

SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Protocol concerning Elected Member Visits to Social Services Establishments

The purpose of Member visits to establishments is

- To assist Members in carrying out their corporate parenting responsibilities to young people who are looked after (Children Act 1989, Association of Metropolitan Authorities 1993).
- To help ensure that services for adults are provided to appropriate and safe standards, in line with legal requirements (Valuing People 2001, Local Government Acts 1999, 2000, NHS & Community Care Act 1990 Health & Safety legislation).
- To assist Members in feeling adequately informed about the quality and value of service provision.

The comments made by Members about their visits can enable

- Staff and service users to feel that their voices are heard by elected representatives
- Members to recognise and praise good practice where they see it
- Staff and Service users to gain confidence in their involvement in determining service provision.

This protocol is a summary guide for Elected Members and Officers of Dudley MBC. It replaces the protocol previously agreed in February 2002.

Elected Members will

- Be nominated by Area Committees to carry out the visits to Social Services establishments.
- Be prepared to receive training prior to undertaking the visits
- Be prepared to provide information to enable Criminal Records Bureau checks to be made, prior to undertaking visits
- Identify a preferred partner with whom to undertake visits and inform the Policy & Review Unit of their choice
- Undertake the requested visits during the allocated three months (one specific month in the case of establishments for children) OR inform the Policy & Review Unit where this is not possible
- Carry identification during visits to establishments
- Make prior arrangements with establishments for adults before undertaking visits
- Make unannounced visits to establishments for children
- Ensure that each visit includes opportunities for Service Users – children and adults – to ask questions of, and make comment, to Members

- Respect the privacy dignity and confidentiality of Service Users during and after their visits
- Ensure that each visit includes an examination of records to enable the completion of the pro forma
- Discuss their comments and the content of the completed pro forma with senior officers of the establishment
- Where available, obtain the Manager's signature to confirm sight of Member comments
- Be alert to any child protection, vulnerable adult or urgent health and safety issues they may observe and report these to the Director or relevant Assistant Director as a matter of urgency.
- Complete and return the pro forma as soon as possible after the visit.

Managers and Officers of day care and residential establishments will

- Ensure that establishment staff and service users are aware that Members may visit
- Provide background information about the establishment to the Policy & Review Unit for circulation to Members and to Members during visits
- Receive Members courteously and give full and free access to the establishment and to service users – subject to their rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Encourage service users to be involved during Member visits and to discuss with Members their views about the service provided
- Accompany Members during the visits if required by Members
- Sign the pro forma completed by Members when available, to confirm that they have seen their comments.

In order to assist Members and Staff in carrying out these responsibilities, the Policy & Review Unit will

- Coordinate the provision of training for new Members as part of their induction, and for Members nominated by Area Committees to undertake visits.
- Monitor Members' participation in training and the receipt of Criminal Records Bureau clearance
- Provide Members with an annual rota of requested visits to establishments
- Ensure that requested Member visits to childrens' establishments are coordinated with Regulation 33 Children Act senior manager visits to those establishments.
- Ensure that each establishment for adults is visited once per year.
- Provide Members with the pro formas for feedback on each visit
- Provide Members on a quarterly basis with information about establishments to be visited

The information will include

- ❖ Details of the previous Members' visit, their comments and the Assistant Director's response
 - ❖ The mission statement, or statement of purpose, of the establishment
 - ❖ Details of the officer in charge and deputy
 - ❖ Contact details for each establishment
 - ❖ In the case of childrens' establishments, confirmation of the month in which the visit must be completed.
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- Acknowledge receipt of completed pro formas and pass to relevant Assistant Director.
 - Monitor the Assistant Director's response within agreed timescales – fifteen working days.
 - Provide copies of the completed pro formas and the Assistant Director's response to
 - the Manager of the establishment,
 - the Chair of Good Health Select Committee,
 - the Lead Member for Social Services and
 - the Members Library.
 - Maintain a record of action required by Members and Assistant Director's response for the purpose of reporting to Director's Management Team and Area Committees.
 - Ensure that the Assistant Director Children and Families is informed where Members have not been able to undertake the requested visits to childrens establishments.
 - Ensure that where relevant, Members' comments are passed to the Directorate's Asset Management Group
 - Ensure that Members' comments on compliments and complaints are passed to the Improvements and Complaints Manager for monitoring and action where necessary.
 - Ensure that a report is presented annually to Directorate's Management Team on the progress and learning from Member Visits, which includes a summary of actions taken in response to Members' comments.
 - Ensure that the report is available to the Director in time for it to be seen and agreed by the Lead Member before presentation at Area Committee.
 - Ensure that the report is presented annually to each Area Committee, in time for the annual nominations of Members following local elections.