

CABINET – THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2017

Written Question from Mr Richard Hards of Whippingham to Cllr Paul Brading – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

QUESTION

At the Association of Directors of Children’s Services annual conference in Manchester last July, the Director of Children’s Services, Steve Crocker, gave a presentation about how Hampshire County Council managed Children’s Services on the Isle of Wight. He claimed that Hampshire “winged it”.

Isle of Wight children have been let down for too long by a poorly performing service.

Is “winging it” now the Isle of Wight Council’s policy for managing children’s safeguarding, which will get us to the high quality service our children are entitled to?

RESPONSE

“Mr Hards is quoting Mr Crocker out of context, but the thrust of what was presented to an audience of professional people, was to set out the scale of the challenge faced by Hampshire and the absence of guidance about how to address it.

When the Isle of Wight Council entered in to a partnership with Hampshire, under the direction of the DfE, there was no previous example of this partnership approach to improvement in Children’s Services. There was no template, no guide book, no instruction manual. Both parties had to take a controlled risk which we managed through a detailed partnership agreement.

The benefits of that approach are now evident; the experience, knowledge, skills and capacity that Hampshire have brought to the table have enabled our professionals on the Island to go through a rapid improvement journey that has outstripped other authorities that were graded as inadequate by Ofsted at the same time as us.

We now have convincing evidence that the partnership approach to improvement, that we were the pathfinders of, actually works; we now have 80% of schools that are good or outstanding, we are sorting out the mess that AET have left in Sandown, our social care services are safe and effective by all measures – including an interim assessment by Ofsted in the summer.

All told, it was worth taking the risk and ‘winging it’.”