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**Chairs**

Representation of the People Public Bill Committee

House of Commons

By email: [scrutiny@parliament.uk](mailto:scrutiny@parliament.uk)23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

Dear Chairs,

I was glad to hear you have been appointed as chairs of the Representation of the People Public Bill Committee. I am sure you are thinking deeply about how the voice of children and young people can be heard as this bill progresses through the house. As Children's Commissioner for England this is something I am also thinking carefully about.

As a statutory appointee, my duty is to promote and protect the rights of children, and I have statutory powers under the Children Act 2004 to help me do this. But perhaps the most important thing I try to do is to make sure that children's voices are heard and understood by those making decisions that will affect their lives.

Young people today are socially aware, politically engaged and full of practical ideas to make England the best place to grow up, but they also tell me they feel like no-one is listening to them. In my Big Ambition survey just 22% of children told me they think politicians should listen to them. Lowering the voting age to 16 sends the message that their voices are heard and ideas do matter. However, children have also told me they want this to be accompanied brilliant lessons in citizenship and democracy, for them not only to understand how to vote but to allow them to learn about our democracy through discussion and debate.

This summer I am launching a new survey to give children the opportunity to share their views about their futures and tell decision makers what they need to improve their lives and opportunities. As well as gather children and young people's views on the proposals to lower the voting age to 16 and understand what is needed best prepare these young people to vote and partake in our democracy.

Last year I asked my Youth Ambassadors their views on extending the franchise to 16-17 year olds, their thoughts are published as a blog on my website here: [Votes at 16: Reflections from my Young Ambassadors | Children's Commissioner for England](#). My Youth Ambassadors are a group of 16-17-year-olds chosen for their unique perspectives to represent the views of England's children and young people and ensure that politicians listen and act upon what children and young people have told me would make their lives and the lives of other children better.

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As this bill intends to introduce the largest reforms to suffrage since 1969, it is vital the voices of those it will impact are represented in the process. I would be very grateful if the Committee would consider meeting with a small group of my ambassadors, to share their views on democratic education and votes at 16.

My office would be delighted to help facilitate a meeting or explore further engagement at a time convenient for you, please do contact my Private Office at [cco.privateoffice@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:cco.privateoffice@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk), they stand ready to assist.

Yours sincerely,



**Dame Rachel de Souza**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**