

Mark Isherwood MS  
Committee Chair  
Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee  
Senedd Cymru

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31 January 2023

Dear Chair,

**Re: Inquiry into the funding of Commissioners**

In your letter, dated 30th November 2022, you indicate that your Committee is gathering information about the funding of Commissioners in Wales, which follows the publication of the Senedd Equality and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee's Report in April 2022 relating to its annual scrutiny of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

I became Wales' fourth children's commissioner in April 2022. As well as running a large-scale consultation of children and young people to help establish my first three year strategy (we have secured over 10,000 responses), I have also been analysing the way this independent institution functions and delivers on its statutory remit. Here's a summary of critical facts about this institution, which I feel are pertinent to your inquiry into the funding of commissioners:

- Funding from Welsh Government has, in real terms, decreased year-on-year since 2016.
- Current staffing complement is smaller than pre-2015.
- Office space occupied is 64% smaller than pre-2015.
- Travel and subsistence costs have more than halved compared to pre-2015 figures (with savings predating Covid19 pandemic restrictions).
- Unqualified accounts secured annually, since its establishment, from Audit Wales.
- Systematically reduced the high level of financial reserves – from £408,000 in April 2015 to £51,000 in 2021.
- Our legislation is silent on the Children's Commissioner generating income, charging for our services or securing financial contributions from others – currently, our sole funder is Welsh Government. We'd welcome further exploration of this.
- Cyber Essentials Plus accredited organisation.
- Seen a three-year reduction in short-term absences, despite experiencing a global pandemic.



Tŷ Llewellyn/Llewellyn House  
Parc Busnes Glan yr  
Harbwr/Harbourside Business Park  
Heol yr Harbwr/Harbourside Road  
Port Talbot  
SA13 1SB

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- Over the last three years have:
  - Heard from over 51,000 via surveys
  - Directly engaged with over 20,000 young people
  - Delivered training on children's rights to over 1,000 professionals
  - Handled 1,894 cases via our Investigations and Advice service
  - [This evaluation](#) documents the changes to children's lives secured as a result of the organisation's work.
- Delivering all project work over the last three years and additional work in response to the pandemic for £315,000 = £0.34 per child in Wales.

As a final critical point, this independent institution has its own unique statutory functions. You'll appreciate that the remits of the four commissioners within the scope of your inquiry are different (with some even having regulatory functions over each other e.g. Welsh Language Commissioner's role in holding us to account on our delivery of the Welsh Language Standards), our structures are different, our funding is different, but a common thread is the desire to provide excellent public service to our respective sectors and a willingness to work in partnership if doing so would result in significant, positive change to the lives of citizens in Wales. We deliver this via a mutually drafted and mutually agreed Memorandum of Understanding. Here are key principles of that agreement:

- *The overarching aim of our five bodies is to contribute to the development of excellent public services in Wales that respect and promote the human rights of citizens in Wales and are sensitive to the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society*
- *We are bodies of equal status and will show regard for each other's remits and activities*
- *We are open to joint working where this may be more effective and appropriate to our joint remits. This may involve cases, thematic reviews, campaigns or joint examinations.*

Here is our response to your request for information:

## 1. Roles and responsibilities

- **A summary of the roles and responsibilities of your office, together with information about how these may have changed over time, as suggested by the Senedd Equality and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee in its Report. Whether there has been any financial impact of such changes and the details of those implications.**

### Our statutory responsibilities:

In 2001, Wales became the first country in the UK to appoint an independent human rights institution for children. My statutory functions are included in two laws: the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 (which amended the Care Standards Act 2000).

My principal, statutory aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children in Wales. I also have:

- The power to review and monitor the arrangements for complaints, whistleblowing and advocacy of defined public bodies;
- The power to review the exercise of functions (powers and duties) or proposed exercise of functions of defined public bodies, including Welsh Government;

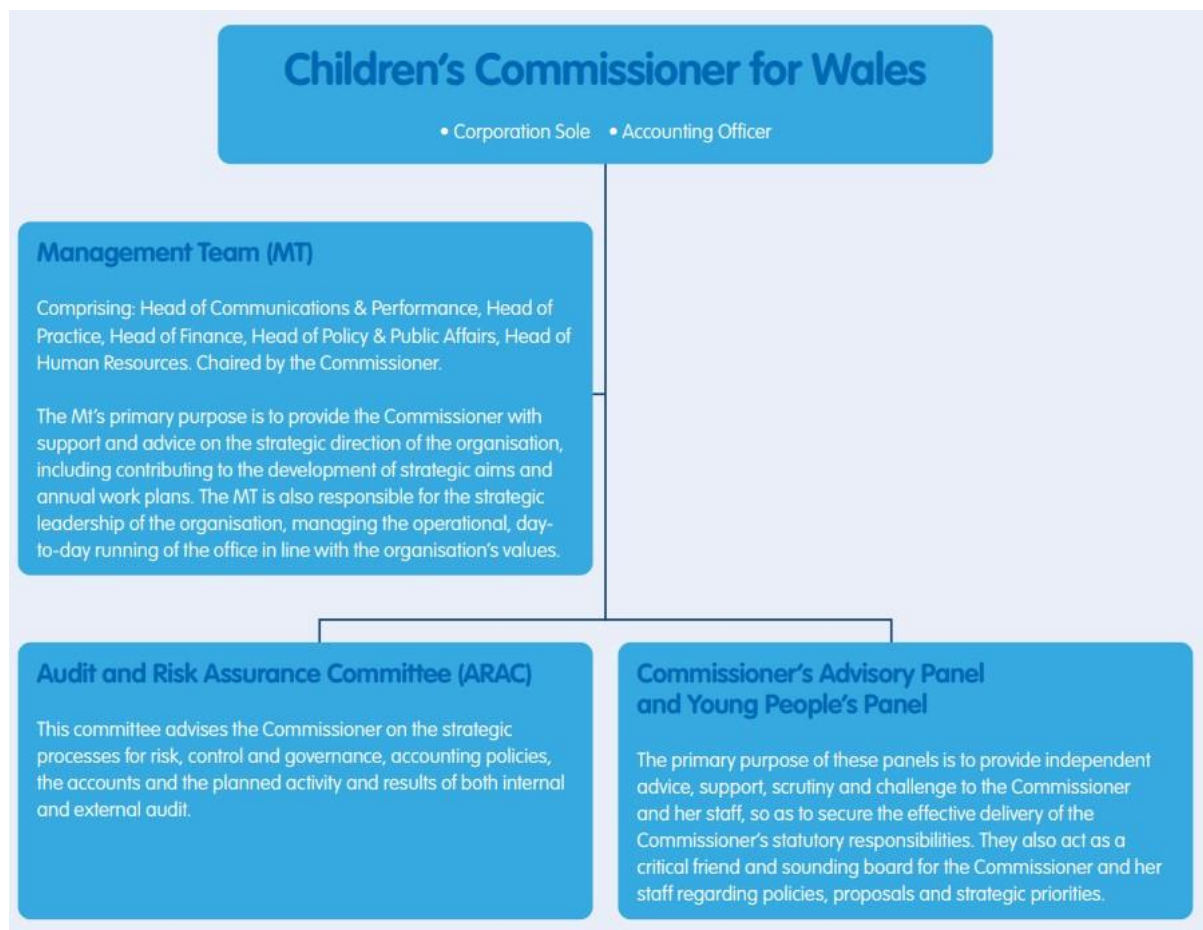


- The power to examine cases, in respect of individual children;
- The power to provide assistance to individual children; and
- The power to make representations to the First Minister, Welsh Ministers and the Counsel General about any matters affecting the rights and welfare of children which concern me and for which I do not have the power to act.

As corporation sole, I am also the Accounting Officer and need to ensure there is sound financial control in place. We manage our public funds according to 'Managing Welsh Public Money' and have in place a detailed Governance Framework. This work is firmly rooted in 'The Good Governance Standard for Public Services', the 'International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' and draws on elements from the 'UK Corporate Governance Code', maps how we build on the Nolan Principles for the conduct of individuals in public life by setting out six core principles of good governance we've adopted.

### The way we work:

This diagram describes our governance structure



Supporting my Management Team are interrelated functions - policy, participation, investigations and advice, communications and HR, finance and IT - that work together in a whole-team approach. We deliver a work programme – which is completely interdependent. Officers take expert roles within this according to their specialism but are dependent on the other parts of the organisation to deliver the programme of work.

As a public office in receipt of public funds, we are committed to implementing rigorous and transparent accountability and decision-making systems. Our evaluation framework provides a framework by which we monitor and report on the delivery of our core work and the internal processes within the organisation. It focuses on four elements: our people, our organisational processes, the Commissioner's financial sustainability and value for money and children and young people. These reports are discussed monthly at Management Team meetings, quarterly by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and highlights are published within our annual reports.

### Changes to powers and duties

Whilst my powers and duties within the original laws which established the office have not changed since the Care Standards Act 2000, and the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 (which amended the Care Standards Act 2000), there are three new Welsh laws which have come into effect during this time: the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and related Codes of Practice and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

To note, all related activities resulting from these changes are welcomed by this office but are flagged here for the purposes of this inquiry as evidence that our scope of work has increased but our funding has not. The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure requires Welsh Ministers to have due regard to children's rights, resulting in further scrutiny work for us. That Measure also requires Welsh Government to involve us in preparing its children's scheme, which outlines the arrangements Government has in place for ensuring children's rights are considered in undertaking its work. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires 'persons exercising functions under this Act in relation to a child... Must have due regard to Part 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child...', resulting in further scrutiny work for us. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, places a duty on 'relevant body exercising functions... in relation to a child or young person must have due regard to Part 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child...', resulting in further scrutiny work for us.

On a related note, in 2021 my predecessor undertook a formal review of the Welsh Government Ministers' exercise of functions in respect of two education policy matters, using the power in Section 72B of the Care Standards Act. The report concluding that Review sets out a number of areas where the team identified difficulties or deficiencies in the exercise of our formal powers.

The original legislation pre-dates the extension of the devolution settlement in Wales. Notably, the powers of the post holder in England were reviewed and revised 10 years following the creation of the office; it's been over 20 years since the post was created in Wales, with no substantive amendments made to the legislation beyond consequential amendments.

In summary, here are the apparent gaps or anomalies with our current legislation:

- Appointment is by the Executive and not the Legislature; this is not the recommended practice for independent human rights institutions;
- A mixed picture on how the different powers can be exercised, with some lacking the operational or practical details needed to make them viable;



- Changes to organisations' roles and remits and new organisations created since the post was enacted, that do not fall within the Commissioner's existing remit;
- Lack of information on how the Commissioner can require access to documentation and settings in discharging their functions;
- Inability to intervene in certain settings due to the current devolution settlement.

We have corresponded with the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee on the issue and can expand on this further, if the Public Accounts Committee wishes to follow up on any of the above points.

- **How the actual cost of delivering your functions compares with any cost estimates that may have been made at the time your role was established (such as any estimates set out in the Explanatory Memorandum/Regulatory Impact Assessment to support the legislation), with reasons to explain any variances (where appropriate).**

As the Children's Commissioner's office was established under the Care Standards Act 2000 the original budget estimate for the period 2001-02 was £936,000, which included the costs associated with the establishment of the office and its systems and processes, such as information technology etc. Due to retention periods of documents, we do not hold further information (other than published information contained within the organisation's first annual report and accounts available [here](#)) about the cost estimates that may have been made over 20 years ago when the role was established.

## 2. Budget approval process

- **Views on the budget process, including timescales and engagement with Welsh Ministers and officials, such as those in Partnership Teams (sponsors) within Welsh Government departments. Is any information provided by Welsh Government officials ahead of the submission of your estimate for the forthcoming year, such as the Welsh Government's best assessment of the level of funding available in future years and factors to take into account when preparing the estimate.**

Under paragraph 6 (2) of Schedule 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000 I am required to submit a budget estimate to Welsh Ministers that outlines the resources required to discharge my statutory functions. The budget estimate should be presented to Welsh Ministers by 31st October, of the year prior to the start of the financial period to which it relates.

We have in place a Memorandum of Understanding: operational working arrangements between the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Government, last updated in June 2022 and signed by the commissioner and Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS. Its purpose is to ensure both institutions work proactively and constructively for the benefit of children, young people and their families, whilst respecting the independence of this office. Here's an extract from that Memorandum of Understanding about the current budget process:

### *7. Funding of the Children's Commissioner's Office*

*The Children and Families Division will advise the Children's Commissioner at the earliest opportunity of the funding to be made available in the following financial year following Ministerial approval.*

*The Children's Commissioner will invoice the Welsh Government on a quarterly basis and be able to draw down the funds in a timely manner. In accordance with principles outlined in Managing Welsh Public Money, grant in aid must only be drawn down to make the payments expected to fall due before the next claim is due. The payment requested will be actioned in accordance with the Welsh*





*Government's financial governance arrangements and the published timescales. A cash grant in aid claim form will be provided with grant award letters.*

*Under the provisions of the 2000 Act Schedule 2, paras. 6(1) to 6(4), the Children's Commissioner has to submit an estimate of her income and expenditure to Welsh Ministers at least 5 months before the start of the financial year. The legislation requires Welsh Government to examine each such estimate submitted and, having done so, lay the estimate before the Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament with any such modifications as they deem fit. However, the Welsh Government fully acknowledges and respects the Children's Commissioner's independence and as such will not seek to influence in any way the Children's Commissioner's work programme or outputs.*

*As stated above, the Children's Commissioner will endeavour to produce a draft of her budget for the following year by August of the current financial year. If necessary, the Children's Commissioner's office and Head of Finance will discuss the Estimate of income and expenditure at the last 'Welsh Government Officials meeting' prior to submission (summer), where they will discuss any issues with the Deputy Director Children and Families Division and the Head of Children's Branch. The Children's Commissioner's office will then finalise the budget estimate for formal submission by no later than 31st October.*

*The Children's Commissioner recognises that the Permanent Secretary, as the Welsh Government's Principal Accounting Officer, has a duty to ascertain that the Children's Commissioner has put in place adequate arrangements to ensure that the annual allocation is used with regard to the need for regularity, propriety and value for money. As such, the Children's Commissioner will provide the Welsh Government with any relevant information that it might require in advance of discussion at each 'Welsh Government Officials meeting'. To be clear, this is for information only and the Welsh Government will not seek to influence any of the Children's Commissioner's budgetary decisions.*

*The Children's Commissioner and her Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will be made aware at the earliest opportunity of any internal audit or other financial review that might impact on the Children's Commissioner's office, and the Children's Commissioner will be provided with a copy of any Terms of Reference and eventual report. The Children's Commissioner and her staff are committed to providing the Children's Branch with any appropriate assistance in preparation for or during such review.*

In 2022, for the first time, we received a request from the sponsor department to share an early outline of our budget estimate for the 2023-24 financial period, by August 2022, to inform internal, departmental discussions. We did so.

Although we provide early indication of our budget request, we do not receive an indication from Welsh Government of our settlement until its draft budget is published for scrutiny in December. At that point, we are able to establish what our proposed budget will be; at this point, if that differs from our submitted estimate, we are not always told the reasons why.

If concerned at this point, we will usually make representation to our link Minister.

We receive confirmation of our budget late in our strategic planning cycle, sometimes as late as April of the new financial year, therefore making long-term business planning extremely difficult.

Despite including three year forecasts in our budget, we are not informed by Welsh Government what the likely settlement will be in future years for us.



- **What process is in place to agree any modifications to the estimate. How are these communicated and agreed. How significant have they been and what impact have they had on the work of, and plans for, your office.**

There is no agreed process for agreeing any modifications to the estimate. We are not informed of the detailed reasons why our budget estimate may not have been granted in full.

Despite this, over recent years, we have sought modifications by discussing needs with officials and at times, taking issues directly to Welsh Ministers.

The latest example of this was in relation to our budget estimate discussions for 2022-23 financial period. The Commissioner wrote directly to the Minister for Social Justice to outline the potential shortfall in the annual estimate request and the proposed level of funding (as was requested in the original estimate submission) be provided by the Welsh Government. Whilst in this particular instance the level of funding was increased, there is no certainty that a direct appeal to Welsh Ministers will have such a positive outcome as happened in this case.

- **In December 2021, the Welsh Government published its Draft Budget 2022-23 and its first multi-year Welsh Budget since 2017. To what extent are you and the Welsh Government moving to a 'Term of Government' approach, while complying with the statutory requirement to submit an estimate to Welsh Ministers at least five months before the financial year to which it relates. What are the main benefits to doing this.**

Our present budget estimate is submitted for the next financial period and includes indicative figures only for a further two financial periods. The current process makes it almost impossible to plan strategically long-term, due to uncertainty of funding, therefore I would welcome the opportunity of moving to a 'Term of Government' approach to enable better long term financial planning and resource allocation to be achieved.

### 3. Collaboration, including sharing functions and staff

- **During its scrutiny of the 2013-14 Accounts, the Public Accounts Committee of the Fourth Assembly explored with the then Commissioners whether they could deliver savings through greater collaboration and possibly, sharing back-office functions. In its Report, Scrutiny of Accounts 2013-14 (March 2015), the Committee summarised the evidence and recommended: ...that efforts to achieve efficiencies and greater productivity through collaboration, including integration of back-office functions, continue between the Commissioners and the Ombudsman, and that this be reported on in their 2014-15 annual reports and accounts. Responses to the Report are included on the Committee page for the scrutiny of accounts for 2013-14.**

**The Committee would welcome an update about how Commissioners collaborate and the benefits that arise from any joint working, as well as any sharing of backroom functions and staff.**

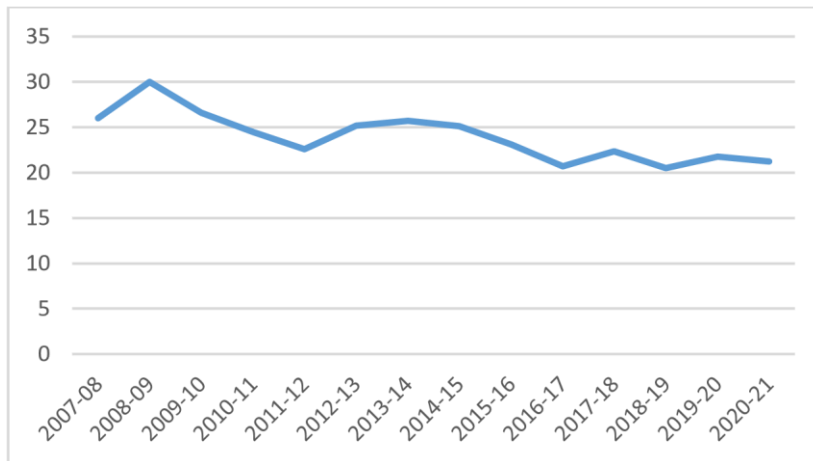
- **Any learning from these experiences: what worked well; how did you mitigate any risks with accountability; what savings did you make; and why you may not have continued with such arrangements. Details of any sharing of functions or staff with other public bodies/regulators in Wales.**

Over the last seven years, we have strived to be an efficient and effective organisation by making ourselves as lean as possible, with staffing and office costs. As can be seen in Figure 1, the staffing



complement is smaller than pre 2015, with a largely stable workforce meaning that many of my staff have reached the top of their pay band levels. This brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the work of the office as well as stability in our workforce; it means I have a staff team who are able to deliver, at fast pace, high quality and high volume work.

Figure 1: Average Staff Numbers 2007-21



In addition to a reduction in the staffing complement, the physical office space we are occupying is also 64% smaller, delivering more value for the public purse. This has been achieved by reducing the number of offices from two to one in 2016 and a move to a smaller office in 2021.

Table 1: reduction in office occupancy by square metre 2015-2023

	2015-16	2022-23	Difference	Difference (%)
Office Accommodation square metre	664.94 (m2)	238 (m2)	426.94 (m2)	64.2

With our new accommodation, we are in a prime position to be able to establish ourselves as a real public sector hub in the heart of Port Talbot in a sustainable building, accessible to all via solid public transport infrastructure, a suitable and safe space for staff. This move included cost savings of £56,000 from the figure of our dilapidations provision and on average a saving of £20,000 per year on rates and rental costs.

It is important to note here that we do not distinguish any of our small staff team as 'back-office' – we require all staff to integrate their specialism with duties related to the delivery of our statutory functions. We all work collaboratively, via a detailed project management approach, to deliver our statutory functions and any additional work we undertake in response to what children and young people are telling us.





During my predecessor's term in office, the team sought opportunities to work collaboratively with other public bodies. The organisation has benefitted from both inward and outward secondment opportunities, working with other organisations to gain experience and knowledge, and reduce the pressure on the public purse. Opportunities have been developed with other organisations with secondments to/from:

- Future Generations Commissioner for Wales;
- Senedd Commission;
- Children's Legal Centre, Swansea University
- Social Care Wales; and
- The Cabinet Office – via the Fast Stream Civil Service scheme

We have also pursued other opportunities for collaborative working, to deliver our statutory remit including:

- As one of our contributions as a public service during the national emergency, we worked with the Welsh Government, Children in Wales and the Senedd Ieuenctid/Youth Parliament during the Covid19 pandemic to undertake large-scale consultations with nearly 43,000 children and young people - 'Coronavirus and Me'-which we estimate would have the cost the Welsh Government over £100,000 in 2020-22 if they had procured the work from another organisation.
- Since 2017, we have been supporting organisations to transform services and ways of working using our 'Right Way' model, which enables public services to place children's human rights at the heart of all planning decisions and service delivery. In our most recent evaluation of the work, here's what practitioners had to say:  
 "The Right Way has helped us to put in place structures to transform our value of listening to children and young people into action.... The Right Way changed the lens – children were not perpetrators who deserved punitive measures, but people who needed restorative support. This has led to the changing of policies that are deemed to be punitive."  
 "Official guidance and documents from the office of the Children's Commissioner have been useful in gaining buy-in from our senior decision makers. Navigating all of the pressures of and demands of service provision requires a little more direct encouragement and Sally brings that. People see her name and they pay attention. It's not my voice anymore but a strategy and resources and a Commissioner. We welcome that."
- We work with other organisations where opportunities for sharing training costs align with organisational requirements.
- We work with other Commissioners and the Ombudsman in Wales to jointly procure the services of internal audit.
- We offer hot desk facilities for other organisations
- We support each other with interview processes where external panel members can be beneficial for many reasons.
- We work with our UK counterparts to deliver joint training and good practice exchange and work with them on submitting a joint report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the state of children's human rights across the UK.



Most of this work is time-bound for the completion of a specific project or piece of work. Where we have embarked on any type of collaborative working a Business Case and full Project Plan is developed to ensure all possible risks are identified and where possible mitigated controls are used to treat the identified risk.

In terms of delivering value for money and securing wider benefits, I would draw the attention of the committee to three aspects of work under my predecessor which I'm keen to maintain and build on (we have already identified some ideas as part of our strategic planning process):

- Shared training has been very effective and has allowed us to build relationships with others.
- Secondments, both inward and outward, have also been useful for dealing with either short-term problems, sharing expertise or knowledge, furthering common goals or ensuring that our organisational resilience and efficiencies have increased.

Most of these secondments have been time-bound for the completion of a specific project, a piece of work or due to an employee's resignation. Where we have embarked on an inward or outward secondment a secondment agreement has been drafted to ensure clarity with the employment relationship, ensure all possible risks are identified and where possible mitigated controls are used to treat the identified risk.

- Joint procurement exercises: we have worked with the Public Services Ombudsman most recently to procure internal audit services and will consider other opportunities for joint procurement when service contracts are due for renewal.

I'm nine months into post and can categorically conclude that partnership working will be a key pillar of the way we work during my term in office, not only from a prudent accounting officer perspective but with an acknowledgment that our statutory remit cannot be delivered alone with such a lean staff team of 24, and a budget which equates to 0.96% of the Social Justice division spend within Welsh Government (figure based on 2023/24 indicative budgets).

In relation to other Welsh commissioners and the Public Services Ombudsman in Wales, we have a Memorandum of Understanding in place (last updated in December 2020) and here are pertinent principles from that agreement:

- *The overarching aim of our five bodies is to contribute to the development of excellent public services in Wales that respect and promote the human rights of citizens in Wales and are sensitive to the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society*
- *We are bodies of equal status and will show regard for each other's remits and activities*
- *We are open to joint working where this may be more effective and appropriate to our joint remits. This may involve cases, thematic reviews, campaigns or joint examinations.*

Our remits are different, our structures are different, our funding is different, but a common thread is the desire to provide excellent public service to our respective sectors and a willingness to work in partnership if doing so would result in significant, positive change to the lives of citizens in Wales. There are clear human rights breaches pertinent to my office and the Welsh Language Commissioner's office and I have sought an early meeting with the new Welsh Language Commissioner to discuss how we could collaborate to challenge those stubborn issues; there are shared concerns around the access to public transport, which I will continue pursuing with the Future Generations Commissioner and there will always be a need to avoid pitching one generation against the other, hence the need for regular dialogue between my office and that of the Older People's



Commissioner for Wales. My focus will be on addressing those real issues affecting children and young people in Wales and working with fellow commissioners, or others if required, to push for change. An area of improvement for me, in relation to this, will be how as a public service, we're making the most of the data we're gathering on children's lives.

I will also continue with the arrangement of having annual discussions with the Permanent Secretary, raising with him not only pertinent issues on children's human rights matters, but also on any matters of relevance to him as principal accounting officer. I know the organisation has previously used this contact to offer support and staffing to the civil service during the Covid19 pandemic.

#### 4. Current financial position and future challenges

##### **- An assessment of the current financial position of the organisation and an assessment of future needs in the context of the pressures on public funds.**

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the significant pressures on public services and public finances – the pandemic, cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine has placed significant challenges at the door of the Welsh Government. All three have had a devastating impact on children's human rights. These issues bring into sharp focus the importance of having a strong and stable independent champion for children's human rights in Wales, that can amplify children's voices but also support Government and others to protect and promote those fundamental rights. This can only be achieved by having a more sustainable funding model.

In my first estimate as Commissioner, I wanted to be certain there was no waste nor extravagance, and took time to evaluate every budget line with my management team.

The financial period 2022-23 - being the first year for me as the new Commissioner - is a consultative year. We have a Strategic Planning cycle in place that sets out the key points for our work programme, within the context of my seven-year term. As part of this planning cycle, we have engaged with children, and those who care for and about them, across Wales, with qualitative engagement across the summer and a large-scale nationwide survey in the autumn – in which nearly 10,000 took part. This, along with our usual staff planning sessions to share intelligence gathered from across our areas of work, will form the basis of our 3-year strategic plan (2023-2026) and the annual work plan for 2023-24.

As at January 2023, this work is continuing and is an important part of exercising my legal remit by allowing children and young people to directly influence my work plans and priorities, however, these priorities have not been fully costed. That said, we have been able to rely on our forecasting figures and historic information about likely spend on projects (which we used as the basis of our draft budget estimate).

Notably, quite a significant proportion of our spend is comprised of fixed costs. Like all public sector employers, my office has faced increased staff costs, largely due to increased pension contributions, incremental in-band pay increases that mirror those of the civil service, and the increase in employers' national insurance contributions. In the last four years, the rise in pension costs (64%) has significantly outstripped the rise in our wage bill (11.4%).



**- The impact of the designation of your office under the changes to the Government of Wales Act 2006 (Budget Motions and Designated Bodies) Order 2018 on your current and future financial position. What were the main challenges in moving to the new arrangements and what do you see at the most significant change(s) as a result of them.**

To note, as an organisation we have always welcomed plans to 'simplify systems, improve the consistency and transparency of Welsh Government finance and provide clearer accountability to the Assembly [now Senedd] and the public'. However, the inclusion of our office in the Order does present a risk, which we have highlighted on numerous occasions to Welsh Government, as there are potential unintended consequences of these changes in relation to the independence of this institution.

In particular, the new limit to the general fund which can be carried over from year to year, of 5% of our annual grant (circa. £86K) has created an increased risk of us not being able to deliver our statutory function and our ability to act swiftly to undertake urgent additional work (as seen during the Covid19 pandemic) due to lack of funding. An example of this in year is our request to Welsh Government for additional funds to support our participation in the Covid19 UK Public Inquiry as one of only eight core participants of Module 2B, which will look into decision-making in Wales during the pandemic.

The order sees us having to request additional funds to undertake pieces of work, such as undertake statutory reviews or examinations of Welsh Government, from Welsh Government itself. There remains lack of clarity about the method by which this may be requested or the rationale for it being granted or how. This consequently has the potential to compromise the independence of my office and curtail my ability to undertake additional work.

I concur with my predecessor that this risk could be mitigated if plans were put in place to make this office accountable to Senedd Cymru.

As a reminder, the Paris Principles – which establish the minimum standards required for the independence and effective functioning of national human rights institutions – require that a national institution such as the Children's Commissioner for Wales: "Shall have an infrastructure which is suited to the smooth conduct of its activities, in particular adequate funding. The purpose of this funding should be to enable it to have its own staff premises, in order to be independent of the Government and not be subject to financial control which might affect its independence."

I trust this submission will be of interest and of use to committee members during the inquiry. Please do not hesitate to request any additional information from us.

Yours sincerely,



Rocio Cifuentes MBE  
Children's Commissioner for Wales

