

Porchlight services history

Kent Outreach Service

The outreach team work throughout Kent to help people who are sleeping on the streets, with no fixed abode and the “hidden homeless” who might be sofa surfing or very transient. The team provide emergency support by helping individuals to access temporary accommodation and once housed, short term tenancy sustainment. A 24 hour freephone helpline **0800 567 7699** has been put in place to ensure the service is accessible to all.

We encourage people to access other support services where necessary such as drug, alcohol or mental health services. Workers undertake street outreach sessions to locate people who are homeless as well as running drop-in sessions in each local authority area and prisons.

The service started in **1998** and proved very successful in contacting and working with a significant amount of entrenched rough sleepers in Canterbury. Since then successful bids for funding enabled the service to go county wide in **2008** with a team of 22, including two Private Landlord Liaison roles that work closely with landlords to help service users access the private rented sector.

Young Person’s Services

We have a number of services run specifically for young people aged 16-21 years including two supported accommodation projects and a young person’s mental health outreach worker.

Young people come to us from a variety of circumstances and often with a range of complex issues. Through tailored support, meaningful activities and the provision of safe accommodation we aim to help young people regain their confidence and trust and develop a sense of responsibility, citizenship and inclusion in their community.

In **1997** fundraising by 'The Friends of Canterbury Cyrenians' led to the building of an 8 roomed accommodation project at New Town Street, Canterbury.

Homelessness legislation in 2002 meant that local authorities had a duty to house 16-17 year olds and this led to a further growth of our young person's supported accommodation. Major building work took place on our original hostel on Whitstable Road and in **2003** it was reopened with 10 new staff as supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds.

Homelessness Prevention

We also prevent vulnerable people from becoming homeless through our floating support service. This works with people in their own home and helps them address the issues affecting their housing security. We have specialist floating support for ex-offenders to help them reintegrate into the community as well as our new service for those with enduring mental health which we provide to residents in high-support accommodation.

The floating support service started informally as a way of continuing support for our service users once they had moved on from our supported accommodation. In **2001** the service expanded further with floating support offered in Dover, Canterbury and Thanet. In April 2007, we received additional funding to provide floating support for 19 ex-offenders in East Kent. Since **2008** the service is able to work with 214 vulnerable people at any one time.

Supported Accommodation

We provide supported accommodation for people who are homeless and help them to change their lives. We have a range of hostels providing different levels of support from medium to high support (which are 24 hour support services). We have specialist services for young people and those with enduring mental ill health; as well as working with ex-offenders and people with substance misuse issues. Our current accommodation projects are based across East Kent.

Our first supported accommodation project was established in Canterbury in **1974**. The building on Whitstable Road was originally owned by the Mayor who donated it to staff and volunteers. In the late 1990's it became a shared

house for 6 people and is now a young person's direct access hostel for 16-21 year olds.

In **1994** Craddock House in Canterbury was opened. Originally an army barracks the property was transformed into supported accommodation with the help of the Territorial Army and some intensive fundraising. Craddock House now accommodates 21 people aged 18-65 years. The following year, in **1995** we opened another hostel in Whitstable Road, Canterbury which now accommodates up to 16 people aged 18-65 years. Then in **1999** we began running Simon Mead House in Ashford. Originally a children's home the project now accommodates 11 men aged 18-65 years.

The expansion of services and growth of the charity's supported accommodation projects continued in **2003** with Fern Court, Dover. Originally owned by the YMCA the building was redeveloped in to 24 hour high support accommodation.

In **2004** a further project was opened in Dover along with our first in Thanet. Prospects in Dover, which was named by a former resident comprises of 8 individual flats spread over 2 different buildings. Support is provided for up to 7 people with enduring mental ill-health.

King Street in Thanet was originally a vacuum cleaner repair shop but after extensive redevelopment the property can now accommodate 4 people aged 18-65 years old.

In **2008** we secured funding to provide 3 Support and Resettlement Workers at newly built George Culmer Court in Margate. The building contains 7 purpose built, modern, fully furnished flats with staff on hand 7 days a week.