

## **Appointment of the next Children's Commissioner for Wales**

**Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning And Skills**

**12 December 2007**

I am delighted to make a statement on the appointment of the next Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The post of Children's Commissioner for Wales was originally established by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001—the first piece of Assembly-sponsored primary legislation passed through Parliament after devolution, and a signal of the importance that we place in Wales on safeguarding and promoting the rights of children and young people.

We remain justly proud of this achievement, and of the work of the late Peter Clarke in setting up the office and in promoting the role of the commissioner as an effective, independent champion for children and young people for nearly seven years before his untimely death. The new commissioner will be able to build upon the solid foundations laid by Peter.

The appointment of the new commissioner will be made by the First Minister, as provided for in the Children's Commissioner for Wales (Appointment) Regulations 2000, as amended. These require him to take account of the views of children and young people, and the advice of any selection panel appointed for the purpose.

I am delighted that we were able to put together a panel of young people, drawn from Funky Dragon, the Young Carers Network, and the children's commissioner's advisory groups in north and south Wales, to fulfil our obligation to consult children and young people on this appointment. It is a tribute to the representative structures that the Assembly Government and the children's commissioner's office have put in place that we were able to draw upon such a talented and committed group of young people. I am immensely proud of the way in which the young people's panel operated, and I know that the candidates found the experience to be fair as well as challenging.

I also thank Assembly Members from across our political parties, together with the two members of the young people's panel, who sat on the formal interview panel, which I chaired. Both panels recommended the same candidate as the next Children's Commissioner for Wales.

I am delighted that Keith Towler has accepted the post of Children's Commissioner for Wales. Keith is the programme director for the Wales programme of Save the Children, a post he took up in May 2006. In his present role, he has overall responsibility for Save the Children's work in Wales, including policy, advocacy, campaigns, research and direct work with children and young people on poverty, protection, education, child rights and participation.

Keith is also the chair of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child monitoring group for Wales. The monitoring group produced the impressive alternative report on children's rights in Wales, which was published a fortnight ago.

Before joining Save the Children, Keith worked in the fields of youth justice, community safety and criminal justice for over 20 years. He was formerly the director of crime reduction for NACRO.

We look forward to Keith taking up his post in March 2008.

