



Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016

Context

The Children's Commissioner for Wales (CCfW) is an independent children's rights institution established in 2001. The Commissioner's principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children.¹ In exercising his functions, he must have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).² The Commissioner's remit covers all areas of the devolved powers of the National Assembly for Wales insofar as they affect children's rights and welfare. He may also make representations to the National Assembly for Wales about any matter affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales.¹

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people aged 18 and under. It is the most widely ratified international human rights instrument and gives children and young people a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which State Parties to the Convention are expected to implement.

The four general principles of the UNCRC are:

- non-discrimination
- the best interest of the child
- the right to life, survival, and development; and
- respect for the views of the child

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is subject to Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Regulations) Wales 2011 and this Strategic Equality Plan outlines how he will discharge those duties.

¹ Section 72A Care Standards Act 2000

² Regulation 22 Children's Commissioner for Wales Regulations 2001

Foreword by Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales

As Children's Commissioner for Wales, it is my job to:

- support children and young people to find out about their rights;
- listen to children and young people to find out what's important to them;
- advise children, young people and those who care for them if they feel they've got nowhere else to go with their problems;
- influence government and other organisations to make a positive difference to children's lives and to hold them to account; and
- speak up for children and young people on a national level – being the children's champion in Wales.

It is essential that I engage with the most vulnerable children and young people who often find it more difficult to have their voices heard and sometimes find themselves at a disadvantage because of the way services are provided. The public sector equality duty provides me with a useful tool to continue promoting the rights of particular groups of children and young people, such as children and young people with disabilities, who often face additional barriers. It helps to ensure that I do so systemically, enables me to assess how effective we are as a team, and helps ensure all my staff take responsibility for giving a voice to all children and young people in Wales. This may mean taking specific positive action in particular circumstances.

I want to inspire all service providers to improve the way in which we deliver services in Wales. One of the ways I'll do this is by being a standard bearer in the way I implement the duties and also by raising awareness of the need to always consider the needs of children and young people within the equalities context.

I intend to use my status and powers as an independent human rights institution to hold public bodies to account in how they apply the equality duties, ensuring that whilst disappointingly, the Equality Act does not offer protection on the basis of being under the age of 18, **it does apply** to every single child or young person under the age of 18 who have a protected characteristic.

It is clear that my office has an important role in Wales to progress equality of opportunity for all children and young people in Wales. I will utilise the equality duties to do so in order that the rights of all children and young people are upheld.



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Children's Commissioner for Wales' Vision

We will work with and on behalf of children and young people to achieve positive and lasting changes in their lives.

Children's Commissioner for Wales' Values

These eight values help us make sure every decision we make is made for the right reason:

- Children and young people are at the centre of everything we do;
- We listen to children and young people, driving action and change;
- We make a difference to children and young people's lives by working in partnership; with people and organisations and holding them to account where necessary;
- We champion children and young people;
- We believe in everyone's rights, diversity and respect;
- We lead and challenge with integrity and courage;
- We inspire people to do their best for children and young people;
- We invest in our staff.

Children's Commissioner for Wales' Goals (2011 – 2015)

There are many things we want to achieve and we have got to prioritise. We want to:

- Increase understanding of children and young people's rights and the Children's Commissioner for Wales
So that...children, young people and adults have a better understanding of their rights and how the Commissioner can help if people don't get their rights.
- Reduce inequality and discrimination
So that...children and young people have a fair chance.
- Continue to be a high-performing organisation, providing inspirational leadership to others
So that... we can work in partnership to introduce positive and lasting differences to children and young people's lives and experiences.
- Ensure effective service delivery by all for children and young people
So that... children and young people are protected, are provided with services and support and are able to take part in decisions about their lives.
- Improve attitudes towards children and young people
So that... children and young people are valued by everyone.



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- Build a strong, confident, inspiring and resilient organisation

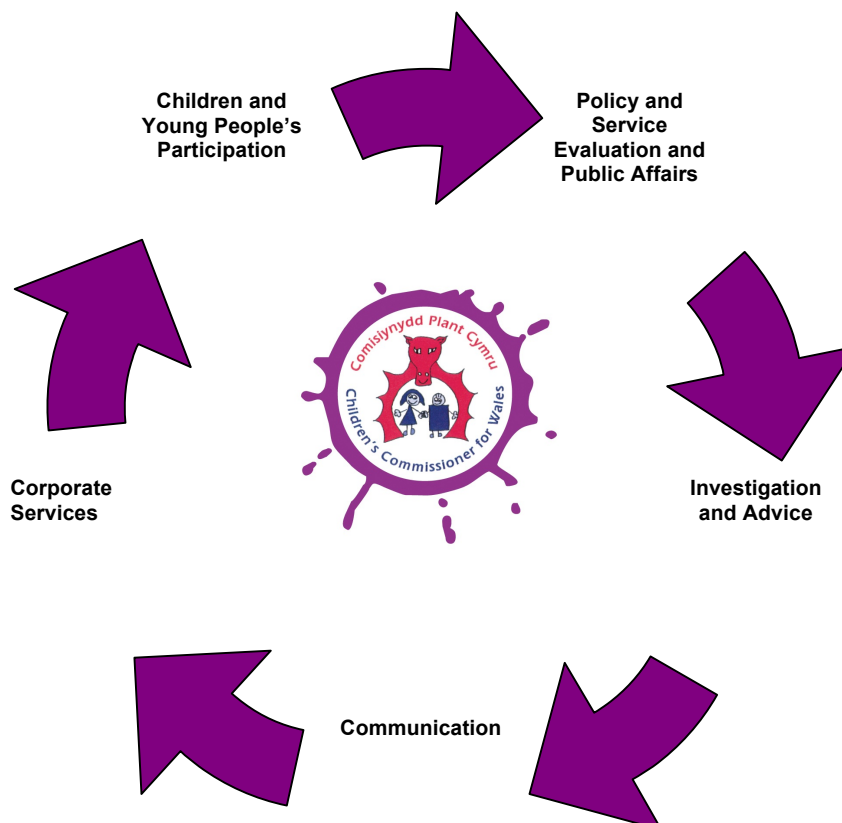
So that... our staff work effectively as a team to help make children and young people a national priority.

We will always respond to children and young people.

We will make children and young people a national priority.

Staff Structure

There are five clear functions that are required in the Office to fulfil the mandate of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. These are interdependent and none can function in isolation. These functions will work together in project and theme teams to deliver the work programme of the Commissioner:



Communications

The overall aims of the Communication function are to position the Commissioner as *the* voice of authority on children’s issues in Wales, to achieve excellent media coverage for the organisation across all aspects of the work



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of CCfW, ensuring that key messages are communicated to all relevant stakeholders, and ensuring high-quality publications are produced and disseminated to relevant stakeholders on behalf of the Commissioner.

The Communications function leads on the development and implementation of an external communications strategy aimed at raising the profile of the Commissioner, his role and the work of his office.

Other responsibilities include developing and implementing CCfW's digital communications strategy, which includes managing the content of the website.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services function of the office supports the achievement of the Commissioner's vision and corporate plan and adds value to the organisation by providing expertise in effective and sustainable governance, administration, informatics, advice, finance and facilities systems. These systems ensure that as a public body we comply with the principles outlined by "The Good Governance Standard for Public Services" so that our accountability and decision-making functions are rigorous and transparent.

The Head of Corporate Services has overall responsibility for the framework within which all of the above systems and processes operate and the staff members employed within this function.

Our Administrative Officers provide the full range of support activities to their work colleagues including advice on health and safety at work and provide telephone and welcoming reception services to children and young people, visitors to the office, other professionals and the general public.

Our Finance Officers work to ensure that all business activity is conducted with the highest regard to financial regularity ensuring that the Commissioner complies with statutory and best practice accounting requirements.

Our IT and Web Development Officer ensures that the work of the organisation is enabled and enhanced by robust information technology resources and systems.

Our Human Resources Officer works to ensure that the Children's Commissioner for Wales creates a supportive and empowering workplace and is an exemplar in employer practices

Our Volunteer and Placement Officer works to ensure that volunteers and students are utilised and valued for the unique contribution that they can make to the achievement of the vision and corporate plan.



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Investigation and Advice

The Investigation and Advice Team are based in our two offices in Swansea and Colwyn Bay. Children and young people, parents and carers, or other professionals contact the team in a number of different ways, by phone, text, letter or email. A member of the team acting as the duty officer for the day will determine what action needs to be taken on a case-by-case basis. This may involve referral to another organisation, signposting to another organisation or we may become directly involved in a case.

We will do our best to identify a quick solution to resolve issues at the lowest possible level. We may speak to people over the telephone or we may ask for meetings to help the child or young person have their say. We will never give a child or young person another telephone number to call; we will always make the initial contact on their behalf.

The Officers travel all over Wales to meet with children and young people to listen, support and advocate on their behalf.

Participation

The Participation team works to inform children and young people, and adults who work with them, about the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the UNCRC. Participation Officers also gather the views of and listen to what children and young people have to say and involve children and young people directly in the work of the office

The Participation team does this in a number of different ways, ensuring that all children and young people, wherever they are from in Wales are informed about, and have the opportunity to be listened to by, and influence the work of, the Commissioner.

Participation Officers work with ambassadors in schools across Wales. Ambassadors are children in primary schools who are elected by their peers; their job is to raise awareness about the Children's Commissioner for Wales and children's rights in their own school communities.

Participation Officers also run the Backchat service through which any child or young person can give us their views on issues that affect them by answering Backchat questions on our website. In addition to this, officers meet and engage with groups of children and young people to let them know about the Commissioner and listen



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to their experiences. What they tell us informs our work focus and policy responses with a view to affecting change for all Wales' children.

Policy and Service Evaluation

The team seeks to ensure that children's rights are delivered to all children in Wales in a number of ways including by responding to proposed legislation in both the UK Parliament and National Assembly for Wales and responding to consultations on new or revised guidance and regulations produced by the Welsh Government.

By monitoring the recommendations made in reports, the team seeks to ensure that the recommendations are fully implemented and lead to positive changes for children and young people. The team is also responsible for conducting reviews of complaints, whistleblowing and arrangements for advocacy services within regulated services in Wales.

The team has undertaken a number of service evaluations looking at the implementation of policy and how such policies affect children and young people's lives and rights. Examples of such evaluations have included work on the provision of wheelchairs to children and young people, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and play for disabled children.

The team also monitors the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Wales. With colleagues across the other Commissioners' offices in the UK we monitor the overall implementation of the UNCRC in the UK and report on progress to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Equality Act 2010 and the public sector duties in Wales – what does it mean?

Under the Equality Act 2010 (statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 the Children's Commissioner for Wales must develop and implement a set of equality objectives and develop an action plan that sets out how these objectives can be met. This strategic equality plan outlines how the Children's Commissioner for Wales intends to do this.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales must, in the exercise of his functions, have due regard to:



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1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not; and
3. foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not.

For the purposes of the equality duty, the protected characteristics are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

Definitions

Equality Objectives:

What CCfW has said it will do to achieve the general duties noted above.

Strategic Equality Plan:

The plan (this document) is the overarching summary of the objectives and arrangements considered necessary by the CCfW to enable better performance of the general public sector equality duty.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):

The equality impact assessment process is a systemic way of examining whether a function, policy or procedure affects any person or group of persons adversely. The CCfW will initiate a schedule of EIAs and make the assessments publicly available.

For the purpose of corporate planning and service provision it has been decided that Welsh language considerations be incorporated into the equality impact assessment process though it will not be referenced in the strategic equality plan.

Population data for Wales



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Total population of those under 18: 624,798

Gender in Wales 0-17

Males: 320,776

Females: 304,022

Disability in Wales 0-17

32,361 children and young people aged 0-17 have a limiting long term illness.

150,616 children and young people aged 0-18 live with a disabled parent.

Ethnicity in Wales 0-17

White: 585,289

Asian or British Asian: 18,028

Mixed: 10,622

Black or Black British: 3,841

Chinese: 972

Other ethnic group: 5,632

Religion in Wales 0-17

Christian: 363,3785

Muslim: 16,534

Hindu: 2,094

Any other religion: 6,571

No religion: 234,974

Pregnancy and maternity in Wales 0-17

Conception rates are 7.8 per 1,000 for under 16 and 37.7 for under 18 years of age.

Gender reassignment

Data on gender reassignment is not collected in any large scale social survey or on the census.

Sexual Orientation



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Data on sexual orientation is not collected on the census and is only available for those aged 16+ from the integrated household survey.

*the Strategic Equality Plan will be updated when relevant data becomes available. For information on data sources, please contact the office (contact details at the rear of the document).

Strategic Equality Objectives

The Commissioner's office has utilised the equality impact assessment process in each function to identify the equalities objectives and this will continue on an ongoing basis via an annual schedule of EIAs. It is the Commissioner's view that in implementing the objectives, his office will be able to mainstream all equalities considerations. This will directly impact on the way in which his office delivers services and will also enable him to prioritise particular areas of work relating to equalities within his annual work plans. In implementing the objectives and reviewing on an annual basis, the Commissioner will be able to do this from a robust, evidence based position.

Strategic Equality Objective 1: Corporate leadership and governance – leading from the top

As an established national human rights institution, the Children's Commissioner for Wales will ensure that corporate leadership and processes will ensure that equality objectives are included in all corporate planning processes.

The Children's Commissioner will seek ways to utilise his status and powers to progress the equality agenda in Wales using an internal focus to ensure that we have the systems in place to ensure we are always improving the way in which we work, as well as having an outward focus in showing leadership and holding other public bodies to account.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales will continue to develop a robust corporate data management system which will enable his office to evidence their work in relation to all sections of the community. This will also ensure that all functions operate from an informed evidence base which in turn is reflected in the office's annual work plans.

The development of the corporate data management systems will include:

- Investigations and Advice Service – will develop a coherent data collection service.



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- Policy – correspondence and policy issues brought to the Commissioner’s office to be collated centrally.
- Participation – collation of evidence from visits.
- Corporate service – data on access point to the office.

Corporate leadership and development will include:

- corporate Planning process to be continually Equality Impact Assessed and that the equalities considerations outlined within the document are implemented;
- risk register to be amended to include risks relating to non –compliance with the public sector equality duties in Wales;
- identify strategic opportunities to raise the profile of equality issues within his remit, including specific policy work which will be supported by all functions. This may require use of targeted resources from supporting functions such as the Investigations and Advice service and Communication;
- ensure that there is a section on internal compliance and an analysis of other public bodies compliance within his annual report. This report has a statutory basis and is sent to the First Minister of Wales, is discussed at a National Assembly for Wales Committee, debated in plenary and also receives a formal response by the Welsh Government; and
- engage with strategic partners to inform discussions relating to equality. Possible bodies will include Welsh Government, Older People’s Commissioner , EHRC, The Public Services Ombudsman and various inspectorates.

Objective 1	Corporate leadership, governance and processes will ensure that equality objectives are included in all corporate planning processes
Outcome	Equalities issues mainstreamed and evidenced throughout all functions
Protected characteristics / other equality issues covered	All protected characteristics and relevant equality strands
Relevant policies functions or procedures	All
Evidence base	National population profiles including the Child Wellbeing Monitor for Wales / internal audit reports



Timeline	Annual monitoring and reporting as minimum – see specific actions
Stakeholders	Members of the public, audit committee, Management Team, professionals working with children and CCfW staff, strategic national bodies. Children and young people

Action / Task	Timescale	Expected outcome	Progress
CCfW Risk Register reflects the organisational risks to non-compliance with statutory obligations. See also Welsh Language Scheme.	July 2012 (Audit committee meeting)	CCfW Risk Register amended and reported upon as per management team risk register updates.	
Audit process to reflect equalities obligations and commitments, including compliance with agreed actions and timescales. The same will apply to the Welsh Language Scheme.	June 2012	The audit schedule to be amended with independent auditors directed accordingly.	
Corporate planning guidance to be implemented as per EIA	June 2012	The annual work plan to include particular work streams in relation to equality work which will be reflected in the CCfW Annual Report 2012/13	
Annual report will include a section on CCfW compliance with the	October 2012	The published annual report will include specific sections on the	



<p>Equality Act 2010 duties as well as feature within policy sections of the report where at least one assessment per year will be made regarding public sector compliance to the Act by other public bodies.</p>		<p>Equality Act 2012 enabling the National Assembly for Wales to debate the content.</p>	
<p>EIA process will continue to be rolled out with a structured schedule as well as ensuring that new functions, policies and procedures are Equality Impact Assessed.</p>	<p>Ongoing work as per EIA schedule 2012-2016 with an annual review of progress every January</p>	<p>The Strategic Equality Schedule to be assessed on an annual basis to assess requirements for amendments following equality impact assessments. Equality Impact Assessments to be made publicly available. The schedule may also require immediate revisions if an EIA dictates. Relevant actions from EIAs will be fed into the corporate planning process.</p>	
<p>Training for staff to support the implementation of the strategic equality plan. This will include rolling out of the equality impact assessment training to relevant staff.</p>	<p>Ongoing work as per EIA schedule 2012-2016 with an annual review of progress every January</p>	<p>The corporate learning and development plan amended to ensure CCfW capacity to implement the Strategic Equality Scheme. This will enable staff to be responsive to the needs of those with whom we communicate as well as developing</p>	



		knowledge to enable relevant staff to identify in policy and casework, any potential non-compliance of the equality duties in Wales.	
<p>Introduce a central data collection information system to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equality data collection system for the Investigation and Advice Service (to include data in line with ONS census data) - Noting language preference when switchboard Welsh Language Scheme requirement is implemented - Introduce a mechanism for recording all correspondence noting any equality relevant issue. - Introduce a mechanism for recording equality information and evidence from CCfW visits and those who visit the CCfW office. 	By March 2013	<p>Corporate data management system in place with priority given to the Investigations and Advice service.</p> <p>Analysis of data leading to potential development of Performance Indicators.</p>	
The external relations strategy to be updated to ensure that the desire to progress the equalities agenda in Wales is reflected	May 2012	External relations strategy will feed into the annual work plan with a discrete section on key stakeholder engagement.	



in the strategic engagement with other bodies – such as the Older People’s Commissioner and Welsh Government.			
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Strategic Equality Objective 2: Delivering an effective service.

The Children’s Commissioner for Wales will continue to improve the way in which his office delivers services – ensuring that the needs of the public are central in the way in which services are configured and implemented.

The Children’s Commissioner for Wales offers a public service, has public facing functions and can assist in the realisation of progressing equality of opportunity in Wales. Whilst the office doesn’t provide direct services in the same manner as the majority of public bodies, the relevance of the equality duties in how the Commissioner exercises his functions is clear.

Objective 2	The Children’s Commissioner for Wales will continue to improve the way in which his office delivers services – ensuring that the needs of the public are central in the way in which services are configured and implemented.
Outcome	The population can access CCfW services and activities in a way which is sensitive to their needs.
Protected characteristics / other equality issues covered	All protected characteristics and relevant equality strands.
Relevant policies functions or procedures	All
Evidence base	National population profiles including the

Timeline	Child Wellbeing Monitor for Wales / satisfaction surveys / CCfW data collection processes.
	Annual monitoring and reporting as minimum – see specific actions.
	Stakeholders
	Children and Young People, Professionals working with and for children and young people, CCfW staff, general public.

Action / Task	Timescale	Expected outcome	Progress
Revision of Investigations and Advice operational guidance to introduce a consistent process for recording equality characteristics within the Investigation and Advice Service. This includes recording the nature of the case (i.e. does it relate to equality issues) as well as the characteristics of the service user – in line with ONS census categorisations.	July 2012	Implementing of new operational guidance in August to be audited and evaluated after 3 months. Improved data on the characteristics of those accessing the Investigations and Advice service.	
Introduce an evaluation process (satisfaction survey) for Investigation and Advice casework.	July 2012	Feedback from service users to improve service configuration and practice as well as improved data on service users.	



<p>Revision of Investigations and Advice operational guidance to include promotion of and implementing of alternative communication methods. This to include the access gateways (switchboard, email, texts and correspondence).</p> <p>See also Welsh Language Scheme.</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Ability to disaggregate preferences of communication methods and analysis of possible under-representation of contact from particular groups.</p>	
<p>Revision of visitors / events guide to ensure that all equalities requirements are implemented and the equality needs of visitors are addressed</p> <p>Development of guidance for staff to help formalise engagement work with all protected characteristics via the participation implementation action plan.</p> <p>See also Welsh Language Scheme.</p>	<p>Annual work plan 2012-13</p>	<p>Practices that ensure we are sensitive to the needs of those with whom we engage – this will include physical and cultural accessibility.</p>	



Strategic Equality Objective 3: External Relations – How we communicate and with whom

To further develop our external relations policy and participation work to ensure diversity and equality is integral to all external communications.

The communication and engagement methods used by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales will be tailored according to each work plan objective. The Commissioner will ensure that he takes adequate steps to ensure that children and young people in Wales are able to engage with the office as well as ensuring that their parents, carers or representatives are enabled and encouraged to influence the work of the Commissioner’s office.

Objective 3	The Children’s Commissioner for Wales will further develop our external relations policy to ensure diversity and equality is integral to all external communications.
Outcome	The CCfW services are accessible to all and that the corporate work streams of the office are reflective of having engaged with people across Wales, including those with protected characteristics. We also aim to be able to analyse the effectiveness of targeted communications and participation work using the corporate data systems.
Protected characteristics / other equality issues covered	All protected characteristics and relevant equality strands.
Relevant policies functions or procedures	Communications and Participation – though all functions expected to contribute.
Evidence base	National population profiles including the Child Wellbeing Monitor for Wales / CCfW corporate data collection processes / requests for information made.
Timeline	Annual monitoring and reporting as



Stakeholders	minimum – see specific actions.
	Children and young people, General Public, Media professionals, NGOs, Government, Politicians at all levels, Professional working with and for children and young people, CCfW staff, audit committee.

Action / Task	Timescale	Expected outcome	Progress
The Participation implementation plan: to undertake a mapping exercise to establish the status of support groups and networks relating to equality characteristics with which the CCfW currently has contact.	August 2012	Analysis of current position and identify actions of engaging with children and young people with protected characteristics. This work will inform the annual work plan.	
Systemic analysis of awareness raising activity, targeting people with protected characteristics.	July 2012	Analysis of current position and identifying actions of engagement with those with protected characteristics.	
Systemic analysis of promotional activity and uptake of ambassador scheme in relation to equalities considerations.	September 2012	Analysis of current position and Identify actions for engaging with children and young people with protected characteristics.	
Audit of publications strategy.	June 2012	Analysis of compliance against actions identified in EIA.	

