**Draft Kent Housing Options Group LA Meeting Notes, 20 November 2023 via Teams**

**Present**: Toni Carter, chair and Dartford; Manpreet Bhupal, Gravesham; Kylie Gillham, Canterbury; Nicola Conroy, Sevenoaks; Robin Cahill and Hazel Quennell , KCC commissioning; Pam Millington and Elly Toye, Dover; Paul Withrington, Porchlight; Matthew Muddell, Tunbridge Wells BC; Natalia Merritt and John Littlemore, Maidstone; Claire Keeling TMBC; Graham Urquhart, KCC; Duncan Berrington, Thanet; Jenna Hicken and David Smith, SEC; Vicky Hodson, Kent Homechoice; Stephen Tingley and Zsofia Imre, DLUHC; Serine Annan-Veitch, KCC; Roxanne Sheppard, Swale; Franky Roma, SHIP and Medway; Max Guest, KCC; Emma Harknett, F&HDC; Rachel Westlake; KCC; Amanda Gill, Ashford; Ray Easdown, Medway; Beth Shelford, Forward Trust; Sofia Serenilli, KCC Commissioning; Louise Wood, CGL; Helen Miller, Kent Housing Group;

**Apologies received before the meeting;** Alison Simmons and Jenny Weston, Sevenoaks BC;

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| Reference | Notes/Outcome | Who  | Action/Decision |
| Matters Arising from July & Sept 2023 | **From July** RC Share Legal advice on clients who refuse to leave TA when available. The recommendation they received was that providers should only be using a tenancy agreement which is subject to the protection form eviction act.  It does not matter if the individual builds up rent arrears or is the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour a Notice to Vacate will need to be served followed by an application to Court should the individual not hand their accommodation back.  There is basically no other option that would avoid the use of the Courts to evict an individual from the accommodation without a huge risk of legal challenge.TC At TA meeting include do we want to have a TAAG – this is being discussed but no final decision on TAAG. - pick up later in meetingSC and SAV discuss provision of DA services and challenges in west Kent – done.**From Sept** RC Liaise with colleagues in adolescent services to understand offer being made to 16-17 year olds – work in progress as part of recommissioning. MA Liaise with NM and Adam on how MBC and F&HDC address supporting prisoners at risk of homelessness – Not done yet. MBC do prison leavers meetings. All – email TC or HM to volunteer to join group Reviewing Housing Pathway for criminal justice service users no responses receivedAll LAs Let Toni know of any barriers you, or the HAs in your area are experiencing in joining the DA reciprocal agreement – no issues raisedTC - Circulate DBC’s s208 template to KHOG to ascertain whether we can agree a Kent form – not done yet. All - Respond to the community warden service consultation as needed HM Circulate material on TA agreements from Essex and London by email with LA partners when provided by ST - DoneHM Circulate numbers from VH on housing options enquiries - DoneHM invite CB and NM to join exempt supported accommodation group – doneHM circulate summary of Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 – doneAll Ensure your colleagues in benefits, private sector housing and planning know of Act – work in progress for MBC.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. MBC will raise in in annual review. Ashford also reviewing it. HM circulate NM’s material on Xantura – DONENM Ask MBC’s Information Governance person whether willing to discuss lawful basis with other IG officers – they are and they have. Kent Chief execs also discussed. All LHAs Send date your LA will do Rough Sleeper count to HM for circulation – doneAll LHAs provide ET with the data she requests around TA – Yes, received. NM Ask whether KHOG colleagues could shadow a staff support session to understand more. Declined. Offer from providers to have meeting with anyone who wants to talk through service. CB circulate details of Porchlights support service for staff - DONE | TC | Circulate DBC’s s208 template and ascertain whether we can agree a Kent form |
| Chairing and future format of KHOG | TC explained we had a meeting and TC has identified that we struggle to move things forward as everyone is super busy. We do have strategic issues that we need to progress. Perhaps there are too many meetings, and perhaps we need more task and finish groups to address particular issues. We could move towards targeted meetings, perhaps on TA, etc. and the whole group would only meet once or twice a year. She suggested that the January 2024 meeting is more of a workshop on what is working and what needs to change, in person, in Ashford, potentially with samosas from Manpreet.JL the group is really valued by KHG and by the people attending. We’ve struggled to attract someone to chair the group. It has been a big role and that may need to change. We need to be more time efficient and support the group to achieve as much as we can. Single topic meetings can help us focus our time, and allow for the right person to attend each meeting. Its possible KHG leans too hard on KHOG and some issues should go to main KHG to take a strategic approach and flag to other bodies as needed. We do need a volunteer for the chair role. Toni, John, Robin and Helen will support the new chair. NM some participate in the group more than others and it would be great if the work could be allocated more evenly to help us all get on with the day job. Could we encourage those who volunteer less often to step forward more often. MM introduced himself to group. He will come to these meetings instead of SC at TWBC. We’re having a meeting with the heads of housing to discuss how KHOG works in future.  | HM | Send out meeting update with ABC venue |
| Taking a procurement approach to providing TA (HW8) | David Smith and Jenna Hicken of SEC outlined how a procurement approach could be taken to TA. Almost all the members of KHG are also members of SEC. We’d need to consider;* Standard or quality of accommodation required
* Suppliers and need for housing
* Costs of providing the accommodation

There are two routes; dynamic purchasing system (agree to common standard of accommodation and new suppliers can be added but the challenge there is not price benchmarking) or a framework for up to 4 years that has set suppliers for the term of the agreement – so need to get enough providers on but could do cost benchmarking at the beginning and include cost indexing. To begin with we’d need to know the scale of collective needs, what the sector is paying for the year across K&M, what the current scale of capacity is (and what the shortfall is) and seek to drive up the quality of accommodation. There is no commitment to buy using the procurement but it is more fair to only join of the organisation does intend to use it. TC we need to decide whether we’d welcome a county approach, region, or no this approach at all.JL Kent is a big area. Should we go Kent wide or regional? Jenna Hicken SEC; every LA does not have to buy in, it would be optional to use as and when wanted. They’d need guidance from KHOG on terms and conditions. We could choose to agree on an SLA that we’re comfortable with on conditions of the home and standards of management. SEC would advise on the viability of the SLA to ensure it’s attractive to the market. LAs could have additional requirements to the SLA. DS it is a sellers market yet the LAs are big spenders in the market and so it procurement is fair to both parties it can work as a way to support buyers and sellers. RS Swale tried a procurement exercise with MBC and TWBC but the level of interest from providers was low and one major supplier declined to bid due to the difference in cost between the areas. It may be worth liaising with the housing and procurement teams to gain any learning. DS we could not have a flat rate and would need a sensible pricing method. RE pricing and demand is different in each area. DS the module would be built to cover the heat map of demand across Kent, with an awareness that is changes. The pricing would have to vary across the county. We could go with a fixed price arrangement and explore whether it is the best arrangement for Kent and Medway. JH the call of mechanism would need to be arranged to meet your needs.TC this is a huge topic. It’s a huge expenditure. If we have a sub group model for KHOG TA would be one of the sub groups.  |  |  |
| Should housing associations let outside of Kent | Vicky Hodson There is an agency, Bridge Housing Solutions, letting RP hard to let homes to other LAs outside of Kent. Social landlords have 25% of properties they can let outside of the normal agreement. VH is working on a nomination agreements to restrict how the 25% can be let.NM It’s a very bad idea. Most LAs could easily find a household who would move areas and take the accommodation. NM finds Bridge Housing Solutions to be opaque on the checks they make. London Boroughs use private sector housing and we would protect our social housing from them. NC a provider came to them asking for who to let a hard to let home to. They used this offer to house household from TA list. JL this is a worrying trend. The nomination agreements are largely based on trust with RPs. If RPs are saying that they may let some of the 25% to those outside of Kent that would be appalling as we all have households in TA who would accept the homes. This could be a break of contractual arrangements.VH suggested we raise this at KHG. VH to send JL note on this.VH RPs are saying that the timescales for LAs letting voids are getting too long and that strains RPs. JL RPs are advertising homes not yet ready to let and so people stay in TA whilst waiting the homes to be let.  | JL | raise this at main KHG on 29th Nov |
| Seeking a volunteer to lead a possible research bid  | Robin outlined the options for bidding for the research funds by 12th Dec [22/22 Interventions to prevent eviction and homelessness | NIHR](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2222-interventions-to-prevent-eviction-and-homelessness/29967)Kent Public Health has identified the funding that we could bid for around the effectiveness of interventions to prevent eviction. This could be for some LAs or Kent wide. They are looking for someone from housing to lead the project. The costs would be covered. The public health research team can help with creating the bid but need an expert from housing to help. Please look at the link and decide whether you wish to do this.  | All | Consider whether you could lead this |
| Modern slavery and exploitation in the homelessness sector | Paul Withrington from Porchlight showed a presentation that will be circulated. This includes a video people can play outside of the meeting. Human trafficking/modern slavery is a big part of serious organised crime in Kent. Homeless clients are vulnerable to accepting cash in hand work or work that provides shelter. British people traffic British people the most, though migrants are also vulnerable. It includes labour, sexual, or criminal exploitation and domestic servitude.National Referral Mechanism is safeguarding route for modern slavery. An adult would have to consent to a referral. If there are reasonable grounds to believe there is a case then the adult will be offered support whilst the case continues to be investigated. First responders include Kent Police, LAs, Salvation Army. Home Officer, Health and Social Care Trusts, National Crime Agency, etc. If you have an questions please do email Paul on PaulWithrington@porchlight.org.ukSA-V Offered help with making links with adult safeguarding if needed. She is finalising the DA strategy and will touch base with him on that.  | HMSA-V | Circulate Modern slavery presentation Contact PW about DA strategy. |
| Update on Huume | Vicky Hodson people now doing HCLIC return using Huume. They are going to improve the validator and it will be run three times a day, not overnight. VH has circulated a list on the enhancements desired. Huume is acting on that list. The Rents module is due in Jan/Feb. The s208 referral and enhancement to PHP is coming. VH is visiting each LA to review progress and have a project plan for any training or knowledge needs. They have housing options operations meeting that include system issues now. She has done a couple of spreadsheets on enquiries and applications. If you know what you need on a regular basis please speak with Vicky around the data needed.  |  |  |
| Supported housing improvement programme | Franky Roma gave a presentation that will be circulated. It is similar to the one given at the Homeless Link Forum. The project aims to improve the standards of supported accommodation and help organisations get ready for the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and they believe licensing will begin in 2025.Some of the sector is commissioned and this project has begun with a focus on non-commissioned services. The service is building relationships with the tenants. They have found issues can be found in both commissioned and non-commissioned services. Housing Benefit, private sector housing, social care colleagues may be visiting some schemes and SHIP aims to avoid duplications. They have a team who can provide property inspections, reviewing the support given and scrutiny on housing benefit and liaise with the service provider. Non commissioned services are not accustomed to being inspected and relationship building is essential so any action plans for improvements are understood and they are in a better place ready for licensing which will probably begin in 2025.The provider forum in Maidstone gives a space for learning, networking and share best practice. FR has attended the LGA roundtable on supported accommodation.  | HM | Circulate presentation on SHIP |
| Protocol updates (A4 and HW8) | **Temporary Accommodation Placing Protocol – Toni Carter**This hasn’t progressed as may be better to decide whether we want a TAAG or procurement approach. We’ll decide who to structure addressing TA in Jan KHOG.**Young Persons (focus on Care Leavers) - Natalia Merritt/Robin Cahill**KCCs model is close to being signed off. YPSAF is also close to being signed off. They’ve taken a new tack on preventing homelessness applications if possible. * The protocol should be focused on preventing the need for former care leavers to make a homelessness application. All districts in Kent would move to a model of panels, the frequency of which will be determined on need based in that district. The panels will be informed by the work KCC are undertaking in respect of “fagging” those young people at risk of future homelessness from the age of 16. This commitment is supported by the s179(2)(b) duty to provide advice and assistance in the 1996 Act, as well as s17 duties under the Childrens Act.
* KCC and districts should work together to develop a training package for both staff at KCC and for young people aged 16-19. The objective of this training would be to educate staff and young people on housing options, myth-bust common misconceptions, encourage the use of a multitude of options for young people and provide an excellent foundation for young people to live securely. This commitment is routed in our shared corporate parenting responsibility as a reflection of the support that parents and other caregivers would put in place for their own children.
* Duty to refers should be made within the 56 day period only, to ensure that the work undertaken at panels is focused on early intervention and information sharing.

 NM and RC would appreciate any comments on these recommendations by 8th Dec; * Recommendation that governance of the protocol moves to a sub group, to include a KHOG member, sitting under the corporate parenting board.
* Recommendation that staff in both KCC and districts improve their cultural competence of those UASC cohorts who most frequently approach for assistance.
* Recommendation from DLUHC that districts allow any Kent care leaver to join their HR’s by waiving local connection criteria- on this point we recognise that this is not a decision which can be made at this level, but I agreed to raise this as a recommendation in any case.

**Young Persons (focus on 16-17 year olds) - Toni Carter, Hazel Quennell** TC and HQ are suggesting that when LAs places 16-17 year olds in nightly paid then LAs would need director approval. They are developing move on panels and these mirror the good work by NM and RC. They want to make booking for joint assessments easier. They will share with HAST and DLUHC to gain comments and then KHOG. HQ asked whether a joint assessment could be done quickly, ideally within 3 days. TC asked whether 3 days is too onerous? NM no, as we do on the day cases. **Reviewing Housing Pathway for criminal justice service users – Polly Hardy/ Mike Alvarez**This group needs more volunteers. TC will contact them to ask if progressing.**Domestic Abuse reciprocal –Lisa Clarke (Written update circulated)** | AllTC | Send your thoughts on these recommendations to NM and RC by 12th DecContact PH and MA to ask how the review of the Housing Pathway for Criminal Justice Service users is going  |
| Commissioning updates | **New supported accommodation service – Robin Cahill /Hazel Quennell** shared a presentation that sets out the services and will be circulated.There is an expectation that care leavers move on when 19 years old. The presentation sets out additional temporary support that can be provided. They are training social workers how to manage expectations. They will contact each LHA about decommissioning YPSAFS. They are working with providers on exit plans to reduce the likelihood of YP presenting homelessness. E-Beds are available via the Front Door process, not a LA direct referrals. NM Could the 16-17 protocol cover the E-bed issue please?**Introducing new providers of SAFER contract – Rachel Westlake – paper already circulated.**The contract has been awarded and so be ready to take referrals from December. The providers will be in touch with LAs soon. Referrals via KIDAs to being with and other agencies from Jan. Male refuge will be launched soon. They will recommission the KIDAS contract and will be liaising with you. There is a male refuge in Swale but not provided by KCC. NC to send details of this to go to RW.  | HM | Share presentation on Supported Accommodations |
| Programme to provide tenancy sustainment to people with drug or alcohol misuse | Beth Shelford and Sofia Serenelli who showed a presentation that will be circulated. Beth Shelford, Forward Trust, serving East Kent (Swale, Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe) Louise Wood, Change Grow Live for West Kent will provide a tenancy support service. The service does not cover Medway. The service can support people with housing need and willing to use drug and alcohol services. They will support clients with both mental health and drug and alcohol concerns. It is a test and learn project to assess whether this approach does work. They have drafted an updated joint working protocol that will be circulated soon. The service can help organise multi-agency wrap around services.Beth highlighted that they have already been able to prevent some evictions and invited people to get in touch. Louise invited people to get in touch for West Kent. There are three referral pathways outlined in the presentation;1 for those already in D&A support programmes,2 referrals from LHA housing teams, for those in treatment or willing to engage with treatment3 one for external agencies, including social and private landlords and may help clients earlier so may prevent a housing crisis.They would like to meet LHAs quarterly to review progress and Sofia will be in touch to arrange that. ZI will request a meeting with Sofia and would like to be invited, with HAST, to the LHA meetings.KG raised two questions. SS answers were;We will work with clients in TA on a case by case basisWe will escalate cases to the homelessness service where a private sector landlord has engaged us but could lead to homelessness as early as we can.  | HMZISS | Circulate presentation on tenancy sustainment for those with D&A problemsMeet with SS to arrange to join the LHAs quarterly meetings. Have another meeting with KG to address her questions |
| AOB | ET Thanks for info on how your assess your medical reports – if not sent yet please sendTraining on reviews – would anyone else want to come in on a training session so can spread costsTraining on decision letters – would anyone else want to come in thisFOI new refugees and housing, probably coming to us all “New Refugees and Housing” asking for data for 2022 and 2023. NM suggested that as not recorded in an easy to retrieve way and may take longer that can be done in reasonable time. If anyone has answered with data please flag to Dover as they are happy to answer in similar way.PM Moving on and Moving in. Dover will be revamping it. If you’d like to join in please contact Pam. TC Would like 2 spaces on reviews training. 4-5Dec Introduction to homelessness has a couple of online sessions to attend – if you have staff who’d like to attend at a reasonable email TC.TC Ombudsman has investigated a complaint where a temporary member of staff was advising people to stay put until the bailiff came. They await a final decision. MM TWBC has s184 decision letter training with plenty of spaces available at Tunbridge Wells. The dates are not set. Please contact MM.  Next meeting 30th January at ABC Council Chamber in a more interactive format  | AllAllAllAll | Contact ET to request place on her training on reviews OR decision letters sessionsContact PM if you’d like to work with her to update Moving on and Moving inEmail TC to request a place of her intro to homelessness courseContact MM to request place on his s184 decision letter training  |