

**OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

**REVIEW OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND**

FINAL REPORT

24th OCTOBER 2007

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Deloitte MCS Limited was commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) to undertake a strategic review of the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The agreed terms of reference for the review focussed on the following key areas:

- an examination of the delivery functions conferred on the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- an assessment of the validity of those functions in relation to Government policy objectives;
- an examination of the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, including the Chief Executive, Head of Communications and Participation, Head of Research, Policy and Service Review, and Corporate Services Manager;
- consideration of how roles and responsibilities have evolved from when the office was established by drawing comparisons with the original job specification for each post; and
- an examination of existing means of delivery and presentation of the optimum means of the delivery of those roles and responsibilities, having particular regard to cost effectiveness.

The review addresses the following themes:

- **Delivery of Objectives** - How the Commissioner contributes to the delivery of the Government and wider Departmental objectives with regard to the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- **Relationships** - What relationships the Commissioner has with: Children and young people; OFMDFM, DFP and Ministers; Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); Statutory sector; and Voluntary and Community sector;
- **Past Performance** - How effectively the Commissioner has performed against the aims & objectives of the Corporate Plan, utilised financial resources and worked with others to deliver the objectives set out in this corporate plan. Also an examination of how the Commissioner compares against other Commissioners and Ombudsmen and the established relationships with its parent/sponsor Department and Ministers;
- **Responsiveness** - What the Commissioner's customers, stakeholders and staff think about its role and performance addressing how responsive the Commissioner has been to their needs/requirements, and the extent to which the Commissioner has maintained the focus of the remit as outlined in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- **Good Practice** – Examples of good practice within the Commissioner's delivery of its functions, and an examination of evidence of the systemic use of quality schemes such as Lexcel, EFQM Excellence Model®, Charter Mark and Investors in People; and

- **Delivery Mechanisms** - How the Commissioner's services should be delivered in the future. How the Commissioner's structures contributed to the delivery of its statutory role and corporate objectives. The organisational option best suited to delivering responsive, efficient and quality services in the future.

The report sets out the outcomes of the review, considers the options for future arrangements, and includes additional recommendations to affect improved delivery of its services. Three options were required to be considered, specifically: abolition, continuation of NDPB status and alternative delivery arrangements. The review identifies and recommends a preferred option.

1.3 Our Approach to the Assignment

In undertaking the strategic review, the project team has completed the following activities.

Table 1.1

Project Team Approach

Method	Description
Desk Research	Extensive review of a wide range of reports and management information relating to the Commissioner
Consider performance expectations, and review of past performance	Assessment of the Commissioner's performance against agreed targets
Value for Money Analysis	Examination of the financial arrangements in place and examination of the value for money aspects of the Commissioner
Benchmarking	High level comparison with Commissioners in England, Scotland, Wales, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand and Norway
Consultation ¹	Internal Stakeholder Consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commissioner; ▪ Chief Executive; ▪ Head of Communications and Participation; ▪ Head of Research, Policy and Service Review; ▪ Corporate Services Manager; ▪ Independent Chair of Audit & Risk Committee; ▪ Staff focus groups for each function within the organisation; and ▪ The Young People's Panel.

¹ For a full list of consultees, see Appendix I

Table 1.1
Project Team Approach (cont'd)

<p>Consultation (cont'd)</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder Consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; ▪ Office of the Ombudsman for Northern Ireland; ▪ Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety; ▪ Department of Education; ▪ Departmental Solicitor's Office; ▪ Northern Ireland Court Service – Head of Operations; ▪ Northern Ireland Court Service – Lord Chief Justice; ▪ Health and Social Services Boards; ▪ Northern Ireland Office; ▪ Southern Health and Social Care Trust; and ▪ Youth Council for Northern Ireland. <p>Non-Statutory Stakeholder organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's Law Centre; ▪ NSPCC; ▪ Barnardos; ▪ Include Youth; ▪ CiNI; ▪ An Munia Tober – Belfast Traveller Group; ▪ Save the Children; and ▪ VOYPIC.
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1.4 Format of Report

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** gives an overview of the Commissioner and sets the contextual background to the review and highlights key legislative, strategic and operational considerations;
- **Section 3** examines the Commissioner's performance against key corporate objectives and contribution to wider government policy;
- **Section 4** provides an analysis of financial management;
- **Section 5** summarises the findings from the internal and external stakeholder consultation exercise;
- **Section 6** examines the governance and management of the Commissioner and considers alternative service delivery options;
- **Section 7** provides a benchmarking analysis of the impact and effectiveness of the functions of the Commissioner against other similar offices for Children;
- **Section 8** presents our conclusions; and
- **Section 9** details our recommendations to the future operations of the Commissioner.

2 Overview and Context

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the background to the review and of the roles of OFMDFM and the Commissioner. In addition, we outline the key legislative and political imperatives that form the context for the work of the Commissioner.

2.2 Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

OFMDFM is a fully functioning department of the Northern Ireland Administration with a wide range of responsibilities, including promoting a culture of equality and rights; and targeting social need and promoting social inclusion. The Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) is a branch within the Good Relations and Reconciliation Division of OFMDFM. The branch was established to ensure that the rights and needs of children and young people living in Northern Ireland are given a high priority.

2.3 The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland – An overview

The Commissioner is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the CYPU of OFMDFM. It was established under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003.

The relationship between OFMDFM and the Commissioner is set out in a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.

The following sections set out the background, legislative basis, mission and activities of the Commissioner, and provide some headline information on current staffing and budget arrangements.

2.3.1 Background

The Belfast Agreement, signed by the governments of the UK and Ireland in April 1998, included a commitment to establish, by Westminster legislation, an independent Human Rights Commission for Northern Ireland. This was done in section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Programme for Government drawn up by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2000 recognised the need to focus policies on the future, and on young people, in a spirit of reconciliation:

“Our vision is of a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all... Central to our vision for the future must be a focus on our young people. On their development lies our future and we need to ensure that our policies and programmes take account of their needs.” - The Belfast Agreement, 1998.

In January 2001 the former Northern Ireland Executive signalled its intention to develop a long-term strategy for children and young people. In June 2006 direct-rule Ministers published ‘Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge. A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People.’ This signalled a greater awareness of the role that children and young people play in society together with a desire to put measures in place to ensure that their rights are recognised and promoted, their contribution is encouraged and enabled and their best interests are safeguarded. This is a landmark strategy which applies to all government departments and seeks to place children and young people at the centre of the process of government.

At the same time, the then First Minister and deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland announced the intention of the Executive to appoint a Commissioner for

Children and Young People for Northern Ireland as part of the wider children's strategy. After some years of campaigning and discussion, legislation required for the Commissioner was passed in 2003. The age range of children and young people falling within the Commissioner's remit is defined by the legislation as 'a person under the age of 18, or up to the age of 21 for those with a disability and those leaving care'.

The first Commissioner took post in October 2003. Due to illness, this Commissioner was only in post for approximately two and a half years. On his death the Secretary of State appointed the Chief Executive as Commissioner under an emergency appointments procedure between the period of 2 May 2006 until 7 January 2007. The current Commissioner took up office on 8 January 2007.

2.4 Governance and Financial Structure

2.4.1 Organisational Status

The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland was established in October 2003, under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. There are a number of aspects of the original organisational set-up that are useful to highlight, and these are summarised below.

Non-Departmental Public Body

As previously stated, the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland was established as an NDPB of the OFMDFM. As an NDPB, the Commissioner sits outside of the resource accounting boundary and is at "arms length" from central government. The Cabinet Office publication *Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments* describes NDPBs as follows, "NDPBs have a national or regional remit and carry out a wide range of important functions. Their distance from government means that the day-to-day decisions they make are independent as they are removed from ministers and Civil Servants. Ministers are however ultimately responsible to Parliament for a NDPB's independence, its effectiveness and efficiency."

The Commissioner is an Executive NDPB. Executive NDPBs have the following key characteristics:

- set up by Ministers to carry out administrative, commercial, executive or regulatory functions on behalf of the Government;
- are legally incorporated and have their own legal identity. This means that they are established by Act of Parliament, by Royal Charter, under the Royal Prerogative, or incorporated under Companies Acts legislation and charity law;
- employ their own staff;
- are allocated their own budgets;
- are not Crown bodies and do not have Crown status (apart from a few minor exceptions);
- appointments to the boards of the bodies are made by Ministers, by officials on behalf of Ministers, by the Prime Minister or the Queen on the advice of ministers. Some may be made by the bodies themselves; and
- Ministers are ultimately answerable for the performance of the bodies and for their continued existence, e.g. ministers have the power (subject to Parliamentary approval if necessary) to wind the bodies up.

Corporation Sole

The Commissioner was established as a corporation sole. A corporation sole is a legal entity consisting of a single ('sole') incorporated office, occupied by a single ('sole') man or woman. This allows a corporation to pass vertically in time from one office holder to the next, giving the position legal continuity with each subsequent office holder having identical powers to his / her predecessor.

Within a corporation sole there is no Board of Directors, as the 'corporation sole' him / herself fulfils the role of the Board. A corporation sole would be supported by a senior management team, to whom he/she may delegate various responsibilities (Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, Schedule 2(6)).

Accounting Officer

The 2003 Order makes provision for the Commissioner to be designated as Accounting Officer. As the Accounting Officer, the Commissioner is personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which he/she has charge; for ensuring propriety and regularity in the handling of those public funds; and for the day-to-day operations and management of his/her staff and resources.

2.4.2 Governance Arrangements

The governance arrangements of the Commissioner can be summarised as follows:

Relationship with OFMDFM

Following commencement in October 2003, the Commissioner's governance arrangements were instantiated via the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. This document gives an overview of the responsibilities of both the Accounting Officer of the body (the Commissioner), and the Accounting Officer of OFMDFM (the Director of Resources, RPA and International Relations of OFMDFM) with respect to the Commissioner. It also explains the relationship between OFMDFM and the extent and means of monitoring that is required to ensure regularity and propriety of expenditure within the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland.

As the sponsoring department of the Commissioner, OFMDFM funds the body's expenditure by grant-in-aid. The Management Statement summarises the relationship between the two bodies as follows:

"Relationships between the Commissioner, Ministers and OFMDFM are governed by the 'arm's length' principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Commissioner's legal and financial framework and the structure of his/her funding and management. Within this framework it is the role of the Commissioner to determine his/her policy activities in keeping with his/her statutory responsibilities and the requirements of Assembly policy."

This statement shows the careful balance that has to be struck to ensure that OFMDFM is assured as to the regularity and propriety of any expenditure incurred by the Commissioner, and also that the Commissioner has the requisite freedom to determine the policy activities it should undertake to further the wider government policy for which it has been established.

OFMDFM Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU)

The CYPU within OFMDFM is the sponsoring team for the Commissioner. This unit is the primary contact point for Ministers in the discharge of their responsibilities in dealing with the Commissioner. In support of the Departmental Accounting Officer, the sponsoring team monitors finances, performance and risk management within

the body, and communicates with the Commissioner regarding relevant government policy and any concerns it may have about the Commissioner's activities.

Monitoring

Monitoring information on performance and finances are provided by the Commissioner to OFMDFM quarterly. Additionally, it is the Commissioner's responsibility to notify OFMDFM in a timely fashion as to any significant problems arising.

Within the Financial Memorandum, it states that on a monthly basis the Commissioner will provide OFMDFM with information to enable it to monitor:

- the Commissioner's cash management;
- its draw-down of grant-in-aid;
- the expenditure for that month;
- forecast outturn; and
- other data required for the DFP Government Expenditure Monitoring Systems.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Commissioner established its Audit and Risk Committee in June 2005. Following a period of induction training, the first meeting took place on 14th April 2006. The formation of this committee is in line with good corporate governance, and gives greater consideration of both internal and external audit findings. Its overall responsibility is stated in its terms of reference as to "provide a means of independent assurance and objective review of the Commissioner's financial systems, financial information and internal control mechanisms, thus ensuring that assets are safeguarded, the risk of illegal or improper acts is reduced and confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial reporting is increased".

Ethics Committee

The Commissioner established an Ethics Committee tasked with ensuring that all research / reviews undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Commissioner are conducted in an ethical manner and meets agreed ethical guidelines. It also exists to promote innovative ethical practice.

The Ethics Committee's members include:

- the Head of Research, Policy and Service Review;
- the Senior Research and Policy Officer;
- the Participation Manager;
- a member of Queen's University's School of Social Work;
- a senior post holder with a social services background from a Health and Social Care Trust;
- a member of the Public Prosecutions Service (with legal expertise); and
- a Director of a voluntary organisation.

The Commissioner is currently seeking to appoint an external Chair for the Ethics Committee.

A Shadow Ethics Committee supports the main Ethics Committee. This has six youth panel members. The Shadow Ethics Committee meets prior to the main

committee to discuss ethics submissions (a document that records intentions to carry out work ethically) / issues and their views are put forward to the main committee's discussion via two nominated representatives.

The Commissioner is currently in discussion with the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety to agree a way forward in terms of accessing Health and Social Care information for the purposes of research.

Quality

The Commissioner received accreditation for Lexcel, the Law Society's practice management quality mark in 2006. Following a recent second assessment of the organisation by Lexcel, this accreditation has been maintained.

The Employers of Choice Award was granted to the Commissioner in June 2007, which demonstrates commitment to promoting positive mental health of staff through support for flexible working and the promotion of a healthy work-life balance.

The Commissioner has registered with Investors in People.

In addition members of the Communications and Participation Team have achieved the Chartered Institute of Public Relations gold and silver awards.

2.4.3 Structure of the Commissioner's Finances

The Commissioner receives grant-in-aid from OFMDFM of circa £1.9m per year. For the 2004/05 and 2005/06 years the expenditure can be broken down into Programme and Non-Programme costs as detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Programme and Non-Programme Costs Breakdown

	2005/06		2004/05	
	£	% of Total	£	% of Total
Programme	370,606	17.9	437,494	25.2
Non-Programme	1,698,629	82.1	1,295,253	74.8
Total	2,069,235		1,732,747	

Source: 2004/05 and 2005/06 Annual Report and Accounts

It should be noted that OFMDFM recently highlighted to the Commissioner that the Programme costs do not truly reflect the amount of money spent in relation to working directly with children and young people. The budget for 2007/08 was reanalysed to take this into account, for example, a significant percentage of salaries relates to working directly with children and young people.

These categories can be further broken down to give a high-level overview of the Commissioner's financial structure.

Table 2.2
Breakdown of Programme and Non-Programme Expenditure

		2005/06		2004/05	
		£	% of Total	£	% of Total
Programme	Communication & Participation	180,679	8.7	311,831	18.0
	Legal and Complaints	44,804	2.2	20,821	1.2
	Research, Policy and Service Review	145,123	7.0	104,842	6.1
Non-Programme	Staff Salaries and Commissioner's Fees	922,306	44.6	611,269	35.3
	General Costs	272,796	13.2	276,119	15.9
	Premises Costs	292,300	14.1	224,160	12.9
	Depreciation	181,529	8.8	151,855	8.8
	Notional Cost of Capital	29,698	1.4	31,850	1.8
Total		2,069,235		1,732,747	

Source: 2004/05 and 2005/06 Annual Report and Accounts

As detailed in Table 2.2, Programme Expenditure is categorised against the three functional departments of the Commissioner. Non-Programme costs are categorised against typical operational costs, including salaries and premises costs.

Each year, the body budgets against the above lines, and is allocated grant from OFMDFM in accordance with the budget for the financial year.

2.4.4 Corporate Planning Structure

The Commissioner has a wide-ranging objectives and corporate planning/performance structure. The following is a summary of its key aspects:

Priorities

The Commissioner has 15 priorities, these are:

1. Having your say;
2. Knowing your Rights;
3. Implementation of the UNCRC;
4. Special Educational Needs;
5. Bullying;
6. Road safety & School Transport;
7. Facilities for leisure for all Children and Young People and the development of a Play strategy;
8. Children and Young People with mental health issues and suicidal tendencies;
9. Poverty;
10. Children and Young People with disabilities;
11. Children and Young People and Risk-taking behaviour;
12. Safeguarding Children and Young People;
13. Physical Punishment;
14. Children, Young People and Crime; and
15. Children, Young People and the troubles.

Balanced Scorecard

The Commissioner utilises a Balanced Scorecard to group corporate objectives under the following four areas:

- Our Stakeholders;
- Staff;
- How we do things: and
- Money.

There are 23 corporate objectives of the Commissioner which are arranged under these four headings, with the aim of ensuring that the organisation pushes forward in all four areas, without the neglect of any one of them.

Business Plans

The Commissioner produces an annual business plan that details actions against each of the corporate objectives. Measures are placed by each action so that the Commissioner can determine progress achieved against each action in the achievement of the overall objective.

The business plan is updated quarterly, showing how the body has performed against each of the defined measures.

2.5 The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland – Operating Context

2.5.1 Mission

The Commissioner's mission is to:

- listen to children and young people;
- safeguard and promote their rights; and
- work with them to challenge and change the world in which they live.

2.5.2 Core Activities

The principal aim, duties and powers of the Commissioner are set out in paragraphs six, seven, and eight of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The Commissioner champions children's rights in Northern Ireland, advising the government on all aspects of children's policy and legislation. This includes coverage of child protection services, child welfare and all public and social services relating to children (health, social welfare, education and human rights). The principal aim of the Commissioner is described in the legislation as 'to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young persons'. He/she is required to report to the Assembly and Parliament about its work and how the budget is spent.

While the detailed powers are set out in the legislation they can be grouped under three main areas of work:

1. **Promoting children's rights** – the Commissioner is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), an international agreement setting out how children should be treated and the rights that they have;
2. **Legal and Complaints action** – the Commissioner can deal with individual complaints from children and young people, or their parents/guardians about government services like education, health, adoption and fostering, youth justice, road safety; and
3. **Research and Inquiries** – the Commissioner bases all its work on helping children and young people on thorough research.

2.5.3 Organisation Functions and Staffing

The Commissioner's post is a full-time appointment for a period of four years, with the possibility of one renewal for a further period of four years, subject to satisfactory performance appraisals.

The Commissioner is supported by a Chief Executive and four main functional areas as follows:

- **Communications and Participation**

This function is responsible for communicating the views of the Commissioner to all of its stakeholders i.e. the general public, Ministers, government officials, members of the children and young people sector, and to children and young people.

The participation element works to ensure that the Commissioner captures the views of children and young people on various issues affecting their lives.

The Commissioner's Youth Panel also forms part of this function. The Youth Panel acts as a consultation committee to provide the Commissioner with views and opinions of children and young people in Northern Ireland. There are currently 42 members aged between 12 and 21 years, who come from all over Northern Ireland.

- **Research, Policy, and Service Review**

This function is responsible for undertaking research into issues affecting children and young people's lives in Northern Ireland, influencing government policy and undertaking reviews of services relating to children and young people.

- **Legal and Complaints**

The Legal and Complaints function deals with complaints from children and young people and / or their carers about the services they receive or the way they are treated by government agencies in Northern Ireland.

This function also supports the Commissioner to instigate judicial reviews of services if required, and to undertake a legal case on behalf of children and young people regarding an area where their rights are deemed to have been breached.

- **Corporate Services**

The Corporate Services function provides human resources; finance; information and communications technology; procurement and maintenance support to the functional departments of the organisation

Schedule 2 of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 permits the Commissioner to have a maximum of 26 staff.

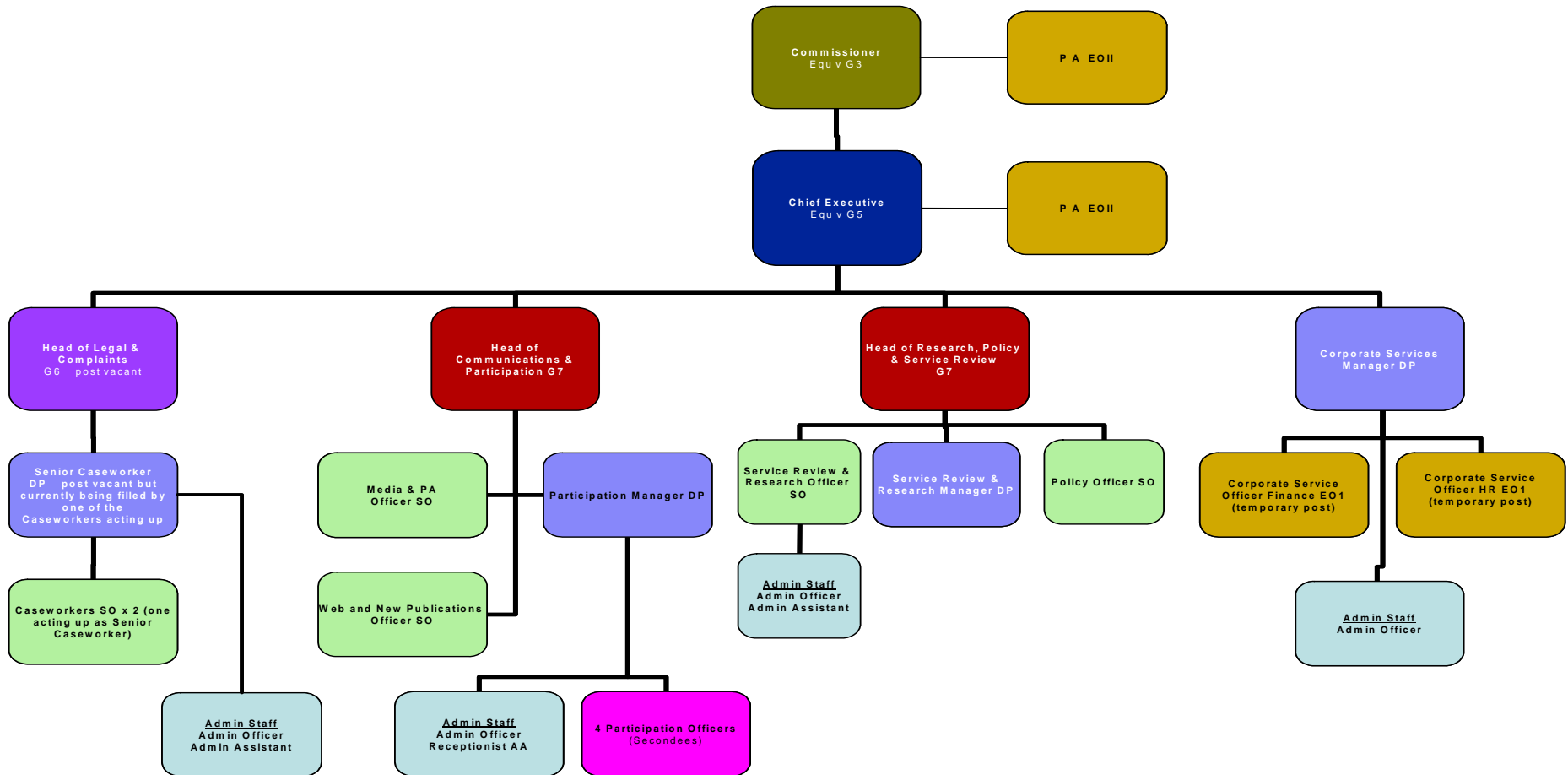
Under the current structure (see Figure 2.1), if all posts were filled, there would be a staff complement of 30 whole time equivalents (this includes four full-time Participation Officer seconded posts). However, there are currently six vacant posts (for further details see Table 2.5).

The following points summarise the key differences between the original and current structures.

- the Chief Operating Officer post was revised and renamed as Chief Executive;
- the Head of Legal and Complaints became vacant in June 2006 and this post has not been filled again since;
- the Head of Research and Service Review was renamed the Head of Research, Policy and Service Review;
- the Events and Public Relations Officer was a permanent post and was always filled in a temporary capacity. When it last became vacant, the funding from this post was allocated towards the Policy Officer post in the Research and Service Review Team to support the Commissioner regarding Article 7 of the 2003 Order;
- the Service Review and Research Manager post was renamed Senior Research, Policy and Service Review Officer;
- the Corporate Services Officer post has been temporarily replaced by a Finance Officer post and an HR Officer post awaiting the outcome of this review. Funding from this function's Admin Assistant post has also gone towards this new temporary structure for Corporate Services; and
- In addition, the Commissioner accesses the services of a Barrister on a contract basis as required (this is not reflected in current structure chart).

The current structure (including vacancies) is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1
Current Organisation Structure (August 2007)



Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland

Table 2.5 provides a further summary of the posts within the current structure regarding whether they are currently filled, vacant, temporary, and seconded.

**Table 2.5
Staff Complement and Vacancies (as at October 2007)**

	Number of Posts	Name of Posts
Filled Permanent Posts (WTE)	18	Commissioner Chief Executive PA to Commissioner, Grade EO11 Caseworkers (x2 but one currently acting up as Senior Caseworker) Head of Communications and Participation Media & PA Officer Participation Manager New Media & Publications Officer Head of Research, Policy & Service Review Senior Service Review & Research Officer Policy Officer Corporate Services Manager Administration Officer (x3.9 WTE) Administrative Assistant (x1.5 WTE)
Filled Seconded Posts (WTE)	3	Participation Officer (x3 WTE)
Filled Temporary Posts	1	Administrative Assistant, Grade AA (Research, Policy and Service Review)
Filled Agency Staff Posts (WTE)	2	HR Officer, Grade EO1 Finance Officer, Grade EO1 PA to Chief Executive, Grade EO11
Vacant Posts (WTE)	6	Head of Legal and Complaints Senior Caseworker (post currently being filled by a Caseworker, who is a barrister, acting up) Participation Officer (seconded post) Research Officer
Total Posts (WTE)	29.4	

Source: the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland

Staff turnover statistics were available for the period April 2006 to July 2007 as detailed in Table 2.6. This indicates that the turnover rate increased during the first half of 2006/07 and was followed by a period with no vacancies. More recently the turnover rate has increased to 18.8 per cent (the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development states in their Recruitment, Retention and Turnover Survey 2006 that the overall employee turnover rate for the UK is 18.3 per cent. The public sector has an average turnover rate of 13.3 per cent). However, the average number of permanent staff between January and March 2007 was 16 and 18.8 per cent relates to three leavers.

Table 2.6
Staff Complement (August 2007)

Period in 2006/07	Average no. of permanent employees in period	No. of permanent leavers in period	Turnover for period
April – June	17	1	5.9%
July – September	16	2	12.5%
October – December	14	0	0%
January – March	16	0	0%
April - August 2007	16	3	18.8%

A number of additional changes / circumstances have affected the senior management team since the Commissioner was established. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Corporate Services Manager**

The Corporate Services Manager post is currently the subject of a grading review exercise by an external consultancy. The post has a Deputy Principal grading, and the Corporate Services Manager was invited to become a member of the Senior Management Team in 2006. The review began in November 2005 and is ongoing.

- **Name of the Senior Management Team**

In October 2006, the Senior Management Team was renamed as the Executive Board.

3 Organisational Performance Overview

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to review the Commissioner's performance against its corporate objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 with the exception of financial management, which is considered separately in Section 4. This section will also consider how the Commissioner has contributed to wider government policy.

3.2 Performance Prior to Corporate Plan

Prior to the current Corporate Plan (2005 – 2008) the Commissioner had been in operation for just over one year. During this period, 2004 - 2005, a business plan was implemented. This was subsequently used to inform the development of the Corporate Plan for 2005-2006.

Table 3.1 summarises the Commissioner's progress against each of the four performance areas contained within its balanced scorecard, and contained within the Business Plan 2004 – 2005. The details behind this assessment are provided in Appendix II.

Table 3.1
Objectives from Business Plan 2004 - 2005

Performance area	Total	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Ongoing	Not Achieved
Stakeholders and Customers	23	16	1	4	2
Finance and resources	13	11	1	1	0
Processes	11	10	0	1	0
Learning and Growth	7	5	0	0	2
Total	54	42	2	6	4

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Business Plan 2004 - 2005

As can be seen in Table 3.1, the Business Plan 2004 – 2005 outlined 54 outcome measures for the Commissioner. The table shows that:

- Six of the 54 outcome measures were considered ongoing;
- eighty-eight per cent of the remaining outcome measures for 2004 – 2005 were achieved; and
- of those outcome measures that were not fully achieved two were partially achieved, and four were not achieved.

3.3 Performance Against Objectives 2005 – to date

In order to assess the Commissioner's performance from 2005 onwards we have considered the annual business plans for the period 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 and attempted to analyse how effectively the Commissioner has performed against the aims and objectives set out within the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008.

It should be noted that the Commissioner's current Corporate Plan is still in operation and therefore any measurement of performance against its corporate objectives must be considered in light of the fact that it is not complete. It is likely therefore that the

Commissioner will not have fully achieved in a number of their objectives, as there is still one year to run on the plan.

3.3.1 Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008

The Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 sets out 23 corporate objectives which guide and, together with the 15 Priorities for Action (detailed in Section 2.4.4), focus the Commissioner’s work in achieving its mission and vision. The objectives form the basis of individual Business Plans in 2005 – 2006 and 2006 – 2007 and are reviewed annually with OFMDFM. Table 3.2 provides details of the corporate objectives under each area of the scorecard as described in section 2.4.4.

Table 3.2

Corporate Objectives 2005 - 2008

Our Stakeholders (Children, Young People, Parents and Others)	
<p>Listen to and encourage the active involvement and engagement of children and young people and their parents;</p> <p>Influence and improve the law relating to children and young people;</p> <p>Influence and improve policy relating to children and young people; and</p> <p>Influence and improve practice relating to children and young people;</p>	<p>Provide a responsive, accessible and targeted complaints and advice service;</p> <p>Provide targeted assistance to children and young people in legal proceedings;</p> <p>Conduct formal investigations under Article 9, 10 and 12 of the Commissioner’s Order; and</p> <p>Promote awareness of our work and develop and maintain effective relationships with key organisations.</p>
The Commissioner’s Staff	
<p>To have staff skill levels required to effectively deliver our services;</p> <p>Develop our staff in line with best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify; ▪ Plan; ▪ Take action; and ▪ Evaluate & Review. 	<p>Value staff and support them to achieve an appropriate work life balance;</p> <p>Ensure effective and accountable leadership at all levels in the organisation; and</p> <p>Develop a child friendly and centred culture.</p>
How we do things	
<p>Develop, implement and evaluate a research strategy to inform the work of the Commissioner;</p> <p>Develop and evaluate a programme of service reviews & investigations using agreed criteria;</p> <p>Develop, consult on and implement criteria and processes for assisting complainants; and</p> <p>Develop, implement and evaluate effective internal policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Develop, implement and evaluate a participation strategy with C&YP; and</p> <p>Develop, implement and evaluate a communications strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal; ▪ External; and ▪ Influencing.

Money	
Develop, allocate and manage annual budgets to fulfil our priorities; Control costs, make effective and efficient use of our resources within budget;	Secure funding to maintain & develop our services; and Develop and Maintain effective governance in line with best practice

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2005 - 2008

3.3.2 Quantitative Assessment

The following tables provide details of the Commissioner's performance against the objectives between 2005 and 2007. The details behind this assessment can be found in Appendix II.

Table 3.3
Objectives in 2005 – 2008 Corporate Plan

Performance area	Corporate Objectives	Actions Achieved Against Objectives 05/06 (%)	Actions Achieved Against Objectives 06/07 (%)
Our Stakeholders	8	92	94
How we do things	6	81	91
The Commissioner's Staff	5	70	91
Money	4	71	100
Total	23	83	93

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008, Business Plan 2005 – 2006 and 2006-2007

Table 3.3 indicates that:

- Eighty-three per cent of time-bound actions relating to objectives within the 2005/2006 Business Plan were achieved; and
- ninety-three per cent of time-bound actions relating to objectives within the 2006/2007 Business Plan were achieved.

Table 3.4
Objectives in Business Plan 2005 - 2006

Corporate Objective	Total Actions	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Ongoing	Not Achieved	Deferred
Our Stakeholders (Corporate Goals 1-8)	28	23	2	2	0	1
How we do things (Corporate Goals 9-14)	19	13	3	1	0	2
Commissioner Staff (Corporate Goals 15-19)	11	7	2	1	1	0
Money (Corporate Goals 20-23)	7	5	2	0	0	0
Total	65	48	9	4	1	3

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 and Business Plan 2005 – 2006

The Business Plan 2005-2006 outlined 65 total actions for the Commissioner to undertake within the year (see Table 3.4). The table shows that:

- four of the actions were considered to be ongoing and three of the actions were also deferred with agreement from OFMDFM.
- seventy-four per cent of all actions for 2005 – 2006 were achieved; and
- of those actions not fully achieved nine were partially achieved, four were considered to be ongoing and one was not achieved. Three of the actions were also deferred with agreement from OFMDFM.

Table 3.5
Objectives in Business Plan 2006 - 2007

Corporate Objective	Total Actions	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Ongoing	Not Achieved	Deferred	Partially Achieved and Ongoing
Our Stakeholders (Corporate Goals 1-8)	26	17	0	5	1	1	2
How we do things (Corporate Goals 9-14)	27	21	0	1	2	2	1
Commissioner Staff (Corporate Goals 15-19)	13	10	1	2	0	0	0
Money (Corporate Goals 20-23)	7	5	0	2	0	0	0
Total	73	53	1	10	3	3	3

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 and Business Plan 2006 – 2007

The Business Plan 2006-2007 outlined 73 total actions for the Commissioner (see Table 3.5). The table shows that:

- ten of the actions were considered to be ongoing and three were considered to be partially achieved and ongoing. Three actions were also deferred with agreement from OFMDFM;
- ninety-three per cent of the remaining actions for 2006 – 2007 were achieved; and
- of those actions not fully achieved one was partially achieved and three were not achieved.

3.3.3 Qualitative Assessment

The quantitative assessment in the previous section indicates a relatively successful level of performance in percentage terms across the three business periods in operation since the Commissioner's inception. In all three cases, the Commissioner has achieved success in more than eighty per cent of the time-bound actions, relating to the corporate objectives, identified in the business plans. This section considers the key achievements of the Commissioner identified through the Business Plans in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, it's important to note that this is not a definitive list of all that the Commissioner has done but rather outlines the key achievements. Details are provided in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6
Key Achievements Contained within Business Plans

Key Achievement	Corporate Objective
Over 6,000 children and young people have been engaged by the participation team in a range of settings in 2006 – 2007 ² alone; and Satisfaction levels amongst those engaged are high (>95%) based on children and young people monitoring questionnaires.	Listen to and encourage the active involvement and engagement of children and young people and their parents
Anti-bullying guidelines, endorsed by the Department of Education, were produced and distributed to all schools in Northern Ireland	Influence and improve practice relating to children and young people
The Commissioner has and continues to work with the Policy Group of the British and Irish Networks of Children's Commissioners (BINOCC) on a range of issues, including physical punishment and reporting to the Joint Committee on Human Rights	Influence and improve policy relating to children and young people
The monitoring of casework by the Commissioner identified policy and service deficits in speech and language therapy for children and young people; A major review into speech and language provision followed which highlighted the unacceptable waiting times and waiting lists for speech and language therapy; Result: DHSSPS established a taskforce, as recommended by the Commissioner.	Influence and improve policy and practice relating to children and young people

² Figures for C&YP engagement were not identified in the 2005 – 2006 Business Plans

Key Achievement	Corporate Objective
<p>Over 10,000 children and young people have had awareness about their rights raised and / or trained;</p> <p>Satisfaction levels amongst those engaged are high (>95%) based on children and young people monitoring questionnaires;</p> <p>56 individual meetings held with stakeholder organisations;</p> <p>17 key note speeches published on the Commissioner's website</p> <p>60 press releases circulated to relevant voluntary & community organisations and politicians</p> <p>20% increase in visits to the Commissioner's website in 2006-07 compared to 2005-06</p>	<p>Promote awareness of our work and develop and maintain effective relationships with key organisations</p>
<p>Establishment, growth and diversity of the Commissioner's Youth Panel; and</p> <p>Recognised in 2005 through the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Pride awards – the Commissioner received a joint Gold Award Winner, Silver Awards Winner and was finalist in the PR team of the year</p>	<p>Develop, Implement and evaluate a participation strategy with C&YP</p>
<p>The Commissioner has been awarded with an Employers of Choice award</p>	<p>Value staff and support them to achieve an appropriate work life balance</p>
<p>100% staff employed by the Commissioner are trained in Child Protection and all staff are vetted using POCVA; and</p> <p>The Commissioner's room facilities have been booked on 68 occasions by external organisations who represent children and young people</p>	<p>Develop a Child Friendly and Child Centred Culture</p>

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 and Business Plan 2006 – 2007

Good progress has been made against all of the corporate objectives identified within the Commissioner's Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008, although undoubtedly further progress has been made in some objectives than others. Some examples are set out below:

The 'Our Stakeholders' element of the plan has performed best overall with 92 per cent of the time-bound actions relating to objectives achieved in 2005 – 2006, and 94 per cent in 2006 – 2007.

Under the 'How we do things' element of the plan, 81 per cent of time-bound actions relating to objectives were achieved in 2005 – 2006 and 91 per cent in 2006 – 2007. The establishment, growth and diversity of the Commissioner's Youth Panel is a significant achievement, although a number of the actions have been hindered by the lack of Head of Legal and Complaints as identified in the Business Plans.

A research study was commissioned by the Commissioner to establish a baseline of the level of recognition of parents and young people in relation to the Commissioner in January 2006. Following a survey of more than 600 children and

young people and parents across a number of locations in Northern Ireland the following results were produced:

- just over a third of children and young people had heard of the name of the organisation and a quarter recognised the logo. While parents are more likely to have heard of the name of the organisation when compared to children and young people (42 per cent versus 35 per cent), the percentage recognising the logo is lower (16 per cent versus 26 per cent);
- fourteen per cent of children and young people and 13 per cent of parents who recognise the Commissioner's logo have seen it at the Great Victoria Street building;
- understanding among children and young people and parents of the full role of the Commissioner is limited; and
- the two main methods that children and young people and parents would use to find contact information for the Commissioner are the Yellow Pages/telephone directory and the internet.

The results from the survey indicated that although some progress had been made by the Commissioner in relation to raising the awareness of the office, there was still potential for further improvements, this is particularly the case in raising awareness of the role of the Commissioner. Increased media coverage, and high levels of engagement with children and young people and parents illustrated during the 2006-2007 business plan indicate that the Commissioner is offering the correct environment for this to develop.

The Commissioner has also developed a number of relationships with various organisations since its inception which are detailed below in table 3.7. This is not an exhaustive list but rather highlights the breadth of formal partner relationships that have developed through working on projects, cases and other pieces of work (the list is not an indication of the impact of these partnerships).

Table 3.7
List of Partner Organisations

Organisation Name	
The Northern Ireland Youth Council	RQIA
Health Promotion Agency	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy
NSPCC	All Education and Library Boards Youth Services and other departments
Barnardos	NCB
NIPPA	General Consumer Council
Playboard	Voypic
Criminal Justice Inspectorate	Trading Standards
Social Services Inspectorate	ECNI
NIHRC	PSNI
Children's Law Centre	Save the Children
An Munia Tober	Include Youth
Contact Youth	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
HSS Trusts	

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland

The Commissioner's staff element of the plan, although performing less well, with 70 per cent of the time-bound actions related to objectives achieved in 2005 – 2006 and 91 per cent in 2006 – 2007 has still performed admirably across the two business plan cycles. The development / review of a number of internal policies, Employers of Choice award and enrolment in Investors in People, highlights significant progress against the Corporate Objectives contained in the Corporate Plan;

Although the performance of the office has been impressive, it should be noted that a number of the actions within the business plans are more difficult to monitor / quantify and this raises the question of how meaningful they are in the formal measurement of the Commissioner's performance. This is specifically the case in relation to 'Improving Policy and Practice relating to children and young people.' At times the actions appear to be highly ambitious, for example:

- the full inclusion of the UNCRC in the Bill of Rights (BoR); or
- the full incorporation of the UNCRC in UK law.

Although these actions are consistent with the priorities / objectives identified by the Commissioner, it is questionable whether they can be achieved within a single business plan, or indeed, within a three year corporate plan.

At other times there is a poor linkage between the measure, action and outcome which has made an assessment of the performance difficult to estimate. For example, in relation to a number of the Commissioner's reports, success of which is measured by the number of recommendations implemented, the outcomes are still to be finalised and the recommendations have still to be considered by the relevant third party. This has made a number of the actions hard to assess in terms of performance.

Without doubt the Commissioner has performed well across all elements of the Business Plans in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. This is admirable considering the challenging circumstances that the office has faced since its inception. The impact of the tragic circumstances of the First Commissioner's death, firstly on the staff themselves and secondly on the Senior Management resource available to the office cannot be underestimated. The performance must also be considered in light of the infancy of the organisation.

3.3.4 Quality Schemes / Accreditation

The Commissioner has implemented or is in the process of implementing a number of quality schemes which provide effective risk management and performance improvement advantages, these include:

- **Lexcel** – the Law Society's Practice Management quality mark – which involves implementing a practice management system in line with the Lexcel standard;
- **Employers of Choice (EoC)** – a programme funded by DEL, aimed at improving the mental health of the organisations work-force, and hence their productivity levels, by focussing on the issues of work-life balance. EoC involves completing a staff audit and then drawing up an action plan which is presented to a panel of assessors; and
- **Investors in People (IiP)** - a national quality standard which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

In terms of Lexcel the Commissioner has recently (May 2007) been successful in retaining the accreditation for a second time following an assessment by the Law Society. Following the completion of a staff audit, the Commissioner drafted an action plan aimed at addressing key issues identified through the audit and has

recently received an EoC award. In relation to liP the Commissioner has registered for the scheme and is currently in the initial stages of the process.

The implementation of the quality schemes highlights good practice by the Commissioner against other comparator organisations as few public sector organisations maintain any of these standards. The accredited schemes also indicate a consistency of service and provide effective risk management for the organisation.

3.4 Contribution to Government Policy

3.4.1 The Commissioner's Contribution to Wider Government Policies

Following a review of government policies / intentions, we believe the Commissioner will be in a position to make / has made a contribution to numerous policies and areas of concern for children and young people. This section provides a summary of progress made on a number of issues and policies (further details regarding the Commissioner's progress on each area are contained within Appendix II):

- **Vetting**

In 2004 the Commissioner began a review into how adults are checked to make sure there are no reasons why they shouldn't work, or volunteer to work with, children. The Commissioner published a vetting report, 'A Right to Protection' in 2005 as a result of this work.

The Commissioner has continued to monitor government progress in this regard and in June 2007 the Commissioner published a response to that progress. This response detailed areas that have progressed and those that require further focus. The Commissioner passed her response on to government.

- **Child Protection**

The Commissioner supported the inspection of child protection services in Northern Ireland that resulted in the publication of 'Our Children and Young People – Our Shared Responsibility'. The inspection, which was led by the Social Services Inspectorate, was undertaken in five health trust areas – Causeway, Craigavon and Banbridge, Foyle, South and East Belfast and Sperrin Lakeland.

The Commissioner supported the inspection team to capture the views of children and young people, and the Commissioner welcomed the report and called for the implementation of its recommendations.

- **Speech and Language**

The Commissioner undertook a review of speech and language service provision in Northern Ireland in 2004/05 and completed a follow-up review of service in 2005/06. In January 2007 the Northern Ireland Health Minister announced that children across Northern Ireland would benefit from an additional £1million for speech & language therapy services.

- **School Transport**

In July 2006 the Commissioner undertook research, in co-operation with the Department of Regional Development and the General Consumer Council, regarding the safety of school transport services. The research produced several recommendations, many of which Government have been progressing.

In May 2007 the Ministers for Regional Development and Education announced the introduction of 110 new high specification school buses, that would be fitted with seatbelts. The £13 million funding for the buses was provided by the Department for Regional Development.

- **Pre-school**

The Commissioner called for more co-ordination in early years' policy, advising Government on the need for the right services at the right age for children under five years.

- **Funding for Children and Young People's Services**

The Commissioner has played an active role in highlighting the need for adequate funding for children and young people's services in Northern Ireland. This has included encouraging government to involve children and young people in planning its budget and priorities for 2004/05 and 2005/06.

The Commissioner also published a report in July 2007 entitled 'An Analysis of Public Expenditure on Children in Northern Ireland'. It is anticipated that this report will act as a first step into analysing budget allocation for the areas of health and social care, education and housing.

- **Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland**

Government has indicated its commitment to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The Commissioner is campaigning for the rights outlined in the UNCRC to be included as a key part of the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights. The Commissioner also intend to work with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector to promote the full incorporation of the UNCRC in Northern Ireland legislation through the Bill of Rights.

- **Children and Young People Funding Package**

The Commissioner played a significant role in helping shape the priorities and the range of interventions in the Children and Young People Funding Package.

- **Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People was consulted about the development of 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge' – A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016, published by OFMDFM.

This long-term strategy sets out plans for significant improvements in the health and educational outcomes of children and young people in Northern Ireland and the Commissioner was instrumental in ensuring their priorities were aligned to those in the strategy.

3.5 Summary of Findings

In relation to performance against targets, the key findings identified are as follows:

- given the extensive range of targets, performance against corporate objectives has been good, with more than eighty per cent of the time-bound actions relating to targets set out in the 2005-2006 business plan achieved and more than ninety per cent in 2006-07;
- the most successful performance area in terms of achievement of objectives was under the 'Our Stakeholders' element of the Corporate Plan;
- some progress has been made in terms of raising awareness of the Commissioner with a third of all children and young people surveyed indicating that they had heard of the organisation;
- the implementation or planned implementation of a number of quality schemes by the Commissioner highlights good practice in relation to other Public Sector Organisations;
- the least successful performance area in terms of achievement of objectives is under the 'Commissioner's Staff' element of the Corporate Plan;
- the impact of the Commissioner's work is more apparent on some priorities / objectives over others; and
- the linkage between measures and outcomes isn't always clear which makes it difficult to measure performance on some of the actions and objectives.

It is clear from the review of wider Government policies that the Commissioner has made a contribution or is in a strong position to influence and help oversee the implementation of a number of current Government initiatives.

4 Analysis of Financial Management

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report details the analysis of financial management procedures within the Commissioner and provides an analysis of expenditure.

4.2 Financial Management

4.2.1 Analysis of Expenditure

There are four aspects of the expenditure of the Commissioner that will be considered:

- Detail of Expenditure;
- Quantum of Expenditure;
- Cost of Formal Investigation; and
- Internal financial controls.

Detail of Expenditure

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the expenditure of the Commissioner over the last three financial years, taken from the 2004/05 and 2005/06 audited financial accounts, and the 2006/07 draft financial accounts.

Table 4.1
Programme and Non-Programme Costs Split

	2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	£	% of Total	£	% of Total	£	% of Total
Programme	226,464	11.7	370,606	17.9	437,494	25.2
Non-Programme	1,709,328	88.3	1,698,629	82.1	1,295,253	74.8
Total	1,935,792		2,069,235		1,732,747	

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People Annual Report and Accounts

This demonstrates that the Programme to Non-Programme split within the Commissioner has reduced from 25:75 to 12:88 over the three years. It is unwise to draw any conclusions from the reduction in Programme expenditure, as the Commissioner has been developing over the three years, and is finding a balance. A sizeable proportion of staff time, which is detailed under non-programme costs relates to working directly with children and young people.

Table 4.2
Breakdown of Programme and Non-Programme Expenditure

		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
		£	% of Total	£	% of Total	£	% of Total
Programme	Communication & Participation	103,277	5.3	180,679	8.7	311,831	18.0
	Legal and Complaints	60,455	3.1	44,804	2.2	20,821	1.2
	Research, Policy and Service Review	62,732	3.2	145,123	7.0	104,842	6.1
Non-Programme	Staff Salaries and Commissioner's Fees	895,497	46.3	922,306	44.6	611,269	35.3
	General Costs	299,177	15.5	272,796	13.2	276,119	15.9
	Premises Costs	308,433	15.9	292,300	14.1	224,160	12.9
	Depreciation	180,114	9.3	181,529	8.8	151,855	8.8
	Notional Cost of Capital	26,107	1.3	29,698	1.4	31,850	1.8
Total		1,935,792		2,069,235		1,732,747	

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People - Annual Report and Accounts

The above table is more detailed in showing the expenditure of the Commissioner. It should be noted that the main expenditure of the Commissioner is staff costs and the Commissioner's Fees. In 2006/07 this amounted to 46.3 per cent of total expenditure. Due to the nature of the Commissioner's work, this is understandable. As an organisation advocated for children and young people, its key resource is the people that work for it. To be successful, the Commissioner needs a core staff base that is experienced and proactive in the pursuit of its aims and objectives. This requirement leads to the substantial outlay in terms of staff costs.

General costs involve further expenditure relating to staff in the form of staff recruitment, staff training, and travel and subsistence. In 2006/07, these costs amount to £72,949 of the £299,177 on general costs. The other costs in this category relate to other administration and corporate services costs within the office. The corporate services costs relate to general administration and consumables costs.

Premises costs are rent, rates, electricity and cleaning, with rent being approximately £150,000 per annum (the Commissioner holds a ten year lease and there are currently seven years remaining). These costs are high in comparison to other similar sized NDPBs, and in comparison to the other Children's Commissioners used in the comparator analysis. Rent and rates for the Children's Commissioner in New Zealand were £49k in 2005/06, £95k for Scotland in 2005/06, and £72k for England in 2005/06. This disparity can be explained in part by the prime office location that the Commissioner has in central Belfast. It should be noted however, that children and young people had an input into where the Commissioner would be located. They wished it to be city centre based with an on street entrance and near local transport.

Programme Costs of the Commissioner are split amongst the body's core departments. These costs are not considered high, and are to support the activity of the three departments e.g. events relating to the youth panel for Communications and Participation, legal costs related to case work for Legal and Complaints, and research costs for Research, Policy and Service Review.

Quantum of Expenditure

Table 4.3 illustrates the funding provided to Commissioners for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, and the child population of each of these countries.

Table 4.3
Breakdown of Programme and Non-Programme Expenditure

	Annual Funding (Approximately £m)	Child Population (2001 Census)	Funding per Child (Approximately £ / head)
Northern Ireland	1.9	500,153	3.79
Scotland	1.1	1,224,155	0.89
Wales	1.5	662,779	2.26
England	3.0	10,551,140	0.28
Republic of Ireland	0.7	864,449*	0.81
Norway	0.8	1,214,201**	0.66
New Zealand	0.7	1,113,024***	0.63

* Central Statistics Office Ireland - 2006

** 2001 Census in Norway

*** New Zealand's 2006 Census of Population and Dwellings

It is notable that the Commissioner receives the highest level of expenditure per child. This could in part demonstrate the government's commitment to children and young people in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that to maintain any office of this kind, there would be a level of fixed costs that would not vary in line with the number of children and young people in the region. It is also acknowledged that the Commissioner has a more extensive range of powers than those in other countries.

Cost of Formal Investigation

The Commissioner has the power to take forward a formal investigation on behalf of children and young people. The costs of such an investigation are not included in the annual budget for the Commissioner. Also, it is not possible to judge the frequency or cost of such investigations.

Internal Financial Controls

The Commissioner has developed an internal control environment since establishment to aid in the safeguarding of public funds. These internal controls have been audited and refined through the work and recommendations of the Commissioner's internal audit. Additionally, external audit findings have resulted in refinements to internal controls to better safeguard the public funds utilised by the Commissioner.

It is not within the scope of this report to comment substantially on the internal control systems of the Commissioner. Internal audit each year carries out detailed work analysing and commenting on the overall control environment.

As part of this review, we reviewed the internal audit reports for the Commissioner over the last two financial years. The reports issued in 2005/06 and 2006/07 are summarised in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4
Summary of Internal Audit Reports for 2005/06 and 2006/07

Year	Area Reviewed	Assurance Rating
2005/06	Financial Systems Review	High
	Departmental Process Review	High
	IT Support Review	Partial
	Risk Management Workshop	N/A
2006/07	Risk Management and Corporate Planning	High
	Staffing (including CEO Remuneration)	High
	Departmental Process Review	High
	Financial Systems Review	High

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland Internal Audit Annual Assurance Reports 2005/06 and 2006/07

Based on the above findings and assurance ratings, the internal auditors gave an overall high assurance rating in relation to the adequacy of the systems of control in place in each of the financial years 2005/06 and 2006/07.

4.2.2 Value for Money Analysis

Method of Assessing VfM

As noted above, staff costs are the main cost for the Commissioner. Hence an assessment of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of staff costs of the office is a key part of an overall assessment of VfM. There is currently no method of linking performance objectives against utilisation of staff costs. Such a linkage would be useful in understanding how the costs associated with staff push forward the aims and objectives of the Commissioner, and for driving efficiencies and directing staff resources in a more targeted manner.

Value for money of premises costs was discussed in Section 4.2.1. The premises costs are high in comparison to other bodies, but this should be weighed against the positive impact that the high visibility central Belfast location provides to the Commissioner.

Shared Services Potential

The Commissioner shares IT support with the Equality Commission (ECNI). On establishment of the Commissioner, finance was also shared with the Equality Commission, but responsibility for this was taken in-house to ensure closer control by the Commissioner. An Internal Audit report commented regarding the outsourcing of finance to ECNI. It states:

'To help ensure that the confidentiality and integrity of the Commissioner's information is maintained by ensuring that either:

- all financial transactions are posted only by the Commissioner's staff; or
- ensuring that arrangements governing the 'temporary outsourcing' of this work are appropriately documented and confirmation that Equality Commission staff meet the same requirements as the Commissioner's staff as appropriate.'

This demonstrates that the opinion of internal audit is that any consideration given to outsourcing of finance would require clearly documented arrangements. In its draft 2006/07 external audit report, the NIAO states that the Commissioner should

review the resourcing and structure of the finance and HR functions with a view to minimising risk.

For a body the size of the Commissioner, back office administration costs are generally proportionately high compared to larger organisations. Hence, there is a move towards encouraging shared services within the public sector, to help drive efficiency and reduce the administration costs across government. There are no inherent difficulties with outsourcing or shared services for the Commissioner (IT services are currently shared with the Equality Commission).

4.3 Summary

Overall, the quantum of expenditure given to the Northern Ireland Commissioner is sufficient to support the day-to-day operations of the office, and the key issue is to ensure that these funds are directed appropriately and to the areas that will achieve the most useful impact. Current funding arrangements are such that they could have the effect of fettering the capability and capacity of the Commissioner to take on high profile and lengthy legal cases.

Financial systems appear to be robust and there is potential to share elements of the corporate services function with another organisation.

5 Consultation Findings

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present the findings from the extensive consultation exercise that was undertaken as a core element of the review. As in most consultation exercises, there was often a divergence of views on particular issues and we have sought to reflect the full breadth of opinion in this section. It is important to emphasise that the contents of this section simply presents a summary of the key points raised by those consulted.

For reasons of confidentiality, comments have not generally been attributed to individual consultees and it is acknowledged that not all staff / stakeholders were in a position to comment on every area of discussion or some staff stakeholders had a stronger view on certain areas than others. However, the balance of views and the number of people who put them forward have been taken into account along with other factors in our analysis.

5.2 Commissioner Staff

5.2.1 Introduction

Individual meetings were held with the Commissioner, Chief Executive, and Heads of Research, Policy and Service Review, Communications and Participation, and Corporate Services, and with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. Discussion groups were held with members of the Research and Service Review, Communications and Participation, Legal and Complaints, and Corporate Services Teams respectively. The findings from the meetings are set out below and the term 'staff' refers to all staff and not, for example, staff within a particular function.

5.2.2 Structure and Functions

There was a common understanding that the structure of the Commissioner's office was a reflection of the powers and duties vested in it by legislation, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. However, differing opinions were put forward in terms of the focus and remit of the existing functions.

■ Communications and Participation

Staff stressed that communication is a vital function within the organisation in order to build the profile of the Commissioner, to put forward the Commissioner's views on issues, and to ensure that children and young people were aware and engaged in the work of the organisation, through the participation element of the team.

A number of staff believed that the challenge to this function was increasing the profile of the Commissioner in specific areas including the media and the new Assembly. It was generally anticipated that the organisation's profile building would be supported by the recent appointment of the new Commissioner due to this individual's existing high profile across the children and young people's sector, and in political circles.

It was reported that public affairs work has increased due to the reestablishment of the Assembly. Staff generally agreed that this area of work is now very closely aligned to policy, which sits within another function of the organisation. Although there was mixed opinion amongst staff regarding whether public affairs should move from this function to the Research, Policy and Service Review function that houses policy.

Opinions varied regarding the location of the participation function within the structure of the office. A number of staff viewed its existing location to be appropriate due to its links to communication. Several staff believed that participation should be more closely linked to research and service review due to the importance of capturing children and young people's views in these activities.

Concerns were also raised regarding how participation is measured. Currently targets are based on numbers of contacts but this is not deemed to reflect the impact of participation, which many staff reported needs to target hard to reach children who potentially would not have structures around them through which their voice can be heard. A review of performance indicators would be welcomed.

■ **Research, Policy and Service Review**

There was a general consensus that the workload of this function was substantial and that the emphasis of work within the function has been shifting towards policy. This was widely regarded as being due to the reestablishment of the Assembly.

The function is reconsidering its approach to responding to government consultations. There was a consensus that the Commissioner could better prioritise which consultations to respond to in detail and that there was scope to improve impact in this regard. An exercise is ongoing within the function to develop a systematic approach for responding to consultations.

There was a consistent view that the focus of this function should become more strategic in future and should be driven by the need to effect change in government. Staff stated that the work of the function has, to date, been driven by the organisation's fifteen priority areas. They now believe that their work would be more effective if it was driven by high profile issues that could impact on all children and young people, and that ultimately influencing government, and affecting policy and change should be their goal supported by targeted research and / or service reviews. Many of those who spoke to us shared the opinion that developing policy papers as a means of putting forward the viewpoint of the Commissioner was a positive step.

Undertaking research was reported as being time consuming, whether undertaken in-house or outsourced. It was also reported that the research produced for the Commissioner by external organisations had been of varying quality. Staff questioned the return on investment for some of the research studies undertaken, and believed that a more strategic approach to research should be adopted that is more closely aligned to generating impact and influencing change. In addition, staff acknowledged the wealth of existing research that is undertaken by other organisations and believed that the Commissioner should collate and build on findings from research previously conducted by other organisations, as opposed to undertaking research that potentially duplicates existing efforts.

Staff acknowledged the link between public affairs and policy, but differing views were put forward regarding the need for both of these areas to be located within the same team.

■ **Corporate Services**

Those consulted recognised the importance of this function in supporting the operations of the Commissioner but did not perceive it to be a core element of the work of the Commissioner in terms of delivering its legislative powers and responsibilities.

A number of staff questioned the need for an internal HR function for an organisation of the Commissioner's size and believed that there could be potential for HR activities to be shared with another organisation. Many of those who shared this opinion believed that sharing HR services would be more in line with the principles underpinning the current reform agenda across Government.

- **Legal and Complaints**

The focus of the Legal and Complaints function has shifted towards casework dealing with complaints. Although there was agreement that this is a critical element of the function, staff raised concerns that the skills within this function are grounded in social services (although one of the Caseworkers is a barrister and is currently acting up as Senior Caseworker), and recommended that the team has broader experience, for example in education. The Commissioner has the legislative power to take on a legal case on behalf of children and young people.

Some staff were concerned that casework is currently too Belfast based and suggested that complaints clinics should be operated in facilities such as Hydebank or in disadvantaged areas where it is perceived that children and young people may be of greatest risk of not having their fundamental rights recognised and upheld.

- **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee was generally regarded as an important element of the Commissioner's governance structures and as a valuable source of advice.

5.2.3 5.2.3 Staffing and Roles

Role of the Senior Management Team

During the consultations, a number of issues were raised by staff (views put forward relate to a cross section of staff and not staff from any one function) regarding the roles of the Senior Management Team as detailed in the following points:

- **Distinguishing Between the Roles of Commissioner and Chief Executive**

Staff raised the need for clarity between the role of the Commissioner and that of the Chief Executive. This lack of clarity was generally attributed to the current Chief Executive having acted up as Commissioner until a new Commissioner was appointed. The majority of staff view the Commissioner as being the face and voice of the organisation, and the Chief Executive as the person responsible for managing the operations of the organisation, but some blurring of roles was being experienced in practice.

- **Consideration of Deputy Commissioner post**

A minority of staff believed that there is a need for a dedicated Deputy Commissioner within the organisation who could represent the Commissioner in her absence. However the majority of staff believed that the various Heads of Functions could undertake this role if requested by the Commissioner.

- **Transition of the Chief Operating Officer role**

Many staff were confused about the change in title of the Chief Operating Officer to Chief Executive, particularly when the Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the organisation.

- **Heads of Functions**

Staff generally agreed that the Head of Research, Policy and Service Review role has increased responsibility for policy due to the reestablishment of the Assembly.

The majority of staff raised concerns that the Commissioner currently does not have a Head of Legal and Complaints post holder to lead the Legal and Complaints function and who is of sufficient seniority to form part of the Senior Management Team / Executive Board. These staff believed that this is a risk to the organisation in terms of its ability to effectively carry out its legislative responsibilities, for example reviewing government legislation. Many staff believed that this post holder requires experience in children's law.

Some staff who believed that a Head of Legal and Complaints was required questioned the need for a full-time post as they were of the view that there would be an insufficient workload for this. A minority of staff believed that this post was not required and any legal expertise needed, in addition to that provided by the acting Senior Caseworker (who is also a barrister) could be bought as needed from external organisations.

It is noted that the Corporate Services Manager post is currently the subject of an external grading review. The need for this role to be at Senior Management Team level was debated by some in the consultations. However, a number of staff considered that the responsibilities of this role have increased to include some of the former responsibilities of the Chief Operating Officer.

Only those staff who believed that the participation activities could be moved to another function, were of the opinion that the Head of Communications and Participation role should be changed to being Head of Communications only. It was also acknowledged that the Head of Communications and Participation was playing a more active role in terms of acting on behalf of the Commissioner by, for example, speaking at events / undertaking public relations activities. The post holder has also had to assume a number of responsibilities formerly associated with the Events Officer post.

A number of staff believed that the Heads of Functions now had increased responsibilities for managing risk and developing risk registers for their areas, and for corporate governance.

It was also apparent during the consultations that a number of staff were unclear about the rationale for renaming of the Senior Management Team as the "Executive Board".

Staffing and roles within particular functions

Viewpoints put forward during the consultations regarding staffing and roles within functions are summarised in the following points:

- **Clarification of individual roles and responsibilities**

Almost all of the staff interviewed called for the need to clarify individuals' roles and responsibilities. The majority of those consulted reported that they were unclear about the boundaries set on roles and that this often led to staff questioning why an individual or team was undertaking an activity, or at times why they weren't when others believed it was their responsibility. The difficulty experienced by the organisation in terms of recruiting suitably skilled people to various posts was also partially explained as being due to insufficient clarity of job advertisements that had resulted in an insufficiently broad field of applicants. A number of staff attributed this confusion to the lack of strategic focus within the Commissioner and calls were made for roles

and responsibilities within individual job descriptions to be reviewed in line with the organisation's revised priorities for the future.

■ **Workloads and staff morale**

The majority of staff reported that they were overloaded with work and attributed this to resource issues within the organisation. For example, the Communications and Participation staff are reported to be under increased pressure to cover responsibilities that would have fallen within the Events Officer's remit.

Staff morale was reported as being low by the majority of those consulted and staff turnover levels were believed to exacerbate this issue.

■ **Enhancing the Corporate Services function**

There were mixed views regarding the need to enhance the resources within the Corporate Services function and to have two Executive Officers (one for Finance and one for HR). Many staff questioned the need for this based on the view that the Commissioner is a relatively small organisation in terms of numbers of staff.

■ **Policy and Public Affairs**

There was a general consensus that the staff undertaking public affairs activities and policy activities should work more closely together. Although opinions varied regarding whether these staff needed to be located within one team, if team working was improved.

Although staff agreed that a Policy Officer was needed in the organisation, many were of the view that this should not have been at the expense of the Events Officer post (when the Events Officer post became vacant, funding for this post was reallocated to the Policy Officer post).

■ **Temporary and Seconded Posts**

The majority of those consulted raised concerns at the continuing level of temporary staff and seconded posts (i.e. the Participation Officers). Staff would welcome consistency in terms of staffing and believed that it would be beneficial if the Commissioner was not restricted on staff numbers by OFMDFM, but instead had the autonomy to establish and fill posts driven by the needs of the organisation, but within overall budget.

■ **Recruiting to Vacant Posts**

Although staff acknowledged that the recruitment process takes time, they expressed the need to fill posts quickly. They suggested that posts should be advertised when someone hands in their notice in an effort to ensure that posts do not remain vacant for prolonged periods of time, as this impacts on the workloads of others.

■ **Team Working**

There was a consensus that the Commissioner is still a relatively young organisation and that in its first years of operation, it has experienced a number of unfortunate setbacks, most significantly the illness and death of the first Commissioner.

Staff reported that it is now time for renewed focus, particularly following the appointment of the new Commissioner.

Staff reported that although team working is improving, there is a general sense that more progress could be made in this area for the benefit of the

Commissioner. However, the majority of staff acknowledged that the physical layout of the office is not necessarily the most conducive to team working given that it is spread over two floors.

5.2.4 Priorities

There was a general consensus that the current fifteen priorities is too many and that this has resulted in the efforts of the organisation being spread too thinly. It was also widely agreed that this resulted in a wider range of focus but less impact during the first years of the organisation's life.

Staff acknowledged the current exercise that is being undertaken to identify future priorities and were hopeful that this will result in a reduced number of priorities that are more strategic in nature. There were also calls for the priorities to be supported by SMART objectives in order to facilitate impact, add value and enable benefits to be measured.

Those consulted were also hopeful that the priorities would enable the Commissioner to balance the extent to which it proactively takes on an issue with the extent to which it reacts to issues that are raised elsewhere. On this basis staff were generally of the opinion that priorities should not be too issue specific.

Examples of priorities suggested by those consulted included:

- anti-poverty;
- child protection;
- play and leisure;
- ethnic minorities;
- structure of children and young people's services; and
- funding for children and young people's services.

A number of staff also raised the need for the Commissioner to "gear up" for the devolution of reserved matters to Northern Ireland, such as criminal justice. Although criminal justice is currently a reserved matter it is anticipated that it will be devolved in due course and there was general acknowledgement that the Commissioner must prepare in advance for this.

5.2.5 Achievements

Areas which staff highlighted as specific achievements included:

- *speech and language therapy*: following research into speech and language services for children and young people, the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety established a taskforce to further examine the implications;
- *school transport*: resulting in the legal requirement for seatbelts, not having three children / young people sharing a seat suitable for two, and removing permission to stand on school transport;
- *bullying*: the Commissioner prepared guidance packs detailing how schools should deal with bullying;
- *vetting*: the Commissioner undertook a service review of vetting procedures and is currently undertaking further work in order to ascertain the extent to which recommendations have been implemented; and

- *child centred care*: the Commissioner worked with a number of Health and Social Services Trusts in order to develop approaches whereby children and young people had a say on what happened in their lives and one Trust established a youth panel as a result.

Despite having identified these as achievements, a significant number of staff questioned the extent to which outcomes had been as a result of the Commissioner's involvement, and recognised that measuring impact and success is a challenge for the organisation.

Areas in which staff reported that the Commissioner has potentially underachieved included:

- raising awareness of the Commissioner and services provided;
- engaging with socially excluded children and young people; and
- influencing government policy (although staff anticipated that the reestablishment of the Assembly would facilitate progress in this regard).

Staff were generally hopeful that future business plans would be impact and outcome focused and viewed previous plans as having been too numbers driven.

5.2.6 Relationship with OFMDFM

Generally there was a consensus that the powers and responsibilities vested in the Commissioner through legislation, ensures that the organisation can operate effectively. However, the majority of staff believed that it was appropriate that the Commissioner should be sponsored by a central government department such as OFMDFM.

A small minority of those consulted would prefer the Commissioner to be accountable to the Assembly directly, as they perceive that this would reinforce the independence of its remit.

It was widely acknowledged that the Chief Executive should act as the liaison point between the Commissioner and OFMDFM. Some staff believed that OFMDFM should have an arms length approach to working with the Commissioner and should not become involved in the day-to-day operations of the Commissioner. These staff, for example, were of the view that as an independent body, the sponsoring department should not have a say in how budget is spent. However, the remainder of staff who commented on the Commissioner's relationship with OFMDFM did not identify any issues.

5.2.7 Relationships with Stakeholders

A number of issues were raised regarding the Commissioner's relationship with stakeholders. These are detailed in the following points:

- **Children and Young People**

The majority of staff believed that although more children and young people were becoming aware of the Commissioner, confusion exists regarding the role of the Commissioner and when a child or young person, or their family / carer should approach the Commissioner as opposed to another organisation.

- **Statutory Sector and Children and Young People's Sector**

Those consulted had differing views regarding the relationship between the Commissioner and the statutory sector and children and young people's sector.

The majority of staff believed that the Commissioner should be eager to work with the statutory sector and / or children and young people's sector when either is developing a strategy that could impact children and young people. It was generally viewed that this would help to ensure that the viewpoint of children and young people is embedded in any subsequent outputs.

These staff were generally of the opinion that the Commissioner must appreciate the expertise that other organisations have in specific areas and should focus on bringing experts together to support the Commissioner to voice the most informed view point for the benefit of children and young people.

A minority of staff raised concerns that such an approach would impede the Commissioner's independence and that an arms length relationship is required.

A number of staff raised concerns that members of both sectors in question could potentially be unclear regarding the Commissioner's role compared to other organisations, such as the external organisations, including those in the statutory sector. A number of staff suggested that developing memorandums of understanding between the Commissioner and stakeholder organisations in the statutory and children and young people's sectors regarding roles, responsibilities, and how the Commissioner will work with such stakeholders, could be of mutual benefit to all involved.

- **Media**

There was a general consensus that in future the Commissioner's media profile should be improved and that the organisation should use the media more effectively to raise its profile and differentiate itself from other organisations with a children and young people's remit. Recent progress in this regard was noted by some.

- **Politicians**

The majority of staff believed that during the interim period the Commissioner's political profile was limited, and are eager that the Commissioner targets politicians, senior officials in government, and strategic advisors, in order to effect change and influence positive outcomes for all children and young people. Staff generally anticipated that this will be facilitated by the appointment of the new Commissioner and the reestablishment of the Assembly.

- **Commissioners in Other Areas**

A number of staff raised views regarding the importance of the Commissioner building and maintaining working relationships with Commissioners / Ombudsmen for children and young people throughout the UK and internationally. This view was based on the need to share information and for joint working on high profile issues.

5.3 Commissioner's Youth Panel

5.3.1 Introduction

A meeting was held with eleven representatives from the Commissioner's Youth Panel. The findings from the meeting are set out below.

It should be noted that an independent review and evaluation of the Commissioner's Youth Panel was undertaken for the period September 2005 to March 2007. The recommendations resulting from this review have yet to be implemented.

5.3.2 Structure and Function

The Youth Panel's aim is to act as a representative forum to provide the Commissioner with the views of children and young people and to support the Commissioner in its work. There are currently 42 members of the Commissioner's Youth Panel, made up of representatives from all over Northern Ireland, who formally meet every month and hold a number of residential sessions each year. The composition of the Youth Panel as provided in the 2006-2007 Business Plan is as follows:

- Religious Belief: Protestant 19 per cent (eight representatives), Catholic 48 per cent (20 representatives), Other two per cent (one representative), None 14 per cent (six representatives), Not Declared 17 per cent (seven representatives);
- Gender: Male 43 per cent (18 representatives), Female 57 per cent (24 representatives);
- Age: 12-14 yrs 17 per cent (seven representatives), 15-16 yrs 33 per cent (14 representatives), 17-18 yrs 45 per cent (19 representatives), 18-21 yrs five per cent (two representatives);
- Disability: 17 per cent (seven representatives); and
- Ethnic Minorities: nine per cent (four representatives).

The diversity of the youth panel was explored. Members of the panel recognised the efforts made in trying to recruit a representative forum and indicated that by and large the current panel was representative in nature although some thought the diversity in membership from, specifically, ethnic minority groups could be greater. The age range was also discussed, most indicated that in line with the Commissioner's aims and objectives, the current upper and lower age limits were appropriate.

Youth Panel members were in slight disagreement about the optimum size of the panel. They recognised the need for larger numbers (more than 20) in order to provide a varied and diverse representation of children and young people. However, some also stated the need for all members to be 'actively involved' in the Panel, and questioned whether this was possible with numbers exceeding 40 representatives, others believed there should be no restriction on the numbers of children and young people involved in the panel. Members of the Youth Panel believed that current representatives were committed to the Panel, however external circumstances, (i.e. school, sports etc) restricted attendance at a number of the meetings / events to between 15 – 20 people. It was suggested that although this low turnout was frustrating reducing the frequency of meetings or rotating the venue would not have any major impact on the numbers in attendance.

There was overwhelming support for a Youth Panel, amongst all of the stakeholders, although differences were noted in the extent of its involvement in the Commissioner's work. Members of the Youth Panel believed there to be limitations in providing a purely consultative body, with some indicating the requirement of a more in-depth role. Some of the members stated that there were plenty of opportunities to work with the Commissioner, but not as many opportunities to get involved in the more 'day to day' operational aspect of the organisation, good relationships have been built up with the Communications and Participation team, but there is little / no contact with other teams / staff members and some Panel members were unsure as to what goes on in the rest of the office. Enhanced communication through regular updates and potentially getting members involved in more office work was highlighted as being options going forward in rectifying this situation.

5.3.3 Achievements

The following examples are key achievements highlighted by the Youth Panel in supporting and contributing to the Commissioner's work. These include:

- playing an active role in research and service review. The most significant included the peer-led survey on the issue of young consumers exploring people's positive and negative experiences in shops across Northern Ireland. Panel members have also been involved in research into anti-bullying, school transport and physical punishment;
- the Youth Panel has strongly supported the Commissioner's communication and publication strategies by consulting and helping to develop the Commissioner's website and by inputting into such publications as the annual review, school council guidance and playing a key role in the Democra school campaign. The Panel has also recently completed a promotional DVD for the Commissioner with the aim of providing more information about the context within which the Commissioner works;
- the panel's main role is to provide a consultative body, not only for the Commissioner but for others. For instance, internally they were involved with various business planning; research / reviews etc. and they also met with the Education Minister and Children's Minister several times and in partnership with the Commissioner, gave presentations at various conferences, e.g. Include Youth AGM, Association of Chief Police Officers UK Conference, and UK Youth Presidency EU Conference. Other organisations also benefited as the Panel provided a positive example of young people's participation, enabling them to hear the views of children and young people and adding credibility to their work; and
- the completion of the Youth Panel's constitution and action plan.

5.3.4 Relationship with the Commissioner

In general, Panel members indicated that working relationships between staff and the Panel were good, although as noted earlier the majority of contact is with the Communications and Participation team. In supporting the success of the Youth Panel, the main factor highlighted by representatives was the support and guidance provided by the Participation Officers. Some suggestions were made, however, in relation to the communication between the Senior Management Team and the Panel, with some representatives indicating that they are sometimes 'kept out of the loop' with regard to updates on meetings / feedback.

Panel consultees agreed that current work conducted by the Panel was appropriate and beneficial, however, planning this work in advance and developing future work opportunities was essential in continuing the success of the Panel. Greater clarity in the work undertaken and feedback from teams in the office of the Commissioner regarding the outcome of work would both be beneficial to the Youth Panel in moving forward.

5.4 Stakeholders

5.4.1 Introduction

Individual meetings were held with several stakeholders of the Commissioner from both the statutory sector and non-statutory children and young people's sector. Full details of those consulted are included in Appendix I. The findings from the meetings are set out below.

5.4.2 Role and Functions of the Commissioner

All of those consulted recognised the unforeseen circumstances that have been experienced by the Commissioner since its establishment, and the unenviable position of the Chief Executive with the added responsibilities of being Commissioner prior to the appointment of the current Commissioner. A significant number of the stakeholders involved in the consultation were involved to some degree in establishing the role of Commissioner and in shaping its status and functions. These stakeholders maintain the view that the role of Commissioner in Northern Ireland is needed in order to add value to the rights agenda for children and young people, and believe that the rationale for its functions as set out in legislation remains.

Within this context, the following issues were raised during the consultations with regard to the role and functions of the Commissioner.

■ **Role of the Commissioner**

The majority of those consulted reported the need for the Commissioner's profile to be raised and would welcome a proactive approach in this regard. It was generally accepted that those organisations, whether statutory or non-statutory, with an explicit focus on children and young people, and which were involved at some level in supporting the establishment of the Commissioner, are clear about the responsibilities of the Commissioner. However, concerns were raised that other stakeholders have difficulty in differentiating between the Commissioner and other organisations such as the Office of the Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Children's Law Centre, and CYPUP in OFMDFM. In addition, some concern was expressed in terms of the potential cross over into other organisations areas of responsibility. Some degree of confusion also exists between the individual roles of the Commissioner and the Chief Executive, particularly if the Chief Executive attends meetings when it had been expected that the Commissioner would attend.

Stakeholders put forward the view that the Commissioner's role was to act as "watchdog" over the work of other organisations in terms of ensuring the rights of children and young people are not breached. A media and PR exercise to convey and differentiate the roles and responsibilities of the Commissioner would be welcomed.

■ **Kudos of the Commissioner**

The majority of stakeholders believed that the Commissioner has an elevated standing compared to other organisations due to its responsibility to provide the voice for all children and young people and its legislative powers.

A number of stakeholders stressed that when the Commissioner speaks out on a matter that others should sit up and take notice, and that the Commissioner can help to add weight to the work of NGOs. However, concern exists that the Commissioner has been involved in too many areas (further opinion regarding the Commissioner's priorities are contained within Section 5.4.3) and that this has diluted its voice, potentially resulting in a more minimal impact than initially desired. In addition, some concern was raised in relation to a potential conflict between the Commissioner's advocacy and investigation roles and that there was a need to ensure the right checks and balances are in place to protect the Commissioner against the risk of being challenged.

These stakeholders would encourage the Commissioner to maintain the kudos associated with the role and supporting this with a strategic and targeted approach.

- **Legal and Complaints**

The lack of a Head of Legal and Complaints (at Senior Management / Executive Board level) within the office of the Commissioner was highlighted as a significant gap. The vast majority of those consulted were of the opinion that leadership (with legal expertise) is required. For example, to support the Commissioner to: identify cases that the Commissioner could consider undertaking as a legal challenge on behalf of children and young people; to recommend that a child or young person or their family or carer should seek legal advice; or to review any legislation from a children and young people's perspective.

However, the Commissioner has developed comprehensive criteria against which to assess requests for legal support. This assessment is made by the Legal Funding Committee whose membership includes the Commissioner, the Senior Caseworker (a Caseworker who is a barrister acting up), the Chief Executive, and the Head of Research, Policy and Service Review. In the event that this committee believes that a legal support request meets its legal funding criteria, the opinion of an expert legal advisor is sought prior to a final decision being made.

A number of stakeholders also reported that expertise of children's law specifically would be of benefit and that the Commissioner should develop a legal strategy. Some stakeholders also believed that the Commissioner should have a separate budget for taking on legal cases.

- **Role of Participation**

Whilst stakeholders did not question the value of participation, a number of those consulted reported that they were unclear about the role of participation in the Commissioner compared to that undertaken by other organisations, for example, the Education and Library Boards, Participation Network Initiative, and the Big Deal Initiative (ELB and NI Youth Forum).

Several other stakeholders thought it was beneficial that the Commissioner had Participation Officers in remote locations in the four Health and Social Services Board areas, in terms of enhancing the Commissioner's ability to engage with children and young people throughout Northern Ireland.

- **Role of Youth Panel**

A number of stakeholders reported that they were unclear about the role of the Youth Panel and asked for clarity in terms of its membership and degree of involvement in the Commissioner's activities.

5.4.3 Priorities

All of the stakeholders consulted agreed that having fifteen priorities was too many for the Commissioner.

A number of those consulted believed that the Commissioner's priorities should be in line with those of government departments for children and young people, and a more significant number of respondents stressed the need for priorities to be strategically focused.

Priorities suggested by the stakeholders included:

- public perception of children and young people;
- funding of children and young people's services;

- the integration of children and young people's structures and services post RPA and surveying children and young people in order to determine changes in their perception and experiences of such services;
- child-proofing legislation on behalf of children and young people; and
- taking forward strategic test cases on behalf of children and young people.

5.4.4 Achievements

Stakeholders highlighted the Commissioner's achievements in a number of areas for example, speech and language, the publication of valuable pieces of research such as the recent Spending Review on children and young people's services, Children's Rights in Northern Ireland report, road safety and school transport.

However, many stakeholders were of the opinion that the real impact of the Commissioner has yet to be realised. This was widely acknowledged as being a result of the circumstances faced by the Commissioner following its establishment, and due to the Commissioner having fifteen priorities to work towards. Stakeholders agreed that this had spread the Commissioner's resources too thinly.

A number of stakeholders reported that they believed the children and young people's sector and the statutory sector had been waiting for the appointment of the new Commissioner and that an element of hiatus was experienced in the meantime.

All stakeholders stressed their support for the new Commissioner.

5.4.5 Relationships with Stakeholders

Positive examples of how the Commissioner has worked with other organisations were put forward by a number of stakeholders. For example, DHSSPS was undertaking a review of Child Protection Services in a number of Health and Social Services Trusts. The Commissioner became involved in the review of two of the Trusts and DHSSPS reported that significant value and validity was added to the exercise by the ability of the Commissioner's staff to engage with children and young people in order for their views to be included in an appropriate manner.

Although stakeholders are supportive of the Commissioner, and examples were provided of positive experiences of working relationships, there was strong consensus that the Commissioner needs to clarify its approach to working with other organisations, and to gain respect from stakeholders.

Numerous stakeholders highlighted the need for the Commissioner to work with its stakeholders as opposed to working in isolation. The independent nature of the Commissioner's role is regarded as being highly significant and a number of those consulted were proponents of this independence when the role of Commissioner was being established.

Most stakeholders believed that the Commissioner has been reluctant in the past to join partnerships or groups that have been, for example, undertaking research / a review or developing a strategy in an area focusing on children and young people; for fear that this might limit their independence. The majority of stakeholders stressed that each member of such a group / partnership, did so as a representative of their particular independent organisation, and believed that the Commissioner should assume a similar approach. However, a small number of those consulted had reservations about the Commissioner being represented on groups because they believed it would make it difficult for the Commissioner to comment on outputs / outcomes.

Stakeholders stressed the need for collaboration and joint working because so many organisations specialise in a particular area / set of areas focusing on children and young people. These stakeholders reported that if the Commissioner collates

the views / research outputs of relevant stakeholders, the outputs would have more weight and would in turn support the Commissioner to put forward viewpoints underpinned by informed and expert opinions. There was also a consensus that this would minimise duplication of effort. It was anticipated that the collation of views could be facilitated by the establishment of an Advisory Counsel for the Commissioner comprising members of NGOs, academics, and statutory organisations that focus on children and young people. It was reported that the Commissioner has agreed to the establishment of this group.

All stakeholders believed that there would be considerable benefits and impacts if the Commissioner was involved in challenging, advising, and influencing government from the outset of any planning, strategy or policy development process involving children and young people. However, those consulted stressed that the Commissioner should not become involved in managing children and young people's services or in the operational side of services. Stakeholders were clear that this was the responsibility of other organisations.

A significant number of stakeholders stressed the need for a memorandum of understanding to be established between their organisation and the Commissioner. Ideally they reported that this memorandum should outline roles and responsibilities. In addition, the memorandum should detail the approach that would be adopted by the Commissioner when working with another organisation to enable it to discharge the voice of children and young people from a clear rights perspective.

One stakeholder proposed that the Commissioner should share its draft business plan with stakeholders and that these stakeholders should share draft business plans with the Commissioner in order to minimise duplication and improve the sharing of information.

5.5 Children and Young People / Families and Carers

5.5.1 Introduction

A randomly selected sample of 32 cases were invited by letter to take part in a survey of their experiences and views on the Commissioner. The sample was selected across the breadth of priority areas that are supported by the Commissioner. Only seven responses were received and we recognise that this is not a statistically significant result from which we can draw definitive conclusions.

5.5.2 Analysis of Results

Out of the 32 cases that were selected, seven responded, all of whom were family representatives. The survey results were very positive indicating a very satisfactory experience regarding their interaction with the office of the Commissioner. All of those who responded, strongly agreed, that the Commissioner's staff were:

- friendly and supportive;
- gave good advice;
- was understanding to their problems; and
- explained things in a way they understood.

Six out of the seven respondents also strongly agreed that the Commissioner helped to sort out the issue they had, with the other representative failing to answer that question.

Finally, all seven of the respondents indicated that they would recommend the Commissioner to other people with a similar problem.

5.6 Summary

It is clear from the consultation that there is considerable support for the work of the Commissioner. However, there are a number of areas that those consulted believed that improvements could be made.

For staff these include that the staff turnover rates need to be addressed, and that roles and responsibilities of staff throughout the organisation need to be clarified, particularly those of the Commissioner and Chief Executive.

Both staff and stakeholders agreed that the Commissioner needs to have a more strategic focus with fewer priorities.

Stakeholders would welcome protocols that would clarify how the Commissioner will work with other organisations and believe that the Commissioner's ability to fully utilise legislative powers is limited due to the lack of senior in-house legal expertise.

The Commissioner's Youth Panel members are committed and enthusiastic about their role. However, panel members believe their input could be utilised more effectively through improved communication channels and the opportunity to engage with all functions within the office.

6 Governance, Management and Consideration of Options

6.1 Introduction

This section reviews the Commissioner's governance and management arrangements, and considers alternative options for delivering the Commissioner's services in the future.

6.2 Governance Arrangements

Corporate governance in the public sector has gained increasing emphasis in recent years. Based on the principles contained in the Combined Code on Corporate Governance, HM Treasury has produced guidance for central government departments in the form of a Code of Good Practice³. Additionally, the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services has published *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services*. Following several high profile cases of weaknesses in corporate governance within departments and their Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) in Northern Ireland, which became the focus of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) produced the report *Good Governance: Effective Relationships between Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies* in May 2007. This very recent report outlines the most up-to-date guidance on this particular area of corporate governance, and is particularly relevant to the Northern Ireland government environment.

In reviewing the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland, the governance arrangements in place between its parent department, OFMDFM, and itself have been reviewed. These arrangements have an overarching impact on the overall effectiveness of the organisation, as they set in place means of communicating between the two bodies, oversight of the public funds allocated to the Commissioner, and a means of performance management with respect to the disbursement of these funds by the Commissioner.

Section 2.4.2 gives an overview of the governance arrangements in place within the body.

There are two aspects of this analysis of the Commissioner's governance arrangements. Firstly, the governance arrangements in place in general, and secondly the impact of corporation sole status on these arrangements.

6.2.1 Analysis of Governance Arrangements

Analysis of Structures in Place

Since commencement in 2003, the Commissioner has worked hard to establish robust governance structures. The most notable governance structure put in place has been the Audit and Risk Committee, which was established in December 2005 and had its first meeting in April 2006. Such a committee is in place to ensure that audit work is directed at areas of greatest risk, audit findings (both internal and external audit) are given greater visibility within an organisation and to ensure that such findings are dealt with effectively and proactively. The Audit and Risk Committee should play a central role developing and maintaining a sound system of internal control.

Three members have been recruited to the Audit and Risk Committee. Two of these members have a finance background, one of which is the Chair, and the other is from a social work background. This is a good mix bearing in mind the nature of the committee as well as the aims and objectives of the Commissioner. As per the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee, the following people normally

³ Circulated by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) as DAO(DFP) 18/05.

attend meetings of the committee: the Chief Executive, the Corporate Services Manager, a representative from internal audit, a representative from external audit, and a representative from OFMDFM.

In September 2006, the Commissioner established an Executive Board, which meets monthly. The 'Executive Board's' primary responsibility, as per its Terms of Reference, is "to provide leadership, vision, continuity of purpose, and accountability in taking forward and delivering the mission of the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland." It consists of the Commissioner, the Chief Executive, the Heads of Departments, and the Corporate Services Manager. It is chaired by the Commissioner. It should be noted that the Executive Board was originally the "Senior Management Team."

The Terms of Reference, however, do not lay out the respective responsibilities of the Chair of the Executive Board (the Commissioner) and the Chief Executive. Corporate Governance guidance suggests that the Chair and Chief Executive should be different individuals.

The CYPU of OFMDFM is the sponsoring team for the Commissioner. Section 2.4.2 describes how CYPU carries out this role and the monitoring that takes place on a monthly basis. In general, the monthly monitoring information supplied to CYPU is in line with common practice between NDPBs and their sponsoring branches. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the information supplied is purely financial, and there is no attempt to demonstrate linkage between utilisation of resources and achievements of objectives.

The Youth Panel is an important element of the governance structures because it enables children and young people to provide advice to the Commissioner on issues.

The Ethics Committee demonstrates a systematic approach to ensuring that any research / reviews carried out by, or on behalf of, the Commissioner comply with agreed ethical guidance. The ethical guidance is comprehensive and details, for example, procedural requirements regarding any interaction with children and young people during research or review work. The Shadow Ethics Committee, which supports the main Ethics Committee and includes six youth panel members, ensures that the views of children and young people are included in ethical considerations.

The inclusion of internal staff, external professionals, and members of the youth panel in the Ethics Committee and Shadow Ethics Committee provides an important breadth of opinion.

6.2.2 Analysis of the Impact of Corporation Sole Status on Governance Arrangements

Corporate Governance and Corporation Sole Status

The Commissioner, like many other human rights organisations in the UK, was established as a corporation sole. According to OFMDFM, the original intention behind this was to allow continuity in the role of the Commissioner e.g. if court action is commenced in the name of the Commissioner, his/her successor can continue this action. Additionally, it also provides a degree of protection for the individual Commissioner, and allows him/her to be named as an office in other legislation. A final part of the original rationale for corporation sole status was that it would enable the Commissioner to be legally independent from the parent department.

Thus, the status is principally for legal reasons, as opposed to operational and governance reasons.

The Combined Code on Corporate Governance concerning the roles of the Chief Executive and Chair of the board states:

A.2 Chairman and chief executive

Main Principle

There should be a clear division of responsibilities at the head of the company between the running of the board and the executive responsibility for the running of the company's business. No one individual should have unfettered powers of decision.

Yet, in a corporation sole in general, the individual office that constitutes the corporation sole will inherently have such unfettered powers, since it is this individual who runs the organisation, and not a Board.

The Corporate Governance guidance does not deal specifically with corporation sole status, and appears to only deal with corporation aggregates. This means that there is a lack of clarity as to the structures needed for good governance within a corporation sole, and leaves them with the inherent difficulty discussed above.

Corporate Governance in Other Corporation Sole Organisations

It is useful to consider the governance structures of other corporation sole organisations to see how they have attempted to deal with these issues.

Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland - The Police Ombudsman is a corporation sole, but is not the Accounting Officer for the organisation. The Chief Executive is designated as Accounting Officer of the body. This creates a clearer division of responsibility, and could be considered to provide a more natural division of responsibilities, with the Police Ombudsman being the public face of the body and key decision maker on investigations, and the Chief Executive being responsible for the day-to-day operation and safeguarding of public funds.

Office of the Ombudsman – The Ombudsman is a corporation sole, and additionally the Ombudsman is the Accounting Officer for the office. There is a Deputy Ombudsman, who deputises for the Ombudsman in his absence. Within its financial accounts it states, "The office does not have a "Board" in the context referred to within the Code (the HM Treasury Corporate Governance Code of Good Practice), however it has an established Senior Management Team (SMT) which is regarded as a proportionate arrangement for an organization of this size."

Northern Ireland Audit Office - The Comptroller and Auditor General is a corporation sole. He is the Accounting Officer for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). The NIAO does not have a board, but has a Senior Management Group comprising the C&AG, the Assistant Auditor Generals, the Directors of the various departments, and three Non-Executive Directors. One of the non-executive directors is the chair of the senior management group. This is intended to create the division of responsibility at the head of the organisation as suggested in the Combined Code.

Hence, it appears that there is no clear view on the best corporate governance structures within corporation sole organisations. Generally but not universally, the corporation sole and Accounting Officer are the same individual. It should be noted that this is similar to the arrangement in a central government department, where the official at the head of the department is normally appointed as its Accounting Officer. The HM Treasury Corporate Governance Code of Good Practice discusses this situation, and balances it with the following guidance:

'The Accounting Officer should establish and document a clear allocation of responsibilities amongst officials in the department, but he or she retains personal responsibility and accountability to Parliament for:

- propriety and regularity;
- prudent and economical administration;
- avoidance of waste and extravagance;
- efficient and effective use of available resources; and
- the organisation, staffing and management of the department.”

6.3 Analysis of Staffing

In this section of the report we examine the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of the Commissioner’s Senior Management Team, in particular the roles of the Commissioner, Chief Executive, Head of Communications and Participation, Head of Research, Policy and Service Review, and Corporate Services Manager.

Additional observations are included regarding the other staff related issues.

6.3.1 Evolution of Senior Management Team Responsibilities

▪ The role of Chief Executive versus Chief Operating Officer

In late 2005, the Chief Operating Officer post was revised and renamed as Chief Executive. There was no Chief Executive post in the originally agreed structure.

Following a review of the job descriptions of both of these posts it is apparent that one of the key differences is that the Chief Operating Officer’s responsibilities focus more on day-to-day operations management, whereas the Chief Executive post has more strategic and lead responsibilities in terms of relationship building and corporate and business planning. The Chief Executive also has line management responsibilities for the Heads of Functions and the Corporate Services Manager whereas the Chief Operating Officer is the line manager for the Corporate Services Manager. The Chief Executive job description was reviewed but the outcome of the review has yet to be agreed.

The job descriptions of both the Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer state the post holder is required, in the absence of the Commissioner, to represent the Commissioner.

▪ The role of Commissioner versus Chief Executive

There are a number of areas in which the distinctive responsibilities of the Commissioner and Chief Executive are unclear, including:

Financial Management

Whilst the specific responsibilities of the Commissioner and Chief Executive are distinct, in practice there has been some cross over regarding the area of financial management. The Commissioner is responsible for ensuring efficient financial management, for preparing accounts of expenditure made, and estimating income and expenses as required. The Commissioner is also designated the Accounting Officer.

The Chief Executive is responsible for managing the Commissioner’s annual budget, noting that the Commissioner may delegate day-to-day responsibility of his/her consolidation officer role to the Chief Executive, who will be responsible for bidding for the Commissioner’s budget and for directing members of the Senior Management Team on budget allocation to their functional areas and defining budgeting processes for the office.

Relationships

It is also apparent that the boundaries between the responsibilities of the Commissioner and Chief Executive are unclear regarding relationship building.

Although it is understood that both the Commissioner and the Chief Executive should develop and maintain relationships with other organisations with responsibility for service delivery to children and young people, and with similar bodies such as the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and with members of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, (ENOC) and the British and Irish Network of Children's Commissioners, (BINOCC), the differentiation between responsibilities in this regard is unclear.

Staff Management

The Commissioner is responsible for recruiting and managing staff and for setting the overall strategic direction of the organisation. The Chief Executive is required to provide organisational leadership to staff, articulating a clear vision and objectives and building and sustaining commitment to their achievement.

Again this is an area where the boundaries between the responsibilities of the Commissioner and Chief Executive require clarity.

■ **Head of Research, Policy and Service Review and Head of Communications and Participation**

Each of these Heads of function posts has its own distinctive responsibilities, however the post holders are required to work collaboratively as appropriate.

When originally established, the Head of Research, Policy and Service Review post did not have recognition for policy in its title. Key responsibilities of this post include managing service evaluations and research.

The inclusion in the post title of policy was a more recent addition in light of the increased focus on policy work within the function; however responsibilities pertaining to policy have formed part of the role since its creation. It is anticipated that the reestablishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly will increase the policy focus of this team.

The Head of Communications and Participation's remit is clearly set out with regard to communicating the views and vision of the Commissioner, capturing children and young people's views, promoting the Commissioner, and informing children and young people (their families and carers) of their rights.

It is anticipated that with the return of devolved powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly the already heavy workload will be increased by further public affairs activity and related media activity.

■ **Corporate Services Manager**

The Corporate Services Manager is responsible for managing the financial and HR functions of the Commissioner in addition to managing the Corporate Service Team, and supporting business development through the provision of advice and guidance to the Chief Executive and Commissioner. The Corporate Services Manager was invited to become a member of the Senior Management Team in 2006.

When the Chief Operating Officer post was revised and renamed as the Chief Executive post, a number of the operational aspects of the Chief Operating Officer's remit were redirected to the Corporate Services Manager. For example, the Corporate Services Manager has become more involved in providing advice and guidance to the Commissioner, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team on corporate services issues.

This post is currently the subject of review by an external organisation. The review commenced in 2005 and has not yet been completed.

- **Head of Legal and Complaints**

The Commissioner's Legal and Complaints Team, was led until June 2006 by a Barrister (Grade 6 post). Since June 2006 this post has been vacant.

Staff within this team focus on complaints casework but have not instigated any legal casework since June 2006. However, there is ongoing legal action with regards to physical punishment.

Responsibilities of the Head of Legal and Complaints included reviewing and making recommendations on the adequacy and effectiveness of the law and practice in relation to the rights and welfare of children and young people. Further responsibilities included compiling and presenting a legally sound case to senior government officials in order to influence their decision making.

6.4 Potential Delivery Arrangements

As discussed previously at 2.4.1, the Commissioner is an NDPB. The Commissioner was set up in this way to deliver its aims and objectives. The Terms of Reference requests a consideration of alternative delivery arrangements, analysing their appropriateness, and potential effectiveness in achieving the core aims and objectiveness of the Commissioner. The options to be considered as per the terms of reference are as follows:

- a public private partnership;
- market testing;
- privatisation;
- strategic contracting out; and
- merger or rationalisation.

There are a number of reasons why we do not consider any of these options to be a viable alternative to the current delivery arrangements at this point in time. They are explained below.

6.4.1 Private Sector Involvement Inconsistent with the Commissioner's Aims and Objectives

The first four of the alternative delivery arrangements above, namely PPP, market testing, privatisation and strategic contracting out, include an element of private sector involvement to a greater or lesser degree.

The principal objective of the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland is to advocate for and raise awareness of the needs and rights of children and young people. There is no business imperative for private sector involvement in such an advocacy and awareness raising role and there would be a credibility gap with any proposed private sector solution.

Additionally, it should be noted that the services delivered by the Commissioner are not services that would easily be delivered by the private sector or contracted out. Such services tend to be very much transactional, with clear understanding of good and poor performance e.g. MOT testing. The services provided by the Commissioner, as has been demonstrated within this report, are by nature difficult and complex to measure.

Based on the above, the first four alternative delivery options are not considered viable.

6.4.2 Merger or Rationalisation

The final alternative delivery arrangement to be considered is the potential for merger or rationalisation i.e. the scope for merger or rationalisation of the Commissioner's functions with other areas of Government providing similar or complementary service, or the scope for merging offices which form part of a regional network with other Government offices in order to provide a "one stop shop" service.

There are three potential options:

- OFMDFM Delivery of the Commissioner's Functions;
- Merger of Children and Young People's Commissioners in the UK; and
- Merger of Human Right's organisations in Northern Ireland.

With regard to the Commissioner, there are only two natural options which would fit into this framework:

OFMDFM Delivery of the Commissioner's Functions

The CYPU is the sponsoring unit within OFMDFM for the Commissioner. It has core responsibility for children and young people in central government, and for driving forward the government's cross-cutting priority in respect of children and young people. Hence, it may be considered that CYPU could deliver the functions of the Commissioner itself alongside its other work for children and young people. This would be likely to have the benefit of reducing overall costs as overheads would be unlikely to be as high, with the functions of the Commissioner sitting within the core Department.

Nevertheless, this option is also not viable due to the need for the powers of the Commissioner to be independent from central government. The Commissioner has to have regard for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Paris Principles that direct the independence of the office. To effectively advocate for the rights of children and young people, it is essential that the body maintains its arm's length relationship with central government. Hence, this delivery option must be excluded on these grounds.

Merger of Children and Young People's Commissioners in the UK and Ireland

There are four Commissioners for children and young people across the UK and one Ombudsman in Ireland, one for each of the constituent jurisdictions. It could be argued that a single commissioner for children and young people for the whole of the UK and Ireland could have more political and legal sway. Additionally, a single commissioner could potentially pool the resources of the individual commissioners, have reduced overhead costs and be able to utilise a greater proportion of resources on achieving the primary aims and objectives. On top this, any inconsistencies in functions of the four current commissioners would be removed.

There are also disadvantages of such a merger. Firstly, the needs of children and young people of Northern Ireland specifically might not have as clear a voice under a UK Commissioner. Additionally, a single commissioner for the UK would be counter to the move towards devolved government in the UK over the last decade. The individual commissioners for each country of the UK sit well within the devolved political environment of the UK. The current legislative powers of each Commissioner are also different.

Merger of Human Right's Organisations in Northern Ireland

There is a trend in other jurisdictions for human rights organisations to pull together into a single organisation. In the Northern Ireland context, this could involve the Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission, the Commissioner for

Children and Young People, Police Ombudsman, and the Office of the Ombudsman, coming together to form one large organisation to push forward the human rights within Northern Ireland.

It is not within the scope of this review to ascertain if this would be a feasible arrangement. Nevertheless, it would have similar advantages to the option above of combining the UK Children's Commissioners, in terms of having a louder combined voice, and the benefits of pooling resources. Additionally, this option would not have the difficulty of having to merge organisations across the devolved administrations.

Nevertheless, there would be potential difficulties in terms of working out the best way a combined organisation would be structured, and the rights of children and young people would no longer be the core thrust of the organisation. As such, the rights of children and young people may not get as much attention.

As with the option above, this would require a careful assessment of all the bodies to be combined, and a combined effort to bring them together. Bearing this in mind, this option is also excluded in the short term, but the Department and the Commissioner may wish to explore it further.

6.5 Summary

The Commissioner has established sound governance systems, in particularly its Audit and Risk Committee, which plays a key role in developing and maintaining a sound system of internal control. However, there is scope (and benefit) for the Commissioner to sit on this Committee.

The 'Executive Board' of the organisation was established in 2006, to provide leadership, vision, continuity of purpose, and accountability in taking forward and delivering the mission of the Commissioner.

Appropriate monitoring arrangements are in place between the CYPUC, the sponsoring body for the Commissioner, and the Commissioner. However, monitoring information is primarily financial and there could be benefit in including information that links the utilisation of financial resources and achievements of objectives.

Although a variety of alternative delivery options exist, for various reasons maintaining the status of the Commissioner as an NDPB of OFMDFM appears to be the most appropriate option.

Overall the roles of senior management and Corporate Services Manager are appropriate (however specific issues which should be addressed have been highlighted). The boundaries between the role of the Commissioner and the Chief Executive are not clear in all areas.

7 Comparative Analysis and Good Practice Review

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to benchmark the legislative, administrative and operational arrangements of the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland against other similar offices. It also seeks to identify examples of good practice.

7.2 Methodology

Six telephone interviews were held with comparator organisations highlighting the views of agencies regarding the delivering services to children and young people in their respective regions. Those consulted included:

- a) Children's Commissioner for England;
- b) Children's Commissioner for New Zealand;
- c) The Ombudsman for Children's Office, Republic of Ireland;
- d) Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- e) The Ombudsman for Children Norway; and
- f) Children's Commissioner for Wales.

7.3 Overview of Differing Legislative Contexts and Operational Arrangements

The purpose of Table 7.1 is to set the legislative context of each comparator organisation. This section does not provide a detailed comparison of legislation.

It should be noted that Article 24 of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 requires a review of legislation to be carried out. The Commissioner for Children and Young People has presented her report to Ministers and it is currently under consideration. This organisation status review has therefore not made an assessment regarding the effectiveness, remit and operation of the legislation.

Table 7.2 provides a comparative summary of various operational aspects of each organisation, including the Northern Ireland Commissioner.

Table 7.1
Summary of Best Practice Legislation Information

Legislation	Enquiry powers	Aims in legislation	Comment
Northern Ireland			
Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003	<p>May investigate where a “child’s rights have been infringed” or “his interests have been adversely affected” by the action of a relevant authority and where the Commissioner is satisfied that: the complaint “raises a question of principle” and it “does not fall within an existing statutory complaints system.”</p> <p>Power for review of advocacy, complaint, inspection and whistle-blowing arrangements of relevant authorities</p>	Principal aim 'to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young persons'.	<p>The Commissioner has most extensive powers of all of the Commissioners throughout the UK. It has powers of investigation and representation focussing on rights and best interests of children and young people.</p> <p>The Commissioner must carry out all functions having regard for UNCRC.</p>
England			
Children Act 2004	<p>Only where the case raises “issues of public policy of relevance to other children”, where the Commissioner is satisfied that the inquiry would not duplicate work that is the function of some other person, and after consultation with the Secretary of State. The commissioner can also be directed by the Secretary of State to conduct an inquiry.</p>	<p>The ‘general function’ is that of ‘promoting awareness of the views and interests of children in England ‘in particular’ to be concerned with the views and interests relating to the five outcomes identified in Every Child Matters (ECM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being; (b) protection from harm and neglect; (c) education, training and recreation; (d) the contribution made by children to society; (e) social and economic well-being. 	<p>The Commissioner’s powers do not relate to the ‘rights’ of children and young people but rather their ‘views and interests.’</p> <p>The focus is also on the ECM five outcomes and not the UNCRC though the commissioner “must have regard to” UNCRC when considering the interests of the child.</p> <p>Williams (2005) states that “ties to the Secretary of</p>

Legislation	Enquiry powers	Aims in legislation	Comment
			<p>State have provoked expressions of concern about the independence of the 2004 Act Commissioner which, although strenuously rebutted by the Minister of State, have been sufficient to cast doubt on the Commissioner's qualification for membership of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children."</p>
Ireland			
<p>Ombudsman for Children Act 2002</p>	<p>The Office of the Ombudsman in Ireland "may investigate any action taken by or on behalf of public organisations, schools or hospitals, whereby upon carrying out a preliminary examination of the matter, it appears that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the action has or may have adversely affected a child; and 2. the action was or may have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ taken without proper authority; ▪ taken on irrelevant grounds; ▪ the result of negligence or carelessness; ▪ based on erroneous or incomplete information; ▪ improperly discriminatory; ▪ based on an undesirable administrative practice; or ▪ otherwise contrary to fair or sound administration" 	<p>The primary aim of the Ombudsman is to <u>promote and safeguard the rights and welfare</u> of children and young people up to eighteen years of age. The main functions of the Ombudsman are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To provide an independent complaints handling service regarding public bodies; ▪ To promote children's rights, through participation and communication activities; and ▪ To provide research and policy advice to ensure that law, policy and practice meet the highest standards and obligations under UNCRC 	<p>The Ombudsman's powers relate to the rights and welfare of children and young people.</p> <p>The Ombudsman for Children can investigate an action on her own initiative or where a complaint has been made to her. A complaint can be made by a child or by an adult on behalf of a child.</p>

Legislation	Enquiry powers	Aims in legislation	Comment
New Zealand			
Initially established in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 and extended through the Children's Commissioner Act 2003	<p>The Office of the Children's Commissioner in New Zealand can carry out individual investigations, however, if "the Commissioner considers that the subject matter of the investigation relates, in whole or in part, to a matter that is more properly within the scope of the functions of one of the following statutory officers the Commissioner must, without delay, consult with that officer in order to determine the appropriate means of dealing with the subject matter" The relevant officers are:</p> <p>(a) the Chief Commissioner under the Human Rights Act 1993;</p> <p>(b) the chief executive of the department for the time being responsible for the administration of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989;</p> <p>(c) the Commissioner of Police;</p> <p>(d) the Health and Disability Commissioner;</p> <p>(e) the Chief Ombudsman exercising jurisdiction under the Ombudsmen Act 1975;</p> <p>(f) the Police Complaints Authority; and</p> <p>(g) the Privacy Commissioner.</p>	The principal aim of the New Zealand Commissioner is to ensure "that children and young people's <u>rights and interests are recognised</u> and widely supported and that children and young people are treated with respect, dignity and fairness."	<p>The Commissioner's powers relate to rights and interests.</p> <p>The Commissioner can carry out individual investigations, however, they must consult with statutory officers if the matter is 'more properly' within the scope of that officers function.</p>
Norway			
Act no. 5 of March 6. 1981 Relating to the Ombudsman for Children (With changes from July 17 1998)	"The Ombudsman does not have the authority to decide cases or set aside decisions in the administration." (Royal decree). The Ombudsman can investigate a case, has powers to have the information needed to carry out duties from Government authorities and public and private institutions for children and then must make a statement on it. "The Ombudsman himself decides to whom the statement shall be directed. The statement can also be directed to the press and the broadcasting corporation or others to the extent that the Ombudsman finds expedient."	The Ombudsman's rules give the duty "to ensure that the <u>needs, rights and interests</u> of children are given the necessary consideration in all areas of society"	<p>The Ombudsman's powers relate to needs, rights and interests.</p> <p>The UNCRC is written into Norwegian legislation in the Human Rights Act.</p>

Legislation	Enquiry powers	Aims in legislation	Comment
Scotland			
Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003	No powers to carry out investigations in relation to a particular child. Instead has powers of investigation 'into whether, by what means and to what extent, a service provider has regard to the rights, interests and views of children and young people in making decisions or taking actions that affect those children and young people'. Reports on investigations, and annual reports, are made to the Scottish Parliament.	The general function of the Commissioner is 'to <u>promote and safeguard the rights</u> of children and young people'. More specifically this includes: (a) promote awareness and understanding of the rights of children and young people; (b) keep under review the law, policy and practice relating to the rights of children and young people with a view to assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of such law, policy and practice; (c) promote best practice by service providers; and (d) promote, commission, undertake and publish research on matters relating to the rights of children and young people	The Commissioner has no powers to investigate individual cases but rather the focus is on promoting and safeguarding the rights of children and young people.
Wales			
Initially Part V of the Care Standards Act 2000 Extended by the Children's Commissioner For Wales Act 2001, Welsh Assembly	Powers include: • examine the case of a particular child or children if it involves an issue that has a more general application to the lives of children in Wales • require information from agencies or persons acting on their behalf, and require witnesses to give evidence on oath • review and monitor the arrangements made by care providers for complaints, whistle-blowing, advocacy, advice and support.	Sec 72A principal aim is "to <u>safeguard and promote the rights</u> of children" The Commissioner can: ▪ review the effects of policies, proposed policies and the delivery of services to children ▪ provide advice and assistance to children and young people, and others ▪ review, comment and make representations to the National Assembly on, any matter affecting children in Wales.	The Children's Commissioner for Wales has the most extensive powers of the children's commissioners when compared to Scotland and England, they can provide advice and assistance to Children and Young People and deal with complaints and investigations into individual cases.

Reference:

Williams H. (2005) "Effective government structures for children?: The UK's four Children's Commissioners" *Child and Family Law Quarterly* 17 1 (37)

Table 7.2

Summary of best practice information

	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	Norway	New Zealand	Republic of Ireland
Year established	2003	2005	2004	2000	1981	1989	2002
Staff Numbers*	30 including 4 seconded posts	28	14	30	14.5	15	15 including 3 seconded posts
Length of Term (of the Commissioner)	4 year term. Maximum of two terms	5 year term. Maximum of two terms	5 year term. Maximum of two terms	7 year term. Non renewable	4 year term. Maximum of two terms	5 year term. Non renewable	6 year term. Maximum of two terms
Child Population (2001 Census)	Under 19: 500,153	Under 18: 10,551,140	Under 19: 1,224,155	Under 18: 662,779	Under 19: 1,214,201	Under 19: 1,113,024	Under 14: 864,449 (2006)
Participation Function	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Communication Function	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Research Function	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Legal Function	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Individual Investigations	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Promoting Rights/UNCRC	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quality Schemes	Lexcel Employer of Choice Investors in People	PQSSO	No	No	No	No	No
Deputy Commissioner	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	Norway	New Zealand	Republic of Ireland
Consultative Youth Panel	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Funding	c. £1.9m per annum	c. £3m per annum	c. £1.1m per annum	c. £1.5m per annum	NOK 9.3m (c. £790k) p.a.	\$2m per annum (c. £700k)	€1m per annum (c. £700k)
Independent	Yes	No ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Status	NDPB	NDPB	Crown Appointee	Independent	Administrative unit of Ministry of Children and Equality	Crown Entity	Independent
Sponsoring Department	OFMDFM	DfES	Crown Appointee funded by Scottish Parliament	None – funded by Welsh Assembly	Ministry of Children and Equality	Vote Social Development and Vote Education	Department of Health and Children
Shared Services	Yes (IT)	Yes (IT)	Yes (HR)	Yes (Audit)	Yes (IT)	No	No

* Full time equivalent posts.

⁴ The Independence of the English Commissioner is contested as he can be directed by the Secretary of state to carry out investigation and must consult before taking certain actions

7.4 Benchmarking findings

The findings from the six consultations conducted with comparator organisations to the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland are presented below. This information was provided by those consulted or was sourced on each organisation's website.

7.4.1 Wales

Status of the Office

The post of Children's Commissioner for Wales was established by the Care Standards Act 2000. Wales was the first country within the UK to establish a Children's Commissioner. The Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 broadened the remit of the office and set out the Commissioner's principal aim, which is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children in Wales.

The focus of the Commissioner is on everyone aged 18 or under living in Wales or who normally live in Wales. However, the Commissioner can also act on behalf of older young people (up to the age of 21) under certain circumstances – for instance, if they have been looked after by a local authority. The Commissioner can:

- review the effects of policies, proposed policies and the delivery of services to children;
- examine in more depth the case of a particular child or children if it involves an issue that has a general application to the lives of children in Wales;
- require information from agencies or persons acting on their behalf, and require witnesses to give evidence on oath;
- provide advice and assistance to children and young people, and others concerned about their rights and welfare; and
- the Children's Commissioner for Wales also has an important additional power to consider and make representations to the National Assembly for Wales about any matter affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is a corporation sole, independent of, but funded by the National Assembly for Wales. The Commissioner receives approximately £1.5 million to fund its activities annually; this amount has increased since the Commissioner's inception to match the increasing workload of the office. In direct comparison with the other UK offices, the term of office is higher in Wales (7 years) than in England (5 years), Scotland (5 years) and Northern Ireland (4 years). However, all of the other UK Commissioners can renew their term in office for a second term with the exception of the Welsh Commissioner whose single term is non-renewable. This effectively means that the maximum number of years in office can be higher in England (10 years), Scotland (10 years) and Northern Ireland (8 years) than in Wales (7 years).

The Children's Commissioner in Wales is there to help make sure that children and young people in Wales:

- are safe from harm and abuse;
- get the opportunities and services they need and deserve;
- are respected and valued;
- have a voice in their communities and are able to play as full a part as possible in decisions that affect them; and

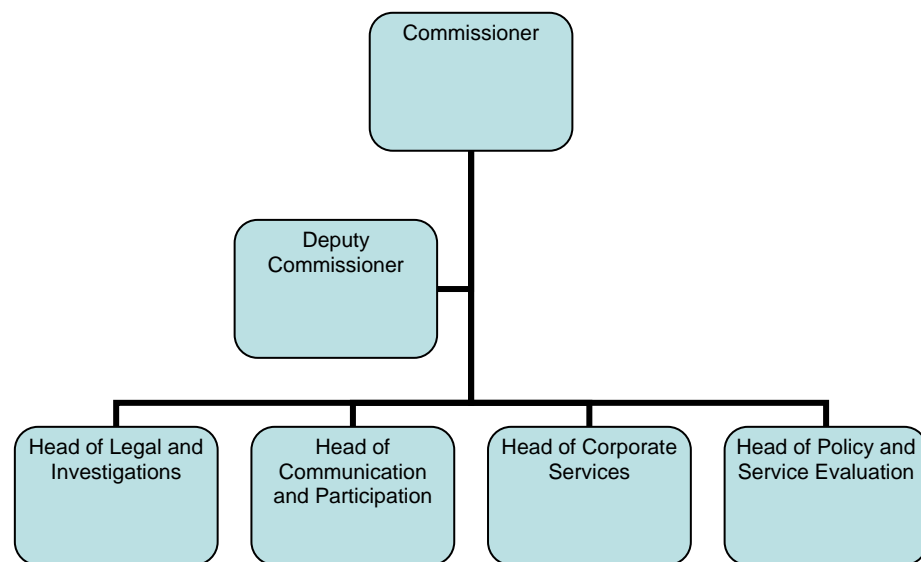
- know about their rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Giving advice and support – The legislation states that the Children’s Commissioner for Wales can give advice and support to children to let them know about their rights and help them express their views and wishes. The Commissioner can also give advice and information to any person concerned about the rights and welfare of a child, or of children in general. They cannot however look into any matter as far as its subject to legal proceedings or has been determined by a court or tribunal.

Staffing / Structure

As well as the Commissioner and his PA, there are 4 different staff groups within the Welsh Commissioner as depicted in Figure 7.1. The Commissioner is also supported by a Youth Advisory panel.

Figure 7.1
High Level Welsh Staff Structure



The four staff groups are each headed by an Assistant Commissioner or equivalent. These are:

- Communications and Participation;
- Corporate Services;
- Legal and Investigations; and
- Policy and Service Evaluation.

The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and four Assistant Commissioners make up the Senior Management Team, which is the main governing unit of the organisation. The Commissioner is the Accounting Officer. The Senior Management team is supported by an audit committee, established by the Commissioner to provide advice and assurance in respect to governance, risk management and control within the Commissioner’s office and the adequacy of the internal and external audit arrangements. This committee meets at least bi-annually and is made up of senior officials from the Commissioner and three independent members.

There are currently 30 staff employed by the Commissioner in Wales, broken down as follows:

- Corporate Services: six staff;
- Communications and Participation: nine staff;
- Policy and Service Evaluation: six staff;
- Legal and Investigations: seven staff; and
- one Commissioner and one Deputy Commissioner.

Within the last year a Volunteer Co-ordinator was recruited as part of a number of developments in the advice and support service. Additional volunteers are also being recruited with the involvement of young people from the Commission's youth advisory group. These additional team members will help staff the Commissioner's Freephone and free SMS text services for children and young people. While open to all children and young people in Wales who want to contact the Commissioner, it is promoted in particular as a service for children who are looked after by the local authority, excluded or at risk of exclusion from school, and young people in secure accommodation or prison.

Work on promoting the advice and support service to these particular groups of young people includes:

- Advice and Support Officers making regular visits to prisons; and
- as a joint initiative with the Communications and Participation staff group, training has been provided to police school liaison officers throughout Wales so that they are clear about the role of the Children's Commissioner and the advice and support service in particular, when they visit schools as part of their work.

Priorities

During 2005 – 2006 two events were held to let children and young people have a say in prioritising issues for the office and establishing the young people's advisory groups. Five themes were brought to the prioritisation events, drawn from all the information gathered from children and young people and adults in the previous year, through workshops, discussions and advice and support issues. Children's organisations, professional associations and other bodies have also brought issues to the Commissioner's attention; these were all considered before the identification of these themes.

The five themes identified were:

1. Play and Leisure;
2. Education and Schools;
3. Emotional Health;
4. Support and Services for children and young people who need them; and
5. Respect

Overall over 1,000 children and young people contributed to the voting process, with Play and Leisure and Education and Schools being taken forward as the Commissioner's Projects for the next financial year.

Impact

The Commissioner's achievements to date include winning £700,000 in funding for mental health services for children after indicating the service was in crisis. The Commissioner also influenced the Welsh assembly in its decision to develop a strategy for child poverty.

In measuring impact the Commissioner provides a review of activities and future development through an annual report. Although not formally distributed through a business plan or yearly statement, key performance indicators are agreed with the children and young people's advisory groups.

Communications and Participation

During 2005 – 2006 the advice and support service dealt with approximately 600 cases involving children and young people. Of these cases, 30 per cent were signposted to other agencies or sources of advice and support. Out of the total number of cases 90 per cent were resolved, 7 per cent were partly resolved and 3 per cent unresolved at the end of the year.

In most cases the initial contact is made by a parent, carer or the extended family. Adult professional such as, advocates, teachers and health workers also contact the Commissioner, but contact is made with the child or children as soon as possible, to ensure that it is their voice that is heard and that they are involved and aware of the decision making.

The Commissioner encourages children and young people's participation by regularly visiting schools and groups of young people, speaking at conferences and attending events, there is also a systematic and targeted programme of work with children and young people who are marginalised, vulnerable or 'hard to reach'. The website provides a medium for contact between children and young people and the Commissioner and the following schemes / initiatives are in operation:

- School Ambassadors – 2 pupils in a primary school are identified as the Commissioner's main contact point with the schools, the scheme encourages and supports the creation of rights aware environments and empowers and supports ambassadors to take projects relevant to their school forward; and
- Backchat (email group) – backchat is an email survey group available on the Commissioner's website.

2005 – 2006 was the first year for the implementation of the Commissioner's Framework for Children and Young People's Involvement. This included holding two events to let children and young people have a say in prioritising issues for the office and the establishment of two children and young people's advisory groups. These groups are based around the two offices in Swansea and Colwyn Bay, with members recruited through existing youth forums from each local authority area to ensure that young people from all over Wales participate, these groups are primarily in place to act in an advisory capacity. Members of the advisory group have been involved in the recruitment of new staff, developing their own terms of reference and influencing on and inputting into policies and procedures and publications.

Influencing Policy

The Children's Commissioner in Wales influences policy through a variety of mediums, whilst some of the influencing happens through recommendations of a particular report or document being incorporated, others look specifically at whether children and young people have had a say or are involved in proposals and decision making.

The Commissioner responds to Assembly consultations and undertakes reviews, basing policy calls on information gathered through their participation, advice and support and communication work. The Commissioner also provides evidence at

Assembly Committees and Lobby's Assembly members over specific issues raised throughout the year. In influencing policy development the Commissioner has the ability to require a response to any recommendations made, and to monitor them, to ensure progress.

The Children's Commissioner has also sought to develop links with Local Health Boards and NHS trusts throughout Wales, advocacy providers, children's NGOs and professional associations, as well as with special interest groups and Welsh Assembly divisions and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies. In order to be clear about the work and to ensure there is no duplication the Welsh Commissioner and other bodies draw up a Memorandum of Understanding enabling greater working collaboration and clear agreement of understanding.

Quality Schemes

There are currently no quality schemes in operation under the Children's Commissioner in Wales.

7.4.2 Scotland

Status of the Office

The Commissioner is a Crown Appointee on nomination by the Scottish Parliament and requires a two thirds Scottish Parliament vote to be removed from office. Appointment is for five years and the Commissioner may be appointed for a second period (whether or not consecutive) but not for any additional period. As corporate legal status does not exist in Scotland staff are all direct appointees of the Commissioner. The staff's employer is thus the current Commissioner. This raises legal issues about liability, indemnity and employment rights particularly if the Commissioner should die. These issues are under discussion but currently unresolved.

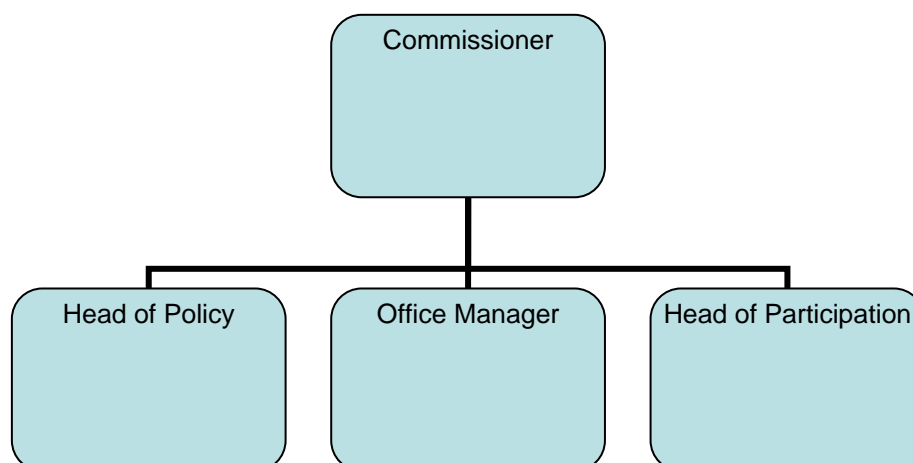
The legislation on setting up the Commissioner's post made no arrangement for setting a budget and simply states that "Parliament will pay all expenses properly incurred". Whilst the office is accountable through financial audit this effectively leaves little or no control over the size of the Commissioner's budget. The Commissioner has, however, maintained expenditure within the indicative budget set by Parliament.

The office shares services such as human resources with the other Scottish Commissioners leading to some economies of scale.

Staff and Responsibilities

The office was established in April 2004 but was not fully staffed until July 2005. It has 14 FTE posts. There are three functions within the office, as depicted in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2
High Level Scottish Staff Structure



-
- Policy function: led by a Head of Policy and supported by a Parliamentary and Legal Officer, one Information Officer, an Enquiries Officer and Policy Development Officer;
 - Participation: led by the Head of Participation and supported by a Communications Officer, two Participation Workers and a Research Officer; The 2 Participation Officer posts are reserved for young people aged 16 to 21; and
 - Office Management: led by one Office Manager and supported by two administration staff.

In addition, there is a Personal Assistant/Executive Assistant to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner may carry out an investigation into whether, by what means and to what extent, a service provider has regard to the rights, interests and views of children and young people in making decisions or taking actions that affect those children and young people. This should only concern cases where the matter to be investigated is of particular significance to children generally or particular groups of children and should not duplicate the work of another person. Although the Commissioner does not have a legal right to deal with cases on an individual basis there are still many referrals (391 during 2005/6 financial year the majority are referred by parents others by children themselves other family members and professionals such as teachers and social workers). The Enquiries Officer provides advice and support to referred children mainly helping them to take their issue to the appropriate authorities.

Initially there was a post of Chief Executive Officer but this has now been removed. The Commissioner wanted to keep personal control of the work of the office and believed that the post represented a barrier to her direct control of the activity of the office. There is no provision in legislation for a Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner has not created one due to her concerns that it would detract from the Commissioner's direct control of the service. This is not entirely satisfactory as it has left her with direct responsibility for office policies (e.g. governance and schemes of delegation) which take her away from her mainstream duties with children.

The creation of a Personal Assistant/Executive Assistant to replace the Chief Executive Officer post does not remove this area of responsibility.

Priorities

The office has the following objectives:

1. to increase awareness of children and young people about their rights and the office of the Commissioner;
2. to increase the incidence of a children's rights perspective shaping law, policy and practice in all matters affecting children and young people, but with particular reference to the selected policy priority areas;
3. to increase the incidence of children and young people participating in decision making on matters of law, policy and practice which affect them, but with particular reference to the selected policy areas; and
4. to successfully implement the Safe, Active and Happy Action Plan. (This is the name given to the work programme).

Impact

The Commissioner has given a range of evidence to the Scottish Parliament and promoted a range of issues from issues about responses to asylum seekers and the gypsy/travellers children's rights through to the physical punishment of children.

Other main activities have been establishing a baseline and developing an action plan through extensive involvement of children and young people. The 2006-9 business plan builds on this and lays out a series of activities relating to each of the objectives. It gives performance indicators for each of these activities along with a statement of the proposed impact. However these indicators are mainly focussed on measuring activity (number of speeches etc.) and in this do not measure the impact or outcome of the activity.

The office has had a significant focus on how it can add value to the actions of other concerned parties summed up in the Commissioner's phrase that the role is "not to steal thunder but to add a little lightening." This approach has meant that there has been a wide range of consultation and gathering of information in the work of the organisation so far. There are a number of research reports about to come out and the office, in consultation with its advisory groups, is currently identifying SMART objectives from the action plan.

Communications and Participation

The Commissioner's office undertook a consultation with children to identify priorities for the work of the office. These priorities are outlined in the Safe, Active, Happy Action Plan. The consultation commenced with 16 focus groups which identified key issues. This was followed by a voting process on key action points in which 16,000 votes were cast.

In addition to this major consultation process, the office has a Youth Panel consisting of three groups of young people aged 14 to 21 and a younger group of children aged 8 to 13 years. These groups, selected by open competition, meet regularly and discuss the activities of the office and raise issues to be considered.

Specific hard to reach groups are directly consulted through dedicated groups. Currently there is a care action group consisting of 8 young people aged 14 to 21 who have experience of being in state care and a young people's health advisory group consisting of children with disabilities or chronic illnesses also with eight 14 to 21 year-olds. These groups are supplemented by consultations with specific user groups such as the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Organisation and Who Cares Scotland.

The Commissioner and her staff are also promoting awareness of the office through public speaking, media, and meetings with children. A series of Mori poles has

shown that whilst there is some general awareness of the organisation it is still better known amongst groups where there has been a campaign (such as minority groups) rather than the general population.

Policy

The Commissioner's main involvement in policy in the Scottish Parliament is through giving evidence to Committees which perform the function of scrutinising legislation where they combine the functions of both standing (detailed analysis of individual bills) and select (consideration of particular issues or areas) committees. The Commissioner has given evidence on a wide range of areas of legislation and policy.

In addition to this direct involvement the Commissioner's office has produced a toolkit for carrying out children's rights impact assessments. The aim of this toolkit is to provide policy makers throughout Scotland with a framework for a participative process for looking at whether their policies properly consider children's rights.

The Commissioner's office works closely with a wide range of organisations involved in promoting children's rights and services and is careful to directly act only where it adds value to work already being undertaken. This requires a careful analysis of the activities, research and publications as well as liaison with other agencies.

Quality Schemes

The office does not currently participate in a quality scheme but may do so in future.

7.4.3 England

Status of the Office

England is the latest of the regions within the UK to establish a Commissioner's office for children and young people stemming from the Children Act 2004. This Children's Commissioner has functions in relation to children in England, but must also promote awareness of the views and interests of children in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland in relation to non-devolved matters (e.g. Social Security, Criminal Justice etc). It is important to note that reserved issues will have an impact on children and young people in all of these jurisdictions since they include such matters as medical ethics and abortion, social security, broadcasting and equal opportunities. Because of the different focus of the English Commissioner this means that in these matters there may be a different basis for intervention.

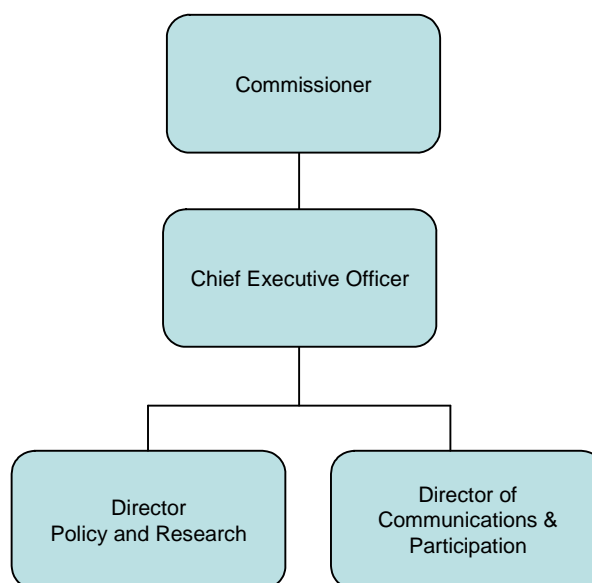
The Commissioner in England is a NDPB sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and each year the Commissioner reports to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

The issue of independence of the Commissioner in England is one that has caused considerable scrutiny among academics and stakeholders. In comparison with the other Commissioners in the UK the English Commissioner is the only one subject to a requirement of prior consultation with the Secretary Of State in order to seek permission to investigate individual complaints. This relationship, which is unlike any of the other commissioners in the UK, has led many people questioning whether or not the Commissioner really is independent from Government.

Staffing / Structure

In England there are 28 staff split between three teams, Corporate Services, Policy, and Communications and Participation as depicted in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3
High Level English Staff Structure



The Children's Commissioner in England is a corporation sole, however, in practice the organisation is run by a Strategic Board chaired by the Commissioner. This Strategic Management Board consists of the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Policy and Research, and Director of Communications and Participation.

In addition, to provide an independent scrutiny, the Commissioner appointed an Audit and Risk Committee through the Cabinet Office's public appointments procedure, consisting of a Chair and three Members, which met for the first time in April 2006.

No formal youth reference group currently exists within the organisational structure of the Commissioner's office in England; however, a Young Assistant Commissioner Scheme project has been piloted. This project has been established in order to explore how children and young people from across English regions can get involved in the Commissioners work. Independent evaluation of the project is currently being conducted and it is likely that a youth reference group will be developed in the near future following the evaluation.

Priorities

The five year strategic plan (2007 – 2012) sets out the priority areas for the Commissioner's work. The focus for the period will be on two major long-term goals:

1. Children and young people see significant improvements in their well-being and can freely enjoy their rights under the United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); and
2. Children and young people are more highly valued by adult society.

This five year plan is supported by individual one year plans, focussing on one major theme with several smaller 'spotlight' projects. For the current financial year the major theme is 'happy and healthy' and the 'spotlight' areas are:

1. Youth justice and anti-social behaviour;
2. Asylum and trafficking;

3. A fair life;
4. Mental health;
5. Enjoying education and leisure; and
6. Staying safe.

In developing the priority areas / objectives the Commissioner consulted with a large number of children and young people. Over 3,000 took part in their Shout! competition which was a medium for children and young people to highlight issues and indicate what they expected the Children's Commissioner to achieve. The 12 young Assistant Commissioners for England worked on more detailed planning. Although the theme and spotlight issues decided were strongly influenced by children and young people, the final decisions were made by the Strategic Management Board.

Impact

The Commissioner's research on bullying has helped to shape anti-bullying resources produced by the DfES, and influenced recommendations of the Education Select Committee. Also, through consultation with disadvantaged children and young people and the development of relationships with those that work with them the Commissioner has drawn public attention to the difficulties that are faced by asylum seeking children and other vulnerable groups.

The one and five year strategic plans include a number of KPI's that measure the impact and performance of the organisation and provide an opportunity for review. There is also a monthly impact log and extensive policy performance guides in order to measure / review and monitor the performance of the office.

Communications and Participation

During 2005 – 2006 the Commissioner's office made over 40 visits to children and young people across England, and documented what they had to say in a diverse range of settings – from inner city to remote rural locations, including prisons, schools and health services.

The main avenue for communication for the Commissioner is through the website, this is also where people can learn about the results and performance of the organisation. During 2005 – 2006 the Children's Commissioner was mentioned over 1,000 times in the national and local media and gave 140 interviews across all the major TV networks.

During the year the Commissioner invested in new systems that will enable the office to record each call, letter, email and website communication received from children and young people.

Children and young people were not involved in the final stage of the planning process for the corporate strategy and therefore the Commissioner acknowledged that "full participation" could not be claimed. However, in future an annual summer planning event will take place where budgeting decisions can be made in partnership with children and young people.

Influencing Policy

The Commissioner scrutinises and influences policy affecting children and young people at a local and national level.

During 2005 – 2006 the Commissioner published 12 research reports on areas including mental health, bullying and the needs of asylum seeking children, they also responded to 11 Government consultations and gave evidence to Parliament through the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the Education and Home Affairs

Select Committees, and All Party Parliamentary Groups. Throughout the year the Commissioner also meets regularly with Ministers and works closely with senior officials in all departments that relate to children in order to inform policy development.

Quality Schemes

The organisation is not accredited for any quality schemes, however, they have recently introduced the PQSSO system, a self-assessment quality assurance scheme for small organisations.

7.4.4 Republic of Ireland`

Status of the Office

The Ombudsman for Children Act, which sets out the role and powers of the Ombudsman office, was agreed by the Dail (the House of Representatives) and Seanad (the Senate) in 2002. In March 2004 Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children was appointed. The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) in Ireland is independent from Government and is directly accountable to the Oireachtas (the National Parliament).

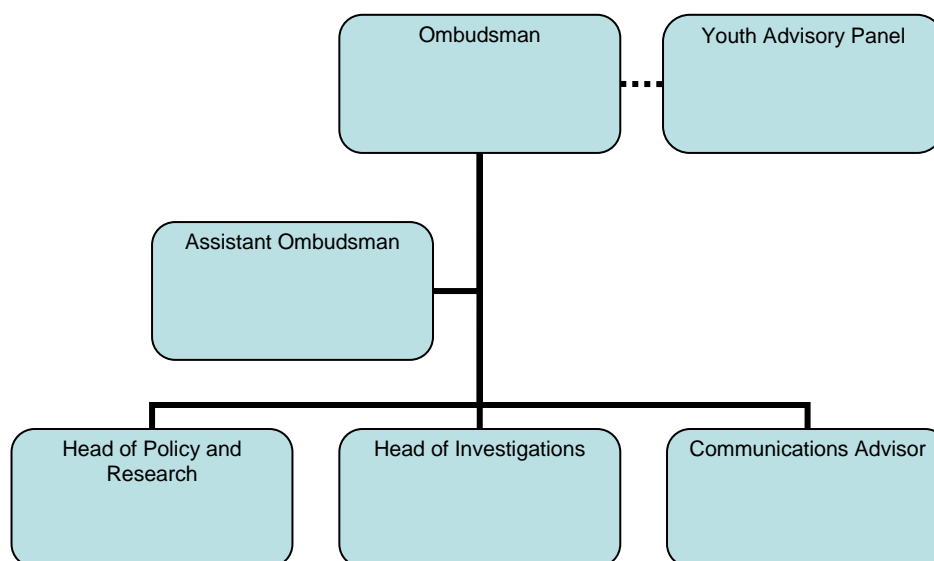
Although the Ombudsman is independent by statute from Government, it does not have its own vote within the Irish Parliament, through which funds would be directly allocated to the Ombudsman. Instead, budgetary provision is made within the budget allocated to the Department of Health and Children. The Ombudsman provides a skeletal business plan to the Department Secretary on an annual basis with an indication as to how much the office will require in the upcoming year, although generally the full amount is allocated to the office it does suggest that the Department technically manages the Ombudsman's funds. (The Ombudsman's office feels that this arrangement limits the development potential of the office and is currently pushing to gain their own vote within the Oireachtas).

In terms of accountability for use of public funds the Ombudsman for Children must (by statute) submit annual accounts to the Controller and Auditor's General's office and attend before the Public Accounts Committee. Through the accounts section of the Department of Health and Children, the Ombudsman has complied with its statutory obligation in relation to the reporting, preparation and auditing of the financial statements each year since its inception.

Staffing / Structure

The staffing structures employed by the Ombudsman are based on the functions of the Ombudsman as outlined in the Ombudsman for Children's Act 2002, namely complaints handling, promotion and safeguarding of children's rights and research and policy advice. The staff chart is depicted in Figure 7.4 below.

Figure 7.4
High Level Republic of Ireland Staff Structure



Currently there are twelve fulltime posts within the Ombudsman's office (including the Ombudsman), in addition, there are three contracted posts – one in Policy and Research and two General Administrators.

The Ombudsman is supported by an Assistant Ombudsman, who is also the functional head of Communications and Participation. The Assistant Ombudsman has no managerial role over the other two heads of department; however, the remit of the Assistant Ombudsman does extend to working on recruitment and financial planning with the Ombudsman.

A senior management team made up of the Ombudsman, Assistant Ombudsman, Head of policy and Research, Head of Investigations and a Communications Advisor is the main governing mechanism in the organisation.

The Ombudsman is also assisted by a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). Originally an interim panel was established to assist in the recruitment of the first Ombudsman, 15 young people were nominated by other young people to interview candidates for the Ombudsman's role. A new YAP has now been formed following a lengthy recruitment process and there are now 25 members of the panel between the ages of twelve and 17 and from all backgrounds across the country. Their role is to provide advice to the Ombudsman and offer a youth perspective on important decisions.

Priorities

The role of the Ombudsman for Children is to promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of children and young people up to eighteen years of age. The main functions are to:

- provide an independent complaints handling service regarding public bodies;
- promote children's rights, through participation and communication activities; and
- provide research and policy advice to ensure that law, policy and practice meet the highest standards and obligations under UNCRC.

The Ombudsman's main priority of work is supporting, and including children and young people to find out more about children and young people's rights. As it is a relatively new organisation they are still 'finding their feet' in terms of priority areas, however, they are currently in the midst of finalising their strategy and work plan for the next three years and have supported this process through a number of participation initiatives:

Academic Research – In 2005, the Ombudsman for Children's Office commissioned the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, to undertake a piece of academic research (literature review) looking at the main economic and social problems for children and young people in Ireland; and

The Voice Project – the voice project has three individual phases – with the aim of giving children and young people a say in determining the priority areas for the work plan – the first phase established the main obstacles for children and young people in realising their rights in Ireland (through the Academic research), the second phase asked children and young people to test these findings and the third (which is due to be completed in November 2007) will invite children and young people to participate in a country-wide consultation process to identify the priority areas for work.

The third phase of this project has been marketed as the 'big ballot,' this involved the Ombudsman for Children's Office writing to every primary and post-primary school in Ireland to ask if they would participate in an election style process to choose priority areas from the issues identified during phase one and three. Approximately, 1,000 schools have indicated they are willing to participate in this process which will include an educational session for the pupils in each school, followed by a debate on the issues and then a ballot to identify the work the Ombudsman will participate in over the course of the strategic and work plan.

Impact

The Ombudsman has made a range of submissions to the Oireachtas Committees and important international bodies to strengthen respect for the rights of children in Ireland. Other activities include:

- the commissioning of a baseline study on Children's Rights in Ireland and
- the endorsement of the work of the Ombudsman's office by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; and
- an active response by public bodies to the Ombudsman's complaints and investigations function, with an increase from 177 in 2005 to 790 in 2006.

In the measurement of impact the key indicators for the Ombudsman are less about the formal measurement of success and more about "what's happening as a result" of the Ombudsman's intervention. The base lining and subsequent regular measurement of awareness of the Ombudsman's office and the recommendation uptake of various policy reviews are seen as being the real key indicators of success.

Communications and Participation

The Participation Lab (the Lab) is an educational programme designed to teach children and young people about the Ombudsman and about children's rights. The Lab is a set of educational workshops that are facilitated by staff at the Ombudsman for Children's Office, that are intended to complement the human rights education curricula in use in the school and youth settings.

During the 'big ballot' the Ombudsman will be visiting up to three schools per day in October prior to the actual voting day, the response to the 'big ballot' has been a resounding success with some 1,000 schools getting involved.

Primary mechanism for communication is through the website, media (Children's TV and Radio) and the annual report which is also published in a child-friendly format.

The Youth Advisory Panel has been involved in the work of the office in a number of ways, for example:

- The current Ombudsman was interviewed for the position by young people;
- Staff were interviewed by young people;
- The Ombudsman's logo was chosen with support from young people; and
- Young people were involved in the design and choice of content for the Ombudsman's website.

Influencing Policy

The office seeks to influence policy through a number of mechanisms:

1. bi-lateral meetings with ministers and advising on the development and co-ordination of policy relating to children;
2. production of reports to Parliament;
3. providing written and oral evidence to Parliamentary Committees;
4. provoking public debate through the media; and
5. through working in conjunction with other statutory and non-statutory agencies whose work is primarily concerned with children and young people.

Quality Schemes

The Ombudsman for Children's Office does not currently have any accredited quality schemes.

7.4.5 Norway

Status of the Office

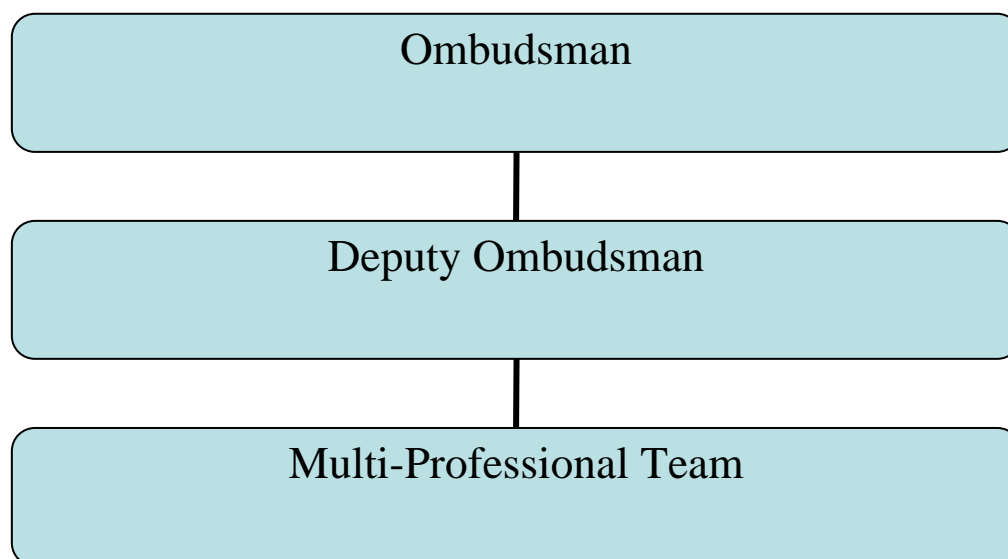
The Norwegian Ombudsman was established in 1981. The Ombudsman is appointed by the King and appoints a Deputy Ombudsman from the staff of the office. Although the office would like children involved in the appointment of the Ombudsman the current legal process makes this impossible to carry out in any meaningful way.

The office is an administrative unit of the Ministry of Children and Equality and its independence is written into statute. The office has financial accountability through usual government financial procedures, and operates within normal government regulations. It provides an annual report of its work to Parliament.

Staff and Responsibilities

The office has a flat structure with no divisions or departments. The multi-professional team are involved as required in cases and campaigns. The office also claims to be relatively free from bureaucracy "the flat, flexible structure and small team size allows adaptation to issues as they arise". This is illustrated in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5
High Level Norway Staff Structure



The office has 14.5 FTE's and employs one law student on a part time basis. Staff include:

- the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman;
- three administrative staff; and
- nine other staff who by statute must have a range of professional backgrounds including sociology, psychology and law.

All of the other staff take an equal role in their work participating in a range of areas not necessarily tied to their professional background or particular post title.

The Deputy Ombudsman manages the office and deputises for the Ombudsman as required. The appointment of a deputy by the Ombudsman from within the team of permanent staff assures some continuity when a new Ombudsman comes into post.

Priorities

Each year priorities are reassessed and established. There are currently five priority areas:

1. Implementation of the UNCRC

This has been incorporated into Norwegian legislation through a Human Rights Act and the Ombudsman is monitoring its implementation.

2. Participation in local matters

A current aspect of this is a campaign to lower the voting age in municipal elections to 16. This initiative is aimed at involving younger children in community life, this is particularly important for rural areas where many children leave before they are 18 years of age and do not return. It is hoped to pilot this change in enfranchisement in some areas in the next regional elections.

3. Children and Health Care

This covers health issues such as obesity, junk food, introduction of school meals (there is currently no school meal service in Norway).

4. Children's working environment in School

This covers various aspects of the school environment. Six years ago the Ombudsman took an initiative on bullying. A manifesto for action was drawn up through consultation with key stakeholders. Commitment to the manifesto was given by the parents' association, the teachers' union, and prime minister's office. The Ombudsman no longer actively participates in the campaign against bullying but now monitors progress.

5. Child Welfare Agency

The Child Welfare Agency has come under critical attention from the media with stories focussing on over-reaction and under-reaction of social work. The office seeks to play a role in helping to re-establish credibility of the service (due to the importance of welfare services to children) helping to promote success stories whilst maintaining a critical stance.

There is also a focus on groups of children who are particularly at risk of rights violations. These include unaccompanied minors (migrant children without parental care) and Sami children where an international cooperation with Ombudsmen in Sweden, and Finland will set up a youth council and identify issues to be addressed.

Getting the balance right between reactive and proactive work was reported to be an ongoing issue and is dealt with by developing initiatives such as the manifesto against bullying and through identifying key areas for action each year and setting annual priorities. A current proactive initiative aims to promote the involvement of children and young people in the country's cultural life. This includes working with the national opera on a children's show to be held there. Another activity involves setting up a youth report on the UNCRC which will be presented alongside the state party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The focus for choosing cases is given to those in priority areas. However, there continues to be a reactive response to important issues as they arise (e.g. a response to a major sexual abuse case involving a group of children in Northern Norway).

Impact

The Ombudsman has had impact in a wide range of areas of public life from initiating a pilot of the enfranchisement of 16 and 17 year olds in local elections through to appealing the censor's ratings of films.

The Ombudsman's office, as in many areas of Northern European policy and practice, takes a more relaxed approach than English speaking countries on issues such as the formal measurement of impact and formal quality schemes. Thus, for example, the reported 11,000 annual phone calls and 2,500 written contacts include not only those from children and their representatives but also contacts by the media etc. The major issue is "mainly" how we are seen by society". A recent Gallup poll asking about the Norwegian institutions that were most trusted ranked the children's Ombudsman 5th and support from all parties in the political system has increased from the very small majority based in a single party at the inception of the post to current all party support.

Communications and Participation

The office has a number of mechanisms for promoting participation. This includes the Internet Parliament for students in the secondary school which was established

in 2001. There are 70 democratically elected school councils giving their opinion on a range of issues to the Ombudsman.

The office recently started a youth panel consisting of 16 to 17 year-olds living around Oslo. There are 12 to 13 people who applied after presentations in schools in the Oslo area and were selected by the office from these applications. Young people leave the panel at the age of 18. A new panel will then be set up in a different area of the country. There has been criticism from politicians that the panel is from a single area but the office believe this is important for ease of communication with the panel and between its members.

This panel system is supplemented by expert panels consisting of children with direct experience of a particular issue e.g. children living in violent families; refugees; those with chronic diseases, children going through divorce and Roma (gipsy). There are also links to the wide number of municipal children's panels

The Ombudsman initially had a telephone hot-line which was recently discontinued. In 1990, when it started it was the only such hotline for children and now there are a range of them run by NGOs and other interest groups. Because of this the Ombudsman's hotline was no longer felt to be necessary. . The main form of communication is now through the web site which has discussion areas and hosts many debates and discussions between children and young people.

Policy

The office scrutinises all government policy and the legislative processes and gives evidence or makes statements to parliament and also promotes initiatives regarding children's rights. For example the Ombudsman has worked on improving the rights of children in the educational environment and this has been influential in the incorporation of the equivalent of employment protection laws into the Education Act.

The prominence now given to children's rights is indicated by the fact that the Government of Norway has now incorporated the UNCRC into its legislation through a Human Rights Act This has given children's rights a more prominent position than in the UK. The Ombudsman is now prominently involved in advice and guidance on the implementation of the new act.

Quality Schemes

The Ombudsman's office does not participate in formal quality schemes as these were felt to contribute to increased bureaucracy.

7.4.6 New Zealand

Status of the Office

The New Zealand Commissioner's office is an independent Crown Entity established under statute by the Children's Commissioner Act 2003. Prior to this statute, it was established under the Children, Young Persons and Families Act 1989. The change in legislation strengthened the independence role of the Commissioner by giving additional powers including greater investigative powers and the ability to report directly to the New Zealand Prime Minister.

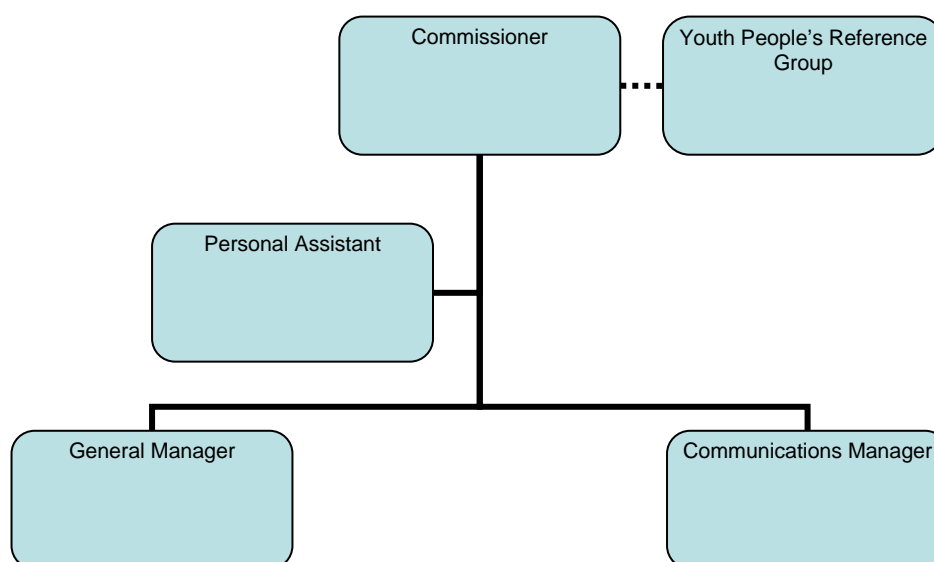
The Children's Act 2003 allows the Commissioner to inquire into any matter affecting children and young people in any service or organisation and to investigate the actions of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. It aims to promote children and young people's wellbeing through advocacy, public awareness, consultation, research and investigations / monitoring.

The office of the Children's Commissioner in New Zealand is funded through Vote Social Development and Vote Education. These monies are allocated within the office into 3 outputs – advice, monitoring and advocacy.

Staffing / Structure

There are currently 15 staff employed by the Commissioner in New Zealand, 11.5 FTE are based in Wellington office, whilst 3.5 FTE are based in Auckland. The Staff Chart is depicted in Figure 7.6 below.

Figure 7.6
High Level New Zealand Staff Structure



As can be seen from the diagram there are two arms within the organisational structure. The General Manager oversees the work of the Principal Advisors and Advisors in both Wellington and Auckland, and the Principal Policy Analyst and Office Manager in Wellington. The other arm is the Communications Team which is focussed on strengthening communication activities.

- Advisors – carry out monitoring and investigations functions, promote children’s rights, and work with communities to encourage and support child advocacy;
- General Manager – Oversees the work of the Principal Advisors and Advisors in both Wellington and Auckland. The General Manager also has administrative responsibilities; including meeting the office’s reporting requirements – supported by a business analyst; and
- Communications Team – Focussed on strengthening communication, research, policy and information base.

Advocacy – The Commissioner has a statutory role to be an advocate for children’s and young people’s rights. One of the roles is to increase public awareness of children’s rights and generate public interest and debate on the issues affecting children – the rights of children and young people are recognised in domestic legislation, government policy and international conventions. The Commissioner has a statutory role to monitor implementation of the UNCRC and works with government and non-government organisations to promote child-centred policies and practices – providing children’s rights training and education for government and community agencies. The Commissioner also addresses individual or systematic violations of children’s rights (except where the matter is before any court or tribunal); and

Investigations / Monitoring – The Commissioner is able to receive or invite representations from members of the public on any matter that relates to the

welfare of children. The Commissioner can investigate any decisions or recommendations made, or any act done or omitted, in respect of any child. However, the Commissioner cannot investigate any decision or recommendation of a court or tribunal.

The Commissioner also receives funding from the Ministry of Education to provide an Education Advocacy Service. One arm of this service aims to train and co-ordinate a nationwide network of community based child advocates who are able to assist students and their caregivers in the resolution of education related problems. The second arm of the service, the Parents Legal Information Line (PLINFO) provides free legal advice, education information and advocacy services.

Priorities

Three key areas have been identified, which previous research and experience show require significant progress to be made in order to ensure the positive development and wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand. These outcomes are the Commissioner's Strategic Priorities:

- every child is safe and nurtured;
- every child has adequate resources and opportunities to develop; and
- society's attitudes and behaviour change to become more child-focused.

The Commissioner is aware that these outcomes align with those of other organisations, in particular organisations identified as key stakeholders of the Children's Commissioner, who operate within the welfare, education and health sectors and have children and young people as their focus. The need to work with these stakeholders in delivering the outcomes has led the Commissioner to identify six core strategies to provide direction for the Children's Commissioner and support and strengthen relationships and collaboration with the stakeholders. The strategies are:

- setting the agenda;
- advancing collaboration;
- generating new knowledge;
- educating and communicating;
- encouraging participation; and
- building capacity and capability.

Impact

The Commissioner has made a number of submissions in relation to the interests, rights and welfare of children and young people to the New Zealand Government and promoted a range of issues about youth alcohol harm reduction, child discipline and immigration.

In the measurement of impact the Commissioner signs an output agreement with the Minister for Social Development through which the performance, financial management and reporting standards of the Commissioner are monitored. In addition, the Commissioner produces an annual statement of intent summarising the outputs, functions, responsibilities and strategic objectives to be produced by the Children's Commissioner in the following year.

Communications and Participation

Historically a large amount of the office staff time was spent responding to complaints and enquiries. When the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 shifted decision-making to families, the Commissioner's role was primarily to keep an overview of the new system and protect the interests of children who came to the attention of the Children and Young Persons Service (now Child Youth and Family Services). From this function, an enquiries/complaints service grew and it gradually moved to cover other areas of children's lives such as education and access to services. In 2005, the office dealt with 1,210 inquiries.

The Commissioner believes that the focus on individual complaints and advocacy severely limits its ability to address systemic issues, highlighting that by identifying solutions to systemic issues and advocacy based on a rights framework that they can have a greater positive impact for the most children. This is in keeping with specific statutory responsibilities for working with Government to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To help offset this move away from individual complaints and advocacy towards addressing systemic issues, the Commissioner plans to assist other agencies to develop child-friendly complaints systems, in particular Child Youth and Family Services, the Ministry of Education and schools.

The Commissioner acknowledged that most of the communication it receives is from adults. It aims to further improve communications and participation of children and young people through:

- including children in conferences where they will make presentations;
- speaking at schools;
- holding focus groups based on children and young people's timeframes;
- public forums focussing on child and youth issues; and
- accessing young people with specific interests e.g. disabilities or with mental health issues.

The Young People's Reference Group was set up in 2002 as a means of strategically focussing on children and young people by engaging them in the work of the office. There are currently ten members, who are based throughout the country, represent rural and urban communities, and aim to reflect the diversity of New Zealand's children and young people. The group meets approximately 5-6 times a year and are involved in:

- presenting at conferences;
- organising forums;
- running workshops;
- providing Advice to Government Agencies;
- communicating with their Peer groups; and
- providing input on submissions.

Influencing Policy

The Children's Commissioner works with government and non-government organisations to promote child-centred policies and practices. It does this through:

- regular meetings with the Chief Executives of a number of external stakeholders;

- attendance and Reporting to various sub-committees / committees in relation to children and young people policy and practice; and
- making informed submissions to Government on proposed legislative and policy changes highlighting the impact of the proposed changes on children and young people

Quality Schemes

The Commissioner has not implemented any quality schemes.

7.5 Summary of Good Practice

Following the comparative analysis it is evident that the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland has a similar status and broadly similar functional responsibilities to many of the other Commissioners / Ombudsmen. It is also apparent that, in comparative terms, the Commissioner is well funded.

Areas of good practice identified include the following examples:

- the Welsh Commissioner offers a freephone service through which children and young people can communicate with the office;
- in Scotland the Commissioner's office has produced a toolkit for carrying out children's rights impact assessments. The aim of this toolkit is to provide policy makers throughout Scotland with a framework for a participative process for considering if their policies properly reflect children's rights;
- in England the Commissioner develops one and five year strategic plans which include a number of KPI's that measure the impact and performance of the organisation and provide opportunities for regular review. There is also a monthly impact log and extensive policy performance guides in order to measure / review and monitor the performance of the office;
- in Ireland the Ombudsman for Children's Office wrote to every primary and post-primary school in the country requesting that they participate in an election style process to choose priority areas for future work of the office. The process will also include an educational session for the pupils in each school that wishes to participate;
- in Norway the office has a flat operational structure with no divisions or structure, thus offering flexibility to adapt to any issues that may arise; and
- In New Zealand the Commissioner believes that focussing on individual complaints and advocacy severely limits the office's ability to address systemic issues. The Commissioner are currently looking at a rights framework similar to the Scottish example through which they aim to identify solutions to wider systematic issues and therefore impact on a greater number of children. To help offset this move away from individual complaints and advocacy towards addressing systemic issues, the Commissioner plans to assist other agencies to develop child-friendly complaints systems, in particular Child Youth and Family Services, the Ministry of Education and schools.

8 Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In this section we present the conclusions of the Review. These are drawn from the findings presented in the body of the report. In presenting these conclusions, we would highlight that the review team recognises the significant impact that the illness and subsequent death of the first Commissioner Nigel Williams had on the office of the Commissioner and its staff during the early stages of operation. The current Commissioner, Patricia Lewsley took up post on 8th January 2007. Her appointment is welcomed by staff and stakeholders and is seen as timely given the current work to shape the new strategic direction for the organisation. Patricia's long track record of working on behalf of children and young people, her understanding of the issues within this sector and her already high political profile should support the work of the organisation in the future.

8.2 Overarching Conclusion

The overarching conclusion of this review is that:

- there is a continued need and rationale for having a Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland;
- the status of the Commissioner as an NDPB and corporation sole is appropriate for the nature of the body, and is comparable to the status of other organisations with similar responsibilities. However, it is acknowledged that corporation sole status presents challenges in terms of governance arrangements;
- the Commissioner has made good progress against its priorities for action and has had a number of successful achievements to date e.g. school transport and speech and language therapy;
- whilst the Commissioner has made progress in a number of areas, it has lacked strategic focus and efforts have been diluted across 15 priority areas. This has led to confusion regarding the role of the Commissioner amongst stakeholders;
- the Commissioner is a relatively young organisation that is still defining and consolidating its role;
- financial resources of the body are adequate and sufficient in the short-term but would be insufficient if the Commissioner was to take on a major legal case on behalf of children and young people; and
- although the Commissioner is structured to fulfil its legislative powers, there is currently no Head of Legal and Complaints post holder (at Senior Management / Executive Board level).

8.3 Examination and Validity of Delivery Functions

The terms of reference request an examination of the delivery functions conferred on the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland by legislation and an assessment of the validity of those functions in relation to Government policy objectives.

The review concludes that the functional areas within the structure of Legal and Complaints, Communications and Participation, Research, Policy and Service Review, and Corporate Services are appropriate in terms of supporting the Commissioner to fulfil its objectives.

An independent review of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, through which the Commissioner gets its powers, was completed in October 2006 and has yet to be accepted by the Commissioner and OFMDFM. Direct Rule Ministers decided to defer a decision on the report pending the restoration of devolution.

The report has now been sent to the First Minister and deputy First Minister and is currently being considered.

8.4 Past Performance

This section considers how the Commissioner contributes to the delivery of the Government and wider Departmental objectives with regard to the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. An assessment is made regarding how the Commissioner has performed against aims, objectives, impact measures and key targets as defined in the Corporate Plan / Business Plan. The section also assesses the extent to which the Commissioner has worked with others to deliver the objectives contained within these plans and examines the evidence of the systemic use of quality schemes such as EFQM Excellence Model®, Charter Mark and Investors in People.

Full analysis of performance against objectives is contained within Section Three and Appendix II.

8.4.1 Contribution to the Delivery of the Government and Wider Departmental Objectives with Regard to the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

Following a review of government policies, we believe the Commissioner will be in a position to make / has made a contribution to the delivery of a range of Government and wider Departmental objectives, for example, the Commissioner is campaigning for the rights outlined in the UNCRC to be included as a key part of the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights. The Commissioner has recognised within its 2005-2008 Corporate Plan the need to establish formal relationships with key government bodies in Northern Ireland and has begun work to develop these relationships. The Commissioner will also have a key role in overseeing the implementation of the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland.

8.4.2 Performance Against Aims, Objectives, Impact Measures and Key Targets

The Commissioner's Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008 is still in operation with one year left until completion. The Commissioner is making good progress against the 15 priorities for action and 23 corporate objectives outlined within the Corporate Plan. Our assessment would suggest that the Commissioner has addressed 13 of the 15 Priorities for Action. The Commissioner has had a number of key achievements since its establishment as detailed in Section Three.

In relation to progress against actions identified within the 2005-2006 Business Plan, more than eighty per cent of the actions have been achieved, and more than ninety per cent of the actions have been achieved in the 2006-2007 Business Plan.

A number of additional conclusions were drawn as a result of the assessment of performance:

- the corporate objectives are not directly linked to priorities for action and therefore it is difficult to ascertain clearly how the objectives support the fulfilment of priorities;
- a number of objectives were over-ambitious and lacked staged milestones to support the tracking of progress;
- a number of priorities for action and corporate objectives were not strategic in nature and there is potential that they could fail to leverage appropriately the work of other organisations working in the children and young people's sector;

- focusing on fulfilling fifteen priority areas has diluted the efforts of the Commissioner and affected the depth of achievement;
- in various areas it has been difficult to measure impact for a number of reasons: not all objectives were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound); and given the nature of the work undertaken by the Commissioner the impact on the lives of children and young people is unlikely to be realised within such a short timeframe; and
- although the Commissioner is accredited with quality schemes including Lexcel, Employers of Choice, and has registered to begin work to achieve Investors in People, limited evidence of the systematic use of quality schemes was identified. For example the Legal and Complaints staff use Lexcel on a regular basis as it sets out how they should administer and manage their casework and this is referenced in the Commissioner's business plan. However an action plan outlining improvements regarding staff resulting from Employers of Choice has been developed and implemented.

8.4.3 Working with Others to Achieve Objectives

The review has found some examples of positive partnership working between the Commissioner and a number of other organisations including the British and Irish Network of Children's Commissioners, the Putting Children First Alliance, the Children's Law Centre, VOYPIC, and numerous other statutory and non-statutory organisations that work in areas relating to children and young people. However, a systematic approach on how the Commissioner works with other organisations has not been developed.

Given the independent nature of the Commissioner's role, entering into partnerships has been a challenge. The organisation has struggled to get the balance right for fear that this might limit its independence. The majority of stakeholders from organisations operating in the children and young people's sector are keen to see improved and enhanced partnership working arrangements in the future.

8.5 The Roles and Responsibilities of the Senior Management Team

The terms of reference requested an examination of the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, including the Chief Executive, Head of Communications and Participation, Head of Research, Policy and Service Review, and Corporate Services Manager. Particular consideration was to be given to the evolution of roles and responsibilities since the office was established, and the optimum means of the delivery of those roles and responsibilities. Further details regarding these roles are contained in Section 2.5.3.

8.5.1 The Role of the Commissioner and the Chief Executive

According to the job descriptions reviewed, the key difference between the role of the Chief Operating Officer and that of the Chief Executive is that the former is more focused on operational management and the latter undertakes a strategic leadership role.

The review has identified that there exists some degree of overlap within the job descriptions of the Chief Executive (which is still in draft form and has yet to be approved) and the Commissioner.

There is confusion amongst staff and stakeholders regarding the specific differences in the roles and responsibilities between these two posts because the current Chief Executive post holder acted as Commissioner for an eight month period until the appointment of the new Commissioner in January 2007 and the earlier change in title from Chief Operating Office to Chief Executive.

8.5.2 The Heads of Research, Policy and Service Review, Communications and Participation, and the Corporate Services Manager

Each of these roles is critical to the delivery of the Commissioner's objectives.

The current functional structure of the Commissioner is comparable to other organisations working within this field and is reflective of the powers and duties vested in it by legislation, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

As a result of the reestablishment of the Assembly the need for increased focus on policy by the Research, Policy and Service Review function was identified. Public affairs and communications activity has increased as a result of the return of devolution, particularly with politicians and the media. In addition, the need for a Head of Legal to form part of the Senior Management Team was highlighted.

Finally, joined up working across the Senior Management Team is crucial to the successful delivery of the Commissioner's Corporate Plan and improved communication across and within teams was identified as important for the future.

8.6 Staff

The review has identified a number of staff issues as follows:

- **Staff turnover:** At 18.8 per cent for the year to date, staff turnover appears to be high when compared to CIPD and civil service rates, but this represents three staff leaving from a permanent complement of 16. This has had a negative affect on staff morale and has upset continuity within the organisation. The Commissioner has never had a full staff complement since it was established and relies on a number of temporary and agency posts;
- **Workloads:** A considerable number of staff reported that they were overloaded with work, particularly in the areas of research, policy and service review, communications and participation, and corporate services. It is also clear that a significant number of staff are frustrated by workloads and at the same time are uncertain about what their work is achieving in terms of impact and outcomes, and believe that the work of the Commissioner should be focused on fewer priorities based on experience to date;
- **Role and responsibilities:** Confusion also exists in terms of roles and responsibilities across the various functions of the organisation and throughout the organisation in terms of hierarchical roles. To some degree this has been the result of the natural evolution of a young organisation finding its feet and determining its direction. It is perceived to be due to a lack of strategic focus but also due to the challenges that faced senior management in the periods prior to and following the death of the first Commissioner; and
- **Team working:** Team working (across functions) has improved however this is impeded by the physical layout of the office which prevents all of the teams from working in reasonable proximity. It would appear that there is a lack of a joined up working across the senior management team and limited corporate focus. However, this is currently being addressed through ongoing team building exercises which appear to be having a positive impact.

8.7 Relationship with OFMDFM

The terms of reference required an examination of the Commissioner's relationship with OFMDFM.

As discussed in Section 2.4.1, the Commissioner is an NDPB of OFMDFM. As such, the Commissioner, as Accounting Officer, reports to and is accountable to the Accounting Officer of OFMDFM. This structural relationship is in place to ensure that public funds are safeguarded. On the basis of our file review and through our consultation with the

Commissioner and OFMDFM we can conclude that these arrangements are adequate e.g. there is regular reporting on financial management and performance and OFMDFM currently sits as an observer on the Audit and Risk Committee. However, it is noted that on occasion both OFMDFM and the Commissioner operate outside of this relationship structure. There is a need for OFMDFM and the Commissioner to clarify and agree the level and frequency of information required and the Commissioner's obligation to respond.

There is a need for the Commissioner to fully respect OFMDFM's need to seek assurance as to the regularity and propriety of the expenditure of the Commissioner and there is a balancing need for the CYPU of OFMDFM to respect the 'arm's length' relationship in seeking this assurance. In general, we conclude that the relationship between OFMDFM and the Commissioner is still developing. Adequate structures are currently in place to facilitate this relationship, however individuals involved need to work together at making the best use of these structures.

8.8 Relationships and Responsiveness to Needs

The terms of reference request an assessment of the relationships that the Commissioner has developed with a number of key stakeholder groups, and also the extent to which various stakeholders believe that the Commissioner has been responsive to their needs and requirements, and maintained the focus of the remit of the Commissioner as outlined in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. Further detail regarding the views of stakeholders is contained within Section Five.

8.8.1 Children and Young People

We conclude that the Commissioner has made clear progress in meeting the needs of children and young people in its first few years of operation and has the potential to add further value in the future. This is in part evidenced by the Commissioner's achievements (outlined in section 5.2.5) since its establishment e.g. speech and language therapy and school transport. However, it is recognised that there are some groups of children and young people that may not have been targeted as actively as was possible i.e. hard to reach groups.

As identified in a Mori Ireland Awareness Study commissioned by the Commissioner, which was completed in May 2006, understanding of the Commissioner's full role was, at that point in time, limited amongst children and young people, and their parents / carers.

Overall, the Commissioner would benefit from raising awareness of its role and services provided. In addition, the Commissioner does not have a promotional strategy that specifically targets hard to reach children and young people who are less likely to have a parent / carer to speak on their behalf. This is seen as a gap.

8.8.2 Ministers, Statutory Sector, Voluntary and Community sector, and Non-Governmental Organisations

There are positive examples of where the Commissioner has developed relationships with stakeholders. However, at all levels there is a need for a continued focus and ongoing effort in this area in the future.

The Commissioner has not undertaken a consistent and systematic approach to the way in which it engages and works with its key stakeholders. It is evident that members of the statutory and community and voluntary sectors, and NGOs hold a wealth of expertise and information regarding the issues facing children and young people. The Commissioner has been criticised for failing to leverage appropriately the knowledge and experience of other organisations working within the children and young people's sector.

Despite having worked with numerous other organisations the Commissioner has struggled to find the right balance between engagement and the perceived requirement for independence.

Although considerable progress has been made in order to raise the Commissioner's political profile, the absence of a Commissioner for a period of time has created a challenge in this regard. It is generally anticipated that the Commissioner's interaction with Ministers and hence its profile will improve following the appointment of the new Commissioner particularly given her already high political profile.

The review has identified that concern exists both internally and externally as to the lack of a Head of Legal and Complaints post holder with legal expertise and of sufficient seniority to be a member of the Senior Management Team. This is seen to impede the Commissioner's ability to fulfil its statutory legal function i.e. taking a legal case on behalf of children and young people.

8.9 Governance and Financial Management

The terms of reference required a review of effectiveness of the utilisation of financial resources. Our analysis of this and governance arrangements are contained within Sections Four and Six.

8.9.1 Governance Arrangements

The terms of reference required a review of governance arrangements. The following conclusions have been made in this regard:

- corporation sole status is important for legal reasons, to ensure that the individual powers remain with the office even if the office holder changes;
- corporation sole status leads to challenges in terms of roles and responsibilities at the head of the organisation;
- other corporation sole organisations have a similar governance structure to that of the Commissioner i.e. the individual who is corporation sole is also Accounting Officer, but there is normally a Senior Management Team with some responsibilities delegated;
- the Youth Panel is an important element of the governance structures because it enables children and young people to provide advice to the Commissioner on issues;
- the title of the Executive Board may also lead to confusion regarding responsibility within the organisation, as ultimate power and responsibility lies with the Commissioner as corporation sole. The title of "board" is commonly associated with a corporation aggregate;
- the Audit and Risk Committee is well formed, with a good balance of personnel, and appears well placed to enhance the internal control systems of the organisation; and
- the Ethics Committee and Shadow Ethics Committee demonstrates good practice in terms of ensuring research and reviews are undertaken in line with agreed ethical guidance.

8.9.2 Management of Financial Resources

With respect to the management of financial resources, the following conclusions can be made:

- the Commissioner has managed its resources within budget since commencement;
- staff costs are the key cost of the Commissioner, to be expected given the nature of the organisation and its reliance on staff. As such expertise and

experience are essential in fulfilling the aims and objectives of the organisation;

- the quantum of funds available to the Commissioner is reasonable and is sufficient in the short term. As the body develops, further establishes its position, and sees clear year-on-year success, there may be a case to be made for increasing the funds available to the commissioner for defined additional activities;
- although funding is sufficient for the current day-to-day operations of the Commissioner, there would be insufficient funds should the Commissioner take on a major legal case on behalf of children and young people. Should such a situation arise the Commissioner would have to bid as part of the in year monitoring process for funds from the Department to cover any liability/expense incurred;
- utilisation of staff resources is also key in furthering the aims and objectives of the body. Currently, the use of staff time is not monitored within the organisation to ensure that staff time is targeted at areas of greatest need, and to provide greatest value for money for the Commissioner; and
- in terms of value for money, there is no clear linkage within the body between expenditure and performance. Thus value for money is not easily assessed, and efficiency improvements are not easily ascertained.

8.10 Good Practice

The review requests a comparison with other Commissioners and Ombudsmen and the identification of good practice in the delivery of its functions.

The overall conclusion is that the status of the Commissioner in Northern Ireland is comparable to other organisations with similar responsibilities particularly in relation to the status and structure of the organisation. The Commissioner is also comparatively well funded, and has similar structural functions although each organisation has varying legislative powers.

The comparative exercise identified some areas of practice that the Commissioner may wish to explore further including:

- how some Commissioners and Ombudsmen have developed flexible structures that support cross functional working;
- other mechanisms for facilitating communication such as a freephone service through which children and young people can contact the office;
- developing key performance indicators to measure impact and performance of business plans; and
- the move towards addressing systemic issues affecting children and young people by assisting other agencies to develop child-friendly complaints systems.

It is important that the Commissioner seeks to benefit from the experiences and lessons learned elsewhere.

8.11 Delivery Mechanisms

The Terms of Reference requests a consideration of alternative delivery arrangements, analysing their appropriateness, and potential effectiveness in achieving the core aims and objectiveness of the Commissioner.

Section 6.3 analyses the potential delivery arrangements for the functions of the Commissioner going forward. The following conclusions have been made:

1. **a public private partnership** – no case for private sector involvement identified;
2. **market testing** – no case for private sector involvement identified;
3. **privatisation** – no case for private sector involvement identified;
4. **strategic contracting out** - no case for private sector involvement identified;
5. **merger or rationalisation** – three potential options were ruled out as not being viable in the short term due the requirement to seek an overall assessment and agreement amongst parties involved or due to the potential risk of jeopardising the independence and children and young people’s focus of the organisation;
6. **abolition** – the need and rationale for the Commissioner has been demonstrated and remains unchanged; and
7. **NDPB** – best fit as it provides independence from central government through the arm’s length relationship with OFMDFM while safeguarding the use of public funds through established governance arrangements.

9 The Way Forward

9.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to set out a series of recommendations regarding the way forward for the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland, based on the findings and conclusions of the review. These are proposals for consideration and although these are presented as separate recommendations, there are a range of interdependencies between these proposals that must be considered when making decisions about the implementation of recommendations.

Recommendations are structured under the following headings:

- Status of the Organisation;
- Strategic Focus of the Organisation;
- The Commissioner and Chief Executive;
- Delivery Functions and Senior Management;
- Working with Stakeholders; and
- Governance and Financial Management.

9.2 Status of the Organisation

9.2.1 Introduction

The overarching recommendation of the review is that there is still a continued need and rationale for a Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland.

9.2.2 Status of the Commissioner

It is recommended that the Commissioner should continue to operate as an NDPB of OFMDFM. This status will support the ongoing need for appropriate independence from central government, in addition to providing a means for safeguarding the use of public funds.

The review also recommends that the Commissioner should continue as a corporation sole.

9.2.3 Governance and Relationship with OFMDFM

The Commissioner's relationship with its sponsoring body, OFMDFM, is an important mechanism for ensuring accountability and governance arrangements.

We recommend that:

- a) CYPUC should continue to make use of the Audit and Risk Committee to support the accountability and governance arrangements through the regular attendance, as an observer, by a CYPUC representative at the quarterly meetings. This will enable CYPUC to gain assurance as to the regularity and propriety of public funds utilised by the Commissioner. CYPUC should use this forum to raise any issues/concerns that it may have in this regard. The Commissioner should also attend these meetings as she has Accounting Officer responsibility;

- b) The Audit and Risk committee should act as the mechanism for CYPU to contribute to the discussion in relation to work to be undertaken by the Commissioner's internal audit each year. While it is recognised that the Audit and Risk Committee will have the final decision on internal audit, it should remain open to the suggestions from CYPU. This will support and strengthen the arm's length relationship between the Commissioner and OFMDFM;
- c) the Chief Executive (or Chief Operating Officer – recommendation Section 9.4.2c) should be the main operational point of contact with the CYPU in relation to financial and performance management;
- d) the title of the Executive Board should be changed to Senior Management Team to remove any confusion in relation to responsibility and accountability arrangements i.e. the Commissioner as a corporation sole has overall accountability as Accounting Officer;
- e) the Management Statement and the Financial Memorandum should be amended to reflect any changes resulting from this review as appropriate; and
- f) the Ethics Committee and Shadow Ethics Committee should continue to provide a means of ensuring that all the Commissioner's research / reviews are conducted in an ethical manner.

9.3 Strategic Focus of the Organisation

9.3.1 Introduction

The recommendations below were developed with reference to the need to improve the strategic focus of the Commissioner.

9.3.2 Identifying Priorities

Given the conclusions of the review regarding the current priorities of the Commissioner, it is critical that these priorities are redefined for the future and that they are more strategically focused.

The Commissioner is currently undertaking a consultation exercise to inform the development of its Corporate Plan for 2008-2011. It is recommended that the Commissioner ensures that the outputs from the consultation exercise include the following proposals:

- a) the number of priorities should be kept to a minimum (i.e. four or five priority areas) in order to ensure that the Commissioner's work is focused;
- b) the priorities should be strategic in nature and should be issue specific only by exception. There are a significant number of organisations working in the children and young people's sector that specialise in issues affecting the lives of children. On this basis whilst the Commissioner's priorities can be the same as other organisations within the sector there should not be duplication of activity;
- c) priorities should be identified that enable the Commissioner to take a proactive approach on issues, but also to react to issues that are identified by other organisations;
- d) the priorities should focus on those key strategic issues that are likely to impact on the lives of children and young people over the next three years and which will position the Commissioner to be able to respond to longer term issues, for example, the structure of services for children and young people following RPA, and the adequate funding of these services; and
- e) the Commissioner should develop a promotional strategy that specifically targets hard to reach or vulnerable children and young people.

Following the development of the Corporate Plan 2008-2011 the Commissioner should undertake a review / assessment of the staffing implications. In particular, this exercise should address the issues raised during our consultation process i.e. the location of public affairs and participation and the need for an Events Officer.

9.3.3 Driving Forward Priorities through the Corporate and Business Planning Process

The current Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plans do not easily facilitate the monitoring of performance. We recommend that this is improved in the following ways:

- a) strategic priorities should provide the overall focus for the work of the Commissioner;
- b) the Corporate Plan should contain strategic objectives that are clearly linked to the overarching priorities. These objectives should be SMART;
- c) the Business Plan should contain specific activities/actions and targets that are clearly linked to meeting the Corporate Plan objectives. These activities/actions and targets should result in key milestone achievements that demonstrate progress towards the corporate objectives i.e. year one, year two and year three;
- d) the Business Plan should be translated into individual plans for each functional area and performance against plan should continue to be monitored and reported on a regular basis during the Senior Management Team (recommendation 9.2.3d) meetings. These functional plans should outline areas that require cross team working; and
- e) if the delivery of a corporate objective or key action area requires partnership working with another organisation, the Commissioner should meet with this organisation to seek their buy-in, commitment and support. This should, where possible, be undertaken prior to the sign off the Commissioner's corporate and business plans.

Monitoring and Measuring Impact

The Commissioner should establish and implement a performance monitoring and evaluation framework to support the review of performance and assessment of impact. This framework should link the Commissioner's priorities, corporate objectives, and annual business plan actions/activities in the following manner:

- for each corporate objective there should be a number of actions / activities. These actions/activities will form the basis of the annual business plans e.g. meeting political parties and ministers;
- each action / activity should have one or more indicators that explain exactly how the action will be taken forward i.e. which political parties and ministers will be met e.g. which political party will be met; and
- each indicator should have a target e.g. number of meetings held within a specified timescale.

The framework should clearly outline from the outset the information that is required to be collected to enable progress against actions to be monitored. In addition, responsibility should be assigned for collecting this information.

It is also recommended that the Commissioner should continue to work with the other Ombudsmen and Commissioner's for Children and Young People in the UK and internationally in order to identify methods used to identify long term impact measurement. In this regard, in order for the Commissioner to begin to assess

what long term impact it is having on the lives of children and young people it will be important for it to begin gathering information on the baseline position. Therefore, it is recommended that at the outset of the next corporate planning process i.e. April 2008, the Commissioner should collate baseline data for each of its corporate objectives. For example, if one objective was to influence the structure of children and young people's services, the structure of these services should be captured initially in order to help the Commissioner identify progress through the lifetime of its Corporate Plan and beyond.

9.4 The Commissioner and Chief Executive

9.4.1 Introduction

The following recommendations aim to address the issues identified in the review regarding the lack of clarity between the role of the Commissioner and the Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer.

9.4.2 Clarifying the Roles of the Commissioner and Chief Executive

Set against the background of the death of the first Commissioner, the Chief Executive acting as Commissioner for eight months and the recent appointment of the present Commissioner, it is timely that the role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive should be reviewed to ensure that any potential duplication or confusion is avoided. We recommend that:

- a) the role, responsibilities and title of the Chief Executive should be reviewed by the Commissioner and clearly communicated both internally and externally. Overall, it is recommended that the Commissioner should continue to act as the external face of the organisation and have overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the organisation;
- b) the Commissioner should continue to hold Accounting Officer responsibility;
- c) the Commissioner should be supported by a Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer (title to be determined following review) with responsibility for the management of the internal operations of the organisation (including the direct line management of senior staff). In addition, the Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer post should assume responsibility for managing the Commissioner's relationship with OFMDFM as its sponsoring department, in terms of financial and performance management and the delivery of plan; and
- d) any amendments to the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer should be clearly set out within the job description and agreed with OFMDFM and DFP.

9.5 Delivery Functions and Senior Management

9.5.1 Introduction

We have made a range of recommendations regarding the future management of the Commissioner's functions.

9.5.2 Managing the Commissioner's Delivery Functions

We recommend that:

- a) each head of function should develop an annual plan in support of the business plan which in turn will support the Commissioner's overall corporate objectives and strategic priorities. These plans should be updated on a regular basis;

- b) areas requiring cross function team working should be identified in advance and should be built into the actions and targets of each functional area involved;
- c) progress of each functional area against plan should be reviewed at regular senior management meetings;
- d) all staff within the various functions (including management) should have objectives set within their personal development plans that support the achievement of business plan actions and targets; and
- e) investment in senior management teambuilding should continue as a priority in support of the delivery of the organisation's corporate objectives.

9.5.3 The Head of Legal and Complaints

Overall responsibility for the Legal and Complaints function currently falls within the remit of the Chief Executive, in the absence of a Head of Legal and Complaints post holder.

In light of the review's conclusions regarding the importance of legal expertise to support the Commissioner to fulfil its legal powers, we recommend that the Commissioner gives immediate consideration to the level of in-house legal expertise that is required.

It is our view that this team should be led by a Senior Management Team member with a legal background in order to:

- provide legal advice to the Commissioner regarding the organisation's strategic direction;
- gain credibility with stakeholders, the majority of whom would question the Commissioner's capacity and capability in the absence of a Head of Legal and Complaints;
- challenge government and put forward legal policy arguments;
- identify potential strategic test cases that could benefit children and young people; and
- manage the legal and complaints staff to determine when to sign-post children and young people / their families or carers to seek legal advice on a complaint.

Based on the above requirements we recommend that the Commissioner actively seeks to secure a Head of Legal and Complaints post holder who will form part of the Senior Management Team.

9.5.4 The Potential to Outsource Elements of Corporate Services

In our conclusions we highlighted that we have not identified any reasons why outsourcing elements of the Corporate Services Function would be detrimental to the Commissioner's independence or effectiveness.

We therefore recommend that the Commissioner examines the cost effectiveness of sharing further parts of this function such as payroll, internal audit, or HR (IT is already shared with the Equality Commission) with another organisation. We believe that it would be most beneficial if the organisations considered were constrained to those NDPBs that are also sponsored by OFMDFM i.e.:

- Economics Research Institute for NI;
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland;

- Water Appeals Commission;
- Victims Commission;
- Planning Appeals Commission; and
- Statute Law Committee for Northern Ireland.

Any shared service arrangement should be supported by a contract agreed by OFMDFM, the Commissioner, and the organisation that services are to be shared with.

We recommend that the Corporate Services Manager's job description is revised if a decision is made that elements of this function are to be outsourced. The revisions to the job description should also take account of the findings of the ongoing external review of this post.

It is recommended that on completion of the cost effectiveness exercise and once agreement has been reached in terms of outsourcing elements of the Corporate Services Function, that the Commissioner should undertake an exercise to determine if there is a need for the current HR and Finance Officer roles (temporary).

9.6 Responding to the Needs of Stakeholders

9.6.1 Introduction

The following proposals aim to improve working relationships between the Commissioner, and its stakeholders from the statutory and community and voluntary sectors, and NGOs.

Proposals are also included to support the Commissioner to meet the needs of children and young people, and their families and carers.

9.6.2 Working with Stakeholders

In our conclusions we outlined that the Commissioner would benefit from having more effective working relationships with its stakeholders in the statutory and community and voluntary sectors, and NGOs. We believe that this would support the Commissioner to fulfil its priorities and meet its objectives, and do not believe that it would compromise the Commissioner's independence.

We therefore recommend that the Commissioner should:

- a) consult with stakeholders and share its views regarding the development of its strategic priorities, corporate objectives, and business planning actions and targets in an effort to minimise duplication of effort, and to help plan for any areas requiring partnership working;
- b) undertake a communications exercise with key stakeholders in order to clarify and confirm the roles of the Commissioner and Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer, and how stakeholders can expect to interact with each post holder; and
- c) develop and implement a systematic approach to the way in which it engages and works with these stakeholders. This should be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commissioner and relevant stakeholder organisations, which should set out roles, responsibilities, and scope of arrangements involving joint / partnership working with the Commissioner. This will support the Commissioner in appropriately leveraging the knowledge and experience of these organisations. A Memorandum of Understanding should also be drawn up in the event that the Commissioner works in

partnership with a group of organisations for the purposes of strategy / policy development, or service review etc;

9.7 Financial Management

9.7.1 Introduction

In our conclusions we outlined that the Commissioner's funding has been sufficient in order for it to undertake its day to day operations.

9.7.2 Management of Financial Resources

We recommend that:

- a) the level of funding for the Commissioner remains broadly at a similar level;
- b) the Commissioner considers monitoring the use of staff time within the organisation to ensure that staff time is targeted at areas of greatest need, and to provide greatest value for money for the Commissioner;
- c) the Commissioner develops a method of linking expenditure to performance to provide a method for the organisation to assess value for money of its work, and to enable it to have a method of pushing forward efficiency improvements; and
- d) OFMDFM considers the situation when the Commissioner would have to bid as part of the in year monitoring process for funds from the Department to cover any liability/expense incurred.

9.8 Miscellaneous

In this section we highlight a number of specific additional areas which we consider require to be addressed. These are set out below:

- a) the Commissioner should continue its work to establish a Reference Group comprising members of NGOs, academics, and statutory organisations that focus on children and young people;
- b) based on the findings from consultations with staff, further examination of the reasons for poor staff morale is required and measures put in place to improve the morale of staff;
- c) recommendations resulting from the internal review of the Youth Panel should be implemented;
- d) a systematic approach to communication should be developed and adopted throughout the organisation. This should build on the recent positive moves to encourage more open communication;
- e) the Commissioner and OFMDFM should undertake an assessment of the value/impact of having a prime central Belfast office location has on the delivery of the Commissioner's services. Children and young people should be consulted on any potential change in this regard in a similar manner to which they were consulted regarding the current premises;
- f) a systematic approach to collecting customer feedback should be put in place and the findings from this feedback should be addressed on an ongoing basis; and
- g) efforts should be redoubled regarding the Participation Officers' approach to engaging with children and young people from hard to reach groups.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF CONSULTEES

COMMISSIONER 'S STAFF INTERVIEWS

Name	Position
Patricia Lewsley	Commissioner
Barney McNeaney	Chief Executive
Marlene Kinghan	Head of Communications and Participation
Siobhan Weiniger	Corporate Services Manager
Teresa Devlin	Head of Research & Service Review
Bob McCann	Independent Chair of Risk & Audit Committee

COMMISSIONER'S STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

Attendees	Team
Helen Beckett Seana Hume Chantal Standley Denise Quinn	Research and Service Review Team
Jonathon Taylor Andrew McGall Siobhan McLaughlin	Communications Team
Ken Smyth Eugene Donnelly Monica Mallon Niall Moore Ruth Turley	Participation Team
Louise Benson Pamela Downham	Corporate Services Team
Monica McCann Eithne Ryan Margaret Kerr Donna Semple	Legal and Complaints Team

NOTE: in addition a focus group was held with the office of the Commissioner's Youth Advisory Panel

STATUTORY STAKEHOLDERS

Name	Position	Organisation
Bob Collins	Chief Commissioner	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
John McQuarry	Deputy Ombudsman	Office of the Ombudsman Northern Ireland
Paul Martin	Chief Executive	Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety - Social Services Inspectorate
Marian Matchett	Chief Inspector	Department Of Education – Education and Training Inspectorate
Fergal Bradley	Policy Director	Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety – Child Care Policy Unit
Patricia McVeigh	Early Years Manager	Department of Education
Laura McPolin	Lawyer	Law Reform Division – Departmental Solicitors Office
Jacqui Durkin Martin McMullan	Head of Operations Operations Unit	NI Court Service – Lord Chief Justice’s Office
Martin McMullan	Assistant Director	NI Court Service
John Duffy	Eastern Children Services Planner	Eastern Health and Social Services Board
Ann Hardy	Northern Children Services Planner	Northern Health and Social Services Board
Gerry Conway	Western Children Services Planner	Western Health and Social Services Board
Ann Godfrey	Southern Children Services Planner	Southern Health and Social Services Board
Tony Kavanagh	Head of Youth Justice Policy Unit	Youth Justice Northern Ireland Office
Colm Donaghy	Chief Executive	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
David Guilfoyle	Chief Executive	Youth Council for NI

NON-STATUTORY STAKEHOLDERS

Name	Position	Organisation
Paddy Kelly Natalie Strain	Director Policy Officer	Children’s Law Centre
Colin Reid	Policy Advisor	NSPCC – Policy and Public Affairs and Research
Linda Wilson	Director	Barnardos Northern Ireland
Koulla Yiasouma	Director	Include Youth
Pauline Leeson Elaine McElduff	Director Policy Officer	CiNI
Derek Hanway	Director	An Munia Tober - Belfast Traveller Group
Sheri Chamberlain	Northern Ireland Programme Director	Save the Children
Vivian McConvey	Director	VOYPIC

APPENDIX II

The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland's corporate objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008, are detailed in the tables below along with an analysis of performance based on the action, measure and outcomes provided in the quarter four update of the 2005 – 2006 and 2006 – 2007 Business Plans.

Table 1.1

Summary Table of Performance for Business Plan 2005 – 2006

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
Our Stakeholders (Children, Young People, Parents, Others)				
1. Listen to and encourage the active involvement and engagement of children and young people and their parents	Identify, recruit and support children and young people to assist the Commissioner in its work on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mental Health; ■ Applied Behavioural Analysis; ■ Disability ■ Child centred care planning; ■ Bullying; ■ School Transport 	Satisfaction level amongst children and young people and where appropriate, parents, in respect of engagement and participation are high (>85%) as measured by survey	Youth panel members who sat on Steering Committees and responded to the survey expressed 100% satisfaction in respect of their engagement and participation Youth panel members who took part in Peer Research and responded to the survey expressed 100% satisfaction in respect of their engagement and participation	Achieved
	Engage with parents and / or parents' representative groups	Satisfaction level amongst children and young people and where appropriate, parents, in respect of engagement and participation are high (>85%) as measured by survey	Parents/parents representative groups surveyed expressed 100% satisfaction in respect of their engagement and participation	Achieved
2. Influence and improve the law relating to children and young people	Promote the full inclusion of the UNCRC in the Bill of Rights (BoR)	Full implementation of the UNCRC in the BoR	Discussion with NIHRC and a range of NGO's	Ongoing
	Monitor casework to identify strategic 'test' cases with regard to	Review of indicators through casework as	Case work monitored – SENDO cases identified re child with a statement now allowed to sit 11+. Referred case to Equality	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	changes to the law e.g. SENDO	reported in annual report	Commission who took legal challenge and won	
	<p>Identify where changes in the law could enhance the rights of children and young people and promote improvements to legislation and codes of practice, with specific reference in 2005/06 to our work on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special Educational Needs ■ 'Looked after' children ■ Bullying ■ Physical punishment 	<p>All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10 differences between the law in rest of UK and NI identified, 4 of which are significant. Information passed onto OFMDFM. ■ Article submitted to 'Childcare in Practice' about need for overhaul of the Children's Order. ■ Lobbying of Government about the legislation governing the physical punishment of children. ■ Consultation: Legal input given re criminal evidence, judicial complaints, Restorative Justice, Silicone Cosmetics, Court Welfare Officers, COAC Best Practice <p>Additional Evidence provided: Specifically the Office of the Commissioner approached the then Education Minister about the statutory basis and range of bullying guidance. In that meeting the Commissioner pushed for a change in the law to extend pupils role in deciding on bullying policy, learning lessons from colleagues in Wales</p> <p>In addition, with officials, the Office of the Commissioner actively sought to change the basis upon which the guidance to the Education Order 2006 based its suspensions and exclusions policy and the new arrangements for post-primary admissions</p> <p>The Commissioner also actively sought to change to the pastoral care guidance and had a series of meeting to change the mindset of officials in DENI about the range and reach of pastoral care guidance which covers bullying, citing information from individual cases. There were a significant number of meetings and correspondence to this effect.</p> <p>In regards to physical punishment the Commissioner consistently lobbied to change Governments mind on the issue of the introduction of the equivalent of Section 58 of the Children Act 2006 in Northern Ireland. This has culminated in the</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			<p>Commissioner challenging Government in a judicial review on the issue</p> <p>With regard to looking after children, the Commissioner has also released a number of consultation responses, specifically in relation to <u>'Regional Guidance: Children who runaway; and police involvement in residential children's homes'</u> and <u>'Children living without parental care' which sets the legislative context for key aspects of the wider area.</u></p>	
	Work with ECNI to ensure SENDO Codes of Practice reflect UNCRC and best practice		3 meetings with ECNI staff on SENDO codes of practice. Agreement to cross refer where appropriate (see 1.2b above)	Achieved
	Review legislative developments in GB (e.g. the Mental Health Bill, the Children Act) & make recommendations for improvement in N. I.	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	<p>10 key differences between law in rest of UK and NI identified, 4 of which are significant. Information passed onto OFMDFM</p> <p>Additional evidence provided:</p> <p>Face to face meetings between the Commissioner and various Officials and Ministers as well as consultation responses on:</p> <p>'new admissions arrangements for Post-Primary Schools'</p> <p>'reforming the law on sexual offences in Northern Ireland'</p> <p>'statement of policy and procedures on Anti-Social Behaviour'</p> <p>Legislative developments have been reviewed and a number of recommendations have been made for improvement in NI</p>	Achieved
<p>3. Influence and improve policy relating to children and young people; and</p> <p>4. Influence and improve practice relating to children and young people</p>	<p>Report to the UN Committee on the rights of the child to highlight breaches of children and young people's rights</p> <p>Report to the UN Study on Violence</p>	Compliance with UNCRC	<p>Report submitted and conference on UN Study on Violence attended in July 2005. Resolutions currently being passed by UN to reduce violence to children, and thereafter to be adopted by signatory states.</p> <p>Report written and submitted to UNCRC on children living without parental care. As far as can be measured work on these reports was compliant with UNCRC, in terms of the relevant articles.</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<p>Evaluate output from Self Harm and Suicide Conference</p> <p>Develop an action plan / implement recommendations</p>	<p>All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted</p>	<p>Conference evaluated and report placed on the Commissioner's website- no recommendations made. The Commissioner lobbied for Suicide Strategy; Task Force set up; the Commissioner advised Task Force on children and young people's issues. The Commissioner's response to consultation on Task Force report. Met with Minister Shaun Woodward on 05/02/06 to inform him of views of the Commissioner's "Message to the Minister" Campaign.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Support the Mental Health and Learning Disability review and promote their recommendations and ensure they are UNCRC compliant</p>	<p>All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted</p>	<p>Comprehensive response made to MH&LD Review report, Drugs and Alcohol Strategy, Budget and Priorities, and CAMHS report. Unable to assess if recommendations have been adopted as final reports have not yet been published. Date for launch of published report-- Nov 2006.</p> <p>Additional evidence provided:</p> <p>A series of meetings, processes and events were held to highlight the Commissioners position e.g. Message to the Minister, suicide taskforce etc. The office of the Commissioner was at the direction of the DHSSPS in regards to the final reports being published and therefore is unable to assess recommendations made in their response. The Objective was achieved and exceeded in the year under review.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Develop evidence based best practice guidance on bullying</p>	<p>School policies meet best practice standards in at least 200 schools and all recommendations and guidance for boarding schools (ref HPSSRIA role in inspection) are implemented</p>	<p>Research complete. Guidance & launch to coincide with National Bullying week.</p> <p>8 bullying cases recorded by Legal and Complaints Department</p> <p>Additional evidence provided:</p> <p>The research report was launched and disseminated through workshops and on the web. Bullying guidance was launched and disseminated and sent to all schools in Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Evaluate inter-departmental</p>	<p>Compliance with UNCRC</p>	<p>Met transitions group and informed government (Art 7) regarding</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	group's report on 'Transitions' against the UNCRC		changes needed & commented on final report. Additional evidence provided: This objective has been completed. The Commissioner undertook significant work with the DUP and SDLP on this issue in addition to a series of meetings and input to DENI and other Govt. Departments	
	<p>Following service reviews on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Child centred care planning ✓ Mental Health advocacy arrangements ✓ School Transport ✓ Vetting and Child Protection procedures ✓ Speech and Language Therapy provision to children and young people <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyse findings 2. Produce recommendations for policy and service improvements 3. Publish findings and recommendations 4. Follow-up (where appropriate) implementation 5. Evaluate review 	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	<p>Child Centred Care Service Review complete and report with recommendations to be made in June 2006. Adoption of recommendations yet to be evaluated.</p> <p>Mental Health Advocacy Service Review complete and report with recommendations to be made in September 2006. Work still in progress, unable to assess if policies meet best practice standards.</p> <p>School Transport research completed, launch in June 2006 - 9 recommendations have been made. Still to assess recommendation follow through.</p> <p>Vetting: Comprehensive report carried out and 4 key recommendations made. 100% recommendations accepted by Government. Follow up June 2006.</p> <p>Speech and Language Therapy: Comprehensive overview of service delivery carried out. 6 recommendations made. Follow up meeting with DE and DHSSPS, HSS Boards and Trusts. No recommendations adopted by Mar 06. Follow - up review in 2006/07.</p> <p>Briefed Senior Management Team on Youth Green Paper and Review of Government White Paper on Education Reform</p>	Partially Achieved
	Review policy developments in GB (e.g. Every Child Matters) and make recommendations for policy	Children and Young people in Northern Ireland are offered at least the	Responded to 36 consultations, including setting the Commission's policy position with reference to UNCRC and Children's Rights.	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	and service improvements in N. Ireland (including UK wide joint policy work with GB Children's Commissioners)	same level of services and / or protection, as children and young people in GB	<p>We have a duty under Article 7 of the Commissioner's Order 2003 for changes on policy issues: play, family support, mental health, child protection etc.</p> <p>Work on ensuring that children in NI are offered the same level of services and protection still in process with ongoing scrutiny of Safeguarding Bill.</p> <p>BINOCC (British Irish Ombudsman & Children's Commissions group) met on two occasions. Joint policy positions were issued on: Asylum Seeking children, including meeting the Home Office, Ministers & officials: Physical punishment (including <i>Article 7</i> duty with Lord Rooker Children's Minister).</p> <p>BINOCC Policy Group established March 2006. Agreed terms of reference & common policy areas for working.</p> <p>School Transport: Report complete, launch June 2006. Workshop held in Feb 2006.</p>	
	<p>Following the Commissioner's research on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Transport ▪ Applied Behavioural Analysis ▪ Physical Punishment ▪ Bullying ▪ Comparable expenditure on Children's services in GB (with DFP) <p>produce recommendations for improvements to policy and services in N. Ireland</p>	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	<p>Research was commissioned into Aspergers due to considerable body of other and existing work going on into Applied Behaviour Analysis. Report will be available in Sept 2006.</p> <p>Physical Punishment: research in process, delayed due to factors outside the Commissioner's control. Parental survey carried out. Considerable lobbying for change in legislation during the last quarter of 05/06 - still in process. Recommendations to be pursued.</p> <p>Bullying: Research complete, with a launch of this report in June 2006. Guidance is being developed for November 2006.</p> <p>Expenditure: Commissioned research with OFMDFM and DFP. Findings delayed until July 2006.</p> <p>Additional Evidence provided: School transport completed Applied Behavioural Analysis completed Physical Punishment not complete due to differences with partner</p>	Partially Achieved and ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			organisations in respect of the Commissioners work (NSPCC and Barnardos) Expenditure completed For all completed 75% of all recommendations have been accepted	
	Monitor casework to identify major policy and service deficits.	Feedback from casework	Significant deficit in speech & language therapy provision in special schools identified. 36 parents from 2 schools have requested the Commissioner's action for possible legal challenge.	Achieved
5. Provide a responsive, accessible and targeted complaints and advice service	Provide complaints and advice service to meet agreed casework objectives with clients	Casework quality standards are met in > 90% of all cases	Casework objectives met or partially met in 96 % of cases. 257 cases opened for year 2006, an increase of 29% from 2005.	Achieved
	Support a range of cases in line with legal funding criteria	Satisfaction rate of children and young people accessing the service is greater than 90%	Legal Funding criteria applied; 12 cases requested legal funding; 1 case met criteria to receive funding	Achieved
6. Provide Targeted assistance to C&YP in legal proceedings	N/A	N/A	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED Additional evidence provided: As there were no cases save one meeting the published criteria this objective could not be met therefore is not applicable	N/A
7. Conduct formal investigations under articles 9, 10 and 12 of the Commissioner Order	Keep under review the need for formal investigations in relation to all issues affecting children and young people	Issues for formal Investigation are appropriate and meet our criteria	Inspection in partnership with Social Services Inspectorate into children's involvement in child protection carried out in Western Board. Report written, recommendations made and accepted; feedback to children and young people. Formal Investigation appropriate and met criteria.	Achieved
	Monitor casework to ensure issues for formal investigation are identified	Feedback from casework	Case work monitored and 1 case identified - no Formal Investigation completed as the matter was resolved through resolution and cooperation with the statutory agency (in line with the Commissioner's values)	Achieved
	Develop effective relationships with	Levels of reporting and	Monthly meeting with Children's Law Centre	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<p>service providers and NGOs and effective reporting and whistle-blowing processes to ensure serious breaches of children and young people rights are brought to our attention</p>	<p>numbers of cases reported</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings with Putting Children First Regular liaison with VOYPIC Additional Evidence provided: In the period under review the Commissioner formed partnerships with a range of external bodies; ECNI re SENDO and DDA, NIHRC re BoR, Barnardos and NSPCC re CP, Voypic, Children's Law centre re range of casework and legal issues, Off the Streets, Include Youth etc.</p> <p>In addition a review of the Commissioners casework will demonstrate a range of effective relationships with stat providers especially ELBs and Trusts. Cases available for review.</p>	
<p>8. Promote awareness of our work and develop and maintain effective relationships with key organisations</p>	<p>Provide general information and, where appropriate, training in the UNCRC to a range of children and young people and, where appropriate to parents / parents groups</p>	<p>3500 children and young people have their awareness about their rights raised are and / or are trained in UNCRC including 1400 visits to the Commissioner's offices</p> <p>Number of children and young people with special educational needs visiting the Commissioner's offices is proportionate to overall target (>10%)</p> <p>Every special school in Northern Ireland has the Commissioner's resources relevant to children and young people with special</p>	<p>4711 children and young people had awareness about their rights raised and/or were trained in UNCRC including 1395 visits to the Commissioner's offices.</p> <p>140 children and young people, i.e. 10%, visiting the Commissioner's offices had special educational needs</p> <p>The Commissioner's posters and invites to visit the Office of the Commissioner sent to all special schools (including hospital schools) in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		educational need		
	Develop and maintain a range of formal and informal links with statutory service providers, voluntary and community organisations and groups across Northern Ireland	Relationships with 160 statutory, voluntary and community groups are established	Relationships have been developed with 233 statutory, voluntary and community groups	Achieved
	Undertake a Media and Public Affairs campaign on a range of issues to support the work of the Commissioner using a variety of media	<p>Increase in the number of casework complaints / requests from children and young people for advice and / or information</p> <p>15% increase on 04/05 baseline in non-recruitment visits to the Commissioner's website</p> <p>Levels of positive media coverage</p>	<p>Delivered the 'Listening to You' Campaign in Sep 05, focussing on the complaints service that the Commissioner provides; using ADSHELs, bus shelter posters were placed at 120 high impact locations across Northern Ireland. A 30% increase in the number of enquires received by the Legal and Complaints Department resulted.</p> <p>Web visits increased by 120% to over 120,000 - average monthly visits risen to 10,150 (was 4,750 in 04/05)</p> <p>97.5% of all Media coverage positive/neutral</p>	Achieved
	Provide an appropriate communications and public affairs response to all relevant issues	<p>Media opinion is informed by the Commissioner's response to requests for information</p> <p>Support from</p>	<p>Key messages incorporated in all media releases/statements - 700 items of coverage 97.5% the Commissioner positive/neutral</p> <p>123 media releases/statements issued</p> <p>215 media enquiries dealt with; 95% dealt with within one hour, 98% within deadline</p> <p>Stakeholder Support – 50% of media releases generated 3rd party support from NI political parties via supportive media statements.</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		stakeholders is evident in the media and other areas of influence	On 6 occasions NGOs issued statements in support and endorsing the Commissioner's position.	
	Produce a range of bespoke publications using a variety of media to support our work	Satisfaction rating of children and young people using our publications	<p>100% satisfaction levels of children and young people – gauged by evaluating the responses of a representative group of c&yp to a series of questions asking for their views on 5 key publications (including Adshel advertising campaign)</p> <p>Range of bespoke publications produced: new Commissioner web site, Annual Review, Ezine, UNCRC Leaflet, Research Leaflets x 2, Annual Report, Corporate Plan, updated Info Leaflet to include accessibility information, Commissioner e-card and hard copy Christmas card, research templates.</p> <p>Targeted advertising using key medium to reach C&YP: Using a range of media: online, hard copy publication, magazine and newsletter advertising, outdoor bus shelter (Adshel) advertising, hand outs (promotional items and posters), newspaper, press release</p> <p>Targeted advertising - in addition the Commissioner advertised in the youth sector publications and formats including Adshel campaign, Brat magazine and NI4Kids</p> <p>Democra-school brand developed to promote democracy in schools and school councils. The Democra School brand was developed with visual and support materials (display stands, posters, folders, badges)</p> <p>Promotional materials produced e.g. pencils, rulers, fleeces, stickers</p>	Achieved
	Host & co-host a range of events to promote our work on:		The Commissioner hosted the following events: - Safe Guarding Children - Message to Minister (5.2.06) &	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ safeguarding children and young people; ▪ participation ▪ play and leisure ▪ bullying 		<p>(10/09/06)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation - Democra-School (23.4.06) - QUB Report launch (13.10.05) <p>The Commissioner supported / Co-Hosted the following events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play and Leisure (9.3.06) - SLT Conference (29.3.06) <p>187 events/meetings of external groups, whose aims were related to children and young people, availed of using the Commissioner's facilities in Millennium House on a free basis</p> <p>Bullying – to be carried forward to coincide with Bullying week launch in November 2006 together with Media Initiative for Children partnership with Office of the Children's Ombudsman in Ireland and NIPPA/PII</p>	
How we do things				
9. Develop, implement and evaluate a research strategy to inform the work of the Commissioner	Inform all major activities using baseline UNCRC evidence and other research	Evidence based decision making	All <i>Article 7</i> and other advisory work based on QUB research. All other key processes developed or utilised research and clear evidence base	Achieved
	Make evidence available to all of the Commissioner's staff and stakeholders utilising the Web, Intranet and search technologies	Information readily accessible on UNCRC, QUB and project-specific research	<p>Project group set up to develop website and intranet. Website revised and search facility implemented. Plan for structure of the Commissioner's intranet developed for implementation in 2006/07.</p> <p>Additional evidence provided:</p> <p>This objective was deferred owing to the workload of the Commissioners partner organisation the ECNI who provide IT support to the office of the Commissioner.</p>	Ongoing
	Implement our annual research		Research plan implemented, with amended timeframes	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	plan for 2005/2006 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Transport ▪ Applied Behavioural Analysis ▪ Physical Punishment ▪ Bullying ▪ Awareness of the Commissioner amongst children and young people and the general public ▪ identifying research rationale, research management and outsourcing arrangements. 			
10. Develop and evaluate a programme of service reviews & investigations using agreed criteria	Identify serious systemic breaches of children and young people's rights and their causes and where appropriate, undertake service reviews or investigations	>75% of the Commissioner's recommendations are acted upon leading to measured improvements in the rights and best interests of children and young people	Additional evidence provided: In 2005/6 the office of the Commissioner carried out two reviews – Vetting and Speech & Language. Reports on the Web & Service reviews all followed agreed criteria.	Achieved
	In 2005 / 2006 undertake reviews on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mental Health Advocacy arrangements; ▪ School Transport; ▪ Child centred care planning; and <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make specific, measurable and time-bound recommendations 2. Publish service review and investigations findings 3. Follow up recommendations implementation 	100% of recommendations are followed up by the Commissioner within 1 year	Mental Health: Work in process, Review into advocacy commissioned and report due in September 2006. Recommendations to be pursued. School Transport: Work complete, report due in June 2006. Recommendations to government to be pursued. Child Centred Care: Work complete, report due in June 2006. Recommendations to be pursued. Additional evidence provided: Quality of the externally commissioned report meant that the Commissioner was unable to publish the Mental Health report	Partially Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	4. Evaluate review			
11. Develop, consult on and implement criteria and processes for assisting complainants	Adopt and implement criteria for assisting complainants and disseminate to; children and young people, the statutory, private and public legal, voluntary and community sectors	<p>>75%of casework objectives are met</p> <p>Level of complaints about the Commissioner's service is less than 5% of all cases assisted</p> <p>Number of cases assisted increases by 25% in 2005/06</p>	<p>Casework objectives met or partially met in 96 % of cases. 257 cases opened for year 2006, an increase of 29% from 2005.</p> <p>2 complaints received in the year, i.e 0.78% of cases received during the year</p> <p>Legal assistance criteria available on Web-site and made available as part of Shout consultation.</p>	Achieved
	Develop redress policy and procedure		Draft complaints procedure drawn up May 2005	Achieved
<p>12. Develop, implement and evaluate a communications strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Internal; ■ External; and ■ Influencing 	Set key targets for improvement in recognition of the Commissioner across a number of audiences over the lifetime of this plan	<p>Positive media coverage</p> <p>Level of informed debate</p> <p>Reactions to media requests are informed and appropriate</p> <p>Support from stakeholders is evident in the media and other areas</p>	<p>Media Coverage – 97.5% of all coverage positive/neutral</p> <p>External – Provide support for external organisations including third party endorsements, feature articles in professional publications, communications support to the Commissioner; including supporting appearances in BBC Radio Ulster's Sunday Sequence & BBC Radio Five Live's Weekend News</p> <p>Media communications – see measurement above</p> <p>Stakeholder Support – 50% of media releases generated 3rd party support from NI political parties via supportive media statements; on 6 occasions NGOs issued statements endorsing the Commissioner's position</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		of influence Website usage Range of media types covering the Commissioner's stories	Web visits increased by 120% - rise from 4,750 in 2004/05 to 10,150 in 2005/06 183 wide-ranging media organisations covered the Commissioner's stories	
	Support key activities through Media and Public Affairs campaigns and other awareness raising activities	Level of satisfaction of internal customers including children and young people's panel Legislative requirements are met Recognition rates improve by 100% on baseline with both children and young people and adults	88% of young people visiting the office were happy with their visit to the Commissioner and 97% learnt more about what the Commissioner does. Youth Panel Evaluation: 87% rated communication with the Commissioner as good or excellent; 99% of children and young people rated support from the Commissioner's staff as either excellent or good. Communication Strategy draft completed Initial findings from Awareness survey undertaken at the end of Quarter 4 indicate that the website was one of the top 2 ways that children and young people and their parents became aware and communicated with the Commissioner –the 120% increase in web visits indicates a significant improvement in recognition 115% increase on number of visits by groups/organisations/schools of children and young people groups also indicates improved recognition.	Achieved
	Produce and evaluate appropriate guidance and promotional materials to support the work of the	Level of satisfaction of internal customers including children and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publications produced ▪ Youth panel consulted 	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	Commissioner	<p>young people's panel</p> <p>Legislative requirements are met</p> <p>Recognition rates improve by 100% on baseline with both children and young people and adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample survey undertaken ▪ Tendering / purchasing procedures followed ▪ 100% Satisfaction levels of children and young people surveyed. 	
13. Develop, implement and evaluate effective internal policies and procedures	<p>Develop the Commissioner's communications policy statement including:</p> <p>standards/principles and the Commissioner's communications protocols on managing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media; ▪ Language ▪ Alternative formats ▪ Public affairs ▪ Electronic media ▪ Design & Printing ▪ Event management ▪ Photography ▪ Access to information 	<p>Available and adopted by the Commissioner</p> <p>All of the Commissioner's staff to have copy</p> <p>Customer acceptance</p>	<p>Policy Guidelines – completed Accessibility Policy (incorporating Language and Alternative Formats); Event Management and Corporate Branding Policy</p> <p>Drafts completed for Publications Policy (incorporating Design & Printing, Electronic media)</p> <p>Standards – Communications standards/principles completed and integrated into draft Communications Strategy (incorporating Media, Public Affairs and Photography) to be approved in 2006/07</p> <p>Additional Information provided:</p> <p>In the period under review the Commissioner achieved sign-off on 4 of these policies and a further 2 in draft. A further 3 were deferred due to staffing and other circumstances e.g. updating the web meant holding off on the electronic media policy.</p>	Partially Achieved
	Develop and implement Equality Scheme Action Plan	<p>Reports to SMT on a quarterly basis</p> <p>Exception reporting</p>	<p>Timetable delayed- Scheme approved in Sept 2005.</p> <p>S75 training delivered to all staff in Nov 05.</p> <p>CSM set out list of policies to commence screening process.</p>	Partially Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			<p>One quarterly report provided to SMT</p> <p>No complaints received</p>	
	<p>Develop and maintain sound corporate governance policies and procedures based on best practice e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk map, register and policy • Freedom of information • Financial procedures • Stress management policy • Anti-fraud policy 	<p>Level of complaints about scheme or services on the basis of equality</p> <p>No of breaches of best corporate governance practice</p> <p>Exception reporting</p>	<p>Risk Mapping: Completed and approved by SMT</p> <p>FOI- 7 requests received; 100% responded to within timeframes</p> <p>Financial procedures- completed</p> <p>Stress management policy- To be taken forward as part of Employers of Choice programme- bring forward to 2006/07</p> <p>Anti-fraud policy- completed</p>	Achieved
14. Develop, implement and evaluate a participation strategy with children and young people	In partnership with OFMDFM children and young people's unit (CYPUP) undertake an audit of existing participation practice, benchmark with other countries and evaluate	<p>Satisfaction levels of children and young people and parents/carers involved</p> <p>Audit is inclusive and S75 compliant</p>	<p>The Commissioner attended a number of meetings with key stakeholders including CYPUP and the Participation Consortium. Currently awaiting news following CYPUP's consideration of a business case brought forward by Participation Consortium to develop a participation network.</p> <p>Other factors include the development of the Big Deal's Programme 'Participation Hub' (a consortium of NIYF / YCNI / ELBs / YouthNet / PlayBoard). Existing research includes the Taking the Initiative Report (2002) and the Turning Up the Sound Report (2005)</p> <p>To be carried forward dependant on other partners</p> <p>Additional Evidence provided:</p>	Deferred with agreement from OFMDFM

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			This objective was not pursued, in agreement with OFMDFM, as they significantly changed their policy and resourcing for this activity which meant we did not want to duplicate effort of the Big Deal and the Participation Hub.	
	Develop gap analysis and use to inform strategy development and implement	Comparison against UNCRC	To be carried forward dependant on other partners to move forward	Deferred with agreement from OFMDFM
	Support and develop an inclusive Commissioner's children and young people's panel and recruit new members	<p>Satisfaction levels amongst children and young people on the Commissioner's panel</p> <p>Composition of the Commissioner's panel is inclusive and S75 compliant</p>	<p>From the Youth Panel Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 87% of the youth panel thought levels of communication with the Commissioner were good or excellent - 99% of children and young people rated support from the Commissioner's staff as either excellent or good. - Panel members surveyed expressed 100% satisfaction in respect of their engagement and participation. <p>Recruitment process extends to young people / youth & community organisations / schools that represent all section 75 groups</p> <p>Section 75 representation is as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious belief: Protestant 15%, Catholic 50%, Jewish 2%, None 19% - Racial group: 14% ethnic minorities - Gender: 61% female , 39 % male - Marital status: 100% single - Age: 100% under 21 - Persons with a disability: 17% with disability - Persons with dependants: data not available - Sexual orientation: data not available - Political opinion: data not available 	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<p>Develop and maintain effective and creative means of communication with the Commissioner's panel and other children and young people, including those termed 'hard to reach' and their parents/carers (or representative groups)</p>	<p>Quality and level of communication with children and young people</p>	<p>Ongoing development of Participation Service enabled the Commissioner to communicate with children and young people through participation in: the Commissioner's Youth Panel, Research projects, Staff Recruitment, Presentations, Conferences and Events, Website development (see 2.6f), promotion of understanding and awareness amongst opinion formers, Communication resources, Work placements <i>under Article 7</i> of the Commissioner's Order 2003.</p> <p>Able to reach those termed 'hard to reach' and their parents/ carers by organising visits to the Commission or by delivering workshops and presentations to: Schools, Youth Clubs, Youth Organisations, Special Schools, Community Groups, Parents groups</p> <p>The Commission's website- an increase of 120% in site visitors</p> <p>'NICCY' News – a graphically designed 12 page full colour A3 booklet, distributed via the Belfast Telegraph to 115,000 readers</p> <p>E-Zine – Pilot e-zine sent to 258 subscribers generating 10% uplift in requests for further recipients</p> <p>Ongoing development of Participation Service enable the Commissioner to communicate with over 200 partner organisations.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Develop and maintain effective and creative means of communication with a range of partners across Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Quality and level of communication with partner organisations</p>	<p>The Commissioner's innovative programme to consult on its priorities with children and young people and stakeholder groups was recognised in 2005 through the CIPR Pride Awards – the Commissioner received a joint Gold Award Winner, Silver Awards Winner and finalist (PR team of the Year).</p> <p>Website development</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			'NICCY' News and Ezine	
	Build on existing web presence to develop a fun, child and young person and parent friendly web-site(s)	Levels of website usage and satisfaction levels of users	The Commissioner's website was redeveloped with the advice of a children and young person sub-group. New features include a Content Management System, interactive features, user-friendly structure and navigation Visits increased by 120% to over 120,000 in 2006 - average monthly visits rose from 4,750 in 04/05 to 10,150 Youth Panel Extranet - area where Youth Panel can find information on upcoming events	Achieved
Commissioner's Staff				
15. To have staff numbers and skill levels required to effectively deliver our services	<p>Attain benchmarked % employment within the Commissioner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify benchmark % ■ Complete Phase 3 recruitment & recruit participation secondees ■ Develop recruitment policy ■ Ensure young people are involved in all recruitment exercises ■ Complete monitoring requirements 	% rate of staff employed compared to budget	<p>Benchmark identified as 95%; 80% posts were filled at 31/3/06 (inc temp staff and secondees, not agency)</p> <p>Phase 3 recruitment completed; 5 of 7 posts were appointed</p> <p>2 recruitment campaigns completed to recruit Participation Officers; 3 secondees appointed to 4 posts</p> <p>3 posts advertised in Sept 05; 1 post appointed</p> <p>Recruitment campaign commenced in Mar 06 to recruit 3 posts</p> <p>Recruitment policy commenced March 2006 to be finalised by both SMT and external legal opinion by the end of Q2 2006/07</p> <p>100% interview panels involved young people</p> <p>All jobs monitored on ongoing basis- on target for submission to ECNI in Apr 06</p>	Achieved
	<p>Maintain staff turnover at benchmarked %:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify benchmark % ■ Develop retention strategy 	% turnover rate monitored monthly	<p>% benchmark turnover identified as 10%-</p> <p>Actual was 13.95% for year (3 staff) (excluding agency, fixed term staff and the death of the Commissioner)</p> <p>Retention strategy - bring forward to 2006/07 as part of Employers of Choice programme</p> <p>Additional Evidence provided:</p> <p>Variance should be noted as being dependent on the small numbers involved i.e. one staff member represents a figure of</p>	Not Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			nearly 5%	
	<p>Create 6 workplace opportunities for young people within the Commissioner each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a policy, procedure and system for work placements and shadowing ▪ Develop relationships with placement providers to target young people 	<p>6 young people placed within the Commissioner</p> <p>Feedback analysis from placements to assess accessibility and quality</p>	<p>Policies, procedures and systems developed</p> <p>Relationships developed across voluntary and educational sectors</p> <p>10 placements in the year 2005/06</p> <p>Feedback forms developed for issue in 2006/07</p>	Achieved
<p>16. Develop our staff in line with best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify; ▪ Plan; ▪ Take action; ▪ Evaluate Review 	<p>Make all staff aware of internal policies and procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop induction programme ▪ Update all current staff records to ensure induction completed ▪ Complete staff handbook ▪ Develop system to audit records quarterly ▪ Ensure that young people are involved in induction process 	<p>100% of new staff inducted within 3 months of joining the Commissioner</p>	<p>Induction programme drawn up and circulated</p> <p>Induction checklists circulated to all staff</p> <p>Staff handbook issued to all staff</p> <p>One quarterly audit completed</p> <p>Induction process- young people not included to date</p> <p>100% staff received induction- checklists will measure quality of inductions</p>	Achieved
	<p>Develop staff skills to enable delivery of the corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish budget for training based on agreed % of total budget ▪ Implement recommendations of 	<p>- 90% of training needs addressed within agreed timetables from Individual Development Plan</p> <p>- 80% of training budget utilised by the year end</p>	<p>Budget of £25k, revised to £30k (15.8% budget);</p> <p>TNA completed Oct05</p> <p>IDPs to be developed as part of appraisals in 2006</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	TNA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement Individual Development Plans for staff members ■ Devise a system to record, monitor and evaluate training ■ Devise a system to ensure compliance of training programme 	- Evaluation forms from training events	PAMS set up to record, monitor and evaluate training PAMS to monitor compliance of training programme % training needs not assessed as no IDP's in place 75% training budget expended for year Evaluation forms available	
	Monitor staff performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Train staff in supervision system ■ Devise a system to ensure compliance of the supervision system ■ Establish customer service benchmarks ■ Research quality/charter marks (Lexcel, liP, EFQM) ■ Implement selected charter mark per agreed timetable 	- 95% of staff receive supervision on a monthly basis - Supervision records for staff members received by Corporate Services each month	Appraisal system- completed and piloted with SMT group Staff training on appraisal scheme planned for Apr/May 06 PAMS to monitor compliance of system SMT appraisals complete; all relevant staff have had probationary meetings; all other appraisals due Mar-May 06	Achieved
	Appraise staff performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop appraisal system ■ Train all staff in appraisal system ■ Devise a system to ensure the compliance of the appraisal system 	95% of permanent staff appraised by deadline -Appraisal records for staff members received by Corporate Services by 31 st March 2006	80% staff received training re supervision system PAMS set up to monitor supervision system Records not being received by Corporate Services- monitoring of implementation not possible at present	Partially Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry out appraisals 			
	Establish customer service benchmarks Research quality/charter marks (Lexcel, liP, EFQM) Implement selected charter mark per agreed timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement of benchmark partners and completion of review - Completion of assessment and agreed action plan compiled with per timescales 	Research completed Decision taken to implement Employers of Choice (commenced Dec 05), Investors in People (registered Dec 05), Lexcel (completed Mar 06)	Achieved
17. Value staff and support them to achieve an appropriate work life balance	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED	Additional Evidence provided: In this period the office of the Commissioner were in the preparation for the Employers of Choice Award and review.	Ongoing
18. Ensure effective and accountable leadership at all levels in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop an Employee Assistance Programme in line with Management Statement/Financial Memorandum ▪ Train staff in EAP ▪ Explore options of alternative work patterns, eg job share ▪ Set up a relationship with Employers of Choice ▪ Establish a Social Committee to organise events for staff ▪ Establish an annual employee award scheme or other staff recognition scheme ▪ Review other ways of maximising employee benefits, eg lunch vouchers, parking, healthcare insurance ▪ Implement childcare voucher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of staff trained in EAP and Stress Policy by September 2005 - Completion of annual employee award event or other recognition scheme 	EAP- completed EAP training- completed Alternative work patterns- ongoing; 16% staff availed of p/t working during year Employers of Choice – audit carried out Jan 06 and report available Mar 06 Social Committee- completed Employee Award Scheme- following the death of the Commissioner, it was agreed by SMT that this was not appropriate at this stage Other benefits- parking not possible; healthcare information offered to staff (not associated with the Commissioner) Childcare voucher system- implemented and staff trained All staff trained and informed of EAP scheme to date; quarterly reports received from scheme provider	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	system			
19. Develop a child friendly and child centred culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Train staff in Child Protection issues ■ Establish a written vetting procedure ■ Establish a parent/child event, e.g. Bring a child to Work day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of staff trained in Child Protection issues - 100% of staff vetted in line with best practice - No of C&YP using the Commissioner's premises per month 	<p>70% of staff at 31/03/06 trained in Child Protection issues (95% following training in May 06)</p> <p>Child Protection Policy written</p> <p>Vetting procedure- links to the Recruitment Policy (not written)</p> <p>Parent/Child event- the Commissioner's Christmas party</p> <p>100% staff vetted to date</p>	Partially Achieved
Money				
20. Develop, allocate and manage annual budgets to fulfil our priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Draw up budgets for 2006/07 ■ Prepare monthly management account statement for SMT on 05/06 budget ■ Undertake monthly management review of 05/06 budget at SMT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Budget submitted to OFMDFM by agreed deadline -Unspent balance at end of year 2005/06 no greater than +5% - the Commissioner remains within annual 05/06 budget 	<p>Monthly management account statement provided to Chief Executive within deadline</p> <p>Monthly review of budget carried out by CSM and Chief Executive</p> <p>The Commissioner currently operating within annual 05/06 budget</p> <p>Unspent cash balance at 31 Mar 06 is +3.3%</p>	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish software and hardware requirements ■ Identify training needs ■ Develop Intranet ■ Develop contingency system ■ Legal and advice database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project approval sought from OFMDFM by agreed deadline - Intranet in place - Legal & Advice database design & implementation - Contingency system in 	<p>Hardware and software needs and budget established</p> <p>Intranet- initial meetings with ECNI and working group and project plan discussed for implementation in 2006/07</p> <p>Contingency- completed</p>	Partially Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		place - Website matches best practice - Website capacity & capability improved	Legal database- Phase 1 completed by Mar 06	
21. Control costs, make effective and efficient use of our resources within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Write anti-fraud policy ■ Train staff in financial procedures ■ Review suppliers for cost-effectiveness and establish tendered services where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-fraud policy in place - Financial procedures completed - >85%% of staff trained in financial procedures - Tenders submitted and agreed within policy 	Anti-fraud policy- completed Financial procedures- 80% staff trained Reviewing suppliers- ongoing All tenders and quotations processed within procedures Additional evidence provided: All of the objectives were met bar the training of staff in financial procedures	Partially Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review suppliers for cost-effectiveness and establish tendered services where appropriate ■ Ensure implementation of expenses policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expenses policy completed and 100% staff trained in use of same - Tenders/quotations submitted and agreed within policy 	Audit and Risk Committee recruited and induction completed in Mar 06 for initial meeting in Apr 06 Internal audit plan completed, except for ICT audit which was brought forward to 2006/07 Annual accounts completed Additional evidence provided: This area was covered by the Internal Audit report and no issues of control were indicated.	Achieved
22. Secure funding to maintain and develop our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete and submit 	All submissions made to OFMDFM within set	In-year bids submitted within deadlines	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<p>appropriate in-year bids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Submit monthly draw downs ■ Submit quarterly spending reviews 	deadlines	<p>Monthly draw-downs submitted within deadlines</p> <p>Quarterly spending reviews submitted within deadlines</p>	
23. Develop and maintain effective governance arrangements in line with best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a Risk Management strategy and implementation plan ■ Training of relevant staff ■ Identification of risks, construction of risk register and rolling action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Risk Register in place - Department Risk Register in place - Risk Register Reviews completed within agreed timescales 	<p>Risk mgt- corporate and dept risk registers completed</p> <p>Risk mgt policy to be written</p> <p>Action plan and reviews on target</p>	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish calendar of meetings ■ Establish action plan ■ Establish programme of H&S training ■ Carry out risk assessments according to action plan ■ Develop a system to manage H&S information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of days per annum lost due to accident - Minutes available from quarterly H&S Committee meetings - Risk assessments available within timescales agreed by Committee 	<p>3 committee meetings in 2005/06- minutes disseminated to all staff. Action plans established at each meeting and reviewed at following meetings</p> <p>No days lost due to accident</p> <p>Risk assessments- delivered as required, including fire risk assessment; training to be provided to staff</p> <p>H&S information managed within system- accident book and reporting structure, notice board</p> <p>H&S statement in place; policy and procedures being drafted- b/f to 2006/07</p>	Achieved

Summary Table of Performance for Business Plan 2006 – 2007

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
Our Stakeholders (Children, Young People, Parents, Others)				
1. Listen to and encourage the active involvement and engagement of children and young people and their parents	Engage with children and young people and, where appropriate, their parents / carers and / or parents' / carers' representative groups	<p>300 individual face to face meetings with Children and Young people, at pre-school (20%), primary school (40%) and post-primary school (40%) age, their parents or carers, across a range of settings.</p> <p>A minimum of 10% of all interactions will be with children and young people with a disability or with special needs.</p> <p>Satisfaction levels amongst children and young people and where appropriate, parents, in respect of engagement and participation are high (>85%) as measured by survey</p>	<p>The C&P team have had face to face meetings with 122 school and young Persons groups of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 were Pre-school • 24 were Primary age • 84 were Post primary age (including 32 youth organisations) • 9 had disabilities / SENs <p>This represents almost 6000 individual face to face meetings</p> <p>10.3% of internal interactions were with C&YP with a disability C/R 1.6a</p> <p>The Commissioner has had the following contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 meetings with groups of children and young people, 7 of which were with children and young people with disabilities; • 27 meetings with organisations representing children and young people; • 17 keynote speeches on issues relating to children and young people. <p>96% of those engaged were satisfied or very satisfied in respect of engagement and participation (based on C&P monitoring questionnaires)</p>	Achieved
2. Influence and improve the law relating to children and young people	Promote the full inclusion of the UNCRC in the Bill of Rights (BoR)	<p>Full implementation of the UNCRC in the BoR</p> <p>Involvement of children and young people</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Inclusion of UNCRC in BoR is part of workshop presentations by Participation Officers to</p>	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		Full implementation of the UNCRC in UK Law	schools/youth clubs, etc during rights awareness workshops.	
	Work with Children's Right Alliance England (CRAE) project for the full incorporation of the UNCRC in UK law		Ongoing.	Ongoing
	<p>Following an externally commissioned review on NI legislation, identify gaps (with reference to disparity with other UK legislation), prioritise required changes to legislation and lobby for change in the law in NI in particular in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RPA ▪ Physical punishment ▪ Special Educational Needs ▪ 'Looked after' children & Children Order ▪ Youth Justice ▪ Child Protection 	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	This work was delayed due to the departure of the Head of Legal and Complaints and has been deferred to the current review of the legislation	Deferred with agreement from OFMDFM
	Identify legislative recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 'Country Report', not implemented since the last hearing and lobby for their implementation	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	Identified as part of the Commissioner's preparation for UNCRC reporting Additional Evidence provided: This action has been delayed due to a delay in the UN timetable outside of the Commissioners control	Ongoing
	Disseminate evaluation of the Commissioner's powers against the	All recommendations are actively considered,	Evaluation of the Commissioner's powers completed in September 2006. The Commissioner is currently	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	Paris Principles for Human Rights Institutions and inform and influence OFMDFM in the review of the Commissioner to ensure compliance	debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	considering dissemination of report. Additional evidence provided: Both reports are available and have been forwarded to the Children's sector. The Commissioner has been awaiting the outcome of this current office review before widely disseminating one half of the process.	
	Monitor casework to identify strategic 'test' cases with the potential to make improvements in legislation relating to Children and Young People.	All recommendations are actively considered, debated and > 75% of key recommendations are accepted	The Commissioner is currently taking a Judicial Review on proposed new legislation relating to the physical punishment of children (Article 2 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.) The Commissioner is considering taking legal action in respect of Speech and Language provision, as highlighted in current caseload Additional evidence provided: The Judicial Reviews on Physical Punishment and potential Speech and Language Judicial Review are evidence of this objective being achieved	Achieved
3. Influence and improve policy relating to children and young people; and 4. Influence and improve practice relating to children and young people	Prepare for the 'Country Report' to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Report to the UN study on the right of the child to be heard	Compliance with UNCRC All recommendations are actively considered, debated and all key recommendations are accepted	Project Plan agreed by UK Commissioners; Assessment of children's rights against conclusions Obs completed; Top priority issues identified for N.I part of report; Children and young people consulted and 2 meetings held with NGOs. Completed. - Reported to UN on Child's Right to be heard and attended session in Geneva, will contribute to consultation document for recommendations	Achieved
	Publish and promote Schools' Councils guidelines	All NI schools to receive copy of School Council guidelines	Due to purdah restrictions, launch of guidance postponed until 2 nd May 2007.	Partially Achieved and

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		<p>Best practice model pilot established in 20 schools</p> <p>Guidelines adopted by DE</p>	<p>Guidance is printed and ready for distribution after launch.</p> <p>Best practice pilot to be instigated after launch.</p> <p>Guidance endorsed by Schools Council UK</p> <p>Awaiting written confirmation from DE endorsing the guidelines</p>	Ongoing
	<p>Publish and promote evidence based best practice guidance on bullying with a range of partners</p>	<p>All NI schools to receive copy of Anti-bullying guidelines.</p> <p>Best practice model pilot established in 40 schools.</p> <p>Guidelines adopted by DE.</p>	<p>Anti-bullying guidelines produced and distributed to all schools</p> <p>40 schools supported Anti-bullying guidance through seminars / workshops</p> <p>Guidelines endorsed by DE</p> <p>Coverage achieved for media release including broadcast interviews; as evidenced by media monitoring</p>	Achieved
	<p>Communicate the Commissioner's policy position on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical Punishment ▪ Play ▪ Mental Health ▪ RPA ▪ Budget and Priorities and CSR ▪ Family Support ▪ Children's Strategy 	<p>All recommendations are actively considered, debated and key recommendations are accepted</p> <p>Key responses include the voice of Children and Young people accessed by the Commissioner through its Youth Panel</p>	<p>Most of this work is still in progress. Policy responses to a range of consultation documents have been completed and forwarded to Government.</p> <p>C&P staff involved in capacity building NYP and other c&yp to enable their voices to be at the centre of responses on key consultations / policies</p> <p>Extensive media coverage achieved on mental health, physical punishment, Play, Poverty, Care</p>	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverty ▪ Aspergers ▪ Children's Involvement in Care Planning ▪ Young People's involvement in Inspection, Research and Review ▪ Traveller Children ▪ Anti-bullying <p>through evidence based responses to policy and other consultations, in meeting Article 7 of the Commissioner's Order 2003 and through workshops and events following publication of Reports.</p>	and other participatory frameworks	Planning, and anti-bullying as evidence by media monitoring	
	Disseminate findings of report into child protection in boarding schools	Recommendations are actively considered, debated and key recommendations are accepted by all boarding schools in NI	This activity will not be completed in 2006/07 due to the departure of the Head of Legal and Complaints	Not Achieved
	Review policy developments in GB and make recommendations for policy and service improvements in N. Ireland (including UK wide joint policy work with GB Children's Commissioners)	Policies meet best practice standards and implementation of review recommendations. Children and young people in Northern Ireland are offered at least the same level of services and/or protection, as children and young people in GB	The Commissioner has and continues to work with the Policy Group of the British and Irish Networks of Children's Commissioners on a range of issues; issues covered include a report to the Joint Committee on Human Rights, and joint statements on physical punishment and DNA, co-operating to prepare the report to the CRC.	Achieved
	Monitor casework to identify major policy and service deficits.	Feedback from casework	The monitoring of casework has identified policy and service deficits in the areas of Special Educational Needs (including Aspergers), and Speech and	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			Language.	
	Conduct an attitude survey and awareness campaign in a pre-selected number of retail outlets into how 'child and young person' friendly they are.	Research completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made	Research completed and report launched in December 2007 with attendant media coverage in mainstream and specialist outlets	Achieved
5. Provide a responsive, accessible and targeted complaints and advice service	Provide complaints and advice service to meet agreed casework objectives with clients	<p>>80% of Casework objectives are achieved</p> <p>Satisfaction rate of children and young people accessing the service is greater than 90%</p>	<p>112 new cases between April to September 2006</p> <p>194 new enquiries between April to September 2006</p> <p>Priority areas were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having your say 15 Bullying 12 Play and leisure 4 Road safety and school transport 16 Special educational needs 116 Children and young people with disabilities 16 Mental health issues and suicidal tendencies 2 Safeguarding children 87 Children and crime 5 Physical punishment 2 Implementing the UNCRC 3 Knowing your rights 22 Contact issues 6 <p>Outcomes of closed cases for April to September 2006 were as follows:</p> <p>Fully met 74%</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			Not met due to lack of cooperation/contact 10% Outside remit 6% Information provided	
	Support a range of cases in line with legal funding criteria	>80% of Casework objectives are achieved Satisfaction rate of children and young people accessing the service is greater than 90%	One case supported in line with legal funding criteria; measurements are not yet available as the case is still ongoing. One group action currently under consideration	Achieved
6. Provide targeted assistance to C&YP in legal proceedings				
7. Conduct formal investigations under articles 9, 10 and 12 of the Commissioner Order	Undertake a Formal Investigation of complaints system in one functional area of the criminal justice system.	Review completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made. Young people within the juvenile justice system are provided with the information and advice to help them take part in an investigation	Investigation work completed and report written, March 2007.	Achieved
	Undertake a review of the advocacy arrangements in a number of pre-selected H&SS Trust areas for those children cared for by the Trust who have a profound disability	Review completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made Young people with a	Fieldwork completed, draft report received, final report by end of April, 2007. Xxx number of children expressed views, as part of the research.	Partially Achieved and Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		profound disability are provided with the support to take part in the investigation	Additional evidence provided: This report was delayed due to concerns raised by a member of the Commissioner's steering committee for the research – as a result the publication is delayed but the fieldwork and report are complete and other objectives are ongoing	
	Commission a review of educational provision for Traveller children	Review completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made Young traveller children are provided with the support to take part in the review	Fieldwork completed and draft report submitted. Report launch delayed until post April, 2007. C&P staff supported young travellers to participate in the review.	Achieved
	Keep under review the need for formal investigations in relation to all issues affecting children and young people Monitor casework to ensure issues for formal investigation are identified	Issues for Formal Investigation are appropriate and meet our criteria. Feedback from casework	The need was considered on two occasions. On the first occasion, the statutory authority co-operated and there was no requirement for a formal investigation. The second potential formal investigation is currently under consideration.	Ongoing
8. Promote awareness of our work and develop and maintain effective relationships with key organisations	Provide general information and, where appropriate, training in the UNCRC to a range of children and young people and, where appropriate to parents / parents groups	5000 children and young people have their awareness about their rights raised are and/or are trained in UNCRC including 1000 visits to the Commissioner's offices and 1000 children and or young people trained through training the trainers.	5990 children and young people have had awareness about their rights raised are and/or are trained Of those 919 visited the office Training the Trainers: Student teachers currently on placement. Final data to be correlated in Q1 2007/08.	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		<p>No. of children and young people with special educational needs visiting the Commissioner's offices is proportionate to overall target (>10%).</p> <p>Satisfaction levels amongst c&yp and where appropriate, parents, in respect of engagement and participation are high (>85%) as measured by survey.</p>	<p>10.3% of those visiting the office have special educational needs</p> <p>96% of those engaged were satisfied or very satisfied in respect of engagement and participation</p>	
	<p>Develop and maintain a range of formal and informal links with statutory service providers, voluntary and community organisations and groups across Northern Ireland</p>	<p>50 individual meetings with stakeholder organisations</p> <p>15 Key Note speeches</p> <p>Support from stakeholders is evident in the media and other areas of influence</p>	<p>C&P have contributed to the measurement by having 56 individual meetings with stakeholder organisations</p> <p>17 speeches from Commissioner published on the Commissioner's website</p> <p>60 press releases circulated to relevant voluntary & community organisations and politicians – support from political spokespeople evident in 9 instances</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Provide an appropriate communications and public affairs response to all relevant issues</p>	<p>Levels of positive media coverage inc 25 media interviews</p> <p>Media opinion is informed by the Commissioner's</p>	<p>Commissioner has completed in excess of 50 media interviews</p> <p>250 media enquiries handled and as evidenced in media monitoring; media opinion is informed by tone</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		response to requests for information	and nature of coverage Evidence from reporter feedback suggests media regard the Commissioner as trusted contact for information and advice 3 rd parties issue press releases in support of the Commissioner and commented favourably on our work	
	Further develop/maintain the Commissioner website as a key vehicle in communicating the Commissioner's messages	15% increase on 05/06 baseline in visits to the Commissioner's website	Over 20% increase in visits to niccy.org. (A total of 148,115 unique visits to niccy.org compared to 121,000 in 05/06) More than 17 speeches and 56 press releases added, in addition to 24 consultation responses New features developed including a children's interactive painting feature targeted at younger children to encourage awareness of Schools Councils	Achieved
	Develop awareness of the Commissioner across all young people starting post-primary education through the use of age appropriate promotional materials.	>75% of all children receive promotional materials	contact letter and promotional material sent to 300 post primary schools Awareness Campaign included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Commissioner's branded key rings with contact details circulated to 30,000 Year 8 pupils and Special Schools ▪ the Commissioner's information and poster with contact details sent to all primary schools 	Achieved
How we do things				
9. Develop, implement and	Conduct research into the adequacy	Research completed on	Work delayed due to other demands on staff time.	Deferred

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
evaluate a research strategy to inform the work of the Commissioner	and effectiveness of sexual health services for young people across NI	time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed, clear recommendations made and evidence based policy position for the Commissioner is adopted	Report with recommendations now due end April, 2007. Additional evidence provided: The Commissioner has decided to change the approach to their work by creating a policy position paper to use as a lobbying tool	
	Develop the Commissioner's Ethics Policy and Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ induct, develop and support Ethics Committee ▪ monitor work undertaken both by the Commissioner's staff and organisations commissioned by the Commissioner to ensure conformity to the ethical standards of the Commissioner. 	Research completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made Committee in place and working effectively and all research commences with approval of committee	Completed. All work now guided by Ethics committee to ensure ethical standards. Shadow youth ethics committee also established.	Achieved
	Support the Research being undertaken by Joseph Rowntree Trust in Northern Ireland on the impact of Poverty on Children	Research completed to time, meeting terms of reference, findings are analysed and clear recommendations made	Completed. The Commissioner's feedback comments to report. Policy recommendations to follow.	Achieved
10. Develop and evaluate a programme of service reviews & investigations using agreed criteria	Review the Actions detailed by Government Departments in relation to the Report "A Right to Protection"	>75% of the Commissioner's recommendations are acted upon leading to measured improvements in the rights and best interests of children and young people	Work completed, report submitted to SOS and recommendations made.	Achieved
	Complete work on the reviews of	All research commences with approval from ethics	Child Centred Care complete and findings disseminated.	Partially achieved and

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mental Health advocacy ▪ Aspergers ▪ Physical punishment ▪ Child Centred Care Disseminate findings and lobby for implementation of recommendations	committee	Mental Health delayed due to quality of work Aspergers completed, report launched March 2007. Publication of the review of Physical Punishment has been delayed due to JR.	ongoing
11. Develop, consult on and implement criteria and processes for assisting complainants	Maintain criteria for assisting complainants and disseminate to; children and young people, the statutory, private and public legal, voluntary and community sectors	>80%of casework objectives are met Level of complaints about the Commissioner's service is less than 5% of all cases assisted	Legal funding criteria disseminated to stakeholders within the Commissioner's Corporate Plan 2005-08, and available on the Commissioner's website.	Achieved
	Further develop redress policy and procedure to include a protocol with OFMDFM on the handling of complaints about the Commissioner's casework and customer feedback	Number of strategic cases assisted increases by 15% over 2005/06 baseline	Delayed due to the departure of the Head of Legal and Complaints; for completion now by the end of quarter 4.	Not Achieved
	Achieve and maintain Lexcel accreditation	Achieve and maintain external accreditation	Lexcel accreditation achieved, and currently being maintained	Achieved
	Undertake casework review	Enhanced organisational effectiveness, targeting of resources and consistency with legislative requirements	Internal review carried out in June 2006- this resulted in the closure of a number of cases, e.g. inactive cases. Independent review due for completion by end of November 2006.	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
<p>12. Develop, implement and evaluate a communications strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal; ▪ External; and ▪ Influencing 	<p>Raise awareness of the Commissioner through pro-active media relations</p>	<p>75% Positive media coverage</p> <p>75% of media enquiries responded to within 24 hours</p> <p>Support from stakeholders is evident in the media and other areas of influence</p> <p>Evidence of a broad range of media organisations covering the Commissioner's stories</p>	<p>Target exceeded</p> <p>98% positive media coverage</p> <p>100% media enquiries responded to within 24 hrs</p> <p>SDLP has issued support to 5 Commissioner press releases, UUP 3 and Alliance and SF 1 each</p> <p>Voluntary and community organisations have supported the Commissioner's media activity in 10 instances</p> <p>Radios / TV / daily & weekly print / magazine coverage achieved on key issues, online coverage achieved also across new and emerging web outlets</p> <p>A total of 95 media releases/statements were issued in year and 250 media enquiries handled.</p> <p>A 7.5% increase in media enquiries showed increased efficacy in targeting releases to generate follow-up requests for information and interviews.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Establish a BINOCC working group on Communications</p>	<p>Enhanced collaboration with other Commissioner bodies through meeting twice a year</p>	<p>Communications group established and collaboration ongoing</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
	<p>Utilising results of awareness levels survey:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess recommendations from 	<p>Increased awareness of the Commissioner</p> <p>Recognition rates improve by 100% on baseline over</p>	<p>Parents and children and young people surveyed last year</p> <p>Awareness research being evaluated against</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify gaps in awareness ▪ incorporate findings in ongoing support of the Commissioner's business ▪ Plan future communications activity 	the next two years with both children and young people and adults	findings to identify future activity Additional Evidence provided: Once the report setting benchmarks was presented the Commissioner engaged in a pilot to ascertain if an advertisement in yell.com would yield results in addition to their heavy investment in the website. The report specifically targeted the web as a means of reaching children and young people and the yellow pages as a means to reach parents.	
	Produce appropriate publications / promotional materials to support the work of the Commissioner including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Report ▪ Innovative Annual Review ▪ Anti-bullying Guidelines ▪ School Council Guidelines ▪ Range of other information / promotional / advertising / publication materials ▪ Ad hoc advertising and sponsorship as required ▪ Production and distribution of the Commissioner's awareness raising materials 	Produce Annual Report including relevant copywriting, design and printing and ensuring report is laid before Parliament (in conjunction with 4.2b(v)) Publications and promotional items produced and distributed according to timeframe	Complete plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 additional publications over and above specified list produced (3 research reports and the Commissioner's Manifesto) • Bilingual versions of 2 sets of the Commissioner's Guidance produced • Developed a new Commission visual communication resource to support more effective communication across a range of stakeholders • Additional targeted promotional materials produced throughout year • Ongoing consultation with c&yp so that their voices are heard in the Commissioner's publications 	Achieved
	Run 2 key events to further endorse and promote the Commissioner's work	Support from stakeholders is evident in the media and other areas of influence. Satisfaction rating of 85% for children and young people involved in the	Due to purdah restrictions, Democra-school event postponed until 2 nd May 2007. However, majority of development work for event completed in year Young Consumer event completed. 18 Peer researchers supported in carrying out survey, NYP members supported in hosting the event in December 2006 in addition to support in appearing in 4 media interviews. Extensive coverage of the	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		events	<p>survey results achieved in daily print and broadcast media as well as specialist trade/business magazines, thereby influencing and informing retail trade of the views of YP</p> <p>92% of those engaged were satisfied or very satisfied in respect of engagement and participation</p>	
13. Develop, implement and evaluate effective internal policies and procedures	Implement Equality Scheme Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports to SMT on a quarterly basis - Exception reporting - Level of complaints about scheme or services on the basis of equality - Action plan delivered in accordance with agreed timescales 	<p>Reports provided to Commissioner</p> <p>Annual report submitted to ECNI</p> <p>No complaints received</p> <p>Action plan delayed but working towards new timescales with support of Policy Officers</p>	Not Achieved
	Maintain and monitor Corporate and Team Risk Registers based on best practice; implement action plan relating to Corporate Services Risk Register.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly report discussed and updated at SMT and at Audit and Risk Committee - No of breaches of best corporate governance practice - Action plan complied with within agreed timescales 	<p>Corporate and Team Risk Registers in place and reviewed at monthly Board meetings.</p> <p>Quarterly updates reviewed at Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>Draft Risk Management Policy developed for review by Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>Additional evidence provided: The risk register is available to review and has been in place for some time, as have the team registers. They are regularly reviewed at Exec Board and the Audit and Risk Committee regularly review the same</p>	Achieved
	Review Financial Procedures and Anti-fraud policy.	- No of breaches of best corporate governance	Financial procedures review completed.	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
		practice - Exception reporting	Fraud Policy reviewed at Audit and Risk Committee on 29 th June 2006. Minor amendments made to policy on an ongoing basis to comply with DFP guidelines. Policy explained at staff meeting on 18 th January 2007 and reissued to all staff on 23 rd January 2007. No instances of actual or suspected fraud reported during year.	
	Review current procedures and write protocols to ensure compliance with Data Protection Act.	- No of breaches of best corporate governance practice - Policy written and 100% staff trained in same - Exception reporting	Draft protocols completed by March 2007, for approval by Board.	Achieved
	Maintain and develop procedures for compliance with Freedom of Information Act, e.g. research and implement a solution to manage archived e-mail	- No of breaches of best corporate governance practice - Exception reporting	Draft protocols completed by March 2007, for approval by Board. 11 requests have been dealt with under Freedom of Information; 100% responses were issued within the time-frames.	Achieved
	Implement and maintain revised policy on Travel and Subsistence in line with Internal Audit recommendations	Exception reporting	Travel and Subsistence policy implemented. All claims checked by Corporate Services Administrative Officer to ensure compliance.	Achieved
14. Develop, implement and evaluate a participation strategy with children and young people	In partnership with OFMDFM children and young people's unit (CYPU) undertake an audit of existing participation practice, benchmark with other countries and evaluate	Satisfaction levels of children and young people and parents/carers involved Audit is inclusive and S75 compliant	Ongoing - discussions with key stakeholders being held to identify participation audit plans in 2007/08. Additional Evidence provided: Following the change in policy by OFMDFM and the development of the Participation Hub and the other NGOs involved the Commissioner agreed not to pursue this as it would have resulted in duplication.	Deferred with agreement from OFMDFM

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	Development of personal capacity building programmes for Commissioner's youth panel members to enable and empower them to participate in the work of the Commissioner	<p>>85% satisfaction levels amongst children and young people on the Commissioner's panel.</p> <p>In-house peer research training provided to at least 10 panel members.</p> <p>Youth Panel implement Action Plan</p> <p>Youth Panel Evaluation 2006 complete.</p>	<p>93% of those engaged were satisfied or very satisfied in respect of engagement and participation</p> <p>18 youth panel members trained in peer research</p> <p>NYP Action Plan ratified by SMT and implemented by youth panel</p> <p>Independent Youth Panel evaluation complete</p>	Achieved
	Using the youth panel evaluation report 2005 and its recommendations, develop an annual youth panel action plan including support for key the Commissioner's activities	Youth panel numbers maintained and members aware of, and signed up to, the constitution	<p>NYP Constitution ratified by SMT and signed up to by youth panel members</p> <p>Recruitment of new panel members put on hold subsequent to outcome of youth panel evaluation</p>	Achieved
	Implement new youth panel constitution and recruit new members	More young people involved with the Commissioner, especially among hard-to-reach groups and composition of the Commissioner's panel is inclusive and S75 compliant	<p>NYP recruitment is targeted at all relevant Section 75 groups having used gap analysis re existing panel membership</p> <p>Youth Panel Composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious belief: Protestant 19% (8); Catholic 48% (20); Other 2% (1); None 14% (6); Not declared 17% (7) • Marital Status: 100% single • Gender: 43% male (18); 57 % female (24) • Disability: 17% (7) • Age: 12-14yrs 17% (7); 15-16yrs 33% (14); 17- 	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			<p>18yrs 45% (19); *18-21yrs 5% (2)</p> <p>*NYP members with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Minorities: 9% (4) • Dependency: unknown • Sexual Orientation: unknown • Political Opinion: unknown 	
	Develop working relationships with young people outside the Commissioner's Youth Panel to support work of the Commissioner	Working relations developed with 50 groups	<p>Complete and exceeded:</p> <p>Working relations developed with 80 groups / organisations</p> <p>A major piece of work undertaken with PSNI has led to setting up of 4 regional Independent young peoples panels to ensure YP voices are fed into the PSNI planning</p>	Achieved
	Develop young person focussed public affairs activity in support of overall public affairs activity	Members of the Commissioner's youth panel have opportunity to represent youth panel views to elected representatives	The Commissioner supported members of the Youth Panel to meet directly with Ministers on several occasions including with Lord Rooker and Maria Eagle M.P	Achieved
	Identify how best to engage Children and Young People with a profound disability	Work in partnership with appropriate agencies to encourage participation of C Y Ps with profound disabilities.	Complete – worked with a range of groups and developed individual participation programmes to support the needs of C&YP with disabilities	Achieved
Commissioner's Staff				
15. To have staff numbers and skill levels required to effectively deliver our	<p>Maintain benchmarked employment within the Commissioner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete recruitment & selection 	- % rate of staff employed compared to budget	Posts filled at end of: Quarter 1 – 81%	Partially Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
services	as required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete recruitment and selection for AA posts ▪ Ensure young people are involved in all recruitment exercises ▪ Complete monitoring requirements 		Quarter 2 – 64% Quarter 3 – 69% Quarter 4 – 81% Recruitment delayed due to reviews of team and business requirements Recruitment of AA posts started in March 2007. Young people involved in all recruitment during the year Monitoring completed at end of each recruitment drive, to enable annual return to be completed at year end Article 55 completed on time.	
	Maintain staff turnover at benchmarked % within the Commissioner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement actions arising from Employers of Choice (EOC) and Investors in People (IiP) programme ▪ Implement actions arising from retention policy 	- % turnover rate monitored monthly	Turnover for quarters is as follows: Quarter 1 – 5.2% Quarter 2 – 5.9% Quarter 3 – 12.5% Quarter 4 - 0%	Achieved
	Maintain staff sickness absence at benchmarked % within the Commissioner.	- % sickness absence rate monitored monthly	Sickness absences are as follows: Quarter 1 – 6.3% Quarter 2 – 0.1%	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			Quarter 3 – 2.5% Quarter 4 – 3.4%	
	<p>Create 6 workplace opportunities for young people within the Commissioner each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement School Work Experience policy ▪ Implement Placement/Volunteer Policy ▪ Develop relationships with 5 new placement providers to target young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 young people placed within the Commissioner - Feedback analysis from placements to assess accessibility and quality - Monitoring of placements to ensure diversity and s75 compliance 	<p>11 placements in the Commissioner during April 2006 to March 2007: 1 males, 10 female</p> <p>Feedback analysis being developed within the Commissioner</p> <p>School work experience policy currently being implemented</p> <p>Placement and volunteer policy being implemented</p> <p>Relationship developed with two new placement providers</p>	Achieved
	Evaluate secondments for Participation Officers after they have been in post for one year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback analysis from Participation Officers and their employing organisations to assess quality of secondment - Report provided to CE 	Completed by March 2007; recommendations to be taken forward at next recruitment of secondees	Achieved
	Address and/or support SMT to ensure effective management of individual HR issues, e.g. grievance, disciplinary, complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of HR matters addressed/ advised on 	<p>One key HR issue being addressed</p> <p>Ongoing support provided to SMT and other staff</p>	Achieved
16. Develop our staff in line with best practice:	<p>Make all staff are aware of internal policies and procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop induction programme ▪ Update all current staff records to ensure induction completed ▪ Complete staff handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of new staff inducted within 3 months of joining the Commissioner - 100% of personnel records audited quarterly 	<p>The following policies have been reviewed/written this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grievance policy; - Disciplinary policy; - Child Protection Policy; 	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate & Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop system to audit records quarterly ▪ Ensure that young people are involved in induction process 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maternity policy; - Time in lieu- written - Appraisal Scheme- written; - Stress Policy- written; - Lone-worker Policy- written <p>Staff provided with re-fresher training on policies at monthly staff meetings.</p> <p>100% of new staff have had an induction within 3 months of joining the Commissioner</p> <p>Audit of personnel records completed quarterly. Personnel audit carried out by internal audit function, with a high assurance obtained</p> <p>System implemented to record training; evaluation of training carried out by line manager via supervision</p>	
	<p>Develop staff skills to enable delivery of the corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish budget for training based on agreed % of total budget ▪ Implement recommendations of TNA ▪ Implement Individual Development Plans for staff members ▪ Devise a system to record, monitor and evaluate training ▪ Devise a system to ensure compliance of training programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% of training needs addressed within agreed timetables from Individual Development Plan - 80% of training budget utilised by the year end - Evaluation forms from training events 	<p>Draft Training and Development Policy and Procedure completed by end of Quarter 4</p> <p>81% of training budget utilised by end of Quarter 4</p> <p>Consolidated training plans not developed due to lateness in completion of appraisals</p> <p>Individual Development Plans developed by Line Managers as part of Appraisal process and managed as part of Supervision process</p> <p>Four seminars delivered to staff: participation within the Commissioner, MS Project, Mind-mapping and</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			Economic Appraisal All training recorded on PAMS using training application form. Training evaluated by Line Manager as part of Supervision process	
	Appraise staff performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure staff are appraised effectively using appraisal system ▪ Review appraisal system ▪ Develop 360° appraisal within SMT. 	- 95% of permanent staff appraised by deadline -Appraisal records received by Corporate Services by 31 st March 2007 &- Feedback analysis from all staff appraised for first time	100% appraisals of relevant staff completed Review of appraisal scheme completed December 2006 Amendments to Appraisal Scheme made and staff consulted by March 2007 Due to changes in SMT during the year, it was agreed that 360° appraisal will be postponed to 2007/08	Achieved
	Deliver action plan identified from Investors in People assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead liP working group ▪ Prepare updates for SMT ▪ Ensure relevant documentation completed for liP 	- Agreed action plan compiled with within agreed timescales - Quarterly reports provided to SMT	The Commissioner has enrolled in liP; this programme will be rolled forward to 2007/08 and the audit will be carried out in Quarter 1	Ongoing
17. Value staff and support them to achieve an appropriate work life balance	Deliver action plan identified from Employers of Choice assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead EOC working group ▪ Prepare updates for SMT ▪ Ensure relevant documentation completed for EOC 	- Agreed action plan compiled with within agreed timescales - Quarterly reports provided to SMT	Action plan developed and presented to EOC accreditation group. Strategy document submitted to accreditation group by March 2007. Quarterly reports provided to SMT.	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to explore options of alternative work patterns, e.g job 	- Completion of annual employee award event or	1 employee (5%) works on part-time hours following	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<p>share, and proactively offer these in recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver an annual employee award, staff recognition scheme or all-staff team-development event ▪ Explore options of working at home ▪ Write lone-worker policy and procedure 	<p>other recognition scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of staff employed within the Commissioner under alternative working patterns - Completion of lone-working policy and procedure 	<p>a flexible working request.</p> <p>Working at home offered on a flexible arrangement with approval of line manager</p> <p>Consideration of feasibility of staff award scheme carried forward to 2007/08 as part of Employer of Choice Action Plan.</p> <p>Lone-worker policy written and staff trained in same.</p>	
18. Ensure effective and accountable leadership at all levels in the organisation				
19. Develop a child friendly and child centred culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train all new staff in Child Protection issues within six months of joining the Commissioner ▪ Ensure all staff vetted in line with vetting procedure ▪ Deliver effective room facilities to external organisations who represent C&YP ▪ Co-ordinate training for staff in 'Plain English' writing ▪ Develop opportunities for staff / Youth Panel engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of staff trained in Child Protection issues - 100% of staff vetted in line with best practice - No of C&YP and organisations representing C&YP using the Commissioner's premises per month <p>Training available to all staff</p> <p>Members of Youth Panel and the Commissioner's staff have the opportunity to meet on at least one occasion per year</p>	<p>100% of staff employed by the Commissioner are trained in Child Protection. Policy reviewed in September 2006 and clarified to staff. Refresher training delivered by March 2007.</p> <p>All staff vetted using POCVA.</p> <p>The Commissioner's room facilities have been booked on 68 by external organisations who represent C&YP</p> <p>Plain English training organised by C&P team</p> <p>The Participation and Communication team have provided ongoing support for the youth panel throughout the year including 10 monthly meetings; 2 residentials and approx. 100 sub committee meetings</p> <p>The Participation team organised an 'all staff/youth panel' event in June 06</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			<p>The Commissioner and Commissioner's PA have had regular involvement and contact over the past year including attending residentials and monthly meetings</p> <p>Corporate Services have delivered training to the Youth Panel on Section 75 and Equality, as well as training to a sub-group on recruitment and selection.</p> <p>C&P/RPSR team have worked together with youth panel to deliver work on various elements of research throughout the year including the development of the shadow ethics committee</p>	
Money				
20. Develop, allocate and manage annual budgets to fulfil our priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draw up budgets for 2007/08 ▪ Prepare monthly management account statement for SMT on 06/07 budget ▪ Undertake monthly management review of 06/07 budget at SMT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Budget report submitted to SMT & OFMDFM by agreed deadline -Unspent balance at end of year 2006/07 no greater than +5% 	<p>Monthly management accounts prepared for SMT for period April 2006 - March 2007.</p> <p>Monthly management review of 2006/07 budget undertaken for period April 2006 – March 2007.</p>	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish software and hardware requirements ▪ Support Legal in implementation of Legal Database ▪ Identify training needs ▪ Review and develop Intranet ▪ Review and develop robust IT policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project approval sought from OFMDFM by agreed deadline - Intranet in place - Legal and Advice database design and implementation - IT policies developed and 100% staff trained in same 	<p>Hardware requirements discussed and reviewed at regular meetings with IT support.</p> <p>Legal Team supported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set-up of support contract; - Attendance by CSM at all supplier liaison meetings; - Discussion at intra-team meetings between Legal and Corporate Services Teams; - Attendance of staff member from Legal Team at CHAS User groups. <p>Intranet/Internet working group meetings took place during year; initial draft of Phase 1 Intranet to be carried over to 2007/08.</p> <p>Internal Audit of IT completed in September 2006.</p>	Achieved

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
			Draft policies completed and in process of being approved prior to issuing to staff.	
21. Control costs, make effective and efficient use of our resources within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review suppliers for cost-effectiveness and establish tendered services where appropriate ▪ Ensure implementation of expenses policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expenses policy completed and 100% staff trained in use of same - Tenders/quotations submitted and agreed within policy 	<p>Reviewing suppliers- ongoing. All tenders and quotations processed within procedures</p> <p>Expenses policy completed and implemented across the Commissioner.</p> <p>Additional evidence provided: This area was covered by the Internal Audit report and no issues of control were indicated.</p>	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Audit and Risk Committee ▪ Roll out induction programme for Audit and Risk Committee members ▪ Complete internal audit ▪ Review and update financial procedures following audit ▪ Input to NIAO audit. ▪ Write and complete annual accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit and Risk Committee complies with terms of reference of committee - Induction completed for members - Production of internal audit report within agreed timescale - Production of annual accounts within agreed timescale 	<p>4 meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee took place in year 2006/07.</p> <p>Induction of members completed on 15th March and 14th April 2006.</p> <p>Internal audit on plane completed for 2006/07. High assurances obtained for four audits completed in the year 2006/07 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personnel audit; - Business Planning audit; - Financial audit; and - Legal and Complaints Department audit. <p>Procedures being actioned according to management letters.</p> <p>Input to NIAO audit for 2005/06 accounts completed according to timescales. Annual report and accounts for 2005/06 written and completed.</p>	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete and submit appropriate in-year bids ▪ Submit monthly draw downs ▪ Submit quarterly spending reviews 	All submissions made to OFMDFM within set deadlines	<p>No in-year bids required.</p> <p>Monthly draw-downs submitted per draw-down calendar.</p> <p>Quarterly spending reviews submitted per DFP requirements.</p>	Achieved
22. Develop and maintain effective governance arrangements in line with best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead and facilitate quarterly Health and Safety Committee meetings ▪ Ensure delivery of action plan arising from meetings ▪ Establish programme of H&S training ▪ Carry out risk assessments according to action plan ▪ Maintain H&S information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of days per annum lost due to accident/ work-related illness - Minutes available from quarterly H&S Committee meetings - Risk assessments available within timescales agreed by Committee 	<p>4 meetings of the Health and Safety Committee took place in 2006/07.</p> <p>Delivery of action plan was ongoing during the year. H&S procedures currently in draft format, for circulation to staff and training thereafter.</p> <p>The following H&S training has been delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First Aid to key staff; - Fire awareness training to all staff; - Fire warden training to key staff; - Evacuation chair refresher training is currently being arranged, along with training on the management of aggressive behaviour. <p>Fire Risk assessment completed for Millennium House. Risk assessments completed for events/activities within teams.</p> <p>The following information is maintained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accident book and accident records; - Minutes of H&S meetings; - Training records; - Risk assessments. 	Ongoing

Corporate Objective	Business Plan Actions	Business Plan Performance Measure	Outcome	Status of Business Plan Action
	Complete work on Article 24 review, promote recommendations to OFMDFM and stakeholders and implement relevant changes.	Compliance with international standards – Paris Principles and UNCRC	Completed	Achieved
23. Secure funding to maintain & develop our services				