

**Cypress House Stakeholder Meeting**  
**Monday, 14 July 2025, 10:00 am – 11:00 am**  
**MS Teams Meeting**

Service/Agency
KCC, UAS Children's Service
KCC, Councillor
GBC, Councillor
Kent Police
Kent and Medway NHS

Kent County Council (KCC) – Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UAS Children)

Welcome and Introductions
Introductions made at start of meeting. A KCC representative explained that the purpose of the Stakeholder Meeting for Cypress House is to share information about the operation of the Reception Centre; explore ideas around community engagement, to establish local networks of support; and to resolve any enquiries or concerns raised in the community as a partnership.
Achievements and Progress
As of the date of this meeting, there were 17 young people staying at Cypress House – they are doing well and are happy with the level of support they receive from staff and with the welcoming nature of the community. The NTS is operating well, with children moving to other LAs within 2-10 days.
Cypress House has been able to establish a partnership with a leisure centre, for children to engage with swimming activities and kickball. Cypress House are continuing to improve the relationship with the Gurdwara, who have welcomed and encouraged children to tour the Gurdwara and engage in boxing sessions.
Staffing at Cypress House has remained consistent over the last 6 months, with 95% retention rate. Staff are engaging well with training and most have achieved a 90% completion rate, which is supporting them to build confidence. There has been an increase in the number of staff working at Cypress House who are local to Gravesend – the centre is keen to continue to be a local employer where they have vacancies arise.
Key Events/Incidents
One minor incident occurred at the centre whereby someone was seen filming the centre – this was dealt with swiftly and appropriately. Similarly, another incident occurred where children from Cypress House were filmed in the community – this was handled well by staff and Kent Police are looking into this.
Complaints
One enquiry has been received recently, which related to a local resident raising concerns about the noise levels from the centre. Whilst this is not unusual, given the summer period and children wanting to play outside in the garden area, the Operations Manager provided a full respond to the resident, which outlined a number of measures to help to bring noise levels down and to ensure there is consideration to neighbouring residents. The resident was happy with the response received.
A GBC Councillor representative confirmed that they have received no concerns or complaints from local residents.
In response to a GBC Councillor representative, a KCC representative confirmed that the centre currently has 17 children and the average length of time they stay at Cypress House is 10 working days – though, some move on

within as little as 2 days.

A Kent and Medway NHS representative confirmed they had no concerns or queries to raise in relation to Cypress House and that the GP practices are working well with the centre.

A Kent Police representative stated they did not have any concerns raised to them in the last couple of months and confirmed that, as mentioned earlier, they are looking into the incidents of filming that had occurred, though nothing came of the footage itself. Kent Police representatives acknowledged the positive links they have made with Cypress House and their continued commitment to work alongside the centre.

A KCC representative advised that the NHS Outreach Team recently joined one of the centre's community meetings, which was very positive – this will be scheduled for future meetings also, to help with children understanding things like healthy relationships, etc.

A KCC Councillor representative commented that they were surprised to hear that that has only been one complaint/enquiry raised with the centre recently, given that there had not been a public consultation on the use of Cypress House (Edward Moore House) as a Reception Centre for UAS Children.

In response to a KCC Councillor representative, a KCC representative advised that children at Cypress House are taught by a Higher Learning Teaching Assistant (HLTA) at the centre – their lessons include English as well as other key skills and subjects, including maths. Interpreters support more complex communication needs between staff and children at the centre, as needed. The HLTA is based permanently at Cypress House.

A KCC Councillor representative queried if children are age-assessed before arriving at Connors House and asked how long they are in the UK before moving to Connors House. A KCC representative explained that the process will be the same for all UAS children arriving into Kent (the same for all KCC's reception centres): children may arrive by boat or lorry and will first be taken to Dover where Home Office Immigration Officers and Home Office Social Workers will complete checks for immigration functions. The Home Office robustly considers the claimed age and their presentation. If the Home Office determine their age to be 18+, they will not refer them to KCC. In rare cases, there may be concerns raised about a child's age, a robust process is followed whereby Social Workers undertake a full age assessment and, if determined to be 18 or over, would be immediately removed from KCC accommodation and referred to the Home Office. Any concerns regarding age are acted upon swiftly.

Children are moved to Reception Centres from Dover Kent Intake Unit (KIU) within 24 hours of arrival. KCC Social Workers work alongside the Home Office Social Workers and Immigration Officer at KIU, Dover, to undertake an assessment to gather as much information about the child as possible and to effectively match children to the best placement.

### **Community Integration and Public Perception**

A KCC Councillor representative stated that the centre is working on developing further opportunities for sports activities with the Gurdwara and will continue these discussions outside of the Stakeholder Meeting.

Engagement with the nearby school (Holy Trinity) continues with the centre reaching out to the new Headteacher to reintroduce the Cypress House team and to explore any concerns and joint working opportunities. A school in Tonbridge has been very welcoming to have children from Cypress House join in with activities.

A GBC Councillor representative recommended further opportunities to make links with the local Mosque and positive feedback has been received from those sessions. A Kent Police representative suggested following up with the Mosque outside of the meeting as they often arrange sports activities.

A KCC representative acknowledged that a previous Kent Police contact was looking to undertake some informational briefings with children at Cypress House around awareness of knife crime and keeping safe – a Kent Police noted that this is not in relation to any concerns regarding Cypress House but to generally raise awareness and suggested that this is discussed outside of the meeting to agree how best to deliver this; it was suggested that

Kent Police could provide materials and knowledge to staff to help them share these messages with children, in terms of what to look out for, safeguarding advice, etc.

A KCC Councillor representative queried if Cypress House has/would accommodate any girls. A KCC representative explained that Cypress House is only for male UAS children and that other accommodation provision would be used for female UAS children.

#### **AOB**

A KCC representative commented that it has been a positive period since Cypress House has opened, with very few complaints and enquiries – and those that have come in have been positively responded to and resolved. The focus continues to be on how Cypress House can be a positive part of the community, which is supported by developing links with partners in and outside of the Stakeholder Meetings.