

## Olea Grove Stakeholder Meeting

7<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm

### MS Teams Meeting

Attendees
KCC, UAS Children's Service
DDC, Dover Asylum Resettlement Team
KCC, Public Health
KCC, Prevent
St Faiths Prep School

### Introductions

Introductions made and the agenda shared.

### Overview

A KCC representative began by announcing that the site is now open, and this is the third stakeholder meeting for Olea Grove.

The previous two meetings were chaired by the assistant director. Moving forward, stakeholder meetings will be held monthly. A site tour took place in August, and two formal letters were sent to residents in February and May. The minutes from the previous two stakeholder meetings, along with the formal letters and a link to FAQs, have been uploaded to the KCC website.

During the meeting, a KCC representative mentioned that the independent living programme would be discussed, and future stakeholder meetings would focus more on practical ways to involve local communities and businesses in the programme. These meetings will continue to serve as a positive platform for communication and addressing concerns.

In July 2023, KCC was in the high court to discuss the high number of children arriving at the port of Dover and their transition into the NTS scheme. The high court acknowledged the large number of children arriving but emphasised that each child must be recognised as a child in need under the Children's Act legislation. Adequate accommodation must be provided to meet this duty of care. The Home Office and other organisations assisted Kent, and additional government funding was provided to secure appropriate accommodation.

A KCC representative noted an increase in reception centres for children aged 16-17, from two to five. There are now two children's homes, with the possibility of two more properties: one as a reception centre and one as a children's home, though details are still being negotiated.

A KCC representative continued, stating that the portfolio has expanded significantly, and foster placements remain involved for children needing provisions that the existing accommodation cannot meet. The social work teams have grown from two to seven to support all children waiting on the NTS and for those remaining in Kent as children in care.

A KCC representative explained that Olea Grove is still in its recruitment phase, but progress is good.

When opening the home, a KCC representative explained that security considerations for both the local and national community were essential. While there has been little tension in Ash and the home has been well-received, national tensions, such as the Southport riots, must be considered. All centres and homes have secure lines around the property to protect staff and children, not to confine the children but to safeguard them from potential external tensions. There are security guards to monitor attendance in the building.

A KCC representative advised the home had a soft opening, gradually increasing the number of children instead of reaching full capacity immediately. The home is expected to reach full capacity early next year, as fewer arrivals are anticipated at the port during the colder months.

A KCC representative mentioned that since opening, there have been a few building-related issues, such as delays in fitting the Wi-Fi, but everything is now connected. No major works are planned, only ongoing maintenance. The garden will be improved, possibly with a vegetable patch. Local residents should not experience further major building works as the building has been signed off.

A KCC representative advised that since the last stakeholder meeting, there have been no complaints or enquiries.

A KCC representative explained the home officially opened on October 15th, once registered by Ofsted. Since then, 15 children have been accommodated, with seven moving on. The home provides short-term safety and immediate care for the children, focusing on resettlement and explaining their next steps. Children typically stay for about a week. The phased opening was designed to minimise community impact and protect the children.

The home has an excellent relationship with the local GP, registering children upon arrival and ensuring they receive vaccinations before leaving.

Children are starting to engage with the community, visiting local shops, playing football, and attending the mosque every Friday with support workers.

A DDC representative inquired about which mosque the children attend. A KCC representative replied that they go to a mosque in Canterbury but are considering other options. The DDC representative suggested a new mosque in Dover, and the KCC representative agreed to reach out to their contact there.

A KCC representative advised that the boys are generally 14-15 years old, though younger children can also be accommodated. Overall, the children are settling in well, supported by a dedicated staff group.

### **Inclusion and Support Programme**

A KCC representative explained that the home has an Inclusion and Support Programme (ISP), similar to the independent living programme at the reception centres. This programme helps children begin their resettlement journey. This can include helping the children adjust their body clocks, which are often disrupted from their travels.

The home currently has two higher-level teaching assistants, with one training at Olea Grove

while awaiting the opening of a new centre.

A KCC representative advised the ISP is beneficial as it runs Monday to Friday with morning and afternoon sessions, closely resembling a school schedule. This helps children understand the structure of schooling in the UK.

Olea Grove is one of the first children's homes. Recognising the high attendance rates at education sessions in other centres, the home understands the vital role education plays in the children's lives. The children are eager to learn and actively participate in the sessions.

A KCC representative advised the ISP includes information to help children integrate into UK society, such as cultural norms like queuing and understanding UK laws.

The programme aims to build independence for mid to late teens. It is age-appropriate and adapted from the independent living programme for older children. It teaches budgeting pocket money and developing core independent skills while keeping the children engaged and occupied.

A KCC representative explained the ISP includes fun activities and there are opportunities for one-on-one work with residential support workers and or their social workers.

The ISP runs throughout the children's stay. Staff work with the children to reduce anxiety about their next move, as they are always eager to know where and when they will be moving.

A KCC representative advised there is a weekly house community meeting attended by children and staff, with opportunities for partner agencies to participate. For example, it is hoped that representatives from Kent Police will attend these meetings to help break down negative views of authority figures. It would also be beneficial for other partner agencies to be involved.

KCC representatives encouraged stakeholders to reach out to colleagues and others who might want to be involved in the house community meetings.

A KCC Public Health representative mentioned they would contact their trauma-informed care department.

A DDC representative explained that there is a monthly asylum-seeking forum attended by police and other agencies. They invited the KCC representative to attend to connect with the police.

The KCC representative expressed interest in attending the forum, noting their background in working in children's homes and the unique nature of this home and how engaging with community leaders will help the children integrate.

A DDC representative shared an experience where a meeting at a local mosque was a test of true intentions, highlighting that even adults can be distrustful of authority. Therefore, it is important to encourage the break down of these barriers.

A KCC representative explained the home is keen to support local businesses. A local fruiter

supplies fruit at another site, and stakeholders were asked to suggest local farmers or businesses the home could connect with.

A DDC representative offered to connect the home with the community development team, which has designated officers for each area. They can inform the home about community events and local businesses to engage with.

A KCC Prevent representative praised the home's positive impact on young people and its successful integration into the community, offering congratulations.

A KCC representative promised to relay this feedback to the team, acknowledging their efforts.

A KCC representative advised the stakeholders that if there is any concerns raised by the community, they should contact the home for a response and reassurance. It is better to address issues directly than let them fester.

<b>Stakeholder Questions</b>
No questions raised.
<b>AOB</b>
None raised.