

**Children's Commissioner for Wales**

**Budget estimate 2019-20**

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## 1. Estimate submission

I submit this budget estimate to Welsh Ministers as required by paragraph 6 (2) of Schedule 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000. It sets out the resources required to discharge my statutory functions.

I have based my budget estimate – and my draft delivery plan – on my funding remaining that of the previous year at £1,543,000.

**Table 1: Estimate and indicative budget level for the next three financial years**

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Indicative</b>	<b>Indicative</b>
	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
	(£)	(£)	(£)
Salaries	1,099,167	1,112,510	1,126,886
Premises	88,103	88,103	88,103
Office costs	74,900	74,900	74,900
Training and wellbeing	25,100	25,100	25,100
Travel and subsistence	14,550	14,550	14,550
External audit fee	17,883	17,883	17,883
Internal audit fee	10,500	10,500	10,500
Communication	47,050	47,050	47,050
ICT	30,500	30,500	30,500
Project costs	159,667	146,401	132,200
Capital and depreciation	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,577,420</b>	<b>1,577,497</b>	<b>1,577,672</b>
<b>Funding from Welsh Government</b>	<b>1,543,000</b>	<b>1,543,000</b>	<b>1,543,000</b>
<b>Over/(Under) Spend</b>	<b>34,420</b>	<b>34,497</b>	<b>34,672</b>

## **2. Role and functions of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales**

Established by the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (CCfW) is an independent children’s rights institution. My remit is laid down in the Children’s Commissioner for Wales Act 2001, which amended the Care Standards Act 2000. My principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children. This must be my overriding objective when undertaking my functions.

A child is defined in the 2000 Act as a person under the age of 18, although I am able to act when a young person is older than this when certain conditions are fulfilled. For example, I can act on behalf of a young person who has been placed in care and for whom the local authority has a continuing duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

In exercising my functions, I must have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – an international charter which sets out the minimum standards for children and young people wherever they live. The UNCRC underpins all of my work. To ensure children’s rights are upheld in Wales, I can review the functions or exercise of functions of various public bodies and of Welsh Government, and review and monitor the arrangements which certain public bodies have in place to safeguard and promote the rights of children in respect of dealing with complaints and representations, ensuring that proper action is taken in response to whistleblowing, representing the views and wishes of children, and providing children with advice and support.

My remit covers all areas of the devolved powers of the National Assembly for Wales insofar as they affect children’s rights and welfare. I can also make representations to the Welsh Ministers about any matter affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales.

## **3. Governance arrangements**

As corporation sole, responsibility and accountability for the activities of my office remain with me, and as Accounting Officer, I am responsible for maintaining a sound system of governance. As a public office in receipt of public funds, I am committed to implementing rigorous and transparent accountability and decision-making systems. My Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes and values by which I direct and control the activities of my office. The following elements are key components:

### **Management Team**

Its primary purpose is to provide the Commissioner with support and advice on the strategic direction of the organisation, including contributing to the development of strategic aims and annual work plans. The Team is also responsible for the strategic leadership of the organisation, managing the operational, day-to-day running of the office in line with the organisation’s values.

### **Commissioner’s Advisory Panel and Young People’s Panel**

These panels provide independent advice support, scrutiny and challenge to the Commissioner and staff, so as to secure the effective delivery of the Commissioner’s statutory responsibilities and her staff regarding policies and proposals, informing the policy and strategic priorities.

### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

Advises the Commissioner on the strategic processes for risk, control and governance, accounting policies, the accounts, and the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit.

#### - **Internal Audit**

Deloitte provides internal audit for the office. They operate to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and submit regular reports, which include the independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's system of internal control. In their latest Annual Report to me, Deloitte provided substantial assurance in relation to corporate governance, risk management. They also concluded, based on the work they undertook last year, that we have a sound system of internal control, which should provide substantial assurance regarding the achievement of my objectives.

#### - **External Audit**

On an annual basis, my organisation's accounts are examined and certified by the Auditor General for Wales, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the Schedule 2 to the Care Standards Act. The Auditor General is responsible for providing an opinion on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the organisation. They consider a number of matters both qualitative and quantitative relating to the accounts. In 2018, the Auditor General for Wales gave an unqualified opinion on our 2017-18 Annual Report and Accounts.

### **4. Our performance**

Our latest [Annual Report & Accounts](#) includes a detailed analysis of our achievements. It includes details of how our project and core (day-to-day) work has delivered against our [three year plan for children and young people](#). Below is a summary of this year's key achievements:

- Listened to 9443 children and young people all over Wales
- Assisted 554 individual children and young people through our Investigation and Advice Service
- Assessed progress on wheelchair access to schools
- Published 'Sam's Story', a report highlighting the views of 2000 children about bullying, developed resources for schools and put on a Sam's Story exhibition in the Senedd
- Brought forward new evidence on children's experiences of play and leisure
- Developed sensitive and powerful 'Tackling Islamophobia' lessons for schools that changed children's understanding and attitudes
- Listened to the experiences of young people with learning disabilities, and their families, as they move towards adulthood
- Secured a new legal duty for children's rights in Additional Learning Needs provision in education
- Secured further opportunities and resources for young people leaving care
- Ensured that children and young people living in care had a chance to express their views through the Bright Spots survey
- Worked with public bodies including health boards, Welsh Ambulances, Parc Prison, National Museums and local authorities to implement a Children's Rights Approach
- Published a new guide for schools on how to implement a children's rights approach and supported thousands of pupils and their teachers to learn about rights and influence our work through our successful ambassador schemes
- Produced a self-assessment toolkit with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, for public bodies to work on children's rights alongside the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Intervened to protect Sexual Assault Referral centres
- Enabled primary schools to set up new, rewarding inter-generational clubs and activities with their older neighbours

- Engaged with a primary school eco-committee to audit our environmental record, and changed our behaviour as a result
- Become a Real Living Wage employer
- Secured 763 pieces of media coverage for the Commissioner’s work

## 5. Effect on General Fund

The 2017-18 Annual Report and Accounts reported that the level of the general fund was £271,000. The majority of the rise in the value of the general fund from 2016-17 was due to additional funding of £40,000 provided by the Welsh Government that year to fund the ‘Bright Spots’ project. Due to external factors not within our control this project did not complete within 2017-18 financial year, therefore the funds (£40,000) remained in our accounts. The project has now completed successfully and all funds have been released to the project contractor.

The table below estimates the impact on the general fund balance of the movement between the 2018-19 balance and the budget/funding for the next three years:

**Table 2: Movement on the General Fund over the financial periods**

	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>
General Fund at the beginning of the period	271,000	218,806	184,386	149,889
Over/(Under) Spend	52,194	34,420	34,497	34,672
General Fund at the end of the period	218,806	184,386	149,889	115,217

As per my policy on general funds, I am committed to ensuring that I maintain a positive balance on the general fund for any unforeseen events. I continue to monitor the underlying assumptions and review the level of the fund on an annual basis.

I have projected the planned over-spend for the remaining three years of my term as Commissioner. This represents funding of fairly-paid interns to support my team in implementing our ambitious work programme. It also provides a structured career development opportunity for young people taking part in the scheme. This spend will be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis.

As a prudent accounting officer, I have detailed financial year forecasts, which I discuss with my Management Team on a monthly basis, and my Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on a quarterly basis. These forecasts examine the circumstances within which I need to operate, to deliver my ambitious strategic plan which is based on extensive consultation with children and young people. One key element is securing a flat budget from the Welsh Government. The second is securing a suitable office location for my staff team, as our current lease expires in 2021. To that end I established a Provision for Dilapidations in 2017-18, which will cover the expenditure necessary to comply with my legal liabilities under the present lease.

To ensure objectiveness and a timely decision, I have secured, at no cost, a staff member from the Civil Service Finance Fast Stream for 6 months (starting 1 October 2018) to undertake the final phase

of our accommodation project. This will include a full review, including a cost-benefit analysis, of all options. I have committed to presenting a decision paper to my Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in February 2019.

I also continue to review individual budget lines and my expenditure commitments on a monthly basis with my Management Team, to ensure that my spending is focused on the delivery of my clear strategic objectives, which all aim to drive positive change for children and young people in Wales.

Whilst wholly independent of government, in the spirit of transparency, I discuss on a quarterly basis my current financial situation with Welsh Government officials, including my reserves, and the budget forecasting I am undertaking on a monthly basis with my Management Team. My Audit and Risk Assurance Committee also provides challenge with regard to my expenditure and my estimate.

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