**Draft KHG Private Sector Housing Sub Group 21st November 2023, Microsoft Teams Call**

DRAFT

**Present**: Sue Oliver, chair and Tunbridge Wells; Kerry Petts, Folkestone and Hythe; Peter Littlewood, iHowz; Marion Money, NRLA; Dan Shaw, T&CH; Stacey Clark, KCC; Dan Otley, Canterbury; Donna Ward, T&CH HIA; Julian Watts, Ashford; Glyn Pritchard, Swale; Clare Reynolds, Gravesham; Hazel Skinner, TMBC and vice chair; Rachel Evans, Dartford; Paul Salter, Medway; Eve Lockton-Goddard, Thanet energy efficiency; Helen Miller, KHG;

**Apologies received before the meeting:** Richard Hopkins, Thanet DC; Ashley Jackson, Thanet; Lloyd Rees, Medway; Richard Stanford Beale, KFRS;

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| Reference | Notes/Outcome | Who | Action/Decision |
| ReferKent | Stacey Clark from KCC gave a presentation on the [ReferKent](https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/cost-of-living-support/professional-referrals/referkent) service which aims to support households at risk of financial hardship. We know signposting can be hit and miss. This system makes it easy to make referrals with the client’s permission. KCC have 130 organisations working with them and welcome you all to join too. The webpage explains the scheme and how to join. There is a video in the presentation that explains how the scheme works.  Organisations are asked to sign a data sharing agreement and SLA.  When you meet a client with a need you can ask their permission to refer and then complete a short referral. The organisation receiving the referral then make contact with the client and offer their service within 3 working days. This is great for the clients who would be unlikely to act on signposting. Organisations include Citizen Advice, debt, mental health, energy, childrens centres etc. organisations.  Stacey will send a link to HM that will be circulated with more information. Their email is [referkent@kent.gov.uk](mailto:referkent@kent.gov.uk)  SC highlighted the Money Guiders Enrolment Sessions too.  Richard Evans and Phil Jennings are working with ReferKent to allow other professionals to make damp and mould referrals to the private sector teams.  Eve L-G Thanet are signing up to referkent and they are making sure that they list all the services.  KP the welfare service at F&HDC use the system and she is hoping to be able to make referrals. Referkent can arrange it so damp and mould referrals can be made to the right team. | All | Consider whether referKent is right for your service and clients |
| Matters arising from June 2023 meeting | HM circulate presentation on TB – Done  HM forward contacts for housing service – done  HM circulate presentation on retrofitting park homes – done  E L-G Coordinate a meeting for Kent LAs officers on how to address retrofitting in park homes – not done specifically but will raise it at the meeting tomorrow. Medway is doing a pilot on park homes and they will use the learning from that.  E L-G Send HM a summary of Thanet’s approach to share with group – EL-G will do this. DS did a lot of retrofitting park homes at Sevenoaks and they may be learning from that. The contact is Sharon Donald now. The work was done by Aran. They got data on the performance on the works the year after. Phil Jackson from Daedalus [philip@daedalusenvironmental.co.uk](mailto:philip@daedalusenvironmental.co.uk) is very knowledgeable and helpful and his fees are reasonable for specifications and bids and he is well connected in Kent. EL-G agreed Phil is very good on project conception through to deliver. He was at the Kent Energy Centre. MG there is a new team at KCC for retrofitting and they will be making contact with LAs in Kent. EL-G will share the structure diagram on what is happening at KCC. HM not currently fully aware of the retrofit agenda in Kent.  All Email Helen if you’d like to participate in the group writing this costed proposal regarding retrofitting for KMEG – no volunteers but this work has been done and the paper will be circulated to districts via and retrofit group. | HM | Ask SD about this project and share it with group. |
| How are organisations preparing for Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023? (licensing & strategy) | SO explained that the consultation process on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) [Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26/crossheading/advice-strategy-and-standards/enacted) 2023 is due to begin in January 2024. RH collated the number of properties in Kent, which showed the majority are not currently licensed as HMOs and that all LAs will have some units that will require licensing and that work will fall to private sector housing teams. Each LA will also need to write a review of supported housing and then create a supported housing strategy. It may be that Kent will want to support each other to write the strategy.  The SoS may create supported housing standards – which could help make the path clearer.  Licensing will cover the building and amenities but also the provision of support, care and supervision.  The Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) covers Medway, Swale, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells and the lead at Medway is Franky Roma.  LGA is running events in supported housing with one on 13th and 22nd November.  RE attended an HQN session on it. She is concerned on how they would assess the care, support and supervision part. They appeared to assume that the KCC side would be assessing the care, support and supervision part. It appeared to assume that all organisations are unitary and so have staff who know about care, support and supervision.  KP would this fit better with CQC? Perhaps suggest that in consultation.  PL this has come up with members willing to offer HMO accommodation but are worried about losing the s21. This area is not well known.  So this legislation focuses on people who need support every week and not the same as general needs accommodation.  HM highlighted this accommodation is exempt from LHAs requirements because it provides care, support and supervision.  MM Porchlight provide this service well. Some landlords may set themselves up for this as its exempt from LHA. Many people live there under licenses, not tenancies.  SO suggested that all members flag this area of work and potential additional workload in your organisations. | HM  All | Share any learning from the LGA’s roundtable of Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act with group.  Please flag this Act and the workload around the licensing, strategy, etc. with your housing and benefit colleagues. |
| Roundtable; your pressures, projects and plans | SO at TWBC recruiting, particularly experienced staff, is challenging, even when trying to use agency workers. They are on top of their reactive work but less so on proactive work. They want to revisit their licensed HMOs. She has begun to flag they are up to capacity to her managers. For policies she would like to share what they are doing so they support each other. She often looks at others policies to see which she’d like to emulate. She has an empty homes policy she’s happy to share and they take a reactive approach. The team now has responsibility for illegal evictions and she will be working on that and is willing to share it.  HS TMBC they are fully staffed now. She will be looking at more proactive work now and encouraging people to send service requests in. They hope to continue the MEES work and then empty homes.  Thanet EL-G covers energy efficiency. AJ has been promoted so they will be recruiting to her old post.  GP Swale, they’ve struggled to recruit. People aren’t fully experienced in all areas. The empty homes post has gone so they do not offer that service. They are doing more enforcement and that may lead to tribunals and appeals. The energy work is coming up. SHIP is being led in Swale by the benefits team. They have highlighted they are up to capacity. The staying put team is being rejigged around DFGs.  Medway PS have received the illegal evictions task too and would welcome working with SO on that. They are fully staffed including training new officers who are developing well. They will advertise for hospital discharge officer and an adaptations officer. They are working with the SHIP team and doing the more complex housing inspections and forming the relationships internally. They are looking at whether they can create more capacity for the SHIP work.  Gravesham CR they are fully resourced and have two temps. They are having stock modelling done soon. They will do MEES work soon. Council tax will provide data on empty homes and they will send a letter to the owners but other than that it will be reactive. They will do an HMO amnesty on mandatory licensing so allow them to come forward with no repercussions, then they will enforce.  F&HDC KP they now know their jobs are safe in the restructure but are unlikely to get extra staff. They are at capacity. They are looking to tender for HIA with Dover and Ashford soon. She will review the Housing Assistance Policy. Members want a selective licensing scheme but the team lacks the capacity. Civil penalties were raised at HTWG and its possible that the way we determine the level of fine may not be right. RH at Thanet will review the case law to determine on whether this needs a working group to amend it. They deal with empty homes reactively and value the support from KCC. The housing options cover harassment and illegal evictions.  RE from Dartford she gained agreement for three new members of staff but she has struggled to recruit and they are advertising again. They also struggle to get temps. They are trying a career grade approach but know they need the highly skilled staff more than the entry level ones. She has specified what is needed to progress to each grade but how to deal with those who do not manage to develop? They are on top of reactive single household work and HMO licensing. They’ve struggled with grant work budget and reactive non licensing HMO work.  Dan Otley Canterbury is fully staffed but under resourced. They have permission to recruit one post. They are doing HMO licensing and had around 450 applications. They are only doing reactive work and disrepair case numbers are high. The adaptations officers does DFG and CCCs own stock. The Members are interested in addressing empty homes and they have a reactive response. They are having a days training on illegal eviction [https://www.dashservices.org.uk/Training/Available-Training-Courses/dealing-with-harassment-and-illegal-eviction-course](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.dashservices.org.uk/Training/Available-Training-Courses/dealing-with-harassment-and-illegal-eviction-course&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1700990926443781&usg=AOvVaw2gd2ZhdHRyj8ApS76fxvbv). They have their first application for guardianship for an HMO. They are aiming to license mobile homes as a little behind on that.  JW of Ashford has a team of 3. Julian is doing a lot of policies work and working through HIA procurement. Mallards are doing a course of illegal evictions. They are aiming to get ready for HUGs and ECO4 with help from El-G. They are moving from M3 to Arcus. They would be grateful to see policies on empty homes as Members are keen to bring them back in to use.  SO suggested she sets up a spreadsheet showing what LAs are working on, or just finished, so can share information.  PL iHowz provide training for landlords on what they needs to know to let home and is available to LAs free. PL to send details for HM to circulate.  MM NRLA policy team is working with government on the rental reform bill and with KHG on support for the private rented sector. Their energy efficiency officer is working with KCC.  DW,T&CH HIA also struggle with the recruitment issue. Thanks for the offer to tender for HIA. She emailed KCC commissioner and it’s a new contact, Jo Harding at KCC.  KHG is willing to advertise your housing jobs on [Jobs - Kent Housing Group](https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/jobs/) free. If you’d like to advertise a job email the weblink where the job is advertised to [sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk) | PS&SO  SO  PL | Liaise on illegal evictions policies  Create a spreadsheet for members to show the areas they are working on and any topics for training needs  Send details of training to HM for circulation |
| Training new staff – would we like to tackle this together? | So asked whether the group want to work together on training for new or existing staff? If so, we’d need to identify what the training needs if we wanted to cooperate on this?  KP Free and low cost is attractive as training budgets are squeezed. Supported Housing licensing could be a training need.  SEC has training programme and if your organisation is a member you get 18 free places and once used the training is still subsidised. They are willing to work with providers to address topics they aren’t currently offering. [Housing Sector Training Programme - SouthEastConsortium](https://southeastconsortium.org.uk/prospects/training-programme/) | All | Flag your training needs to SO on the spreadsheet she will circulate |
| AOB | The CIEH TWG has similar attendees. We need to keep our agenda different and interesting. Please flag topics for future meetings to Sue, Hazel or Helen.  Dates for 2024 meetings are 21st May and 6th November |  |  |