



House of Commons

Children, Schools and Families
Committee

Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England

Eighth Report of Session 2008–09

Volume I

*Report with appendices, together with formal
minutes*

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The Children, Schools and Families Committee

The Children, Schools and Families Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Children, Schools and Families and its associated public bodies.

Membership at time Report agreed

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Annette Brooke MP (*Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset & Poole North*)
Mr Douglas Carswell MP (*Conservative, Harwich*)
Mr David Chaytor MP (*Labour, Bury North*)
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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/csf/

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kenneth Fox (Clerk), Anne-Marie Griffiths (Second Clerk), Emma Wisby (Committee Specialist), Judith Boyce (Committee Specialist), Jenny Nelson (Senior Committee Assistant), Kathryn Smith (Committee Assistant), Jim Lawford (Committee Support Assistant), and Brendan Greene (Office Support Assistant).

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1 Background to the pre-appointment hearing

1. The *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published in July 2007, included a proposal that the Government nominee for key positions ... should be subject to a pre-appointment hearing with the relevant select committee ... The hearings would cover issues such as the candidate's suitability for the role, his or her key priorities, and the process used in selection.¹

2. The Government's proposal was welcomed by the Liaison Committee, which entered into discussions with the Cabinet Office on the framework for pre-appointment hearings and, in particular, which appointments should be subject to them. A final list of such posts was agreed between the Liaison Committee and the Government in May 2008.² Four posts were deemed suitable for pre-appointment hearings before the Children, Schools and Families Committee. These are:
 - Chair of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
 - Chair of Ofqual
 - Children's Commissioner for England
 - HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills

3. The Government made it clear that it would not regard any views expressed by committees on the suitability of any such appointment to be binding; but it undertook to take those views into consideration in deciding whether or not to proceed with the appointment.

4. The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to the Committee Chairman on 6 October 2009, to say that Maggie Atkinson, Director of Children's Services at Gateshead Council, had been identified as the Government's preferred candidate to take up the post of Children's Commissioner for England when the term of office of the incumbent, Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green, comes to an end in February 2010. The Secretary of State's letter, the candidate's *curriculum vitae* and a memorandum by the Government setting out the requirements of the post and details of the recruitment process, are all printed with this Report.³

5. We accordingly invited Maggie Atkinson to attend a pre-appointment hearing on 12 October.

¹ Cm 7170, page 29

² The full list is set out in the First Special Report of the Liaison Committee, Session 2007–08, HC 594, *Pre-appointment hearings by select committees: Government response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2007–08*

³ Memorandum from the Government to be published in Volume II of the Eighth Report of Session 2008–09 *Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England*, HC 998-II

