

NEWS RELEASE

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Artistic trip for vulnerable citizens

A group of vulnerable tenants from Canterbury, who are currently accessing the services of homeless charity Porchlight, recently went on a trip to the Tate Modern funded ActivMob.

ActivMob is a programme developed by Kent County Council and the Design Council to help people access more activities in ways that fit in best with their lives. It currently supports over 200 people in a range of pursuits and is funded by the Communities for Health programme at the Department of Health.

The scheme is also helping out with the cost of art materials for regular art group meetings.

The service users are currently accessing Porchlight's floating support service which works with tenants in their own homes to address issues that may be affecting their housing security.

In 2007-8 Porchlight received 243 referrals to its homeless prevention service in contrast to 121 in 2006-7. An increase of 50% highlights the growth of the charity's preventative work.

Tony accessed Porchlight's floating support service after the charity found him accommodation on release from prison, "With the backing of Porchlight I am taken more seriously and am able to get through the red tape. Without their support I don't think I would be where I am now. I was in a very vulnerable position when they came to help me."

A year on Tony is now looking forward to the future and has plans to get a job as a courier, "I want to get some structure, and with the help of Porchlight I can do that."

Hayley Ells, Floating Support Offender Worker, works in the Thanet area helping ex-offenders to maintain their tenancies, "My clients receive intensive support to start with and then continued support for up to two years. Most receive weekly visits and more frequently if there is an immediate issue. The ultimate goal is for them to become and integrated member of their local community and maintain both tenancy and employment or engage in other meaningful activities."

Mike Barrett, Chief Executive says, "The support the charity is able to give to vulnerable and homeless people across the county is an important lifeline. With focussed commitment our service users eventually build the skills and confidence they need to live independently."

To find out more about Porchlight's work to prevent homelessness and other support the charity provides for vulnerable and homeless people in Kent please visit www.porchlight.org.uk

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Notes to the Editor:

1. Find out more about ActivMob at www.activmob.com

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 2007-78 Porchlight helped over 1,400 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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