**DRAFT - NMSG Action Log – 26th March 2019, Ashford Borough Council, Ashford Kent**

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| **Present**: Matt Eddy, MHS Homes & Chair; Genette Pinwill, WKHA & Vice Chair; Stefan Polom, TCHG; Felicity Dunmall, Gravesend Churches HA; Tom Harding, Medway Council; Tina Dust, Sanctuary HG; June Heslop, Southern Housing Group; Helen Sudbury, Golding Homes; Anthony Crossley, Ashford BC; David Edie, Dartford BC;  **Apologies**: Terry Spillard, Optivo; Brian Horton, SELEP & KHG; Keith Cane, TCHG  **Visitors**: Becky Waller, DWP | | | | |
| **Reference** | **Notes** | **Action/Decision** | **Lead** | **Timescale** | |
| **Minutes & Matters Arising Oct 2018** | Minutes agreed as accurate. There were no matters arising.  Page 4 – to catch up with Terry Spillard regarding Safeguarding Role mentioned at the last meeting. | RS to liaise | **RS** | **By 1/4** | |
| **DWP Overview and Update** | How is it going from perspective of DWP and how providers and local authorities can improve communications and what the asks may be from housing and contacts with customers.  BW commented that some residents do not understand how much their rental payment is and this can delay the payment application process. BW advised that housing colleagues would be welcome to attend DWP offices, liaise with staff and create awareness about housing. There many changes with UC.  Help to Claim coming in from 1st April 2019, sitting with CAB who are working in DWP offices, assisting clients with all elements to have a successful housing payment via UC. JH welcomed this new support and would like to know how tenants can be supported in claiming the housing element and the option around direct payment. (UC47) – Landlords can complete this form and this is a digital process, each case will be assessed individually based on their vulnerability.  FD advised that GCHA have requested direct payments for some vulnerable clients but these have been declined as not meeting the threshold, BW advised that direct payment arrangements are only a short term option.  Change in Circumstances, Help to Claim will help with this situation, they will have an interview with a work coach and talked through a claim and the to do list through the journal. Claimants made aware of the communication platform to allow them to communicate with a Work Coach at DWP. DWP support third party organisations financially to ensure appropriate referrals if clients are vulnerable. There is a third party escalation process for each JCP in Kent. There are a number of colleagues within DWP who will assist claimants with the digital element of UC, if not DWP will be a local provider. The use of the portal by claimants is varied. The journal is the main point of contact promoted for use by the DWP, although claimants can make appointments or call the service centre.  BW advised that wait time is now down to 5 weeks from 6 weeks. An advance payment has to be paid back, now over 12 months and not 6 months. Direct deductions are high. Claimants can apply for advances from outside of the office, HB or other benefit run on is now two weeks and will not be considered as additional income and is paid automatically.  TH raised an issue with regards to when a claimant for UC is not the tenant which results in the portal process complicated. Colleagues urged to send on additional information regarding a claim to the service centre email, this may assist with more complex issues.  In the case of complex mental health where a tenant does not have capacity to provide the information to enable a claim to be made, BW suggested direct payment application. There is a Best Interest meeting set up. The Service Innovation Lead (SIL) is the person with the knowledge about how to approach a complex case and to consider the case. Currently there is a SIL in each DWP office, these resources will be reduced over time as DWP colleagues become more knowledgeable and specialist about the whole process.  People in TA and supported accommodation can claim housing costs through UC. Colleagues urged to keep DWP notified about when new supported accommodation is developed.  £8m is being invested into how to support people to remain in employment or progress them through employment through to 2020.  Joint claims with someone in FTE will not be expected to be seeking work to be successful in making a joint claim. When a claimant has a good reason or cause for not making a UC claim after the 30 day limit they may continue to claim Tax Credits. Claimants now have 14 days to provide evidence to support a claim for UC. Claimants allowed 14 days to provide evidence about medical conditions.  Additional information regarding UC within the presentation to be shared with the notes. | **BW to share presentation**  **BW will share relevant contact details for on line or telephone re Help to Claim**  **BW to share the relevant details for colleagues** | **BW**  **BW**  **BW** | **ASAP**  **ASAP** | |
| **Training / Workshops** | RS shared the information about the events planning the KHG are working on, shared some initial thoughts about the Mental Health and Hoarding sessions in the planning. Details about other sessions to come forward as available. | **RS to share the overview of the MH training and colleagues to feedback interest and numbers** | **ALL** | **By 5/4** | |
| **Domestic Homicide Review** | Presentation shared by Bob Porter at the February KHG main membership, important to share the messages with this group as front line staff who are visiting homes and have contact with tenants and other agencies. GP ran through the presentation with colleagues and they were advised to consider the learning points and share with appropriate colleagues within their organisations.  There is a national definition of ‘mate crime’. | **RS to share link to copy of presentation -** [**https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/events/kent-housing-group-full-membership-meeting-5/**](https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/events/kent-housing-group-full-membership-meeting-5/) | **RS** | **Link provided** | |
| **Kent Tenancy Fraud Forum Update** | The Kent TFF is making progress, this started last year. There is a small core group meeting now and working towards a key amnesty in June 2019, working on publicity materials to form the campaign that can be used with organisations own logos.  In the lead to May there will be some communication through the press and social media and track through June the increase in the awareness to share at the end, to raise awareness and communication that could lead to investigation work after the amnesty. There is also work on a you-tube info graphic around the definitions of tenancy fraud more broadly.  If keys are returned the TFF would like to have confidence that should keys be returned this can be done via any KHG membership office, who will have access to the NTV form and link with the relevant organisation.  Members who are not part of the amnesty but wish to be should contact Rebecca Smith.  The group are also looking at training about investigations and myth busting about evidence gathering and prosecution. More details to follow on this. |  |  |  | |
| **KHG Pre Eviction Protocol** | The Pre Eviction Protocol has been in existence for some years, required an update following the introduction of the HRA, Duty to Refer and GDPR. The protocol has been updated with assistance from KHOG to reflect the new focus on prevention. The aim of the protocol is to encourage early communication between landlord and housing options teams, where possible to prevent the homeliness of a person or family in KHG membership accommodation. The protocol is a short concise document with flow chart and referral form. RS to feedback that the notice period, unless a S21 is not the appropriate place to commence the referral or notification process, that this should be at the point of court application.  The purpose of the protocol should also reflect the language and how we generally approach homelessness generally and engage with tenants who are risk of eviction, the principles through Homes for Cathy. How can this be reflected in the protocol. | **Colleagues to share any feedback about the protocol or flow chart to RS ahead of the KHOG meeting on the 4th April 2019** | **ALL** | **By 1/4** | |
| **KHG Update** | KHG are continuing to work on the refresh of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy, with a revised set of action plans and draft strategy context text to be shared again for further consultation, action plans revised following workshops and consultations, will now include timeframes for completion of objectives.  There is also work that KHG are engaged with across Kent with Homes England and MHCLG regarding infrastructure investment into the county, similar to deals with Government that have taken place elsewhere in the Country, limited details to share currently but will share as available.  KHG Excellence Awards to take place later this year, categories and application information to be shared ahead of open date for submission, colleagues encouraged to communicate the event and opportunity within their own and partnership organisations. Nominations will be accepted from June to end of August.  Continuing to review protocols that need to reflect legislative changes around homelessness, this has included the Pre Eviction Protocol, all updated protocols will be share on the KHG website.  KHG working through feedback from membership survey, including how to engage across the membership and between use of the KHG website.  Continuation of work on the Events planning, including information sessions, training opportunities and to help membership organisations meet the training needs of colleagues. As workshop sessions come forward details will be shared via the KHG website and through sub group meetings.  New Chair of KHG now in place, Jo Ellis from Town and Country Housing Group, Vice Chair is Sharon Williams, Ashford Borough Council. |  |  |  | |
| **Agenda Planning** | To have learning from the key amnesty on the July agenda, sharing of case studies or feedback.  Supported housing procurement process, what are the implications of the new tendering process? Housing First, Golding to bring this to the next meeting or October meeting, supporting street homelessness.  Colleagues to share any other ideas about the agenda planning with RS, Me and GP. | RS to note for agenda  RS/Me/GP to note for agenda | **RS**  **RS/ME/GP** | **For July**  **Oct 2019** | |
| **AOB** | Asked by an Ashford BC colleague to raise the question about landing and stairwell policies in communal areas, what is your policy, is it zero tolerance? Any good practice or successful policies that can be shared? [Vicky.perry@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Vicky.perry@ashford.gov.uk) David to share CPW letter via RS for all colleagues.  GP asked regarding transfers and voids, people to share information with GP about this. AC to share the learning from the recent LEAN review of the void process within Ashford BC. FD advised that GCHA are reviewing their void and transfer policy and how to make best use of stock.  BW advised that posters for the key amnesty can be placed in the DWP offices.  AC asked colleagues to share their decision making process or report about the continuation of Fixed Term Tenancies or reverting to secure life time tenancies with him to assist with work around this at Ashford Borough Council. Please respond to AC directly by email [anthony.crossley@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.crossley@ashford.gov.uk) | Colleagues to share information with Vicky direct  Agreed to add as future agenda item  RS to note for Kent TFF  All to respond to AC direct | **All**  **RS/ME**  **RS**  **ALL** | **ASAP**  **For July**  **May**  **ASAP** | |

***Thanks noted to Ashford BC for hosting***