

5 April 2024

Dear Resident,

Re: Edward Moore House, Trinity Road, Gravesend, DA12 1LX

We are writing to share KCC's plans for Edward Moore.

In July 2023, the High Court ruled Kent County Council (KCC) must take "every possible step" to increase its capacity across the county to accommodate and look after all unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) children that arrive. The legal process is ongoing, as are the funding discussions with Central Government but KCC is committed to sharing as much information as possible.

KCC must comply with the Court ruling. As a result, KCC is required to identify accommodation which can be utilised to support UAS children at pace. KCC used the Central Government funding, agreed specifically for the acquisition of property to accommodate UAS children, to acquire Edward Moore for the following reasons:

- Internal spaces are already configured in a layout to provide homely and appropriate accommodation for children, as is required by Ofsted regulations
- Edward Moore is located in an area where children can temporarily reside to develop early skills in acclimatising to their local community and socialising
- The layout and location is similar to KCC's existing Reception Centres which for many years has successfully provided temporary accommodation for UAS children before they move to other Local Authorities under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).

We will start works at Edward Moore very soon to allow the accommodation to open for UAS children arriving in the summer period. As a result, you will start to see increased activity at the site as we start to make preparations for the facility to become operational.

Enabling works

Works are expected to be taking place on site until September 2024 when the centre will become operational. We will work closely with our contractors to ensure we minimise noise and disruption to the local residents and the neighbouring properties wherever is possible. We and our contractors are aware of the neighbouring properties and we will be working to ensure any works are undertaken as sensitively as possible.

Reception Centre Management

Edward Moore will be registered with Ofsted, operate to its regulatory standards and be subject to regular inspections. The intention is for it to be a temporary home for UAS children aged under 16. Current plans suggest the centre will provide up to 36 places. Edward Moore will have KCC staff and security on site 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We can confirm all reception centres will be a temporary homes for children, aged under 18 years old, only. We understand concern that children accommodated at Edward Moore might be adults stating they are children. Whilst UAS children may arrive to the UK without documentary evidence for their age, the Home Office robustly considers any differences between a child's claimed age and their presentation and the information they provide. If the Home Office considers a person to be older than 18 years old, they will not refer them to KCC. Accommodation and support for adult asylum seekers is provided by the Home

Office. If concerns regarding a child's age are raised whilst they are in KCC's care, an age assessment is completed by social workers. If the assessment concludes the child is aged over 18 years old, they are immediately moved to Home Office accommodation and support for adults.

Edward Moore will be managed in the same way as KCC's two existing reception centres, one of which is based in a similar residential area to Edward Moore, close to local schools and community services. These centres are operating well and have been for many years, providing temporary homes for UAS children while they await transfer to other local authorities under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The required timescale for a UAS child to transfer from KCC care to another local authority under the NTS is 10 working days.

UAS children accommodated at Edward Moore will be Children in Care to KCC, as required under legislation. This means each child will have an allocated social worker regularly visiting them and leading a plan for their care. Each child will have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to ensure this plan is satisfactorily completed. Therefore, social workers will be at Edward Moore alongside dedicated management staff and security.

KCC dedicated managers and staff at Edward Moore will be responsible for meeting the children's basic care needs, providing a structured program of weekly education and activities and setting rewards and consequences for behaviour. As the children will only be at the centre for a short period of time their education will be delivered on-site, meaning the children will not be required to register with local schools. This includes English language lessons and guidance on English law and society, thereby supporting the children to develop early skills to socialise whilst having the best and earliest opportunity to contribute towards their community, wherever that may be in the UK. This helps UAS children successfully integrate, whilst temporarily at Edward Moore and when they move to their more permanent home in other local authority areas.

KCC staff will accompany the children on organised activities off site. There will be times when the children can independently leave the centre for short periods of time, for example, to go to the local shop or park. It will only be allowed with the agreement of staff about where they will be and when they will return. Generally, children are extremely grateful for the accommodation and support they receive from KCC and are eager to learn about, integrate and contribute to UK society.

Continued engagement

KCC is committed to working with the local community and partners as these plans develop. We will keep you updated and will write to you again when we have more information to share. KCC is working with your local councillors to identify a forum through which they and other local leaders can represent your questions regarding Edward Moore.

In the meantime, if you do have questions, please visit our website section we have set up to answer some of the most frequently asked questions or email reception.enquiries@kent.gov.uk

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/protecting-children/reception-centres-for-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children>

Kind regards,

UASC Reception Centre Enquiries Team