

Advisory Panel (adult panel)

Terms of Reference and Role Profile

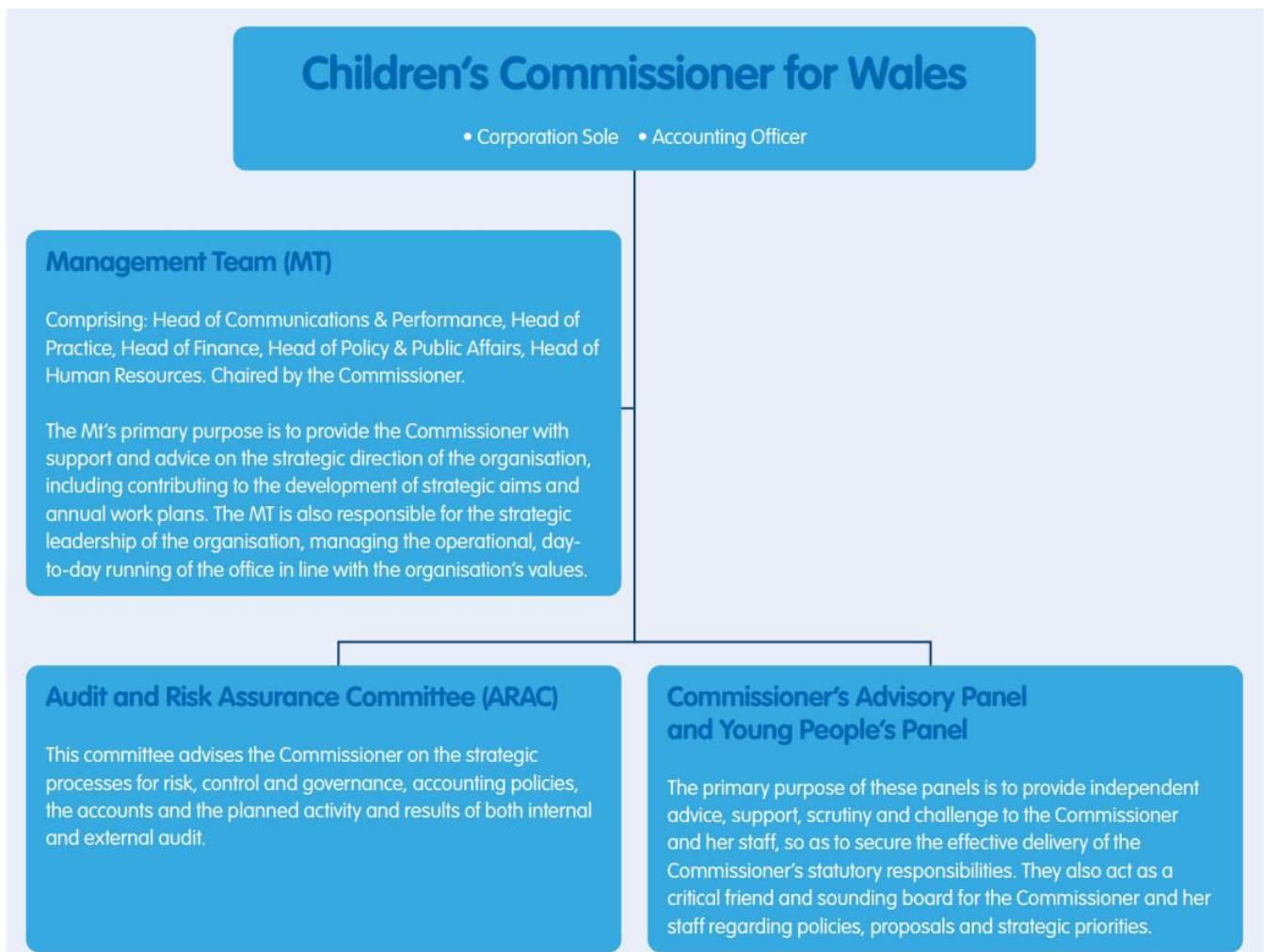
Updated: March 2023 // Next review date: March 2026



Context

The principal aim of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children. In working towards this aim, the Commissioner has a legal duty to properly manage the resources made available for her office to deliver on its statutory obligations. She must also ensure that arrangements have been put in place to ensure that her office is properly managed and governed.

An independent Young People’s Advisory Panel and a Commissioner’s Advisory Panel have been established to support and advise her in connection with some of these responsibilities. The diagram below explains how these non-statutory panels form part of the Commissioner’s governance framework:



The Panel’s Terms of Reference will be reviewed every three years.



Role of the Panel

The Commissioner has established Advisory Panels to provide strategic advice and challenge to the team. Members will advise how the Commissioner's remit and powers can be used to best effect to improve outcomes for children and young people in Wales.

Reporting directly to the Commissioner, members are required to assist the Commissioner and team to:

- Establish the strategic direction for the organisation;
- Scrutinise the implementation of three year strategic plans and annual work plans; and
- Monitor and review operational performance and delivery for effectiveness.

The Panel's work will be undertaken paying due regard to the seven principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles):

- **Selflessness:** should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness:** act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** be truthful.
- **Leadership:** exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Membership and tenure

The Panel comprises 12 - 18 members, including the Chair.

The Commissioner will appoint a Chair from members of the Panel. To ensure effective collaboration and information sharing between committees and panels forming the Commissioner's governance framework, the Chair of the Panel will be offered membership of the Commissioner's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

All members will be appointed for an initial three-year period, with the option to extend for up to another twelve months.

A member of the panel may stand down at any time from the Panel membership obligations. Three months' written notice of their intention to leave is required.



In the unlikely event that the Commissioner deems it necessary to remove a member of the Panel because of substantial risk to the Commissioner's office, the Commissioner shall write to the member concerned, stating in detail the reasons for terminating the membership, and allow twenty working days for the member to respond in writing.

The Commissioner can appoint other individuals to join the Panel to ensure that the Panel has the appropriate level of skills and experience to meet the organisation's requirements.

Commissioner's staff in attendance

- Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Head of Communications and Performance
- Executive Support Officer to the Commissioner, who provides Secretariat support to ARAC
- Other staff from the Commissioner's office may attend to present and/or present to gather feedback on pieces of work

Experience, Knowledge and Skills requirement

We want to broaden our understanding of the experiences of children and young people, build a workplace where difference is valued, and understand the perspectives of people from a diverse range of characteristics. We warmly welcome applications from people with a broad range of experiences and protected characteristics.

Members will bring specific expertise and knowledge and will be required to have:

- Ability to influence and engage with organisations at a senior level to promote positive change;
- Knowledge of the role, remit, powers and duties of the Commissioner;
- Knowledge of and experience in organisational governance; and
- Knowledge of the cultural and bilingual landscape in Wales and an understanding of how you can contribute to the committee effectively in this context.

In addition to the above criteria members will also have a proven track record in at least **ONE** of the following areas:

- working influentially across either the public, private or voluntary sectors;
- knowledge of services relevant to children, young people and families;
- knowledge and experience of the policy making process at local and national levels;
- a thorough knowledge of (or commitment to gaining knowledge of) the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's rights approach;
- experience of working with local and national media outlets;
- an understanding of Wales, the Welsh language and Welsh culture;
- the ability to communicate in Welsh; or
- professional expertise and/or lived experience of poverty or a protected characteristic.



Conflicts of Interest

As members of the Panel, each member must complete an annual declaration of interest, which is kept in accordance with all relevant data protection regulations and in line with the Commissioner's Document Retention Policy. Declarations of conflicts of interest are recorded at the start of each meeting.

The Commissioner and her office is an independent human rights institution and the laws which describes her statutory functions lists the public bodies in Wales that the Commissioner is able to review. Anyone employed by one of these bodies is not eligible for appointment. However, as the role of the Panel is not an operational role, anyone who is appointed to a board role in a scrutiny capacity of one of these public bodies (e.g. audit committee member of a public body) may apply.

As an independent institution, we won't appoint elected members, including local councillors, Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament, to the panel.

Time commitments and Remuneration

Key duties as a panel member are expected to typically take up to 5 days a year; this includes meeting preparation. The Panel will meet four times a year (a combination of virtual and in-person meetings), but additional meetings / conversations may be required from time-to-time.

Members do not receive any remuneration but can be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses incurred. Members should submit such claims in accordance with the Commissioner's Travel and Subsistence Policy.

Responsibilities

- As experts in their respective fields, members are required to provide advice, support, scrutiny and challenge to the Commissioner, to facilitate the effective delivery of the Commissioner's statutory responsibilities.

In addition, the Panels' role and responsibilities are:

- Advise on how the Commissioner's powers can be utilised to best effect to promote and protect children and young people's rights, and thereby to improve outcomes for children and young people in Wales;
- Offer considered advice to the Commissioner and her staff as necessary, so that their effectiveness is enhanced and the Commissioner's remit is fulfilled;
- Ensure that the Commissioner's work is appropriately aligned with legislative, policy and practice developments for children and engages with key stakeholders focused on the delivery of children's services to maximise impact and avoid duplication.;
- Expect that the Commissioner and her staff will have regard to the advice and opinions of the Panel;
- Act as a confidential sounding board for the Commissioner and her staff regarding policies and proposals, informing the policy and strategic priorities;



- Contribute to and scrutinise the Commissioner's Annual Report, which is laid before Senedd Cymru on an annual basis.

In return, the Commissioner and her team will endeavour to provide members with a high quality, broad experience in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. The panel's efficient secretariat will provide members with full support and we'll endeavour to be flexible with meeting arrangements to meet any access requirements or personal circumstances you may have.

Rights

Committee members also have access to official documents held by the Commissioner's office if deemed necessary in assisting them to carry out their duties.

Members are not personally liable for the actions of the Commissioner and her staff.

Meetings

- The Committee will meet four times a year. The Commissioner may convene additional meetings, if deemed necessary;
- Members will be expected to attend meetings unless in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. Notice of unavailability should be given at the earliest opportunity after dates are agreed;
- Some, or all, of these meetings will be hosted virtually. Staff arranging and attending these virtual meetings will adhere to the Commissioner's safeguarding procedure. All external members attending these virtual meetings should make every effort to ensure the meeting is a secure place by adhering to the following:
 - o Do not share the link or password to the virtual meeting with anyone;
 - o Ensure you join from a quiet and private space to minimise risk of anyone overhearing discussions;
 - o Ensure you're joining using latest version of platform (please contact the Commissioner's staff if you require any support with any IT-related issues);
 - o Do not record the meeting.
- a minimum of six members of the Panel must be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate;
- Panel meetings will normally be attended by the Commissioner, the Commissioner's Head of Performance and Communication and the Commissioner's Executive Support Officer;
- agenda for meetings will be based on work programme outlined in Annex A and will be agreed in advance of the meeting with the Chair;
- the Panel or the Commissioner may ask other members of the Commissioner's staff to attend to assist with its discussions on any particular matter; and
- all matters and materials discussed are to be treated as confidential by all members unless stated otherwise by the Commissioner's staff team.



Information Requirements

For each meeting the Panel will be provided with:

- previous meeting's minutes;
- a summary of the Commissioner's activities;
- performance report;
- progress report on annual work plan.

As and when appropriate the Panel will also be provided with:

- internal policies for scrutiny and review;
- project management plans to monitor and review;
- draft annual work plans for scrutiny and review;
- draft three-year strategic plans for scrutiny and review;
- evidence / data sets relating child's rights issues;
- draft of the Commissioner's annual report.



Annex A: programme of work

In addition to the following standing agenda items, the Panel will work on the elements noted in the table below:

- Minutes of previous meeting for ratification
- Declarations of interest
- Summary of the Commissioner's activities
- Performance report
- Progress report on annual work plan

Winter meeting (February)	Deep dive into x2 areas of work from current annual work plan
	Comment and advise on the draft annual work plan for the organisation
	Input into business cases
Spring meeting (April)	Input into project plans
Summer meeting (July)	Deep dive into x2 areas of work from current annual work plan
	Comment and advise on draft annual report and recommendations to Welsh Government
Autumn meeting (November)	Deep dive into x2 areas of work from current annual work plan
	Take part in a gap analysis to ensure delivery against three year strategy
	Input into the design of new annual work plan

