

**The Limes (Pine Fields) Stakeholder Meeting**  
**26<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm**  
**MS Teams Meeting**

<b>Services in Attendance</b>
KCC, UAS Children’s Service
KCC, Prevent
Kent Police
DBC, Councillor
DBC, Councillor
KCC, Councillor
DBC, Dartford Community Safety Team

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

<b>Introductions</b>
Introductions were made and agenda shared.
<b>Overview</b>
<p>A KCC representative advised that there are currently 26 young people in the centre, with the numbers fluctuating between 20 and 40. The young people are from different parts of the world, but they all seem to settle in well and are engaging in education.</p> <p>A KCC representative mentioned that the teacher understands the needs of the young people and will often tailor sessions to certain groups. They are taught English, maths, and the education links to the independent living programme, which helps the young people gain key skills like reading bus timetables.</p> <p>There is a weekly survey that the young people can participate in, where they can raise any areas of concern. The feedback from the surveys often indicates that the young people are anxious about their move, and this helps the support and social workers assist the young person to ease their worries.</p> <p>A KCC representative explained that there have been a few complaints from residents recently. The refuse lorry turned up again early, but this has now been rectified. There were emails from residents regarding a young person going missing from the centre. The young person did go missing, but this was because he wanted to go to Croydon to seek asylum. The young person has since returned.</p> <p>A further complaint was raised by residents about headlights shining into the residents' houses. Over the last few weeks, there have been a few occasions of this happening. A KCC representative explained that to fix the issue, they have reorganised the car park and all staff have been given instructions to park facing the building. There will be a few days' grace period to</p>

inform all the staff. There is a long-term solution to this issue, as plants are going to be planted along the fence line, and once these have grown to full height, it should reduce the reflection of the headlights. Once the trees are dense enough, the green netting can be removed, as there have been complaints regarding the netting.

A KCC representative explained that there has been a complaint about the deliveries and the kitchen staff being loud. Regarding the deliveries, this had been previously raised and the company agreed to use small vans where possible to deliver. However, when the larger lorries need to be used, they cannot swing into the car park if there are cars parked on either side of the entrance. The seven-seater vehicle that the centre uses often struggles to enter and exit the car park. Ideally, there would be double yellow lines.

A DBC councillor responded that the residents may not want double yellow lines and mentioned that when it was a care home, deliveries were able to enter due to there being no fencing.

A KCC representative explained that when the contract runs out with the supplier, the kitchen caterers have been asked to look into using a local supplier who will use smaller vans. It is problematic for deliveries to be in a small van all the time, but it is recognised as an issue that will hopefully be solved by using a local supplier.

A KCC representative noted concerns around privacy. Due to previous issues with the top floor rooms, it was decided to create several zones. For example, the ground floor rooms are used first, followed by the rooms facing the garden.

A KCC representative explained that the centre was designed to maintain privacy, so the windows have restrictors and privacy films on windows that overlook other properties. The restrictors can be broken easily; therefore, any rooms with a broken restrictor are now out of action. In the evening, the young people are asked to pull down their blinds, but it is their home, so they may choose not to. The young people can open the windows to let fresh air into their rooms, but they only open a small amount. All the rooms on the top floor are being inspected for broken restrictors, and the use of the top floor is being reduced when possible.

A DBC councillor asked how quickly the boys were moving on.

A KCC representative responded that they are moving very quickly, with the average stay recently being 7.6 days.

A DBC councillor asked if the young people are informed that it is illegal for under-18s to purchase cigarettes and whether the shops have been advised not to sell to them.

A KCC representative responded that there have been complaints regarding the young people smoking, as this can be seen from the garden. They explained that the young people often arrive in the UK addicted to nicotine and bring their own cigarettes. While the young people are encouraged not to smoke, if they do, they are asked to use the designated smoking area. Through the independent living programme, the young people are educated about making healthy life choices, with interpreters available for these conversations. Whenever the young people leave the centre, they are briefed that it is illegal for them to purchase cigarettes. It was

clarified that no one is buying cigarettes for them.

A KCC councillor responded that they had researched this issue and noted that it is often seen on the news and television programmes that young people are smoking at the port in Calais. They advised that it is not illegal to smoke at 16, and the young people often arrive with cigarettes. There is too little time between arriving at the port and being taken to the reception centre for them to purchase cigarettes in the UK.

A KCC representative responded that sometimes the young people arrive at the centre within hours of arriving in the UK. They do double-check the cigarettes but cannot seize them, only offer to look after them. By looking after them, it reduces how often they smoke, although this doesn't always work.

A DBC councillor asked what the young people are doing with the cigarette butts and whether the police could visit the shops to advise them about the young people potentially wanting to buy cigarette.

A KCC representative responded that, given there is no evidence at this time that the cigarettes the young people are smoking are from the UK, it may not be necessary to involve the police. However, if Kent Police would like to, they are welcome to speak to the shops.

A KCC Prevent representative advised that the response to these complaints needs to be carefully worded, as there are many young people who smoke and there is no evidence that local shops are providing the cigarettes. It is not illegal to drop cigarette butts, although in some areas of Kent it may incur a fine. They suggested it might be beneficial to be transparent when responding to the complaints and to clarify that it is not illegal.

A Kent Police representative advised that there is no evidence of shops providing young people with cigarettes. If this were occurring, it would be an issue across Dartford and not specifically with the shops close to the centre. The police will take a measured response, and if there is evidence, it will be investigated.

A DBC councillor asked whether a young person went missing on the 21st of November.

A KCC representative responded that a young person did go missing; however, it was not as straightforward as it seemed. There are several different ways of claiming asylum, and this young person believed he needed to go to Croydon to claim asylum. The young people often want to live in London, so it is possible the young person thought that if he claimed asylum in Croydon, he'd be placed near London. The young person has now returned to the centre. The police were alerted when he went missing and carried out house-to-house enquiries to help with their investigation.

A KCC representative explained that there was a complaint about a group of young people walking up and down the street. The CCTV was reviewed, and it was found that the young people were going to the mosque with the support workers. There were two separate groups of five, each with two support workers. A few of the young people left late and therefore caught up to the groups heading to the mosque. A KCC representative advised that the centre does try to limit large groups going out, but the young people enjoy going to the mosque.

## Community Engagement

A KCC representative advised that they like the young people to be involved in the community and start giving back. They asked if there were any events or activities in the community that the centre could participate in.

A Kent Police representative mentioned that the Festival of Light is on Friday and that another colleague will be able to provide a list of events happening over the Christmas period.

A KCC representative noted that they can walk into town with the young people or use their two minibuses to do activities further afield.

A DBC councillor mentioned the Panto that happens in Dartford.

A KCC representative responded that they'd look into the availability as that is a good idea.

A DBC representative advised that they'll put the centre in touch with the individual who runs the theatre, who will be happy to help. They also mentioned that Eve Unity has been at another centre carrying out activities with the young people and they'd like to organise this for The Limes.

A DBC councillor suggested attending football matches at Princes Park.

A KCC representative advised that they'd like to organise this.

A KCC representative explained that they'd like the centre to be involved in tree planting or community work to show that they are giving back.

## Stakeholder Questions

A KCC representative asked if there were any questions.

A DBC councillor asked if the young people are given mobile phones and computers.

A KCC representative responded that they are not.

A KCC councillor advised that privacy issues are the biggest concern from the community now. For the residents, it is an element of the unknown with the young people, but they are harmless and most likely curious about the community and our culture. They advised continuing to see both sides of the situation and helping the young people understand the concerns from the community.

A KCC representative mentioned that they've really gotten to know the young people, and a common theme is that they love sports. Referring to the privacy issues, there are two young brothers on the top floor with rooms next to each other who will remain on the top floor. The boys are very polite, open doors for the staff, and have received a welcome talk that clearly explains the expectations of behaviour. They noted that they are aware of which boys may push the boundaries and therefore would not place them on the top floor. With new groups of boys arriving, the process of advising them about expectations is started again.

A KCC representative advised that the privacy glass will be revisited, and there will be more education in the welcome talks regarding the windows being open. However, the boys will be allowed to open the windows for fresh air.

A Kent Police representative advised that the police have only received a call from The Limes regarding the missing person and there have been no other issues. The police were notified after Britain First attended The Limes, and this was handled well by the centre.

A KCC representative confirmed that Britain First did attend. An individual came up to the front gate and was filming while speaking to security. There is a video circulating online, but it is heavily edited as the CCTV showed they were there for around 11 minutes. A group was seen exiting a van with placards and took photos in front of The Limes. A KCC representative advised it was not a protest.

A KCC Prevent representative advised that Folkestone has been receiving leaflets from the Homeland Party. They advised the stakeholders to be mindful of receiving similar leaflets and to inform the Prevent team if anyone does receive them.

A KCC representative closed the meeting and advised that in future meetings they'd like to go into further detail about the young people's time at The Limes.

**AOB**

None raised.