



House of Commons  
Education Committee

---

# Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England

---

**Second Report of Session 2019–21**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 15 December 2020*

## The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP](#) (*Conservative, Harlow*) (Chair)

[Fleur Anderson MP](#) (*Labour, Putney*)

[Apsana Begum MP](#) (*Labour, Poplar and Limehouse*)

[Jonathan Gullis MP](#) (*Conservative, Stoke-on-Trent North*)

[Tom Hunt MP](#) (*Conservative, Ipswich*)

[Dr Caroline Johnson MP](#) (*Conservative, Sleaford and North Hykeham*)

[Kim Johnson MP](#) (*Labour, Liverpool, Riverside*)

[David Johnston MP](#) (*Conservative, Wantage*)

[Ian Mearns MP](#) (*Labour, Gateshead*)

[David Simmonds MP](#) (*Conservative, Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner*)

[Christian Wakeford MP](#) (*Conservative, Bury South*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2020. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at [www.parliament.uk/copyright](http://www.parliament.uk/copyright).

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/education-committee](http://www.parliament.uk/education-committee) and in print by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kevin Candy (Second Clerk), Vanessa Donhowe (Committee Specialist), Dr Mike Everett (Clerk), Oliver Florence (Senior Media Officer), Rosemary Hill (Committee Specialist), Nelson Idama (Media Officer), Robert McQuade (Committee Operations Manager), Rebecca Owen-Evans (Committee Specialist), Steiner Teixido-Oroza (Committee Operations Assistant), Kandirose Payne-Messias (Committee Support Apprentice).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2370; the Committee's email address is [educom@parliament.uk](mailto:educom@parliament.uk).

You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsEd](https://twitter.com/CommonsEd).

# Contents

---

<b>1</b>	<b>Background to the hearing</b>	<b>3</b>
	The Office of the Children's Commissioner	3
	Pre-appointment hearing request	3
<b>2</b>	<b>The recruitment process</b>	<b>5</b>
	Requirements for the post	5
<b>3</b>	<b>The preferred candidate</b>	<b>7</b>
	Candidate's background	7
	Line of questioning	7
	The Committee's views on the suitability of the candidate	7
	<b>Appendix 1: Posts which are subject to pre-appointment hearings by the Education Committee</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Appendix 2: Correspondence from the Secretary of State</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Appendix 3: Recruitment information provided by the Department</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Appendix 4: Candidate's CV</b>	<b>20</b>
	<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>Witnesses</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>24</b>

# 1 Background to the hearing

---

## The Office of the Children's Commissioner

1. The Children's Commissioner gives a national voice to all children and young people, especially the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. It is an appointment made by the Secretary of State for Education under Schedule 1 to the Children Act 2004. The primary function of the post is "promoting and protecting the rights of children", with a particular focus on ensuring that the views of the most vulnerable children are heard; and that the rights of children in vulnerable circumstances are upheld. The Commissioner's statutory remit is set out in Part 1 and Schedule 1 of the Children Act 2004, as amended by Part 6 and Schedule 5 of the Children and Families Act 2014.
2. The Children's Commissioner has wide powers, extended by the Children and Families Act 2014, to hold inquiries into issues of public policy of relevance to children. Notably, the Commissioner has the authority to require any public body to provide information the Commissioner may reasonably request. The Commissioner can also make representations on behalf of a child where the child is in care, enter any premises (other than a private dwelling) for the purpose of interviewing a child or for the purpose of observing the standard of care provided to children. The Commissioner may also interview a child in private if the child consents.
3. The Children's Commissioner must represent children in parts of the UK outside England on issues that are not devolved to the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales.<sup>1</sup>
4. The Children's Commissioner is one of five positions subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the Education Select Committee (see appendix 1).

## Pre-appointment hearing request

5. As part of their wider role in scrutinising Government, select committees scrutinise some senior public appointments made by Ministers. This is to help ensure that the candidate is suitable for the post.
6. On 8 December 2020, the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP, wrote to us to say that Dame Rachel de Souza, the Chief Executive at Inspiration Trust, had been chosen as the Government's preferred candidate to take up the post of Children's Commissioner for England. The Committee was invited to hold a pre-appointment hearing with the candidate. The Secretary of State's letter, the candidate's curriculum vitae and a memorandum provided by the Government, which sets out the requirements of the post, along with details of the recruitment process, are all appended to this Report.
7. We accordingly invited Dame Rachel to attend a pre-appointment hearing on Tuesday 15 December.

---

1 Children's Commissioner, [Ambitious for Children: Children's Commissioner for England's five year commitments, 2015–2020](#), p1

8. In advance of the hearing, we held an accountability hearing with the current Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield OBE, to ascertain her views on the role and the challenges likely to be faced by her successor.

9. We would like to put on record our thanks to the outgoing Children's Commissioner, for the important work that she has done over the last five years.

## 2 The recruitment process

---

10. The recruitment campaign was launched on 27 July 2020 and closed on 18 September. 63 applications were received in response. Seven candidates were invited to interview as they were deemed to have met the bar. Following a request by the Secretary of State, an additional two candidates were invited to interview. A shortlist of nine candidates were invited to the interview stage, although two candidates pulled out of the competition in advance of the final interview.<sup>2</sup>

11. Interviews were held on 4 and 6 November. Interviews were conducted by an Advisory Assessment Panel consisting of:

- **The Rt Hon. Sir Simon Burns**, Panel Chair (former Conservative MP for Chelmsford, President of West Oxfordshire Conservative Association and Government Liaison Officer for Clinova Ltd)
- **Cindy Butts**, Senior Independent Panel Member (Commissioner Criminal Cases Review Commission)
- **Indra Morris**, departmental official (Director General Social Care, Mobility and Disadvantage)
- **Andrew McCully**, departmental official (Director General Early Years and Schools Group)
- **Jon Yates**, other panel member (Executive Director of the Youth Endowment Fund).

Following the interview stage, the Secretary of State met the three candidates who were deemed appointable before making his decision on the preferred candidate.

### Requirements for the post

12. The recruitment pack drawn up by the Department for Education set out five essential criteria that the successful candidate would need to be able to demonstrate. They were:

- An understanding of the issues and problems facing children and young people in England, and the ability to bring about solutions that have a demonstrable impact on children's lives.
- The ability to demonstrate a pragmatic approach to addressing and resolving complex issues, with a particular focus on delivering outcomes.
- The ability to lead a high profile and complex organisation, create effective partnership working and provide valuable challenge.
- The confidence and ability to successfully communicate, influence and work collaboratively with a wide range of groups—including children, decision makers, government and parliament.

---

2 See appendix 3

- An understanding of all relevant statutory duties and how children's rights are protected and promoted through domestic legislation.

Candidates were also expected to be able to demonstrate the following desirable criteria:

- Understanding and knowledge of the key rights of children such as, a child's right to quality of education and the rights of children who are living away from home or receiving social care.
- Ability and working understanding of financial management and the importance of securing value for money.
- The ability to think strategically about the issues affecting children and young people.
- The ability to engage effectively with and gain the confidence of children and young people in order to represent their views and interests.

The appointment of Children's Commissioner is for a period of six years. Remuneration for the post was advertised at between £120,000-£130,000.

## 3 The preferred candidate

---

### Candidate's background

13. The Secretary of State's preferred candidate is Dame Rachel de Souza. She is currently the Chief Executive at Inspiration Trust, a multi-academy trust of 14 academies based in Norfolk and Suffolk, and a trustee at Ambition Institute. Dame Rachel was previously an independent member of the Education Honours Committee and has held various teaching and headship roles. She declared no political activity or conflict of interest as part of the recruitment process.<sup>3</sup> Dame Rachel's CV has been included as an appendix.

14. In the Secretary of State's view, Dame Rachel:

Emerged as the strongest candidate suitable for the role from a very competitive field and following a rigorous recruitment process [...]. Rachel has a strong history of working with children and young people and a passion for improving lives and the opportunities of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.<sup>4</sup>

### Line of questioning

15. In line with the guidance drawn up by the Liaison Committee on the conduct of pre-appointment hearings, our questioning sought to test the professional competence and personal independence of the candidate. The Liaison Committee also observes that a candidate will need to be able to withstand parliamentary and public scrutiny should they take up the post, and that questioning may therefore be robust.<sup>5</sup> We questioned Dame Rachel on the following areas:

- the role and powers of the Children's Commissioner;
- the candidate's priorities, if appointed;
- how her previous experiences have prepared her for this role;
- the challenges facing children and young people today.

16. A transcript of the oral evidence is published on the Committee's website.

### The Committee's views on the suitability of the candidate

17. The Committee held a pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for Children's Commissioner for England, on 15 December 2020. We agree Dame Rachel de Souza is appointable for the post.

---

3 Appendix 3

4 Appendix 2

5 Liaison Committee, *Pre-appointment Hearings*, Third Report of Session 2017–19, HC 2307, 19 June 2019

# Appendix 1: Posts which are subject to pre-appointment hearings by the Education Committee

---

HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills

Children's Commissioner for England

Chief Regulator, Ofqual

Chair of the Social Mobility Commission

Chair of the Office for Students

## Appendix 2: Correspondence from the Secretary of State

---

### Letter to the Chair of the Committee, 4 July 2020

You will be aware that the term of the current Children's Commissioner for England comes to an end on 28 February 2021. I am writing to inform you of our plans for recruiting the next Commissioner. Sharing this with you is the first step in the recruitment process and we will continue to keep you updated as the campaign progresses.

Our high-level timetable is to run an eight week recruitment campaign from the end of July, carry out interviews in October and identify the preferred candidate by early November. We hope to announce the successful candidate in early December. This timetable is of course subject to change owing to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and we will inform you if anything does change.

As you know from your regular hearings, the Children's Commissioner plays an extremely important role in improving the lives of children in England and I would like to share with you our vision for the person we are looking for. Enclosed with this letter is our draft essential criteria.

In essence, the Children's Commissioner must be someone who understands the issues facing children and young people, and who is able to focus on delivering solutions to these issues.

The Children's Commissioner primary function is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England, with a particular focus on ensuring that the views of the most vulnerable children are heard. This includes considering the potential effect of government policy and legislative proposals on the rights of children. The legislative basis for the office of Children's Commissioner is in Part 1 and Schedule 1 of the Children Act 2004.

I would like to invite the Committee to undertake a pre-appointment hearing once I have chosen a preferred candidate. I will ask my officials to contact your clerk to explore suitable dates as soon as possible after our appointment process has ended.

I am grateful for your consideration of this proposal and look forward to the Committee's involvement in this very important role. I am sure you will share my high expectations of the positive benefits that the Children's Commissioner will continue to bring to the lives of children in England.

**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**

## Draft criteria for recruitment of Children's Commissioner for England

**The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following essential criteria:**

- An understanding of the issues and problems facing children and young people in England, and the ability to bring about solutions that have a demonstrable impact on children's lives.
- The ability to demonstrate a pragmatic approach to addressing and resolving complex issues, with a particular focus on delivering outcomes.
- The ability to lead a high profile and complex organisation, create effective partnership working and provide valuable challenge.
- The confidence and ability to successfully communicate, influence and work collaboratively with a wide range of groups – including children, decision makers, government and parliament.
- An understanding of all relevant statutory duties and how children's rights are protected and promoted through domestic legislation.

We also expect candidates to be able to demonstrate the following desirable criteria:

- Understanding and knowledge of the key rights of children such as, a child's right to quality of education and the rights of children who are living away from home or receiving social care.
- Ability and working understanding of financial management and the importance of securing value for money.
- The ability to think strategically about the issues affecting children and young people.
- The ability to engage effectively with and gain the confidence of children and young people in order to represent their views and interests.

## Letter to the Chair of the Committee 8 December 2020

### *Appointment of the next Children's Commissioner for England*

I wrote to you on 4 July 2020 to confirm our plans to recruit the next Children's Commissioner for England, following the conclusion of the current commissioner Anne Longfield's tenure on 28 February 2021. We agreed at that point that the Committee would wish to hold a pre-appointment hearing once we have a preferred candidate for the role. I can confirm that the recruitment process has now completed and I am writing to invite your committee to hold a pre-appointment hearing with my preferred candidate: Dame Rachel De Souza.

In my view, Rachel has emerged as the strongest candidate suitable for the role from a very competitive field and following a rigorous recruitment exercise led by an independent Advisory Assessment Panel. This involved: applicants passing a rigorous sift, shortlisted candidates undertaking a psychometric test, a children and young people's panel and an interview by the Advisory Assessment Panel. Following the final interviews, the Advisory Assessment Panel met to agree their final assessments for each candidate and found three candidates to have met the minimum standard for the role. Having carefully considered the panel's views and met with the three candidates, all of whom impressed me, I have chosen Rachel as my preferred candidate.

Rachel has a strong history of working with children and young people and a passion for improving the lives and opportunities of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. She is currently the Chief Executive at Inspiration Trust, a family of 14 schools from Nursery to Sixth Form based in Norfolk and north Suffolk, with the majority rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. She is also a Trustee at Ambition Institute and has previously been an independent member of the Education Honours Committee and Trustee at the Shakespeare's Globe.

Rachel has strong experience in education, having held various teaching and headship roles.

I am aware that the intention is for the hearing with the select committee be held before the Christmas recess. In advance of that session, I attach for your information a copy of information about the role, a description of the recruitment process and information on the preferred candidate, including Rachel's CV.

I shall look forward to receiving the Education Select Committee's conclusions and advice on the appointment in due course.

**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**

## Appendix 3: Recruitment information provided by the Department

---

### 1) The preferred candidate – Dame Rachel de Souza

Rachel has a strong history of working with children and young people and a passion for improving the lives and opportunities for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. She is currently the Chief Executive at Inspiration Trust, a family of 14 schools from Nursery to Sixth Form based in Norfolk and north Suffolk, with the majority rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. She is also a Trustee at Ambition Institute and has previously been an independent member of the Education Honours Committee and Trustee at the Shakespeare's Globe. Rachel has strong experience in education, having held various teaching and headship roles.

Rachel has indicated no political activities or conflict of interest as part of this recruitment process.

A copy of Rachel's CV has been attached as part of the covering email accompanying this document, for your reference.

### 2) Role description and person specification

#### *Role remit*

The Children's Commissioner's primary function is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England, with a particular focus on ensuring that the views of the most vulnerable children are heard; and that the rights of children in vulnerable circumstances are upheld.

As such, the Commissioner has a unique role in monitoring the implementation of children's rights, supporting the achievement of better outcomes for children and challenging breaches of their rights. Using his/her statutory powers, the Commissioner can investigate any matter affecting children and make recommendations for changes to legislation, policies or practices, so that they better promote and protect children's rights and are compatible with children and human rights instruments.

The Commissioner is an independent champion for children, making sure their views and interests are heard and their rights are respected. The Commissioner will therefore influence the development of policy, legislation and the way public functions which affect children are delivered.

The Commissioner will also raise awareness of children's rights and ensure that their views and interests are brought to the attention of key decision-makers, such as Government Ministers and leaders of local services, in order to ensure that services for children and young people are responsive to their needs.

The Children's Commissioner for England operates as a corporation sole, sponsored by the Department for Education, and is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The Commissioner's primary function is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England.

The Commissioner is not an Ombudsman and, in general, cannot conduct investigations into the case of an individual child.

The Commissioner is bound by the Seven guiding principles of public life (Nolan Principles) and is required to account for the public funding allocated to the role

### ***Legislative Framework***

The legislative basis for the office of Children's Commissioner is in Part 1 and Schedule 1 of the Children Act 2004 (as amended). This establishes the independence of the office and the six-year tenure of the post holder [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents)

The legislation relating to the Children's Commissioner is permissive, allowing significant flexibility for the Commissioner to determine how best to carry out his or her primary function of promoting and protecting children's rights. A non-exhaustive list of activities contained in the legislation serves to illustrate the breadth of the Commissioner's remit and includes:

- advising persons exercising functions or engaged in activities affecting children on how to act compatibly with the rights of children;
- encouraging such persons to take account of the views and interests of children;
- advising the Secretary of State on the rights, views and interests of children;
- considering the potential effect on the rights of children of government policy proposals and government proposals for legislation;
- bringing any matter to the attention of either House of Parliament;
- investigating the availability and effectiveness of complaints procedures so far as relating to children;
- investigating the availability and effectiveness of advocacy services for children;
- investigating any other matter relating to the rights or interests of children;
- monitoring the implementation in England of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child.

In exercising the primary function, the Children's Commissioner is required to:

- Involve children in all work undertaken and in particular to have regard to the views of those children who do not have other adequate means of making their views known;
- Ensure children are made aware of the Commissioner and his/her work and how to communicate with him/her;

- Publish reports on any matter that the Commissioner has investigated, considered or researched;
- Appoint an advisory board;
- Consult annually on his or her draft business plan;
- Report annually to Parliament on the impact that the Commissioner has had on the promotion and protection of children's rights;
- Ensure the efficient running of the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) and act as the OCC's Accounting Officer, responsible for the efficient and proper use of the public funds it receives;
- Work closely with the Children's Commissioners in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the European Network of Children's Commissioners; and,
- Work with a wide variety of other bodies to promote children's rights and the delivery of public functions and services in a way which respects children's rights.

### **Person Specification**

- As outlined in the job advertisement, the successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following five essential criteria. This is what the panel assessed against:
- An understanding of the issues and problems facing children and young people in England, and the ability to bring about solutions that have a demonstrable impact on children's lives.
- The ability to demonstrate a pragmatic approach to addressing and resolving complex issues, with a particular focus on delivering outcomes.
- The ability to lead a high profile and complex organisation, create effective partnership working and provide valuable challenge.
- The confidence and ability to successfully communicate, influence and work collaboratively with a wide range of groups – including children, decision makers, government and parliament.
- An understanding of all relevant statutory duties and how children's rights are protected and promoted through domestic legislation.

Candidates were also expected to be able to demonstrate the following *desirable criteria*:

- Understanding and knowledge of the key rights of children, such as a child's right to quality of education and the rights of children who are living away from home or receiving social care.
- Ability and working understanding of financial management and the importance of securing value for money.

- The ability to think strategically about the issues affecting children and young people.
- The ability to engage effectively with and gain the confidence of children and young people in order to represent their views and interests.

**Term Dates** (length of tenure): 01 March 2021 – 28 Feb 2027 (6 years)

**Remuneration** The post affords remuneration of between £120,000 - £130,000.

**Time Commitment** Full time position

### 3) Children's Commissioner for England Recruitment Process

#### Overview

Campaign launch date	27 July
Campaign closing date	18 September
Number of applicants	63
Number of candidates invited to interview	9
Number of candidates found appointable	3

#### Advertisement

The competition was launched on 27 July 2020 for a period of eight weeks, closing on 18 September. The job advertisement can be found here: <https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/childrens-commissioner-for-england/>.

The post was also advertised online in The Times from 17 August to 17 September 2020 and The Telegraph from 14 August to 14 September, and was advertised through social media and also on the Children's Commissioner's website.

A copy of the advertisement is available in Annex A.

#### Advisory Assessment Panel

As outlined in the Governance Code for Public Appointments,<sup>6</sup> the purpose of the Advisory Assessment Panel is to assist the Secretary of State in his decision-making for the role of the next Children's Commissioner.

The panel comprised of:

- The Right Honourable Sir **Simon Burns**, Panel Chair (former Conservative MP for Chelmsford, President of West Oxfordshire Conservative Association and Government Liaison Officer for Clinova Ltd)
- **Cindy Butts**, Senior Independent Panel Member (Commissioner Criminal Cases Review Commission)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-code-for-public-appointments>

- **Indra Morris**, departmental official (Director General Social Care, Mobility and Disadvantage)
- **Andrew McCully**, departmental official (Director General Early Years and Schools Group)
- **Jon Yates**, other panel member (Executive Director of the Youth Endowment Fund).

### *Sifting of Applications*

A total of 63 applications were received when the competition closed. Diversity data related to the longlist can be found below.

The panel met to sift the applications and recommended seven candidates were invited to interview as they were deemed to have met the bar. Following review by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State requested an additional two candidates were invited to interview. A total shortlist of nine candidates were invited to the interview stage, though two of the nine candidates pulled out of the competition in advance of the final interview.

### *Interview stage*

Candidates were assessed against multiple components during the interview stage.

Firstly, the seven candidates which were interviewed (note, two withdrew before the interviews) each met a panel of three young people. During the panel session, each candidate ran a 10-minute consultation exercise with the young people on a topic of their choice related to issues impacting children and young people in England. The young people then spent an additional 15 minutes asking follow-up questions, to explore the candidate's suitability to the role. The interview panel took account of the views and scores of the young people's panel against the criteria in their consideration of the shortlisted candidates.

Candidates were also required to complete a self-evaluative emotional capital survey, which assessed their emotional and social competencies. This survey provided a summary report for the panel on candidate's signature-strengths and development needs, along with suggested probing questions that were used at interview stage. This element of the interview stage was not scored.

Finally, candidates were invited to interview. As part of this, candidates were provided with a scenario exercise regarding a topical issue facing children and young people, following which they were asked a set of questions to assess their strengths against a number of essential and desirable criteria (as outlined in section A). The remainder of the interview related to questions based on the candidates' experience and strengths, assessed against each of the essential criteria.

Following the final interviews, the advisory assessment panel met to agree their final assessments for each candidate and deemed three candidates to have met the minimum standard.

The outcomes of the interview stage were presented to the Secretary of State, who agreed to meet with the three candidates who were deemed appointable before making his decision on the preferred candidate. Following the meetings, the Secretary of State deemed Dame Rachel De Souza as his preferred candidate for the role of Children's Commissioner for England. This has been approved by the Prime Minister, and as such, the Education Select Committee have been invited to hold a pre-appointment hearing with her and report on their conclusions.

## Diversity data<sup>1</sup>

**Table A: Gender**

	Percent Male	Percent Female
Applicants	40	60

**Table B: Ethnicity**

	Percent White	Percent Mixed / multiple ethnic group	Percent Asian/ Asian British	Percent Black/ Black British	Percent Other Ethnicity
Applicants <sup>2</sup>	71	N/A	12	N/A	N/A

**Table C: Disability**

	Percent Disability declared	Percent Disability not declared
Applicants	20	80

### Notes on diversity data

1. Departments must consider their obligations under data protection legislation when sharing this data with select committees. Candidates must be made aware at the outset of the campaign that their data will be shared with the select committee in this way. The data should not be shared in a way which means that individuals are identifiable.
2. Departments should follow ONS guidance on statistical disclosure control to meet this requirement. Where there are fewer than 5 candidates in any given category, diversity data must not be shared as this is potentially identifiable. For example if you have six women and four men on a shortlist - you should not give any gender information.

## Annex A

### *Vacancy Description*

The Commissioner operates as a corporation sole, sponsored by the Department for Education and is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The Commissioner's primary function is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England.

The legislative basis for the Office of the Children's Commissioner is in Part 1 and Schedule 1 of the Children Act 2004 (as amended). This establishes the independence of the office and the six year tenure of the post holder.

[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents)

The legislation relating to the Children's Commissioner is permissive, allowing significant flexibility for the Commissioner to determine how best to carry out his or her primary function of promoting and protecting children's rights.

The Commissioner is not an ombudsman and, in general, cannot conduct investigations into the case of an individual child.

The Commissioner is bound by the Seven guiding principles of public life (Nolan Principles) and is required to account for the public funding allocated to the role. In 2019/20, the Commissioner was allocated a budget of £2.73m.

The Commissioner is also allowed to appoint staff to assist in the delivery of their functions. Currently, the Commissioner employs around 25 staff.

### *Person Specification*

The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following essential criteria:

- An understanding of the issues and problems facing children and young people in England, and the ability to bring about solutions that bring about a demonstrable impact on children's lives.
- The ability to demonstrate a pragmatic approach to addressing and resolving complex issues, with a particular focus on delivering outcomes.
- The ability to lead a high profile and complex organisation, create effective partnerships working and provide valuable challenge.
- The confidence and ability to successfully communicate, influence and work collaboratively with a wide range of groups—including children, decision makers, government and parliament.
- An understanding of all the relevant statutory duties and how children's rights are protected and promoted through domestic legislation.

We also expect candidates to be able to demonstrate the following:

### *Desirable criteria*

- Understanding and knowledge of the key rights of children such as a child's right to quality of education and the rights of children who are living away from home or receiving social care.
- Ability and working understanding of financial management and the importance of securing value for money.
- The ability of thinking strategically about the issues affecting children and young people.
- The ability to engage effectively with and gain the confidence of children and young people in order to represent their views and interests.

### **Additional Information**

The preferred candidate for the post of Children's Commissioner for England may be required to appear before a Parliamentary Select Committee prior to appointment.

## Appendix 4: Candidate's CV

---

### **Dame Rachel de Souza**

#### ***Current Roles***

##### **Chief Executive, Inspiration Trust**

The Inspiration Trust is a family of 14 schools spanning nursery to sixth form across Norfolk and Suffolk. It has twice been ranked the country's best comprehensive schools group for progress to GCSE.

- Brought together 14 primary and secondary schools together as a tightly-knit group, sharing resources in and out of the classroom.
- Strong Ofsted judgements, with 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgements in the majority of schools.
- Created a streamlined highly-skilled central team to lead the multi-academy trust and maximise efficiency.
- Bid for and established four free schools, including Britain's first maths and science specialist sixth-form school.
- Established innovative curriculum and assessment centre.

##### **Trustee, Ambition Institute**

Board member of the education training and development charity.

#### ***Previous Experience***

##### **Independent member, Education Honours Committee**

Advisor to the Cabinet Office on the award of official UK honours within the education sector.

##### **Trustee, Shakespeare's Globe**

Board member of the acclaimed Shakespeare's Globe theatre.

##### **Member, East of England Head Teachers' Board**

Advisor to the Regional Schools Commissioner on oversight of and major changes at schools across the region. Advised and coached a wide range of schools and academy trusts on academic and organisational improvement.

##### **Principal, Ormiston Victory Academy, Norwich**

One of the most improved schools in Britain, since opening in 2010. Ofsted Outstanding.

##### **Principal, Barnfield West Academy, Luton**

First principal of an innovative new sponsored academy. Ranked as the most improved school or academy in the UK from opening in 2007–2010.

**Deputy head teacher, Denbigh High School, Luton**

**Assistant head teacher, Hastingsbury Upper School, Bedford**

**Curriculum Leader and Director of Equality & Diversity, Luton Sixth Form College**

**Head of Faculty, Sir John Cass School, Tower Hamlets**

**Curriculum Leader (Religious Studies & Philosophy), Gosford Hill School, Oxford**

### ***Qualifications and honours***

- Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to education, 2014
- Advanced Development for Business Leaders, Cranfield School of Management Development, 2009
- National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NCSL), 2007
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education, King's College University of London, 1991
- MA Education, King's College, University of London, 1998
- BA (Hons) Philosophy & Theology, Heythrop College, University of London, 2:1, 1989

# Formal minutes

---

**Tuesday 15 December 2020**

Members present:

Robert Halfon, in the Chair

Fleur Anderson	David Johnston
Apsana Begum	Ian Mearns
Jonathan Gullis	David Simmonds
Tom Hunt	Christian Wakeford
Kim Johnson	

Draft Report (*Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 16 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 17 read.

Motion made, and Question put, That Paragraph 17 stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided:

Ayes, 5	Noes, 4
Jonathan Gullis	Fleur Anderson
Tom Hunt	Apsana Begum
David Johnston	Kim Johnson
David Simmonds	Ian Mearns
Christian Wakeford	

Paragraph 17 accordingly agreed to.

Four papers were appended to the report.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till 16 December 2020 at 9.30 am

## Witnesses

---

The following witness gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### **Tuesday 15 December 2020**

**Dame Rachel de Souza**, Government's preferred candidate for the post of Children's Commissioner

[Q1-71](#)

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

---

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Getting the grades they've earned Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades	HC 617
1st Special Report	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019	HC 668
2nd Special Report	Getting the grades they've earned Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019–21	HC 812