**KTMSG Sharing Best Practice Teams Summary Notes**

**Wednesday 22nd July 2020**

Great opportunity to share learning and experiences due to the implications of Covid-19, the first best practice session for Kent Tenancy Management Sub Group, following monthly meetings of the sub group since the end of March 2020.

**Don’t Make Tough Times Tougher – West Kent HA**

*Genette Pinwill, Income Recovery and Joanne Hiscock, Property Homes.*

High performing collection service at WKHA, working within targets set, impact of Covid-19 saw significant risk of lost income. Customer contact shooting up during the lockdown period, court closures and how to manage the risks and contact.

Message to make communicate that there to help but balance with payment of rent as priority, clear about the obligation, difficult period of time for tenants. Make Rent Priority and Keep Talking Campaign really important.

Focused on the technical and systems as well as the people side. Had a lot of automation around text messages, letters and contact at stages of rent arrears work flow, suspending anything not fit for purpose, adapted and working through changes now building new automation. Focused on enhancements around UC and work flow to adapt to the increase in claims, 30% increase in UC claims since March 2020.

Quickly categorised the end contact note so could review call handling each week, what messages shared, to share with the communities team to share what tools and resources was there to feedback to tenants. Income communication campaign, designed with tenants via an online meeting, had a sense of key messages so working with tenants to design new materials to keep communication going.

Six elements to the income campaign, shared in the slides by Genette. Through materials using social media to promote strap lines, continuing with responsive engagement.

Acting swiftly with automation, quickly catching the messages and using KPI’s to understand the messages back. Keep reviewing projections of the impact to make necessary changes.

Recruitment and induction continued through Covid-19, a good foundation for future waves of changes and challenges.

*Augmented Reality – Joanne*

Wanted to find an alternative method to access properties during lockdown, found this application call Augmented Reality (AR). How could this be used across the business?

Realised tenants did not want to wait at home once restrictions started to lift and not be home waiting for repairs. Stock of WKHA is growing across the county, use the app to be more environmentally friendly.

Remote diagnosis, best use of operatives times, increase the number of first time fixes, help tenants to resolve repair queries themselves.

AR has an overlay, the operatives provide a link to the resident, opening a video chat (not recorded) allowing both the resident and operative to see the same thing. Completed a pre pilot programme using members of the contract teams in and out of house, testing through inspections with residents, 100% positive feedback.

Increased full pilot to whole of WKHA, using for pre void inspections, new homes defects and in customer services.

How much operative time would be saved, including travel and distance, reducing one visit a once would cover the cost of the AR for one month, now reviewing all savings made through the pilot with a view to using full time moving forward.

**Change – Maintaining the pace post Covid lockdown – MHS Homes**

*Matt Eddy, Business Partner*

Covid-19 has impacted the pace of change, including structural changes to how customers are serviced, including on line shopping and engagement. The pace of change at MHS Homes has moved quicker, including the introduction of Microsoft Teams ahead of plan.

Have used a data led approach to housing within MHS Homes, bought the flexibility to design the offer in house for residents and staff. For Housing Management there is live and migrate systems, pre booking consultancy days to instigate change and development, using products such as Hot Jar, diagnostic products to understand the customer journeys through services.

Launched a fully integrated DD system via the website at MHS Homes, through natural traffic to the website to test and develop the system. Make use of proof of content, using live data and engagement with suppliers to integrate and update systems.

Debt Management re launched in 2019 and already at version 5.3 of this process but is updated to reflect change and response to the environment.

In office 365 have used Forms to undertaken customer surveys, within instant responses, using existing subscriptions and software, explore what you have and pay for already so not purchasing goods or software that is not really needed.

Having a road map to keep up with the pace of change, to look ahead at what is needed, really important and keeps you focused. Don’t forget the customer journey as we leave lockdown, how to keep improving the journey and outcomes for the customer.

Looking at Amazon lockers for staff, contractors and tenants to collect or drop off items, thinking and using innovation or ideas that are in existence.

**Viewings and Lettings Safe and Secure – Medway Council**

*Tom Harding, Housing Manager*

Changes and tweaks made to the viewings and sign up process due to Covid-19 and the lockdown period.

3,000 homes and carry out on average 3 to 4 lettings per week and let a small number of properties as temporary accommodation. Pre lockdown the lettings process was a traditional one, through April and May all lettings/viewings were suspended with a slow restart in June, back to full capacity now.

Made the decision early on to undertake a physical viewing, partly due to the culture of the organisation and also because it is important for prospective tenants to see the property available. Invitation to the viewing for one or more customers will depend upon how confident Medway are about the first person agreeing to have the property.

Spend more time now ahead of the viewing about the new process, rules based around the limitations due to Covid-19, tips about not touching surfaces and how the overall process will be.

Voids are all sanitised ahead of the inspection, all viewings are completed once all void works are completed, the housing officer will arrive ahead of the customer, open all internal doors, use wedges to keep doors open, provide liquid soap and hand towels for hand washing before and after.

Share and take advice from Public Health about the overall approach to manage the inspection or viewing process.

99% of sign up by telephone, post viewing and acceptance. Always used a sign up checklist to cover all key areas on a checklist, this has been modified for full telephone use post Covid-19. The checklist is shared with the tenant after complete, signed to confirm understanding. Medway have adopted DocuSign with tenancies, working on how to manage secure tenancies and DocuSign through support from legal colleagues. Found using DocuSign very simple.

Keys are currently still collected from the Medway offices, fully sanitised. All new tenants get a welcome call from the Welfare Team to offer any support or advice. Six week settling in visit is still under consideration, happy to have/share any ideas about managing this process.

**Doing it digitally – Golding Homes**

*Francesca Spencer, Allocations Team Leader*

Pre Covid-19 similar to other organisations in offering physical one to one viewings, with on average 10 – 12 lettings per week, with residents in most cases asked to attend the Golding Homes offices to sign all paper work, with the exception of contactless verification information sharing which was undertaken via email.

The number of voids completed and lettings dropped during the period of lockdown but now are back to normal numbers and have reduced the back log.

The new normal is now about virtual viewings by the relevant officer, once all void works are complete, this helps to maintain the social distance and keep colleagues safe. Key safes are installed as early on in the void period as possible and are reused/repurposed to ensure value for money. The Golding Homes handy man now removes and installs key safes where required, only use on a block of flats.

During the virtual viewing the officer will talk through the key points to note, where relevant items are such as heating controls, stop cock etc. the videos have been edited and shared via the PR and Communications Team, from week commencing 27th July the Lettings Team will be undertaking this work which will reduce the reliance upon other teams in the organisation. Currently the videos are uploaded to YouTube and a secure link is shared with the applicant, the plan is to move away from YouTube and send a secure link via email through the editing software used.

Golding Homes are using Adobe Sign for all documents post the viewing, can be signed by multiple tenants and feedback on the use has been positive. It is similar to DocuSign and can be used on any device.

There are some exceptions to virtual viewings, in the main on medical or disability grounds, there has to be an agreed valid reason to undertake a physical viewing, when all guidance around social distancing is adhered to.

Will continue to work in this way moving forward, feedback from staff and residents is that it is simple, efficient and a good way of working.

**Questions**

The cost of AR is £16.50 per month per licence, do need to have a licence per person. For out of hours just one licence as phone passed around that team.

Applicants turning up at viewings even though trying to avoid physical viewings, not had feedback on this from contractors working on site. Apart from one case there has been no negative feedback about the property after a virtual viewing.

Lots of different approaches and stages to using a virtual viewing, getting the right balance based upon the culture of the organisation and the access to technology.

Digital and virtual meetings do and will continue to provide more efficient use of time and provide more opportunities to share information and learning.

**Closing Points**

Colleagues urged to share feedback about the session to assist with planning future sessions.

Rebecca to share the slides with all colleagues along with contact information for those presenting.