

# HOME FRONT



## Excellence Awards 2023



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Take a bow – all our winners and highly commended finalists



Our highly coveted Excellence awards

## The best of the best unveiled

**Teams and individuals working in the housing sector have enjoyed success in our annual Excellence Awards. The awards – the Oscars for our regional housing sector – celebrate the best projects, professionals and partnerships across housing in Kent and Medway.**

"I know that for all KHG members, housing delivery – whatever aspect of housing delivery that is – is a passion, not a job," Brian Horton, Chair of KHG, told an audience of nearly 100 housing professionals who gathered at the awards ceremony in Northfleet.

"These awards are always special, especially this year when we come together for the first face-to-face ceremony since before the Covid pandemic.

"Over the years the judging panel has been touched by the passion behind the vital contributions

colleagues in housing are making. The ideas, the innovation and the vision that are demonstrated illustrate the caring side of housing and the drive we have to make a difference.

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"The housing sector faces many challenges but seeing so many success stories gives us enthusiasm for the art of the possible and enables us all to go back to the day job inspired by what we have seen and heard today.

The winners were announced at a ceremony hosted by Becs Wilcox, Chair of our Events Group. We are thankful for sponsorship from the Kent Housing and Development Group, Southern Housing, Paramount Independent Property Services and the South East Consortium.



## CATEGORY WINNERS AND HIGHLY COMMENDED

**Excellent partnership – winner Shepway Community Larder at Maidstone Borough Council;** highly commended The Pathway Project by Porchlight, Pathway and Kent and Medway's Integrated Care Board

**Excellence in asset management – winner Fire Safety Team at mhs homes;** highly commended Stay Green House at Sevenoaks District Council

**Excellent community project – winner Daisy Den at mhs homes;** highly commended Dover Pantry at Southern Housing

**Excellence in delivering services for vulnerable people – winner Ladies Night Project at Medway Council;** highly commended Foy House Project at Thanet District Council, and also Sarah Moore and Michele McLoughlin at Interventions Alliance

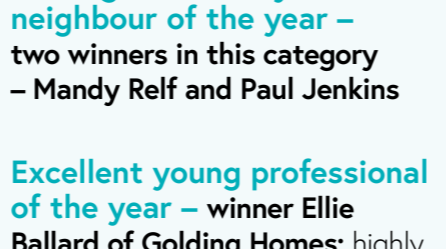
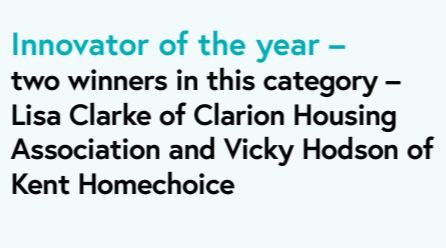
**Excellence in development and regeneration – winner Lenham Springs at mhs homes**

**Excellent health and social care professional – winner Stephanie Line at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust**

**Excellent housing professional – winner Amber Tipping of Town and Country Housing;** highly commended Dominic Norwell of Town and Country Housing and also Mark James of Ashford Borough Council

**Excellence in the private sector – winner Thanet District Council v Tamiz prosecution team;** highly commended Clare Reynolds of Gravesham Borough Council

**Team of the year – two winners in this category – the Tenancy Sustainment Team at Southern Housing and the Income Management Team at Town and Country Housing**



**Innovator of the year – two winners in this category – Lisa Clarke of Clarion Housing Association and Vicky Hodson of Kent Homechoice**

**Unsung community hero/ neighbour of the year – two winners in this category – Mandy Relf and Paul Jenkins**

**Excellent young professional of the year – winner Ellie Ballard of Golding Homes;** highly commended Ben Turner of Moat.



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Got an idea for an event? Email [sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk)

## YOUR FEEDBACK

People attending the awards event have given positive feedback, with an average score of five out of five for the venue and four out of five for the organisation and the refreshments. The presenter, Becs Wilcox had several great reviews. Feedback included: building in networking time/activities; changing the event timing &/or serving more substantial food; presenting videos of all winners. The KHG Events Group will take on board the feedback and suggestions where possible in planning the next awards ceremony.

### Some feedback:

**"It was well organised and ran very smoothly, everyone had a chance to celebrate their wins."**

**"It could include a little more detail about what each winner and highly commended had done to be nominated."**

**"The screen words at times was small to see. You may have people in the room who can't read particularly the community hero award. Maybe good to read it aloud."**

**"I enjoyed meeting and being around new people from the same industry. It was also very inspiring to hear the stories of the work people have done over the year."**



## Stay #winterstrong

As the nights close in, Kent County Council (KCC) is sharing guidance to help tenants keep warm and well this winter. Vulnerable people, including the elderly, very young, pregnant mums and individuals with underlying health conditions, are at greater risk of becoming ill when it gets cold. But anyone can become sick because low temperatures weaken our immune system. This increases susceptibility to a range of health issues, such as cardiovascular diseases, and infections like flu and COVID-19.

Cold weather creates other health hazards. Using damaged appliances to heat a home increases the risk of **carbon monoxide poisoning**. Cold and damp housing is also more likely to suffer mould, increasing the risk of illness such as asthma. New **guidance** outlines what landlords should do to about damp and mould.

Heating one room to at least 18°C, wearing several layers, having hot food and drinks, and moving about, can all protect against illness – reducing the need for NHS treatment or a trip to A&E. Make sure tenants know about the **Priority Services Register** and cost of living help on **kent.gov** and **GOV.UK**. You can find out if a home is eligible for support for energy efficiency improvements through **'Help to Heat'**.

## DA reciprocal scheme off to a great start

A reciprocal scheme for social landlords to support households fleeing domestic abuse to retain a social housing tenancy is gathering real momentum.

Almost a dozen landlords have already joined the scheme and the first three families have been moved to a place of safety to rebuild their lives.

A working group held its first webinar in April and a second one was organised on 5 October for housing associations and local authorities who have not signed up yet.

The multi-agency initiative is being led by Lisa Clarke of Clarion Housing, who said: "We want to reduce the risk of homelessness for survivors. The scheme is helping landlords move survivors into another local authority area if they cannot find suitable within their own stock. The survivor will not lose their social tenancy.

The first family to benefit from the scheme moved into a home provided by mhs homes. We cannot publish details for the sake of the safety of the family but it involved moving them out of emergency temporary

accommodation into a house in another part of the county.

Leading the project was Sandra Paine, Customer Liaison Officer with mhs homes, who said: "The whole process was completed quickly and smoothly. It has been a very successful outcome and when I spoke to family recently they were delighted to be given the chance of a fresh start."

Brian Horton said: "As Chair of KHG I'm very proud to see the first results of collaborative working on a coordinated response to domestic abuse across the county to protect tenants and families at risk of homelessness. This exemplifies the convening role of KHG to make a positive impact."

To find out more [visit our web page for survivors of domestic abuse](#).

The Kent and Medway End Domestic Abuse campaign 16 Days of Action runs from 25 November to 10 December.

[Download the 16 Days campaign toolkit](#) which has everything you need to take part.

## KHG Conference 2024

We are very excited to be planning the Kent Housing Group Conference 2024! This major event in our calendar is scheduled for February and the programme is currently being refined. Watch out for further announcements about the date and venue and how you can be part of it...



## Check out the Dashboard

The KHG Dashboard of Indicators for 2023, together with a wealth of supporting data, is available for members to study online – visit [KHG Dashboard of Indicators September 2023 – Kent Housing Group](#)

This is the first issue of the KHG dashboard for some years. It presents a summary of publicly available data and indicators on housing delivery, the housing market, tenure and energy efficiency, homelessness, and the comparison of private rents compared to the Local Housing Allowance.



## NEWS & EVENTS

### EDI group makes progress

The latest meeting of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) group demonstrated how much momentum has been built up since the group was formed in the spring.

The Group – which is a safe space to discuss actions and share good practice, learning and ideas to address EDI across our member organisations – covered a range of topics, including a discussion of the Better Social Housing Review and to work on an action plan regarding race and ethnicity.

The meeting also had a presentation from Stonewall Housing on LGBTQ+ housing experiences. Future presentations are expected on gypsy, Roma and

traveller communities, the Armed Forces Covenant and Allyship – the lifelong process of people developing relationships and building empathy with marginalised groups to better understand their challenges and issues.

The EDI group has been formed in partnership with the **Housing Diversity Network** (HDN). KHG is an associate member of the Network, which acts in an advisory role to the EDI group. If your organisational lead on EDI has not yet joined the group and would like to attend these meetings, please send your EDI lead's name and email address to [sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk)



### LET'S STAY FIRE SAFE

Partners are being encouraged to continue sharing the posters, social media posts and other materials in support of our ongoing "Let's Stay Fire Safe" campaign.

KHG has teamed up with a number of housing associations and councils to deliver the potentially life-saving campaign. It is split into two parts, covering fire safety advice in the home and guidance on keeping communal areas safe in blocks of flats.

Social housing landlords have been sharing details with their tenants, to encourage them to take simple steps to keep themselves, their families and neighbours fire safe. The campaign includes two animations (fully accessible with subtitle options), and a toolkit for landlords including images, social media assets and posts, QR codes, posters for communal areas and a dedicated KHG webpage.

Messages focus on the use of smoke detectors, not overloading electrical sockets, care if using any portable heaters, shutting fire doors in communal areas and keeping communal areas like corridors, entrance halls and stairwells clear from clutter.

Visit [kenthousinggroup.org.uk/fire-safe](http://kenthousinggroup.org.uk/fire-safe)



### Making referrals safe, easy and secure

ReferKent is an online referrals system that organisations can access to make referrals for people who need more help than their organisation can give.

Since launching in September 2022, a range of organisations have joined, including

support services for mental health, gambling, fuel advice and much more. Every Citizens Advice Bureau

across Kent are on-board too, making the ReferKent platform a unique tool for referring people to help and support in a timely way.

Organisations can just make referrals through the system, or they can make and receive referrals. If you are regularly signposting and/or making referrals

for people and would like to join ReferKent, email [referkent@kent.gov.uk](mailto:referkent@kent.gov.uk) to find out more.



### Homes not stock

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has provided a toolkit on how to talk about homes – you can view it here **A framing toolkit: How to talk about homes | JRF**

Key points include advice to talk about homes and not property or stock; and to recognise that homes are a way to protect health, not a form of wealth. As housing professionals we can often slip into talking about stock and a more 'human' tone can help us to better connect with tenants and the public. Previously JRF created a toolkit on talking about homelessness and it was considered a useful aid in achieving a better tone when writing documents relating to homelessness.



### RACE is on...

The Rural and Community Housing Enabling service (RACE) has commenced its survey programme with the first undertaken in Chiddingstone, Sevenoaks – and unveiled its new logo and branding.

As we reported in the last issue, RACE has been set up by KHG and is being hosted by Ashford Borough Council and supported by contributions from councils and housing associations working across the county.

RACE works with communities to deliver housing that matches what local people need. It works with

parish councils, housing teams at councils, housing associations and local developers to identify rural communities where action needs to be taken to meet the local housing needs.

Central to its work are surveys which it carries out aimed at the residents of individual villages and rural communities to find out whether there is a need for affordable housing locally.

To find out more visit **RACE – Kent Housing Group** or email [tessa.o'sullivan@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:tessa.o'sullivan@ashford.gov.uk)



## NEWS FROM THE SUB GROUPS

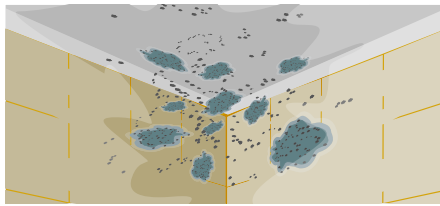
### Asset Management

We hosted the Impact of Damp and Mould event for nearly 100 attendees. It included presentations from key speakers and covered everything from its effects on health to the cultural aspects within the housing industry, and how we combat this issue with two product demonstrations. For a link to the video, email [sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk).

We had a presentation by KCC's Max Tant on flood resilience and one on how Dartford is utilising Vericon to gather data on property performance. Golding Homes' experiences with EV chargers was really useful, and can be shared with anyone who is interested.

### Housing, Health and Social Care

Cedi Frederick, Chair NHS Kent & Medway, and ICB Director Malti Varshney explained the role of integrated care systems in reducing health inequalities. The group requires a Vice Chair and is keen to hear from anyone interested in this rewarding role.



### Kent Homechoice

Westree Road Housing has joined the Kent Homechoice partnership. It was agreed to promote pre tenancy training videos. On the theme of affordability, it was agreed to update the website with new affordable home ownership schemes. Members heard that implementation of new system has provided greater transparency to the customer in terms of accessing available homes. They were also told that initial transitional issues after the new system went live on 1 July have been resolved.

### Housing Strategy and Enabling

An event is to be arranged with HSEG, planners and developers to ensure closer working, to address concerns with the process of

ensuring the right type of high quality housing within sustainable communities are developed. Ensuring housing is resilient to future climate changes was discussed as part of the work. Thanet Council has delivered on an MMC site in Broadstairs – an Ashford MMC scheme is due to open next summer. An update from Homes England on its 2021-26 affordable homes programme led to debate about estate regeneration and replacement homes which are now included in the mix.

### Tenancy Management

The group heard that members are continuing to use the marketing materials supplied as part of KHG's ongoing Let's Keep Fire Safe campaign, and will be evaluating the impact in a variety of ways. KCC provided an update on the Refer Kent service to help professionals make referrals, not signposting, for vulnerable clients.

Advertise your job vacancies for FREE on the KHG website  
– email [sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk)

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