and young people and also with commissioning the Commissioner's work. The team provides policy advice and develops relationships with networks of partners and stakeholders involved in policy development, legislation, and the delivery of services that affect children and young people.

The **Communications team** is responsible for managing the Commissioner and her team's communications and reputation. The team lead, maintain and develop the Commissioner's main communications channels including media relations, digital channels and social media.

The **Evidence** team is responsible for leading the Commissioner's evidence strategy and the collecting of evidence to support her work.

The **Help at Hand team** run Help at Hand, an advice and representation service for children in care or in touch with social service

## **The legislative basis for the Children’s Commissioner:**

The Children’s Commissioner was established under the Children Act 2004 as amended by the Children’s and Families Act 2014.

Further information regarding the legislative basis for the Office of the Children’s Commissioner is available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/part/6/enacted>

## **Framework Agreement Document between the Department for Education and the Children’s Commissioner.**

Appendix 3

## **Partners**

We work in partnership with a range of individuals and organisations to achieve positive change for children.

These include:

- statutory bodies including central and local government departments and organisations, parliamentarians, the judiciary, police and NHS
- voluntary sector organisations both those with children and young people at the core of their work and those whose work affects children’s lives
- academics and professional bodies
- other children’s commissioners in the UK and further afield
- private sector organisations.

The Department for Education is our sponsoring Government department.

## **Senior members of staff and leadership**

The Children’s Commissioner is a Corporation Sole and she is the accounting officer for the Children’s Commissioner’s office. There is therefore no executive board.

### **Senior Management Team**

The Commissioner’s Senior Management team meets regularly to discuss and advise on all aspects of the Commissioner’s work including strategies, plans and budgets. Its members comprise the Children’s Commissioner and the Director of Strategy and the Director of Evidence.

For the Senior Management Team Terms of Reference see Appendix 4

## **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee provides a means of independent assurance and objective review of financial systems, financial information, information data security, risk management systems, governance arrangements and internal control mechanisms, thus ensuring that assets are safeguarded, the risk of illegal or improper acts is reduced and confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial reporting is increased. The Audit and Risk Committee is currently made up of five members including the chair.

For the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference see Appendix 4.

## **Children’s Commissioner’s Advisory Board**

The Children’s Commissioner’s Advisory Board provides strategic advice and guidance to the Commissioner. It comprises the following members:

Dr David Halpern	Chief Executive, Behaviour Insight Team, Cabinet Office
Sir Martin Narey	Non-Executive Board Member Ministry of Justice
Alison O’Sullivan	Former President of Association of Directors of Children’s Services
Alice Webb	Director BBC Children’s and BBC North
Prof Marian Brandon	Professor of Social Work University of East Anglia
Lily Caprani	Deputy Executive Director, Communications, Advocacy and Programmes, Unicef UK
Christine Davies CBE	Trustee, Early Intervention Foundation
Natasha Finlayson	Chief Executive, Become
David Holmes CBE	Chief Executive, Family Action
Javed Khan	Chief Executive, Barnardo’s

For the Advisory Boards Terms of Reference see Appendix 6

## **Location and contact details**

The location of and contact details for the Children's Commissioner and her team are:

Children's Commissioner's Office  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

For more information, please see the 'Contact us' section of our website:  
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/contact>

## **What we spend and how we spend it:**

### **Financial statements and budget reports**

Information about the Children's Commissioner's annual expenditure is provided in the Annual Report.

[Annual Reports](#) can be downloaded from the Children's Commissioner's website.

### **Capital programme**

The Children's Commissioner's office is not asset or capital intensive. We do not have a capital allocation

### **Spending reviews, financial audit reports and staff and board member's allowances and expenses**

Details of the allowances and expenses incurred by staff and Board members are available on request.

### **Ministerial expenditure**

The Children's Commissioner is a non-departmental public body funded by central Government through a grant in aid.

### **Organisational Structure: Spending Pay and grading structures:**

The Children's Commissioner follows the grading structure provided by the Department for Education.

[See appendix 2](#)

The Childrens Commissioner has a Shared Services Agreement with the Department for Education who provides the following support services to the

Children's Commissioner's:

- Finance
- Human Resources
- IT
- Procurement

### **Internal financial regulations**

The Children's Commissioner's Finance Code provides information to staff to enable them to do their job while ensuring that all financial affairs are conducted to the highest standards of efficiency and propriety and fully comply with all relevant rules. It covers areas such as procurement, petty cash and business expenses as well as resource accounting and financial reports.

### **Scheme of delegation**

Our Scheme of Delegation sets out the level within the organisation at which different types of decision can be taken. The scheme currently covers the following areas: human resource management; financial management; procurement and is attached to Children's Commissioner's Financial Procedures

Financial procedures: Appendix 7

### **What are our priorities and how are we doing?**

The Children's Commissioner's overall priorities are set out in [Ambitious for Children](#), her five-year strategic plan, published in 2015. Each year the Commissioner publishes an annual [business plan](#) which sets out the work she will do in the year ahead to deliver on the strategic plan. Her [Annual Report](#) explains her performance against her previous year's business plan.

The Children's Commissioner's priorities for 2017/18 include a focus on children who are under-represented, unheard or 'invisible' to policy makers and service providers. We will use the Children's Commissioner's data collection powers this year to highlight the real level of need among children and teenagers for mental health services. We will look at the scale of the problem of low-level anxiety, particularly among younger children, conduct research into the relationship between social media use and children's mental health, aspiration and wellbeing. We will also begin a major programme of work to access the extent of child vulnerability in England.

We will continue to guide children in their understanding and decisions about use of their data online and continue to campaign for the introduction of a children's digital ombudsman. Growing up Digital in care will explore whether the access of children in care and adopted children to digital networks is restricted by their care

status or safeguarding concerns of the adults caring for them, and what can be done to broaden access. We will also visit children accommodated in health, criminal justice and welfare settings; to assess where these children are, how far from home they are, and what we know about their welfare.

In 2017-18 we will extend the hours of the Help at Hand service to ensure that more children and young people can get the help and advice they need.

## **Reporting to Parliament**

The Children's Commissioner's Annual report is laid before Parliament in July.

Previous Annual reports can be downloaded from the Children's Commissioner's website.

## **Statistics produced in accordance with departmental requirements**

Statistics published by the Children's Commissioner's office statistics are not classified as *National Statistics*, although they follow the good practice guidance given in the Statistics Code of Practice.

A summary of the Children's Commissioner's year end performance is included in her Annual Report.

Annual report and Financial Statement 2016–17

## **How we conduct our Business**

### **Corporate Governance Framework**

#### **What is Corporate Governance?**

Corporate governance is the way in which organisations are directed and controlled.

#### **Why is Corporate Governance important?**

It is important because organisations need efficient and effective controls and systems in place which enables risk to be assessed and managed properly.

#### **Corporate Governance:**

- defines the distribution of rights and responsibilities among all those concerned with the organisation
- determines the rules and procedures for making decisions on corporate affairs including the process through which the organisation's objectives are set, and
- provides the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance.

Governance Structure: Appendix 1  
Corporate Governance Framework: Appendix 3

## **Our policies and Procedures**

### **Safeguarding Policy**

Appendix 8

Protecting children from harm is one of the Commissioner's strategic priorities and core to all of our work with children and young people.

### **Staff Handbook**

Appendix 9

### **Recruiting and employing staff**

Our website includes a section on which employment opportunities are promoted.

### **Recruitment and appointment policy**

This policy document covers the recruitment and selection of all employees, and is included in our Staff handbook.

### **Equal opportunities and diversity policy**

The Children's Commissioner's equal opportunities and diversity policy is included in our Staff handbook.

### **Health and safety policy**

This policy covers the organisation's responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of staff.

This policy is included in our Staff handbook.

### **Making a complaint**

We welcome feedback on our work. For our complaints policy please see Appendix 10 and 11.

### **Whistleblowing policy, Children's Commissioner: Prescribed Person**

Appendix 12

### **Records management and personal data policies**

### **Record Management Policy**

The Children's Commissioner's office has policies relating to information security, records retention, destruction and archive and data protection.

Appendix 13

### **Register of gifts and hospitality**

The Children's Commissioner's office keeps a register of gifts and hospitality given to staff which is available on request.

### **Register of interests**

The Children's Commissioner's office keeps a register of the interests of: its staff; the members of the Commissioner's Advisory Board: and the Audit and Risk Committee. This can be viewed at:

<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publications/registration-interests-senior-staff-and-members-audit-and-risk-committee-and-advisory>

## **Communications**

**Consultations:** The Children's Commissioner publishes her submissions to public consultations from government and other statutory bodies on her website.

Our reports are published on our website

You can read more about our work by subscribing to our newsletter.

### **News releases**

News releases are published on our website

**Website:** <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/>

### **Twitter**

Follow the Children's Commissioner on Twitter @childrenscomm

## **Help at Hand Advice service**

Help at Hand is our national advice line for children and young people who are in care, leaving care, living away from home or working with children's services.

Our advice line is independent of the Government and exists to make sure that young people's rights and entitlements are upheld and that their views are taken seriously.

### Contacting Help at Hand

Telephone: 0800 528 0731

Email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Help at Hand is open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. The service is free and fully confidential, and children and young people can remain anonymous if they wish to do so.

## Individual requests for access to information

If you cannot find the information you are looking for via this publications, you can make a request for it under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

Freedom of Information Act 2000:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

### Freedom of Information Policy Appendix 14

Requests for information under the Act should be made in writing, identifying clearly the information you require. These should be sent to [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Requests for information are treated on a fair and equal basis and without prejudice. If we cannot provide the information you request, we will explain why and give you details of how you can appeal against this decision.

Information about Freedom of Information requests received by the Children's Commissioner over the 5 years can be viewed in Appendix 15.

**Data Protection Policy:** Appendix 16

## Charging regimes and policies

Electronic documents in HTML, PDF, Word, Excel and PowerPoint formats can be accessed free of charge on the Children's Commissioner's website. To read PDF documents you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is free and available from Adobe: <http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>

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[www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index)

Charges may be made for printed copies of some of the Children's Commissioner's documents, for example, the Annual Report, which can be ordered from TSO at [www.tso.gov.uk](http://www.tso.gov.uk) by post at PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN; by email at [customer.services@tso.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@tso.co.uk) or by telephoning 0870 600 5522.

For requests made under the Freedom of Information Act and this Publication Scheme, there will not usually be a charge for supplying information. However, if the request involves photocopying, it may be necessary to make a charge. In all cases, we will let you know if there is a cost before we start work so that you can choose whether to pay it or to modify your request.

## **Appendices**

All Appendices listed below are available on request either by post:

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Or email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Pictogram of Governance Model:**

**Appendix 2: Staff Organisation Chart May 2017**

**Appendix 3: Framework Agreement Document between the Department for Education and the Children's Commissioner**

**Appendix 4: Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference:**

**Appendix 5: Senior Management Team Terms of reference:**

**Appendix 6: Advisory Boards Terms of reference**

**Appendix 7: Financial procedures**

**Appendix 8: Safeguarding Policy**

**Appendix 9: Staff Handbook**

**Appendix 10: Our complaints policy**

**Appendix 11: Our Children and Young people's complaints policy**

**Appendix 12: Whistle Blowing policy: Prescribed person**

**Appendix 13: Record Management Policy: Under revision**

**Appendix 14: Freedom of Information Policy**

**Appendix 15: Freedom of Information log**

**Appendix 16: Data Protection Policy**