**KENT HOUSING OPTIONS SUB GROUP (KHOG) MEETING**

**13th September 2018 - Maidstone BC Office, Maidstone House, Maidstone**

**Present:** ; Jane Smither, Chair and T & M BC;Marie Gerald, Vice Chair & Dartford BC, Ray O’Shea, Ashford BC; Elly Toye & Pam Millington, Dover; Jane Lang, TWBC; Stuart Clifton, Maidstone Borough Council; Mark Damiral, F&HDC; Lynn Wilders, Gravesham BC; Vicky Hodson, Kent Homechoice; Zoe Callaway, Swale BC; Deborah White, WKHA and KHOG Mentor; Franky Roma, Medway Council; Lora McCourt, Canterbury CC; Vicky May, Thanet DC;

**Apologies:** Josh Mitchell, KCC CRC; Roxanne Sheppard, Swale BC;

**Guests:**  Richard Williams, MHCLG; Sara Pennington, HMP Elmley; Maria Love & Claire Wills (NACRO)

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| **Reference** | **Notes/Outcome** | **Timescale** | **Lead person** | **Action/Decision** |
| **Action log from Meeting**  **21 June 2018** | **Reconnection Policy** –unaware of outcome of commissioning, will discuss once known MA.  **Reciprocal Policies** –to be passed to Vice Chair to be picked up for action  **Protocols** to remain on the agenda as a standing item.  **Homelessness Prevention Tool** – being used by some colleagues, a decision on purchasing to be made soon, would be £1k approximately per authority. Feedback is that is simple to use, one element due for implementation soon (finding affordable properties), DDC are using regularly. The visual tool regarding expenditure is very useful. Need to establish if the cost is per annum or one off cost.  **Out of London Placements** – too costly for local authorities, it was agreed to contact KCC and London Councils to see if they would share the costing.  **Terms of Reference** – updated and shared with KHOG.  **Protocols** – to be monitored as they are required and KHOG to liaise with KHG EXB about resources to get protocols developed, the Intentionally Homelessness Protocol needs re writing. The protocol could look to identify high risk families, RW to share examples of existing policies.  **Case Law** – this current accounts case law has been delayed until February 2019.  **Training** – any spaces on forth coming sessions to be offered out to colleagues. |  | **MA**  **MG**  **RS**  **MG/ALL**  **MG**  **RS**  **MG/RS/RW**  **ALL** | MA to feedback  MG to take forward  To note for future agenda  Establish costing & any feedback about use of the tool.  Contact KCC about sharing cost with London Councils  Share ToR with action log  Meet & scope actions to re write  As required |
| **HRA & Impact on Offenders leaving prison** | Context set by Governor of Elmley Prison (Elmley is a remand prison). Want to make the most of the new duty and housing offenders when they are released. Huge through put, 200 – 220 released every month and 75% referred to NACRO and half will be NFA. Average sentence length is 14-16 weeks, spike in 14 and 28 day recalls, changing population of prisoners with elderly prisoners and sex offenders. There are other prisons in Kent with similar issues, both men and women’s prisons. **Constraints faced by prisons** - Limited internet access in the prison for staff, and virtually none for prisoner, space limited, scanners are being introduced to assist. Short core day when men are unlocked and available to interview, lock downs etc. Breaking the cycle with access to housing is critical.  **NACRO** – based in prisons and funded by the KSS CRC and look after those who are NFA. Really struggling with housing for offenders leaving custody. Referrals through to NACRO 12 weeks prior to release, often they are at 5 days or two weeks. In this time they are met, assessed, referred to local authority housing teams or other housing options. A lack of response from housing options can delay the process. Telephone assessments are difficult in the prison setting. Referrals are being emailed with posting of signed copies via recorded delivery. Limited feedback from housing options, have received some PHP. What do housing options need from NACRO and can help the process? Case studies shared. All prisoners are vulnerable, the HRA doesn’t specify that all prisoners are eligible for assistance under the HRA.  **Discussion** – Difficult to be reactive in the short timescales for assistance. The HRA is considering why an applicant is homeless and the history of the person. In the NACRO assessment questions about homelessness are asked.  FM advised that Medway have been opening cases as prevention and will use PRS and then work with them in the relief stage and the 56 days. If you start relief stage in prison this means loss of days in this period.  The local authorities experience the same barriers to secure accommodation as the prison service.  **The referral form** – there is a Kent Referral Form, but this is on line and the prison service cant access websites due to security. Prison teams are based in prison and have to use prison services computers. Is there potential to have a paper version of the referral form with agreed set of questions to assist with the process, for example have they been rough sleeping before their prison term? Are there any licence restrictions, what medication is the offender being prescribed?  RW – lots of case law about priority need – significantly more vulnerable than the ordinary person if made homeless, due to their medical condition or suite of issues for them personally. People can be in priority need but intentionally homeless. More and more complex cases results in the benchmark changing. Offenders on short term sentence are generally unlikely to be institutionalised, but each case is determined on its own merits. Government are setting up an editable pdf referral form and every council will have a duty to refer email to receive this information. Government recognise the strict security issues and how this is a barrier to a referral. This shouldn’t override or replace any local arrangements that are working well.  Open prisons allow more opportunities to work together, arranging interviews, attending external appointments and access to the internet. The issue is the follow on services for DA for prisoners who access this whilst in custody. Duty to Refer is a statutory duty on both sides. There is no reference to age in the current code of guidance for the HRA. Statistics about the impact of the HRA will take at least 12 months to allow for new reporting methods and consistency of data shared. This will include indicators of repeat applications, which could be revolving door offenders.  A good point is how to retain accommodation that an offender may have before they are in custody. This is picked up by NACRO as part of the work. | **ASAP** | **ALL** | Colleagues to provide a point of contact via RS |
| **MHCLG Update** | RW updated – will be visiting local authorities he is responsible for, to see the impact of the HRA there are two new advisors joining the team of advisors. The London Training Academy, set up to recognise the fact about new starters that are not housing options staff and top up training to existing staff. If you have an invite you are encouraged to attend or send staff. This is free.  James Jolly joined the Rough Sleeping Team, he has been made aware of potential changes to the commissioning of homelessness services via KCC and this includes funding for specific offender supported housing units. There has been a homelessness commissioning consultation but not any outcome to date. DW advised that within the tenders there will be a number of supported accommodation units, there is an issue about young people who are vulnerable but not care leavers, nothing specific about offenders. This is a tender by negotiation. Lead providers will be appointed on the 1st October, existing providers will work through existing contracts for the 6 month transition.  UC will continue to roll out and consider how UC will work for vulnerable people, including those in temporary accommodation going forward.  **Tenants Fee’s Bill** –purpose is to protect tenants from unscrupulous agents, the Tenant’s Fee Bill as it stands now and once it is enacted would make it illegal for a local authority to incentivise an agent to accept a tenant through payment (not rent deposit or rent in advance). MHCLG are working on this and considering an exemption within the Bill for local authorities. This is a Government backed Bill and not a Private Members Bill.  **Case law** – 31st January 2019, Supreme Court, highest appeal, Samuels’s v Birmingham. Court of appeal judgement that said a tenant should use some of their other benefits to assist with housing costs. This is a big case for local authorities. Birmingham are defending this case.  H-Click –there is step by step guide available, which RW can share if required. RW to take feedback from KHOG to the stats team. Is it lawful to share personal data via H-Click? MHCLG would have gone through the HCO to check whether it is lawful to share the required data via H-Click. | **ASAP** | **RW/ALL** | Contact RW for more information about training |
| **HRA Workshop** | HRA and D2R Workshop set for 28th September, 1.30pm in Maidstone. MHCLG will attend and provide an update/overview. MA invited to talk about the Homelessness Commissioning and the HRA. MG to feedback on the Hub Pilot model in Dartford and VH about the national perspective. All local authorities, the RP’s who are members of KHG, including those with supported housing arm, KCC and NACRO/CRC.  KCC have developed their own referral form, Amanda Hornsby, KCC to be invited to demo the form. At the moment this form used by KCC will go to the duty to refer email that each local authority will have.  Opportunity for the housing associations to understand what their role could be to assist with this new legislation and duty and to make them aware of what the impacts are going to be. MG to make reference back to the work she did with HA’s back in January as part of the hub presentation. DW to share link from the NHF on this. | **ASAP**  **ASAP**  **For 28/9** | **RS**  **RS**  **MG** | RS to share agenda as available  RS to liaise with Amanda Hornsby  MG to note for the session |
| **Behavioural Insights Team Letter** | JS shared the Behavioural Insights Team letter in advance of the meeting. This is about managing expectations; the letter shared is the final version. The timescales will work differently for each local authority. Could all local authorities use this letter, LGA are keen to learn from Kent, to roll out nationally and put on the LGA website. | **As required** | **ALL/RS** | All colleagues encouraged to use the letter shared. RS to share with action log |
| **Rough Sleeper Count** | The Rough Sleeper Initiative, one element is a bi monthly count; a count was undertaken last night. The night of the 22nd November is the agreed rough count/estimate.  Top 82 local authorities invited to bid. MBC, Canterbury, Thanet, TWBC and Medway all have funding in Kent. There is potentially a further £11m funding available nationally but more news will come forward on this in due course. |  |  |  |
| **Protocols** | Intentionally Homeless Protocol to be looked at as agreed earlier in the meeting.  SC asked is there a need for an Intentionally Homelessness Vulnerable Adults Protocol? It was agreed that this could be an annex to the former mentioned protocol. Will need to engage with Adult Social Care.  VM received letter from NPS who want to do third party sharing agreement. There is an offender protocol that was updated before JPPB disbanded, it does not include early intervention and does the HRA and Duty to Refer supersede the protocol? This protocol also needs consideration of review. |  | MG/RS  MG/SC/RS | MG, SC and RS to start work on this protocol and annex |
| **Recent Case Law** | Colleagues updated on current cases, including Maidstone and Thanet DC. |  |  |  |
| **National Policy** | To be removed from the agenda going forward. | For next meeting | RS | To remove from agenda |
| **Standing Items: Training Opportunities, including local training** | Maidstone BC have shared details of training coming forward (2 day part 7 HRA and letter writing courses). | As req’d | **ALL** | ALL to share as details come forward |
| **AOB** | MG - Conference in December 2018, Northampton. Review of Allocations Policy to include HRA taken to Cabinet.  It was agreed that RS will email the group about the role of Chair, if no one comes forward it will go to MG and a new Vice Chair will be elected.  FM – on Locata, when a case is closed to view a PH you need to publish it and view it in the letters section. You can use publish even if you don’t intend to publish it.  EM – GDPR and correspondence from external organisations such as banks, should this be responded to? How do you hold/store information to not breach GDPR?  Discharge of duty date and then the date when the letter is written, which can be different, which is the discharge date? It was agreed that the errors via H-Click were date matching, the case is only formally closed once the letter is sent so agreed to use the date on the letter as discharge date.  PM – trainer v’s champion for Locata, VH advised that this a trainer role has been advertised for a two day role, advertised nationally.  MD – DHP, colleagues to share information about what their authorities are doing regarding HB and UC.  RS to share dates for 2019 with group (full and LA)  SC suggested inviting KSAS to a meeting of KHOG to establish who qualifies for what assistance they provide. RS to invite KSAS to November meeting, SC to share contact details with RS.  The group noted thanks to Jane for her work with the group and wished her good luck for the future. Jane’s replacement will commence in early November. | By 17/09  ASAP  By 1/11  By 13/9 | **RS**  **ALL**  **RS**  **RS** | ALL to respond to email  Examples to be shared with MD  RS to share dates and confirm venue  RS to invite to next meeting |
| **Next Meeting** | 1st November (full meeting) – Maidstone Borough Council Offices  13th December (LA only) - Maidstone |  | ALL | To note and share apologies if necessary |