

KENT HIGH PRIORITY REHOUSING (RECIPROCAL) SCHEME (KRS)

Joint Statement

The purpose of this reciprocal scheme is to provide guidance and procedure for a voluntary reciprocal arrangement between the twelve Kent authorities, excluding Medway. The guidance points within the scheme should only be only in exceptional circumstances, when it is necessary to assist a household move from one borough to another. This scheme sets out a commitment from all local authorities to cooperate with regards not only the exporting of households, but the receiving of households.

The aim of the Kent reciprocal scheme is to assist the Local Housing Authorities across the county to meet statutory homelessness duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. This scheme should be used to assist in rehousing an applicant in another borough/district who is at risk of domestic abuse, violence or serious harm within the borough/district who owe the applicant a homelessness duty.

Points of Guidance of Procedure include the following:

1. The scheme is intended for applicants in all types of tenure who have become homeless or are threatened with homelessness, who is at risk of domestic abuse, violence or serious harm.
2. An allocation of accommodation may be made under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Each local authority's allocation scheme should include provision for offering accommodation via this reciprocal scheme. The local authority will accept the applicant onto their Housing Register and place the applicant into the highest band in accordance with their Allocations Policy for bidding and review their situation after three months.
3. If the local authority does not own its own stock, it will liaise with Registered Providers of social housing who have accommodation in the district.
4. Where the applicant is successful with an offer of accommodation or property to be offered as a direct let is identified, this offer will be made by the Authority requesting assistance under the KRS as a final Part 6 offer of accommodation.
5. An allocation of accommodation may be made under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and in accordance with the recipient local authorities Allocations Policy. However, some flexibility will be possible at the discretion of the recipient local authority, taking account of additional contributing factors such as welfare reform policy changes and the impact on the local community.
6. Appropriate and timely information about the KRS may be given to applicants when discussing the reasonable steps, the local authority will take to prevent or relieve homelessness. During this process, care should be taken not to raise expectations that their requests under this scheme will automatically be successful. The referring authority will continue to be subject to any homelessness duty, including any interim or temporary accommodation duty until that duty can be lawfully discharged, including where the applicant is successfully re-housed via this reciprocal scheme/agreement. However, the receiving authority may, at their discretion agree to take over the homelessness application and the homelessness duty owed, including providing interim or temporary accommodation.
7. The KRS applies in the following instances;

- **The applicant accepted as being owed a Prevention or Relief Duty, or the main housing duty**

AND

- **The household approaches their local authority fleeing domestic abuse and it is deemed unsafe for the applicant to remain within their local authority area**

OR

- **The household approaches their local authority fleeing violence or serious threats of violence or harm from outside the home and inquiries made by the local authority corroborate the claim that they are not safe in the local authority area where they have a local connection**

OR

- **Where there is another exceptional reason as to why the applicant is unable to live in the borough/district of their local authority or needs to reside within another borough**

8. Following an approach from an applicant who appears to be eligible for the scheme, the referring local authority will establish whether any other local authorities' areas are unsafe for the applicant to be referred to. Where possible the referring local authority will have regard for and consider the preference of the applicant about which local authority they could be referred to under the KRS, but **not a commitment** to meet the applicant's preference. The referring local authority will also check any support the incoming tenant may need to sustain a tenancy. A tenancy reference may be requested from the existing landlord for any existing or temporary accommodation.
9. The local authority will contact only the other safe local authorities via email. The email will be sent to a named representative from the other local authority or authorities. See Appendix 1 for contact details.
10. If an authority can assist the referring authority, they will respond via email to the whole group so that all contacted local authority or authorities are aware of the need being potentially met.
11. The referring authority will send all relevant information regarding the applicant to the receiving authority before a final acceptance is made. It is the responsibility of the referring authority to collate all relevant information including any DASH Risk Assessment that relate to the applicant, any police reports that are relevant (including Risk Assessment Matrix) and any supporting or relevant information or documents from all relevant agencies such as social services, probation or doctors.
12. Where an applicant has successfully bid for a property, or where a direct offer is being made, the referring local authority will make a written Final Offer of Part 6 accommodation to the applicant. They will also advise that the assisting landlord will contact the applicant directly to arrange a viewing of the accommodation that is available. The receiving authority or Registered Provider on receipt of all the relevant information will contact the referred applicant to arrange a viewing once a suitable property has been identified, at the earliest opportunity.
13. The receiving local authority / landlord will advise the referring authority of the result of the viewing.

14. The referring authority will be responsible for ending homelessness duty owed to the applicant and recording this within H-CLIC, unless the receiving local authority has agreed to take over responsibility of the homelessness application
15. Each local authority will be responsible for maintaining up to date records of the number of referrals they have made or received under this protocol, which may be requested to be supplied to the Chair of the Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG).
16. The scheme will be monitored by the Chair, Kent Housing Options Group and the terms/contents of the scheme guidance will be reviewed annually at a local authority only KHOG meeting.

This Protocol will be reviewed in September 2021

Appendix 1 – KRS Contact by District/Borough Council

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| <p><u>Ashford Borough Council</u></p> <p>Ray O'Shea, Housing Operations Manager, Housing Raymond.O'Shea@ashford.gov.uk</p> | <p><u>Sevenoaks District Council</u></p> <p>Mary Sturgeon, Senior Housing Officer mary.sturgeon@sevenoaks.gov.uk</p> |
| <p><u>Canterbury City Council</u></p> <p>Lora McCourt, Community Services Manager, Housing lora.mccourt@canterbury.gov.uk</p> | <p><u>Swale Borough Council</u></p> <p>Kerry Wright, Accommodation & Business Support Manager kerrywright@swale.gov.uk</p> |
| <p><u>Dartford Borough Council</u></p> <p>Toni Carter, toni.carter@dartford.gov.uk</p> | <p><u>Thanet District Council</u></p> <p>Rachel May, Senior Housing Options Officer Rachel.may@thanet.gov.uk</p> |
| <p><u>Dover</u></p> <p>Elly Toye, Housing Options Manager elly.toye@dover.gov.uk</p> | <p><u>Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council</u></p> <p>Claire Keeling, Housing Options and Support Manager Claire.keeling@tmbs.gov.uk</p> |
| <p><u>Folkestone & Hythe District Council</u></p> <p>Mr Mark Damiral, Housing and Inclusion Manager Mark.Damiral@Folkestone-Hythe.gov.uk</p> | <p><u>Tunbridge Wells Borough Council</u></p> <p>Stuart Clifton, Housing Services Manager Stuart.clifton@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</p> |
| <p><u>Gravesham Borough Council</u></p> <p>Lynn Wilders, Housing Needs and Improvements Manager lynn.wilders@gravesham.gov.uk</p> | |
| <p><u>Maidstone Borough Council</u></p> <p>Natalia Merritt, Housing Advice Manager, NataliaMerritt@maidstone.gov.uk</p> | |

