**Kent Housing Group Sub Groups**

**Kent Housing Options Group**

Since the previous update shared with KHG KHOG have met twice, with one full meeting and one Local Authority only meeting. The group continues to receive updates from the Rough Sleeper advisor and HAST advisor from the MHCLG. Colleagues from KCC commission services continue to provide updates on the services they commission including the adult homeless services; young person’s services; and domestic abuse services, as well as updates from colleagues with the CRC and KCC Public Health.

Colleagues from the KCC 18 plus care leavers service attended the December meeting to discuss the steps they were taking to serve notice and move on a large number of care leavers from accommodation being provided by KCC. Discussions were held around how the KCC 18 Plus service could work closely with local housing authorities to prevent any care leavers from becoming homeless as part of this process.

At the recent January meeting agenda items were discussed that had been raised within Joint Chiefs and the Kent Resilience Forum’s VPCC. These were regarding the impact of Covid on the private rented sector, particularly on evictions and rent arrears; the arrangements for working with the CRC and National Probation Service for securing accommodation for individuals leaving prison as homeless and who have tested positive for Covid; and how the CCG and public health can work with district housing authorities to support rough sleeping, including a vaccination programme.

A launch event has been provisionally booked to launch the new Young Persons Homelessness Protocol, with invites to this event likely to be sent within next week or two.

The group continues to share details of good practice and any case law, national policy or legal updates.

**Kent Tenancy Management Sub Group**

KTMSG met last on 4th December. The changes to the legal and court proceedings remain as a standing item on the agenda, along with sharing best practice and agenda planning more generally. Attendance generally within the Sub Group remains steady and consistent which is very positive and the networking has proved very beneficial for joining up approaches and adapting to new customer experiences. Our meeting focused on areas for joint working and discussion as we enter into 2021 and these included the White Paper, Tenancy Sustainment, Older Person services and ways to engage resident in safety agendas. The Virtual Lettings Guide was confirmed as available for use and enhancement as service evolve.

**Kent Private Sector Housing Group**

The KPSHG met virtually on 7th December 2020 with verbal updates from partners including KMSEP and KEEP. Kerry Petts stepped down as the Chair and Julian Watts from Ashford BC was elected as the new Chair.

Members continue to take advantage of the many different free webinars provided by Landlord Associations, Solicitors’ firms, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and others. They have served to keep colleagues informed and allowed them to continue gaining valuable CPD hours.

Most PSH teams are back to doing some housing inspections but attempting to resolve housing complaints through virtual means where possible. New working procedures and risk assessments have been written and procurement of PPE to protect staff and customers.

The group is meeting for the first time in 2021 at the beginning of March.

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

In December 2020 we said goodbye, and a huge thank you, to outgoing Chair Hayley Brooks.

This month we are very happy to welcome Cathy McCarthy, from West Kent Housing, to the role of Chair and Helen Charles, from Town and Country Housing, to the role of Vice Chair.

We are also excited to update our Group’s Terms of Reference to allow us to strengthen the executive team by introducing this new role of vice chair.

**Housing Strategy and Enabling Group**

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Group met in December to bid a member of the group good luck in a new role and to have a pre-Christmas wellbeing catch up. The group is due to meet at the end of February, the Action Plan for the group will continue to be on the agenda for review and consideration, to support the implementation of the main KMHS. The Rural Housing Protocol is being officially launched with great support from Action with Communities Rural Kent on the 19th February, via a lunchtime webinar, to date over 100 are registered to attend this launch.

**Kent Engagement Group**

Kent Engagement Group met on the 8th December and Changing Minds Kent opened the call with a presentation on the work they have been involved in during the pandemic around mental health and wellbeing. We had a discussion on the White Paper and a general catch-up and check-in to see how people were feeling as the year was coming to an end. We also spoke about any upcoming projects/ideas we all had and challenges we were still facing. Virtual meeting dates were agreed for 2021 with the next one taking place on the 11th February 2021.

**Kent Events Group**

The KHG Events are meeting on the 8th February to discuss primarily the planning of the KHG Extraordinary Awards, submissions were due in by 5th February 2021. For all those who have made a submission details about the event will be shared in due course.

Over the course of January 2021 two virtual information sessions have been delivered, one regarding Data Protection and Governance, led by Capsticks and the second about the Tactical use of CPN’s, led by Mallard Consultancy, both had 38 members in attendance.

The group will continue to plan for events over the course of the 2021 with focus on the Housing White Paper, strategic housing delivery amongst other topics, 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 Rebecca Smith or Kerry Newbury 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**

A KHC Operational Meeting was held at the end on 21st October 2020

The new change of circumstance process on Kent Homechoice went live on 1st December 2020.

In November 2020 we had our first view of the upgraded PSH/SLA system which Locata were developing. The PSH module is now available to any KHC partner (with a support fee cost). We are in discussions with regards to whether we will add the Social Lettings Agency enhancements to the module.

KHC Partners have tested the upgrade for adding higher res property images to the system along with enhancements to improve the user experience for those with additional accessibility requirements such as visual impairment. This went live in December 2020.

An additional KHC Op Meeting of LA partners was held in December 2020 to review the KAA process along with our OT colleagues and changes will be trialled shortly and reviewed after 6 months

We are still awaiting the return of a number of signed Partnership Agreements, **until these are returned**, we are unable to extend the contract with Locata.

The new version of the help with homelessness triage tool is almost ready to go live.

With assistance from Cornerstone Barristers and Lee Georgiou at GBC the eligibility questions have been rewritten for the online housing application form to comply with the new legislation. They are with Locata and will be added to the form over the next two weeks.

**Additional Countywide Group Updates**

**Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership**

The Kent and Medway Warm Homes Scheme is now back to completing installations following enhanced safety and social distancing procedures.

KMSEP partners are looking at future options for providing an energy efficiency offer for residents, following on from the KMSEP Retrofitting Framework which officially ended in October 2014. Our existing contracts have been extended until 31st March 2021, but we are now working on the new contracts to take over from these.

Solar Together Kent, a collective solar PV buying scheme, had around 4,000 residents register for a no-obligation quote for solar panels and/or battery storage. Nine Kent districts and Medway council signed up to participate. The scheme ran a successful information session with 290 attendees and had just under 700 residents accept their quotes. Surveys are now taking place and installations should take place before the end of June 2021.

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is now available [here.](https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-and-medway-energy-and-low-emissions-strategy)

The next meeting of the Project Board will be taking place in March.

**Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership**

Due to ongoing COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, the delivery of many schemes have slowed down but are still operational. The Partnership is continuing to deliver the following:

Current contract with SGN/WHF is delivering first time gas central heating in partnership with SSE. 7 Kent Local Authorities supported the funding applications. A further 3 local authorities are looking to join this scheme. We have secured a further funding bid on LADS 1 and starting delivery on this shortly for EWI/ASHP.

Off Gas Scheme with SGN – currently collecting and processing referrals for all LAs taking part. Funding from SGN has been extended until March 2021 for gas connections and heating fund until March 2022.

KEEP members have been working with KMSEP task and finish group to look at future of the KMSEP Framework as the current Warm Homes Framework has been extended to March 2021. This is to ensure that heating and other energy efficiency measures are in place for vulnerable residents during Winter 2020/21.

Officers are also looking at the recent development of the LADS 2 bid. This will be delivered via the Energy Hub. There seems to be major changes in how it will be administered including an agent being procured for the delivery. Kent officers will be meeting together to look further into this future bid.

We are continuing to deliver Collective switching schemes. Saving money through energy bills is now more important than ever because of the financial strain many people will have encountered as a result of COVID 19, and increased levels of home working.

New scheme ‘Solar Together’ has had its first auction in October and we await outcome. This scheme is supported by a number of Kent LA’s with KCC overseeing the contract.

KEEP officers are continuing to work on the Climate Emergency agenda. Partners continue to deliver actions outlined in the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy, and continue to progress partnership working across organisations. Some local authorities are starting to identify Health partners and are attending CCG meetings at GP level to input increasing awareness about BCF grants and other grants.

Local authorities have received the Winter food and fuel grant to administer. Work is under way to deliver this to the vulnerable households as quickly as possible. The Partnership will also be working with KCC to help deliver this until end of March.