



Police and Crime Communications
Home Office

20 September 2010

Dear Sir or Madam

This is a joint response by the Children's Commissioners for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to the Home Office's consultation "Policing in the 21st century consultation - reconnecting police and the people". Our comments are regarding the position of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) within the envisaged National Crime Agency.

We supported and welcomed the announcement that CEOP would become an arm's length independent agency in January this year. We all share the understanding that the arguments in favour of that transformation remain as important and relevant today. We believe that a more independent status will both strengthen CEOP's presence in the UK and will enhance its reputation as a world-leading organisation, protecting some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. The widening remit of the Centre and developing expertise for work with missing children is another area that would benefit from gaining more independence.

CEOP has developed a unique child centred multi agency operating platform. It delivers a range of child focused services including education and outreach programmes, children's services and law enforcement engagement. However, we are concerned that placing the Centre's model permanently within a larger law enforcement agency could lead to an imbalance in its approach by placing a disproportionate emphasis on criminal justice outcomes.

The safety of our children is paramount. We therefore urge the UK Government to allow the Centre to develop further as a unique child protection organisation.

Yours faithfully,

Patricia Lewsley
Northern Ireland Commissioner
for Children and Young People

Tam Baillie
Scotland's Commissioner for Children
and Young People

Dr Maggie Atkinson
Children's Commissioner for England

Keith Towler
Children's Commissioner for Wales