

## **FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **PROTOCOL CONCERNING ROTA VISITS BY ELECTED MEMBERS TO SOCIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

This protocol is a summary guide for elected Members and officers of the Council to assist in the effective operation of rota visits by elected Members to social care establishments. It should be seen in conjunction with other guidance such as local policies and procedures and national advice, e.g. Children First.

The main purpose of visits by Members to establishments is to help ensure that services are being provided to appropriate and safe standards and that they give best value to the service users of those establishments and to the Council as a whole. As such, it is essential that the visiting Member has received training from officers, is adequately informed about the purpose of the establishment and is able to spend time with service users, listening to their opinions about the service.

These visits are in no way intended to mirror or replace either the inspection role or contract monitoring. However, they do play a key role in providing a view of services which is independent of the management of services, and they inform Members' accountability for the range and quality of services provided. Therefore:

#### **OFFICERS WILL:**

- ensure that establishments expect to receive visits by Members
- brief Members beforehand about the nature and purpose of the establishment
- receive Members courteously and give full and free access to the running of the establishment (see exceptional circumstances below)
- advise Members of issues of privacy and confidentiality which may arise during their visit.
- inform service users that they should expect Members to visit, and wherever possible, allow for service users to escort Members on their visit
- always allow space for service users to speak in private to visiting Members and actively encourage them to speak openly about the service
- responsibly voice any concerns staff may have about the running of the establishment to Members
- ensure that Members receive responses to their visits as required

## **MEMBERS WILL:**

- make prior arrangements to visit establishments with the visits co-ordinator or the manager of the establishment
- always carry their I.D. and explain the nature of their visit to staff on duty
- ensure that each visit includes reference to the well being of service users, discussions with staff and an examination of the building
- pay particular regard to the rights of service users to have a voice in the way services are run and encourage comment and discussion
- observe confidentiality about service users and staff if any such information is shared with them
- listen to any concerns of service users and staff and report these in full, but avoid making any immediate commitments until senior managers have been consulted
- respect the privacy and dignity of service users (e.g. do not examine bedrooms without the resident's permission)
- **Be alert to any child protection or vulnerable adult protection concerns and report these as a matter of urgency to the relevant Director**
- return the completed Report of Rota Visit as soon as possible after the visit to the visits co-ordinator

## **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

In some exceptional circumstances the senior manager on duty may consider that the timing of a visit may be inappropriate, usually to do with the safety or welfare of service users. In such circumstances the manager may explain why this is not a good time for the visit to proceed and the Members will agree to postpone the visit. However, in that event the manager must ensure that a report is made to the relevant Director as a matter of urgency explaining that a rota visit has been postponed and why.

## **FREQUENCY OF VISITS**

Each establishment on the list for visits should be visited at least once during a 12 month period, and a maximum of four visits per year.

The rota visit coordinator will contact Members on a quarterly basis to discuss the allocation of establishments.