



Children's Commissioner for Wales' additional note for the Children and Young People's Committee

This paper is in response to the request for additional information requested by the Committee in scrutiny on 10 November 2009. Annex 1 includes the organisational chart for the Children's Commissioner for Wales office, which reflects the restructuring as of September 2009.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

Role of CEOP

CEOP works to eradicate the sexual abuse of children. They are part of UK policing and work to track and bring offenders to account directly through their own intelligence or in partnership. They support local efforts and also operate on an international stage.

The reference to CEOP came about following the discussion on my report '*Bordering on Concern: Child Trafficking in Wales*'. CEOP contacted me following the work we undertook in raising awareness of child trafficking, and the concerns I raised regarding the use of police intelligence. I informed your Committee that I was intending to visit CEOP to see how it operated and to assess how they supported trafficked children and I also committed to report back to the members.

I visited Jim Gamble and his team at CEOP in London on 15th December. At the time of my visit it would be fair to say that there were concerns relating to:

- the independence of CEOP
- its financial security
- the need to widen their remit to cover missing children.

I was impressed with what I saw. CEOP's work is complex and challenging but any doubts or questions I had were very much assuaged. It was abundantly clear that the organisation has a very important role to play in safeguarding and protecting children.

It is for this reason that I very much welcomed the statement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mr. Alan Campbell on 11 January 2010 which relates to the Home Office's publishing of

"Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: The Way Forward" which sets out the Government's proposals to make CEOP a non-departmental public body. There is also a commitment to widening CEOP's remit to become a centre of expertise for work with missing children.

The Hansard link is below:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/wmstext/100111m0001.htm>

The UK's four Children's Commissioners issued a supportive statement in response to the announcement, a copy of which is included below.

"The safety of our children is paramount. We therefore welcome the government's decision to put children's safety first by allowing the CEOP Centre to become an independent organisation. This will strengthen the CEOP Centre's presence in the UK and will also enhance its reputation as a world-leading organisation, protecting some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society.

"We also welcome the widening remit of the Centre. Whilst it will continue its efforts to work in both online and offline environments to protect children from sexual exploitation, it will become a centre of expertise for work with missing children. This is a significant step in the right direction to protect our children."

Particular Issues of Concern

During the Committee scrutiny, the Chair asked *"Is there a particular priority issue that you want to highlight to our committee today that affects children and young people and that you would particularly like us to pursue with Ministers in the Welsh Government?"*

My response was child poverty, as it can often explain the underlying causes and context of failures we currently have in Wales. You may find my written submission to the Children and Families (Wales) Measure useful:

http://www.assemblywales.org/cf6_childrens_commissioner_for_wales.pdf

Whilst I stand by that statement, I would also like to reiterate the sentiment expressed by the Chair during the deliberations on the need to work strategically and being capable of reporting on progress against recommendations contained within Committee reports. This is a difficult balance to achieve when faced with so many issues warranting attention, as reflected in the varied policy areas contained within my annual report.

I commend the Children and Young People's Committee's approach and endeavors to make the process of identifying children's issues which are worthy of inquiry as accessible and as outward facing as possible. The recent launch of the inquiry into Safe Places to Play and Hang Out came as a direct result of

giving children and young people a voice in the democratic process and I understand that the inquiry itself will also be informed by children and young people.

I am committed to working in collaboration to ensure that Wales is a country where all children and young people are respected, valued, listened to and supported to lead safe and happy lives. The Children and Young People's Committee has an important role to play in driving this agenda forward as have all the NAFW committees, and it is essential that the voice of children and young people is heard within the political structures at all levels so that children's rights can truly be realised.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Towler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

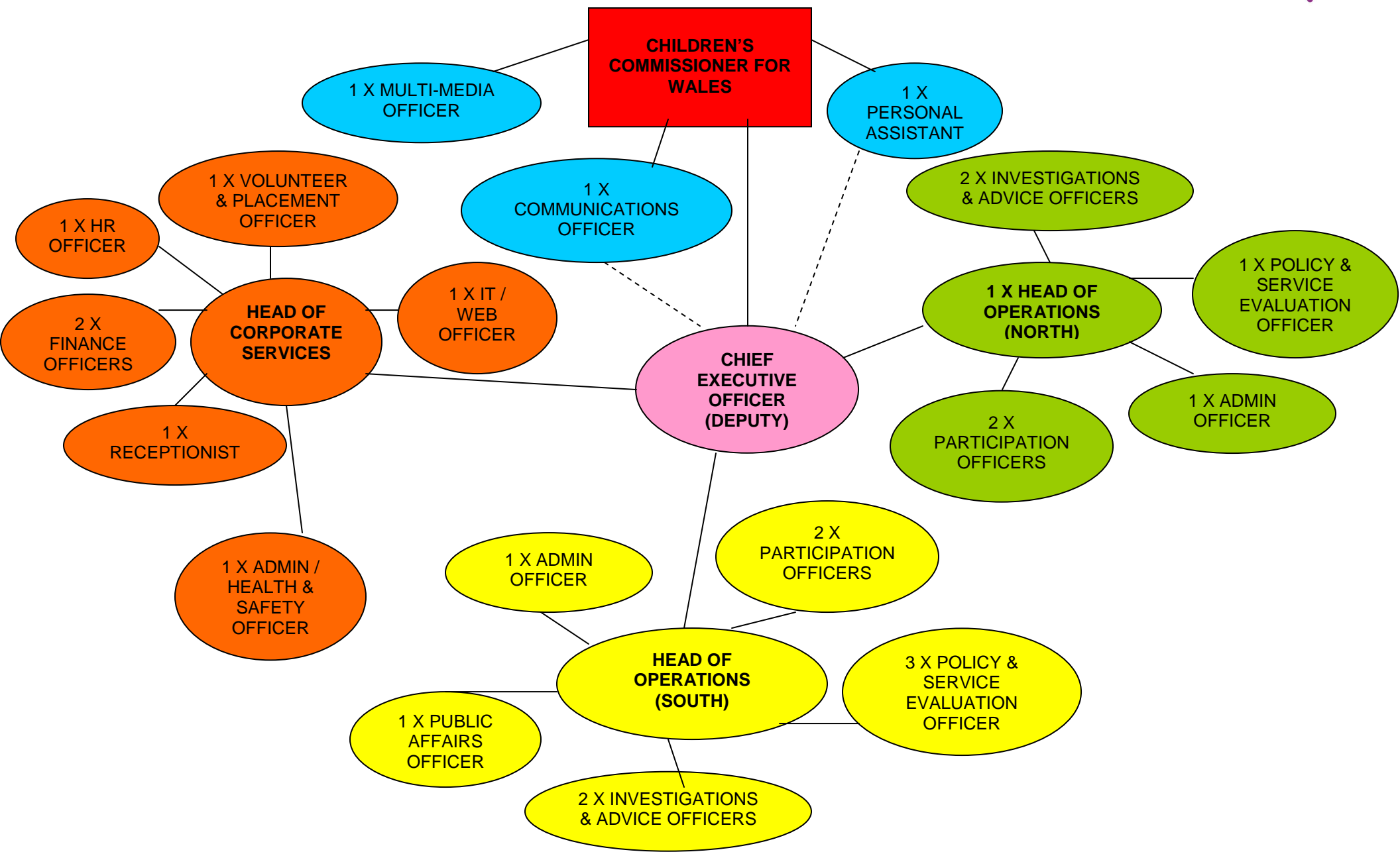
Keith Towler
Children's Commissioner for Wales

January 2010



Annex 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES – STAFF STRUCTURE: As of 1 September 2009 (28.77 WTE POSTS)





COMISIYNYDD PLANT CYMRU – STRWYTHUR STAFF: Yn weithredol o 1af o Fedi 2009 (28.77 O SWYDDI CALI)

