**Children’s Commissioner’s Audit and Risk Committee**

**Briefing pack for applicants**

**Closing Date: 23:59hrs, 30 September 2020**

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**Children’s Commissioner’s message to candidates**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of my Audit and Risk Committee.

As Children’s Commissioner for England over the past five years, this office has gained a big voice on behalf of children. We’ve represented the interests of children from the most vulnerable to the whole child population of England, across a wide range of policy areas including mental health, digital society and education. We focus particularly on those children hidden from wider society who ‘fall through the gaps’ in the system. We work across Whitehall and report to Parliament.

We’ve driven change through hard, evidence-based analysis and impactful public affairs, but there is still much more to do, particularly for those children in the care of the state.

My office is funded by public money, and is required to adhere to high standards over how and what we spend money on when procuring goods and services.

The Audit and Risk Committee [ARC] 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.

Over the coming year, my last as Children’s Commissioner, I want to maximise the influence of my Office to make the country a good place to grow up for all children and make the state a better parent to those who are most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely,



**About the Children’s Commissioner’s Office**

The Children’s Commissioner for England is an independent voice for children. The role was initially established by the Children Act 2004 which gave the Commissioner responsibility for promoting awareness of the views and interests of children.

The Commissioner’s statutory remit includes understanding what children and young people think about things that affect them and encouraging decision makers to always take their best interests into account. Her unique data gathering powers and powers of entry to talk with children and gain evidence enable her to help bring about long-term change and improvements for children, particularly the most vulnerable.

The Children and Families Act 2014 further strengthened the remit, powers and independence of the Commissioner, and gave her special responsibility for the rights of children who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services. She also 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).

The Commissioner is a Corporation Sole. This means that all legal powers rest with the Children’s Commissioner and the Children’s Commissioner is responsible for all decision-making and governance. In this model, there is no board to oversee the work of the OCC - this responsibility rests solely with the Children’s Commissioner.

The Commissioner is the accounting officer and has personal responsibility for maintaining a sound system of governance, internal control and risk management whilst safeguarding public funds and the sponsoring department’s assets.

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner is an executive non-departmental public body [NDPB] of, and grant-in-aid funded by, the Department for Education.

The Commissioner established an Audit and Risk Committee to provide 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 Commissioner is now inviting applications from exceptional individuals, with a wide breadth of experience, to join her Audit and Risk Committee, which meets five times a year in London.

Candidates should have an interest in issues affecting children, particularly the most vulnerable, and be interested in the work of the Commissioner’s office.

**Essential criteria**

The successful candidates will be able to demonstrate:

* track record of operating at a senior level in a high-profile organisation
* understanding of the role of an Audit and Risk Committee
* knowledge of corporate governance arrangements
* ability to challenge rigorously and debate constructively
* strong communication and inter-personal skills
* awareness of issues affecting children, particularly the most vulnerable
* extensive experience of either finance and/or audit, including a knowledge of government accounting protocols and relevant financial qualification and/or risk management

The successful candidates must abide by The Nolan principles – The seven principles of public life (attached at Annex C).

**Time commitment and term of office**

Meetings are held four times a year with members attending a brief pre and post meeting for private discussions before and after each meeting proper. An additional meeting is generally scheduled in June to consider the Commissioner’s Annual Report and Accounts, when the Head of Internal Audit and National Audit Office representative are invited to join the pre-meet.

Members may be contacted between meetings via email or telephone, on a limited basis and only as strictly necessary.

Meetings are scheduled one year in advance and dates will only change in exceptional circumstances. Attendance is recorded and published as part of the annual reporting cycle.

Meetings take place at the Children’s Commissioner’s Office, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

The initial term of office is three years, subject to performance. Members are not employees of the Children’s Commissioner’s Office. The Children’s Commissioner has discretion to renew the appointment at the end of the first term of office, subject to consistently good performance. There should therefore be no assumption of automatic reappointment.

**Remuneration and expenses**

Audit and Risk Committee members do not receive a fee, but are eligible to claim reasonable expenses for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on the Children’s Commissioner’s business.

**The recruitment process**

The closing date for applications is 23:59hrs, on Wednesday, 30 September 2020. Interviews are expected to take place week commencing 19/26 October 2020 in the Children’s Commissioner’s Office, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

It is essential that your statement of suitability gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the essential criteria.

The Recruitment Panel will consist of Anne Longfield OBE and David Clarke, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for final interview.

**How to apply and submit your application**

To apply, please send the following to OCC.Recruitment@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk by the deadline of 23:59hrs, on Wednesday, 30 September 2020:

* a CV of not more than two A4 sides;
* a supporting statement of not more than two A4 sides, setting out how you meet the essential criteria – ensure you refer to the guidance in this document;
* Equality and diversity monitoring form;
* Registration of Interests form (please note the section on conflicts of interest and due diligence below).

To arrange an informal discussion about the role please contact: Lyn.Foster@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

**Conflicts of interest and due diligence**

* If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of the CCO, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your application. If you have queries about this and would like to discuss them, please contact the Public Appointments Team.
* Given the nature of public appointments, it is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you provide details of the issue(s) in your application. In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media.
* As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publically available information. This information may be made available to the Panel and they may wish to explore issues with you should you be invited to interview.

**Ineligibility criteria**

You cannot be considered for a public appointment if:

* you become bankrupt or make an arrangement with creditors;
* your estate has been sequestrated in Scotland or you enter into a debt arrangement programme under Part 1 of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Act 2002 (asp 17) as the debtor or have, under Scots law, granted a trust deed for creditors;
* you are disqualified from acting as a company director under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986;

**The Commissioner for Public Appointments**

This appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, to ensure that it is made on merit after fair and open competition. More information about the role of the Commissioner and the Governance Code on Public Appointments can be found at:

<http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/governance_code_on_public_appointments_16_12_2016.pdf>

For full details of the complaints process for public appointments, please click on the following link which will take you to the Commissioner for Public Appointments website:

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/regulating-appointments/complaints-and-investigations/>

Alternatively, please contact the Commissioner’s office on 020 7271 0831 for a printed copy.

**Data protection**

The CCO is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information and does so in accordance with data protection law including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All the information you provide will be used to proceed with the public appointment listed in this information pack and in the case of diversity monitoring, information may be anonymised and used solely for monitoring purposes. For more information about the way we collect and hold your information, please read our Privacy Notice, accessible through the CCO website (<https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk>)

**Equal Opportunities**

Appointing high-calibre people from diverse backgrounds with relevant skills, knowledge and experience to the boards of our public bodies will help us to ensure that our work is more effective, resilient and accountable.

We are committed to equality of opportunity. We aim to promote equal opportunity whereby no one suffers unfair discrimination either directly or indirectly, or harassment, on grounds such as race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age.

We positively welcome applicants from all backgrounds. All public appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition as regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. By ‘minimum criteria’ we mean that you must provide us with evidence in your application which demonstrates that you generally meet the level of competence required for each criterion, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience defined as essential.

**Annex A: Terms of Reference**

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**Annex B: Current membership of the Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee comprises of a chair and four members

* David Clarke, Chair
* Susan Tranter
* Owen Vallis
* James Norton
* Brian Tytherleigh

**Annex C: The Nolan principles - The seven principles of public life**

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not

act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.