

## Kiln Court Stakeholder Meeting

Tuesday, 12 March 2024, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

### MS Teams Meeting

Agencies and Services in Attendees
KCC, UAS Children's Service
KCC, Deputy Chief Executives Department
KCC, Councillor
KCC, Prevent
Kent Police
MCET, Kent Police
Kent and Medway NHS
Swale Borough Council
Faversham Town Council
Bysing Wood School
EKC Schools Trust
The Abbey School

Kent County Council (KCC) - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UAS Children)

Welcome and Introductions
Introductions were made and an overview of the agenda was provided (circulated with invites). It was stated that there will opportunity throughout for questions to be asked and also an item at the end dedicated to stakeholder questions.
Legal Context
<p>A KCC representative stated that KCC has undertaken the development of Kiln Court out of necessity to comply with the High Court ruling which made clear that KCC must take every possible step to increase capacity across the county to look after and accommodate all UAS children arriving in Kent. KCC must comply with the ruling, using all legal means to establish provision to do so. The existing Reception Centres in Kent are not enough to provide sufficient accommodation.</p> <p>It was explained that feedback received to date has raised concerns around why KCC had not informed residents and partners about these plans sooner – this is due to the on-going litigation process taking place in the High Court. Kiln Court – and all other Reception Centres – will be funded by Central Government, not from KCC resource.</p> <p>It was explained that public meetings will not be taking place, as per advice given by Kent Police around safety concerns. Therefore, these Stakeholder Meetings have been organised as an opportunity to bring together a number of professionals and elected representatives to share information and answer questions from the community. A centralised mailbox and Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) site has been set up to allow enquiries from members of the public to be answered in a timely way.</p> <p>A Faversham Town Council representative queried the distribution of the previous letter, noting it did not reach some residents who live close to Kiln Court. A KCC representative explained that it is difficult to get a proportionate radius and welcomed suggestions on a more suitable distribution radius.</p>
Building Works
A KCC representative shared that Kiln Court is a building already owned by KCC and KCC has appointed a contractor to undertake the necessary refurbishment works, with a completion date of 11 July 2024. Kiln Court will provide 32

beds. A secure high fence will be erected around the full perimeter of the building and will be reinforced by hedges and trees. Security will be on site 24/7.

It was raised why KCC is not pursuing the use of the Osbourne building nearby, with the KCC Councillor noting that residents feel frustrated that the building has been left unused for a significant period of time and has become the target of vandalism. A KCC representative stated that it was considered but determined that refurbishment costs and timeframe for these to be completed in were both too great. Another KCC representative noted that these centres are being funded by central government and must meet requirements under Ofsted as appropriate for accommodating and caring for children, as well as meeting the funding envelope agreed with government. It was noted that Kiln Court has designated C2 use and therefore didn't require planning permission.

In response to a query about the demographic of children being placed in Kiln Court, a KCC representative explained that, typically, it will be boys aged 16-17 placed there. However, if needed (and with risk assessments in place to mitigate against any potential risks), girls may temporarily be accommodated there. However, it is likely that for the majority of time, it will be used for 16-17-year-old males.

A Faversham Town Council representative queried the future use of the site, should it be determined that, at some point, it is no longer required as a Reception Centre. There had been an assumption from many residents that it would be sold and converted into housing. A KCC representative stated that, whilst they could not comment on the previous closure decisions, the use of Kiln Court as a Reception Centre is putting the building to good use to support children and to meet the most urgent need at this time. It is anticipated that it will be used as a Reception Centre for the medium to long term future and it would be difficult to comment on the alternative uses it may serve beyond this.

A KCC representative highlighted the different sections of the building, including staff and communal areas. Windows will be fitted with restrictors and CCTV will be installed to cover the whole building. In answer to a question raised regarding location of the access gate, it was confirmed that this would likely be located in a similar position to where it is currently, so as not to cause traffic difficulties along Lower Road.

### **Management of The Centre**

A KCC representative confirmed that Kiln Court will provide accommodation to 16-17 year old males as an Ofsted-registered Supported Accommodation. As an Ofsted-registered provision, it will need to meet the regulation standards and be subject to regular inspections. Security will be on site 24/7 to ensure the security of the site and boundary. Reception Centre staff will be on site at all times – there will not be a time when children at Kiln Court are left unsupervised whilst in the building.

Kiln Court will be managed in a similar way to existing centres, one of which is in a similar area to Kiln Court (with neighbouring school and within a residential area) and is operating very well. KCC confirmed that the staffing ratios will be 1 member of staff to 6 children, during the day, and 1 member of staff to 10 children, during the night. Daytime hours are 8:00 am – 10:00 pm. Nighttime hours are 10:00 pm – 8:00 am. This ratio has been used successfully in existing centres for many years. There will be a Registered Service Manager, Reception Centre Operations Manager, Centre Managers and teams of daytime and nighttime staff.

It is expected that children at Kiln Court will be there for a short period of time – this is because they would be expected to transfer to another local authority (LA) via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The NTS allows LAs to transfer the responsibility and care of UAS children to other LAs. When a child first arrives in the UK, they are met by Social Workers who undertake an assessment of their risks and needs and, at the same time, refer them to the NTS. There is a mandated timescale of 10 working days for NTS transfers to take place. Whilst not every child does transfer within this timeframe, many do, and every effort is made by all agencies involved to move children on swiftly and safely.

A structured programme is delivered by staff to support children to recover from their challenging journey to the UK and to support their resettlement in the UK. This includes providing education on English language skills, UK law and society. Sport activities and other extracurricular activities are also planned, both on-site and off-site with staff supervision. KCC wants UAS children to be engaged and stimulated.

UAS children are extremely grateful for the accommodation and support they receive and are eager to learn and

contribute and KCC is committed to support them and they have a positive impact on the community.

A Bysing Wood School representative raised that, in the letter to residents, there was reference to children being out in the community unsupervised. A KCC representative confirmed that Kiln Court, as with all other centres, is a home for children and that they are not in detention. KCC representative stated that there are activities, organised and supervised by staff that take place in the evening – some off-site, some on-site. If a child leaves the centre in the evening, e.g. to go to the shop after dinner, this is always done in discussion and agreement with staff, including an agreed return time. It was noted that staff are acutely aware of the particular vulnerabilities of UAS children.

The KCC Councillor representative referred to the content of the letter stating an apparent 'cut-off' time of 10:00 pm, by which KCC staff would report a child missing and raised concerns that this is too late. A KCC representative explained at existing reception centres there are protocols to ensure staff know where children are and how to respond if a child did not return to the centre as agreed, which have worked well for many years and will be in place at Kiln Court. If, after taking all available steps, staff cannot locate a child, then they will contact Kent Police to report them missing. The reference to 10:00pm in the letter relates to the operating shifts of the centre, not a 'cut-off' point for contacting Kent Police. The KCC representative noted that the children have a right to access the community independently but KCC has a responsibility to ensure this is done safely.

When children arrive in the UK at Dover, they are met by Social Workers who undertake an assessment of their risks and needs – if a significant risk is identified, a multi-agency child protection strategy discussion is held where it will be considered if a Reception Centre is the safest place to accommodate them and/or what other actions need to be put in place as part of a plan around the child.

A KCC Prevent representative noted that, in terms of County Lines, etc, what has been seen is, due to UAS children having little grasp of English, it makes it difficult for them to be exploited by someone who does not speak the same language as them.

A Kent Police MCET representative queried how much information is known about UAS children in KCC's care – particularly in terms of having enough information to pass onto Police if they go missing. It was explained that information such as phone number, IEMI numbers and photographs are taken as part of the assessment at Dover. In the risk assessments and safety planning, if there is a particular concern about a particularly vulnerable child who may potentially go missing, KCC staff will pre-emptively share information with Police so that there is no delay in sharing information if they do go missing.

It was asked if children at the Reception Centre have access to the internet. A KCC representative explained that children do have access to the centre WiFi but, if there were concerns about a particular child and access to the internet was felt to be a risk, measures would be taken by staff to mitigate against this, i.e. taking possession of their phone, no access to the internet, etc, whilst these concerns are further investigated. Similarly, it may be determined that they should not be accommodated in the Reception Centre.

It was queried if KCC is anticipating the Reception Centre and children placed there to be a target for anti-immigration protest, etc. A KCC representative confirmed that this is a concern that is being worked on with Kent Police, KCC Contest and other partners to ensure the safety of children, staff and the community.

A Kent Police representative raised concerns about a particular incident of a child going missing at Dover shortly after arrival, with little information known about them. A KCC representative offered to discuss this incident and the details of it outside of the meeting.

A EKC Trust representative queried the response and support that would be put in place to support Bysing Wood school (and wider community) in the event of a mass protest, to help ensure that children and community members are able to be safe. A KCC representative explained that community partners, such as Bysing Wood School, would be able to make contact with the Reception Centre Operations Manager and Centre Managers to understand what is being done, including if this has been reported to Kent Police. A Kent Police representative advised that the response from Police will be to undertake an assessment and to take action that safeguards the community whilst maintaining the right to peaceful protest.

A KCC representative offered to meet with the representatives for Bysing Wood School and EKC Trust to discuss any concerns – and stated that they and KCC are committed to engaging with the community and partners now that KCC is in a position to be able to do this.

The EKC Trust representative queried what the communications plan going forwards looks like and noted that the school can provide support in getting the right messages out to parents if they are included in the communication planning. A KCC representative confirmed that there will be a further Stakeholder Meeting prior to Kiln Court becoming operational. Once operational, these meetings will be chaired by the Operations Manager on a more frequent basis and at a less senior level. The centralised KCC mailbox and the KCC FAQ website should be referred to if residents/parents have questions.

#### **Stakeholder Questions**

In response to a Faversham Town Council representative, it was confirmed that residents should be signposted to the centralised KCC mailbox to raise queries and that information shared in today's meeting can be used to inform discussions with residents.

It is likely that another letter will be sent to residents soon, to provide an update – KCC welcome suggestions from colleagues on suitable letter distribution radius. All attendees of the Stakeholder Meeting will receive a copy of the letter.

#### **Agreed Actions**

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>KC-001</b>	KCC to offer a meeting with Bysing Wood School/EKC Trust representatives.
<b>KC-002</b>	KCC to provide attendees of the Stakeholder meeting with details of the enquiries mailbox and FAQ site, following the meeting.