**KENT HOUSING OPTIONS SUB GROUP (KHOG) MEETING**

**15 March 2018**

**Held at Maidstone BC Office, Maidstone House, Maidstone**

**Present:** ; Jane Smither, Chair and T & M BC;Marie Gerald, Dartford BC; Deborah White, KHG Mentor and WKHA; VMarion Money, NLA; icky Hodson, Kent Homechoice; Stuart Clifton, Maidstone BC; Daisy Negus, Maidstone BC; Elly Toye, Dover DC; Lynn Wilders, Gravesham BC; Mark Damiral, Shepway DC; Lora McCourt, Canterbury CC; Tracy Partridge , Medway Council; Simon Allcock, Riverside; Matthew Jones, Sevenoaks DC; Mike Barrett, Porchlight; Sholeh Soleimanifa, KCC ; Vicky May, Thanet DC; Lesley Clay, Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing; Jill Pells, KHG

**Apologies:** Jane Lang, TWells BC;Andy Kefford, Sevenoaks DC; Sylvia Roberts, Ashford BC; Raymond Easdown, Medway Council; Hayley Brooks, Sevenoaks DC; Emily Matthews, KCC; Jane Griffiths, BPHA; Sarah Huntley, DWP; Pam Millington, Dover DC; Sarah Lewis, TWells; Melanie Kendall, Porchlight; Janice Wood, Porchlight; Andrew McDonald, KCC

**Guests:**  Grant de Negri, Paramount Independent Property Services; Christ Knowles, PIPS

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| **Reference** | **Notes/Outcome** | **Timescale** | **Lead person** | **Action/Decision** |
| **Action log from Meeting**  **14 December 2017** | **Code of Guidance** – It was noted that there has been an addition to this giving 10 working days deadline to respond to referrals in relief stage which is good news.  **16/17 year olds supplementary guidance** – picked up on Protocol launch day 23.02.2018.  **Out of London placement meeting** held on 6 February – no update available yet. Likely to be another meeting arranged. MBC has met with Richard Williams of HAS – very interested in London placements of gangs. Would be interested in any case studies.  VH has had a conversation on IT systems – London system to be rolled out to other areas.  **On Line Training**. Members were asked for feedback and advised that no response by the deadline would be taken as agreement to the work being taken forward.  Jo Ellis, T&CHG “I support a task and finish group to explore opportunities. However I would not feel it appropriate at this stage to support funding until we have a clear costed recommendation”  Sasha Harrison Southern HG “I am not opposed to the online tenancy training tool as a concept, I wonder how much research has been done to see if this will actually be effective, presumably part of the T&F group remit will be to assess viability and ensure it would be worth the investment of KHG cash seeing as we don’t have a lot!”  Emma Wiggins, Swale BC “We are not sure how practical an on-line tenancy sustainment training programme will be for the types of families that we work with. Many seem to prefer face-to-face contact and a level of hand holding through the process which is a good deal of the prevention work undertaken. We do realise that some landlords may take comfort in this module, but we’re not sure how this will lessen the practical day-to-day support provided by Housing Options staff?”  Ian Long mhs Group “We already deliver a Customer Training programme for all new tenants,  Its been running for nearly three years with over 800 people attending and has proved very successful with those attending have significantly lower rent arrears and fewer failed tenancies.  We were using a trainer to deliver the sessions (who is great), however due to other commitments she can no longer deliver so we’ve just brought them in house and I’m delivering them  I would be very interested in joining your T&F group to share our experience, presentation and feedback.”  Eileen Martin, Optivo confirmed her support for this piece of work.  NLA agrees with this but feels there is more value in ongoing support and commitment. Medway has a passport system, Thanet has a traffic lights system. Just because you have done the course it doesn’t mean that you are a better tenant.  DW suggested that there could be an ongoing log system to monitor tenancies.  SC commented that Golding are looking at an on line system.  MM to be part of the T & F Group along with Golding representative and Ian Long. Can identify what it will look like and likely cost. VH to lead on this.  ET, VM, LMcC, SC.  **Protocols** signed off and on website.  **Reconnection Policy** – JS to lead – outstanding.  **Supported Housing Funding** – MBC responded to the consultation and shared with group. Also WKHA.  **KSAS categories** Need to extend KCC’s categories to recognise homeless categories– MG has raised with them.  MB raised likelihood of **rough sleeper outreach service** not being funded through KCC, although this could be done via homeless commissioning. Concerned that there may not be a service. Porchlight preparing various bids to charitable trusts to enable them to maintain a service. Forewarning them that by the end of September there may not be a service.  SS updated on consultation on commissioning of homeless services. Had lots of feedback from a variety of sources. Majority have favoured an integrated approach with housing related support. Not the intention to eradicate or exclude any part of these services. Single provider was not a popular proposition.  Wants to ensure that this compliments the HRA and does not duplicate it. The timeframe is very tight with ambition to have service in place by 1 October. Would appreciate any help with this from members.  MB noted that there is a problem with current KCC funding as this is not sufficient and there is concern that they will lose the service. Providers are dealing with non-priority homeless cases in the main which will have a huge impact. Government have said they will make more funding available to eventually eradicate rough sleeping, however they seem to think that Housing First will solve everything. It won’t.  MM has taken a Porchlight client and wanted it noted that the support from them has been exemplary.  **Reciprocal Policies** – VH has been doing some research on this. MG to send her details of the existing policy. |  | **VH**  **JS**  **ALL**  **MG** | Set up a T & F Group with those mentioned  Feedback to SS  Send current policy to VH |
| **Allocation Classification for move on from mental health supported housing** | Unfortunately those that asked for this to be on the Agenda were unable to attend but noted that authorities do have provision within their allocation policies to address move on from all forms of supported housing. |  |  |  |
| **Paramount Independent Property Services** | Grant de Negri from PIPS attended with a colleague to give a presentation on temporary accommodation.  Prewsentation to be circulated with casestudies.  JS asked for information – GdN to send conditions of residence, behaviour policy, tick sheet – three documents and inventory. Will share.  AST move on – GdN initially thought this would be easy but not the case. Main hurdle is difference between market rent and LHA. |  |  |  |
| **Rent in Advance** | DDC have monthly meetings with DWP and EK Housing have raised the identified rise in arrears thought to be as a result of UC. Suggested that even if tenants paid a little prior to moving in this would be a small buffer against future arrears. |  |  |  |
| **Review of Terms of Reference** | This item to be considered at the LA only meeting in June. | June 2018 | **JP** | Add to June Agenda |
| **Homeless Reduction Act** | KHG are due to present to Kent Leaders again and the following questions were posed:  **Do you feel prepared for the HRA? Y/N**  LAs have done as much as they can but can’t prepare for something when they do not know what will happen. What will the impact be? Not all LAs have the additional staff they feel that they will need.  It is understood that other parts of the country are less prepared, especially with regard to their IT systems and recruiting.  **What structure/operational changes are they making to accommodate HRA?**  Some LAs are making changes to allocation policies (Camden has a good policy although still using points system), some have increased their staffing numbers where permitted and other are still awaiting the impact. (Medway have arrangement with PIPS to do signups for benefits, etc to enable housing staff to be free to deal with applicants).  **What are their potential greatest concerns/impacts likely to be?** Greatest concern is volume of traffic, time to be taken on dealing with clients, increased bureaucracy/paperwork. Concerns about impact on homelessness budgets – increased need to place people in accommodation. No interpretive case law so could be an increase in legal budgets with more challenges.  Could well be an even bigger impact from October when the duty to refer comes in. Despite increased duties there is still a problem with accessing private rented accommodation.  VH has prepared an HRA advice leaflet and is happy for colleagues to share.  SC – need to decide how we deal with applicants applying to more than one authority. |  |  | Leaflet circulated by email |
| **Homeless Triage Tool – for Update** | Vicky Hodson advised regarding funding from LGA a couple of years ago to develop online services. LGA very pleased with work done and have now asked VH to run a workshop to encourage use of this tool – also want to extend this nationally. From 3 April the present tool will be out of date – need Kent to change this to bring it up to date. Originally given £14,000 to do this work but now owned by Smarter Digital Services at TWells.  ET suggested contacting Andy Gale (who is very busy) or perhaps Liz Davies who has legal background to do this update.  Existing tool will be taken down on 3 April although only 6 LAs are using this at the moment. No further money from LGA available. Also VH to ask Ruth Trown and Garden Court Chambers for a quote.  JS congratulated VH on her work on this.  On agenda for June – update. |  | **VH**  **JP** | Obtain quotes for work  Add to June Agenda |
| **Protocols (SI)** | LC updated as follows:  YP protocol launched - leaflet circulated.  Criminal Justice one to be circulated.  Next one is intentionally homeless with children although leaving this until after HRA start. This will be taken forward by KHOG.  Asked for KHOG to look at Swale Offender Protocol and will circulate. Uncertain if this is working. Feedback by **22 March** please. |  | **LC/ALL** | Circulate Offender Protocol. Members to feedback |
| **Kent Wide Risk Assessment Form and Referral Form for Offenders** | LC previously circulated a risk assessment form but consensus is that this is not robust enough and need to use existing risk assessments. Just need to work together in an open and transparent way. |  |  |  |
| **Standing Items: National Policy; Recent Case Law; Training Opportunities, including local training** | Shepway running **NHAS training on HRA.**  PIPS running training on **HHSRS** for £100 pp.  VH mentioned Ombudsman case regarding alleged placement into “squalid” accommodation. <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2018/mar/council-places-homeless-woman-in-squalid-temporary-accommodation-miles-away-from-vital-support>  JS to update on an ongoing Ombudsman case at next meeting. |  | **JS** | June Agenda |
| **AOB** | County Court case (in London) regarding serving gas safety certificates. This is something that may well be considered by other County Courts. Could challenge a S21 if GSC not served. Possible that HMO landlords could be vulnerable as it should be publically displayed and served on individual tenants.  Noted that How to Rent must be a PDF copy not just a link and have to show it has been served.  MM – GSC from 1 April will be MOT style with a month’s leeway.  ET – PM has done some factsheets including one on UC where it shows exactly what should be done – will share.  ET raised signposting people to do things on line – thinking about having a specific number and voicemail as triage. Value in having a common system across partners.  MM raised changes to HMO legislation from October, unlicensed landlords cannot issue a S21. Also, EPC, F and G rated properties cannot be let after 1 April.  SC – UC – TA exempt for new claims, existing will be HB. London Boroughs are lobbying for trusted partner status which will give better access? Noted that support for mortgage interest is a loan rather than a grant.  As a result of changes at KHG it was noted that it may be necessary for sub Groups to take their own notes in future, however, this is something that will form part of a broader discussion at an upcoming KHG ExB meeting and may impact on the Sub Group ToR to be discussed at the next meeting.  PIPS offered to take minute future meetings! |  | **ET** | To share UC factsheet |
| **Next Meeting** | LA only **21 June 2018** at 10 am (MBC) |  |  |  |