

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FOREWORD

by **Jane Hutt AM**, *Minister for Health and Social Services*
the Chair of the Committee

Betterwales.com, the strategic plan of the National Assembly, made a clear commitment to establishing a Children's Commissioner for Wales to promote children's rights. From the inception of the National Assembly for Wales the proposal has had all-party support. The Health and Social Services Committee, in consultation with the Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee, was instrumental in consulting on the remit, role and functions of the commissioner and drawing up proposals for establishing the post. This was the Committee's top priority in its first year and I have made it a personal objective to appoint the first Commissioner before the end of this year.

The new Children's Commissioner for Wales will be the first in the United Kingdom, an achievement of which the National Assembly for Wales and all those who have been involved in the process can be proud. I believe that our approach to the appointment, especially in the involvement of children and young people, demonstrates how the National Assembly can be both innovative and open. We and other administrations can learn from our experience and I hope that we will adopt a similar approach for other significant public appointments.

Through the Children's Commissioner Appointment Advisory Committee, Assembly Members have been more involved than usual in the selection process. As well as forming the final selection panel, they have advised on the format for applications and how we might effectively involve children and young people. Applicants were not asked for a curriculum vita, but to demonstrate that they had the personal qualities and experience for the post. Those who were invited to take part in the final selection were also asked to meet a special panel of children and young people. Their perspective on the suitability of candidates was fed into the final selection panel.

I am especially grateful to the voluntary organisations, the statutory agencies and the individuals who have worked with us, but a special word of thanks must go to all the children and young people who have contributed to the selection of their Commissioner.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Children's Commissioner Appointment Advisory Committee was established by the National Assembly under SO 8.1 on 12 September 2000. The Assembly resolved that the Committee should cease to exist on 31 January 2001.

1.2. The members of the Committee are:

Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Health and Social Services, Chair (*Vale of Glamorgan*);

Lorraine Barrett AM (*Cardiff South and Penarth*);

Helen Mary Jones AM, (*Llanelli*);

David Melding AM (*South Wales Central*);

Kirsty Williams AM (*Brecon and Radnorshire*).

2. Background

2.1 The report of the Health and Social Services Committee on [proposals for an independent Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) was endorsed by the Assembly on 7 June 2000. The report recommended that the Assembly should establish an ad hoc committee to advise on the appointment of the Commissioner. It further recommended that the remit of the committee could include taking the opinions of children and young people into account in the appointment process.

2.2 The title and terms of reference for the Children's Commissioner Appointment Advisory Committee, approved by the Assembly on 12 September, are to -

i. determine:

- the job specification for the post;
- the criteria against which candidates will be assessed;
- the terms of the advertisement and other recruitment documentation, such as the application form;
- the media in which the post will be advertised and publicity arrangements for the advertisement;
- how children and young people will be involved in the appointment process;

ii. advise on the level of remuneration for the post;

iii. advise on the membership of the selection panel, within the guidelines of the National Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Appointments;

iv. advise the selection panel on a shortlist of candidates for interview; and

v. report to the Assembly on the above.

The above terms of reference are compatible with the National Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Appointments.

2.3 The Committee met on two occasions, 13 September and 14 November 2000.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 This report sets out the Committee's conclusions and recommendations in respect of the terms of reference.

3.2 Points (i) to (iii) of the terms of reference were considered by the Committee when it met on 13 September. Paper [CCAAC-01-00\(p1\)](#) provided the basis for discussion. Members were generally content with the proposals, but made a number of suggestions as detailed in the [minutes](#). The following were the main points:

3.2.1 The job specification

- It should be made very clear that the role of the Commissioner was expected to widen beyond the powers contained in the Care Standards Act 2000.

3.2.2 The criteria against which candidates would be assessed

- Formal educational qualifications would not be as important as the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding, experience and the ability to show sensitivity to the cultures and languages found in Wales;
- while the ability to speak Welsh was desirable, the position should not be restricted to Welsh speakers.

3.2.3 The terms of the advertisement and other recruitment documentation, such as the application form

- the advertisement should indicate when interviews would be held;
- candidates should not be asked to provide a curriculum vitae, or their date of birth;
- candidates should have the opportunity to supply as much information as possible about their skills and experience;
- candidates should be asked to submit a written paper.

3.2.4 The media in which the post will be advertised and publicity arrangements for the advertisement

- As well as the newspapers and journals suggested in paragraph 25 of the committee paper, the

post should be advertised in the ethnic and other minority group press and in Network Wales (which circulates in the voluntary sector);

- details of the recruitment should be circulated to a wide range of professional and other relevant organisations and press release issued.

3.2.5 How children and young people will be involved in the appointment process

- As a first step Children in Wales should be asked to select a children and young people's panel to be involved in the selection process.

3.2.6 On 11 November a number of children and young people's groups attended a consultation day, the aim of which was to select a panel and discuss the basis for their assessment of candidates. Members of the "Bite Back" Group facilitated workshops. 15 children and young people volunteered for the panel, of whom one was from an ethnic minority. Three had experience of disabilities.

3.2.7 When it met on 14 November ([minutes of the meeting](#)) the Committee agreed that the children and young people's panel should be able to meet and interview the candidates on Sunday 3 December, the day before the formal selection panel interviewed them. The children and young people's panel would need careful and comprehensive guidance on their role. This should include training in basic principles, such as equal opportunities, respecting confidentiality and assessing the candidates against the agreed criteria. . The Committee also agreed that that children's organisations such as NSPCC and Voices from Care should be involved in preparing the young people the day before they interviewed the candidates. Helen Mary Jones would meet the panel on their briefing day.

3.2.8 The Committee accepted the recommendation that the views of the children and young people's panel should be collated and that two members of the panel should be delegated to take part in the final selection panel on 4 December. The Committee felt that the panel should be asked to identify all the candidates they assessed to be suitable for appointment, but not to rank them.

3.2.9 Mrs Annand Jasani, one of the independent assessors appointed to the selection panel (see below), would sit in on the children and young people's interviews with the candidates.

The level of remuneration for the post

3.2.10 The committee recommended that the annual salary for the post should be in the region of £70,000 a year, with a mechanism for annual review.

The selection panel

3.2.11 The committee recommended that the selection panel should include the members of the Committee and two independent assessors. It further recommended that Mrs Annand Jasani, MBE and Professor Teresa Rees should be invited as assessors. The selection panel should also include Ms Helen

Thomas, head of the Social Care Group in the National Assembly, and two delegates from the children and young people's panel.

Shortlist of Candidates for interview

3.3. When the Committee met on 14 November it was presented with the applications of 11 candidates recommended for shortlisting by a preliminary sift panel comprising Ms Helen Thomas, Mrs Annand Jasani and Mr David Middleton, Children and Families Division, Social Care Group. The committee also had information on the other 27 candidates who had applied. Of these they asked to see the full applications of two further candidates. The committee considered the candidates' applications against the job specification and agreed criteria, and recommended six candidates for interview.

Jane Hutt AM
Chair