

Halesowen Area Committee 6th July 2011

Joint Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Children's Services

Progress of Elected Member Visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments 2010/11

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the Committee with information about the progress of visits to Adult and Children's social care establishments undertaken by Members during 2010/11 and to inform Committee about actions taken in response to Member comments.
2. To seek nominations from the Committee for Members to carry out visits to Social Care establishments during 2011/12.

Background

3. Each Area Committee nominates pairs of Members who are willing to undertake visits to Adult and Children's Social Care establishments. A list of residential and day care establishments for adults and children across the Borough is attached as Appendix 1.
4. The purpose of the visits is to assist Members in reviewing the residential and day care service delivery to Adults in establishments managed by the Directorate of Adult Community & Housing Services and to Children in establishments managed by the Directorate of Children's Services
5. The visits also assist Members in fulfilling their role as Corporate Parents of Looked After Children.
6. All Members participating in the rota of visits must have received training in the role and satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau clearance.
7. Training to assist the process for 2011/12 will be arranged and provided to Members.
8. The rota process and the delivery of training is managed within the Policy, Performance & Resources Unit of the Directorate of Adult, Community & Housing Services. Over a period of time Members have made suggestions to improve the process and these have been incorporated into the Protocol determining the responsibilities of Members and officers. The Protocol is attached as appendix 2.
9. Staff of the Policy, Performance & Resources Unit provide Members with
 - a copy of the Protocol for Members and Officers
 - a schedule of visits to be undertaken during the period
 - a reminder of scheduled visits to establishments
 - a proforma for completion at each visit
 - background information about each establishment, in terms of purpose and staffing
 - a copy of the comments made by Members on the previous visits.

10. Members completed proformas are sent to the relevant Assistant Director for comment and response. Appendix 3 provides details of the visits carried out by Members of the Halesowen Area Committee and the response provided by the relevant Assistant Director.
11. Examples of issues arising and specific action taken in response to Members comments:- Please refer to appendix 3 for full details

There were five individual establishments for nominated Members to visit between September 2010 and April 2011. Three out of the five visits took place; the remaining visits could not be completed within the timescales due to sickness and unexpected unavailability of Members. Consideration is being given to ways of assisting Members to complete visits when difficulties arise.

- A consistent message from all visits carried out was that of a positive relationship between service users and staff and a welcoming environment.
- Members commented positively on the running of **Brett Young Day Centre** particularly the quality of artwork produced by centre users. Members noted that recent refurbishment of the garden had provided an additional pleasant area for centre users to sit in on warm days. Members queried whether catering equipment could be provided, in the absence of the centre having its own kitchen, so that cooking could be included as an activity. Members highlighted that further work is required in the garden to repair tree root damage of paved areas. A gazebo has also been identified by the centre's users as a valuable addition. Members also highlighted that motorists sometimes use the centre's driveway as a shortcut and asked if a pop up bollard could be employed to prevent this.

The Assistant Director thanked Members for their positive comments about the professionalism of the staff in the centre. Feedback on specific areas of comment would be provided directly to the Centre's Manager.

The Assistant Director gave additional details on the improvements made to the Centre and advised that a request has been made via the capital bid process to provide a training kitchen as well as repairs to the paved area of the garden and traffic control measures. Members were thanked for the support that they have offered in this process.

- Members commented positively on the range of activities available to the users of **Rowan Lodge Day Centre** as well as the rapport that exists between staff and users. Members raised concern about the amount of room available within the centre and requested that consideration was given to extending the premises.

Members also commented on the neglected state of the centre's gardens and asked that this be addressed.

The Assistant Director thanked the members for their positive report. Members were advised that the centre is able to be creative in using off site activities within the local community. The possibility of engaging the Princes Trust was raised as a means of improving the gardens, as had been the case with other establishments. Members had commented on the high quality of the staff and were advised that all had achieved accredited dementia awards.

Consideration would continue to be given to the possibility of altering the layout of the Centre.

- Members commented positively on **The Family Assessment Centre** and its work. Members spoke with one of the families in residence who reported that they believed being at the centre was beneficial to them.

Members commented on the size and layout of the unit, saying that they believed more space was required.

Members also commented that the problem of space was again limiting the availability of car parking.

The Assistant Director thanked members for their positive comments about the ability of the staff and the work of the unit. The possibility of a suitable alternative building is being explored in a bid to overcome the current problems of limited space.

Finance

12. There are no immediate financial implications from this report. The programme of Member visits can continue to be provided from within existing resource allocation.
13. On occasion, Member comments and recommendations will have additional cost implications. These are forwarded in the first instance to the Technical Support Services and where appropriate to the Property & Steering Capital Group for consideration.

Law

14. Members' visits to Social Care establishments assist in meeting some of the relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 and the Care Standards Act 2000.

Equality Impact

15. The visits to establishments are intended to assist officers in ensuring that services are delivered in a fair, equitable and service user focused manner. The visits provide opportunities for Members to consult with a wide ranging group of people with varied needs, abilities, disabilities, age, gender and ethnicity.

Recommendations

16. That Members consider and comment on the information contained in this report and attachments.
17. That Members make further nominations from Committee for Members participation in the rota for the year 2011-2012.



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