

**Office of the Children's Commissioner**

**Annual Report and Financial Statements  
for 2013–14**



# **Office of the Children's Commissioner**

## **Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2013–14**

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## **CONTENTS**

Foreword from Amplify, the Children's Commissioner's advisory group.....	6
Foreword from the Children's Commissioner for England.....	7
About the Office of the Children's Commissioner.....	9
Strategic report.....	10
Introduction.....	15
Our work 2013–14.....	16
Management report.....	33
Remuneration report.....	36
2013–14 salaries.....	39
Civil Service pensions.....	40
Statement of responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner.....	42
Governance statement.....	43
Audit certificate.....	52
Financial review.....	54
Notes to the Accounts.....	58
Summary of the UNCRC.....	72

## **FOREWORD FROM AMPLIFY – THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER'S YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVISORY GROUP**

Hello! My name is Mark, and I'm a fairly new member of Amplify (I joined in summer 2013).

I became a member because, in my opinion, it is the best place to have your voice heard – plus you have a direct line to the Children's Commissioner herself!

I have gained so much knowledge and made so many new friends from Amplify. I have even recommended it to my friends, who hope to apply when spaces open up.

What is Amplify, you ask? It is the advisory group set up by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) for children and young people so they can provide direct advice about upcoming and current work.

We do a lot of things in a typical year, such as leading our own project with the support of OCC staff; representing children and young people's views at important meetings; as well as contributing to research and consultations that seek the views of children and young people.

Amplify also helps to interview applicants for positions within the OCC, as well as companies and organisations who apply to work on research and projects.

The best part of Amplify is our residential meetings that happen three times a year, where we spend a good amount of time talking about the OCC's work and our own exciting project. This year our project focuses on children and young people's mental health.

We have done so much this last year which you'll read about in this report, but I have a few personal highlights which I have listed below:

- recruited new members to be a part of Amplify adding to the knowledge and experience we have as a group
- launched our poverty report, *What we say we need* and met with the Government's Child Poverty Unit to talk to them about it
- took part in Takeover Day! Don't forget to put the date in your diary for this year – Friday 21 November
- consulted on the new OCC website (launching very soon)
- helped think about what makes a good education system
- attended the National Participation Forum and represented the OCC with staff from our Participation team.

It has been amazing to be a part of a group which is involved in all of this work! Thank you so much to Maggie, the OCC staff and all the other members of Amplify for making the past year such an enjoyable experience.

I cannot wait to get started on lots of exciting new things in this forthcoming year!



**Mark, Amplify member**  
**26 June 2014**

## **FOREWORD FROM THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER**

I am delighted to join Mark in presenting my fifth Annual Report as Children's Commissioner for England.

As you read this report, my staff at the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) and I are three months into fulfilling my reformed remit. On 1 April, following the passing of the Children and Families Act 2014, my role was strengthened. As a result, my primary statutory function is now to promote and protect children's rights with particular, but not exclusive, regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This includes continuing to promote awareness of the views and interests of all children and young people in England, but by law, my work must concentrate on those whose voices would otherwise not be heard or whose rights are in danger of or are already being denied.

The Children and Families Act 2014 says our work must '*have particular regard to the rights of children who are within section 8A (children living away from home or receiving social care) and other groups of children who the Commissioner considers to be at particular risk of having their rights infringed.*' It says we cannot conduct an investigation into an individual child's case, but can provide advice, assistance and representation to children in or leaving care; living and learning away home; or at home but receiving social care services.

The Children and Families Act repealed the role and remit of the Children's Rights Director and his Office, who had been championing the rights of these groups of children since 2001. That work, together with two staff, transferred to the Office of the Children's Commissioner on 1 April 2014.

I am immensely pleased that Parliament has strengthened the work done at the OCC on behalf of children in England and across the UK on non-devolved issues. Staff at the OCC and I are looking forward to developing our reformed and strengthened remit during the year ahead.

During 2013–14 we continued to focus on promoting and protecting children's rights, in the spirit of recommendations made by the independent review of my remit commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education four years ago.

Last year we concluded two impactful, high profile national Inquiries: into children and young people excluded from school and into those who are sexually exploited by gangs and groups. Both raised the profile of breaches of children's rights and catalysed positive change in both policy and practice.

We also published evidence-based research and advice to decision makers on:

- children and young people's experiences of telling people about neglect and abuse, the barriers they face and how professionals can help them
- disabled young people's experiences of being raised in low income families
- young people's hopes and dreams for the future – work led by Amplify, my young people's advisory group.

In addition, we developed and published good practice principles for use in children's health complaints systems, and practical materials for both primary and secondary schools to use to keep their pupils safe and create a safeguarding culture.

We continued to conduct and publish Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) of key government policies: one on the impact on children of budgetary and fiscal measures since 2010 and another on the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill. They were well received, and have been quoted in Parliament and used by practitioners.

As always, children and young people's views have been at the heart of all of our work. Their voices and lived experiences ring out in all our publications. Everything we did in 2013–14 was informed by them.

We did much to promote and protect children's rights over the past 12 months, including:

- addressing over 800 requests for advice about individual children and young people
- contributing to conferences, think tanks' work, high level forums, round tables and other events influencing policy and practice
- speaking out about children and young people's lives in the media
- giving evidence in Parliament as new laws were drafted and subsequently debated
- intervening in legal cases where the issue was likely to exemplify issues for the wider child population
- undertaking both announced and unannounced visits to the secure youth justice estate, mental health estate and secure children's homes.

Every year, my staff and I meet thousands of children and young people. I continue to be both delighted and deeply impressed by the fact that the vast majority are active, well-rounded citizens, raised in stable loving homes and educated in great schools, who already contribute enormously to the communities in which they live.

I remain concerned that the substantial minority of less fortunate children and young people, often made so by accident of birth, are not afforded the same opportunities and

do not fare as well as the majority. Many of them are resilient enough to overcome the challenges life throws at them, with the support of the State, its services and others. But there are still too many who are not, and who require additional help and support from us all. These children and young people were at the centre of our work in 2013–14 and will remain so, given my statutory remit.

This report is largely a retrospective look at a successful year. What you will read in it is tangible proof of the strength and impact of what we do.

In each section of the report you will find clear examples of how children and young people were involved in our work.

We also look forward to a great year in 2014–15. The details of what we intend to accomplish are detailed in our Business Plan, available on our website and already underway.

Sometimes, what we do at the OCC plays the 'long game'. We set out our challenges and feedback to the system on children and young people's behalf, and need to go on restating them and pressing for change. At other times, we require, and have the power to insist on, far more rapid change. We are, at every stage, clear that whilst sometimes our impact is ours alone, we are also determined to remain a member of strong partnerships and work in conjunction with others.

We go into 2014–15 as a year of both continuity and change with justified optimism about our role and a firm appreciation of how much we achieve and the impact we have on the lives and life chances of our children and young people.



**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**  
**26 June 2014**

## **ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national public sector organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. We promote and protect children's rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and, as appropriate, other human rights legislation and conventions.

We do this by listening to what children and young people say about things that affect them and encouraging adults making decisions to take their views and interests into account.

We publish evidence, including that which we collect directly from children and young people, bringing matters that affect their rights to the attention of Parliament, the media, children and young people themselves, and society at large. We also provide advice on children's rights to policy makers, practitioners and others.

The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The Act makes us responsible for working on behalf of all children in England and in particular, those whose voices are least likely to be heard. It says we must speak for wider groups of children on the issues that are not-devolved to regional Governments. These include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales.

The Children and Families Act 2014 changed the Children's Commissioner's remit and role. It provided the legal mandate for the Commissioner to promote and protect children's rights. In particular, we are expected to focus on the rights of children within the new section 8A of the Children Act 2004, or other groups of children whom we consider are at particular risk of having their rights infringed. The Act also allows us to provide advice and assistance to and to represent these children.

## **OUR VISION**

A society where children's and young people's rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and they respect the rights of others.

## **OUR MISSION**

We promote and protect the rights of children in England. We will do this by involving children and young people in our work and ensuring their voices are heard. We use our statutory powers to undertake research, investigations and inquiries, and our statutory position to engage, advise and influence those who make decisions that affect children and young people

# STRATEGIC REPORT

## Aims, objective and strategy

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national public sector organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. We promote and protect children's rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and, as appropriate, other human rights legislation and conventions. For a summary of the UNCRC, see page 71.

The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The Act makes us responsible for working on behalf of all children in England and in particular, those whose voices are least likely to be heard. It says we must speak for wider groups of children on issues that are not-devolved to regional Governments. These include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales.

The Children and Families Act 2014 provides the legal mandate for the Commissioner and those who work in support of her remit at the Office of the Children's Commissioner to promote and protect children's rights. In particular, we are expected to focus on the rights of children within the new section 8A of the 2014 Act, or other groups of children whom we consider are at particular risk of having their rights infringed. This includes those who are in or leaving care or living away from home, and those receiving social care services.

The Act also allows us to provide advice and assistance to and to represent these children.

The passage of the Children and Families Act 2014 provides the essential context for reviewing our work during 2013–14. In conjunction with the former Office of the Children's Rights Director (OCRD), we have prepared for a seamless transition over the last two years by aligning our work to meet our expected new statutory responsibilities.

## Business model

The OCC's Business Plan is published annually on our website. This document describes our statutory remit and structure, and the objectives that guide our work. In 2013–14 our key business objectives focused on the need to promote and protect children and young people's rights to:

1. Access services and support that enable them to develop, flourish and realise their potential
2. Protection, with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC
3. Participate in and have their views respected and interests taken into account, in matters and decisions that affect their lives
4. Through the way we work and by being an efficient organisation that is flexible and capable of responding with authority and expertise.

## Risk management

We proactively manage risk throughout the year. The main risks faced by the OCC were as follows:

- Preparing for our reformed remit and office incorporating the Office of the Children's Rights Director
- OCC has insufficient resources to fulfill the new remit set out in the Children's and Families Bill 2013.
- OCC incurs significant dilapidation costs in respect of the former premises at 1 London Bridge
- OCC incurs significant costs due to the relocation from its office in Greycourt Street
- OCC fails to upgrade the website.

## Implications

This would result in:

- OCC having to reduce significantly the projects set out in the annual Business Plan
- OCC having to reduce significantly the projects set out in the annual business plan
- OCC not being able to engage with stakeholders effectively
- OCC being unable to protect the children that come under its statutory remit resulting in the OCC failing to deliver on the remit.

Action was taken to achieve successful mitigation of the main identified risks.

## Mitigating controls

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the Risk Register to provide scrutiny and challenge to the Leadership team on the management of risk.

The Transitions Board Chaired by the Children's Commissioner met bi-monthly to review the adequacy and effectiveness of the transitions plan and the transitions risk register.

The following risks were closed in 2013–14:

- OCC incurs significant dilapidation costs in respect of the former premises at 1 London Bridge.
- OCC incurs significant costs due to the relocation from its office in Greycoat Street
- OCC fails to upgrade the website.

In addition, QMG (Quality Management Group) conducted an annual refreshment of risk which was presented to Leadership team on the 1 April 2014.

The OCC return a Security Risk Management Overview (SRMO) to the Department for Education. This describes

how protective security responsibilities are allocated and structured within the OCC.

## Impact summary 2013–14

Our key achievements are listed below, grouped under our strategic priorities for 2013–14. Full details can be found in 'Our work' on page 16.

### **Strategic priority 1: To promote and protect children and young people's rights to access services and support that enable them to develop, flourish and realise their potential**

- **School exclusions** – the DfE and Ofsted have acted on our Inquiry recommendations to prevent illegal exclusions, including restating to all schools that they must comply with official guidance.
- **School admissions** – the Government has reiterated that all state-funded schools must adhere to the statutory admissions code as a result of our report on school admissions.
- **Child poverty** – the children working with us influenced the Government and shaped policy by providing key recommendations to two influential bodies.

### **Strategic priority 2: To promote children and young people's rights to protection, with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC**

- **Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG)** – this ground-breaking Inquiry had far-reaching impacts on children's rights to protection. Ten of the 11 initial Inquiry recommendations have already been implemented and numerous changes have been made by the police and professionals to improve responses to child sexual exploitation.
- **Safeguarding and child protection** – our framework on how to respond to signs of abuse and neglect is being

used by professionals. The DfE issued guidance to all schools in England referring to our materials as best practice and encouraging their use.

- **Youth justice** – we made regular visits to the secure estate, identifying both good practice and necessary improvements.
- **Asylum and immigration** – our work on unaccompanied children has had tangible effects on policy and legislation. Our work on trafficking helped lay the foundations of the Modern Day Slavery Bill. The Government has sought our advice on children in the asylum system and those trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation and other types of criminal activity.

### **Strategic priority 3: To promote and protect children and young people's rights to participate in and have their views respected and interests taken into account, in matters and decisions that affect their lives**

- **Participation** – children and young people were engaged and involved in our work. Their views and experiences were embedded across the organisation.
- **Takeover Day** – we continued our success, growing participation in the day to over 40,000 young people and 1,500 organisations.
- Amplify and Young Amplify both made meaningful contributions to our work. Amplify's project, '*What we say we need*', has informed a wide range of experts.
- Our resources page on TES Connect had 39,659 visits and 3,974 downloads.

### **Strategic priority 4: To promote and protect children and young people's rights through the way we work, and by being an efficient organisation that is flexible and capable of responding with authority and expertise**

- **Individual enquiries** – we received and dealt with over 800 enquiries relating to children and young people.
- **The transition** to the reformed OCC has been successfully completed. Internal audit have reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of the transitions management and have given this 'full assurance'.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The Children's Commissioner and her staff have made many presentations and attended numerous events with a wide range of external stakeholders in support of our work. Key to this was influencing thinking on behalf of children and young people. We have also attended many events which featured the central and purposeful involvement of children and young people as delegates and co-presenters.

As part of preparations for taking on our new remit we have liaised widely with all of our stakeholders; specifically children and young people for whom the Office has to have particular regard for under the new legislation.

### **Staff**

As of March 2014, The Office of the Children's Commissioner has 30 permanent members of staff, three of whom are part-time.

The Office has three Directorates: Policy (led by Ross Hendry, Director of Policy); Communications and Participation (led by Oliver Berman, Director of Communications and Participation); and Corporate Services (led by David Ryan, Director of Corporate Services). All three directors report to Sue Berelowitz, Deputy Children's Commissioner and Chief Executive.

For further details about staff, please refer to page 59.

## **Advisory panels**

The Children's Commissioner and her Office are advised by two groups of children and young people, **Young Amplify** (aged 7–11) and **Amplify** (aged 11–18). They make sure the views of children and young people are included all of our work. Members come from a wide range of geographical locations and backgrounds.

The **Audit and Risk Committee** is responsible for providing independent assurance and objective review of financial systems, financial information, information data security, risk management, governance arrangements and internal control mechanisms. There are four members: Lynne Snowball (Non-Executive Director at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust); Magda Moorey (Director, Cognitive Connections); Sue Gower MBE (Kent Safeguarding Childrens Board); and Gill Galliano (Independent Consultant).

The Children's Commissioner's **Interim Advisory Board** provided advice, support, scrutiny and challenge to the Children's Commissioner and her Office during 2013–14. Members were: Dr Maggie Atkinson (Chair) (Children's Commissioner for England); Sue Berelowitz (Deputy Children's Commissioner and Chief Executive); Christine Davies, (member of various Improvement Boards); Anita Tiessen (Deputy Executive Director, Communications and Programme, UNICEF); Simon Woolley (Director, Operation Black Vote), Tim Levell (Producer, BBC), Lynn Snowball (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee); Sally Bartolo (young person). Paul Bowen QC and Victor Adebowale also attended for part of the year.

The Board has been constituted from 1 April 2014 as the Children's Commissioner's Advisory Board, as a statutory requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014.

More details on our Boards can be found at page 44.

## **Financial summary**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is funded via Grant-in-Aid from the Department for Education (DfE), which is subject to Parliamentary control.

The OCC Business Plan was agreed for one year. The budget has been gradually reduced from £3 million in 2009–10 to £2.272 million in 2013–14, a reduction of 24%. This resulted from the Comprehensive Spending Review drive for efficiency savings across all Government Departments, its Agencies and ALBs.

In 2013–14, staff costs accounted for £1.568 million of expenditure and non-pay costs amounted to £0.62 million. The OCC's net expenditure for the period totaled £2.195 million.

The vast majority of our non-pay expenditure funds our projects set out in our annual Business Plan. The cost of our accommodation at Greycoat Street is shown under our operating expenditure. This total includes our share of the building rent, service charges, council tax rates, utilities, security and maintenance. For further details of our operating and programme expenditure please see note three and four of our annual report.

## **Accounts direction**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with a Direction issued by the Secretary of State for Education under the Children Act 2004.

## **Going concern**

The OCC is a statutory corporate body established under the Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act 2011, which entered into force on 4 April 2011 under SI 892 (2011). This legislation provides the basis for the creation and continued operation of the OCC. From 1 April 2014 the Children's Commissioner's role and remit were changed by the Children and Families Act 2014. These included strengthening the

primary function to promoting and protecting children's rights with particular but not exclusive regard to the UNCRC.

The Children and Families Act 2014 also makes provisions for the Commissioner to be able to provide advice and assistance to any child who is within section 8A. This work, alongside work that focused specifically on the rights of this group of children and young people, had previously been undertaken by the Children's Rights Director. The Act repealed the requirement for Ofsted to appoint a Children's Rights Director and some members of staff who had worked in his office transferred to the Office of the Children's Commissioner bringing with them their expertise of working with these children.

The OCC's Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2014 shows net assets of £182,000. Under the normal conventions applying to Parliamentary control over income and expenditure, such grants may not be issued in advance of need, but there is no reason to believe that, if required, grant funding and parliamentary approval will not be forthcoming. It has accordingly been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for these financial statements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie Atkinson".

**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**  
**26 June 2014**

## INTRODUCTION

The passage into law of the Children and Families Act marked the end of a period of working towards a strengthened role for the Children's Commissioner for England, as recommended by the Dunford review and requested by the Secretary of State for Education in 2010.

As a result the Children's Commissioner, supported by the staff team at the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), is now the only body in England with a statutory remit to promote and protect children's rights. The legislation requires us to have particular regard to vulnerable children. We are now empowered to advise, assist and represent children who receive social care support, are in or leaving care, or who live or learn away from home.

The passage of the Children and Families Act 2014 provides the essential context for reviewing our work during 2013–14. In conjunction with the former Office of the Children's Rights Director (OCRD), we have prepared for a seamless transition over the last two years by aligning our work to meet our expected new statutory responsibilities. That transitions-focused work was a significant part of our activity in 2013–14.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has significant impact; our advice is sought and acted on by professionals; academics; national and local government; Parliamentarians; statutory agencies and those commissioned by them to provide services.

The impact of our activities over the last 12 months, taken in the context of a continuum from previous years, represents fundamental changes for the better for children and young people in England through protecting and promoting their rights.

We cannot do our work in isolation, and throughout this Annual Report, we recognise the cooperation we receive from many other organisations and individuals with whom we share a common interest or cause. Much of

our work is done in partnership, by commissioning work from or by acting as advisers to, other bodies acting to better children's lives.

In 2013–14 we designed our Business Plan around four strategic priorities. This Annual Report reflects this, setting out our key achievements for 2013–14 against these priorities. Often, our strategic priorities cut across traditional boundaries between services and policy areas such as health, education, child protection, justice, active citizenship, family life and income. They represent our interpretation of how children enjoy their rights under the UNCRC. We focus on the need to promote and protect children and young people's rights to:

- 1. Access services and support that enable them to develop, flourish and realise their potential**
- 2. Protection, with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC**
- 3. Participate in and have their views respected and interests taken into account, in matters and decisions that affect their lives**
- 4. Through the way we work and by being an efficient organisation that is flexible and capable of responding with authority and expertise.**

We use four mechanisms to carry out and trace the impact of our work under these priorities. These match the UN-sanctioned framework for judging the effectiveness and impact of human rights institutes. They are:

- statutory inquiries
- advice and influence
- outreach and engagement
- efficiency and effectiveness.

## OUR WORK IN 2013-14

Every facet of every child's life in the UK is potentially the business of the Children's Commissioner in England or colleagues within the home nations for devolved matters.

The legislation governing our work specifies that: '*In the discharge of the primary function, the Children's Commissioner must have particular regard to the rights of children who are within section 8A (children living away from home or receiving social care) and other groups of children who the Commissioner considers to be at particular risk of having their rights infringed*'.

Each year, we make difficult decisions selecting between the competing priorities of those children who are most at risk of having their rights infringed and determine how best we can use our unique powers and duties to ensure their rights are protected and advanced.

The projects explored here are grouped under the strategic priorities and headings identified in the introduction, but they are also cross cutting – which is how children experience their rights in action.

It is important to note that some of the impacts of our work are slow to mature and may not yet be apparent. It has long been our experience that they often emerge over periods of years, rather than in the span of one Business Plan. Therefore, this section captures impacts noted during 2013-14 but resulting from our work over earlier years. Similarly this report recognises that work reported in 2013-14 may continue into 2014-15. For each project, the relevant Articles from the UNCRC are identified (see page 71 for a summary).

The impact of our activities over both the last 12 months and from previous years represents a fundamental change for the better for children and young people in England by protecting and promoting their rights.

**Strategic priority 1: To promote and protect children and young people's rights to access services and support that enable them to develop, flourish and realise their potential**

### SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS INQUIRY

Our two year Inquiry into school exclusions was completed with the publication of *Always someone else's problem* whose impact we record here.

### How does it align to the UNCRC? (See page 71 for a summary of Articles)

Articles: 2, 3, 12, 23, 28 and 29

### What did we do?

The full body of work from the Inquiry has been promoted throughout 2013-14 through conferences, mail outs and media coverage to ensure its potential for effecting change in the longer term.

We began a new two year project to identify what makes an excellent education system and to assess how England's present system measures up against this. This work will continue in 2014-15.

We also looked for evidence about unlawful decisions in school admissions processes. A report, *It might be better if you looked elsewhere*, was published in April 2014 to coincide with the first ever National Offers Day for primary school places. It found limited evidence of practices by schools which may have the effect of dissuading certain parents from applying for a place. It recommended that further detailed research be conducted by DfE to determine the full extent of this issue, and that all schools should review their admissions processes to ensure that nothing they do either directly or indirectly discriminates against specific groups. This report was well received and widely reported.

## **How did we do this?**

We worked with children and young people and sector experts to define the characteristics of an excellent education system and consulted widely on them. The consultation also asked if the conditions were right in our present system to allow these characteristics to prevail. Parents were asked about their experiences through research we commissioned from the National Foundation for Educational Research.

### **How did children and young people influence our work?**

Children and young people were at the centre of our school exclusions Inquiry and several hundred told us about their experiences and shaped what we said to practitioners and policy makers.

Young people made two films to support the Inquiry, talking about their experiences of exclusion. These have been viewed almost 9,000 times on our YouTube channel.

Amplify, our young people's advisory group, were key shapers of our work around the schools admissions process. During the course of our research, we also heard from many families of children with special educational needs who felt that their child had been excluded via the admissions process – their voices and experiences feature throughout *It might be better if you looked elsewhere*.

Amplify and Young Amplify will continue to take a key role in shaping our investigation into the characteristics of a high-performing education system.

## **What was our impact?**

**Two academy chains and a number of providers of initial teacher training, for example, the Open University, London Metropolitan University and the Institute of Education, confirmed to us that they use our exclusions reports in training teachers.**

**In their formal response to our Exclusions Inquiry, DfE agreed to investigate giving schools easier access to resources on how to teach children with a range of special educational needs.**

**Also in this response, DfE clarified the processes for parents to complain about illegal exclusions. We had identified a lack of clarity around complaints processes as being one of the causes of unlawful exclusions.**

**Ofsted committed to grading as inadequate, schools found to be excluding pupils illegally and have followed through on this pledge.**

## **What will we do next?**

We will continue our investigation into the characteristics of a high-performing education system.

We are working with children and young people who attend residential special schools to understand how their wellbeing is promoted and their safeguarding assured.

We will investigate the system for children, young people, and their parents to complain about the actions of schools.

## CHILD POVERTY

Our unwavering stance on this continued issue is founded on the UNCRC. This gives children a right to a good enough standard of living to flourish and challenges every government to ensure it fulfils its duty to provide what families cannot.

### How does it align to the UNCRC?

Article 26, 27

### What did we do?

Young people's own assessment of what they need was central to our work. Building on the work of previous years, we published two reports: *What we say we need* and *We want to help people see things our way*.

A key finding in both reports was the relationship between having enough money and the ability to access local education, health, housing and transport services. Through both reports we made a number of recommendations to the Government and others to help improve the lives of children raised in low income families and both disabled and non-disabled children.

The influence of these reports has been acknowledged by both policy makers and those working with children and young people in circumstances in which some continue to live and struggle.

We also published a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) of fiscal policy and budget decisions since 2010. This important piece of work looked at the cumulative impact on children's rights of tax benefit reforms and reductions in spending on public services from 2010 onwards, including those which take effect in 2015. It is a robust model for future budgetary CRIs as enable accurate and direct comparisons to be made over time. It has been welcomed and used by Parliamentarians and practitioners alike.

### How did children and young people influence our work?

*What we say we need* was written following research designed and delivered by our young people's advisory group, Amplify. They also met with the Social Mobility and Poverty Commission, an independent body, and the Child Poverty Unit (CPU) to discuss the findings of the research. CPU officials made it clear to our young researchers that they were discussing our work and its findings at the highest levels in government. *We want to help people see things our way* was developed by a group of young disabled researchers with experience of living with low incomes, trained by and working with University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). They also made film version of the report which has been viewed over 1,000 times on YouTube. They presented their research to a group of their own MPs and commissioners and providers of a wide range of services in North West England.

Zac, 19, was one of the young people who took part in the work with UCLAN. He said, '*The best thing about taking part in the research was meeting different people and getting a better understanding of some of the issues they face.*'

### What was our impact?

All three pieces of work attracted substantial media coverage and have been extensively used and quoted in Parliamentary debates and policy discussions in both Houses.

Our evidence and recommendations were directed to the Social Mobility and Poverty Commission, an independent body, and the Child Poverty Unit (CPU), a cross-cutting team within the Government.

The Social Mobility and Poverty Commission's Annual Report for 2013 made references to our work and

**meetings with Amplify are noted in the draft child poverty strategy.**

**We wrote to all local authorities about the research and have had confirmation from some that they use our materials in their decision making.**

## **What we will do next**

We anticipate this work, and what we go on to do next, will influence how organisations tackle child poverty in the future.

We plan to undertake a future CRIA examining the impact of UK fiscal policies and budget measures on children and families in England using the established model. We are undertaking a new strand of work as part of the CRIA involving children and young people, which was published in June 2014.

We will build on the work done in the two reports published this year and look at the role that families have in deciding priorities in local housing, health and early years services for under 5s in the context of national policy.

Disabled young researchers will help us to develop our response to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One member of the group has also secured a seat on Amplify.

## **HEALTH**

We are increasingly being asked for our view on key health issues which is improving our influence in this area. We consider a child's right to health as fundamental to all the UNCRC Articles and health considerations are a constituent of all our work.

### **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Articles: 24, 25, 36, 12, 19, 23, 37, 39

### **What did we do?**

The Children's Commissioner is a member of the Secretary of State for Health's

influential Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum. Topics examined in 2013–14 included mental and emotional health and wellbeing, health inequalities related to child poverty, the response of children's health services to the Francis Inquiry on patient-centred care and the Winterbourne View inquiry into treatment of those with learning disabilities and difficulties.

The Children's Commissioner was a member of the critical readers' group for the draft stages of the Chief Medical Officer for England's (CMO) Annual Report, part two of which focused on the degree to which children and young people are supported to be agents in their own, and are helped to achieve the highest possible levels of, health and wellbeing.

The Children's Commissioner addressed several national health-related professional and policy making events, including the national conference of clinical commissioners of children, young people and maternity services. At each, she emphasised the need for health service policy makers, commissioners and providers to listen to children and young people and respond to their feedback as service users. We responded to a number of consultations and calls for evidence, including:

- the Health Select Committee in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Inquiry
- the Royal College of Paiatrics and Child Health Consultation on a Foundation for Child Health
- the Mental Health Act Code of Practice Consultation
- the development and refinement of the recently launched 'MindEd' professional development and support materials in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

## **How did children and young people influence our work?**

Children and young people met with and fed directly in to the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum, where the Commissioner is a member.

Our work with Amplify and other children and young people shows clearly that they are not sufficiently consulted or involved in their own rights – issues which we shared with the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and which influenced her eventual Annual Report on 2012, published in 2013.

All but one of the many health focused conferences and events addressed by the Children's Commissioner featured the central and purposeful involvement of children and young people as delegates and co-presenters.

## **What was our impact?**

**There is significant crossover between health projects and other areas e.g. the mental health of detained children and young people. More information about the impact of our mental health work with this vulnerable group can be found under 'Youth justice'. Findings from our visits to the secure mental health estate were used to influence practice in all settings.**

**The Commissioner's and OCC staff members' contributions to the bodies and events outlined influenced thinking on children and young people's behalf.**

**Strategic priority 2: To promote and protect children and young people's rights to protection, with particular regard to the most vulnerable groups who are afforded special protection under the UNCRC**

## **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN GANGS AND GROUPS (CSEGG)**

In 2013 we concluded our seminal two year CSEGG Inquiry, publishing the final three reports from a series of six.

### **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Articles: 3, 12, 19, 34, 35, 37, 39

### **What did we do?**

The Inquiry:

- captured the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in the context of gangs and groups
- identified the profiles of victims, and as far as possible, perpetrators
- mapped the range of patterns of abuse
- drew together international evidence on the impact of children viewing adult pornographic material
- researched young people's understanding of consent
- reported on how to keep children in residential care safe from sexual exploitation
- documented good practice
- developed a new framework for protecting children – See Me, Hear Me.

## **How did children and young people influence our work?**

Over 800 children and young people contributed to the inquiry. They told us about their experiences by taking part in focus groups and one to one interviews.

Four groups of young people also made their own short films as part of research on gangs, to tell practitioners and other young people about their experiences.

The films were shown at the launch of the final CSEGG report at the House of Commons Speaker's Apartments, where the children and young people involved also talked to parliamentarians and practitioners about their experiences.

### **What was our impact?**

**Our first CSEGG report into improving the protection of children in residential care made eleven recommendations to government including legislative and regulatory changes. All were accepted and ten have been fully implemented.** Following the publication of our report into the impact on children of viewing adult pornography, containing compelling evidence of the negative impact on children's attitudes to sex and sexuality, the Government introduced a range of measures to prevent children and young people accessing pornography online including network-level blocks.

**Our Inquiry has changed the culture and practice of the identification and protection of children by the police, local authorities, Crown Prosecution Service, health agencies, voluntary sector and youth offending teams.**

**The College of Policing and Association of Chief Police Officers have jointly developed and rolled out an action plan to tackle child sexual exploitation across England and Wales. A lead officer will take responsibility to drive and measure improvements. Indicators include: greater identification of victims and perpetrators and more prosecutions, including specifically improving detection in minority ethnic and faith communities.**

**The Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) teachers' forum (which is DfE funded) has distributed our tools for improving sex education in schools on important topics such as boys' attitudes to girls and the effects of online pornography.**

**The CSEGG Inquiry has significantly influenced the Crown Prosecution Service's development of new guidelines on protecting vulnerable witnesses which make clear children are not responsible for their abuse.**

**We developed a new child protection framework, See Me, Hear Me, as part of the Inquiry. Use of this by practitioners will seek to ensure the child at risk can have their needs effectively met. The framework will be piloted and fully evaluated and 12 local authorities and police forces have expressed a wish to participate. In addition, at least six local authorities have revised their child protection processes in line with the See Me, Hear Me framework to improve they ways in which they protect children and young people.**

**Our lists of risks and warning signs have been widely disseminated and actively used to identify and protect children and young people.**

**The Deputy Children's Commissioner was invited to address a key conference organised by the Council of Europe.**

**We recommended urgent action to improve information sharing between agencies. The Home Office is now working with the Information Commissioner to develop a definitive guide to sharing information, allowing organisations to work better locally to identify victims and perpetrators.**

**Two police forces have begun to map gang-associated girls, in response to the Inquiry. This was a key recommendation from our final report and is an essential prelude to developing protection plans for these girls, who are known to be at grave risk.**

**The Government has committed to reviewing and revising the 2009 Working Together guidelines on child sexual exploitation including reviewing the current definition of child sexual**

**exploitation, in response to our recommendation.**

**The Deputy Children's Commissioner was invited to join a number of key bodies, including:**

- **Adviser to the National Child Abuse Review Panel, convened by the Crown Prosecution Service and the Association of Chief Police Officers to review historical cases occurring before 2012.**
- **Chair of the Experts' Advisory Group of the Alliance of Funders, which includes Comic Relief, the Big Lottery, and the Barrow Cadbury Trust. The objective is to ensure funders have the necessary information to make informed decisions.**
- **The Strategic Stakeholders Consultative Group, part of the Home Office strategic group for addressing Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People.**

**The Deputy Children's Commissioner and other members of the CSEGG team have addressed numerous conferences on the findings of the Inquiry, including: the Association of Women Judges, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Local Government Association, the Association of Local Safeguarding Board Chairs, the Association of Forensic Health Physicians, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the London Probation Service, the NSPCC, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Youth Justice Board and the National Working Group.**

### **What will we do next?**

We are beginning a two year investigation into child sexual abuse linked to the home or family environment because our CSEGG Inquiry revealed that many victims of child sexual exploitation were previously abused within their families. The work will explore the nature and scale of the issue in England.

See Me, Hear Me will be piloted and evaluated in at least three areas.

All outstanding recommendations will be actively pursued and a one year follow-on report published in autumn 2014.

Three briefing papers will be produced on unpublished evidence collected from the CSEGG Inquiry.

### **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

We have achieved important progress in:

- improving child protection in schools
- removing barriers that inhibit children and young people from telling someone about their abuse and professionals' capacity to recognise this
- supporting children and young people whose parents misuse alcohol.

There is overlap here with our work on child sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Articles: 12, 18, 19, 34, 39

### **What did we do?**

Building on the significant impact of work done in 2012–13 to examine safeguarding in primary schools, we looked at the same issue in secondary schools. The University of Sussex was commissioned to research this for us and produced a report, *Feeling safe, keeping safe*.

We completed a two year programme of research led by the University of East Anglia, and with young researchers, aimed at improving support for young people to get help about abuse and other problems. We published a report, *It takes a lot to build Trust – Recognition and telling: Developing earlier routes to help for children and young people*, in October 2013 and produced a framework to help professionals and others pick up on abuse and respond helpfully. One

of the key messages from the work is that adults should not rely on children speaking out: rather they may communicate abuse through their behaviour.

We continued our work on parental alcohol misuse, building on the report published in 2012, *Silent Voices – Supporting children and young people affected by parental alcohol misuse*. This report found that school is a haven and teachers are often among the most trusted adults. We commissioned the Children's Society to conduct follow up work on practice in several local areas in order to improve recognition, understanding and help to children and families. This work is near completion.

### How did children and young people influence our work?

Our work on parental alcohol misuse was informed by interviews with children and young people across several local areas, who told us about their experiences.

Young people involved in *Feeling safe, keeping safe* made a film to communicate the findings of the research in their own words. Children and young people supported our recognition and telling work as young researchers, and significantly contributed to producing the framework.

Children and young people presented alongside the Commissioner in Committee sessions and in subsequent follow-up work with MPs. They have directly advised the Education Select Committee as part of our response to their inquiry into residential care and 16+ accommodation.

### What was our impact?

**We have achieved important progress in these areas including work done in three local authority areas with those seeking to better identify and support children and young people who are living with alcohol misuse in their families.**

**In March 2014 the DfE issued our safeguarding guidance to schools,**

**referring them to our best practice advice and tips to guide their practice, rather than produce their own materials.**

**Our Recognition and Telling framework is being promoted widely and is also being drawn upon to support the development of other aspects of our work e.g. follow-up to the CSEGG Inquiry.**

**We have made a number of presentations about our recognition and telling work, including at the College of Social Work's national conference.**

**A chapter was contributed by the OCC's Principal Policy Adviser for safeguarding, to a book focusing on child protection practice post the Munro report.**

**We also responded to a number of consultations and inquiries in this area, including those on residential care, permanence, inspection and the Education Committee's inquiry into residential care and 16+ accommodation.**

### What will we do next?

We will be actively supporting the use of the Recognition and Telling framework, as part of the See Me, Hear Me pilot project, to ensure it has the best possible chance to promote good practice. We will also be taking forward some specific recommendations from this work.

We will promote our work on parental alcohol misuse and its impact on children, in order to highlight the range of impact on children and the extent of need for support. This includes support for those children who become carers for their parents. We will empower those affected by it as trainers.

### YOUTH JUSTICE

We are the only statutory body with the right of entry across all parts of the children's secure estate. We exercise this right regularly, making unannounced visits to check on the welfare of children deprived of their liberty in Young Offenders Institutions

(YOIs), Secure Training Centres (STCs) and Secure Children's Homes (SCHs). This gives us a unique perspective as there is no other body that visits or inspects across all three types of secure provision and our feedback is directly from children and young people.

The OCC is a member of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), designated by the Secretary of State for Justice under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture. The Deputy Children's Commissioner has chaired the children and young people sub-group of the NPM since 2013, bringing together members on a quarterly basis to share information on children's detention settings and recommend specific activity on children for the NPM as a whole.

### **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Articles: 40, 37, 28

### **How did children and young people influence our work?**

On every visit we make, we exercise our statutory right to talk in private to young people about their experiences. We directly act on what they say, including producing detailed feedback to those running the establishments concerned on necessary improvements to their settings.

We speak with children and young people both individually and in small groups, explaining who we are and why we are visiting. This includes those held in segregation units or placed on a single separation regime in SCHs or STCs and children in health wings, including those who are self-harming and/ or have suicidal thoughts.

### **What did we do?**

The OCC made seven unannounced visits to the secure estate in 2013–14, sometimes accompanied by senior representatives from other agencies. Each visit lasts approximately four hours and commences with a conversation with the governor or director focusing on the key issues of

reception, induction, searches, bullying, restraint, segregation/ single separation and mental health. Statistics on restraint and segregation are requested and must be provided under our powers.

We look particularly at patterns of restraint and segregation/separation and our data analyst provides a detailed analysis of these based on the records provided. We will view CCTV footage of restraints if considered necessary.

We follow these opening discussions with a walk around the facility, looking at children's cells/rooms, dining or association areas, segregation units, health wings, education and outdoor or gym facilities.

The OCC also has a powerful voice on youth justice policy issues. We continue to sit on the Ministerial Board of Deaths in Custody and gave evidence on youth justice matters to Parliamentary Committees, All Party Parliamentary Groups, and a Parliamentary review of the youth courts system led by Lord Carlile QC.

We also responded (as part of the NPM) to the Government's consultation on secure colleges, a new type of detention facility for 12 to 17 year-olds. The NPM response highlighted the importance of taking a holistic approach to the requirements of children in custody, all of whom have very significant psychological, emotional, developmental, physical, social and cognitive needs. Distance from home was raised as a particular concern. A lack of visits due to children being placed far from home is a known contributory factor to self-harming and has been implicated in at least one child suicide in prison.

Our influential reports *I think I must have been born bad* and *Nobody made the connection* continue to have a significant impact on advancing the understanding of the mental health needs of young people who are detained in the secure estate.

The OCC jointly hosted a round table event with the Royal College of Psychiatrists, on

the incidence and impact of acquired and traumatic brain injury in relation to children who get into trouble with the law. We are committed to raising awareness of this significant problem and supporting the development of preventive measures.

### What was our impact?

While good practice was identified in a number of secure settings, significant concerns were found and reported on. These included:

- children segregated for lengthy periods – over ten weeks in one instance
- children segregated under 'informal' regimes, sometimes called 'risk management' or 'behaviour management'. These could also be for lengthy periods with one girl found to have been placed on such a regime for eight out of ten days, including two days out of cell after one week. These 'informal' segregations were not recorded in the formal segregation/ separation records and were discovered when on 'walk-around'
- boys in a YOI held in segregation during Ramadan and not being fed adequately
- restraint using undue force, lack of attempts at de-escalation and restraint triggered by staff responding insensitively to a girl's recent history of sexual exploitation. Staff actions were a significant contributory factor to her distress and consequent aggressive behavior
- full searches being done routinely in a SCH in contravention of regulations
- children being delivered very late – this is a long standing problem but seems to have got worse; one governor reported a child being delivered after a court appearance at 2am.

After each secure estate visit we wrote in detail to every setting, the Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board, the Chief Inspector of Prisons in his role as chair of the NPM, to the relevant inspectorate, the Director of Children's Services and the Director-General of the

National Offender Management Service, as appropriate, to highlight areas of good practice and to point out breaches of children's rights. We set out clearly what needs to change. In some cases we do follow up visits if sufficient cause for concern is present. We exercise our right to require detailed responses.

The following are examples of changes as a direct result of our visits:

- ending of 'informal' segregation/ separation
- food being provided at the appropriate times for segregated boys during Ramadan
- a new escort timetable being developed to end late drop off of children
- routine strip searches immediately ceased at the identified SCH
- review of and reduction in restraints and use of segregation/ separation in specific units.

In 2014 The National Offenders Management Service (NOMS) confirmed that it is implementing a new strategy to transport children following our continued representations about its practice of moving children very late at night.

Participants at our jointly hosted roundtable with the Royal College of Psychiatrists on the impact of neurodisability agreed to develop a joint approach over the next 12 months to raise awareness and lever changes to commissioning and delivery of services.

## **What will we do next?**

In 2014–15 we will continue with our visits to the secure estate. We will undertake an examination of solitary confinement, separation, cooling-off periods, and other instances where young people have no contact with other young people or access to education. We will document the reasons for action and the experiences of young people and look to capture data around this and other issues. We will also continue to contribute to the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill.

## **IMMIGRATION, ASYLUM AND TRAFFICKING**

The age assessment process for unaccompanied children seeking asylum and what happens to unaccompanied children whose claims have failed when they reach 18 have been key areas of work.

The age assessment work is underpinned by significant work in earlier years including our publication, *The Fact of Age*, a review of case law and local authority practice since the Supreme Court Judgment in R (A) v Croydon LBC (2009) which followed our intervention in this seminal case.

## **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Articles: 3,8,9,10,12,20,22,28,29,32,35,36, 37 and 39

## **How did children and young people influence our work?**

Children and young people made significant contributions to our work in this area. 32 young people aged between 17 and 25 whose appeal rights were exhausted took part in workshops which directly influenced the recommendations in our report, *What's going to happen tomorrow?* Their voices also feature powerfully throughout the publication.

We also met with young asylum seekers on visits to Heathrow Airport and Hillingdon LBC, to hear about their experiences in immigration and care settings. What they

said has had direct influence on our work, including our response to the Ministry of Justice's Transforming Legal Aid consultation.

## **What did we do?**

**Age assessment:** Last year we helped the Association of Directors of Children's Services establish a broad-based working group with government departments, NGOs and professional associations to develop a new age assessment process and practice guidance for all those involved in assessing age. The Age Assessment strategic group first met in September 2013. It was established after a series of meetings between ourselves and the Home Office, DfE and the Department of Health as a response to the Croydon Judgment and our review.

**Young people whose claims have failed:** This group of young people face particular issues when they turn 18. Unlike other care leavers, they are not looked after until they are at least 21 (or 25 if in higher education). Home Office funding of their care ceases shortly after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday but few are removed from the UK. This leaves local authorities with the burden of funding their care or stopping their funding with young people at risk of disappearing from the system and becoming involved in crime or sexual exploitation to survive.

In the latter half of 2013 we interviewed service leads for three local authorities, interviewed children's lawyers in early 2014 and published a report in April 2014 called *What's going to happen tomorrow?* We await the Government's response to this.

We also responded to a number of government consultations about legal aid, migrant access to health services, the Modern Day Slavery Bill and the draft guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children.

In August 2013, one year after their introduction, we wrote to the Immigration

Minister about the unfair effects and consequences of the significant changes to the family migration rules. We have been involved in ongoing dialogue about the matters raised, and seek to influence any future change to these rules and their implementation through further work on this in 2014–15.

We assisted the higher courts in arriving at judgments favourable to children by intervening successfully in three legal cases concerning:

- the use of force against children and pregnant women in immigration settings
- age assessment in child trafficking cases and public interest test of prosecutions for crimes committed stemming from the child's exploitation
- the residence test arising from ongoing government changes to legal aid.

This final issue was also covered extensively in our response to the Transforming Legal Aid consultation from the Ministry of Justice.

Visits to immigration and care settings were also carried out. We went to the Asylum Screening Unit in Croydon to assess the pilot the Home Office were running on recording statistics for asylum applicants claiming to be children but whose appearance or demeanor very strongly suggested that they were significantly over 18. These young people are treated as adults and not referred to the local authority for an age assessment. Some end up in detention as a result and are later found to be children.

We also visited Heathrow Airport twice. The first time was to consider arrangements in place to detect child victims of trafficking. The second visit included Hillingdon, a local authority where a high proportion of the looked after children are unaccompanied asylum seekers. We looked at arrangements for processing children at the airport and the local authority's care arrangements. We also met with young asylum seekers on the visit. Separately, we visited another local authority

asylum team to look at arrangements for accommodating unaccompanied children.

### **What was our impact?**

**It has been an achievement to bring all interested parties together to map out and develop a new age assessment process. We are hopeful that this work will bear fruit in 2014 when new practice guidance will be published for local authority staff. Like much of the OCC's work, this is ongoing over a significant period of time, across several years and Business Plans.**

**We have made a number of recommendations about young people who reach 18 and whose appeal rights are exhausted. The chief recommendation is for immigration rules to be aligned with care leaving legislation so that unaccompanied young people are treated the same as other care leavers – and granted leave to remain to allow them to be cared for until they are at least 21, or if they go on into Higher Education, 25.**

**We also recommended that children have access to good quality legal advice which is often pivotal to the outcome of their claim. Alongside previous work in this field, this has made a significant impact. For example, the Department for Education has, for the first time, drafted specific statutory guidance for the care of unaccompanied and trafficked children in a consultation document about care planning in 2014, which we expect to be published shortly.**

**We responded to this consultation highlighting the importance of local authority engagement in the child's legal process, children's right to legal representation and the local authorities duty to ensure unaccompanied children get the help they need in navigating the UK's asylum process. We also highlighted a child's right to retain and develop their mother-tongue language.**

## **What are we doing next?**

We will continue with work on the age assessment process and will engage young people who have been through an age assessment to comment and provide their views on the draft guidance being produced. We will follow up the recommendations and good practice points highlighted in *What's going to happen tomorrow?* with the relevant government departments, agencies and local authority representative bodies.

New planned work will include examining family migration to the UK, in particular the impact of rules around non-EU spouses' rights to live in the UK and the effect on children who may be separated from their parents as a result.

We will also contribute to developing a robust Modern Day Slavery Bill through assisting with the review of the National Referral Mechanism.

**Strategic priority 3: To promote and protect children and young people's rights to participating in and having their views respected and interests taken into account, in matters and decisions that affect their lives**

## **PARTICIPATION**

Article 12 of the UNCRC – the right for children to be listened to and to have their views taken seriously – is fundamental not only to what we work on but also to the way we work. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires us to involve children and young people in our work and our vision, mission and values state our commitment to doing so. Not only do we report what children and young people say and facilitate meetings between them and decision-makers, but we also ensure that wherever possible, children and young people are active participants in our work.

We facilitated Amplify, the Children's Commissioner's young people's advisory group whose advice continued to be invaluable to shaping our work and whose

participation is invaluable to delivering it. Aged 11–18 and from all over England, Amplify's 30 members come from a wide range of family backgrounds, ethnic and social groups. They are a strong influence on how the OCC does all its work, contributing to our business planning and annual reporting cycles.

Over the last year, Amplify members' participation included, but was not limited to: informing our Business Plan and Annual Report, leading their own projects agreed and steered by them as a group, influencing what the Commissioner and other senior representatives say in public and to policy makers on vital issues, conducting research and publishing their findings, taking part in interview panels for staff and commissioned contractors, and developing promotional materials. We do all our work on behalf of children and young people in England, and are indebted to them for the free time they give up to contribute to and help us with everything we do.

We also developed a network of organisations and individuals who do participation well, in particular with children under 11 years old to enable us to include younger children in our work

Throughout the year we also supported, hosted, co-ran and co-chaired, many reference groups of children who had experience of the specific issues we worked on, all of whose advice informed our work in these areas. These included children who had been excluded from school, those within the care system and care leavers, those who had been sexually exploited and those seeking asylum.

### **How does it align to the UNCRC?**

Article: 12

### **How did children and young people influence our work?**

Children and young people influence all that we do. As well as reporting what they tell us, children and young people are active

participants in our work wherever this is possible. Children and young people helped to set our work plan for the year; recruit all of our permanent staff through taking part in interview panels; and procure services, including commissioning research.

Increasingly our commissioned research was conducted by young researchers with personal experience of the issues they were researching providing opportunities for them to learn new skills as well as influence decision-making about issues of importance to their lives.

Amplify led a research project on children and young people's hopes and dreams, the report of which has been used to inform a wide range of experts and has been cited by the Child Poverty Unit and the Chief Medical Officer in their work.

We met with a broad range of children and young people to help inform our work to plan for our new role and remit.

### **What did we do?**

Children and young people's views and experiences informed and were embedded in all of our research and policy work.

Children and young people were active participants in our work including organisational decision-making, research, procurement, recruitment and communications.

Forty thousand children and young people were involved in our annual Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day.

Members of Amplify met three times during the year at whole-group residential, as well as a number of times in smaller working groups to contribute to strategic thinking and specific projects such as development of our new website and CRIAs. They developed, designed and implemented their own project on children's hopes and dreams based on a web survey of 1300 children, which resulted in a report and a YouTube video, both called *What we say we need*. This report has been used to inform a wide range of experts.

We held half day workshops for 7 to 11 year olds in the East Midlands and London with a view to developing Young Amplify, an advisory group of younger children. The views expressed in the workshops mirrored the concerns of the older members of Amplify: family, care and safety, school and the right to play and relax are important.

We developed and extended our network of organisations that 'do' participation with specific groups of children to help ensure the views and experiences of the very broadest range of children and young people from across the country featured in our work. This included: those seeking asylum; those in care; those vulnerable to exclusion and not in education, employment or training; those with disabilities; those living in poverty or in the youth justice system.

### **What was our impact?**

**The impact of our participation work is integral to the impact of our organisation as a whole in that it underpins all that we do. It is evidenced through our publications and reports which feature the views and voices of children and young people throughout.**

### **What are we doing next?**

In 2014–15 children and young people's views and active participation will continue to drive OCC's work. We will produce a new participation strategy to help ensure we do this.

We will continue our work with Young Amplify and Amplify and develop our participation work with children who live away from home or receive social care.

## CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER'S TAKEOVER DAY

Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day gives children and young people the chance to be involved in decision making. Children benefit from the opportunity to experience the world of work and make their voices heard, while adults and organisations gain a fresh perspective on what they do.

This year over 40,000 young people and 1,500 organisations took part in the seventh Takeover Day, building on the success of previous years.

### How does it align to the UNCRC?

Articles: 12

### What did we do?

More organisations than ever before took part – including senior staff from high profile organisations such as Tesco and the Cooperative.

Other organisations that joined in included charities, MPs, government departments, police forces and commissioners, and cultural and sporting bodies including the Victoria and Albert Museum and Rugby Football Union. Health organisations included the British Red Cross and NHS England, who used the event to engage with young people over service planning.

### What was our impact?

**A number of local authorities have evaluated how Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day has influenced them and as a result of taking part are organising events for young people to give feedback about their services.**

**Sir David Nicholson, Chief Executive of NHS England said, 'children are a very important part of the healthcare system and it is important that we engage with them in planning services in the same way we do adults. Supporting Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day is one way**

***we can show our commitment to giving this audience a voice.'***

**We raised awareness of the importance of children and young people being involved in decision making, particularly through social media. We reached 4 million Twitter accounts. The Twitter hashtag #TakeoverDay trended for the first time and between 9am and 5pm on the day the hashtag was retweeted every four minutes.**

### What are we doing next?

This year's Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day will have updated guidance for schools; organisations; children and young people and new ways to share what people are doing online.

There is also an exciting new scheme allowing organisations and schools to become ambassadors for the day. It will encourage long time participants to get new organisations involved offering even more takeover opportunities and innovative things to do.

## PROMOTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

All the activities undertaken by the Children's Commissioner and the staff of the OCC are focused on achieving this aim, both through work directly with children and young people and through influencing policy makers and practitioners whose decisions and work affect children's and their families' lives and life chances.

### How does it align to the UNCRC?

Articles: 4, 3, 12

### What did we do?

Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) are an important way of restating and promoting children's rights. We published two in 2013–14. The first CRIA, published last year, assessed the effect on children's rights of changes to economic policy since 2010 and the second was on the

## **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill.**

We have drafted user-friendly briefings about key children's rights topics to help promote our understanding from a rights point of view. The first two are about smacking and mandatory reporting. They will be published on our new website (under development now and launching summer 2014).

We made submissions to UN Treaty bodies on specific children's rights areas, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (OCC's submission focused on the UK Government's performance implementing the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography).

Another aspect of promoting children's rights is ensuring that the complaints systems are robust and child-friendly. In 2013–14 we continued with our work in this area.

## **What was our impact?**

**The CRIA about the Children and Families Bill had significant impacts on the legislation. Some we reported on in the last Annual Report and some have emerged since. Parliamentary committees referred several times to our CRIA about the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill during its passage. Key changes made during the passage of the Bill reflect the analysis in OCC's CRIA and include:**

- retaining the current definition of antisocial behaviour for the purpose of the new injunctions to prevent nuisance and annoyance**
- powers to exclude people from their homes because of antisocial behaviour will only apply to adults.**

**Our work around child friendly complaints systems has secured the endorsement of key health sector organisations including three Royal Colleges, Monitor and the Health Service Journal.**

## **What will we do next?**

We have a commitment to continue to carry out CRIs in 2014–15 on topics yet to be agreed.

**Strategic priority 4: To promote and protect children and young people's rights through the way we work, and by being an efficient organisation that is flexible and capable of responding with authority and expertise.**

A number of projects under this priority relate to organisational administration and efficiency. Ensuring that our resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible helps make us flexible and able to respond to opportunities, needs and issues as they arise as well as maximise the impact of the planned project work we carry out.

## **What did we do?**

Over the course of the year our team and infrastructure supported work that resulted in the office publishing 25 reports (including 19 children and young people's versions of our research) and submitted evidence to 26 consultations and inquiries. This represents an increase of over 10% from the previous year and an increase of 54% in the number since 2010–11.

We received 800 individual enquiries: some were signposted to other organisations and others were deemed cases of particular importance to a wider issue within our remit.

These cases are typically highly sensitive and therefore we are not able to go into detail about the specific issues, outcomes and impacts of each but key topics we addressed included:

- school exclusions (especially relating to children with special needs)**
- child protection**
- family breakdown and contact arrangements**
- enquiries from the general public around our research and work.**

2013–14 was also an important year for the Office in preparing for changes announced in the Children and Families Act. These represent significant additional responsibilities that the Office has assumed from 1 April. A time-bound action plan was successfully carried out to ensure implementation of the new remit and fitness for purpose. This plan included:

- comprehensive arrangements for transfer of staff and assets from the Office of the Children's Rights Director
- engagement with children and young people and adult stakeholders for whom the Office has to have particular regard for under the new legislation
- regular Transition Board meetings with the Department for Education and Ofsted to monitor preparations for implementing the Office's new remit and functions
- adapting and applying internal policies and systems to be fit for purpose following the implementation of the new remit
- production of the annual Business Plan
- the appointment of an Advisory Board as set out in the Children and Families Act.

## What was our impact?

**Where enquiries raised significant concerns, they were actively pursued with the relevant authorities, most commonly with directors of children's services. As a consequence, a number of child protection investigations have been undertaken and action progressed in order to safeguard vulnerable children. We always request, and receive, a response from the relevant authority in order to satisfy ourselves and the original correspondent that the necessary action has been taken.**

**The impact of all the preparation work for the transition proved successful in the smooth implementation of the Office's new remit.**

**Children and young people living away from home or receiving social care services who would formerly have contacted the Children's Rights Director continued to receive uninterrupted help and support. A new business plan was published during the first week of April outlining how the Office would fulfil the expectations and requirements of its statutory remit.**

## CONCLUSION

Our reports and submissions continue to have a significant impact on policy and practice. Some of the most significant have already been noted above. The Office is recognised as an influential and significant voice in many areas that impact children and young people's lives and are approached proactively by government, agencies and individuals seeking advice on good practice. They are quoted by policy makers, service providers, academics and the media.

During the next year we will further develop our impact log so that it will consistently record the difference our work has made and the way in which we have successfully rooted and protected children's rights.

# MANAGEMENT REPORT

## Introduction

During 2013–14, pending the passage of the Children and Families Act 2014 through Parliament, the Office of the Children's Commissioner continued work in the spirit of recommendations made by the independent review commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education in 2010 and also to plan for transition to it of the Children's Rights Director's functions. Work under each of its four strategic priorities was aligned to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Articles. We also ensured the way we worked reflected guidance on the operation of national human rights institutions (UNCRC General Comment 2) and the UN's Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principles). In addition, we used UNICEF-recommended performance indicators to measure our work, based on a framework used by national human rights institutions.

From 1 April 2014 the Children's Commissioner's role and remit were changed by the Children and Families Act 2014. These included strengthening the primary function to promoting and protecting children's rights with particular, but not exclusive regard, to the UNCRC.

The 2004 Act says that in the course of her work, the Children's Commissioner must have particular regard to the rights of children who are within section 8A (children living away from home or receiving social care) and other groups of children she and staff at the Office of the Children's Commissioner consider to be at particular risk of having their rights infringed.

The Act also makes provisions for the Commissioner to be able to provide advice and assistance to any child who is within section 8A. This work, alongside work that focused specifically on the rights of this group of children and young people, had previously been undertaken by the Children's Rights Director. The Act repealed the requirement for Ofsted to appoint a

Children's Rights Director and some members of staff who had worked in his office transferred to the Office of the Children's Commissioner bringing with them their expertise of working with these children.

## Investment in fixed assets

The expenditure on fixed assets in 2013–14 was £43,000. Investments are represented by a new accounts systems and audio visual equipment. The new accounts system went live in June 2014.

## Our staff

We spent £1,569,000 on staff costs in 2013–14, a 1% increase on the prior year. During 2013–14 the total number of working days lost due to sickness absence amounted to 64.5 days. This is an average of 2.3 days absence per employee (compared to 2012–13 where the average was 1.59 days). The increase in the average was due to the long term illness of two members of staff.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Services Pension Scheme (PCSPS). Further details of this can be found in notes 1 and 2 of the accounts.

## Operating costs

We spent £316,000 on operating costs during 2013–14. The dilapidations claim by our former landlord at 1 London Bridge has been resolved. The former landlord deducted £17,063 in full and final settlement of the dilapidations claim from the rent deposit held. The OCC relocated from its previous office at Greycoat Street to the Department for Education (DfE) main building at Great Smith Street London on 14 April. The annual licence fee payable for the new premises have been set at £153,350 per annum.

## Efficiency and value for money

For the first five years of its existence, the resource allocation of the organisation was

static at £3 million. Taking in to account inflation, this has demanded year-on-year savings. In 2013–14 the organisation was required to make further savings of 8% as a result of efficiency savings across government which reduced the annual budget to £2,272,000. The expenditure reported for 2013–14 was £2,165,000.

### **Supplier payments**

During 2013–14 we paid 76% of our suppliers within 30 days (2012–13 100%). This was due to delays resulting from the recruitment of a Finance Officer. The aggregate amount owed to trade creditors at 31 March 2013 compared with the aggregate amount invoiced by suppliers during the year, expressed as a number of days in the same proportion to the total number of days in the financial year, is equal to 35 days.

### **Child protection**

We are committed to ensuring the safety of children and young people who become involved in our work in any way. All staff are checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to an enhanced level. We have a comprehensive safeguarding policy, and we ensure that all third party suppliers who come into contact with children and young people are enhanced DBS checked.

### **Opportunities and diversity**

We aim to provide support and assistance to enable staff to manage their own career development in partnership with us and to reach their full potential. We value the rich diversity of our staff whatever their ethnicity, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age. We have reviewed and updated our equality and diversity framework to ensure we are meeting our legal duties as outlined in the Equality Act 2011. We are now looking at going beyond these requirements to develop a more nuanced policy which better reflects the nature of our work.

### **Health and safety management**

The Commissioner's Board has agreed our health and safety policy. The Office of the Children's Commissioner is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, consultants, agency workers and children and young people as specified by the occupational health and safety requirements in the Health and Safety at Works Act 1974 and subsequent legislation or amendments. The intention of the health and safety policy is to prevent injury and ill health in the workplace.

### **Environmental policy**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is committed to best environmental practices including recycling.

### **Data security**

We have taken significant steps to ensure all of our information and data are effectively managed. We have revised and strengthened our policies and procedures regarding how data is stored, transmitted and disposed of. We have revised and reissued our comprehensive staff handbook including sections on information data security. All staff, Advisory Board and Audit and Risk Committee members undertake Cabinet Office training level one and two on information data security as soon as they come into post. All staff are required to undertake refresher training on an annual basis. Our policies and procedures on these issues are provided to new staff as part of the induction process, and to existing staff through an annual refresher workshop. This ensures a robust culture of protecting information. We suffered no incidences of data loss during the year.

An audit of Information Governance and Security was undertaken as part of the approved internal audit periodic plan for 2013–14. Whilst the audit opinion is 'Substantial', we recognise that continuing actions must be undertaken to implement mandatory requirement eight of the HMG Security Policy Framework, relating to

accreditation of ICT systems. Internal audit has been provided with evidence of ongoing discussions being held between the OCC and the sponsoring body regarding the accreditation of applicable ICT systems – with the aim of resolving this issue in time for the implementation of the newly reformed OCC in April 2014. Over the coming year, we will upgrade our ICT systems and seek to realise economies of scale by using DfE systems where appropriate. Accreditation will be undertaken during the implementation phase of our upgrade projects.

## **Audit**

In accordance with the Children Act 2004, our financial accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. As far as I am aware, as Accounting Officer, there is no relevant information of which the auditors are unaware. I have taken all steps that I should have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information, and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie Atkinson".

**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**  
**and Accounting Officer**  
**26 June 2014**

# **REMUNERATION REPORT**

(Salaries and benefits in kind)

## **Remuneration committee**

The Department for Education undertakes scrutiny and approval of our pay and reward policy under the terms of our framework agreement. The Children's Commissioner's pay is reviewed and approved by the Permanent Secretary in the Department for Education in line with average Senior Civil Service pay increases.

## **Service contracts**

The Children's Commissioner is appointed by the Department for Education. During 2009-10, the Secretary of State appointed Dr Maggie Atkinson as Children's Commissioner for England. She came into office on 1 March 2010. In accordance with the Children Act 2004, her salary is paid for by grant-in-aid from the Department for Education and is identified separately in the accounts. Under the 2004 Act her term of office is for five years.

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Principles published by the Civil Service

Commission specify the circumstances when appointments may be made otherwise.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commission can be found at: [www.civilservicecommission.org.uk](http://www.civilservicecommission.org.uk)

## **Remuneration Policy**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) does not have a Remuneration Committee. Changes to salaries and grade are subject to approval by the Department for Education under the terms of the joint framework agreement.

## **Salary and pension entitlements (audited information)**

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the senior officials of the Office of the Children's Commissioner:

## Remuneration (salary and benefits in kind)

### Details of OCC Directors 2013–14

Oliver Berman – Director of Communications and Participation

Ross Hendry – Director of Policy and Deputy Chief Executive

David Ryan – Director of Corporate Services

Single total figure of remuneration								
	Salary (£)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension benefits (to nearest £1000) <sup>1</sup>		Total (to nearest £1,000)	
1. Dr Maggie Atkinson Children's Commissioner Letter of appointment 1 March 2010	2013–14 140,000- 145,000	2012–13 140,000- 145,000	2013–14 -	2012–13 -	2013–14 34,000	2012–13 34,000	2013–14 174,000	2012–13 174,000
2. Susan Berelowitz Deputy Children's Commissioner/Chief Executive Date of contract 1 October 2008	95,000- 100,000	95,000- 100,000	-	-	24,000	24,000	122,000	122,000
3, Ross Hendry Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Policy Date of contract 1 June 2009	65,000 - 70,000	60,000- 65,000	-	-	15,000	14,000	84,000	76,000
4. David Ryan Director of Corporate Services Date of contract 1 March 2011	60,000- 65,000	60,000- 65,000	-	-	14,000	14,000	80,000	76,000
5. Oliver Berman Director of Communications and Participation Date of contract 18 October 2012	60,000- 65,000	25,000- 30,000	-	-	3,000	-	66,000	60,000

<sup>1</sup> The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increase excludes increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

<b>Band of the highest paid Director/Accounting Officer Total Remuneration (£'000)</b>	140,000 - 145,000	-	140,000 - 145,000	-
<b>Median Total Remuneration</b>	40,400	-	42,185	-
<b>Ratio</b>	3.53		3.37	-

1. Ross Hendry was appointed as Deputy Chief Executive on 1 May 2013. This is a fixed-term appointment ending on the 31 March 2015.

2. Oliver Berman was appointed as the Director of Communications and Participation on 1 December 2013. The FTE for the 2012–13 was £60,000.

## 2013–14 SALARIES

Members of the Audit and Risk Committee receive no remuneration and are permitted to claim reasonable travel expenses only.

Benefits in kind were paid to the Commissioner. At the request of the Commissioner this ceased in August 2011. The benefits in kind included the costs of travel and accommodation from home to work. This was contractual and agreed by the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education. Benefits in kind were not paid during the financial year to which this report relates.

### Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office

allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and thus recorded in these accounts. This total remuneration, as well as the allowances to which they are entitled, is paid by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and is therefore shown in full in the figures above.

### Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. No benefits in kind were paid in 2013–14.

### Bonuses

No staff bonuses have been awarded since 2009–10.

	Accrued pension as at 31 March 14 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum £'000	CETV at 31 March 14 £'000	CETV at 31 March 14 £'000	Real increase in CETV £'000
<b>Dr. Maggie Atkinson</b> Children's Commissioner	100–105	3	1,467	1,346	38
<b>Susan Berelowitz</b> Deputy Children's Commissioner / Chief Executive Three months notice	45–50	2	720	655	20
<b>Ross Hendry</b> Deputy Chief Executive Three months notice	5–10	2	66	48	9
<b>David Ryan</b> Director of Corporate Services Three months notice	5–10	1	53	36	10
<b>Oliver Berman</b> Director of Communications and Participation Three months notice	0–5	-	4	-	3

## CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. From 30 July 2007, civil servants may be in one of four defined benefit schemes; either a final salary scheme (classic, premium or classic plus); or a whole career scheme (nuvos). These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted for by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under classic, premium, classic plus and nuvos are increased annually in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Members joining from October 2002 may opt for either the appropriate defined benefit arrangement or a 'money purchase' stakeholder pension with an employer contribution (partnership pension account).

Employee contributions are salary-related and range between 1.5% and 6.25% of pensionable earnings for classic and 3.5% and 8.25% for premium, classic plus and nuvos. Increases to employee contributions will apply from 1 April 2014. Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years initial pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum. classic plus is essentially a hybrid with benefits for service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic and benefits for service from October 2002 worked out as in premium. In nuvos a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during their period of scheme membership. At the end of the scheme year (31 March) the member's earned pension account is credited with 2.3% of their pensionable earnings in that scheme year and the accrued pension is uprated in line with Pensions Increase legislation. In all cases members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 3% and 12.5% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee from a panel of three providers. The employee does not have to contribute, but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.8% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of Classic, Premium and Classic Plus and 65 for members of Nuvos.

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website  
<http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/pensions>

### Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension

scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

### **Real increase in CETV**

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature reads "Maggie Atkinson".

**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
**Children's Commissioner & Accounting Officer**  
**26 June 2014**

## **STATEMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER**

Under the Children Act 2004, Schedule 1, Clause 8, the Children's Commissioner is required to prepare accounts in accordance with HM Treasury requirements. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the Children's Commissioner's state of affairs at the year end, and of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year just ended.

In preparing the accounts the Children's Commissioner is required to:

- observe the accounts direction set out in the Financial Memorandum and Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State for Education, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis
- make estimates on a reasonable basis
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departure from these in the financial statements
- prepare financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Children's Commissioner or its functions will continue.

The Principal Accounting Officer for the Department for Education has designated the Children's Commissioner as Accounting Officer for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

The Accounting Officer is responsible for the proper management of resources and staff, for ensuring that government guidance on regularity, propriety and value for money is complied with, and is responsible for the following:

- keeping proper records and safeguarding the Office of the Children's Commissioner's assets
- ensuring the efficient, economic and effective management of the Children's Commissioner's resources, including cash, liquid assets, capital assets, equipment and personnel
- observing the guidance in Managing Public Money and all other guidance on the responsibilities of accounting officers that the Treasury or the Cabinet Office may issue from time to time.

A copy of the accounts is available from the Office of the Children's Commissioner at:

Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

It is also available via our website at [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## **GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

As Children's Commissioner for England and Accounting Officer for the Office of the Children's Commissioner I have personal responsibility for maintaining a sound system of governance, internal control and risk management whilst safeguarding public funds and the sponsoring department's assets. This governance statement describes how these duties have been carried out in the course of the 2013-14 financial year.

### **Corporation sole**

The Children's Commissioner for England is a corporation sole. The role was established by the Children Act 2004. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is an Executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) of and grant-in-aid funded by the Department for Education. The Commissioner has a remit to promote and protect children's rights and bring the views and interests of England's children and young people into policymaking and practice. Under the 2004 Act she also speaks on behalf of all the UK's children on non-devolved issues: immigration across all four nations in the UK, and youth justice in Wales. These cross-border elements of the remit are in practice undertaken in collaboration with the Children's Commissioners in the other three UK jurisdictions.

The Children's Commissioner is supported by a Deputy Children's Commissioner and staff.

The main purpose of the role of the Deputy Children's Commissioner is to:

1. Support the Children's Commissioner in promoting awareness of the views and interests of children and young people, improving their outcomes and advocating for their interests under the UNCRC;

2. Represent as authorised by the Children's Commissioner the work of the Children's Commissioner and the OCC to children and young people, external stakeholders, the general public and the media;
3. Deputise for the Children's Commissioner during her absences, assuming the responsibilities of Accounting Officer and corporation sole should the Children's Commissioner be incapacitated or absent for an extended period.

This post holder is also Chief Executive of the OCC and has delegated authority for day to day staff and financial management. The CEO reports directly to the Children's Commissioner.

The governance structure incorporates the following groups reporting directly to the Commissioner as corporation sole:

- Commissioner's Board
- Leadership Team
- Children and Young People's Advisory Groups (Amplify and Young Amplify)
- Quality Management Group.

Under the amended 2004 Act the Children's Commissioner must pay particular regard to the needs of children under Section 8A of the amended 2004 Act (Children living away from home). However the OCC identifies its own strategic aims and objectives within the functions for which the Office was created under the Children Act 2004, and the areas on which performance should be assessed. Its remit letter is therefore a confirmation of funding and governance rather than a direction of the Children's Commissioner's actions by the DfE. OCC then sets out its aims and objectives in its longer term Strategic and Annual Business Plans.

## Committee membership 2013–14

Committee membership 2013–14								
Name	Date of appointment	Terms of appointment	Board meetings attendance record	Interim Advisory Board	Audit and Risk Committee	Commissioner's Board	Leadership Team	Quality Management Group
Gill Galliano	Sep 13	1 year	100%	✓				
Susan Gower MBE	Sep 11	3 years	100%	✓				
Magda Moorey	Sep 11	3 years	100%	✓				
Lynne Snowball (Chair of Audit and Risk Committee)	Sep 11	3 years	100%	✓				
Dr Maggie Atkinson Commissioner and Accounting Officer	Mar 10	5 years	100%	✓	✓			
Susan Berelowitz Deputy Commissioner/Chief Executive	Oct 08		100%	✓		✓	✓	✓
Ross Hendry Director of Policy/ Deputy Chief Executive	Jun 09		85%		✓	✓	✓	✓
David Ryan Director of Corporate Services	Mar 11		94%		✓	✓	✓	✓
Oliver Berman Director of Communications and Participation	Oct 12		87%		✓	✓	✓	
<b>Notes:</b>								
Interim Advisory Board met three times in 2013–14								
Audit and Risk Committee met five times in 2013–14								
Commissioner's Board met eight times in 2013–14								
Leadership team met 29 times in 2013–14								
Quality management Group met ten times in 2013–14								

Gill Galliano was co-opted in September 2013, for a one year term only. She attended her first meeting in December 2013

## **Commissioner's Board**

The Commissioner's Board is chaired by the Children's Commissioner as corporation sole. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's (OCC) Leadership team attends the Commissioner's Board. The Leadership team is: the Deputy Children's Commissioner/Chief Executive, Director of Policy and Participation, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Communications and Participation and any other attendees as requested.

The purpose of the Board is to provide assurance on the following:

- to lead and drive the strategic direction of the OCC and ensure the business plans are transparent and deliver value for money
- to approve the one year corporate plan
- to approve the one year business plan
- to provide strategic oversight and approval of the budget;
- to support the Children's Commissioner/ Accounting Officer in her relationship with sponsor department
- to approve any virement or changes to the budget.

Members are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest on appointment and at the beginning of each meeting they attend. They must confirm that the register of interest is up to date on an annual basis. The register of interest is open to the public. Requests for information should be made in writing addressed to the Children's Commissioner. Where actual or potential conflicts of interest are identified, Members take no part in discussions and are not involved in any decisions that relate to these interests.

There has been no assessment of the board's compliance with the Corporate Governance Code. A review was due to take place in 2013-14. This was put back

due a governance review commissioned by the Department for Education.

## **Leadership team**

The Leadership team of the OCC supports the Children's Commissioner with the delivery of strategic objectives identified in the strategic plan and business plan. The functions of the Leadership team include the following:

- to develop the strategic and operational priorities of the OCC
- to lead business continuity both strategically and operationally
- to develop the priorities in the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan and apportion the budget accordingly
- to ensure delivery of priorities in Corporate Plan and Business Plan
- to ensure all risk assurance requirements are in place and actions highlighted through the Audit and Risk Committee are implemented
- to oversee monitoring and management of performance across the whole organisation, ensuring the work is delivered to a high standard
- to monitor the budget and expenditure monthly and against service priorities
- to monitor the effective implementation of the memorandum of understanding with the sponsor department.

## **Children and young people's advisory groups (Amplify and Young Amplify)**

Both Amplify and Young Amplify are advisory groups to the Commissioner. Amplify is for children and young people aged 11 and over, and Young Amplify is for younger children. The aim of both groups is to advise the Children's Commissioner and her staff on specific projects, policy development and practice. They are champions of the Children's Commissioner ensuring that the views of children and young people inform all aspects of the Commissioner's work.

Both groups have no executive power but the Children's Commissioner is committed to listen, take seriously and provide feedback on all recommendations made by the group.

There are 64 children and young people who make up both groups, with sufficient numbers of children and young people to represent:

- an age range of 18 and under
- each region in England
- a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

Duties and authority:

- to act as a strategic advisory group, meeting to provide direct advice to the Children's Commissioner and her staff on a range of issues that affect children and young people in England with a view to influence policy priorities and development
- to canvass, through appropriate mechanisms, the views of other children and young people in their local areas on identified issues
- to provide direct advice to the Children's Commissioner and her staff on operational aspects of the Children's Commissioner's Office.

### **Quality Management Group (QMG)**

To act as an interface between the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Audit and Risk Committee and provide to them:

- advice and guidance on issues relating to risk and audit proportionality
- assurances that the organisation has robust risk and audit procedures
- assurances that the organisation is compliant with procedures by ensuring that audit recommendations are being effectively monitored and responses actioned in a timely manner.

### **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is responsible for providing advice and assurance to the Children's Commissioner as Accounting Officer on the adequacy of and the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management, and OCC's governance arrangements.

The Committee also oversee internal and external audit arrangements covering financial and non-financial systems. The Committee meets five times a year.

The Audit and Risk Committee agree the annual audit programme with the management of the Office of the Children's Commissioner and internal and external audit. The Committee provides an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the OCC's internal controls and risk management.

The Committee consists of four members, one of who was co-opted for one year. All four committee members are non-executives. The Chair of the Committee is a qualified accountant. The Deputy Commissioner/Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services are required to attend. In addition an observer from the Department for Education sponsor team and the internal auditors and the National Audit Office (NAO) are in attendance. Other members of staff may be invited to attend for specific agenda items.

All in attendance are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest on appointment and at the beginning of each meeting they attend. They must confirm the register of interests is up to date on an annual basis. During 2013–14 no members declared any directorships or other significant interests that may have conflicted with their OCC responsibilities.

The NAO facilitated a review of the effectiveness of the Audit and Risk Committee in 2013, using the NAO's Audit Committee self-assessment checklist to

measure the Committee's organisation, management, and approach against recommended good practice. The review showed that most areas of recommended good practice were in place, and the Committee provided a useful contribution. Some minor improvements were agreed.

The key issues discussed at the Committee include:

- internal audits
- external audit
- financial and budgetary control
- financial statements
- risk management
- information security
- transition.

### **Interim Advisory Board and Advisory Board**

The Interim Advisory Board existed to provide expert support, advice, scrutiny and challenge to the Children's Commissioner, the Deputy Children's Commissioner/Chief Executive and the OCC's Leadership team members. The Board's duties were:

- to ensure, notwithstanding the Commissioner's independent status and individual legal responsibility for her work and that of the OCC, that the activity of the Children's Commissioner is aligned with (as well as appropriately commenting on) that of the wider children's services sector and civil society, so that the impact and capacity of her work is maximised to help secure the best outcomes for children and young people in England
- to offer considered advice to the Children's Commissioner and the staff of the OCC as necessary, so that their effectiveness is enhanced and remit fulfilled
- to expect that the Commissioner and staff of the OCC will take due account of the advice and opinions of the Interim Advisory Board, and will state formally why these have not been followed when there are differences

between the opinions of the Board and the actions or decisions of the Commissioner or those working for the OCC.

The Advisory Board was established in 2014 following the final meeting of the Interim Advisory Board on 6 February 2014. The Advisory Board will have the same duties as the Interim Advisory Board. The first meeting of the Board was held on 1 May 2014.

### **Risk management**

Risk Management is an integral part of the Corporate Governance process within the OCC. The Audit and Risk Committee supports the Commissioner as Accounting Officer in reviewing the assurance on the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of the OCC's internal controls and risk management process.

### **Assessment of risk**

Risk could limit or prevent the OCC from achieving its strategic objectives and it is essential OCC manages this. Effective risk management allows the OCC to:

- have increased confidence it will achieve its strategic objectives
- focus its actions and efforts where they will be most effective
- provide a framework for decisions about what risk to manage and what risks to tolerate
- constrain threats to acceptable levels.

The OCC's strategic and operational risk management processes are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk. The processes in place only provide a reasonable rather than absolute assurance that risks are being managed effectively.

The OCC's approach to risk management is:

- comprehensive and embedded throughout the organisation

- to ensure risk management actions are proportionate to the level of risk faced by the organisation
- for the Commissioner and her team to agree risk tolerance levels on a risk-by-risk basis
- to manage risk actively and review risk management processes regularly so that it remains reactive to change. Risks are assigned through Quality Management Group (QMG) to named individuals, who are accountable for managing risks
- to align risk management with strategic objectives and make it integral to support management and business planning.

## Reporting of risk

The Strategic Risk Register has been reviewed at each audit and risk Committee meeting and Internal Audit have noted that members actively discussed and challenged the risk management process, and the level of risk attributed to particular issues in meetings. Members were assured that there was an effective process in place for identifying and managing risk within the OCC overall. The Internal Audit assignment on the strategic risk register and assurance framework provided 'substantial assurance'. Audit recommendations have been implemented. The Internal Audit Annual Report noted that control issues identified during its work do not materially impact upon the opinion to be provided in respect of the adequacy and effectiveness for the OCC's arrangements risk management.

## Key risks in 2013–14

- The OCC incurs significant dilapidation costs in respect of the former premises at 1 London Bridge.
- The OCC incurs significant costs due to the relocation from its office in Greycoat Street.
- The OCC fails to upgrade the website.

- The OCC has insufficient resources to fulfill the new remit set out in the Children's and Families Bill 2013.

## Implications

- This would result in the OCC having to reduce significantly the projects set out in the annual business plan.
- This would result in the OCC having to reduce significantly the projects set out in the annual business plan.
- This would result in the OCC not been able to engage with stakeholders effectively.
- This would result in the OCC been unable to protect the children that come under its statutory remit resulting in the OCC failing to deliver on the remit.

## Mitigating controls

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the Risk Register to provide scrutiny and challenge to the Leadership team on the management of risk.

The Transitions Board Chaired by the Children's Commissioner met bi-monthly to review the adequacy and effectiveness of the transitions plan and the transitions risk register.

The following risks were closed in 2013–14:

- OCC incurs significant dilapidation costs in respect of the former premises at 1 London Bridge.
- OCC incurs significant costs due to the relocation from its office in Greycoat Street
- OCC fails to upgrade the website.

In addition, QMG conducted an annual refreshment of risk which was presented to the Leadership team on the 1 April 2014.

The OCC return a Security Risk Management Overview (SRMO) to the Department for Education. This describes how protective security responsibilities are allocated and structured within the OCC.

## Transitions

The OCC incorporated the Office of the Children's Rights Director following the passage of the Children and Families Act 2014. Transitions Board the strategic board chaired by the Children's Commissioner retained strategic oversight of the whole transition process. The Board met bi-monthly to ensure the transitions arrangements were on target taking action to address any issues that arose during the process promptly. The OCC produced and followed a detailed transition plan in 2013–14 to ensure the smooth reform of the Office. Transition was a standing item at Audit and Risk Committee and Quality Management Group. An HR business partner joined the staff at the OCC to provide specialist HR knowledge.

The transitions plan was audited by Internal Audit for both adequacy and implementation. Both of these audits provided 'full assurance'.

## Information security risk management

An audit of Information Governance and Security was undertaken as part of the approved internal audit periodic plan for 2013–14. Whilst the audit opinion is 'substantial', continuing actions must be undertaken to implement mandatory requirement eight of the HMG Security Policy Framework, relating to accreditation of ICT systems. Over the coming year, we will be upgrading our ICT systems and looking to realise economies of scale by utilising the Department's systems where appropriate. The accreditation will be undertaken during the implementation phase of the upgrade projects.

## Internal Audit

The OCC's governance arrangements and risk management processes are supported by internal audit that reviews the procedures and controls in place to manage its most significant risks. An annual audit programme is developed focusing on OCC's major risks. The Children's Commissioner, Leadership team and the Audit and Risk Committee are consulted on its development.

Internal Audit work to Government Internal Audit Standards and provide opinions on the adequacy and effectiveness of OCC's system of internal control and recommendations for improvement. Where weaknesses in controls are identified, action is taken to strengthen the controls.

## Effectiveness of the internal control framework

The Children's Commissioner as Accounting Officer reviews the effectiveness of OCC's system of internal control on an annual basis. The review is informed by: the work of internal auditors; feedback from Leadership team who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework; and opinions made by external audit in their post-audit completion statements. The Audit and Risk Committee provides advice on the implications of this review and monitors progress against the plan to ensure the system of internal control is continuously improved.

Internal Audit conducted eight reviews during 2013–14. These reviews highlighted areas where improvements could be made, and steps were taken to address the recommendations. Progress against the audit recommendations is reported to the Quality Management Group (QMG) on a monthly basis and the Audit and Risk Committee reviews progress when it meets.

The following internal audits were undertaken during 2013–14:

- **Financial Management and Budgetary Control** – substantial assurance
- **Creditors (key controls)** – substantial assurance
- **Transition (Adequacy and Effectiveness Review)** – full assurance for both audits
- **Information Governance and Security** – substantial assurance
- **Communications** – Substantial assurance
- **Risk Management** – substantial assurance
- **Expenses testing** – limited assurance

Recommendations for the expenses audit were followed up by internal audit in February 2014 and were confirmed as partly implemented. The remaining recommendations were fully implemented when the OCC's new accounts system went live in June 2014.

An action plan has captured the recommendations. There has been good progress from the audit work conducted and all outstanding areas for improvement are being addressed.

The Head of Internal Audit provides an annual, independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of OCC's governance, risk and internal controls. The programme of work completed by internal audit enabled the Head of Internal Audit to state in her report for 2013–14:

*'We provide reasonable assurance that the OCC has an adequate and effective system of internal controls for the year ended 31 March 2014. The control issues identified during our work do not materially impact upon the opinion to be provided in respect of the adequacy and effectiveness for the OCC's arrangements for corporate governance, risk management and control.'*

## **The Annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2013–14**

*The Audit and Risk Committee has developed and delivered a programme of activity to consider the effectiveness of the OCC's financial systems, internal control, financial reporting, risk management arrangements, governance arrangements and information data security, in the context of the risks and uncertainties arising from the transition process. The Committee's work was informed by the work of internal and external audit, management briefings and reports. The Committee has been strengthened this year with the appointment of a fourth member to bring the committee membership to its full complement.*

*Based on the reports and briefings considered in relation to 2013/14, the Committee is able to provide assurance to the Children's Commissioner that it has discharged its role and responsibilities in full in 2013/14. One significant issue has been reported during the year, in respect of the 'limited assurance' report by Internal Audit on issues identified in the expenses audit. Action has been taken in response to the recommendations made to improve arrangements. No other significant issues have arisen.*

**Lynne Snowball  
Chair, Audit and Risk Committee, 26 June 2014**

## **The future of the OCC**

From 1 April the OCC assumed a new remit and primary function to promote and protect children's rights. The passage of the Children and Families Act through Parliament afforded an opportunity to debate the role and raise the profile of the Children's Commissioner. While the last year involved preparing for the changes outlined in the Act, the coming year will be one of understanding the impact and opportunities provided by our new remit.

With an enhanced role, clear powers, greater independence and stronger relationship with Parliament the Office of the Children's Commissioner is strongly placed to deliver an ambitious business plan to improve the realisation of children's rights and better outcome for children and young people across England.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie Atkinson".

**Dr Maggie Atkinson  
Children's Commissioner & Accounting  
Officer, 26 June 2014**

# **THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT**

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Office of the Children's Commissioner for the year ended 31 March 2014 under the Children Act 2004. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Remuneration Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

## **Respective responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner and auditor**

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner, the Children's Commissioner is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Children Act 2004. I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

## **Scope of the audit of the financial statements**

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Office of the Children's Commissioner's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Office of the Children's Commissioner; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by me in the course of performing the audit. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my certificate.

I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

## **Opinion on regularity**

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

## **Opinion on financial statements**

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's affairs as at 31 March 2014 and of the net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

## **Opinion on other matters**

In my opinion:

- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Children Act 2004; and
- the information given in the Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

## **Matters on which I report by exception**

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

## **Report**

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

**Sir Amyas C E Morse**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
National Audit Office  
157–197 Buckingham Palace Road  
Victoria  
London SW1W 9SP  
**1 July 2014**

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### **Statement of comprehensive net expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2014**

	Note	2013–14 £000	2012–13 £000
Expenditure			
Staff costs	2	1,568	1,547
Project costs	3	314	622
Other operating expenses	4	336	33
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>2,218</b>	<b>2,202</b>
Income			
Other operating income	5	(23)	(1)
<b>Total income</b>		<b>(23)</b>	<b>(1)</b>
<b>Net expenditure for the year</b>		<b>2,195</b>	<b>2,201</b>

#### **Note:**

A) All of the income and expenditure of the Children's Commissioner is in respect of continuing operations.

The notes on pages 58 to 71 form part of these accounts.

Statement of financial position as at 31 March 2014

	Note	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
<b>Assets</b>			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	6	9	11
Intangible assets	7	44	12
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Trade and other receivables due after more than one year	8a	-	-
Trade and other receivables due within one year	8b	71	116
Cash and cash equivalents	9	226	14
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>297</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	10	(168)	(212)
Provisions	11	-	(17)
<b>Assets less liabilities</b>		<b>182</b>	<b>(76)</b>
Tax payers' equity			
General reserve		182	(76)
		<b>182</b>	<b>(76)</b>

The financial statements on pages 53 to 57 were approved by the Children's Commissioner.



**Dr Maggie Atkinson**  
 Children's Commissioner & Accounting Officer  
 26 June 2014

The notes on pages 58 to 71 form part of these accounts.

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 March 2014

	Note	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Net expenditure		(2,195)	(2,201)
Depreciation and amortisation	6 & 7	13	17
Decrease/(increase) in trade and other receivables	8	45	3
Increase/(decrease) in trade payables	10	(44)	(27)
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	11	(17)	(430)
<b>Net cash outflows from operating activities</b>		<b>(2,198)</b>	<b>(2,638)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Purchase of tangible and intangible assets	7	(43)	(12)
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>		<b>(43)</b>	<b>(12)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>			
Grant received towards resource expenditure		2,453	2,554
		2,453	2,554
<b>Net financing</b>			
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents during the period		212	(96)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	9	14	110
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>14</b>

**Statement of changes in Tax Payers' Equity  
for the year ended 31 March 2013**

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<u>Changes in taxpayers' equity for 2012–13</u>	£000
At 1 April 2012	(429)
Net expenditure on continuing operations	(2,201)
Grant-in-aid received towards capital expenditure	-
Grant-in-aid received towards resource expenditure	2,479
Grant-in-aid received towards exit costs (2011-12 –note 11a)	75
<u>At 31 March 2013</u>	<u>(76)</u>

<u>Changes in taxpayers' equity for 2013–14</u>	£000
At 1 April 2013	(76)
Net Expenditure on continuing operations	(2,195)
Grant-in-aid received towards resource expenditure	2,453
<u>At 31 March 2014</u>	<u>182</u>

## **NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**

### **1 Statement of Principal Accounting Policies**

#### *a. Basis of preparation*

Accounts are prepared in accordance with Treasury Guidance, Annual Reports and Accounts guidance, the Children Act 2004, and the Accounts Direction and the financial memorandum between the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the Commissioner dated 12 September 2005, copies of which can be obtained from the Children's Commissioner or DfE. They are prepared in accordance with HM Treasury Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Children's Commissioner for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Children's Commissioner are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

In accordance with IAS 8, the accounting policies and estimation techniques used are those that are judged to be the most appropriate for the purpose of giving a true and fair view. These policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain the most appropriate. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the accounts.

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

#### *b. Accounting convention*

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets and inventories.. Under normal conventions applying to parliamentary control over income and expenditure, grant-in-aid may not be issued in advance of need.

#### *c. Grant-in-aid*

Grant-in-aid received from the DfE in respect of revenue expenditure or relating to general capital expenditure is recognised in the general reserve in the year it is received.

#### *d. Income recognition*

Grant income that is receivable for a specific purpose or project is credited to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the duration of the activity to which it relates. Other income is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on an accruals basis.

#### *e. Pensions*

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The defined benefit schemes are unfunded and are non-contributory except in respect of dependents' benefits. The Children's Commissioner recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the PCSPS of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the PCSPS. In respect of the defined contribution schemes, the Children's Commissioner recognises the contributions payable for the year. PCSPS also permits

employees to opt for a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. The defined benefit schemes are treated for accounting purposes as a defined contribution scheme as required by IAS 26. The defined benefit scheme prepares its own financial statements. A description of the pension schemes is at Note 3.

*f. Project costs*

Expenditure on projects funded from grant-in-aid is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure as it is incurred. Project grants payable by the Children's Commissioner are recognised when they fall due for payment.

*g. Property, plant and equipment and intangible assets*

Assets purchased for use on a continuous basis at a cost in excess of £2,500 are initially recorded at cost price. Assets other than construction in progress are re-valued to current replacement cost as at 31 March 2013 using price indices for current cost accounting published by the Office for National Statistics, when the effect of their revaluation over time is material. In instances where there are separate individual items of IT hardware which individually fall below the capitalisation threshold, similar items are grouped together and the combined cost is used for the purposes of determining whether they fall with the threshold.

Construction in progress is capitalised at cost. When complete the cost of a construction project is transferred to the relevant asset class as a single item of expenditure.

*h. Depreciation*

Modified historic cost of a tangible fixed asset is depreciated to expected residual

value by equal annual installments from the date of bringing of into operation as follows:

- Information technology, storages – over four years capital equipment is depreciated over its estimated useful economic life from the month of acquisition
- Furniture and fittings – the cost of improvements to leasehold buildings that have been made are depreciated over the remaining life of the lease
- Intangible fixed assets – intangible fixed assets are amortised over expected useful economic life from the beginning of next calendar month after the acquisition
- Software licences – over four years.

*i. Notional charges*

The Treasury Financial Reporting Manual requires that the result of operations disclosed in the Operating Cost Statement should reflect the true value of resources consumed. Where a supply of goods or services is received at less than full cost a charge equivalent to the estimated difference is introduced into the Operating Cost Statement.

*j. Leases*

Leases in which a significant portion of the risks and rewards of ownership are retained by the lessor are classified as operating leases. Payments made and due to be made under an operating lease of real property (net of any benefit received from the lessor) are charged by equal annual installments to the Operating Cost Statement over the period from the date of first occupation until expiry of the lease. Resulting debit balances are classified as prepayments in the Balance Sheet. Resulting credit balances that will be eliminated within one year are classified as current liabilities. Operating lease cost are charged to expenditure as they are incurred (see Note 14 for further details).

*k. Segmental analysis*

The Children's Commissioner is not required to show a segmental analysis. This is because the quantitative thresholds required for segmental reporting, in accordance with IFRS 8, have not been met.

## 2 Staff costs

	Staff with a permanent (UK) contract £000	Contract Personnel £000	Total 2013-14 £000	Total 2012-13 £000
<b>Costs of employment</b>				
Salary	1,175	-	1,175	1139
Restructuring costs	1	-	1	49
Social security costs	108	-	108	106
Pension costs	223	-	223	226
Staff provided under secondment	-	61	61	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,507</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1,568</b>	<b>1547</b>

The average number of persons employed by the Children's Commissioner during the period expressed as full time equivalents was:

Executive	5	0	5	5
Other personnel	19	1	20	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>

The salary costs include an accrual of £15,999 for outstanding staff leave in accordance with IAS 19 Employee Benefits.

The Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) is an unfunded multi-employer defined benefit scheme but the Children's Commissioner is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. A full actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2007. Details can be found in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation.  
<http://www.civilservice-pensions.gov.uk>.

For 2013-14, employers' contributions of £223,000 (2011-12 £226,000) were payable to the PCSPS at one of four rates in the range 16.7 to 24.3 per cent of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. Employer contribution rates are reviewed every four years following a full scheme valuation by the Government Actuary. The contribution rates reflect benefits as they are accrued, not when the costs are actually incurred, and reflect past experience of the scheme.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. No employer's contributions were paid to any of the panel of three appointed stakeholder pension providers. One member of staff retired early on health grounds.

## 2A Exit packages

No exit costs took place during 2013-14. In 2012-13 exit costs include the sum of £20,000 in respect of additional costs associated with a voluntary exit that took place in 2011-12.

### 3 Project Expenses

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
Schools Exclusions Inquiry	10	123
Education	25	=
CSEGG Inquiry	78	151
Child Rights Impact Assessment	31	19
Developing and Sustaining Participation Networks	39	36
Takeover Day	21	23
Child Poverty	18	62
Immigration and Asylum	6	5
Health Commissioning	-	31
Immigration and Asylum	5	5
Mental Health in Youth Justice	2	16
Child Protection in School Settings	-	32
Impact of Parental Substance Misuse	14	42
Recognition and Telling	20	20
Promoting UNCRC	9	13
Experience of GPS/Complaints	-	5
Safeguarding	(3)	10
Press Office	16	12
Web & New Media	23	22
Project Expenditure Total	<hr/> <hr/> 314	<hr/> <hr/> 622

Project expenses only reflect the costs of external services and do not include staff costs associated with the delivery of projects.

#### 4 Other Operating Expenses

	2013–14 £000	2012–13 £000
IT Support costs	69	67
Training	7	9
Recruitment	12	4
Travel	5	7
Administration services	9	14
Office supplies	7	8
Legal and professional expenses	7	11
Miscellaneous expenditure	4	2
HR Advisor	8	55
Telephone	5	6
Accommodation costs	146	145
Heating & Lighting	-	-
Dilapidations Costs - 1 London Bridge	-	(350)
 Auditors remuneration		
External Auditors – statutory audit work	22	22
Internal Auditors	18	15
Governance Costs	4	1
 Non-cash items		
Depreciation & amortisation	13	17
	<hr/> <hr/> 336	<hr/> <hr/> 33

The current occupancy agreement with the Department for Education in respect of the OCC's premises at Greycoat Street ended on the 11 April 2014. This was due to the decommissioning of the building. In order to maintain efficiency savings on premises costs, the Office of the Children's Commissioner moved to the Department for Education's main building in Great Smith Street, London. The annual licence is confirmed at £153,350 per annum.

## **5 Income**

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
Other operating income	(23)	(1)
	<b>(23)</b>	<b>(1)</b>

The Department for Education provided £20,000 additional funding during 2013–14 to support the provision of in-house human resources through the transition period. Other income relate to reimbursement of travel costs and a refund.

## 6 Property, plant and equipment

2013-14	Furniture & Fittings £000	Equipment £000	Total £000
<b>Valuation/Cost</b>			
At 1 April 2013	28	8	36
Additions	-	8	8
Disposals	-	-	-
<b>At 31 March 2014</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>			
At 1 April 2013	18	7	25
Charge for Year	9	1	10
Adjustment - Disposals	-	-	-
<b>At 31 March 2014</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>			
<b>At 31 March 2014</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>At 1 April 2013</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
2012-13	Furniture & Fittings £000	Equipment £000	Total £000
<b>Valuation/Cost</b>			
At 1 April 2012	1,154	140	1,294
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	(1,126)	(132)	(1,258)
<b>At 31 March 2013</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>			
At 1 April 2012	1,133	137	1,270
Charge for Year	11	2	13

Disposals	(1,226)	(132)	(1,258)
At 31 March 2013	18	7	25
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2013	10	1	11
At 1 April 2012	21	3	24

## 7 Intangible assets

2013-14	Software Licenses £000	Website £000	Total £000
Valuation/Cost			
At 1 April 2013	40	50	90
Additions	35	-	35
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2014	75	50	125
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2013	28	50	78
Charge for Year	3	-	3
Adjustment- Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2014	31	50	81
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2014	44	-	44
At 1 April 2013	12	-	12
2012-13	Software Licenses £000	Website £000	Total £000
Valuation/Cost			
At 1 April 2012	100	50	150
Additions	12	-	-
Disposals	(72)		(72)
At 31 March 2013	40	50	90

Amortisation			
At 1 April 2012	99	47	146
Charge for Year	1	3	4
Disposals	(72)	-	(72)
At 31 March 2013	<hr/> 28	50	78
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2013	<hr/> 12	-	<hr/> 12
At 1 April 2012	<hr/> 1	3	<hr/> 4

## 8 Trade and other receivables

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
8a Amounts falling due after one year		
Rent deposit	-	-
Pre-payments	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
8b Amounts falling due within one year		
Rent Deposit	-	89
Pre-payments	52	15
Trade receivables	5	-
Staff receivables	14	12
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	71	116
8c Balances with other central government bodies	5	-
Balance with local authorities	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Intra-Government balances	5	-
Balances with bodies external to Government	66	116
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total trade and other receivables at 31 March 2014	71	116

## 9 Cash and cash equivalents

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
Cash and cash equivalents		
Government Banking Services	223	11
Commercial bank & cash in hand	3	3
	<u>226</u>	<u>14</u>

## 10 Trade and other payables

*Amounts falling due within one year*

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
10a Analysis by Type		
Trade payables	9	72
Accruals	99	79
PAYE	17	20
National Insurance Contributions	16	15
Pension Contributions	27	26
Childcare	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-
	<u>168</u>	<u>212</u>

The accruals include £15,999 (£13,354 2012-13) in relation to untaken staff leave at the year end, in accordance with IAS 19 Employee Benefits.

	£000	£000
10b Intra-Government Balances		
Balance with other central government bodies	68	61
Balance with local authorities	-	-
Intra government Balances	<u>68</u>	<u>61</u>
Balance with bodies external to government	100	151
Total creditors at the 31 March 2014	<u>168</u>	<u>212</u>

## 11 Provisions

### Dilapidations – 1 London Bridge

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
Brought forward	17	372
Change in year	(17)	(355)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Carried forward	-	17
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The provision relates to estimated dilapidation costs for 1 London Bridge.

### 11a Provision for Voluntary Exits

	2013-14 £000	2012-13 £000
Brought forward	-	75
Change in year	-	(75)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Carried forward	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The provision relates to estimated exit costs under the Cabinet Office VER scheme.

Total provisions at the 31 March 2014

-

17

## **12 Commitments under leases**

### ***Operating leases***

The Children's Commissioner has entered into operating lease contracts for the provision of a photocopier and office accommodation. At 31 March 2014, the total future minimum lease payments will be met on the following dates:

Year of payment	2013-14 £'000	2012-13 £'000
<b>Buildings</b>		
Not later than one year	153	88
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	48
Later than five years	-	-
<b>Other</b>		
Not later than one year	3	3
Later than one year and not later than five years	6	9
Later than five years	-	-

## **13 Related party transactions**

The Children's Commissioner is sponsored by the DfE which is regarded as a related party. There were material transactions with the DfE in respect of grant-in-Aid. None of the Board members, key managerial staff or other related parties has undertaken any material transactions with the Children's Commissioner during the year. No related party transactions took place in 2013-14.

Disclosures on remuneration are contained in the remuneration report on page 36.

## **14 Financial instruments**

The Children's Commissioner has no borrowings and relies primarily on departmental grants for its cash requirements, and is therefore not exposed to liquidity risk. It has no material deposits, and all material assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling so it is not exposed to interest rate risk or currency risk.

## **15 Post balance sheet events**

The Children's Commissioner signed a new licensing agreement with the Department for Education on the 24 April 2014. The agreement is in respect of office accommodation. The fees payable under this agreement are £153,350 per annum.

The financial statements were authorised for issue on 1 July by the Accounting Officer.

## **SUMMARY OF THE UNCRC**

(Available from Unicef at [http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC\\_summary.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_summary.pdf))

### **Article 1 (definition of the child)**

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

### **Article 2 (without discrimination)**

The Convention applies to every child whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from.

### **Article 3 (best interests of the child)**

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

### Article 4 (protection of rights)

Governments must do all they can to fulfil the rights of every child.

### **Article 5 (parental guidance)**

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide and advise their child so that, as they grow, they learn to apply their rights properly.

### **Article 6 (survival and development)**

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and grow up healthy.

### Article 7 (registration, name, nationality, care)

Every child has the right to a legally registered name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

### **Article 8 (preservation of identity)**

Governments must respect and protect a child's identity and prevent their name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully. If a child has been illegally denied part of their identity, governments must act quickly to protect and assist the child to re-establish their identity.

### **Article 9 (separation from parents)**

Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in the best interests of the child (for example, in cases of abuse or neglect). A child must be given the chance to express their views when decisions about parental responsibilities are being made. Every child has the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm them.

### **Article 10 (family reunification)**

Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit both of them.

### **Article 11 (kidnapping and trafficking)**

Governments must take steps to prevent children being taken out of their own country illegally or being prevented from returning.

### **Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)**

Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

**Article 13 (freedom of expression)**

Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.

**Article 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion)**

Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.

Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children guidance about this right.

**Article 15 (freedom of association)**

Every child has the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

**Article 16 (right to privacy)**

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life.

**Article 17 (access to information from mass media)**

Every child has the right to reliable information from the mass media. Television, radio, newspapers and other media should provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

**Article 18 (parental responsibilities; state assistance)**

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must help parents by providing services to support them, especially if the child's parents work.

**Article 19 (protection from all forms of violence)**

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

**Article 20 (children deprived of a family)**

If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language

**Article 21 (adoption)**

If a child is adopted, the first concern must be what is best for the child. The same protection and standards should apply whether the child is adopted in the country where they were born or in another country.

**Article 22 (refugee children)**

If a child is a refugee or seeking refuge, governments must ensure that they have the same rights as any other child. Governments must help in trying to reunite child refugees with their parents. Where this is not possible, the child should be given protection.

**Article 23 (children with disability)**

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life in conditions that promote dignity, independence and an active role in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide free care and assistance to children with disability.

**Article 24 (health and health services)**

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good

quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

### **Article 25 (review of treatment in care)**

If a child has been placed away from home (in care, hospital or custody, for example), they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and conditions of care.

### **Article 26 (social security)**

Governments must provide extra money for the children of families in need.

### **Article 27 (adequate standard of living)**

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

### **Article 28 (right to education)**

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's human dignity. Wealthy countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

### **Article 29 (goals of education)**

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

### **Article 30 (children of minorities)**

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

### **Article 31 (leisure, play and culture)**

Every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

### **Article 32 (child labour)**

Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or education.

### **Article 33 (drug abuse)**

Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.

### **Article 34 (sexual exploitation)**

Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

### **Article 35 (abduction)**

Governments must ensure that children are not abducted or sold.

### **Article 36 (other forms of exploitation)**

Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation that might harm them.

### **Article 37 (detention)**

No child shall be tortured or suffer other cruel treatment or punishment. A child shall only ever be arrested or put in prison as a last resort and for the shortest possible time. Children

must not be put in a prison with adults and they must be able to keep in contact with their family.

**Article 38 (war and armed conflicts – see ‘Optional protocols’)**

Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces.

**Article 39 (rehabilitation of child victims)**

Children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.

**Article 40 (juvenile justice)**

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to help from a lawyer and a fair trial that takes account of their age or situation. The child’s privacy must be respected at all times.

**Article 41 (respect for better national standards)**

If the laws of a particular country protect children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws must stay.

**Article 42 (knowledge of rights)**

Governments must make the Convention known to children and adults.

**Article 45**

UNICEF can provide expert advice and assistance on children’s rights.

**Optional protocols**

In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted two optional additions to strengthen the Convention. One protocol required governments to increase the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces from 15 years and to ensure that members of their armed forces under the age of 18 do not take a direct part in armed conflict.

The other protocol provides detailed requirements for governments to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It also protects children from being sold for non-sexual purposes –such as other forms of forced labour, illegal adoption and organ donation.









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