

Parameters and Outcomes Report for Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the 22nd December 2005

1 Background Summary

- 1.1 A progress report was presented to Cabinet on the 13th July 2005 on the corporate parenting strategy. This included the recommendation that a report reviewing the role of elected members undertaking visits to children's residential homes be taken to the Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel.
- 1.2 Subsequently a paper listed as item 7 "Corporate Parenting – Member's Visits to Children's Homes" was received by the Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the 20th October 2005.

The report made the following recommendations:

That the Panel:-

- Receive information regarding the agenda guiding member visits to children's homes.
- Re-establish the member visits to children's home for the municipal year 2006/7
- Set a work programme to review and enhance arrangements for member visits to children's homes, including consultation, training, identification of members and arrangements for visits and recording
- Consider a timetable of visits which can be agreed and communicated to each home.

The full report is attached as Appendix 1.

- 1.3 Panel on the 20th October accepted the recommendations made in relation to item 7 and concluded that David Bovell prepare a suggested **Parameters and Outcomes** report to be presented back to Panel on the 22nd December 2005, which follows below.

2. **Parameters**

- 2.1 To sensitively and constructively re-establish member visits to children's homes the following initiatives are recommended:-
- That David Bovell & Alison Glover (Children's Residential Services Manager) carry out an evaluation with elected members previously involved in visiting children's homes, children & young people, children's homes' staff and registered managers during January 2006. This will help identify any problem areas, prepare all parties for re-engagement and remove any barriers to success in the future.
 - That David Bovell and Alison Glover conduct a workshop with identified members covering the added disadvantages, chaotic lifestyles and attachment difficulties that looked after children often experience; the need for stable care and the spectrum of child abuse and how it manifests itself in children and young people's levels of vulnerability, risk and understanding. The workshop will

reinforce appropriate nurturing approaches and ethical considerations, including those identified in the evaluation, to be completed in January 06.

- That David Bovell and Alison Glover produce a draft communication and recording tool to be circulated to members and registered managers by mid February 2006 for comments and completion by end February 2006
- That David Bovell and Alison Glover facilitate introductory visits for members to their first home and that they finalise the recording and communication arrangements at the same visit.

2.2 Appendix two shows the format for a proposed six months timetable of visits involving six Members, to include the Portfolio holder for Children's Services and members from Children's Scrutiny and Performance Panel. This should commence a run through the 2006/7 municipal year.

2.3 The suggested framework clusters homes into three categories, with two Members listed to visit two different homes in three months blocks over a six month period. The six homes are clustered into homes for disabled children, assessment homes for children and longer stay homes for older young people. This approach allows a degree of consistency and the following up of agreed actions, at the same time as rotating visits, so comparisons can be included in the evaluations of performance.

3. Outcomes

3.1 Visits will assist the Local Authority's to monitor the delivery of **social inclusion** of Looked After Children placed within Walsall's children's homes, by enabling them to participate and achieve in all aspects of daily life.

3.2 Using the outcomes framework of 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' as a tool, visiting members will be able to identify areas in which they need to focus their attention to help improve set outcomes for children and young people. As a result a **monitoring visit form** will be designed to record services and issues outcomes under the Every Child Matters are follows :-

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

3.3 This framework will enable the **Monitoring and Evaluation of Success** across the following performance areas

- Evidencing the promotion of the local authority's role as corporate parent as described in the corporate pledge
- Experiencing Multi-agency working in practice to test whether Walsall is embracing the vision for the integration of key services in a single child-focused organisation
- Demonstrating key indicator compliance with safeguards for looked after children through **rota visits by elected members**, to children's homes.

4 Monitoring

- 4.1 Performance will be monitored through quarterly updates to the Social Care and Supported Housing Performance Board and annual reporting to the Children's Scrutiny and Performance Panel.
- 4.2 Records of Member's visits to children's homes will assist in showing that service standards are being met to external regulators, such as the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate, and will positively contribute to our Annual Performance Assessment rating

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel:
 - a) Receive the information regarding the parameters and outcomes for member visit to Children's Home
 - b) Re-establish the member visits to children's home for the municipal year 2006/7.
 - c) Agree to the work programme and review of arrangements for member visits to children's homes including evaluation, workshops, re-engaging the process and arrangements for visits and recording
 - d) Agree the first timetable of visits and identify six members to be involved for 2006/7 which will be reviewed through the performance monitoring contained within the report

Contact officer

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Appendix 1

CHILDRENS SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Agenda Item
No.

DATE: 20TH OCTOBER, 2005

7

CORPORATE PARENTING – MEMBERS VISITS TO CHILDREN’S HOMES

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr E Hughes - Children’s Services

Summary of report:

- This report gives a brief overview of the proposal to review the arrangements for members visits to children’s homes and highlights the key areas for Members consideration.

Background papers:

- Children Act 2004 (Every Child Matters)
- Children’s Services Plan
- Equalities plan (in construction)
- Multi-agency disability plan
- Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan 2004-6

Reason for scrutiny:

- For Members to consider the key areas essential for successful engagement of children and young people in relation to member visits to children’s homes and agree a remit and training and awareness programme that will support the arrangements for visits.

Signed:



Assistant Director: Pauline Pilkington

Date: 20 October 2005

Resource and legal considerations:

- Elected members who have not otherwise completed an enhanced CRB check will need to have confirmed clearances before visits can be undertaken

Citizen impact:

- Children will benefit from members commitment to ensuring their wellbeing and contributing to improved outcomes in line with the Children Act 2004.

Environmental impact:

- None directly associated with this report.

Performance management:

- Robust performance scrutiny will contribute to improvement in children's services and will be an essential component of the council's performance management framework.

Equality Implications:

- Improvements in member engagement will promote social inclusion and increase the active engagement of children and young people as citizens

Consultation:

- Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- All strategic managers in education, health and social care
- Headteacher Groups
- Youth Forum
- Parents/Carers forum

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report gives a brief overview of the purpose of members' visits to children's homes and highlights key areas for consideration in preparing for engaging with children.

2. Background

- 2.1 Social Care Services Committees in 2003 and Cabinet in 2005 have considered the promotion of engagement of elected members with children who are looked after in residential and foster care to strengthen the Council's corporate pledge towards looked after children.

- 2.2 The scrutiny process placed a particular emphasis on the responsibility for children looked after by the local authority which resulted in specific work been commissioned to facilitate members visit's to council run children homes.

- 2.3 Officers from Social Care Children's Resource Service provided a briefing workshop to a team of four councillors who had volunteered to undertake visits to children's homes on a regular basis.

- 2.4 The aim of the proposed visits was for members to provide an overview of arrangements particularly in areas such safe care, educational attainment, equality of opportunity and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

- 2.5 The objective of the visits was for members to act as a champion for looked after children in residential childcare settings by helping to overcome any organisational barriers which prohibited the achievement of improved life outcomes for children.

- 2.6 The workshop highlighted and covered the following areas

- the added disadvantages, chaotic lifestyles and attachment difficulties that looked after children often experience if not provided with stable care
- the spectrum of child abuse and how it impacts and manifests itself on children and young people's levels of vulnerability, risk and understanding
- appropriate nurturing approaches
- ethical considerations

- 2.7 The original membership of the member group included the portfolio holder, Cllr John Rochelle, Cllr Joan Barton and Cllr Val Woodruff.

Senior management representation from Social Care and Supported Housing

- 2.8 Preparations for visits included designing a recording tool, producing a member profile for young people and confirmation of an agreed officer and member communication strategy.

- 2.9 Following a number of visits and which produced some very successful outcomes it has been difficult to maintain momentum as progress has been hampered by the change in scrutiny role in relation to social care, health and children's services establishing separate performance and scrutiny panels with varying membership.

3. Re-establishing member engagement

- 3.1 The progress report presented to cabinet on the 13th July 2005 on the corporate parenting strategy included the recommendation that a report reviewing the role of elected members undertaking children's residential visits to be taken to the children's scrutiny and performance panel.
- 3.2 The outcomes framework published with the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' can be used as the key indicator in identifying where corporate parenting needs to be improved for children and young people in the borough i.e. to promote children's ability to
- be healthy
 - stay safe
 - enjoy and achieve
 - make a positive contribution
 - achieve economic well-being
- 3.3 In order to achieve these outcomes it is necessary to identify and evaluate organisations, services and issues which can aid the satisfactory delivery of each outcome.
- 3.4 The intention of member visits to children's homes is to promote the local authority's role as corporate parent as described in the corporate pledge. The new agenda for children and young people will require local authorities to exercise a holistic approach to the needs of every child which means scrutinising all services provided by the council that have an impact on children and young people.
- 3.5 It is possible to group and highlight issues which have a significant impact on the Borough through an analysis of performance and through consultation processes.
- 3.6 Consultations with officers have highlighted the following issues as the most pressing not already being addressed by Scrutiny:

Multi-agency working

The green paper *Every Child Matters* published in September 2003 laid out the Government's vision for the integration of key services in a single child-focused organisation. Visits by members to children homes would help secure improved outcomes for looked after children by services by monitoring working together arrangements at the front line to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

The Children Act 2004 created the statutory basis for this vision to be made reality, and *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, published in December 2004, set out details

of the necessary changes which include member responsibilities towards looked after children.

The 'Lost in Care' Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the abuse of children in care in the former county council areas of Gwynedd and Clwyd since 1974 (February 2000) recommended that **rota visits by elected members**, as a key indicator of compliance with safeguards for children looked after which should be developed.

Recent research about the benefits of multi-agency working highlights the following areas of benefits:

- Improving outcomes for children and families
- Benefits for staff and services
- Providing what children, young people and families say they want

Behaviour Management

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is the term given to a number of unacceptable behaviours for which a small minority of people are responsible, which adversely affect the quality of life of residents in our communities. Problems include; graffiti, littering and youth nuisance.

Looked after children are often highlighted as potential perpetrators of ASB regardless of supportive evidence and in a manner that does not take fully take into account their vulnerabilities as victims. Standard 22.14 of the National minimum standards for Children's Homes (2002), states children should be encouraged to develop a proper awareness of their rights and responsibilities in relation to those who live in the home, those who work there and people in the community.

In addition to advocating for acceptable levels of services for children and young people; member visits to children's Homes could also help balance the experience and views of children looked after with the views and sometimes inaccurate perspectives of sections of the community. This approach would also recognise that early intervention strategies are vital in order to effectively tackle the issue.

Consultation with the Young

The Government strongly supports the effective involvement of children, young people and their families or carers in the development and running of all children's services. Standard 8, consultation with children, from the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes (2002) captures this in a children home setting by the outcome statement advising that children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Members visits to children's home would demonstrate acceptance of the principle of children's involvement is being turned into practice. This would be meaningful for children and young people and prove effective in bringing about change which becomes embedded within the ethos of the home.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

- c) Receive the information regarding the member visit to Children's Home agenda.
- d) Re-establish the member visits to children's home for the municipal year 2005/6.
- c) Set a work programme of review of arrangements for member visits to children's homes including consultation, training, identification of members and arrangements for visits and recording
- d) Consider a timetable of visits which can be agreed and communicated to each home

**Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Children's Residential Services**

Member's Visit - Time Table

April – September 2005

Home	April	May	June	July	August	September
Spindle Tree	Member 1	Member 1	Member 1	Member 2	Member 2	Member 2
Hilton Road	Member 2	Member 2	Member 2	Member 1	Member 1	Member 1
Lichfield Road	Member 3	Member 3	Member 3	Member 4	Member 4	Member 4
Castleview	Member 4	Member 4	Member 4	Member 3	Member 3	Member 3
Eldon House	Member 5	Member 5	Member 5	Member 6	Member 6	Member 6
Redruth Road	Member 6	Member 6	Member 6	Member 5	Member 5	Member 5

- Key:
- Homes for Long Stay Older Young People
 - Homes for Assessment of Children and Young People
 - Homes for Children with Disabilities