

## 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.