**Draft Kent Housing Options Group (full) Meeting Notes, 7 Sept 2023 via Teams**

DRAFT

**Present**: Toni Carter, chair and Dartford; Natalia Merritt, Charlotte King and John Littlemore, Maidstone; Ashleigh Cain, Hazel Quennell, Max Guest and Robin Cahill, KCC Commissioning; Maria Wilson, Medway; Mark Damiral, F&HDC; Joanne Thorpe and Vic May Gravesham; Zoe Callaway, Swale; Stephen Tring, Sevenoaks; Mike Alvarez, Interventions Alliance; Kim Davis and Stephen Tingley, DLUHC; Amanda Gill, Ashford; Abdul Hamid, TWBC; Claire Keeling T&MBC; Chris Burgess and Sarah Porter, Porchlight; Ian Long, MHS Homes; Lisa Clarke, Clarion; Sarah Huntley DWP; Vicky Hodson, Kent Homechoice; Pam Millington and Elly Toye, Dover; Samantha Butler, Golding Homes; Graham Urquhart, KCC; Helen Miller, Kent Housing Group;

**Apologies;** Michael Bourne, SIG; Alison Simmons, Sevenoaks; Christy Holden, KCC; Mike Barrett, Porchlight; Nicola Bowen, Choice Support; Nicola Conroy, Sevenoaks; Rebecca Smith, Ashford; Rachel Westlake, KCC; Rav Kensrey, Medway; Angela Palmer, mhs homes; June Heslop, Southern Housing; Polly Hardy, Interventions Alliance;

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| Reference | Notes/Outcome | Who | Action/Decision |
| Matters Arising from July 2023 | Circulate questions from DS when made sense of them – DS will attend Nov meeting instead to talk about procurement for TA.  RC Share Legal advice on clients who refuse to leave TA when available. RC is awaiting the legal advice so not circulated yet.  TC At TA meeting include do we want to have a TAAG – this is being discussed but no final decision on TAAG.  HM circulate ST presentation on DLUHC update – done  HM circulate presentation on DA consultation – Done  SC and SAV discuss provision of DA services and challenges in west Kent – No update  HM circulate Samad Nadimi’s presentation – done  All send comments on draft Care Leavers protocol to RC and NM - done  ST share info on how LB work with Essex on out of borough placements -  VH circulate exit document with Locata – VH talking on Huume later in agenda.  All respond to SC’s email on way Huume holds data – VH talking on Huume later in agenda.  All respond to advise ET how your organisation records TA charges. Dover doing piece of work on this.  All see the invitation to be rep for this group and email HM if interested – Done and volunteers details sent on |  |  |
| Protocol updates | **Temporary Accommodation Placing Protocol – Toni Carter**  This group are looking at out of borough placements but also considering whether we are duplicating work done by London and Essex so waiting on feedback from ST. Now looking at quality, availability and reliance on TA too. Some areas have a TAAG and Homeless Link suggest Kent consider this. It would require employing someone for a TAAG yet but as a county it may be worthwhile. TC will attend Sussex’s TAAG to learn more and potentially having a second talk and presentation on this. JL said there is a LGA protocol a little while on placements [Local government out of area placements guidance | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-government-out-area-placements-guidance). We could use that as a basis for our protocol as it covers housing and social care matters.  NM This ties in with s208 notifications. MBC have received less since move to Huume. NM would like s208 notifications weaved into Placement Protocol. MBC’s DA and safeguarding coordinator, suggested s208 notifications need to highlight they’ve fled DA. NM stated the nightly paid accommodation is going up in price and suggested Kent work together to agree the cost and speak as one. Kent could also agree minimum accommodation standards, including pest control. Kent needs to look at want we want to do above what the legislation requires.  TC TAAG model would help us as a county agree a cost and minimum standard.  **Young Persons (focus on Care Leavers) - Natalia Merritt/Robin Cahill**  RC and NM have met to discuss the feedback they’ve received. They will look at the comments and incorporate the feedback into the document shortly. The recommissioning of Supported Accommodation by KCC and how that will impact on the Care Leaver protocol and also local authorities need time to determine what the impacts are. RC and NM will postpone until this is decision is determined at KCC Cabinet next week and will revisit it once the decision is made. This could make a change from 3 years to help someone find accommodation to 1 year and that could change the protocol.  **Young Persons (focus on 16-17 year olds) - Toni Carter, Hazel Quennell & Kim Davis**  They invited Kim Davis from DLUHC who said that DLUHC has a priority to end B&B use for 16-17 year olds. Each time that happens they reach out to the LHA to ask what is happening. The joint protocol shows the commitment not to use B&B for homeless 16-17 year olds. Over the past 5 quarters, 3 LHAs in Kent have used B&B accommodation for homeless 16-17 year olds. She posed the questions; why some LAs use B&B for 16-17, and what can we learn for when it does need to be used to ensure you have robust oversight and the support you need too?  JL have we teased out from when LAs did use B&B what was unacceptable about the offer from social services that the YP would prefer to go into B&B?  KD, two good practice things, if B&B is being considered there should be escalation internally from LHA and social services to understand what may have gone wrong. Secondly could there be a forum where LHA, KCC commissioners and children’s social services come together to highlight the challenges we had and what went wrong and what could we do differently in a learning, not blame, culture.  JL asked KD to the ask take back to ministers for the commissioning of these services to be given to LHA. Funding for homelessness related services has been cut at KCC due to their funding situation. As such can that decision making process for these services come to LHA.  NM placed one person into B&B in 3 years as the client would not accept foster care and that was the only option offered by KCC. This person was found accommodation 40 miles away and the next night she found better accommodation. This can happen as the offer from social services to the YP is not an offer they find acceptable.  KG They do not want to place YP in B&B and yet sometimes this is the only option and can be miles from home. The YP are refusing to be a YP in care so we need to look at why.  TC Dartford funds a crash pad at the YMCA. Most of the year it is vacant but is here for that purpose and is mainly used for 16-17 year olds but sometimes 18-19 year olds as a temporary measure.  KG Canterbury did look at a night stop to give a breathing space. The cost was prohibitive for CCC alone but might work for Kent as a whole to fund?  KD many LHAs do invest in a night stop, individually or collectively. Some do a 7 night offer to allow time to create a plan. Torbay do this now. Emergency supported lodging is another option that a few LHAs do. KM recognises the challenges in Kent and the good practice but perhaps this is something the LHAs could come together on. She recommends LHAs escalate concerns up to children social care if the offer is being declined. Social workers do need to understand that a B&B is not a good option for 16-17 years old.  RC the YP SAFS had the 4 emergency bed spaces for children in need. There may be a communication gap between commissioning and Adolescent services. In the cases where B&B was used RC was not aware beforehand**.**  **Reviewing Housing Pathway for criminal justice service users – Mike Alvarez**  MA said the first meeting was on 19th July. Polly has been unable to lead so far. Katie Sorrell has moved to a new role. They do need to refresh membership of this group. The meeting looked to create a set of guiding principles and understanding the customer journey for those leaving prison. West Sussex offender pathway created an all partners one stop shop referral form to reduce the number of forms that need to be completed and so reduce duplication. This would improve pre-release work. This form can be used by all parties. The group is wondering whether this system would work in Kent, with relevant parties input, to simplify pre-release work. The Code of Guidance suggests LHA should do pre-release work but staffing issues and getting access can make this challenging so an all partners shared form that can be completed by any partners could be a way forward.  TC attended this meeting and bring in the Huume aspect and how duty to refer will work going forward.  NM MBC and F&HDC are looking at a system where the prisons can book a slot with them. There is also an email a prisoner service. MA and NM to liaise on how they do this. MA has worked in housing options previously.  MD F&HDC had accommodation for offenders funding but keeping it going after the funding ended. MD suggested that MA liaise with their officer Adam Clarke. Adam models this on the London based system.  MA asked who else would like to attend the next meeting. Please volunteer by emailing TC and HM. NM volunteered.  **Domestic Abuse reciprocal – Toni Carter/Lisa Clarke**  LC explained that this project to reciprocal scheme for survivors of DA to retain their social housing tenancy and reduce homelessness. If the current landlord cannot rehome then a request is sent to those signed up to ask whether they can offer a home. The system is coordinated across Kent. There are 8 organisations signed up so far and we’d like to invite all social landlords in Kent to sign up. There will be a new press release and webinar to explain the agreement and explore any barriers organisations experience in signing up. There has already been one household rehomed and two more households seeking a new home.  TC has reached out to a couple of LAs to ask on the barriers to sign up. Please encourage your housing association colleagues to sing up and learn about any barriers they are experiencing and bring that back to TC.  LC the referral only goes through with the IDVA so assessments will have been completed, including the areas where the household could relocate to. There is support for the survivor throughout the process and afterwards. | RC  MA  All  All LAs | Liaise with colleagues in adolescent services to understand offer being made to 16-17 year olds  Liaise with NM and Adam on how MBC and F&HDC address supporting prisoners at risk of homelessness.  Email TC and HM to volunteer to join this group.  Let Toni know of any barriers you, or the HAs in your area are experiencing |
| Questions from written commissioning updates | We received written update from Children’s Commissioning and Domestic Abuse services at KCC.  TC the issue around accommodation provision was in commissioners updates wasn’t discussed at previous meetings but was in the updates posted with the meeting papers on the KHG website.  Ashleigh Cain is the commissioning for Domestic Abuse and leads on KIDAS contract and Safe Accommodation Scheme (SAS). SAS contract is running and accepting referrals.  The county wide sanctuary scheme is due to go live on 1st December.  They begin to recommissioning activity on KIDAS at the end of this year.  There will be further briefing sessions on the sanctuary scheme when they have a provider in place. Then LHAs can decide whether to wind down their own services or run them alongside. |  |  |
| Best practice for out of borough s208 notifications | Natalia Merritt asked how other LAs are managing now this isn’t done by Huume.  TC decrease in numbers from some LAs and increase from others. Dartford are sending notifications out on a weekly basis. This is being done by email with a Word document attached.  NM trying to find out how to get Huume to do this.  CK T&M has an automatic system, connected to their TA system, and this generates the messages when they place out of borough.  TC the legislation does not require a lot of information on s208s and so just basic info is sent. However it is good practice to include vulnerabilities and safeguarding.  TC has asked her service to create a template for s208s and she will circulate that to KHOG to seek input and see if can agree to use same form. | TC | Circulate DBC’s s208 template to KHOG to ascertain whether we can agree a Kent form |
| Proposed changes to community warden service and consultation | Natalia Merritt highlighted the KCC community warden service consultation which highlights the potential to have significantly fewer staff. The geographical aspect could see less service, particularly in West Kent.  MBC have responded to the consultation. T&MBC had sent a response in as it impacts on so many of their services. Dartford BC are aware as TC raised it with colleagues and there will be a management response.  Members are advised to look at the consultation and responded as needed. The link to the consultation is here [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview) and it runs to 3rd Oct. | All | Respond to the community warden service consultation as needed |
| DLUHC update | Stephen Tingley said the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) [Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26/crossheading/advice-strategy-and-standards/enacted) 2023 has Royal Assent.  Delta requested a monthly data response to local authorities. Please do the August response by today.  From last meeting we raised the TA agreements with London and Essex. ST will share this.  JL at MBC the case numbers for officers is around 80 per officer. What would the government expect on case load. ST work is arranged differently so hard to compared. If assessment officer do nothing but assessment perhaps 100 a year is manageable, or 30-40 live cases.  JL is there more news from Renters Reform Bill and s21 notices. ST not heard that that section will be changed.  HM suggested that if ST wanted a view on whether PS landlords are leaving the market he contact National Residential Landlords [Association](https://www.nrla.org.uk/). A recent KHG meeting suggested PS landlords are leaving the sector due to changes to tax, fears of end of s21, costs of improving energy efficiency etc. | HM | Circulate material by email with LA partners when provided by ST |
| Huume Update | Vicky Hodson explained the live system has all data, documents and placements now. Some documents are loaded twice and cannot be taken out. Humme are looking into any missing files. Closed cases are available back to April to 2018.  The next priority is to the PHP moved from case system to the homelessness part.  A support services strand is being developed.  VH is having review meetings with each LA to identify issues to be addressed so they can be prioritised.  The speed of the system will be looked into by Huume but some issues could be on the Kent side.  Locata ends on 28th Sept.  We are in contract with Encompass for historic data when Locata goes.  VH has figures on housing options enquiries which she showed on the screen, they generally went up in July and fallen a little in August. Housing register has seen a large increase in numbers but system includes pre assessments. **These figures will be circulated by email.** | HM | Circulate figures from VH by email. |
| Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) [Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26/crossheading/interpretation-and-final-provisions) 2023 and focus group | Toni Carter explained that the Act has Royal Assent. There is a working group that meets on supported accommodation with reps from the KHG Private Sector Housing group, the CIEH housing technical working group, DWP, Kent Finance Officers, SHIP project and a KHG member providing supported housing, etc. Chris Burgess and Natalia Merritt would like to join the supported accommodation group.  A person does not become intentionally homeless if their leave inadequate supported housing.  HM raised the need for each LHA to write supported housing strategy, a responsibility that ST had highlighted earlier this year and it is now clear that falls to LHAs.  TC highlighted Supported Housing Improvement Programme that Medway, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells are running. Dan and Franky will present on SHIP at November KHOG.  HM highlighted LGA running the consultation to begin in October.  HM highlighted impacts on benefits, PSH, KHOG etc, teams and asked that people speak to their colleagues to ensure they are aware of the coming legislation. | HM  HM  All | Invite CB and NM to join Supported Housing working group  Circulate summary of Act  Ensure colleagues in benefits, private sector housing and planning know of Act. |
| Making a decision on whether care leavers can have a local connection across Kent | RC lets explore having a local connection for Care Leavers across Kent. DLUHC support this approach. We need to explore if this is feasible and if not provide evidence. This can inform the care leavers protocol.  NM This may open your housing register to more people.  TC how is this reflected in your housing allocations policy.  TC they take care leavers placed in Dartford even if not there for qualifying period  RC some LAs have more care leavers placed in their areas as accommodation is cheaper. It can become difficult for those care leavers who came from other areas to return.  KG CCC cannot make this decision now and she would need to speak to her head of service. | All LHAs | Seek a decision on whether you LHA will give a local connection to all Kent care leavers. Email response to HM by 28th September |
| Xantura | Natalia Merritt said it is a useful tool. It has allowed Maidstone to make interventions with the right households that have prevented homelessness in 98.1% of cases, MBC normally achieves 70%. Many chose not to engage but its very valuable for those who do. Only one person who used the service went into TA.  NM has case studies that will be circulated.  Everyone contacted had expected that organisations shared data to support them anyway. MBC is analysing how much money has been saved on rents, council tax and less TS costs.  KG would like to use Xantura but the Information Governance does not feel they have the right to be profiling. She requested MBC Information Governance’s person make contact with the CCC Information Governance’s person.  ET, the Information Governance officer at Dover is also reluctant to proceed.  TC will explore it again at Dartford BC.  NM they are very clear on the lawful basis for sharing data and that enabled this work but also other project in MBC and also with partners including Golding Homes and KCC. | NM  NM | Send HM the data and case studies for circulation  Ask MBC’s Information Governance person whether willing to discuss lawful basis with other IG officers |
| Any Urgent National Policy, Case Law Updates | MD highlighted Appeal Court Hodge vs Folkestone & Hythe DC, Cornerstone Barristers. This is an IH case and a supported housing case. Client left supported accommodation voluntarily the judge said true cause of homelessness left the supported accommodation. It is possible that the decision will be appealed.  The decision does apply to domestic abuse refuges. The link is [Court of Appeal Judgment Template (cornerstonebarristers.com)](https://cornerstonebarristers.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/APPROVED-JUDGMENT-in-Michala-Hodge-v-Folkestone-and-Hythe-District-Council-CA-2022-001996.pdf)  NM raised two cases. First on suitability of an offer; [Distance, affordability, suitability - Nearly Legal: Housing Law News and Comment](https://nearlylegal.co.uk/2023/08/distance-affordability-suitability/)  NM Waltham Forest on Local Picture on affordable and available accommodation and the Court accepted the difficulties [Suitability s202 reviews and 'minded to' regulations - Nearly Legal: Housing Law News and Comment](https://nearlylegal.co.uk/2023/08/suitability-s202-reviews-and-minded-to-regulations/) |  |  |
| Chair & vice chair arrangements | RC and NM did put themselves forward but unfortunately NM had to step back. Mark Damiral has volunteered to be the chair from Jan 2024 and Robin Cahill is the vice chair from now as Manpreet has had to step back. They will work alongside Toni Carter until she steps down at the end of December 2023 and this handover period will be very useful. | HM | Invite MD to agenda setting meetings |
| AOB | AH suggested 16th Nov for Rough Sleeper count.  CK will probably do same evening.  TC date not set but probably mid Nov.  Please let HM know of the date you set and she will circulate.  ET is creating a snapshot of placements you have in Dover. She will email round asking for your numbers so can feed that back to her management.  TC asked whether your organisation have activated SWEP due to extreme heat. CCC and DBC have. MBC, FHDC, GCB and TMBC have not.  TC on reflective practice and supporting staff, MBC and Ashford have provided group/121 support. ET Dover is investigating this yet and complex service offered.  NM MBC has person attend each month. Staff are encouraged to speak openly in a confidential setting. This brought suggestions on how to do things differently to make it easier for staff to provide the service. NM can ask whether it would be possible for a visitor to attend the managers version of the reflective practice meetings.  JT GBC did reflective practice last year and attendance was hit and miss.  Porchlight also has reflective practice sessions and will get outline of service and share it.  **Ombudsman**  CK has had two Ombudsman decisions against them. They have had to make payments.  TC 202s and 204s are happening at the moment. We can discussed this at LA only meetings as more relevant for that cohort. Cases are extremely complex. Include this in the urgent case law section.  JL people go to Ombudsman rather than appeal their decisions. Ombudsman cases don’t always follow the case law. It is harder to challenge Ombudsman decisions.  **Topics for next time are;**   * Modern Slavery * Supported Housing Improvement Programme * Taking a procurement approach to temporary accommodation * Care Leaver accommodation – separate from protocols   **The date of the next meeting has been moved from 22nd to 20th November.** | All LAs  All LAs  NM  CB  All | Send the date you will do your rough sleeper count to HM for circulation  Respond to ET’s email  Ask whether KHOG colleagues could shadow a session to understand more.  Share outline or Porchlights staff support service  Please email HM with any topics for next meetings |