

HOME FRONT



Kate Willard OBE



Roger Gough, Leader of
Kent County Council

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Conference countdown

After months of planning the curtain is about to go up on the Kent Housing Group Conference 2024.

The challenges and opportunities facing the public and private housing sector in Kent and Medway will be put under the microscope when more than 200 housing industry professionals attend the conference at the Kent Event Centre on Tuesday 5 March.

It is being organised by KHG in association with Birketts, Counties and Capital Consulting and Stantec.

Delegates from a range of specialisms engaged in the delivery of public and private sector housing will gather for the one-day event. In addition to representatives of the member and partner organisations, delegates will include developers, registered providers, planners, architects, contractors, policy-makers, charities, consultants and special interest groups.

Key panel discussions at the conference will reflect the themes of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025, and discussions on the day will help KHG to formulate their future strategy.

The conference will be chaired by BBC presenter Sally Bundock, while the keynote speeches will be delivered by Kate Willard OBE, Chair of the Thames Estuary Growth Board, and Roger Gough, Leader of

Kent County Council. The event is being delivered by White Label Creative.

KHG Chair Brian Horton said: "Housing is fundamentally about people and communities, not just bricks and mortar. In addition to informing, educating and enthusing key stakeholders and members, our conference will provide strategic advice and a Kent perspective on the hottest topics and issues facing the housing sector today and into the future."

The conference is free for KHG members (limited to five spaces per organisation) and the cost for non-members is £250+VAT. You can book your place to attend here: <https://wlevents.org.uk/event/kent-housing-group-conference-2024/>

Programme summary

Healthier Homes, Healthier Communities, Happier Lives

- This session looks at how housing, health and social care sectors can best collaborate to ensure a higher level of health and wellbeing within communities.

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Safe as Houses

- We consider the issues and challenges involved in ensuring decent, secure, healthy, warm homes, whether new build or existing homes, regardless of tenure.

Housing, Infrastructure Investment and Zero Carbon Targets

- Our focus in this session is infrastructure investment into Kent and Medway and the ways in which stakeholders can support and influence delivery.

The Planning Process and Housing Delivery

- Our experts on this panel discuss the main challenges and barriers in accelerating the delivery of homes across Kent and Medway and debate the major planning reforms they think are needed to speed up delivery.

Affordability, Inclusivity and Flexibility

- We focus on the most effective ways to deliver the right type, tenure and location of affordable homes that meet the housing needs of Kent and Medway.

NEWS & EVENTS

Fire safety in sheltered accommodation

A webinar on fire safety in sheltered accommodation organised by KHG and Kent Fire and Rescue Service on 29 January attracted 105 delegates.

The presentation included guidance that should be used when discussing these types of premises, enhance knowledge of what should be in place and the best way to support residents about fire safety. It also covered the importance of fire doors, evacuation strategy for these types of premises, person-centred fire risk assessments, and catering for bed-bound residents. A lively Q & A session followed the presentation.

Early feedback from delegates to the organisers has been very positive, with 67% of those commenting saying they learned a lot from the webinar; while 67% found person-centred risk assessments particularly useful. Suggestions made for future events included person-centred fire risk assessments.

Consumer standards in the spotlight

There's still time to book your place at the Consumer Standards event on Wednesday 13 March at mhs homes in Chatham Maritime. The event will provide clarity on what social landlords need to do and explore challenges and solutions in each consumer standards theme.

Kate Dodsworth, Regulator of Social Housing, is the keynote speaker, and each Consumer Standards theme will be covered by speakers from housing associations, local authorities, Housemark, Homeswapper and ASB & Associates.

The event runs from 9am to 12.30pm and a light lunch will be provided by mhs homes. The event is free to KHG members (limited to five spaces per organisation) and the cost for non-members is £50+VAT. The venue has a capacity of 80 people.

To book your place email sharon.irvine@ashford.gov.uk. Non-members, call Ashford Borough Council on **01233 331 111** and ask to book a place for the Kent Housing Group Consumer Standards event on 13 March.

Suicide prevention training

Housing professionals can sign up to receive free training via the Kent & Medway Suicide Prevention Programme to help people understand what can cause suicidal thoughts and to recognise the signs that someone may be feeling suicidal and how to support them.

Recent data shows that in 2022, 197 people took their own life in Kent and Medway; that's around three to four residents on average a week who die by suicide. By signing up to the interactive training, housing staff can learn more about supporting someone living with poor mental health or affected by suicide.

To find out more email suicideprevention@kent.gov.uk or visit <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/release-the-pressure>

SUB GROUPS

They said...

We asked the housing professionals who chair our sub groups to sum up what the role means to them, the achievements secured, how has being the chair helped their organisation and how has it helped their own career development...

Sue Oliver, chair of Private Sector Housing sub group

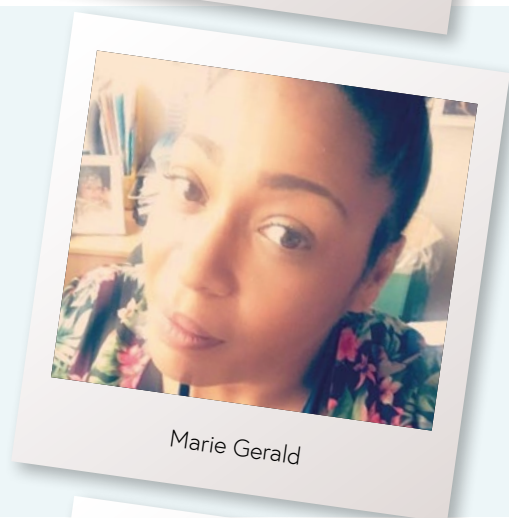
"For me, it's about the opportunity to take a broad and strategic view of the challenges facing private sector housing, locally, regionally and nationally, and to consider how we can contribute to ways forward as a group rather than individually and in isolation at a time when local authority resources are stretched. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate an outward facing and holistic approach and is very useful experience for career development."



Marie Gerald, former chair of Kent Housing Options Group

"I was chair for a long time and absolutely loved it. Kent authorities were so good at working together to achieve great things so as joint protocols, reciprocals etc and I was just proud to be the chair and coordinate great discussions. It made me passionate about partnership working and bringing people together which I still do in my role as a homelessness adviser with DLHUC. I still refer to it as good example of a strong partnership

"Being chair is a fantastic privilege, working with colleagues around Kent and bringing people and discussions together. And it also looks great on your CV!"

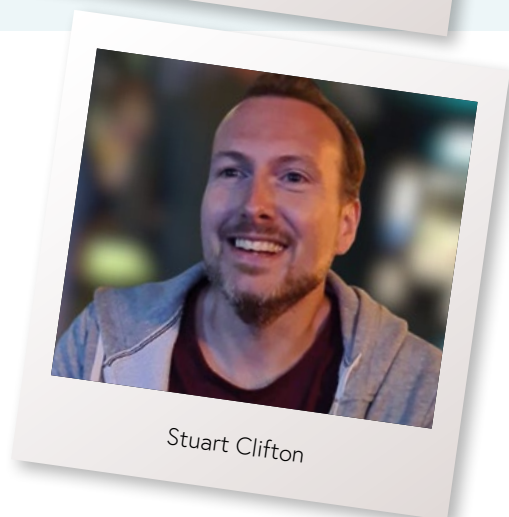


Stuart Clifton, former vice chair and chair of Kent Housing Options Group

"I was vice chair of KHOG from January 2018 to October 2019, before stepping up as chair until December 2021. I chaired throughout the pandemic where there was a critical response from the housing sector, for example with the 'Everyone In' initiative to move rough sleepers off the streets, and with protect and vaccinate. KHOG decided to meet fortnightly throughout the early stages of Covid. As chair I contributed significantly to Kent's response to the pandemic, being a link between public health, KCC and district housing teams.

"I was able to influence and support the review and development of various countywide protocols. One of the achievements I'm proud of was securing £2.5m in grant funding from the KCC COMF for KHG and all 12 districts in Kent to support a project to support the prevention of homelessness for households hit financially by Covid.

"As chair I was able to act as both a conduit between other organisations and the district housing teams, being involved in multi-agency and stakeholder meetings as representative for housing districts. This improved the communication with colleagues across organisations which benefited my organisation



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through developing closer collaboration. It enabled me to share with my senior colleagues much earlier and ensured I was involved in key conversations and decisions.

"Towards the end of my tenure as chair, I was successful in taking on a new, more senior, role at another authority. The knowledge I developed through being chair of KHOG, I believe was integral in being successful with developing my career and with taking on more senior and responsible role. Being chair also helped build my confidence of chairing and facilitating meetings, which is not something which comes naturally to me.

"I would encourage anyone who are focused on their personal and career development to consider standing as chair of a sub group. While there was a significant time commitment, more so due to my involvements in writing some of the protocols and being chair during a pandemic, taking on the role is both personally rewarding and beneficial to your organisation."

Mark James, chair of Housing Strategy and Enabling Group

"I see being a chair of HSEG as a privilege, a recognition among my peers that I have a profile and am respected enough to be entrusted with the stewardship of the group. While to date I have only encouraged conversation, I've learnt from colleagues and helped to shape future implementation strategies that will hopefully benefit all.

"I think senior colleagues here are happy that we have an officer who steers such an influential group and can share the learning from the important sessions. In terms of career development it's meant that my name is out there and I have received invitations to sessions off the back of being chair – also chatting to colleagues on the other side of the Dartford Bridge to obtain wider perspectives. These are avenues that would not have been open to me previously."



Genette Pinwill, former chair of Tenancy Management sub group

"The opportunity to chair the forum was a great way to gain exposure and time with peers across the county. To learn, share and collaborate. I worked on the first tenancy fraud campaign initiatives bringing all housing providers together, which was a fantastic joint effort.

"I was also chair during Covid when we all headed into the virtual world of meeting which helped our membership and attendance – more than ever we came together, less travel time and we needed to bounce ideas around to overcome challenges and innovate.

"We had set agenda items unique to those challenging times and it was a great way of co-ordinating knowledge and experience on common issues and topics. This brought about innovation in how we could work as a partnership and I hope these trends in virtual meetings hold true for easier attendance to share and collaborate.

"The chair role was a great way to ask peers about new legislation, regulations, and case studies. For my career, chairing gave me confidence, a great topic for networking, and a knowledge of ways of working and who's who – useful when you work across multiple areas and local authorities. I would always recommend people put themselves forward, you are well supported by the Partnership Manager, and fellow members are kind, respectful and professional to support the role too so it has lots of positives – in fact I have no negatives – there's lots to gain!"

