**Kent Housing Group Sub Groups**

**Kent Housing Options Group**

Since the last update KHOG in September the group has met one further time for a full membership meeting. An update was provided by the MHCLG and introduction made for, Zsofia Imre, the new RSI lead for Kent, taking over from Lucy Baker.

Paresh Acharya the CEO of Help2Rent, who has previous presented at KHOG, spoke about the ambitions of Help2Rent to bring on landlords and agents for private rented sector properties to only be available to Kent authorities and preventing London from accessing the market. This led to a discussion on what districts and borough are doing to access the PRS and incentives they use.

There was also a discussion on when out of borough placements fail the role of the placing authority to ensure that clients are adequately linked into relevant services.

The KHOG chair also attended the Kent Tenancy Management Subgroup to raise for discuss the issue of rent arrears/tenancy debt and how RP’s apply this issue when considering nominations from LHA’s Housing Registers. Particularly discussing whether any RP’s are intending to review these policies around rent arrears/tenancy debts as the impact of Covid on applications may led to more applicants having rent arrears.

There is one final KHOG LA only meeting scheduled for this year (10 December).

**Kent Tenancy Management Sub Group**

KTMSG met last on the 7th October and had a presentation from the Energy Saving Trust, KSAS and a discussion session with the Chair of KHOG about rent arrears and tenancy debt and nominations from LHA’s to RP’s. The group also discussed the developing Virtual Lettings Guide and this should be signed off at the final meeting for 2020 in mid-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. Frequency and dates for 2021 meetings will be agreed at the forth coming December meeting of the group.

**Kent Private Sector Housing Group**

The KPSHG are due to meet virtually through video conferencing on 7th December 2020. Members gave verbal updates at the meeting in September rather than the usual written ones in order to make the meeting more interactive.

Kerry Petts – Chair of the KPSHG will be stepping down at the end of 2020 and will discuss the position of Chair for 2021 at the meeting in December.

Discussions are ongoing with Kent Fire and Rescue service regarding the protocol between PSH and KFRS for certain types of residential buildings. The final draft of the protocol will be discussed at the Kent Housing Technical Group on 30th November.

Members have been taking 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 us informed and allow us to continue gaining valuable CPD hours.

Most PSH teams are now getting 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.

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

We have recently taken a moment to reflect upon our priorities following the impact we have seen from Covid-19. As a result we have; broadened the suicide prevention action to now encompass all mental health, incorporated a specific focus on reducing weight and keeping fit, and made our supporting vulnerable communities/people action more comprehensive and inclusive. These changes are in addition to our existing actions.

Our work is going from strength to strength. We have established a Task and Finish Group for our Smoking and Housing work. This group includes colleagues from Social Housing, Local Authority, Public Health, KCHFT and Kent Fire and Rescue Service. We are working on a Smoke Free Agenda and are developing a campaign to generate smoke free homes, smoke free cars, smoke free spaces and smoke free tenancies.

We continue to roll out training to our members and in this last quarter provided them with access to Make Every Contact Count, Prevent and Second-Hand Smoke training.

**Housing Strategy and Enabling Group**

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Group met in September with a presentation from Lucy Breeze at KCC to introduce the Kent Low Emissions Strategy and the Kent Environment Strategy. The group also had a verbal update from Homes England and a presentation from Medway Council about a study undertaken with regards to small sites and delivery of new homes. The Action Plan for the group remains in development and will be agreed by the end of the year, with a view to prioritise Covid-19 response work. The next step for the Rural Housing Protocol is to launch it virtually. The group was due to meet in November but this meeting was cancelled with a short call planned ahead of the Christmas break, with meeting dates agreed for 2021.

Please see additional paper for an update on the Kent Community Housing Hub.

**Kent Engagement Group**

Kent Engagement Group met virtually on 1st June and then again in in Mid-October, again another opportunity for colleagues to share and learn from their peers regarding the challenges of delivering resident involvement and community development services through lockdown, sharing best practice on the new normal of zoom conferences, online workshops, and managing staff remotely.

KEG will be meeting again in early December, a short meeting to give colleagues the opportunity to check in ahead of the Christmas break and will agree meeting frequency and dates for 2021. The group will also have a short presentation from Changing Minds Kent about an overview of their offer around mental health and overall wellbeing.

**Kent Events Group**

The KHG Events We’re continuing to work on our events programme for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021 with virtual workshops being delivered around Prevent, Employee Mental Wellbeing, Making Every Contact Count, Covid-19 Response Masterclass and coming up in January another Prevent session and GDPR session are planned, details to be shared.

The KHG Awards of course had to be cancelled for 2020 but at the KHG meeting there will be an update on the plans for 2021!

Please contact Rebecca Smith or Kerry Newbury if you’ve:

• Missed any information on the workshops we’re holding and would like to attend,

• 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 will be going live on 1st December 2020.

In November 2020 we will have our first view of the upgraded PSH/SLA system which Locata are developing KHC Partners are currently testing 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.

An additional KHC Op Meeting of LA partners is being held in December 2020 to review the KAA process along with our OT colleagues.

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.

**Corporate Parent and Children’s Commissioning**

**Young People’s Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service**: Six-month Notices to Vacate, in line with Government Guidance, have been served to those young adults who no longer require or eligible for the service. Following scheduled reviews in January and March 2021 further notices will be served based on discussions with professionals and on the individual circumstances of those involved. Once move-on has been completed there will be a significant increase in the throughput of Children in Care, Children in Need, and Care Leavers into the service.

**Rights, Representation and Advocacy**: KCC have agreed to extend the contract by one year to clear the waiting list for Independent Visitors, review the current service, decide on what is needed going forward, explore procuring a joint service with Medway, and to get us through Covid-19 without making any major changes.

**Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**: Three reception Centres currently in operation: Millbank (Ashford), Appledore (Cranbrook), and Oakwood (Maidstone). Appledore and Oakwood are temporary arrangements. There were no new arrivals in September or October, due to KCC not having the capacity to take new arrivals. One new arrival in November due to a possible connection in Kent. To date, via the Governments National Transfer Scheme, there have been 189 UASC moved on to other local authorities outside Kent, there are a further 14 offers pending.

**Move-on**: Move-on: This continues to be challenging for all supported accommodation services with many reporting capacity issues to meet demand. The Shared Accommodation service have issued 135 notice to vacates’ to over 21-year olds so far, providing young people with six months’ notice. There are approximately another 76 letters to be issued which include rising 21’s. The Personal Advisers for the young people will support them in identifying move on accommodation including exploring private rented schemes.

**18+ Private Rental Sector Referral Scheme**: To date we have received 125 referrals for young adults and have had 23 young adults move into private rented accommodation.

**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, has 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 is now in the acceptance phase where residents can decide if they would like to accept the quote. Residents can still register for the scheme until the 11th December and installations are expected to take place next year.

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 December.

**Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership**

Due to current situation with COVID-19, the delivery of many schemes have slowed down but are operational again. 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 2 local authorities are looking to join this scheme. We have secure a further funding bid on LADS 1 and awaiting to start delivery on this shortly.

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 ends in September 2020. The 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.

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.