

Children's Commissioner's Advisory Board

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: midnight on Sunday 01 August 2021

Contents

Children's Commissioner's message to candidates

About the Children's Commissioner's Office

Essential criteria

Time commitment and term of office

Remuneration and expenses

The recruitment process

How to apply and submit your application

Ineligibility criteria

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

Data protection

Annex A – Terms of Reference

Annex B – The Nolan principles - the seven principles of public life

Annex C – Current membership of the Committee

Children's Commissioner's message to candidates

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of my Advisory Board.

It is a huge privilege to have been appointed Children's Commissioner for England, an advocate and champion for children, their eyes and ears in the system and a strong voice for their rights in the corridors of power.

I begin my six-year term of office as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a year which has demanded so many sacrifices from children and has been tough for many. Now is the moment to give something big back to them after everything they have done for us.

We can do much more than simply return to the old normal and I believe the Covid-19 crisis gives us a once-in-a-generation chance to look at what is going wrong for many children in our country, and to put it right. I want to make children our country's top priority and to deliver solutions that solve the problems that have held many of them back for decades.

In my first month as Children's Commissioner, I launched a new 'Childhood Commission', inspired by the same ambitions as the Beveridge Report published during the Second World War. Our Commission will put forward bold policies and it will draw up tough targets, so that we can hold to account the Government and all those who provide services to children. It will be a blueprint for Ministers and others to find answers to some of the toughest generational problems.

Our 'Big Ask' survey of children in England is at the heart of this work. Hundreds of thousands of children across the country have taken part, and it is the largest ever survey of children ever carried out in this country. It reveals children's dreams for the future, what is stopping them from getting on and how life is for them at home, school and in their local city, town or village.

I am optimistic that this work can inspire our politicians to put children at the front of their mind when they are deciding about spending, or schools, mental health, tackling poverty or the environment.

The experiences of the last year will have changed our children. It is now our job to make sure it changes them for the better. That means not just getting them through the next stage as they catch-up on the life experiences and education they have missed over the last year, but also setting them up for a great childhood and a successful future in the decade ahead.

I hope you will join me in this challenge.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. de Souza".

Dame Rachel de Souza

Children's Commissioner for England

About the Children's Commissioner's Office

The Children's Commissioner for England is an independent voice for children. The role was 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 Children's Commissioner, and 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 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 Office of the Children's Commissioner is a dynamic and creative place to work. It is a small organisation, but it has a loud voice and is highly respected.

The Children's Commissioner's Advisory Board exists to provide advice and challenge to the Children's Commissioner in the exercise of her statutory functions. The Commissioner is now inviting applications from exceptional individuals, with a wide breadth of experience, to join this Board, which meets quarterly in London.

Candidates need not have previous experience of working with children but should demonstrate an interest in policy issues affecting children, particularly the most vulnerable, and be interested in the role of the Commissioner and able to offer a different perspective on her work.

Essential criteria

The Advisory Board is a requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014, which shall comprise of representatives from across Children's and wider sectors.

The successful candidate must demonstrate the following essential criteria:

- A proven track record of excellence at strategic policy and delivery.
- Knowledge and experience of policymaking and public affairs.
- Understanding of the role, remit, powers and duties of the Children's Commissioner as defined in legislation.
- Curiosity about national policy issues affecting children and interest in children's lives, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills, demonstrating an ability to persuade, influence and to build a diverse range of productive and collaborative relationships with other Board members.

The successful candidate 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 per year with dates published one year in advance.

Board members attend a minimum of three and a maximum of four meetings per year. Members may be contacted between meetings via email or telephone, on a limited basis and only as strictly necessary.

The Next Advisory Board meeting will take place on Wednesday, 15 September 2021.

Scheduled dates will only change in exceptional circumstances. Attendance is recorded and published as part of the annual reporting cycle.

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

The term of office for members is three years. However, there may be occasions when their terms of office can be extended.

Remuneration and expenses

Advisory Board members do not receive a fee however 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 midnight on Sunday 01 August 2021. Interviews are expected to take place w/c 9 August 2021 in the Children's Commissioners 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 Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner, and Janette Threapleton, Director of Business Services.

The Panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide whom 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 midnight on Sunday, 01 August 2021:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4.
- a supporting statement of not more than two sides of A4, setting out how you meet the essential criteria – make sure you refer to the contents of this document.
- Equality and diversity monitoring form.
- Registration if Interests form (please note the section on conflicts of interest and due diligence below).

To arrange an informal discussion about the role please contact the 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 further 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 publicly 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.

Illegibility 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 seen 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

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/cco-arc-terms-of-reference.pdf>

Annex B: Current membership of the Committee

The Advisory Board comprises of a chair and five members

- Chair, Dame Rachel de Souza Children's Commissioner
- Nick Bent
- Jacqueline Sebire
- Bernadette Brown
- Baroness Philippa Stroud

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.