**Present**: Genette Pinwill, Chair & Golding Homes; Rebecca Smith, KHG; Anthony Crossley, Ashford BC; Tracy Chambers, Medway Council; Verity Johnson, Dover DC; Keith Cane, TCH; Matthew Eddy, MHS Homes; Jill Rogers, Gravesham BC; David Edie, Dartford BC; Helen Sudbury, F&HDC; Tina Dust, Sanctuary HG; Sarah Walmsley, West Kent HA; Lindsay Felstead, Clarke Willmott.

**Apologies**: Matthew Robbins, Optivo; Helen Ayers, Dover DC; Tom Harding, F&HDC; Simon Davis, Medway Council; Julie Terry, WKHA; June Heslop, SHG; Sian Harris, Clarion HG; Ben McGowan, Moat;

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| **Reference** | **Notes/Outcome** | **When** | **Lead** | **Action/Decision** |
| **Introductions** | GP welcomed everyone to the group call. |  |  |  |
| **Housing Law Update** | LF provided a Housing Law Update. Default notice period from 1/6/21 is 4 months, some exceptions (arrears & ASB) ASB has returned to the normal notice periods. The default notice period does not apply to NTQ – this remains as 4 weeks, this did not change. As of 1/8/21 the notice period will change to 2 months, again with exceptions (arrears & ASB). LF advised to be cautious and have good reason to use the exceptions about notice periods.  In theory on the 1/10/21 the timetable resumes to the standard timeframes, unless there is further intervention by Government.  From 1/6/21 the warrant execution ban was lifted, there were some exceptions related to serious rent arrears or ASB, there will be warrants from March 2020 that need to be executed so the waiting time on those from that point forward will take time to go through. Courts are operating differently about timeframes on requests for execution of warrants.  Reactivation of stayed claims – ends 30th July 2021, any that have not been activated before the 31st July you will need to use the N244 notice requesting to lift the stay. Review hearings and notice for initial hearings, remind that this hearing is to enable the Judge to decide next steps and the tenant to contact their landlord to discuss the case.  LF shared links to check notices for possession, are you using the most up to date version?  Breathing Space – the extent of the impact on social housing tenants unknown currently. It is designed to give debtors time to seek advice and time out from creditors chasing for money, including rent arrears. Slides provide overview of the two schemes, these are formal debt respite schemes, LF shared some practical implications about Breathing Space within the slides. You need to check all debts within the local authority that you are owed by the debtor.  Breathing Space is very specific, mental health crisis treatment, not mental health generally. A qualified mental health person will have to confirm that the person in question is in mental health crisis. During the Breathing Space, there is still an obligation to meet their debts; it is that you cannot be proactively contacting them to pay etc. If they do not comply with their obligation to meet rent payments then you can contact their named Breathing Space contact/debt advisor.  Direct deductions for arrears, should these remain in place during Breathing Space? Any of these payments or Direct Debits/standing orders can continue as their remains an obligation to pay. However, if the tenant stops the direct payment/deduction you cannot contact them about this.  Housing Ombudsman – Handling Code July 2020 – universal definition of a complaint (link to the guide in the slides). ‘However made’ – could be a multitude of ways, having to make it easy for people to complain to your organisation? Requirement to produce annual reports to demonstrate your learning. The ultimate threat is the publication of determination of cases with named parties.  Significant increase experienced about complaints generally experienced by Clarke Willmott. A tenant can contact the HO at any time; there is no waiting time after the final complaint response made.  AC raised the issue of the service from the HO from an LA perspective and how to push back on decisions made and the period for responses. LF advised to try, it would be reasonable to go back to the HO about a situation, and there is justification to do so. The HO will tend not get involved in a legal case.  LF advised colleagues to be robust and closing it down once a complaint has been through a process, especially when a decision is made by the HO.  Social Housing White Paper – LF highlighted a couple of points. Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms –Government intending to consult on poor electrical safety. Access for testing can be an issue for landlords, because this is high on the agenda, you have to have a robust approach to enable testing. Strengthen the regulator role to include safety as part of the regulator remit and powers. Mental Health – promise to invest in services through the NHS to support Mental Health. Pets, specific reference within the SHWP that pets can help create positive mental health, where appropriate to enable tenants to have pets.  Two Case Studies – NTQ served when a tenant dies (details in the slides); s21 Notice and Gas Safety Certificates. |  | **ALL** | **Colleagues can contact LF with any questions, details in the slides** |
| **Matters Arising April** | Pre Tenancy Learning – suggested film on gas safety, this is being actioned by Vicky Hodson at Kent Homechoice.  GP asked RS to capture and note the opportunity for a Vice Chair role within the sub group. |  |  |  |
| **Trends** | GP asked colleagues about annual surveys and any trends, Golding will be looking at in September 2021. AC suggested having a document that all organisations through KHG could have access to and help develop survey questions. |  | **RS/**  **HM** | **RS to note for next meeting agenda** |
| **DA Reciprocal** | RS shared that she has been chasing the contact at Clarion HG about the Kent DA reciprocal agreement that is in development. RS to contact Lisa again and then share the draft with a timescale for colleagues to respond with comments. | **ASAP** | **RS** | **RS to contact Clarion HG and share draft when available** |
| **Standing Items** | Colleagues shared experiences of recent court hearings and the outcomes. There has been some movement in Maidstone Court for evictions, in Medway the courts are due to, move coupled with many temporary staff covering posts that were furloughed over the period of Covid.  Virtual lettings – the guide has been developed and can be updated accordingly to reflect new ways of working. AC asked about void figures, do these include all types of voids (assisted moves/management transfers/complex cases). HS advised that F&HDC does include everything but does comment on impacts such as major works/policy void. GP advised that void numbers are high in comparison to last year and a high number of requests to move, considering the council tax implications on voids.  MHS homes are in a good place with voids, mutual exchanges are delayed but due to external partners. DE advised that there are increased volumes but using Homeswapper for this process. JR considering Homeswapper but in discussion with relevant Governance colleagues about GDPR. | **ASAP** | **DE** | **DE to share legal confirmation about use of HomeSwapper and GDPR** |
| **Training/Events/Best Practice** | HS advised that still working on the Older Persons Review, to consider as another topic in the future as WKHA are taking on a similar approach. DE went to cabinet recently about conversion of two smaller units into one larger unit, and to discontinue using flexible tenancies.  VJ going to cabinet to dispense with flexible tenancies in July.  RS mentioned the access to DA training via KHG and the Housing Health and Social Care and will share the email with details with the notes. |  | **ALL** | **Colleagues to share any wording about dispensing of flexible tenancies with VJ or DE** |
| **AOB** | RS introduced Helen Miller as the successor for the KHG Partnership Manager role, commencing on 12th July 2021. |  |  |  |