



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

Mr Barry Sheerman MP (*Labour, Huddersfield*) (Chairman)
Annette Brooke MP (*Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset & Poole North*)
Mr Douglas Carswell MP (*Conservative, Harwich*)
Mr David Chaytor MP (*Labour, Bury North*)
Mrs Sharon Hodgson MP (*Labour, Gateshead East & Washington West*)
Paul Holmes MP (*Liberal Democrat, Chesterfield*)
Fiona Mactaggart MP (*Labour, Slough*)
Mr Andrew Pelling MP (*Independent, Croydon Central*)
Mr Andy Slaughter MP (*Labour, Ealing, Acton & Shepherd's Bush*)
Helen Southworth MP (*Labour, Warrington South*)
Mr Graham Stuart MP (*Conservative, Beverley & Holderness*)
Mr Edward Timpson MP (*Conservative, Crewe & Nantwich*)
Derek Twigg MP (*Labour, Halton*)
Lynda Waltho MP (*Labour, Stourbridge*)

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

6. We welcome the opportunity afforded by the pre-appointment hearing process to increase scrutiny by Parliament, on behalf of the public, of key public appointments. However, our role is closely circumscribed, which limits the value of involving select committees in the process, particularly as we have no means of comparing the preferred candidate with other applicants.

2 The requirements of the post

7. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established under the Children Act 2004. The Office of the Commissioner (now known as "11 MILLION") is a public body sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. In 2008–09, the Office received £3 million in Grant-in-Aid from the Department.⁴ The present Commissioner and his staff are currently based in London. In 2008–09, 11 MILLION employed 29 people on full-time contracts.⁵

8. The general function of the Commissioner, as defined in the Children Act 2004, is of "promoting awareness of the views and interests of children in England". In exercising this function, the Commissioner may, in particular:

- encourage persons exercising functions or engaged in activities affecting children to take account of their views and interests;
- advise the Secretary of State on the views and interests of children;
- consider or research the operation of complaints procedures so far as relating to children;
- consider or research any other matter relating to the interests of children;
- publish a report on any matter considered or researched by him under section 2 of the Children Act 2004.

9. The Commissioner's overall purpose differs in this respect from that of fellow Commissioners in Wales and in Northern Ireland, both of whom are required not just to promote awareness but to safeguard and promote children's rights.

10. The Department for Children, Schools and Families' memorandum for this inquiry elaborated on the key areas of responsibility of the post, as follows:

- To gather and promote awareness of the views and interests of children and young people so as to raise the profile of children in society and ultimately improve their wellbeing.
- To encourage people working with children and with responsibility for children, in the public and private sectors, to take account of children and young people's views and interests. You will also advise government on the views and interests of children.
- To consider or research any matter relating to the interests of children, including the operation of complaints procedures. You will consult children and organisations working with children.
- To publish reports on any matter you have considered or researched while carrying out his/her general functions.

⁴ DCSF Departmental Report 2009, Cm 7595, Table 8.4, page 175

⁵ 11 MILLION Annual Report for 2008–09, HC 734 (Session 2008–09), page 27

- To take reasonable steps to involve children and young people in all work undertaken and in particular to pay regard to those children who may have no other adequate means of making their views known.
- To ensure children and young people are made aware of your work and how of how they can communicate with you. You will have to develop an effective communications strategy to establish a high profile and to effectively communicate in ways suitable to children and young people.
- Where cases of individual children raise issues of public policy of relevance to other children you can initiate and conduct inquiries. You will have legal powers of investigation when undertaking and inquiry.
- You will need to work closely with the Children's Commissioners in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland generally, and specifically on matters of non-devolved issues to promote awareness of the views and interests of children and young people across the UK.
- To work with a wide variety of other bodies to promote the effective delivery of services for children, including local and national government; ombudsmen and regulators, voluntary organisations, businesses and the media.
- To report annually to Parliament via the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families outlining the way you have carried out your duties; what your findings were; and matters you intend to consider or research during the next year.
- To ensure the efficient running in operational and financial terms of the 11 MILLION office, keeping proper accounting records and preparing a statement of accounts each financial year.
- To manage a team of staff at 11 MILLION, ensuring provision of an efficient service in the face of a busy and demanding workload.⁶

11. Candidates for appointment were required to demonstrate:

- A good understanding, through knowledge or experience of the issues and problems facing children and young people and experience of tackling some of these issues.
- A good knowledge of children's services and of the policy context within which these services operate. Experience of working with children and young people to deliver effective outcomes for them.
- Experience of working with a range of stakeholders in order to deliver a set of common outcomes for children and young people.
- A track record of strong negotiation, persuasion and diplomacy skills and experience of influencing high-level decision-makers in a range of public and private organisations.

⁶ Departmental memorandum, paragraph 8

- Successful experience and consistent achievement at a senior management level within an environment of comparable scope and complexity.
- A record of demonstrable success in translating policy ambitions into tangible achievements.

12. Among the competencies identified by the Department as being key to successful performance in the post were the ability to think strategically, highly developed networking skills, listening skills (with the ability to learn from and gain the confidence of children and young people and those working with them), excellent oral and written communication skills, a strong grasp of the principles of public sector propriety, regularity and accountability, and excellent leadership and management skills.⁷

13. The appointment is for a five-year term, renewable for a further period of up to but not exceeding five years.

⁷ Departmental memorandum, paragraph 8

3 The preferred candidate

The candidate's background

14. Maggie Atkinson is currently Director of Children's Services at Gateshead Council and has oversight of approximately 1,000 staff in direct employment across many professions and disciplines, as well as of some 4,000 staff in 88 schools. She is responsible for management of substantial capital and revenue budgets held by the Council. She also holds statutory responsibility for fostering inter-agency partnership through the creation of a Children and Young People's Trust in Gateshead.

15. From 1 April 2008 until 31 March 2009, Maggie Atkinson was President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, having served as Vice-President in the previous year. She was appointed as National Chair of the multi-agency steering and reference board for the Centre for Excellence in Outcomes in 2008; and in 2009 she was appointed by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families to chair the new Children and Young People's Workforce National Partnership, drawing in sector skills councils, unions, regulatory bodies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, third sector organisations and government officials.

The questioning

16. In line with the guidance drawn up by the Liaison Committee on the conduct of pre-appointment hearings, our questioning sought to test the professional competence and personal independence of the candidate. The Liaison Committee also observes that a candidate will need to be able to withstand parliamentary and public scrutiny should they take up the post, and that questioning may therefore be robust.⁸

17. During the course of our questioning, we explored the candidate's perception of the powers and nature of the Commissioner's role, her priorities should her appointment be confirmed, and her views on the promotion of children's rights. A transcript of the oral evidence is printed with this Report.⁹

The Committee's view on the suitability of the candidate

18. While we are satisfied that Maggie Atkinson demonstrated a high degree of professional competence, we feel unable to endorse her appointment, as we would like to have seen more sign of determination to assert the independence of the role, to challenge the status quo on children's behalf, and to stretch the remit of the post, in particular by championing children's rights.

⁸ *Pre-appointment hearings by select committees*, First Report from the Liaison Committee, Session 2007–08, HC 384, paragraph 13

⁹ Oral evidence 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

Conclusions and recommendations

1. We welcome the opportunity afforded by the pre-appointment hearing process to increase scrutiny by Parliament, on behalf of the public, of key public appointments. However, our role is closely circumscribed, which limits the value of involving select committees in the process, particularly as we have no means of comparing the preferred candidate with other applicants. (Paragraph 6)
2. While we are satisfied that Maggie Atkinson demonstrated a high degree of professional competence, we feel unable to endorse her appointment, as we would like to have seen more sign of determination to assert the independence of the role, to challenge the status quo on children's behalf, and to stretch the remit of the post, in particular by championing children's rights. (Paragraph 18)

Appendix 1

Letter to the Chairman from the Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State, Department for Children, Schools and Families

On 7 June we launched the recruitment process for the role of the Children's Commissioner for England. After being identified by the recruitment panel as the strongest candidate at the end of a very competitive and rigorous recruitment process, I am writing to inform you that I have nominated Maggie Atkinson to be the next Children's Commissioner. I attach Maggie's CV and contact details for your information.

I am pleased to invite the Children, Schools and Families Committee to hold a pre-appointment hearing. I understand that officials in my Department have been in touch with the Committee Clerk to arrange a provisional slot next week. I met with Maggie last week and she is aware of the provisional date and time of the hearing and officials here have equipped her with guidance and information on how the hearing will be conducted.

I enclose a short memorandum for the Committee which contains the background to the role and information on the recruitment process.

I look forward to your embargoed report on the hearing which I will consider carefully. This is in line with the guidance supporting the new proposals to increase democratic scrutiny of key public appointments.

October 2009

Appendix 2

Curriculum Vitae: Dr Margaret Elizabeth (Maggie) Atkinson

Personal Summary

I am a highly qualified professional, deeply committed to and inspired by my work over a 30-year career. I have a 20 year history of leadership, including at Chief Officer level in Local Authority and partnership settings. I have been involved in work in national settings at increasingly senior levels for over twenty years. The common features of my career have been my leadership and management of creative, dynamic and sustainable change; my ability to bring others, including the reluctant and the sceptical, on board to share and deliver on the promises we make; and the open public scrutiny of both my own work, and the work of those I lead and manage.

I have an infectious passion for high quality public services for children, young people and their families; in every setting and for all communities, and for their leadership by services, whether local or national, whose ambition and excellence can be proven by both internal performance management, and external inspection and regulation. I am valued for my ability to bring people from a wide range of backgrounds and interest groups into a shared vision, persuading them to own and deliver it both in their practice, and in lasting partnerships.

Principal Strengths

- Speed of thought and three dimensional consideration of all factors in a situation;
- Ability to think on my feet: in depth, in breadth and in full colour;
- Ability to persuade, understand, lead and inspire others;
- A gift for hard, productive work and a strong personal work ethic, coupled with a strong sense of justice and fair play
- Generosity of spirit, a gift for humour, and a tendency to see the glass, including that of other people's worth, as at least half full

Key Skills

- A keen and able user of three-dimensional thinking and problem-solving skills
- An able and fluent communicator, in speech and writing
- Long track record and lifelong commitment to personal and academic development, and the maintenance and development of my professional skills
- Well-developed ICT skills
- Numeracy skills, especially around the issues connected to budgets in local government

- Literacy, especially that linked to the nature and flow of information, statistics, trends and analysis

Current Employment

Job title: Group Director Learning and Children, and statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS)

Employer: Gateshead Council, Civic Centre, Regent St, Gateshead, NE8 1HH

Leading the following for Gateshead:

- Staff in direct employment across many professions and disciplines. Additionally, staff in 88 partner schools. School governors, management committees for Children's Centres and community settings.
- Partnership leadership across all statutory partners in our Children's Trust arrangements (a themed strand in our Local Strategic Partnership.)
- Volunteers, including all those involved in providing and leading services and leisure time activities for children and young people.
- Capital budget including PFI, BSF, MyPlace, Youth Capital and Youth Opportunities Funds, Children's Centres and Primary Capital Programmes, DCSF co-location funding.
- Revenue budgets for all Council services for children and young people, and aligned spending with partners of their equivalent funds.
- Council's children and young people commissioning function for services contracted to deliver for the LA. Joint commissioning across Council and PCT for a range of targeted and specialist services.

Responsibilities:

- Chief Officer, Area Management, West Gateshead, covering 6 of the 22 Wards in the borough. Support to the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Communities (West) and the inter-agency West Area Forum. The latter mirrors the LSP and covers regeneration, economy, children young people and family issues, adult social, community and cultural services, housing, transport, citizen engagement, and communities' safety, wellbeing, health, empowerment and cohesion.
- Member of the Children's Services Board of the North East Regional Improvement and Efficiencies Partnership (RIEP.) DCS sponsor, first round of regional projects seeking efficiencies in children's services commissioning, especially social care and health.
- Chair of the inter-agency group (Council, HEFCE, schools, businesses, regional universities) to establish a university college in Gateshead as part of our sustainable community strategy, "Vision 2030."

- Statutory responsibility to assure inter-agency governance and partnership through creating a Children and Young People's Trust with police, justice, Health, Learning and Skills Council, FE College, community organisations, schools, parents and carers.
- Relationships with 88 schools, early years provision across several hundred providers, adult and community learning (commissioning, delivery, quality assurance,) relationships with work-based learning providers, the LEP for our BSF and other capital programmes, Further and Higher Education providers, the LSC, RDA, Government Office, and other North East Local Authorities, in preparation for the transfer of some LSC functions in 2010.
- Beacon school improvement service, statutory challenge and support to schools and other providers, plus a trading function earning its way in a competitive open market. Includes commissioning and QA of adult and community learning, and a successful Education Business Links Service.
- Services for Additional and Special Educational Needs (AEN and SEN) and for children from minority ethnic, bi-and-multi-lingual and Traveller backgrounds.
- Integrated Youth Offer: Youth and Community Learning service, Connexions, teams tackling Health Inequalities, Teenage Pregnancy, alternative education, locality teams around vulnerable families, young people's outreach and positive engagement. Directly employed and sessional staff combined.
- Children and families' social care and Youth Offending Teams (preventative and statutory arms.) Children and Families' Social Services cover statutory functions, supporting the Local Safeguarding Children board (LSCB) and our modernising Children With Disabilities service. The YOT is area based for preventative and centralised for statutory functions, and is highly regarded. Relationships extend across a large number of external providers, with the LA as strategic commissioner.
- Direct relationships with, and ensuring the locality heeds the wishes of, children, young people and families as part of its duties concerning community cohesion.

I was appointed initially, from 1 September 2003, as Group Director Learning and Culture (education, arts, libraries, leisure, catering, events, conferences, heritage and tourism) and Director of Education. Gateshead's response to the Children Act 2004 created my current post. I was appointed to it from 1 April 2005. Change has therefore been a constant feature of my career.

Professional Associations

- Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and Manufacture (FRSA) since election in July 2008
- Fellow of the Institute of Administrative Management (FInstAM) since election in 2006
- Fellow of the Institute of Leadership and Management (FILM) since election in 2006
- Member of the Society Of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)

- Member, International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists (MIFPA) since 1997

Activities beyond Gateshead, National Stage: 2007–10:

- First Vice President, Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.
- First sole post holder, ADCS Presidency, 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.
- ADCS Immediate Past President, 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.
- **2008:** Secretary of State-appointed External Chair of the National Expert Group on the Children's Workforce, with two Ministers of State and representatives from all sectors, due to report November 2008.
- **2008:** Appointed national chair of the multi-agency steering and reference board for the new Centre for Excellence in Outcomes (C4EO)
- **2009:** Appointed by the Secretary of State to chair the new national Children and Young People's Workforce National Partnership: sector skills councils, unions, regulatory and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Third sector stakeholders, government officials.

Previous employment, most recent first:

16 August 1999 to 31 August 2003: Cheshire County Council

1. County Manager (Education Standards, chiefly Inspection and Advisory services.)
 2. Acting County Manager (Access and Inclusion) 1 March 2002, substantive 1 August 2002, alongside (1) above, becoming responsible for Additional and Special Educational Needs (AEN and SEN) and county-wide inclusion strategy.
- Managed Cheshire's Ofsted inspection in Summer, and follow-up from Autumn, 2001.
 - Led two Best Value Reviews: school improvement Spring 2000 to mid-2001, SEN 2002–03.
 - 5 Continuing Professional Development Centres, an education and culture art gallery, and the county's statutory and discretionary teams for school and other learning sector improvements, relating to over 300 schools, five FE colleges, and learning in community settings.
 - 6 Outdoor Education Centres
 - Nationally acclaimed arts education service
 - Processes for schools both causing concern, and with good practice to disseminate.
 - Liaison with the EAZ (Ellesmere Port & Neston) and the Excellence Cluster (Crewe.)
 - Managed EDP alongside developing the Local Public Service Agreement.

1 July to 8 October 1999, bridging end of employment in Warrington/start in Cheshire:

Requested by DfEE to work with Liverpool City Council after its critical Ofsted Inspection. Liverpool's Acting Deputy Director (Special Projects.) I committed not to apply for a substantive senior post as the city's services recovered, because to have done so would have fettered our intervention. My duties were:

- To bring leadership and coherence to educational transformation programmes in communities across the city, through ensuring positive change.
- To work with the Acting Director and the city's one remaining senior education manager to support and challenge Elected Members, a departing and then a new Chief Executive
- Worked with KPMG and DfEE, to:
 - (a) Undertake wholesale restructure, reducing the establishment, working with remaining staff recovering from critical inspection and KPMG review.
 - (b) Move over four hundred staff from unfit, to new fit-for-purposes premises, in four weeks from the intervention team's first viewing of the new space.
 - (c) Broker new relationships with all stakeholders from a starting point of mutual suspicion, a history of Council under-funding, and combative relationships.
 - (d) Steer through the launch of Excellence in Cities (EiC), which won more money than expected and met every deadline, in the face of explicit low governmental expectations.
 - (e) Chair partnerships city-wide to ensure initiatives worked together.
 - (f) Make robust contributions to the Liverpool LEA Project Steering Group with DfEE and KPMG, meeting fortnightly to check progress and plan next steps.
 - (g) Write the principles, position and modelling papers on which KPMG based its outsourcing specification for LEA services.
- The result was that rather than being outsourced, the city's services gained time to improve. Re-inspections (2000, 2004) indicated this was fruitful.

23rd February 1998 to 16th August 1999: Assistant Director (Quality Assurance) Warrington Council (new Unitary from 01.04.98)

Principal responsibilities:

- Member of leadership and management team establishing the Department in the new Unitary Authority
- Policy formation and timely and consistent advice to Elected Members.
- Liaison with local, regional and national bodies.
- Development work on new Best Value regimes.

- Forged new relationships with stakeholders, introducing client-facing responsive services.
- Compiler, principal author, co-ordinator and leader, EDP version 1 (1998).

1st September 1992 to 22nd February 1998: Kirklees MBC, West Yorkshire

1. General Inspector (English) including full engagement as a qualified Ofsted Inspector across all phases of compulsory education.

- Advice to Elected Members on policy development and implementation.
- General whole-school responsibility for 17 schools in rural part of the borough.
- Work in inspection, and in training and facilitation, contributing to service income.
- Liaison with arts bodies and providers and the regional Arts Council.
- Consultant to YTV in a national Schools TV and a regional current affairs series.
- Development of schools' self-evaluation frameworks.

2. Included a two-term internal secondment (0.8 FTE) to complete the following:

- Chair of the working party and author of Kirklees language development guidelines in a context where in some localities English was the sole language, whereas in others ten or more languages were in common use.
- Framed language and linguistic heritage projects for Single Regeneration Bids;
- Managed teams ensuring access to learning for pupils and families with English as an additional language;
- Contributed to national debates and developments in my specialist area.

3. In addition, from October 1995, Curriculum Advice Manager. 0.5 FTE management of curriculum development and those delivering it, including income generation. Balance of 0.5 FTE: Inspector for English.

1st June 1991 to 31st August 1992: Birmingham City Council

Adviser, Schools Management Support, plus English subject role.

- Advised Elected Members on policy for families, children and young people, in and beyond specialist role.
- General responsibility for 12 inner city schools in all phases, plus two hospital schools, in the city's two poorest, most densely populated inner city Wards.
- Worked in earning/trading training and development in competitive markets
- Adviser for English and linguistic education and training for Central Birmingham
- Consultant to Birmingham Readers' and Writers' Festival 1992.

1 June 1989 to 31 May 1991:

Regional Co-ordinator, Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, North & West Yorkshire LEAs (Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, North Yorkshire.)

- One of a team writing national training materials.
- Set up professional networks across all six LEAs, ensuring common training.
- Managed advisory teachers in six LEAs and ensured they worked as a professional support and development network.
- Trained services providing support to the language and other needs of diverse communities' children and their schools.
- Set up a resource base and publishing unit serving all six Local Authorities.
- Ran regional and contributed to national events, disseminating and further developing the programme in the process.
- Managed and accounted for a budget audited by Leeds LEA on the region's behalf.

Easter 1987 to May 31 1989: Kirklees LEA: Birkdale High School, Dewsbury,
Head of English

Sept 1979 to Easter 1987: Doncaster LEA: Hungerhill School Edenthorpe,
(3 posts, same school):

1. *Sept 1979 to July 1981:* Teacher of English

2. *Sept 1981 to Easter 1984:* Teacher of English plus i/c Drama

3. *Easter 1984 to Easter 1987:* 2-i/c English plus i/c Drama

Education and Qualifications, latest first

Feb 2008: Graduated Doctor in Education (EdD)

2001–2007: University of Keele, faculty of Social Sciences and Education, EdD programme.

Nov 1997: Diploma in Holistic Aromatherapy from the Northern College of Aromatherapy. Member of the International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists (MIFPA.) Qualified to work in palliative and medical care settings, and in private practice

1979: PGCE (U. Sheff) Secondary Education: History, and English with drama

1978–1979: University of Sheffield Education Department

1978: BA Hons (Cantab) in History: Class II Div 1

1975–1978: Newnham College, Cambridge

- 1975: Four GCE "A" levels: English, History, Geography, General Studies
- 1974: Universities Test in Use of English; "O" level General Paper;
Cambridge University Entrance Examination (History)
- 1973–1975: Mexborough VI Form College, Mexborough, South Yorkshire:
- 1972–1973: 10 GCE "O" levels (two 1972, eight 1973)
- 1968–1973: Pope Pius X RC High School, Wath-on-Deerne, Rotherham, South Yorkshire

Course and Professional Development

1. As an Adviser/Inspector, Chief Adviser, Assistant Director and Director:

Professional Development on legislation, professional concerns and statutory duties. Ongoing through ConfEd, VSC, ADECS, ADSS, ADCS, LGA, IDeA, DfES/DCSF, Ofsted, private providers.

- Trained in performance management.
- Cheshire Management Development Programme Autumn 2000 to Summer 2001.
- EdD in Evidence Based Policy Change and Development in Education at the University of Keele. Began November 2001, awarded 2007, graduation February 2008.
- Trained in the work of Returning Officers and election teams (2008, 2009.)

2. As a teacher:

Drama, ICT, Writers' Workshops, Anti-racism, Oracy, Effective Use of Reading. HODs in Secondary schools (Y&H cross-regional course) 1988

3. NATE and NAAE:

Annual courses/conferences 1988 to 1998;

Branch and regional meetings and seminars of the two organisations, same dates.

4. LINC:

National seminars on Linguistics and Language (1989 to 1991.)

5. Personal development:

- Trained as a general and a grief counsellor.
- Trained facilitator for The Pacific Institute (TPI) Investment in Excellence (IIE) programme.
- Professional aromatherapist qualified in 1997.

Interests and Pastimes

Northumbrian Smallpipes; piano; hammered dulcimer; choral and solo singing; holiday home on the North Northumberland coast; Church affairs; theatre, concert and cinema going; reading; creative writing; travel; gardening; DIY; aromatherapy and complementary therapies; paper, fabric, wool and other crafts; novice level calligraphy, astronomy, and bird watching.

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 14 October 2009

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Annette Brooke
Mr Douglas Carswell
Mr David Chaytor
Paul Holmes

Helen Southworth
Mr Graham Stuart
Mr Edward Timpson
Lynda Waltho

Draft Report (Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 18 read and agreed to.

Papers were appended to the Report as Appendices 1 and 2.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Monday 19 October at 3.30pm]

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2008–09

First Report	Public Expenditure	HC 46 (HC 405)
Second Report	The Work of the Committee in 2007–08	HC 47
Third Report	Looked-after Children	HC 111-I and II (HC 787)
Fourth Report	National Curriculum	HC 344-I and II (HC 645)
Fifth Report	Allegations Against School Staff	HC 695
Sixth Report	Policy and delivery: the National Curriculum tests delivery failure in 2008	HC 205
Seventh Report	Training of Children and Families Social Workers	HC 527-I and II
Eighth Report	Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England	HC 998-I and II

Session 2007–08

First Special Report	Creative Partnerships and the Curriculum: Government Response to the Eleventh Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2006–07	HC 266
Second Special Report	Special Educational Needs: Assessment and Funding: Government Response to the Tenth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2006–07	HC 298
First Report	Children and Young Persons Bill [Lords]	HC 359 (HC 711)
Second Report	The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Children's Plan	HC 213 (HC 888)
Third Report	Testing and Assessment	HC 169-I and II (HC 1003)
Fourth Report	The Draft Apprenticeships Bill	HC 1082 (HC 259 of Session 2008–09)