

From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
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To: Scrutiny Committee – 06 June 2023

Subject: **Kent Homeless Connect: Transition Update**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The eighteen month transition period for the Kent Homelessness Connect service began on 1 October 2022. Phase 1, the ending of the Rough Sleeper Outreach service, is complete. Phases 2 and 3 are on track to complete within the transition period, by March 2024.

Recommendation(s): Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress of the project through the transition phases.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Kent Homeless Connect service was commissioned by the council in October 2018 to support adults with complex support needs that are facing homelessness.
- 1.2. To meet the financial challenge posed by the budget in 22/23 and in years to come, the council's budget, agreed on 10 February 2022, included a proposal to allow the service to end when the contract expired on 30 September 2022.
- 1.3. Following a consultation period and a report taken to Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee in July 2022, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, agreed in August 2022 to:
 - a) The ending of the Kent Homeless Connect service from 30 September 2022;
 - b) The variation of the current Kent Homeless Connect Service Contract to include a transitional period of up to 18 months, ending no later than 31 March 2024;
- 1.4. The 18 month transitional period commenced on 1 October 2022.

2. Background

- 2.1. Kent County Council has commissioned a range of housing related support services since 2003. Whilst housing and homelessness are the statutory responsibility of the District, Borough and City councils across Kent, the county council has continued to provide discretionary support for homeless people with complex support needs.

2.2. The Kent Homelessness Connect contract streamlined former provision into an integrated service, focussed on supporting those with more complex support needs. The contract meets the costs of providing trauma-informed assistance to people who have a range of support needs, to enable them to recover from homelessness and establish an independent life.

2.3. The contract is delivered over four geographic lots utilising a prime provider model. The two appointed prime providers are Porchlight and Look Ahead. The contract was delivered through three pathways:

- **Rough sleeper outreach** - help to people sleeping rough, support to access and sustain accommodation and obtain health care and support appropriate to their needs. This helps people to recover from homelessness.
- **Prevention and resettlement** – help in the community to people who need support and are at risk of homelessness, or people who are homeless, regardless of where they live. The service also helps people to establish themselves successfully into a new tenancy.
- **Supported accommodation** - provides support in a supported accommodation setting, where help is offered to aid people to independence and recovery from homelessness. Once people have gained the skills they need to live independently, they are supported to move on to more permanent accommodation.

3. Transition Update

3.1. A Deed of Variation was drafted and signed by both Prime Providers.

3.2. The transition to new arrangements is phased over three stages. The maximum estimated cost of the 18-month transition period is £4,563k.

- **Phase 1:** 1 October 22 - 31 March 23 – Rough sleeper outreach
- **Phase 2:** 1 April 23 – 30 September 23 – Prevention and resettlement
- **Phase 3:** 1 October 23 – 31 March 24 – Supported accommodation

3.3. The council has continued to work with the District, Borough and City councils and the Prime Providers, aiming towards finalising how alternative support can be delivered in each local authority area. There is broad consensus many aspects of the service can be delivered by the Local Housing Authorities or their agents.

3.4. Local Housing Authorities receive funding from Central Government to support them to deliver against their responsibilities under the Homeless Reduction Act, such as the Prevention Duty. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has made monies available to Local Housing Authorities to tackle rough sleeping, significantly through Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

4. PHASE 1: Rough Sleeper Outreach Transition Update

- 4.1. This service was not provided through the Kent County Council contract in all District, Borough and City council areas, some councils preferring to deliver or commission this themselves. This support delivered through the contract ended at the end of March 2023.
- 4.2. District, Borough and City councils have received funding under the latest round of central government's Rough Sleeping Initiative funding, which has provided funding over a three-year period (2022-25). Local Authorities determine how this is allocated, and many have retained some degree of rough sleeper outreach through this fund.

5. PHASE 2: Homeless Prevention Transition Update

- 5.1. The Homeless Prevention support will cease in September 2023. This support will be delivered, by District, Borough and City councils in pursuit of their homeless prevention and relief duties, placed on them by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.
- 5.2. Work is progressing with District, Borough and City councils to implement the Xantura system, first established in Kent by Maidstone Borough Council. This system enables local authorities to identify households vulnerable to homelessness earlier and therefore take proactive and preventative action.

6. PHASE 3: Supported Accommodation Update

- 6.1. The service funds support within 341 units of accommodation. Rent for these units is paid for through enhanced housing benefit. The District, Borough and City council area breakdown of these units is below.

6.2.

Local Authority Area	Number of Units
Ashford	15
Canterbury	59
Dartford	0
Dover	53
Folkestone & Hythe	22
Gravesham	13
Maidstone	51
Sevenoaks	7
Swale	60
Thanet	36
Tonbridge & Malling	6
Tunbridge Wells	19

- 6.3. During phase 1 of the transition period, the council has worked with Local Housing Authorities, Prime Providers and other partners to seek alternative arrangements, and funding. The primary objective has been to obtain funding so that the units could be retained post March 24 for the purpose of supporting the current cohort, vulnerable adults with complex needs facing homelessness.
- 6.4. Where it may not be possible to retain the units for the current cohort, repurposing of properties is being explored, and conversations have already

taken place with KCC commissioners responsible for Supported Living, Domestic Abuse, Drugs and Alcohol, Neurodivergent and Children and Young Persons services.

- 6.5. If no alternatives are found, and the services must close, the council will work with all partners to ensure those using the services are moved on successfully.
- 6.6. The council, District, Borough and City councils and the Prime Providers are in the process of finalising plans for all supported accommodation schemes.

7. Care Act Assessments Update

- 7.1. The council will ensure those who need an assessment under the Care Act receive one and to consider how care and support needs can be met.
- 7.2. Processes have been established, whereby both Prime Providers report to Adult Social Care on a monthly basis regarding the needs of people accessing the service, as well as an up to date list of those people (who have given consent) that require a statutory Care Act assessment.
- 7.3. A lead contact within Adult Social Care for each Prime Provider's contracted area is in place, who allocate the required Care Act assessments to their team members to be undertaken.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Phase 1 is now complete – the Rough Sleeper Outreach support delivered through the contract ended at the end of March 2023.
- 8.2 Phase 2 the Homeless Prevention support will cease in September 2023.
- 8.3 Phase 3 - the council, District, Borough and City councils and the Prime Providers are finalising plans for all supported accommodation schemes.

9. Recommendations

<p>9.1 Recommendation(s): Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress of the project through the transition phases.</p>

10. Background Documents

Decision No 22/00075:
[Record of Decision \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

Decision No 22/00076:
[Record of Decision \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

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