**Kent Housing Group Sub Groups**

**Kent Housing Options Group**

KHOG have met twice since the last updated was shared with KHG, an LA only meeting and full membership meeting. Colleagues from the MHCLG continue to provide updates on national policy, legislative changes, homelessness statistics, rough sleeper programme updates and funding opportunities.

KCC commission colleagues continue to provide update in the different service arears, including young person, homeless adults, and domestic abuse services. Colleagues have also provided updates from the National Probation Service and CRC regarding organisation changes for the Probation Service.

Colleagues have delivered presentations from Mid-Kent Legal Services on the topic of Breathing Space, the debt respite scheme, and how this may impact on Local Authorities and from The One You service, to look at how greater links can be established between this service and work around health and wellbeing and homelessness. DSI Shaun white also spoke to the Group about the work he is heading up for Kent around County Lines and Gangs.

At the most recent meeting William Campbell-Wroe, RBLI Industries, attended to discuss challenges faced around move on accommodation for veterans, supported also by Brian Horton in his capacity as the veterans Champion for KHG. A useful discussion was held in relation to the difficulties with move-on and concerns over ability for persons accommodated on the RBLI Village being able to access district and borough Housing Register’s for an allocation of social housing. Discussions highlighted that a potential solution exists within LHA’s Allocations Scheme’s and it was suggested for individual cases to be taken up with the LHA directly.

Through KHOG a bid has been submitted to KCC for Containment Management Outbreak Funding (COMF)/Helping-Hands funding, of c.£2.4 million, to develop a campaign and target approach to engage with and advice landlords, who have tenants who at risk of eviction due to being adversely financially impacted as a result of Covid. The objective is to better educate landlords on the support which Local Housing Authorities can provide to tenants and myth bust landlords’ misconceptions of the role and advice of the LHA when private rented sector tenant seek housing assistance. Should the bid be successful, funding will be provided to each LHA in Kent to support with tacking rent arrears and keeping tenants within their homes. There is also scope within the bid to support social housing sector tenants and homeowners alike, who have been adversely impacted financially by Covid.

KHOG would also like to thank Rebecca Smith for all the hard work, support and dedication given to KHOG over the years wish her the best in her new role. The Group look forward to working with Helen Miller once she takes over from Rebecca.

**Kent Tenancy Management Sub Group**

KTMSG met last on 23 June 2021. Topics discussed include:

* Housing Law Update from Lindsay Felstead at Clarke Willmott.
* Older Person Accommodation Reviews – A quick update on approaches and themes to assist shared learning of need and approaches in Kent.
* Domestic Abuse Reciprocal ways of working – discussed and agreed to follow up for next meeting or sooner if required.
* Standing items remain for core tenancy management functions relating to income and legal services; tenancy sustainment; anti-social behaviour and lettings. This is to enable ongoing shared learning of adapted practices and reviews of new ways of working.

Meeting virtually continues to be very productive for sustain strong attendance numbers and engaged conversations.

**Kent Private Sector Housing Group**

The KPSHG met virtually on 5th July 2021, with Julian Watts (Ashford BC) as the new Chair of the group and with verbal updates from partners including KMSEP and KEEP. There was an update from colleagues from Marion Money regarding NRLA and also Breathing Space, Peter Littlewood provided an update from iHowz and a colleague from Thanet DC spoke to colleagues about LADs and ECO funding.

**Housing, Health and Social Care Sub Group**

In June 2021 we introduced our new action plan to our sub group members. The Housing, Health and Social Care Action Plan 2021-2023 has informed by; KHG Kent and Medway’s Housing Strategy, Kent Public Health priorities, the Social Housing White Paper 2021, the priorities of our members and health actions from KHOG.

Our action plan contains seven themes:

1) Tenancy Sustainment and Support,

2) Safe in your Home,

3) Reduce and Prevent Homelessness,

4) Tackling Isolation, Loneliness and Social Exclusion,

5) Smoke Free,

6) Mental Health

7) Cross cutting themes of integration and learning.

We asked our members at our meeting in June to tell us their top three priorities from this list of seven areas. They voted unanimously for 1) Tenancy Sustainment and Support, 2) Homelessness and 3) Mental Health.

These are the areas we shall be prioritising for year one delivery.

**Housing Strategy and Enabling Group**

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Group met in May 2021 with a presentation and overview from Housing 21 about their co-housing offer and an update from the Help2Buy Agent. Feedback was provided from ACRK and the Kent Community Hub followed by a discussion regarding First Homes & Discounted Market. There was a written update from Homes England as shared from the February meeting of the main KHG membership. The group is due to meet again in September the agenda items to be confirmed.

**Kent Engagement Group**

At the April meeting of KEG there was an overview of the Hyde Foundation and their desire to work more collaboratively with other Kent colleagues for the benefit of residents, We Are Resource, a leading print and marketing company within the housing sector attended to advise colleagues of the services provided by their company, having recently worked with both WKHA and Golding Homes. GCHA updated colleagues on the outcomes and feedback on the newly commissioned service to provide support for their residents, which is available 24/7, 365 days per year. Colleagues also discussed the planning for future events with residents and the return to work in the office, how to recruit residents for newly formed panels or those under review and learning from residents through survey work. The group meets next in July 2021.

**Kent Events Group**

The KHG Events are met following the KHG Extraordinary Awards for a quick ‘wash up’ and it was agreed to have a survey shared with all those who attended and feedback used to inform future awards events. Other events held since the May meeting include the LIFT project and KHG Asset Management Session. For the Autumn we have sessions planned for Extra Care Housing, Strategic Partnerships and planning for Diversity event alongside a Housing and Planning event.

The group will continue to plan for events over the course of the 2021 and now into 2022 with focus on the Housing White Paper and liaison with the Social Housing Regulator, if you have expertise or good practice in either area or of another please let Rebecca Smith know and a session can be developed and delivered.

Please contact Helen Miller if you’ve:

• Anything you’d like to see included in our next newsletter,

• Any ideas for events or training you’ve seen or would like to see,

• Would like to know more about the events group.

**Kent HomeChoice**

KHC Operational Meetings have been held in January and April 2021 and the Annual Project Board Meeting was held in June 2021 where the annual report and financial review was agreed

The change of circumstance process which went live in December 2020 has now been reviewed by the Operational Group feel with some enhancements suggested that will further improve the process.

Although we are still waiting for a small number of Partnership Agreements to be returned, we have had approval to extend the contract that we have for the system with Locata for a further year. This will be extended again next year for a further year after which we will need to go back out to tender. The Board agreed that when we go back out to tender we will be putting a contract in place for 4 years with an option to extend it twice for one year at a time.

The new version of the help with homelessness triage tool went live in early 2021.

The updated eligibility questions, which ensure that the application process complies with the new legislation, went live on the application form in April 2021.

Across Kent, we have seen a huge increase in the number of new applications from people applying to the housing register and we currently have a backlog in the region of 5,000 applications that are waiting to be assessed. A housing register overview report for Kent & Medway is currently being produced which will be shared with KHG.

We are continuing to develop our suite of pre tenancy training videos with assistance from the video production team at Dover and we are now looking at ways that we can integrate these with the application process.

**Additional Countywide Group Updates**

**Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership**

KEEP members worked together to develop a template of responses for the HECA return, enabling each Authority to insert Council specific information into their individual reports. HECA reports were due to be submitted by 31 May 2021.

SGN are still obliged to offer free connection to the gas mains to fuel poor/ households vulnerable to living in a cold home under their RIIO-GD2 Ofgem obligation. Unfortunately, financial support from the SGN First Time Gas Central Heating fund is not available to any of the fuel poor/ vulnerable household connected to the gas mains after 31 March 2021. However, the Warm Homes Fund has been extended until June 2022 providing some funded support for first time gas central heating systems. This will ensure that suitable properties with vulnerable resident may still receive funding towards the first-time gas central heating – this is only available to specific Local Authorities in the County.

Authorities who successfully bid for LADS1A and LADS1B funding continue to deliver measures. BEIS have extended delivery of LADS1A until end of August 2021, and LADS1B delivery deadline is 30 September 2021. Dartford BC provided a case study in response to a request from BEIS for COP26.

BEIS awarded the LADS2 funding to the Greater South East Energy Hub to administer – each LA has been allocated a sum of monies dependent on population/ number of fuel poor households. GSEEH have appointed Happy Energy as Managing Agent and set up a Dynamic Purchasing Scheme open to the supply chain. Currently Happy Energy are arranging meetings with each Kent Authority to discuss delivery in their area. Some of the governance arrangements are still to be finalised. LADS2 is scheduled to end in December 2021.

BEIS recently announced LADS3 and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) to be combined into a Sustainable Warmth Competition. LAs were asked to submit an Expression of Interest by 18 June 2021 to gauge interest. LADS 3 focus is E, F, G on gas properties and HUG Phase 1 is E, F, G off the gas grid properties (both apply to fuel poor/ vulnerable households). The application form was made available on 22 June 2021 with submission deadline of 4 August 2021. Notification of successful bids is due in the Autumn with funding allocated by the end of the year. LADS3 and HUG projects must be completed by 31 March 2023.

BEIS also gave forewarning of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund with further details to be announced in July, competition opening in Autumn 2021 with successful bids being notified in December 2021. Delivery of Wave 1 of the SHDF to be completed by the end of 2022/23

Kent Energy Deal - Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, TMBC and TWBC offer this collective energy switching scheme and participate in 3 auction rounds a year (February, May and October). Results from the latest auction round show that energy prices are at a 3-year high, and it is anticipated that Ofgem will increase the price cap on variable tariffs to reflect the market.

A Kent wide decision has been taken to delay the launch of another Solar Together scheme until next Spring as surveys/ installs are still taking place.

KCC have confirmed that the Warm Homes Framework will end this September, therefore Local Authorities will need to either join another framework, such as Fusion 21 or use the recently developed Energy Hub DPS. KEEP however, has drawn off the Warm Homes Framework and has a contract in place to deliver External Wall Insulation measures and other energy efficiency works until December 2021.

KEEP members continue to update the Kent and Medway Environment Group / Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership on domestic energy efficiency measures whilst at the same time linking with the Climate Emergency agenda.

KEEP members are also regularly in contact to look at the ever change energy efficiency grant schemes to try to ensure that Kent LAs offer energy efficiency options to their residents.

**Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership**

No Update Provided.