

Ann Jones AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Our ref: PO1147/RB/NG

29 January 2016

Dear Ann

Thank you for your letter of 10 December asking for my views on the recommendations of the Review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

An important overarching point raised by the Review relates to the appointment and accountability of the Children's Commissioner. I have made representations about the perception of independence and transparency concerning the Commissioner's appointment on several occasions. I have concluded that there is a fundamental flaw in lines of accountability if the final approval for the appointment of the Commissioner responsible for scrutinising its work is a matter for Government alone.

For this reason, I have consistently argued that the Children's Commissioner should be appointed by and be accountable to the Assembly, not the Welsh Government. It is a view shared by an increasing number of people including Sally Holland, the Children's Commissioner. This would not only make the recruitment process rigorous and transparent but also make the lines of accountability clear which is crucial to the delivery of effective scrutiny.

I consider that exploring the benefits of introducing a single Act to establish a firmer and clearer statutory footing for the appointment and accountability of all Commissioners in Wales could usefully be the subject of an early committee inquiry in the Fifth Assembly.

The Review recommended a more formal structure for scrutinising the Children's Commissioner, supported by training and more detailed budget estimates to assist Members in this task. You will appreciate that these are matters for my successor and other Members of the Fifth Assembly. I hope that the new Business Committee will explore this further in their consideration of the committee system for the Fifth Assembly, and that the committee(s) responsible for scrutiny of the Children's Commissioner will ask for, and receive, all the information they need, including detailed budget estimates.

I am proud of the work undertaken by the Assembly's education and youth engagement team over the past five years to champion and promote children's rights. In doing so, we have forged new working relationships with the children and youth sectors in Wales. I would suggest that the recommendation that children and young people should be at the heart of the Children Commissioner and Welsh Government's work should also apply to the Assembly.

With best wishes.



Dame Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer