

Wiltshire Council

Council

20 February 2018

Question from Mrs Glenis Ansell

To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

Question (P18-02)

The Badgeworth Court Schools were spread across Gloucester and Wiltshire providing education for children with a wide range of problems.

The schools were retrospectively opened by Anthony Hurley who presided over a regime of brutality, sexual abuse and intimidation which continued unchallenged for over 30years.

Because the schools were privately owned they were, to a certain extent, under the radar. Nevertheless Wiltshire Council knew that children were being sent to these schools and one of the schools - Clouds House - is situated in Wiltshire. This school was initially opened without permission at a time when Antony Hurley was under suspicion of rape.

A BBC Report was presented in 2015 when victims spoke about their experiences; there were further reports in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Despite complaints to the police, meetings with council officers and requests for help and information, the situation still remains unresolved.

More recently letters have been sent to the PCCs of Gloucester & Wiltshire and a letter for the Prime Minister was handed in at 10 Downing Street. These letters all question the lack of progress with the enquiries and ask for greater emphasis to being placed to this long running grievance.

Nevertheless, so far, victims of the regime have not received any help or support. Some have funded their own counselling others have been haunted by their memories and lived lives limited by the horrific experiences of their childhood. Sadly some victims have been unable to cope and have committed suicide.

Meanwhile the authorities have continued to drag their feet, claiming that individuals could not be found, even though some were hiding in plain sight whilst employed in the army and police force.

In their meeting on December 6th 2017 Gloucester Council gave an undertaking to investigate the allegations of sexual and physical abuse that occurred with Badgeworth Court.

During a meeting in 2016 Wiltshire Council also promised to help because one of the schools - Clouds House - is situated within Wiltshire. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the council is -

- making every possible effort to find the necessary records and information relating to children from Wiltshire who attended these schools
- actively involved in establishing the whereabouts of ex pupils of Clouds House and the members of staff who served there
- sharing that information with Wiltshire police.

Furthermore, under the Council's responsibilities for Safeguarding can the Cabinet Member also explain what steps are being taken to find and identify victims and how the council will provide the much needed counselling and support to these men who as children who were so badly damaged while within the county?

Response

I can confirm that Wiltshire Council is supporting the police with their investigation. As this is an ongoing police investigation, we are unable to comment further at this stage however we continue to work with partners on this investigation.

We along with the police will provide all help and support required.