

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2011**

## **Youth Centres Admittance Policy**

### **Notes of the working group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010**

Present: Councillors Dave Sexon, Nicholas Turner, Val Smith and Bill Service; Tan Lea Strategic Lead: Youth, Young People and Access to Education, and Anthony Sayles Area Service Manager Northern and Roger Edwards

1. Members of the working group had received the management report on the youth centre admittance. It was explained that policies had been in place for some years but that were reviewed regularly and had been amended and updated as necessary.
2. The Sweatbox was unusual in that very large numbers of young people were involved – in fact more than 350. Numbers have subsequently been limited to 250 and additional activities have been set up and spread throughout the week in order to “smooth out” the attendance numbers. Following the incidents last year managers at the Sweatbox had acted responsibly by closing the facility until a review had been carried out.
3. One of the main planks of the procedures is risk assessment. Managers would be expected to assess all activities and to take steps necessary to mitigate those risks. Youth workers have all been reminded of the need for risk assessment and adherence to procedures.
4. The procedure has to be dynamic if it is to be sustainable. For example there are often changes to Health and Safety rules and other procedures. At present regular team meetings take place at which any issues around admittance policy and other matters can be raised. Also, senior management meets regularly and reviews health and safety matters etc.
5. A discussion took place around the use of breathalysers before people were admitted to events. This, it was agreed by all present, would not be an acceptable provision. Leaving aside the possible hygiene problems and the difficulty of getting large numbers of people to undertake tests, it was considered that such a step has not been shown to be necessary. The Sweatbox problem was highly unusual – it happened more than 12 months ago and there have been no more untoward incidents. Members view was that sensible handling of young people in circumstances where drink was suspected of being a factor was a much more sensible approach than the imposition of breathalysers.
6. Each large event has a readmissions policy where there are large numbers of young people and it would be difficult to keep track of who had already been in without such a procedure.
7. There is no exclusion policy. It is not considered to be practical or even, say in the case of a young female who may have had too much alcohol, safe. However if there

were to be large numbers who appeared to have over consumed then they may have to be refused entry. Each case had to be judged on its own and a sensible risk assessment done.

8. A question was raised as to whether the procedures would continue to be used in the future. It was accepted that, due to the County Council's financial situation, the future of youth centres in Oxfordshire would be very different from the present. However the proposed hubs and satellites would be subject to County Council guidelines and so these needed to be robust and sustainable. Many organisations that might become involved in future, such as local churches, were often aware of the issues involved and, for example, the need to limit numbers. However a dialogue would be maintained with all such organisations.
9. **Following a lengthy and wide-ranging discussion members of the working group thanked the officers for providing a clear and succinct report and taking time to answer their questions. Members AGREED that they would endorse the policies and procedures. Members also AGREED to recommend a further review in 2012 once the hub and satellite system had been in place for twelve months or so. In particular safeguarding and quality should be subject of a reassessment.**