



NEWS RELEASE

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35 years of changing lives

This year Porchlight celebrates its 35th anniversary. Established in 1974 as Canterbury Cyrenians the charity has grown considerably and now operates across the entire county offering a wide range of services to meet the needs of vulnerable and homeless people.

The charity provides homelessness prevention and supported accommodation projects across East Kent while its Kent Outreach Service, which works with rough sleepers and people in unsuitable temporary accommodation, operates across the county providing street outreach, drop-in sessions and a free phone helpline 0800 567 7699.

Since humble beginnings of a single hostel on Whitstable Road in Canterbury back in 1974 the charity has grown to employ over 100 people and supports approximately 500 individuals at any one time. In 2008/09 Porchlight was able to change over 1,600 lives for the better.

Mike Barrett, Chief Executive said, "The charity's ability to adapt to the needs of the individual is the reason we are seeing so many more positive outcomes for our service users. In the 1970's, 1980's and even the 1990's it was thought by government, society and many charities that a roof over someone's head was the solution to the homelessness problem. This is not the case and for some time now we have been able to focus on and tackle the complex issues faced by single homeless people."

"The dedication of our staff and determination of our service users to change their lives is ensuring that year on year we are seeing the cycle of homelessness broken for increasing numbers of people."

This year, as part of the government's 'No-one left out' strategy to end rough sleeping in England by 2012, Porchlight was named as 'Ending Rough Sleeping Champion.' The charity will be using this recognition to share knowledge and influence homelessness strategies both locally and nationally to help the government achieve its target.

To find out more about the work of Porchlight visit www.porchlight.org.uk

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Notes to the Editor:

About Porchlight

1. A full media toolkit is available at www.porchlight.org.uk/35years which includes:

- A video interview with Mike Barrett, Chief Executive
- A socio-political overview of changes in homelessness provision since the 1960's
- A history of all our supported accommodation, homelessness prevention and outreach services
- A timeline of major developments in the housing sector since 1974
- A set of photographs from the charity's archive dating back to the 1970's (high resolution available on request)
- An electronic copy of our 08/09 Annual Review giving up to date facts, figures, developments and achievements

2. Porchlight is a Kent wide independent local charity that works to support single, vulnerable homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. It was established in 1974 as Canterbury Cyrenians and works throughout Kent.

3. Porchlight has accommodation based projects in Canterbury, Dover, Ashford and Ramsgate. The outreach team works with street homeless people as well as supporting former homeless people in their own homes, to prevent them returning to street life. Other services support people in their own homes who are at risk of becoming homeless.

4. In 2008-9 Porchlight helped over 1,600 vulnerable people. Porchlight projects include:

Kent Outreach: Our street outreach team work across Kent including working within prisons to help offenders who will be released from prison homeless. They operate a 24 hour free phone helpline for help and advice with housing emergencies - 0800 567 7699

Young Persons Services: This includes a direct access hostel, longer stay hostel and shared house, providing support for a number years, until each individual is ready to live independently.

Mental Health: We run a housing project in Dover specifically for people with enduring mental ill-health. We also provide support to 7 clients in another purpose built accommodation project in Margate. In addition we also have a young persons' mental health service that enables young homeless people with mental health problems to better access the health services they need.

General Accommodation: We have hostels in Canterbury, Dover, Ashford and Ramsgate. They range in the levels of support provided from high support needs with staff available 24hrs a day, to medium support with staff available on a 9-5pm basis.

Floating Support: This is a preventative service that provides support to vulnerable people in their own home who are at risk of becoming homeless. Many of these clients have been through the hostel system and are almost ready to live independently but just need a little support every now and again.

Training and Service User Involvement: We have a team that works with people accessing any of our services and helps them develop their skills and education. We provide tailored training and encourage people to get involved in the running and improvement of their project, or volunteer on a more formal level in the organisation. Porchlight is committed to involving our service users throughout all the activities of the charity. They are actively encouraged to become involved in education, employment, volunteering and service user involvement opportunities.

For more information about Porchlight contact Mark Parry on 01227 813196 / 07734 595308 or email markparry@porchlight.org.uk