

The Limes Stakeholder Meeting
Friday 21st August 2026, 2pm
MS Teams Meeting

Agencies and Services in Attendees
KCC, UAS Children's Service
KCC, Councillor
KCC, PREVENT
KCC, Infrastructure
DBC, Councillor
DBC, Representatives

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

Introduction
Introductions made and agenda shared.
Update and Enquiries
A KCC officer reported that 105 children had been accommodated at The Limes since the previous meeting, most of whom had moved on through the NTS. Twelve children are currently staying at the centre. Local and county councillors also visited the centre on 15th July. A KCC officer reviewed the enquiries log and advised that 15 enquiries had been received since the previous meeting. One, dated 16th July, concerned a torch shining into gardens and a loud mechanical noise. CCTV footage was reviewed, but no evidence of either issue was found. A DBC councillor said that another local resident had also seen the light. A KCC officer confirmed this would be recorded. Although the CCTV showed no evidence of the light, any further information provided would be reviewed. The next enquiry concerned an early refuse collection and had been escalated to Facilities Management. A KCC Infrastructure officer advised that the contractors had been contacted. Consideration was being given to specifying collection times in the contract to ensure compliance. A KCC councillor asked whether the current contract included collection times and, if not, whether these would be added. The KCC Infrastructure officer confirmed that collection times were being considered for inclusion in the contract. The KCC councillor sought confirmation that the current contract contained no specified times, which the KCC Infrastructure officer confirmed. The KCC councillor expressed concern that the contract did not specify collection times and that adding them had not been confirmed. They said this should be actioned rather than explored, noting that several recurring issues, including cooking smells, had not been resolved promptly. If no action was taken, they requested escalation to the Director, as an existing complaint concerning Infrastructure and Facilities Management was already ongoing.

A KCC officer confirmed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

A DBC councillor said the issue had been raised repeatedly without progress and described the situation as becoming unacceptable.

A KCC officer advised that the next logged enquiry concerned blinds and lighting. As residents had received a letter about this issue the previous year, no further response had been issued on this occasion.

A KCC councillor said they had previously raised with the Director and Cabinet Members that the letter should not be used as a blanket response. They reiterated that routine security checks had been agreed and that any light left on with a blind raised should be addressed. Although a light might be switched on after a check, they were concerned that lights remained on with blinds raised for several hours, suggesting the checks were not taking place. They emphasised that this was straightforward to resolve but significantly affected residents when left unaddressed.

A KCC officer confirmed that security checks were taking place and that any raised blinds with lights on were reported. However, recent enquiries concerned bright external light even when the blinds were closed. As the lights operate on timers, they may switch on after checks have been completed. The officer suggested that the light fitting might need to be changed and confirmed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

A DBC councillor said they had been advised on 15th July that the top floor would only be used when the centre was at full capacity. They questioned whether occupancy had exceeded 50 children on any occasion.

A KCC officer explained that, owing to the 105 children accommodated since the previous meeting, the centre had been at full capacity for five days.

The DBC councillor remained unconvinced that the centre had reached full capacity and asked why a lower-strength bulb could not be installed.

A KCC officer agreed that the bulb or light fitting could be reviewed.

The DBC councillor said there had already been sufficient time to consider changing the light. They noted that requested changes were repeatedly deferred, with updates promised at subsequent meetings.

A KCC officer confirmed that this would be recorded and the light fitting reviewed.

Several enquiries concerned cooking smells. A KCC Infrastructure representative advised that additional ventilation and carbon filters had been installed. A smell test had been completed, and a meeting with DBC Environmental Health was scheduled for the following week to discuss the findings.

A KCC officer advised that another enquiry concerned a large group of boys leaving the centre. The matter was investigated and found to involve children attending the mosque with staff in staggered groups; the resident received a response. Around the same time, a noise complaint was investigated. A group of children had become over-excited and may have been loud in the garden. Staff were reminded that the garden should not be used after the agreed time and that noise should remain considerate at all times. The issue was also discussed with the children during community meetings.

More recently, a neighbour emailed about the smell of cannabis. Further information was requested and CCTV footage reviewed. Although a smoking area was located beside the neighbouring property's fence, no evidence of cannabis was found. The smoking area was relocated, and the local police officer was asked to visit, inspect the area and speak to the children about smoking. Staff had not detected any smell of cannabis.

A DBC councillor asked where the smoking area had been moved and whether it was near York Road.

A KCC officer said the aim had been to position it away from boundary fences and agreed to confirm the location

during their next visit to the centre.

A KCC councillor asked whether the CCTV had been checked against the times provided to establish whether anyone had been in the smoking area.

A KCC officer confirmed that no one was present in the smoking area and no drug paraphernalia was visible.

A KCC councillor questioned whether the smell had originated from The Limes, as the available evidence suggested it had not.

A KCC officer agreed that the evidence suggested the smell may not have come from The Limes. Nevertheless, the centre had relocated the smoking area and introduced regular checks.

A KCC councillor asked whether the police would speak to every new child arriving at The Limes.

A KCC officer explained that the police visit was specific to this incident. The message would subsequently be reinforced through welcome talks and community meetings.

A KCC councillor asked why a police officer was attending.

A KCC officer said the local officer had been invited because they regularly visit the site to speak with the children and help build trust.

For the record, a KCC councillor stated that no one had been in or near the smoking area at approximately 9.30–10.00 pm on 14th July. A KCC officer confirmed this.

A DBC councillor asked whether staff and children were checked for cannabis, as they had access to cigarettes.

A KCC officer stated that staff would not attend work under the influence of drugs.

The DBC councillor replied that, if staff were excluded, this appeared to leave the children as the possible source. They noted that the smell was distinctive and lingered for long periods.

A KCC officer noted that the smell could travel quickly but reiterated that staff were not attending work under the influence.

A DBC representative suggested that the police bring a dog handler when visiting, as this could help locate any substances.

A KCC officer agreed that this was a useful suggestion and added that meeting a dog in a controlled setting might help children who had previously had negative experiences with dogs.

Drawing on their previous police experience, a DBC representative said cannabis use could be difficult to identify because the smell travels and may originate from anywhere nearby.

Activities

A KCC officer provided an activities update. The children had been attending football and swimming sessions, as well as community awareness and budgeting sessions. The centre had also contacted a local supported accommodation provider that houses some asylum-seeking young people, with the aim of developing a positive community initiative.

A KCC councillor asked for further information about the supported accommodation provider in Dartford.

A KCC officer explained that an independent supported accommodation charity houses 16- and 17-year-olds under contract, including several asylum-seeking young people.

A KCC councillor asked who held corporate parenting responsibility for these young people.

A KCC officer responded that it was likely to be KCC, as the asylum-seeking young people had probably arrived in the UK some time ago and reception centres accommodate children only temporarily.

A DBC councillor suggested the Cinema in the Park event, which costs £2 per person. They had assumed that children from The Limes might be able to attend free of charge, as they understood other activities were provided at no cost.

A KCC officer clarified that entry would not be free but noted the suggestion.

A DBC representative advised that Cohesion Plus entertainment would continue at the Saturday markets until 26th September.

Stakeholder Enquires

A DBC councillor asked about two police cars seen outside The Limes on 4th and 7th August.

A KCC officer agreed to investigate.

The DBC councillor clarified that the vehicles were outside, rather than within, The Limes.

A KCC officer noted that police sometimes park near The Limes when responding to incidents in Brent Lane.

A DBC councillor asked whether the green fencing would be replaced, as previously raised at earlier meetings.

A KCC officer confirmed that a quotation had been received and the work would be scheduled shortly. They then asked the KCC PREVENT representative whether there had been any protest-related activity. The representative confirmed there had not.

A DBC councillor reported that a resident had contacted them about a young man sitting on the wall outside The Limes. When a taxi arrived, he ran to it and got inside. The exact date was unknown, but the incident had occurred since the previous meeting.

A KCC officer asked whether the individual was a staff member or a child.

The DBC councillor confirmed that the individual was not a staff member.

A KCC officer agreed to investigate and then closed the meeting.

AOB

None raised.