

**NEWS RELEASE**

**DATE: 27 April 2009**

**Evolution exhibition – showcasing service user talent**

An art exhibition, showcasing the talent of Porchlight service users, will be held for 2 weeks starting Monday 27 April at the Charlton Art Centre, High Street, Dover.

The theme for the exhibition came from Charles Darwin's work "The Theory of Evolution" which inspired photography to depict the personal evolution and journey taken by residents at Porchlight supported accommodation projects.

Ross Fisher-Smith, Porchlight Support and Resettlement Worker, who helped organise the exhibition said, "For some this was the first time they had ever used a camera to take a picture to express themselves with this medium. For all this was the first time they were given the chance of exhibiting their work in a gallery. It is very inspiring to see what has been achieved."

"I would like to thank all service users, staff and volunteers involved and the White Cliff Creatives' Guild for making this possible."

The exhibition is open to public free of charge Monday to Saturday 10 - 4pm.

To find out more about the work of Porchlight visit [www.porchlight.org.uk](http://www.porchlight.org.uk)

For more information on the White Cliffs Creatives' Guild please visit <http://www.wccg.org.uk/>

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**Notes to the Editor:**

1. The White Cliffs Creatives' Guild is a not-for-profit membership organisation dedicated to promoting arts and crafts activities in the Dover District and beyond. The Guild has been active for nearly 2 years, managing the Charlton Art Centre, Dover, since January. The Guild aims to make art available, both to take part in, and display/sell via the Gallery and Project space shop, for the whole community, artist or not. The Guild started a "Crafted in Kent" initiative, which guarantees that whatever is labelled as such is guaranteed 100% produced by the person selling it. Workshops, demos and tutorials are held and the Guild is very keen to work with the community to build an environment of creative activity and interests.

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 2007-8 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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