**Draft Full Kent Housing Options Group Meeting Notes, 26 January 2023 Microsoft Teams Call**

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**Present**: Toni Carter, Dartford and chair; Manpreet Bhupal, Gravesham and vice chair; Zoe Callaway, Swale; Robin Cahill and Hazel South, KCC; Elly Toye and Pam Millington, Dover; Rav Kensrey, Medway; Rebecca Eley, KCC; Claire Jones, Interventions Alliance; John Littlemore and Natalia Merritt, Maidstone; Ian Long, MHS; Graham Urquhart, KCC; Elizabeth Elsden, JCP; Tara Duchesne and Philippa Nancoo, SIG; Vicky Hodson, Homechoice; Amanda Gill, Ashford; Emily Jones, KCC; Max Guest, KCC; Sarah Porter, Porchlight; Nicola Verdenik, HMPS; Rachel Westlake, KCC; Duncan Berrington, Thanet; Vicky May, Gravesham; Serine Annan-Veitch, KCC; Ray Easdown, Medway; Emily Oates, KCC; Stuart Clifton, Tunbridge Wells; Steve Claringbold, Look Ahead; Claire Keeling, TMBC; Nicola Bowen, Choice Support; Alison Simmons, Sevenoaks; Emma Harknett, Folkestone and Hythe; Karen Coffey, KCC; Ashleigh Cain, KCC; Helen Miller, Kent Housing Group;

**Apologies;** Stephen Barker, NPS;Stephen Tingley, DLUHC; Rebecca Smith, Ashford; Christy Holden, KCC; Daniel Grech, Look Ahead; Luke Edwards, KCC; Mike Barrett, Porchlight; Nicola Conroy, Sevenoaks; Michael Bourne, Social Interest group; Polly Hardy, Interventions Alliance; Simon Mitchell, KCC;

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| Reference | Notes/Outcome | Who | Action/Decision |
| Matters Arising from Sept 2022 | New attendees;  Claire Jones, from Interventions Alliance, taken over from Cynthia Allen who has retired.  Serine Annan-Veitch, KCC, supports Domestic Abuse group.  Emily Jones, Childrens commissioning, at KCC  Rebecca Eley, Public Health commissioning, drug and alcohol services  Rav Kensrey, 16+ specialist housing adviser in childrens services at Medway Council.  Nicola Verdenik, strategic housing specialist, HMPS  Graham Urquhart, housing pathways team coordinator for 18+ team, KCC  MBh Arrange a meeting with NC, JL and TC to decide how the reviews of the protocols written by KHOG will be done.  DLUHC rep, Seek successful practice on ways round credit checks and guarantors for Ukrainians and feed back. We’ve had an update from Steve but this wasn’t really covered. TC to chase.  ST email HM a response on grant for Ukrainians to circulate to group. Done  JL Ask HB colleagues if evidence of moves from Homes for Ukrainians scheme onto Housing Benefit. JL A bid was submitted from Maidstone and awaiting the outcome. Dartford not submitted a bid. JL believes the funds are underspent. SC TWBC are delivering the resettlement locally and have budgeted from the grant per guest to put £1000 towards homeless costs so TA, PRS deposit, etc.  HM circulate details of the public consultation on gypsy and traveller sit pitch allocation consultation, when it opens - done  RW link JL with Serine on White Ribbon campaign to support a collective response. JL in connection with the World Cup – made sure everyone knew of the campaigns. S A-V can share info on this if wanted. KCC is becoming White Ribbons accredited.  ALL let TC know how the new Kent Agency Digital form should be publicised. VH can track that 10 have gone through from Dover and LAs say they are receiving them. Seems to be working for all except Canterbury.  NM Send HM ToR to circulate around regarding Care Leavers – T&F for Care Leavers. NM sent them and HM circulated.  HM give COMF update when available. This was sent to LAs with underspend on 17th Nov and all have acknowledged the message – Done  HM circulate recent judgement regarding PRSO Thomas Norton v LB Haringey regarding making all checks before a final offer of private sector rental agreement – done | MBh  TC & ST  LAs | Arrange the protocol review prioritisation meeting with TC and JL  TC will catch up with Steve on this and what we need from KHOG.  If you are not receiving KAAs please email Vicky Hodson |
| Financial hardship group (SH6) | Helen Miller explained that the Financial Hardship Task and Finish group was formed to support partnership working with organisations to support people experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship. It has priorities of homelessness, housing, children and young people, cold homes and energy bills, pensioners, communication and engagement. It is led by KCC and has members from KCC, Ashford, Dartford, TMBC, F&HDC, Thanet, Canterbury, Maidstone, Medway, DWP, Citizens Advice and Kent Savers.  Kent Housing Group was invited to send a rep and after discussion with Sharon and Toni that is Helen Miller. Helen will act as a conduit of ideas from KHOG and KHG to the group and vice versa.  The group is having a sub group meeting on housing later today. That will focus on what data it would like, why and what problems it is seeking to resolve.  It will also discuss Discretionary Housing Payment, and that Leaders did lobby government for more DHP funds and a question on whether KHG did/will lobby too? Answer; TC we haven’t but perhaps could. JL has discussed this with an MP but doesn’t recall seeing a consultation and has not had a response. No appetite to do this now.  It will ask whether Ukrainian refugees are creating any pressured regarding homelessness and how KHOG is responding to this. Answer; Yes, they are, housing services are doing the best they can. They try to help re-match and are providing information and offer their normal homelessness function. It does not impact each district equally, some many cases and others less so.  Could group encourage households to save so more ready to have rent in advance and deposit – so Financial Hardship Group could be encouraging people to save for these costs.  Ukrainian issues are similar to the Syrian and Afghan people so perhaps the Financial Hardship Group should widen the focus. TMBC the Syria and Afghan schemes may appear to be less of a priority but that need still exists  Availability of accommodation and also the cost, but just too few homes around.  Many LAs use their Homelessness Prevention Grant rather than DHP. |  |  |
| Discussion on how LAs assess the medical information applicants submit (HW8) | Elly Toye said Dover has always had a large amount of medical information submitted, from very serious to minor issues. They have a medical panel and complex information goes to an external advisor. Elly asked how do others manage this huge amount of data? Do you all get a huge amount of data? Dover may lack capacity to deal with this task. Could people email Elly with advice.  JL Maidstone also receives a huge amount of data. They triage to remove data on very minor issues that wouldn’t need a response. They also have a backlog of data that they struggle to assess in a timely way.  DDC use a GP who works and lives outside Dover and they give the external advice on complex cases.  Dartford provided information on conditions that wouldn’t be considered in that hope that information on minor issues would not be submitted but that led to complaints and was revised.  Dover customer services aim to triage before the client gets a medical form but this is a difficult task to triage.  Elly suggested an independent medical advisor that serviced more than one LA could be useful. | All | Email ET with any advice on how to deal with the volume of medical information. |
| Homechoice and transition to Huume Update (HW8) | Vicky Hodson of Homechoice and the transition to Huume.  There was a Homechoice operational meeting yesterday and Vicky shared a presentation adapted from that, which will be circulated.  The Housing Register will be suspended for June. At Dover this was agreed by Cabinet. VH has sent information to all communications teams across Kent. Information will go on Kent Homechoice website nearer the time and she hopes LAs and HAs will do the same.  Vicky has written a list of FAQ – if you look at the presentation and identify others please let VH know.  SC Will LAs be able to tailor their campaigns? Yes, this will be needed for TWBC and TMBC. | HM  All | Circulate VH’s presentation  Email Vicky with any further FAQs to add to the list in her presentation. |
| Update of DAHA (HW8) | Serine Annan-Veitch shared a document that was circulated with the agenda. The domestic abuse coordinators felt DAHA accreditation would help to give a consistent approach. Some LAs have begun to work towards DAHA. KCC has got funding to support process of DAHA accreditation with details show in SA-V document. Are KHOG comfortable to be part of the governance and so receiving a regular report from the DA group? Yes, this was agreed.  Emily Jones, as commissioners they will use an SLA approach so each LA can go about DAHA accreditation in the ways that suit them. If no progress is made the SLA could allow KCC to aim to recover the costs given to LAs but KCC would prefer to support the LAs to achieve accreditation.  JL thinks it’s important to grow links with DA coordinator group and KHOG. The papers have been to Kent Leaders and Kent Chief Execs to gain sign up.  SA-V all LHAs have shown interest in working towards DAHA.  TC Dartford are keen and welcome the ways this will support DA survivors but aware that staff are extremely busy so need to balance the workload and progress at the pace they can. JL yes, important to be aware of the capacity issues and the need for a pragmatic approach, using existing structures when possible. Maidstone has seen a real increase in approaches for DA to perhaps time invested now may save time later.  CK how does this sit with the DA reciprocal arrangement. SA-V they are working with Lisa Clarke on the DA reciprocal agreement. Both are informed by a DAHA approach. JL DAHA is wider than the DA reciprocal agreement and they are complimentary.  S A-V. They are trying to look at what work is already happening as there are strengths that can be drawn on to help with DAHA process.  EJ There are a lot of short term offers at the moment but we don’t know they will continue when the funding ends. DAHA accreditation will increase resilience in the longer term. |  |  |
| Renew Entitled to (HW8) | Vicky Hodson this contract is due to be renewed again. They are using new AHAS affordability figures. Cost would be £1650 this year, a slight increase. VH will email all to check if they wish to continue. | All LAs | Respond to VH email |
| Protocols (A4 and HW8) | Domestic Reciprocal agreement in social housing – submitted in writing by Lisa Clarke   * The project team have now finalised the documents including the memorandum of understanding to be signed by signatories and the referral form. This has taken some time as there have been a large number of factors/implications that needed to be considered. * We have worked with Serine Annan-Veitch (Project & Partnerships Manager-Domestic Abuse), Jackie Hyland (Domestic Abuse Coordinator), Toni Carter (Housing Solutions &Private Sector Manager- Dartford) and, Sarah Collins ( Analyst Manager, Domestic Abuse Research Programme), to ascertain what data we want to capture from the reciprocal transfers. This has now been finalised and we hope will be beneficial to KCC and support any future service provisions etc. * We had previously established Jackie Hyland (Domestic Abuse Coordinator) to act as the local coordinator for the scheme. Jackie has since moved onto pastures new and so in the interim Joanne Comer (Domestic Abuse Project Officer) will be undertaking this role. * The next stage of the project is now to launch the scheme. We will be hosting a webinar (date TBC), inviting all parties who had originally expressed an interest when the project was first launched and organisations who may also be interested to sign up to the scheme. I will also be writing to the CEO’s of the social landlords in Kent to encourage participation. We are looking at completing these actions in February 2023, following this the scheme will then go live. * I have also been invited to speak at the National Housing Federations Webinar on the 1st February to talk about the lessons learnt from the project with a view to encouraging other local authorities and social landlords to implement the scheme.   KMPT and joint protocol on homelessness and mental health – Manpreet Bhupal  Mainly completed so will be circulated for comments soon.  Young Persons protocol  Robin Cahill and Natalia Merritt for Care leavers focus;  RC they are revising a separate protocol for care leaves. Once the working group has commented it will be sent to KHOG for approval and sign off.  Young persons protocol  Toni Carter and Hazel South Focus on 16-17 year olds  HS is reviewing the document to update it and add the joint assessment form. Seeking clarification around CHIN. The next meeting is booked for February.  RC following OFSTED inspection they raised;   * Creating modular training for social workers for CHIN – the assistant director asked if KHOG would be willing to help develop that training? In principle sounds good * Updating simple video for launching previous YP protocol – KCC volunteers to draft an update on this * Young Lives Foundation provide advocates for joint assessments but demand outstrips demand. Would KHOG want to explore joint funding on this? TC would need to see costings and what the ask of each LA would be on funds. RC will present next time, with costs, and can be discussed   IH/ Families with complex needs.  Natalia Merritt and Karen Coffey  Karen Coffey, early help manager at KCC, and NM were tasked with leading a group creating a guidance document to go with the IH protocol. The exercise with KCC and housing teams really helped build understanding and identify the sticking points. They considered the customer pathway and identified the ways to work together and this turned into the commitments on page 10. Karen explained that the Front Door, Early Help and social care services all attended to help ensure a thorough approach could be taken. It helped understand each others language and this can help with future training of staff.  The guidance document (circulated with the agenda) focuses on how to obtain and/or sustain accommodation and to use appropriate services at the right times and sharing information appropriately. For KCC it explains what the housing service is and what to expect. For a housing point of view it shows how to complete request for support referrals to KCC to share the right information to the right partners at the right time.  It addresses some myths around accepting /refusing accommodation. It addresses staying with friends and relatives – not a blanket no – more informing the landlords and seeking permission.  The document will have a short video to help new staff around the Front Door service.  They intend to build a training offer. Michelle Coles would like to create a SWAY internet learning module for housing and social care staff and this will be developed soon. Integrated children service has asked if they is an introductory course for their staff on housing. NM does this in Maidstone. TC, MBh, EH, volunteered to work with NM to create a Kent wide resource on this.  NM Michelle has asked NM to plan the launch with her. The links between housing and KCC would benefit from being strengthened.  KC a piece is needed in the guidance around Front Door escalations.  No recourse for public funds section has been added. RC they are looking to streamline their process on that.  They are seeking sign off on the document. TC suggested a deadline of 10th February for final decisions.  SA-V to catch up with RC on NRPF (written in chat so no other details available). | MBh  RC  All  All  SAV | Circulate document to KHOG and KMPT when finalised  Present to KHOG in March on joint funding options for the Joint YP assessments, including costs.  Contact Natalia to volunteer to create the IH training resource.  Read the document. Send an issues, to Natalia CC Helen  Liaise with RC on NRPF |
| Commissioning Updates | **Domestic Abuse and Sanctuary Scheme – Rachel Westlake**  RW shared her presentation, which will be circulated, on the SAFER scheme. The offers of sanctuary is not equitable across the county. They decided to develop a county wide offer, informed by the engagement. There will be a single point of access (aligned with KIDAS), then have a home package offer and support package offer.  This should allow people to remain in their homes and maintain their connections, education, employment, etc.  KCC hopes to go to market in April and begin to offer the service in August 2023.  DLUHC has confirmed their DA funding allocation for 2 years.  KCC seeks to extend KIDAS to March 2026.  DA needs assessment has been refreshed and will be published.  Thanks for support on promoting 16 days of DA action.  When property has been assessed, deemed safe then KCC will provide support and this accommodation is deemed to be Safe.  **Young People – Robin Cahill and Hazel South**  HS they are designing the pathway for YP accommodation based on OFSTED guidance.  RC now we have OFSTED guidance they can begin initial governance for YPSAF and can provide more details at the next KHOG meeting.  **Kent Homeless Connects – Max Guest**  We have another 14 months to run on this service. We are in the transitional period, broken in to 3 6 month phases, with drops in funding for each phase. Look Ahead will no longer fund the single point of access from 31st January 2023. They will have an email address where referrals can be made. If you don’t have the email address contact MG to request and MG will email again to all his contacts at LA.  They are working with Adult social care teams to ensure Care Act Assessments do take place and to confirm the duty to refer email address to send referrals too.  SC They are looking at new models for supported housing provision in TW area with Look Ahead unable to continue with existing model. Is this happening in other areas of the county? MG Look Ahead are providing LAs a menu of options in north Kent. It is hard to repurpose properties when agreements are for 12 months or less. MG is working with other services to repurpose existing buildings. There are around 2 months to get these plans in order to ensure a 12 month use of the buildings.  SC are any providers continuing the service as they did before or are all changes with less funding? SP explained that Porchlight have aimed to continue those units with lower contributions and have strong fund raising capabilities so aim to continue with the current model for as long as they can. They are also working with LHAs to aim to keep those units of accommodation going as well as they can.  SC were any LHA invited to bid for the supported accommodation programme? It was advertised end of 2023. TC doesn’t believe any Kent LAs were invited. SC asked DLUHC for feedback on who was invited and it seemed to be based on rough sleeping metrics. | HM  RC  All | Circulate RW’s presentation  Provide details of how YPSAF will change at March KHOG.  If you need email address for referrals to Look Ahead contact Max Guest |
| Any Urgent National Policy, Case Law Updates | SC Judicial review decision relating to the Care Act 2014 and Housing Act 1996 Campbell v London Borough of Ealing <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/10.html> |  |  |
| AOB | SC Cedar Housing are a relocation organisation procuring accommodation in north od country. TW were supporting a Ukrainian family with links to the north of country and were happy to be referred. Cedar housing sent an AST, but a refugee agency in the area said the family were asked to sign a second tenancy for exempt supported accommodation at a much higher cost. TW spoke with housing provider as different information appeared to have been provided. TW not completely satisfied with Cedars response. Another LA in North had raised households being relocated into their areas so this raised the concerns with Cedar or other providers.  Dartford has used Oak Housing and Cedar Housing and the quality of housing has been poor so they contact the LA where the accommodation is to seek their input, whether it supported, quality, issues, etc.  Gravesham had issues with AMRP, property looked on way on the website but very different when visits and they have stopped using Cedar and AMRP now.  PM Dover’s experience has been good so far but will be vigilant.  PM They have options officers leaving and they are thinking on temporary staff. She requested any thoughts on agencies and prices. TC will send info on Dartford’s experience.  Emily Jones, KCC children’s commissioning are in the process of commissioning services to support children residing of safe accommodation. They will call this the Safe accommodation support Service. DA coordinators were involved in the design of the service with other statutory partners. They want to work with local housing teams providing safety equipment under a DA sanctuary scheme to explain the referral process and introduce the new service provider, once they are awarded the contract, probably in May.  Emily Oates, looking at providing a blanket consent form for works on a home from the landlord. If you have ideas please email Emily.  The dates for 2023 are 21 Mar LA; 25 May Full; 19 Jul LA; 7 Sept Full; 22 Nov LA; All virtual except 25 May that is in person in Maidstone. Please be willing to share food on 25th May! | All  All | Email Pam M with any costs or advice on agency staff  Please email Emily if you have ideas on a blanket consent form for works. |