

The Limes (Pine Fields) Stakeholder Meeting
22nd October at 2pm
MS Teams Meeting

Services in Attendance
KCC, UAS Children's Service
KCC, Prevent
Local Charity
Kent Police
DBC, Councillor
KCC, Public Health
DBC, Councillor
Dartford Primary School
Leigh Academy
Leigh Academy
KCC, Councillor
KCC, Chief Executive's Department

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

Welcome and Introductions
Welcome and introductions were made.
Overview
A KCC representative advised that Pine Fields is returning to its original name, The Limes, as requested by the local residents. A DBC councillor representative asked if the signage would be changed. The KCC representative confirmed that the signage will be updated as soon as possible.
A KCC representative mentioned that when the centre first opened, complaints had quietened down. However, recently, a few concerns have been raised by residents.
One complaint was about car headlights shining into residents' homes when vehicles leave the centre. All staff have now been instructed to dim their headlights when leaving the site and to park facing the building instead of the houses. Additional signage about this will be installed soon.
A similar complaint was about vehicles blocking the pathway while waiting for the gate to open. A KCC representative advised that guidance has been given on how to enter the site without causing this issue, while also maintaining security to prevent tailgating.
A KCC representative advised that a resident had raised a concern about a boy running out of the centre and down the road. Staff have been consulted, and CCTV footage for the provided times has

been reviewed, but there is no evidence of this incident. A KCC representative explained that there is a staff crossover at the time in question, and it is possible that it was a staff member running to catch a bus. They have replied to the informant to confirm the times.

A DBC councillor representative asked what time the staff changeover occurs. A KCC representative responded that it is between 9:30 am and 10:00 am.

A DBC councillor representative mentioned that they had heard the incident occurred at 11:10 am. A KCC representative clarified that the information provided indicated it happened at 9:41 am, and therefore, it was a member of staff leaving the premises.

A DBC councillor representative mentioned that residents had said the staff member was running for a bus, but there isn't a bus stop in that direction.

A KCC representative explained that due to conflicting stories, it was difficult to clearly understand what had occurred. However, it was investigated and confirmed that there was no missing child.

A KCC representative advised they'd received a concern from a resident that someone was nearly run over outside the centre. The CCTV was reviewed for the time frame provided and there was no evidence of this, however a KCC representative has responded to the informant to see if the date provided was incorrect.

A KCC representative advised that on November 5th, there will be maintenance work involving the clearance of the roof and gutters. A drone will be used for a very short period. The KCC representative asked stakeholder members to reassure residents if they have any queries.

A KCC representative mentioned that there are still issues with installing the fences on the premises and asked stakeholder members if they were aware of why the residents were preventing the fence installation.

A DBC councillor representative advised that when the site was first announced and work began, a tree on the border of a resident's garden was removed. The resident felt the tree should not have been taken down and contacted the police, following advice from the local MP. The residents in the area do not want the fences installed until the situation has been addressed.

A KCC representative asked a Kent Police representative if they were aware of the police report regarding the tree. The Kent Police representative responded that they had not personally seen the report and requested a crime reference number to look into it.

A DBC councillor representative responded that a crime reference number will be provided after the meeting.

A representative from a local charity asked if there has been a deadline imposed for receiving permission to install the fence and whether councillors could encourage residents to give their permission.

A DBC councillor advised that they have tried to encourage the fences to be reinstated, however the residents are refusing to give permission until the tree situation is rectified.

A KCC representative advised that there have been around 20 boys present at the site this week. They have participated in numerous trips to the Mosque and football activities. A vehicle is now available at the centre to help transport the young people on field trips. Additionally, there is a higher-level teaching assistant, and the independent living programme is progressing well.

A DBC councillor representative asked how many young people have arrived and moved out of the centre, noting that it was previously stated it would be 10 days between arriving and leaving.

A KCC representative responded that sometimes the centre can have as few as three boys living there, and typically they move on average a week after arriving.

A KCC councillor representative asked how the protocol is going regarding the young people moving.

A KCC representative responded that the centre staff work with the young people to reduce any anxiety around the transition.

A Kent Police representative asked which Mosque the boys usually attend, as they would like to meet them there for prayers one day.

A KCC representative responded that the Mosque is very close to the centre, and that would be appreciated.

Overview of education

A KCC representative explained that they have now recruited a higher-level teaching assistant with experience teaching children up to 11+. The first lessons began this week, and the boys were engaged and respectful towards the teacher.

The sessions start after breakfast on Monday, and the teacher has extensive experience teaching children with language barriers. The teacher quickly identified the boys who would require one-on-one work to help with their pronunciation. There are optional sessions in the afternoon, and attendance for these sessions is as high as in the mornings.

A KCC representative mentioned that the teacher even photocopied textbooks and exercises for one of the boys who wanted to try something more challenging. A KCC representative explained that the teacher is helping the boys learn the alphabet, numeracy, reading, and writing. The goal is to equip the young people with skills they can apply to practical tasks like reading bus timetables and booking GP appointments. The sessions develop and increase in difficulty over time, with different groups learning in different ways.

A DBC councillor representative asked if the educational support will continue once the young people have moved on to their next placement.

A KCC representative advised that this programme won't continue, but the young people can take the skills they have learned so far and expand on them with the support of their next local authority.

A DBC councillor representative asked if the young people are being taught how to book GP appointments.

A KCC representative advised that the young people are being taught basic skills to help them with tasks such as booking GP appointments. Learning a new language can be very confusing for them. The numeracy skills help the young people learn how to budget and understand money. Additionally, independent cooking lessons help them learn to budget money effectively.

A KCC representative added that the centre builds an initial assessment, which includes information about the young people's education, and this is passed on to the next local authority. Hopefully, the local authority will continue their education from the point they reached at the centre. The young people are also provided with an app called My-Ed, which they can continue to use after they have left

the centre.

A KCC representative mentioned that the goals of the independent living programme and the education provided are to achieve the following outcomes:

- Ability to make an appointment with a GP or dentist
- Ability to make payments
- Ability to buy essentials
- Understanding bus timetables
- Ability to communicate with locals
- Ability to read instructions

Stakeholder Questions

A representative from a local charity asked whether any work is being carried out from a community and cultural perspective. For example, is there an induction session that introduces the surrounding cultures, or sessions where the police and community are introduced to the young people?

A KCC representative responded that ongoing efforts will be encouraged, especially now that a vehicle is available, making it easier. The other centres have significant community engagement.

A representative from a local charity mentioned the Dartford Christmas lights switch-on event. They noted that there are many opportunities for the young people to join in with the community and offered to help organise this. It would be beneficial for the boys, who have not come from very diverse backgrounds, to see the diversity within the communities. There are many avenues to explore, and while the centre has not been open long, it would be good to work together to encourage this.

A KCC representative explained that the independent living programme is only successful when there is a partnership with the local community. Involvement of Kent Police in community meetings helps to break down myths around authority. Local boxing clubs have visited other centres, and with the help of local connections, the barrier between the centre and the local community can be crossed.

A DBC councillor representative raised concerns about the young people becoming accustomed to the centre and being heavily involved, only to find that this may not be the case at their next placement.

A representative from a local charity responded that it is important to integrate them into the society, this should be encouraged.

A DBC councillor representative replied that she was concerned the boys might not receive the same level of care and involvement from the community at their next placement.

A representative from a local charity advised that we should be passionate about giving the boys the best start in the UK. While other local authorities might not be as welcoming, it is important to have support from DBC, as there will always be challenges, such as the riots in August.

A KCC Prevent representative continued on the previous point, advising that it is important to do what we can and provide the best practices for the young people while they are residing in the centre. There is hope that other local authorities will follow suit.

A DBC councillor representative advised that there had previously been negativity surrounding the

centre, but now that it has opened, things are looking much more positive.

A KCC representative responded that if there are any further issues, they are happy to speak with the residents.

A DBC councillor representative mentioned that two houses near the centre have been put up for sale, but they are selling for reasons unrelated to the centre.

A DBC councillor representative mentioned that there was a complaint from a resident regarding the food truck delivery. A KCC representative responded that the food truck now enters the centre car park instead of waiting on the side road and causing disruption. The bin collection is also now scheduled at a more suitable time than previously. The residents have been informed.

A KCC public health representative mentioned that with winter approaching, they will be working closely with the centre on infection prevention pathways, managing illnesses, and setting up isolation rooms. There will be a visit to the site soon.

A KCC representative advised that all enquiries from residents are being managed and the centre is moving in the right direction. There are now weekly community meetings, and the police are welcome to join. A Kent Police representative responded that it would be good to organise a FIFA battle between the boys and local police officers.

A KCC councillor representative continued by advising that police attendance at community meetings would be beneficial, as the young people may not have a good relationship with the police. The KCC councillor representative also asked if the young people were still mostly from Afghanistan and Syria.

A KCC representative responded that the young people come from many different countries, and there is a long list of interpreters requested.

A DBC councillor representative mentioned that the responses to enquiries have been good, and they expressed their gratitude for this.

A KCC representative responded advising that they were on annual leave soon, but someone will be responding in their absence.

A Kent Police representative advised that there have not been any police reports regarding the centre and the young people. The tree incident will be looked into once a crime reference number has been provided.

A KCC Prevent representative advised to keep them updated if there are any tensions and mentioned that they have recently delivered PREVENT training to the staff at the centre.

A representative from KCC discussed the date for the next meeting and subsequently brought the meeting to a close.

AOB

None raised.