

**Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services and
Directorate of Children's Services**

Protocol for Elected Member Visits to Social Care Establishments

1.0 The purpose of Member visits to Social Care establishments is:

- 1.1 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).
- 1.2 To help ensure that Social Care 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).
- 1.3 To assist Members in feeling adequately informed about the quality and value of service provision.

2.0 The comments made by Members about their visits can enable:

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

3.0 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:

- 3.1. Be nominated by Area Committees to carry out the visits to Social Care establishments.
- 3.2 Be prepared to receive training prior to undertaking the visits.
- 3.3 Be prepared to provide information to enable Criminal Records Bureau checks to be made, prior to undertaking visits.
- 3.4 Identify a preferred partner with whom to undertake visits and inform the Policy & Performance Unit of their choice.

- 3.5 Undertake the requested visits during the allocated three months (one specific month in the case of establishments for children) OR inform the Policy & Performance Unit where this is not possible.
- 3.6 Carry identification during visits to establishments.
- 3.7 Make prior arrangements with establishments for adults before undertaking visits.
- 3.8 Make unannounced visits to establishments for children.
- 3.9 Ensure that each visit includes opportunities for Service Users – children and adults – to ask questions of, and make comment, to Members.
- 3.10 Respect the privacy dignity and confidentiality of Service Users during and after their visits
- 3.11 Ensure that each visit includes an examination of records to enable the completion of the pro forma.
- 3.12 Discuss their comments and the content of the completed pro forma with senior officers of the establishment.
- 3.13 Where available, obtain the Manager's signature to confirm sight of Member comments.
- 3.14 Be alert to any child protection, vulnerable adult or urgent health and safety issues they may observe and report these to the relevant Director or Assistant Director as a matter of urgency.
- 3.15 Complete and return the pro forma as soon as possible after the visit.

4.0 Managers and Officers of day care and residential establishments will:

- 4.1 Ensure that establishment staff and service users are aware that Members may visit and have an understanding of the purpose involved.
- 4.2 Provide background information about the establishment to the Policy & Performance Unit for circulation to Members and to Members during visits.
- 4.3 Receive Members courteously and give full and free access to the establishment and to service users – subject to their rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- 4.4 Encourage service users to be involved during Member visits and to discuss with Members their views about the service provided.

- 4.5 Accompany Members during the visits if required by Members.
- 4.6 Sign the pro forma completed by Members when available, to confirm that they have seen their comments.
- 5.0 In order to assist Members and Staff in carrying out these responsibilities, the Policy & Performance Unit will:**
 - 5.1 Coordinate the provision of training for new Members as part of their induction, and for Members nominated by Area Committees to undertake visits.
 - 5.2 Monitor Members' participation in training and the receipt of Criminal Records Bureau clearance.
 - 5.3 Provide Members with an annual rota of requested visits to establishments.
 - 5.4 Ensure that requested Member visits to childrens' establishments are Coordinated with Regulation 33 Children Act Senior Managers visits to those establishments.
 - 5.5 Ensure that each establishment for adults is visited once per year.
 - 5.6 Provide Members with the pro formas for feedback on each visit
 - 5.7 Provide Members on a quarterly basis with information about establishments to be visited.
 - 5.8 The information will include
 - 5.8.1 Details of the previous Members' visit, their comments and the Assistant Director's response
 - 5.8.2 The mission statement, or statement of purpose, of the establishment
 - 5.8.3 Details to Members where establishments are managed by joint agencies i.e. Adult Community Housing Directorate together with the Primary Care Trust.
 - 5.8.4 Details of the officer in charge and deputy
 - 5.8.5 Contact details for each establishment
 - 5.8.6 In the case of children's establishments, confirmation of the month in which the visit must be completed.

- 5.9 Acknowledge receipt of completed pro formas and pass to relevant Assistant Directors.
- 5.10 Monitor the Assistant Director's response within agreed timescales – fifteen working days.
- 5.11 Provide copies of the completed pro formas and the Assistant Director's response to
 - 5.11.1 the Manager of the establishment
 - 5.11.2 the Chair of Select Committee on Health & Social Care
 - 5.11.3 the Lead Member for Social Services and
 - 5.11.4 the Members Library
- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 Ensure that the Assistant Director [Children's Social Care] is informed where Members have not been able to undertake the requested visits to childrens establishments.
- 5.14 Ensure that where relevant, Members' comments are passed to Technical Support Services or where appropriate the Property and Capital Steering Group.
- 5.15 Ensure that Members' comments on compliments and complaints are passed to the Quality and Complaints Manager for monitoring and action where necessary.
- 5.16 Ensure that a report is presented annually to Directorate's Management Teams on the progress and learning from Member Visits, which includes a summary of actions taken in response to Members' comments.
- 5.17 Ensure that the report is available to Directors in time for it to be seen and agreed by the Lead Member before presentation at Area Committee.
- 5.18 Ensure that the report is presented annually to each Area Committee, in time for the annual nominations of Members following local elections.