

## Children helped appoint their commissioner

**Children and young people from all over the UK have been involved in helping to decide who should be the Children's Commissioner in England.**

### Children helped appoint their champion

*The Department for Education and Skills announced that Professor Al Aynsley Green is to be the first ever Children's Commissioner for England.* Loads of children don't have anyone to talk to and when someone talks to them they feel better about themselves

The ultimate children's champion, Professor Aynsley Green will speak for all children, independent of government.

But how much have young people been involved in deciding who the Children's Commissioner is and the qualities the person will need to do the job? We spoke to a group of young Londoners who have spent the last six months working closely with the Government.

They are members of the Children and Youth Board (CYB), a group of 25 young people from across the UK, whose job was to consult their peers on different youth issues, including what they wanted in a Children's Commissioner.

"Young Londoners want someone they can relate to and someone who is just for children. This is important, as young people want someone who can ask what's wrong and can empathise with us," says Chinwe, 13, from North London.

Ebony, 13, also from North London agrees and says the young people she spoke to want someone who was approachable: "They need to pay attention to all the problems that are going on in London and to get many different points of view."

Empathy and approachability are not the only qualities young people are looking for in their commissioner.

Adam, 13, consulted with primary school children from Wembley who said it was important to be able to identify with the person: "They thought he or she should appeal to young people, and they should understand what they are interested in."

Part of the role on the CYB was also to meet face to face with some of the Children's Commissioner candidates. Members of the board spent a day asking them questions such as 'why do you want to be the commissioner?' and 'what sorts of things will you tackle?'

They then met with the adults who were interviewing the candidates and together they put forward a shortlist of people who they were confident would make good commissioners. The Secretary for State for Education, Ruth Kelly, then announced the final decision.

The young board members we spoke to are happy with the input they have had in the appointment: "I think we helped shoot the starting gun on getting a voice for young people," says Adam.

Ebony is also optimistic: "The candidates we met were all good, and if you could you would have them all as Children Commissioners, but I'm confident the right person has been chosen."

Living in London can be a struggle for young people even at the best of times and there are a lot of issues that need attention. Young Londoners not only want but also need a person who will take notice and represent them.

As Chinwe simply puts: "Loads of children don't have anyone to talk to and when someone talks to them they feel better about themselves."

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### About the team

This story was produced by Tara Brown, 17, James Michael, 18, Samir Pasha, 15 and Ella Parry Davies, 15.. It was published by BBC London online.

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