

Halesowen Area Committee 7th July 2010

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 2009/10

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 2009/10 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 2010/11.

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 2010/11 will be arranged and provided to Members.
8. The rota process and the delivery of training is managed within the Policy & Performance 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 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 seven individual establishments for nominated Members to visit between September 2009 and April 2010. Five out of the seven visits took place. The two establishments which did not receive a visit were Rowan Lodge and Roseville Day Centre.
- A consistent message from all visits carried out was that of a positive relationship between service users and staff and a welcoming environment.
- Shenstone House: members commented on the friendly, caring and professional support offered to the residents by the staff; residents gave positive feedback about the staff when Members spoke with them. Members were also impressed by the range of activities and excursions available to residents through good link up with Dudley's day centre Rowan Lodge (referred to above). Members commented positively on recent improvements to the home, but also commented that few of the rooms had en suite facilities which they thought could in time have repercussions for the home because of changes to minimum requirements. Members also asked for attention to be given to "sprucing up" the gardens.

The Assistant Director thanked members for their positive comments about the home and the relationship between the residents and the staff. The Assistant Director has said that she will pass the Members' comments about the gardens to the Manager for their attention. The Assistant Director commented that the improvements that have been made to the facilities will give more room for necessary meetings when one shift is handing over to another.

- Family Assessment Centre: this was the first of two visits to this facility by this Area Committee. Each Children's Unit is required to have two visits within the programme; one before the New Year and one after. FACS is unique within the Children's Units because it also has adults present; it also requires families to agree to be resident. Members commented on the good routine of the work at the centre which they saw as necessary if positive results were to be obtained for the families who attend. Members commented on the letters of thanks from ex residents who have been assisted to stay together by the work of the centre. Members commented positively on the commitment and skills of the staff. Members also commented on the desirability of expanding the centre if possible. Members concluded by saying "the FAC is one of the great unsung missions of the local authority and its dedicated staff team go about their business professionally and without fuss".

The Assistant Director thanked members for their visit and positive comments and advised that the centre had been judged "outstanding" by Ofsted. The Assistant director advised that further development of the centre continued to be considered.

- Family Assessment Centre: as indicated above, this is the second visit to FACS within this programme. Members commented positively on the work and commitment of the staff whilst also noting the small size of the unit. Members noted that there was limited space for car parking and asked whether a grassed area could be tarmacked; Members also noted that the unit could only take 2 families at a time and that at that point there were 16 families on the waiting list.

Members noted that IT equipment needed updating.

The Assistant Director thanked Members for their visit and comments. The Assistant Director advised that the Directorate was aware of the difficulties of limited car parking space and would wish to increase the size of the unit if possible: however funding was not available at present, but would continue to be explored.

The Assistant Director advised that the issues identified in respect of the IT equipment would be looked into.

- Maitland Road: Members Commented positively on the facilities available to the young people at Maitland Road and the relationship between staff and the young people, commenting that the staff go the extra mile to make the youngsters feel at

home. Members commented on the work carried out on the unit.

The Assistant Director thanked members for their report and for the support that they had given in providing items for a fete that the young people were involved with. The Assistant Director advised that the Directorate was very proud of the unit. The Assistant Director responded to the Members comments on the improvements to the Unit.

- Brett Young Day Centre: Members described the service users as being very content and enjoying the facilities at the centre and those in the wider community, including visits by local schools, which had been made possible by the efforts of the staff. Members also noted a good relationship between the staff and service users, and also the dedication of the staff. Members commented on a number of aspects of the fabric of the building which needed urgent attention.

The Assistant Director Thanked members for their visit and positive comments commenting on the commitment across the borough's homes to offer work experience opportunities to young people in residential homes. Members were advised that the work identified as being required was already known of and was being considered within existing budgets.

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 participation in the rota for the year 2010-2011.



Linda Sanders
Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services



Assistant Director for Children and Families
for

Mark Wyatt
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer:
Steve Rice
Quality & Complaints Manager
Policy & Performance Resources Unit
DACHS

Telephone 01384 814723 e-mail Steve.rice@dudley.gov.uk