**KENT HOUSING OPTIONS SUB GROUP (KHOG LA) MEETING – 9th January 2020, Maidstone BC Office, Maidstone House, Maidstone**

**Present:** Stuart Clifton, Chair & Maidstone BC; Lora McCourt, Vice Chair & Canterbury City Council; John Littlemore, KHOG Mentor & Maidstone BC; Rebecca Ireland, MHCLG; Vicky Hodson, Kent Homechoice; Kellie Pettet-Steele, KCC; Rachel Westlake, KCC; Franky Roma, Medway; Linda Smith , KCC Public Health; Robin Cahill, KCC; Paul Stephen, KCC; Roxanne Sheppard, Swale BC; Claire Keeling, TMBC; Elly Toye, DDC; Vicky May, TDC; Toni Carter, DBC; Mark Damiral, FHDC; Jo Mahieu, WKHA; Wendy Hogg, TWBC; Pamela Millington; DDC; Manpreet Bhupal, GBC; Angela Palmer, Riverside; Chris Hammond, Riverside; Chris Coffey & Chris Burgess, Porchlight; Chris Bishop, Riverside; Bally Majhail, NPS; Stephen Barker, NPS

**Apologies:**  Marie Gerald, MHCLG; Cynthia Allen, KSS CRC; Jacqueline Ball & Penny Miller, Riverside; Mark Powell, Rachel Britt, KCC;

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| **Reference** | **Notes/Outcome** | **When** | **Lead** | **Action/Decision** |
| **Minutes/Matters Arising Jan 2020** | Minutes agreed as accurate and matters arising –  Page 1 - RS shared the pre eviction protocol at KHG last week so this should be signed off shortly.  Check with RS about an update on S21 notice/speaker  RS to provide an update regarding inviting LGO  Homeless triage tool – First meeting next Monday for working group  RS has shared the young person’s protocol  Page 2 - Task and finish group for template of leaflet completed and need to ask RS to share this with group.  Page 3 - RS has shared presentation  Page 5 - PM had a shared training opportunity with Sue Lukes and will share her contact details  Page 6 Jess has shared the risk assessment with ET  Any issues for affordable housing selected committee should be shared with Stuart and Lora as soon as possible. |  | **RS**  **RS**  **PM**  **ALL** | **Provide update on inviting LGO**  **Share YP leaflet with KHOG**  **Share Sue Lukes contact details**  **Share any issues for affordable housing select committee** |
| **Kent Integrated DA Contract** | Rachel Westlake presented on the Kent Integrated DA Contract (the presentation is available at [www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk](http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk))  SC asked whether there are any plans for development groups, RW to take back for discussion  PM asked for criteria for access into the services as Dover had a client that was declined. PM and RW to discuss case outside of KHOG. |  | **RW** | **Take back to KCC for Discussion** |
| **Homefinder UK** | Zubair Mirza from Home Connections presented on Homefinder and Revive Schemes (the presentation is available at [www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk](http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk))  Following the presentation SC asked whether ASB or FTA can raise issues and challenges with moving clients. ZM advised that ASB can be a barrier and they work with the RPs on this. FTA can also cause challenges as well but they recommend that the LA pays off the FTA where possible as usually makes financial sense.  The Homefinder scheme can work with ex-offenders and ZM advised that they do inform those that move with the scheme that after a year of living in the new area there is an option for a mutual exchange.  The schemes are offered purely on a voluntary basis and if the client requires support, they will only offer a move if a level of support is available in the area that they are moving to.  ZM invited each LA to go onto the site themselves to see what properties are available. [www.homefinderuk.org](http://www.homefinderuk.org) There is a case study section on website which includes from applicant and landlord. |  |  |  |
| **LA’s & RP’s Working Together** | There were some concerns raised around RPs refusing applicants because their policy doesn’t fit with the Local Authorities letting policy for example Orbit want 3 years tenancy referencing.  Affordability assessments can also be a challenge.  WKHA try to match their policy with Sevenoaks. WKHA are doing a piece of work to review the rents to make them more affordable.  RI advised that MHCLG are looking at rent levels and looking at affordability and income levels in the longer term. They are initially trying to get some commonality working with G15.  JL advised that the housing management sub-committee in Kent are looking at affordability issues.  SC advised that anyone on universal credit is assessed as not being able to afford any social housing. JM says WKHA have an awareness of that but would not refuse them but would work with them to try and get them into work.  JL raised that another issue is when applicants have pets, this can be a barrier to leaving TA. A choice between a new property and keeping pets can be very traumatic. LM has said that some providers will say that they can take existing pets but cannot have new pets.  RI - Is there an opportunity to meet with providers and explain to them what is required in terms of size and type of properties.  Golding are reviewing their policy around pets. JM is taking this as an agenda item for the neighbourhood management sub-group.  LMC advised another issue is getting early notification around rent arrears before the RP goes down the eviction route. A pre court application or notification is the trigger point but there had been concerns with this and GDPR however WKHA’s legal team have reviewed this and have confirmed that the Housing Act does enable partnership working on this and is compliant with GDPR.  RI advised that RPs are monitored and managed by the social housing regulator but MCHLG are asking for further commitments to assist LAs with housing.  JL to set up a task and finish group with KHG Exec Board to review how RPs and Las work together and to review nominations agreements. |  |  |  |
| **MHCLG Update** | RI advised that they are hosting a series of road shows as best practice training events. Most Kent Las are now booked onto these. The purpose of these events is for the bigger picture of homelessness and rough sleeping and for the sharing of best practice.  RI would like to take some best practice examples from Kent to include in the event.  RI can share slides with Local Authorities that are not able to attend the event.  Since the last KHOG meeting RSI funding has been announced. Some Las will start receiving MOUs so there is a request that these are read and returned. This money is being paid in two tranches as need to demonstrate how the service is working or if not working there is an opportunity to redesign the service  If the project is ‘building based’ then MHCLG will do more monitoring and visits to review.  If any issues with this, please ensure that the RS advisor is CC’d in to any emails.  HCLIC newsletter – Going to improve communications around this. Government are still working on experimental data. Another newsletter coming out shortly.  Some Las are still using P1es but the ability to submit data in this format finishes at the end of March 2020. Because HCLIC is experimental data there is a question around how this can be used for financial settlements. MCHLG are looking to get some improved standardisation on this.  There is an extended deadline for the last quarter’s HCLIC data.  SC advised that the quality checking that has been requested after submitting can be time consuming. RI responded that the quality report is being improved and they are trying to ensure that people are using the test system and they are trying to find a way to make the data more readable for the Local Authorities.  ET questioned whether there is any chance that when improvements are completed there could be some awareness training rolled out around HCLIC. RI has said that they are not resourced to carry training out at the moment although Richard Williams might be able to run a session on HCLIC.  Before MHCLG visits a LA, they look at previous 6 months data and are also looking at published data. They are finding that there are a lot of cases that are still in relief and this has been raised by Crisis and Shelter as to whether the number of main decisions is down because there are a large pool of people sitting in ‘relief’. Maidstone have said they are keeping the duty open whilst they continue to work on the case which should be seen as a positive.  There is a Parliamentary group looking at ending homelessness which is being chaired by Robert Blackman.  Capital Letters – London authorities coming together to procure TA and rationalisation of who has placed who and where so that there is not so much competition – operational group looking at the issues which more London Authorities are joining up to.  Shelter Training – Challenging Prevention of Homeless decisions raised by VM. VM to share some of the surprising information that was raised at the training with RI.  SC from actions of last time to share link of R04 information. | **ASAP** | **ALL**  **RI** | **Share best practice examples with RI**  **Share link of R04 information** |
| **Entitled To** | Entitledto was purchased across Kent last year and the contract is due for renewal in April 2020. VH asked if we wish to repurchase. Some Local Authorities are using the tool more than others. VH to share usage figures. Dartford advised that their usage figures have dropped as they have been using ‘help to rent’ however there are now issues with this service to be discussed in AOB.  Once VH has shared usage figures LAs to let VH know within 2 weeks if they would like to continue. | **By 21/2** | **ALL LA** | **Let VH know if wish to continue with Entitledto contract** |
| **Adults & YP Commissioning Update** | PS (KCC) advised they are keen to know what stakeholders would like to see and ensure that services are meeting needs. They have addressed the issues with the referral form and have built in a structure for anyone that is assessed as not being eligible for the service.  They are aware that there is not enough communication once referral is in so they are working on this and next stage is to look at what else can be developed.  CB confirmed that the updated referral form has been circulated. The key to success will be developing project managers for each area.  Request for RS to send an email out to see what projects are working to ensure that there isn’t any duplication of work.  SC has been asked to present at ‘ending homelessness in Kent’ seminar at University of Kent on what Kent is doing via the funding or via new initiatives so this is an opportunity to showcase work.  Hazel South spoke about Children in Need and advised that as at Sept 2019 a third of those accommodated where children in need and 37 of those placed had CHINs. The majority of those accessing service have successfully had their level of needs dropped down from one level to the level below.  They have taken the agreed terms of reference for housing panel and have had first meeting to iron out issues in how referrals will be made. An invitation to housing panels in each area will be sent out shortly.  CHIN referrals will come though this route. KHOG task and finish group have started discussions about emergency bed referrals. |  | **RS** | **Send email out regarding projects** |
| **Protocols** | **Intentionally Homelessness Protocol**– A draft version of this is to be written and circulated for comments.  **Duty to Refer (referral process)** – Protocol from discussions with CRCs and probation around difficulties with clients servicing custodial sentences and are unable to contact applicants so can’t do any real work until after release. Protocol stalled because of challenges with pulling together a more in-depth referral form. LM to share her draft of referral form developed as would be easiest if we had one standard referral form. This would assist us with assessing circumstances and whether there is a priority need. CRCs and probation are keen on this. Protocol with form once we know how to best support his client group. CCC are trying to break the referral form down to be as simple as possible  **YP Protocol** – The YP housing panels are also part of a task and finish group and there is also a focus also on those that are already in housing. Discussed all non-eligible and eligible, particularly in relation to evictions, there will be advance notice given on when this is happening. The protocol is now being finalised, so it is a last opportunity to put forward suggestions on the draft.  LM has the emergency accommodation task and finish group – notes to be circulated around different options and looking at a suite of options and how it is decided who goes where based on a vulnerability assessment.  SC T&FG to look at leaflet and document template. This will be circulated. New leaflet and document to go out with minutes of meeting.  Procurement of an advocacy service has not yet been finalised. We need to look at financing on an ad hoc basis. This might need more work once the protocol is finalised to see how this can be facilitated. |  | **LM**  **LM** | **Share draft referral form via RS**  **Circulate notes from EA T&FG via** |
| **KHG Update** | Matters Arising from the Information Brief included – review of Kent and Medway housing strategy. This has been out to consultation for responses. Need to ensure that we all read the strategy particularly aims and objectives to ensure that they are deliverable in terms of actions for KHOG to take forward.  The essential work of the strategy and protocols have raised demands on RS and KHG have given support to recruit an additional post to assist with this work. This could be an opportunity for a graduate or apprentice to support with this work. |  |  |  |
| **Standing Items** | **National Policy** – More policies coming out now that the government has been reformed including the Domestic Abuse Bill and ending Section 21.  **Recent Case Law** – Nothing since KHOG last month  **Training Opportunities** – The Sue Lukes eligibility training is running at the end of March but could have been filled twice over so someone may want to run it elsewhere in the County. HAS email has key groups training. There are also Webinars as part of the key groups. Navigator posts and Senior post being advertised for Canterbury.  RI hoping to get DHP notification soon as there may be an additional £50mil but unsure how this is being allocated. Noted that LHA rates are going up. |  |  |  |
| **AOB** | **Help to Rent** – Dartford received a notification that there are issues with this and they are unable to use the insurance. Dartford had 60 insurances in place and Medway have advised that they have had to swallow up some costs of the insurance. Dartford are feeding back to Ian Swift at Southwark who have led on this. Dartford are waiting for confirmation that this is a genuine service. Help to Rent hadn’t correctly advised Medway on what they needed to provide to make the insurance claims valid. MCHLG are unsure at this point of what the implications would be if we pull out of the service. May need to set up a meeting with Help to Rent and with each company that is part of the service. SC has sent information onto Maidstone legal team.  **Homefinder** – Kent and Medway Reducing Reoffending Board – Claire invited to attend and will feedback to the group and will take forward any issues from KHOG.  A couple of reports have been published by KCC – one on rough sleeping and one on homelessness. Latest data on local profiles shows a downward trend on rough sleeping but Swale and Canterbury have the highest rates; the papers might help to facilitate some discussions. KCC to forward link, this is ONS and ministry data that has been drawn together.  MB asked if we can share information on the number of cases each officer has.  SC – do we want to put together a framework of performance data to put to exec board which could include a snapshot of average cases. Perhaps an agenda item at another meeting to focus on reports and shared data, HCLIC and possible invite Richard.  Steve Barker and Bally Majhail from National Probation Service introduced themselves and advised that the NPS and CRC can assist us to navigate the service and officers can contact Bally if further information is required on any case. There was an event at Elmley last week organised by the High Sheriff, 300 prison releases have taken place in the last 3 months with half released as NFA so need to do work to try and get names to track where they are. LM has asked for the same information from the CRC, Josh Mitchell is trying to pull together that area information for them. | **April KHOG** | **CK**  **KCC**  **ALL**  **RS** | **Update group with feedback form K&M reducing reoffending board**  **Forward link to rough sleeping and homeless reports**  **Supply Gravesham with caseload averages**  **Add an agenda item to look at performance framework and invite Richard William MHCLG to discuss HCLIC** |
| **Next Meeting** | Thursday 16th April 2020, LA Only, Maidstone BC |  |  | **Date shared via outlook** |