



NEWS RELEASE

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CHAMPION TO END ROUGH SLEEPING

Communities and Local Government has declared Porchlight as an 'Ending Rough Sleeping Champion' as part of its strategy to wipe out rough sleeping in England by 2012.

The "*No one left out – Communities ending rough sleeping*" strategy, released in November last year, sought community based champions as experts to promote best practice in preventing and tackling rough sleeping through 2009/10.

Porchlight's Kent Outreach Service, which is funded by Kent Supporting People, supports rough sleepers, people in temporary accommodation and those facing eviction. The service works in partnership with all twelve of Kent's local authorities to tackle homelessness and promote independence for single homeless people. Through comprehensive statistics and real life case studies Porchlight are able to assist these local authorities in the development of their homelessness strategies and action plans for preventing and tackling rough sleeping.

Since expanding the Outreach Service to operate Kent wide in January 2008 it has been inundated with referrals. A statistical snapshot from the first 3 months of this year shows a total of 253 people being referred in to the service from across the county, 128 of which were rough sleeping at the time of referral.

Kimba Smith, Kent Outreach Service Strategic Area Manager for Porchlight said, "Our services are vital to the homeless, excluded and vulnerable people in the county. We have a great deal of experience in dealing with the complex issues faced by single homeless people and are delighted to have this recognised by Communities and Local Government."

"As a Champion we are keen to share our knowledge and will be providing speakers at national events, holding a large conference to promote best practice and developing regional and sub regional arrangements to prevent and tackle rough sleeping."

The service operates a 24 hour free phone helpline, 0800 5677699, for help and advice on homelessness and housing emergencies.

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

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Notes to the Editor:

1. Porchlight is a Kent wide independent local charity that works to support single, vulnerable homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. Established in 1974 as Canterbury Cyrenians, this is our **35th** year of changing lives.

About the Kent Outreach Service:

2. The Porchlight Kent Outreach Service comprises a team of 22 and operates across the county providing support to rough sleepers, sofa surfers and people in temporary accommodation or anyone facing eviction. Support is provided through street outreach, drop-in sessions in each local authority area and a free phone helpline number 0800 5677699. The helpline is also available for people to find out when and where their local drop-in will be or to inform the team of anyone who may need their help. The service also provides a prison outreach service working with ex-offenders to find suitable accommodation on release to prevent rough sleeping.

3. The Kent Outreach Service drop-ins provide advice and information regarding housing options, evictions, housing and welfare benefits, health services, referral to other agencies and supported housing providers, assistance with accessing the private rented sector and where necessary help to access emergency accommodation.

Our other services:

4. 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.

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

Young Persons Services: This includes a direct access hostel, longer stay hostel and shared house, providing support for a number of 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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