

NEWS RELEASE

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Tribute to colleague

Staff at Kent homeless charity Porchlight recently held a tree planting ceremony in memory of their colleague Ness Powney who passed away suddenly last year, aged 51. Ness' parents Sheila and Tony also attended.

The tree and plaque with the words, "Our Friend, Our Colleague & Our Amazon Warrior," have been placed in the garden of Simon Mead House, Ashford, which is the Porchlight supported accommodation project where Ness worked.

Bev Russell, colleague and close friend, said, "We called Ness our Amazon Warrior as she was always advocating for her service users' rights. She will be sadly missed but we will keep her memory alive."

Ness, who lived in Hythe, started work with Porchlight in 2002 as Floating Support Worker. She helped to prevent homelessness in Ashford by working with people in their own homes to address issues affecting their housing security. Above and beyond her main role Ness was a very active member of staff, writing staff training, studying for housing qualifications and taking responsibility as a staff rep.

Staff and service users at Porchlight have chosen to remember Ness by holding an annual 'Ness Powney Challenge'. Each year in June they will be complete various challenges across Kent that benefit vulnerable and homeless people.

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

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Notes to the Editor:

1. Simon Mead House accommodates 11 men, aged between 18-65 years old. It is staffed by a team of Support and Resettlement Workers, Monday – Friday. The maximum length of stay depends on the individual and we offer a six month assured short-hold tenancy that can be extended as necessary.

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.

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.

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