

24 July 2025

Dear Resident,

**Re: Aspen Lodge, London Road, Sholden, Deal, CT14 0AD**

Following our previous correspondence we are writing to provide further information and reassurance about Aspen Lodge and its proposed use for unaccompanied asylum seeking (UAS) children.

On 30 October 2024, 6 February 2025 and 11 July 2025 KCC held meetings with your local councillors where your questions regarding Aspen Lodge were represented and responded to.

Senior officers for the relevant service areas in KCC and senior representatives from: KCC Prevent, Kent Police, NHS Kent and Medway, Dover District Council, Sholden Primary School and Hornbeam Primary School attended the meetings. KCC Councillors for Deal and Walmer, Dover District Councillors, Deal Parochial CoE Primary, The Downs CoE Primary and Goodwin Academy schools were invited but were unable to attend.

The meetings provided opportunity for discussion regarding the legal context under which KCC is working, the enabling works on site and the management of the centre once in operation. It provided opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions on behalf of the residents and services they represent. Minutes of the meetings are available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/protectingchildren/reception-centres-for-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children/resident-communication> and communication between KCC and stakeholders continues.

We receive enquiries from residents and continue to respond to these as quickly and fully as possible. These enquiries and responses are informing our Frequently Asked Questions webpage: [www.kent.gov.uk/receptioncentres](http://www.kent.gov.uk/receptioncentres), which you can access for information. KCC is working to make this information as accessible as possible for residents.

We would like to encourage residents to continue to use our enquiries mailbox ([reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk](mailto:reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk)) to make any further contact about Aspen Lodge.

**Work to the Property**

We anticipate improvement works to Aspen Lodge will complete August 2025.

**Key points**

KCC must comply with the 2023 High Court ruling to accommodate and look after all unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) children arriving in the county until they can be transferred to the safe care of another UK Local Authority under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).

All reception centres, and the services KCC provides to UAS children, are funded by Central Government, not from the Council's reserves or from the Kent taxpayer.

KCC's experience of running existing reception centres has shown UAS children present extremely minimal risk to local communities.

Aspen Lodge will have dedicated KCC staff and security on site 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Security will be present to protect against unauthorised access to the site, not because of the children themselves. KCC staff and interpreters will fully orientate each child with the local area, so they understand and respect laws and local customs.

Reception centres are temporary homes for UAS children, whilst they await transfer to the care of other local authorities under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The required timescale for a transfer, set by Central Government, is 10 working days.

All reception centres must register with Ofsted. The intention is to register Aspen Lodge as a children's home for a maximum of 18 UAS children, aged under 16. This means it will be run, inspected and held to the same high standard as children's homes for any other group of children.

As it will be a temporary home, children will not enrol in local schools. Instead KCC staff will deliver support and activity at the home and supervised activity in the community. This will include English language lessons and guidance on English law and society, giving children the best and earliest opportunity to contribute towards their community, wherever that may be in the UK.

UAS children in the care of KCC are not in detention, they have the same rights to the same level of care as any other child in KCC's care, including access to services and amenities in the local community. Children will be able to independently leave the home for short periods of time, with the agreement of staff about where they will be and when they will return. This will depend on the child's age and individual circumstances.

Robust protocols, already successfully used at KCC's existing reception centres, will be in place at Aspen Lodge. Skilled and experienced social workers meet newly arriving children to assess their needs before they are placed in reception centres. Both social workers and staff at reception centres are trained and experienced in working with vulnerable children and are responsible for keeping children safe at the home and in the community.

We hope this information provides you with further reassurance regarding Aspen Lodge. We will continue to keep you updated and will write to you again when we have more information to share with you. In the meantime, if you do have questions, please contact us at [reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk](mailto:reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk).

Kind regards,

**UASC Reception Centre Enquiries Team**