



NEWS RELEASE

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FACING UP TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Porchlight has become the first regional homelessness charity to sign up to the Stonewall 'Diversity Champion' programme and the Changing Faces' Face Equality at Work campaign.

The Stonewall 'Diversity Champions' programme aims to share good practice between employers to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. Stonewall's 'Serves you right' survey of 1,658 lesbian, gay and bisexual people across Britain found that gay people expect poorer treatment from public services including social housing, criminal justice and health services.

David Shields, Stonewall Director of Workplace Programmes said, "By joining Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme Porchlight is sending out a strong positive message – that people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual perform better at work when they can be themselves. Porchlight is committing to equality in the workplace for their lesbian, gay and bisexual staff who can, in turn, provide better support for Porchlight's clients'."

Changing Faces' Face Equality at Work campaign was launched in July 2008 to address the discrimination and prejudice that people with disfigurements may experience both as employees and customers and to promote fair treatment and equal opportunities. In January 2008 Changing Faces conducted independent research which revealed that 9 out of 10 people held unconscious negative attitudes towards people who have disfigurements.

Henrietta Spalding, Head of Professional Development at Changing Faces, said, "Changing Faces is delighted that Porchlight are the first SME organisation to become members of our Face Equality campaign. Awareness of disfigurement amongst their staff is already taking place and their enthusiasm should be an inspiration to every employer; demonstrating that any size and type of organisation can benefit from changing attitudes towards people with disfigurements."

Charles Elford, Head of Human Resources at Porchlight, said, "We are extremely proud to be working in partnership with these two charities. We don't just do things to tick the right boxes. We see our support of and commitment to Stonewall and Changing Faces as a powerful way to change attitudes."

"Our partnership will not only help strengthen Porchlight's culture of equality but also send a clear message to vulnerable people in the county that they will receive respect and understanding when they come to us for support."

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Notes to the Editor:

About Stonewall

Stonewall is the lesbian, gay and bisexual equality charity. To find out more about the work of Stonewall visit www.stonewall.org.uk

About Changing Faces

Changing Faces is a UK Registered Charity, No. 1011222, launched in 1992 by James Partridge OBE, DSc (Hon), who sustained severe burn injuries following a car accident at the age of 18. The charity supports and represents people with disfigurements of the face or body from any cause.

They employ a team of specialists who offer counselling and a range of practical strategies to children, young people, their families and adults with disfigurements, to enable them to manage public reactions and succeed in every part of their life. It offers a consultancy and training service to health professionals, teachers and employers on best practice in teaching, recruiting or providing customer service for people with disfigurements. It also raises public awareness and campaigns for social change.

Over 1 million people in the UK have a disfigurement to the face or body. Over 500,000 people have disfigurements to the face - 1 in every 111. Disfigurement can affect anyone, at any time or at any age. A disfigurement may be present at birth as a result of a birthmark or a craniofacial condition. Scarring, paralysis and other disfigurements can also be acquired following an accident, violence, an eye or skin condition, a surgical mistake, or cancer surgery.

The Face Equality Campaign was launched in May 2008. The aim of the campaign is to make sure that everyone, irrespective of their facial appearance, is treated equally and fairly. The charity is asking the public to show their support for the campaign by uploading their faces to a giant campaign collage on its website: <http://www.changingfaces.org.uk/lendyourface/>.

About Porchlight

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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. They operate a 24 hour free phone helpline for help and advice with housing emergencies - 0800 567 7699

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.

For more information about Porchlight visit www.porchlight.org.uk or contact Mark Parry on 01227 813196 / 07734 595308 or email markparry@porchlight.org.uk