

The Office of the Children's Commissioner: Publication scheme

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Who we are and what we do

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to protect and promote the rights, views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The OCC has a statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

The Government commissioned an independent review of the Commissioner and OCC in 2010. Once new legislation is passed the role will be stronger, more independent, more directly accountable to Parliament, and will incorporate the work currently done by the Children's Rights Director (CRD).

Our vision

A society where all children and young people are respected. They shape decisions made about their lives. Supported by adults who champion their rights, they achieve their potential. They are safe, loved, educated, and healthy. They have easy access to high quality support, especially if they need extra help. Free from all discrimination, they live in homes and communities where their rights are fulfilled, they learn to value and respect those around them. Their lives as young citizens are developed to the full.

Our mission

Using our powers and independence, we protect, promote and realise children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We champion children's and young people's roles as active and responsible citizens. We challenge adults to ensure that in all decisions about their lives, children's and young people's views are routinely asked for, listened to, and acted on. We press government and society to ensure positive change for all children and young people, speaking out especially for those whose voices are otherwise not heard.

Office of the Children's Commissioner's organisational structure

Pictogram of Governance Model (Appendix 1)

Staff Organogram 2012 (Appendix 2)

The **Children's Commissioner** is a corporation sole. Dr Atkinson, Children's Commissioner, is the Accounting Officer for OCC. Her role and remit is set out in the Children Act 2004.

The **Deputy Children's Commissioner/Chief Executive** is responsible for the day to day operation of the organisation as well as deputising for the Children's Commissioner.

The OCC currently has three Directorates: Policy and Participation, Communications and Corporate Services.

The **Policy and Participation Directorate** is responsible for many aspects of the Business Plan. The Policy team manages the delivery of many OCC programmes and projects as well as social research, policy advice and development, relationships with networks of partners and stakeholders involved in policy, legislation, and the delivery of services that affect children and young people.

OCC also supports and promotes the involvement of children and young people across all areas of its work including managing and supporting OCC's young people's advisory board, Amplify, and several specialist networks for young people who inform different programmes of work (e.g. child protection). The participation team also ensures that children and young people are involved, engaged and participate in individual projects as appropriate.

The **Communications Directorate** is responsible for how the OCC engages and communicates with its external partners. This includes maintaining and managing OCC's stakeholder database, and engagement of those in it; media profile and both proactive and reactive media activity; brand house style, publications; e-news, blog and Twitter.

OCC also supports and promotes the involvement of children and young people across all areas of its work through its participation team. This includes managing and supporting OCC's young people advisory board, Amplify, and several specialist networks for young people who inform different programmes of work (e.g. child protection). The Participation team also ensures that children and young people are involved, engaged and participate in individual projects as appropriate.

The **Corporate Services Directorate** is responsible for HR; finance; administrative support; performance and planning; relationships with internal and external auditors; publication scheme; risk management; information assurance and procurement.

The legislative basis for the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Children Act 2004 established the role of the Children's Commissioner who has the function of promoting awareness of the views and interests of children in England.

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>

Partner organisations

We work in partnership with a range of organisations in order to deliver our Business Plan and remit.

These range across statutory bodies (including central and local government departments and organisations), voluntary sector organisations both those with children and young people at the core of their work and those who may affect children's lives, academics whose research is relevant and private sector organisations as appropriate.

For a list of some of the public and voluntary sector bodies we worked with in 2011–12 please see pages 14–15 of our current Strategic Plan 2012–14.

The Department for Education is our sponsoring Government department.

Management board members and senior executives

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 3 members including the chair.

For the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference see Appendix 3.

Commissioner's Board

The Commissioner's Board provides the strategic direction of the OCC and ensures the business plans are transparent and deliver value for money.

Commissioner's Board Terms of reference: Appendix 4

Leadership team

The Leadership team develops the strategic and operational priorities of the OCC and is responsible for making collective and corporate decisions on key matters effecting OCC.

Each Director sits on the Leadership Team (representing each of the three directorates)

Leadership Teams Terms of Reference: Appendix 5

Our Leadership team: Appendix 6

Quality Management Group

The Quality Management Group acts as an interface between the OCC and the Audit and Risk committee and provides advice and guidance on issues relating to risk and audit proportionality.

Quality Management Group Terms of Reference: Appendix 7

Advisory Boards

The Interim Advisory Board

The Interim Advisory Board is made up of six members and provides strategic oversight and direction for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Interim Advisory Boards Terms of Reference: Appendix 8

CYP Advisory Group

The Commissioner's Children's Advisory group advises the Office of the Children's Commissioner on children and young peoples' views regarding all aspects of their work. In 2010 the group decided that they should be known as 'Amplify'.

CYP Advisory Group Terms of Reference: Appendix 9

Locations and contact details

OCC's offices are based at 33 Greycoat Street in London SW1P 2QF

All enquiries should be addressed in the first instance to:

Office of the Children's Commissioner
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: 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

Detailed information of OCC's annual expenditure is provided in the Annual Report:

All Annual Reports are available in the publication section of the OCC website.

Details of OCC's expenditure on its Government procurement card are available on the website:

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_501

Capital programme

The nature of OCC's business means that it is not asset or capital intensive. We do not have a capital allocation

Spending reviews, financial audit reports and staff and board members allowances and expenses

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

Ministerial expenditure

OCC is a non-departmental public body funded by central Government through a grant in aid.

Spending Pay and grading structures

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/staff-organograms-and-pay-occ>

Procurement procedures

OCC's Procurement Strategy is for all staff involved in buying goods and services. It provides information on the legal framework that applies to all procurement in the public sector, and OCC's policies and procedures on procurement and the responsibilities of managers.

Procurement Strategy: Appendix 10

Lists of contracts awarded and their value

Contracts awarded over the value of £10,000 are uploaded onto the Contracts Finder website, in compliance with the Transparency Agenda.

Internal financial regulations

The OCC Finance Code provide information to all 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.

Financial procedures: Appendix 11

What are our priorities and how are we doing?

Strategic Plan 2012–14

This sets out our strategic aims and priorities for the period up to the expected creation of a new Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

Strategic Plan 2012–14

Business Plan 2012–13

OCC's Business plan sets out what we intend to achieve; the work we will carry out and the way we will work with others. It is aligned to the priorities listed in the Dunford Review

Business Plan 2012–13

External organisation performance review

Dunford review: In July 2010, the Secretary of State for Education commissioned an independent review of the office, role and functions of the Children's Commissioner for England.

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm79/7981/7981.pdf>

OCC's Submission to the Independent review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner:

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_423

Report to Parliament

Each year OCC's Annual report is laid before Parliament.

OCC Annual report 2011–12.

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_507

Previous Annual reports are available in the Publications section of OCC website

Statistics produced in accordance with departmental requirements

OCC statistics are not currently classified as National Statistics, although they follow the good practice guidance given in the Statistics Code of Practice.

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

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_507

Public service agreements

There are no public service agreements for OCC.

How we make decisions

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 OCC's Financial Procedures

Financial procedures: Appendix 11

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 12

Policy proposals and Research

All of OCC's policies are based on robust evidence and research, often directly involving children and young people. Our policies and recommendations to public bodies and others are listed clearly in the relevant reports and documents in the publication section of our website.

Consultations

The OCC publishes all of its submissions to public consultations from government and other statutory bodies on its website.

Minutes and papers of senior-level meetings

Minutes and papers of senior-level meetings are available on request.

Our policies and procedures

Conducting our departmental business

Impact assessments

We think carefully about the likely equality impact of their work and, where appropriate, will take action to improve strategies, policies and projects. We now publish an Equalities Review of our work programme alongside our Business Plan

Safeguarding Policy: Appendix 13

Keeping children and young people safe from harm is at the forefront of our work and the way we work. Our safeguarding policies were drafted independently by NSPCC and all staff receive safeguarding training.

Staff Handbook

Recruiting and employing staff

Our website includes a section called 'Working for OCC'

It includes a statement about our work, our values and our general terms and conditions of employment. We advertise vacancies on our website.

Recruitment and appointment policy

This policy document covers the recruitment and selection of all employees, be they on permanent or short-term contracts.

Equal opportunities and diversity policy

OCC's equality schemes on disability, gender, race, age, sexual orientation and religion are an important step to delivering our strategic goals.

Health and safety policy

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

The above policies are included in our Staff handbook: Appendix 14

Making a complaint

Raising concerns and making complaints about the Office of the Children's Commissioner:

Our external complaints procedure Appendix 15

Our external complaints procedure: Guide for the Public Appendix 16

Feedback and comments on the Publication scheme are welcomed and should be addressed to:

Office of the Children's Commissioner
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Tel: 020 7783 8330 (08.45–17.15 – Monday to Friday)

OCC staff are also able to make a complaint against the organisation if they are concerned about any areas of our work:

Whistleblowing policy: Appendix 17

Records management and personal data policies

OCC has policies relating to information security, records retention, destruction and archive and data protection.

Records management and personal data policies: Appendix 18

Data protection Policy: Appendix 19

Charging regimes and policies

Electronic documents in HTML, PDF, Word, Excel and PowerPoint formats can be accessed free of charge on the OCC website. To read PDF documents you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is free and available from Adobe:

<http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>

OCC will not charge for supplying a single hard copy of any information available under the scheme. However, multiple copies may be charged for. This position will be reviewed and does not apply to priced documents that are available from The Stationery Office (see below).

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Where The Stationery Office (TSO) is the publisher of an OCC document, for example, the Annual Report and the Departmental Report, a charge will be made for printed copies, which can be ordered from TSO at www.tso.gov.uk by post at PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN; by email at 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.

Register of gifts and hospitality

OCC keeps a register of gifts and hospitality given to staff: Available on request.

Any register of interests

OCC keeps a register of the interests of all senior staff and members of the Interim Advisory Board and Audit and Risk Committee

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_512

Register of gifts and hospitality

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Any register of interests

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http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_512

Our Duty and Remit

Our legislative remit

Children Act 2004

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

The services we provide

Our reports are published in the publication section of our website:

<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications>

Our website also includes information for:

- Government: Publication section of our website
- Parliamentary: Publication section of our website
- Children and Young People: Issues section on our website
- Media: New release section of our website
- Partners: E-newsletters

News releases

An archive of news stories is available from our website:

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/external_news

Twitter

Follow the Children's Commissioner on Twitter @childrenscomm

Signposting

The role of the Children's Commissioner for England was established under the Children Act 2004 and the powers conferred on the post are set out very clearly within the act. The act states that we are not allowed to pursue individual cases, but only to pursue the policy issues highlighted by cases brought to our attention.

However we do provide a limited signposting function in response to correspondence we receive from members of the general public who seek the advice and assistance of the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Individual requests for access to information

If, having consulted the scheme, the information you are looking for appears not to be listed 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>

OCC Freedom of Information Policy Appendix 20

Requests to OCC for information under the Act should be made in writing, identifying clearly the information required. These should be sent to the relevant part of the organisation dealing with the matters you are interested in.

All requests for information will be treated on a fair and equal basis and without prejudice. Where it is unable to provide the information you request, OCC will explain why and give you details of how you can appeal against its decision

Partner organisations

We work in partnership with a range of organisations for examples see our Strategic Plan 2012–14.

Appendices

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

33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Or email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Pictogram of Governance Model: copy attached

Appendix 2: Staff Organogram 2012: copy attached

Appendix 3: Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference:

Appendix 4: Commissioner's Board Terms of reference:

Appendix 5: Leadership Teams Terms of Reference:

Appendix 6: Our Leadership team: Appendix 6

Appendix 7: Quality Management Group

Appendix 8: Interim Advisory Boards Terms of reference

Appendix 9: CYP Advisory Board

Appendix 10: Procurement Strategy

Appendix 11: Financial procedures

Appendix 12: Corporate Governance Framework

Appendix 13: Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 14: Staff Handbook

Appendix 15: Our external complaints procedure

Appendix 16: Our external complaints procedure: Guide for the Public

Appendix 17: Whistle Blowing policy

Appendix 18: Record Management Policy: Under revision

Appendix 19: Data protection Policy

Appendix 20: OCC Freedom of Information Policy