

The Limes Stakeholder Meeting
Monday 8th June 2026, 10am
MS Teams Meeting

Agencies and Services in Attendees
KCC, UAS Children's Service
KCC, Councillor
DBC, Councillors
DBC, representative
Kent Police
KCC, Public Health
KCC, Infrastructure

Kent County Council (KCC) – Dartford Borough Council (DBC) - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UAS Children)

Introduction
Introductions made and agenda shared.
Overview
A KCC officer advised stakeholders that, over the past six weeks, 58 young people have passed through The Limes, with five currently accommodated. This was viewed as a positive reflection of the NTS programme, as young people are spending an average of 10 days in care at The Limes. A KCC Councillor enquired about the reasoning for the attendance of representative from public health in which The KCC Officer outlined that there's a standing invitation to that office for every stakeholder meeting and fortunately they were able to attend on this occasion.
Enquiries
A KCC officer proceeded to address the enquiries that had arisen since the last meeting, while also providing an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any questions based on the summary provided. The first enquiry was on 16th April and related to cooking smells from The Limes and queries regarding the extractor fan. Similar enquiries were made on 3rd May and 18th May. The KCC officer invited KCC Infrastructure to speak on this matter and provide an update. KCC Infrastructure clarified that many reviews of the extractor system within The Limes and the wider estate have been undertaken. They have currently implemented TR19 cleans across the sites, and these are all up to date at present. These are well maintained and to standard. There has been an increase in this kind of issue being raised by residents, which has led to further monitoring. A decision has been made to install carbon cell panel filters, which will significantly reduce airborne cooking odours. This in turn should help to reduce the smell being emitted. Furthermore, KCC Infrastructure outlined that UV-C lamp technology is being introduced to help break down odour particles within the extractor systems. A DBC Councillor raised concerns that the extractor fans are not being cleaned frequently enough, noting that this is currently every three to four months, and suggested that the extractor fans are attended to every month to prevent recurring issues. A KCC Infrastructure clarified that the current cleaning programme shows the system is being cleaned to the expected standard, with no evidence of overuse or build-up. The proposed upgrades are intended to improve the

system as a whole and help resolve the issue, rather than relying solely on standard TR19 checks.

A DBC Councillor felt that these actions had been taken previously and that the proposed implementation would therefore not make any significant difference.

However, a KCC Infrastructure officer clarified that this was an upgrade to the current system and had not been implemented previously.

A DBC Councillor raised concerns about the issue still occurring after three months and enquired about the steps that would be taken in that case.

A KCC officer clarified that the system will continue to be monitored but remained confident that the upgrade will significantly reduce the smell emissions.

A KCC Councillor felt that the proposed upgrades were not necessarily going to rectify the issue. They stated that previous requests had been made referencing the Defer Guidance Document and Associated Risk Assessment, and that previous queries had been raised regarding whether the controls currently in place were sufficient, but they had not necessarily received a response.

Furthermore, a KCC Councillor referenced correspondence that had taken place with Dartford Borough Council raising similar concerns. The KCC Councillor then requested to know whether an investigation by Dartford Borough Council regarding statutory nuisance had been raised, referencing email correspondence from Environmental Health requesting this information to carry out a risk assessment.

Secondly, a KCC Councillor wanted to know what formal assessment was being undertaken to ensure the proposed upgrade to the system would solve the problem.

A KCC officer clarified that there is no formal investigation currently underway with Dartford Borough Council. KCC are working alongside the council, and any points raised are being taken into consideration. Furthermore, after discussion with catering suppliers and the technical specialist, the recommendation was to upgrade the extractor filters.

A KCC Councillor asked whether a risk assessment was going to be carried out, to which KCC Infrastructure stated no, as they did not feel that a risk assessment was required.

A KCC Councillor outlined that a recommendation from Dartford Borough Council was for a risk assessment to be undertaken. KCC Infrastructure clarified that this could be looked at and taken into consideration.

A DBC Councillor outlined frustrations at the lack of forward progression following meetings in which questions are raised but no real answers are provided. Furthermore, the DBC Councillor did not feel that the question raised by the KCC Councillor had been answered adequately.

A KCC officer clarified that the implementation of the upgrades to the extractor system is an indication of action being carried out to address a concern raised.

A KCC Councillor reiterated the importance of having a formalised risk assessment and questioned whether a formal risk assessment would be undertaken, based on the guidance document sent by Dartford Borough Council, before any upgrades are made.

KCC Infrastructure clarified that this request would be presented to Technical Services, who would then make a judgement on the best form of action. A KCC Councillor would also be made aware of the decision. A KCC officer clarified that all necessary parties would be informed and would receive the necessary feedback during the next stakeholder meeting.

The next enquiry was regarding noise being made by security, which residents had made multiple complaints

about.

A KCC officer confirmed that the issue had been addressed and escalated to the security team's senior management. Although the matter had been raised previously, some communications may have been missed due to staff leave. Communication with senior management had taken place very recently, and it was clearly communicated that, before any security staff can be assigned to The Limes, it is imperative that they undergo induction training for the site and understand the problems that have occurred at The Limes.

A KCC officer went on to further explain the issue regarding security staff being on their phones and having loud conversations, which has been completely prohibited, and expectations have been reiterated to the team. This will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure the issue of noise does not arise again.

A KCC Officer noted that a resident had raised a query about ten children walking into The Limes wearing similar clothing, which was described as intimidating. It was clarified in the response that the group consisted of six children and support workers. Regarding the clothing, the children are offered a choice of several options but often select similar colours and items.

A KCC Officer also addressed age assessments following a query about an article published by Express Online. Children arriving by small boat often do not have documents with them. If the Home Office does not consider an individual to be under 18, they will not be placed in a reception centre or children's home. If a child's age is questioned while they are in a reception centre, a social worker will complete an age assessment. Since The Limes opened, no children have had their age disputed or undergone an age assessment.

A DBC Councillor responded that a group of four support workers and six children seemed an unusual mix. They noted that they had previously been advised large groups would not go out together and asked why the group could not have been divided into smaller groups.

A KCC Officer advised that there were only six children on site that day and, as it was Eid, they wished to attend mosque.

Another KCC Officer clarified that the group consisted of eight people in total, as there were two support workers rather than four. They explained that, because Eid is an important celebration, the children attended together and staff did not feel it would be appropriate to prevent them from doing so.

A DBC Councillor responded that staff are able to say no when children wish to go out in large groups.

A KCC Officer advised that there is no rule preventing the children from going out as a group. They acknowledged that eight people leaving together may appear different, but stated that they did not consider it intimidating. They added that the children often want to take part in activities together, such as bowling and swimming.

A DBC Councillor agreed that the children are entitled to go out, but noted that local residents felt the decision to open The Limes had been imposed on them.

A KCC Officer added that staff regularly prevent large groups from going out and that the children do not decide independently when they leave the site.

A KCC Councillor asked for clarification on whether there is a rule about children going out in groups, noting that one KCC Officer had said large groups are stopped, while another had advised that there is no rule in place.

A KCC Officer advised that larger groups may go out depending on staff ratios.

A KCC Councillor asked whether staff ratios were the only reason.

A KCC Officer explained that, as with any children, young people are advised that going out in a large group at the same time may not be advisable. They are often split into smaller groups, for example with one group attending

education while another takes part in an activity.

A KCC Councillor asked whether a policy was in place.

A KCC Officer advised that there is no policy preventing large groups from leaving the site. They explained that police often recommend minimising large groups of young people, as this can appear unusual.

A KCC Councillor said this information was helpful for communication with residents, as they do not want to feel that certain information is being withheld. They noted that sharing this type of information is one of the purposes of the stakeholder meetings. They also commented that residents' frustration is understandable when concerns are raised repeatedly but not addressed until much later, and that providing clear information is useful.

A Kent Police representative provided a policing perspective. They explained that while large groups can sometimes appear intimidating, there were no concerns about six or seven people attending an Eid celebration together. They advised that available data shows no issues involving the young people at The Limes, and that no calls had been received about The Limes since the previous meeting. They noted that the only call discussed at the last meeting related to unknown individuals climbing the fence. Overall, they felt The Limes had been successful and that staff were doing well.

A KCC Officer advised that a Cabinet Member would be visiting The Limes on 7 July as part of visits to all reception centres and children's homes within the service.

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A KCC Officer advised that they would contact the Cabinet Member's office and suggest this.

A DBC representative advised that they had contacted a colleague in DBC's Environmental Health team, who confirmed that cooking smells remain an active investigation. They added that Environmental Health would work with The Limes on this matter.

A KCC Officer asked whether there were any further questions.

A DBC Councillor asked whether there had been any days in the previous six weeks when The Limes had no children on site, as this had appeared to be the case.

A KCC Officer responded that, during the previous six weeks, the lowest number of children on site was three. There had been 11 children the previous week, and there were currently six. They advised that, if there were no further questions, the meeting would be concluded.

AOB

None raised.