



Impact report

For the year ended 31 March 2021

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About us

We're here for people who have nowhere to go and no-one to turn to. Some are living on the streets, others need our support to prevent or resolve any issues that could put them at risk of homelessness.

We prevent

We stop people from losing their homes and help others to live safely and independently in the community.

We provide

We work with people on the streets, in our supported housing and in local communities. We help people with their mental health, housing, education and employment so they can get where they want to be in life.

We challenge

We're fighting for a fairer society and we won't give up until everybody has a safe place to call home and the chance to make a positive contribution.



This year, more than 9,300 individuals were supported by Porchlight and our partners



Our vision, mission and values

Our vision

We strive for a fairer society where vulnerable people find stability, the most excluded are included, and where homelessness and poverty are things of the past.

Our values

- Inclusiveness
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Empowerment
- Passion
- Innovation

Our mission

To change lives for the better, by:

- preventing** people from becoming homeless through the provision of timely and personalised support services
- providing** housing, education, employability and personal development support to the most vulnerable and isolated people in our communities
- challenging** negative attitudes towards people who are homeless, living with mental ill health, or living in poverty

Trustees and administration

Chair of Trustees

Hilary Edridge

Trustees

- Howard Cohn, deputy chair (resigned 30 Sept 2020)
- Louise Coakley (resigned 26 May 2021)
- Colin Wright
- Dominic Deeson
- Thomas Evans
- Stephanie Goad
- Dr Jenny Robson
- Gill Ridge, treasurer (resigned 29 Jan 2021)
- Naomi Simcox
- Dr Stuart Field (resigned 30 July 2020)
- Dr Nicholas Ward (appointed 20 May 2020)
- Patrick Fuller (appointed 30 Sept 2020)
- Belinda Naiken-Payne (appointed 30 Sept 2020)
- Sue Baker (appointed 17 Feb 2021)

- Member of the fundraising and communications sub-committee
- Member of the HR sub-committee
- Member of the finance and risk sub-committee
- Member of the performance and quality sub-committee
- Member of the remuneration committee

Independent Auditor

RSM UK Audit LLP, 25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

Solicitors

Cripps LLP, Wallside House, 12 Mount Ephraim Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1EG

Bankers

Unity Trust Bank plc, Four Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2JB

Registered address

18-19 Watling Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2UA

Charity registration number: 267116
Registered company number: 01157482
Incorporated in England and Wales

porchlight.org.uk | [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [c](#) [Porchlight1974](#)



Written and designed by Porchlight's communications team. Published September 2021.

Please note: the photographs used in this report illustrate Porchlight's general work and do not necessarily reflect the circumstances of those pictured.

Some names have been changed to protect the identities of our clients. This is indicated by the use of asterisks where relevant.

Welcome



From Mike Barrett, chief executive, and Hilary Edridge, chair

This has been a year like no other for the charity sector. Dominated by Covid-19, we've been challenged in so many ways, from service delivery to fundraising. But here at Porchlight we've seen positives too, both in the way we responded and what we achieved in the face of the pandemic.

When the crisis began, we adapted quickly, working around the clock to keep our essential services going. The external environment was changing all the time so we had to be proactive, anticipating staff's needs and answering their questions as quickly as possible.

Many of our staff suddenly found themselves having to learn new ways of working in an environment of confusion and fear. The safety and health of our workforce and clients was an absolute priority, not just in terms of infection prevention and control but in trying to manage the levels of anxiety and uncertainty that people were feeling.

Our supported housing staff faced particular challenges. Providing care and support to residents with very complex needs, including people who had tested positive for coronavirus, they were on the frontline of our response.

We're so proud of our staff who stepped up, time and time again, with such courage and determination, to make sure that no one was left to face the crisis alone.

Some of our services moved online so they could keep supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. As people were cut off from their usual social networks, we knew that maintaining contact was critical. Over the year, we developed our online offer, providing new services virtually and reaching people we might otherwise have struggled to engage.

Our staff made 70,000 phone calls and 7,154 video calls to clients

Our rough sleeper team worked tirelessly, linking with our partner agencies to help people off the streets and into the emergency accommodation provided under the Everyone In scheme.

The government's response undoubtedly saved lives. But with hundreds of people still living in B&Bs and other temporary accommodation, the

need for more permanent housing solutions has never been greater.

This year, we took referrals for more than 1,000 people who were rough sleeping

We're working with investors to purchase and develop more affordable homes and we're raising awareness of the housing crisis with local influencers and decision makers so that we can explore solutions together.

Lockdown rules put a stop to our fundraising events and face-to-face activities but we continued to bring in much-needed funds thanks to the dedication and creativity of our amazing supporters. They found new ways to help us, taking on challenges at home and donating with enormous generosity to support our emergency response to the pandemic.

Income generation remains a key priority as we brace ourselves for the long-term impact of the pandemic on our communities. People experiencing deprivation are already at greater risk of mental and physical ill health and the extra emotional strain caused by Covid-related job losses, worries about money, housing, heating and food is increasing those inequalities.

Our community mental health service supported more than 5,800 people

We're drawing on our local knowledge and expertise to position ourselves where we're needed most, helping the most vulnerable people to manage their everyday lives so they can stay well and feel hope for a brighter future.

The UK's recovery from Covid-19 will be slow. But this unprecedented situation gives Porchlight an opportunity to push for change, to reduce the shocking levels of inequality in our communities and build a society that works better for those who have been left behind for too long.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CHAIR

Our work during the pandemic

With the country in lockdown, in-person support was paused across many of our services but our teams adapted to new ways of working, moving our activities into virtual spaces and helping people to use the technology needed to access them.

The new social and economic landscape has vast implications for the mental health of the communities we serve.

Long before the pandemic hit, Porchlight services were already working hard to reduce the impact of the social determinants of mental health – deprivation, unemployment, housing instability and isolation – on communities in Kent.

We're stepping up our efforts, making sure our services can meet the growing need to prevent a legacy of declining mental health in the years ahead.

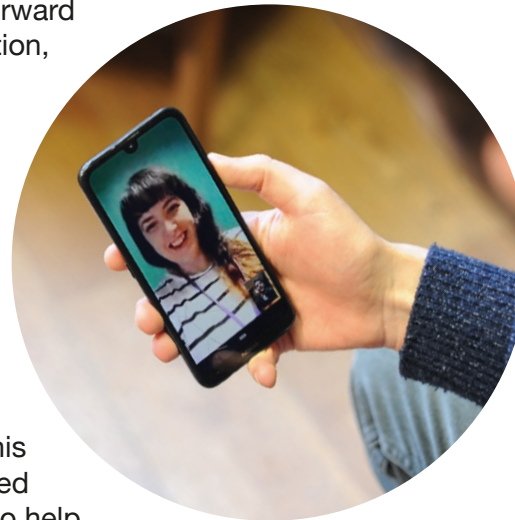
Our community hubs, where people can socialise and stay connected, were moved online so our clients could still participate.

Activities included cookery workshops, mindfulness, relaxation sessions, art sessions, and book clubs. Virtual meet-ups have allowed us to work with people who might otherwise have found it hard to engage, including those with physical

challenges or anxiety. They can sit in on sessions with their cameras and microphones switched off until they feel more comfortable.

Despite the strides forward in virtual communication, many of our clients remain digitally excluded, lacking the skills and confidence to participate, along with having limited or no access to equipment and connectivity.

To partly overcome this issue, we've purchased phones and laptops to help



“ Paul set me up with a laptop which we now all use. It's been amazing for my daughters while they're still at home from school. It's also given me the opportunity to join online social groups to meet new people. A real lifeline. ”
Berni, Aspirations participant



We've been awarded £500,000 to run community hubs across Kent

We're bringing our in-person community hubs back in a Covid-safe way and thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, we're able to deliver them in even more locations in Kent.

Our hubs are places where people who have experienced homelessness or struggle with their mental health can meet others, get advice and take part in activities that encourage them to develop new hobbies and push themselves to achieve their goals.



people stay connected with the support they need. We want to make our services more inclusive by further exploring the potential for hybrid meet ups which allow people to attend in-person and remotely.

The lockdowns didn't stop us involving the people we support in shaping the way the organisation is run. Our lived experience advisory panel, staff recruitment and women's services development groups continued to meet online, helping us to plan for the future and deliver solutions that truly meet the needs of the people we support.

Client safety has become even more of a focus during the pandemic and we want to make sure that everyone understands what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe.

When the first lockdown was introduced, we produced accessible guidance for our accommodation-based clients. It clearly outlined the rules about not leaving home or having visitors, what to do if you have symptoms and the importance of handwashing, face covering and social distancing.

The pandemic has put many of our community-based clients at even greater risk of isolation and we wanted people to feel confident about accessing our support.

We produced a video and an infographic which explained what might be different about our in-person support sessions and how we're working within the new restrictions to keep everyone safe.

Ensuring people don't miss out on the Covid vaccine

With many rough sleepers now housed in temporary accommodation, a big focus for our outreach team has been ensuring people are registered with a GP and supported to access the vaccination programme.

We worked with councils and other organisations to get more than 80 people who had been rough sleeping to vaccination sites across Kent. We organised travel arrangements and our staff were onsite providing drinks and food.

We also opened the doors of our homelessness properties so that residents who are classed as vulnerable and on the priority list, could be vaccinated.

We've continued to update our guidance for clients and staff, based on the latest government



Virtual support from Porchlight

With everything that's going on at the moment, we know you may feel anxious about accessing Porchlight services. That's why we've created questions you may have and we hope it helps you to get the support you need. If you still have questions, please contact us.

Meeting your Porchlight support worker

At Porchlight, we are following coronavirus government guidance to return to and support for a but in a way for everyone. That means we've provided our face access these.



“ Porchlight have done an outstanding job on managing the Covid-19 pandemic within their organisation and should be proud of the efforts they have put in. ”

The Bradley Group



advice, and we have rigorous risk assessments in place to make all of our work settings Covid-secure. Our response to the pandemic was praised by independent health and safety advisors, The Bradley Group.

As the demand for our services grows, our helpline team are busier than ever. They're supporting more and more people who are struggling with Covid-related job losses, worries about money, housing, heating and food and being cut off from support networks.

Between April and October 2020, referrals into our homelessness services more than doubled



This year our volunteers gave more than 3,000 hours of support

At the start of the pandemic, like many organisations, we took the decision to stop our volunteering support across many areas of our work.

Trainee counsellors have continued to provide our clients with much-needed support over the phone.

And our amazing outreach volunteers have continued to support our rough sleeper team, carrying out outreach sessions and supporting homeless people into emergency accommodation.



Directing people to support

We've run awareness campaigns on our social media channels to remind people that we're here for them.

We've signposted people to our helpline team and also to our website, which is regularly updated with information on how to stay safe during Covid and advice for people who are facing job loss or housing insecurity, or having difficulties with money, benefits or food.

porchlight.org.uk



Rob's story

Our volunteers spent weeks befriending a man with PTSD who was sleeping in a stairwell.

After many weeks of checking in to say hello, offering a coffee and reminding him help is available, he opened up to them.

Rob* is now safely indoors and says he's proud of his new home. We're really pleased to say he's also started rebuilding a relationship with his family.

You can read more stories like Rob's on our website: **porchlight.org.uk/news**



Our achievements in 2020/21

WE HELPED
1,850
PEOPLE
WHO WERE
AT RISK OF
LOSING
THEIR HOME

MORE THAN
9,300
INDIVIDUALS WERE
SUPPORTED BY
PORCHLIGHT AND
OUR PARTNERS

OUR STAFF MADE
70,000
PHONE
CALLS AND
7,154
VIDEO CALLS
TO CLIENTS
OVER THE YEAR

OUR LIVE WELL KENT
SERVICE SUPPORTED
MORE THAN
2,000
PEOPLE LIVING
WITH A SERIOUS
MENTAL ILLNESS

OUR FREE
HELPLINE
RECEIVED
33,678
CALLS

OUR COMMUNITY
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICE
SUPPORTED
MORE THAN
5,800
PEOPLE
ACROSS KENT

WE SUPPORTED
MORE THAN
619
PEOPLE WHO WERE
ROUGH SLEEPING
IN KENT

Our strategy for recovery

We've set out four strategic priorities which will guide our work through the next three years (2021-2024) and help us meet the growing need in our communities.

These priorities capture the core of who we are at Porchlight, demonstrating our commitment to bringing about real change and moving us closer to our vision of a fairer society that works better for **everyone**.



People have a safe and stable place to call home



People experiencing poverty and inequality get the support they need



People are supported to have good mental health



Porchlight is a strong and effective organisation

How will we get there?

You can read our detailed objectives (what we'll focus on to achieve our goals) at porchlight.org.uk

We want to deliver the best possible services to our clients and our communities. This means investing in our workforce, providing them with exceptional training, looking after their wellbeing and creating a supportive environment where we celebrate each other's differences and treat each other with respect.

We're so grateful to the many members of the Porchlight community who contributed their ideas, thoughts and perspectives to help shape our new strategy – it reflects all of their voices.

We'll continue to live by our values, putting inclusion at the heart of what we do and making sure that our clients are consistently involved – not just in decisions about their own support, but at every level of the organisation.

Homelessness services

Our homelessness teams have been on the frontline throughout the pandemic, making sure people have access to safe and secure housing.

Much of this work was done as part of Kent Homeless Connect – a network of support services led by Porchlight and the charity Look Ahead on behalf of Kent County Council.



Kent Homeless Connect website launch

People with very complex needs can find it hard to access the right care and support. We've launched a new website to help potential clients and professionals access the service easily.

The site features an online eligibility checker which helps identify whether someone qualifies for this specialist support, along with signposting information to other relevant services.

kenthomelessconnect.org.uk

This year, our helpline took more than 4,200 referrals for the Kent Homeless Connect service



Rough sleeping

When the pandemic began, the government announced its 'Everyone In' initiative to help all rough sleepers into emergency accommodation. Porchlight worked with councils and other support agencies to get people into hotels and B&Bs who provided emergency bed spaces.

Once people were inside, our teams continued working with them to ensure they had food, medicines and essential items, were emotionally supported and given practical help applying for housing benefit and other forms of aid.

We supported more than 619 people who were rough sleeping in Kent



Our outreach team have continued to support people who are rough sleeping, some new to the streets as a direct impact of the pandemic. Others, entrenched in rough sleeping and with very complex needs, have been struggling as the services and facilities they normally rely on – including day centres, libraries and public toilets – closed.

The pandemic has given us opportunities to connect with people who have previously not engaged with our support. Our focus is now on providing the tailored support and sustainable housing solutions needed to prevent people returning to the streets.



Supported housing

In Porchlight's supported housing, we don't just respond to people's immediate needs by offering a bed, food or clothing. We also provide emotional and practical support that enables them to make longer lasting changes and rebuild their lives.

Our staff are trained to understand and respond to the trauma people have faced. Part of this is

Homelessness – our work in practice

When young people become homeless, it's often due to a family relationship breakdown. Earlier this year, we helped a young woman in this situation. Most nights she would walk the streets, too afraid to sleep. Now she's in one of our properties and can feel safe again. We helped her to overcome the trauma of homelessness, manage her mental health, and will support her with finding work when she's ready.



helping people to identify their strengths – what they are good at – so that they can develop coping skills and resilience as they move towards a more positive future.

Even before the pandemic, we were finding it increasingly difficult to secure affordable 'move-on' accommodation for our clients; tenancy-ready individuals who are unable to afford local rents are struggling to transition from our supported housing into independent accommodation.

Our inability to free up space in our supported housing projects is a chokepoint when we're trying to house newly vulnerable clients.

Our helpline team took 1,190 referrals for people in need of our supported accommodation



Affordable homes

To end homelessness, we need more housing that people on low incomes can afford. We're working with local philanthropists and investors to increase the number of Porchlight homes so that the people we support can put down roots in local communities.

Specialist support – Housing First

It's two years since we brought Housing First to Kent in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and Golding Homes. It has allowed people with a long history of rough sleeping who struggle to engage with typical homelessness services to remain in tenancies and begin rebuilding their lives.

Under the Housing First model, people are moved straight into a home of their own with no conditions placed on them to change. With stable accommodation and ongoing support they will, in their own time, start to recover and make more positive choices.

We've also launched Housing First schemes in Dover and Thanet and hope to expand this work into new areas in the year ahead.



This year, we've acquired six new homes, bringing our total bed spaces up to 158.

Homelessness prevention

One of the most effective ways to tackle homelessness is to prevent people from losing their home in the first place. This important area of our work has become even more critical as Covid-related job losses and rent arrears push struggling households even closer to the edge.

We took referrals for 1,850 people who were at risk of losing their home

Our helpline is taking calls from more and more people who are facing impossible decisions about paying rent, bills or putting food on the table.

We prevent people's problems from escalating by connecting them with the support they need, including debt and financial advice, help with paperwork and form filling, as well as mediation and advocacy services.



David's story

Our client David moved into one of our Housing First properties with a 17-year history of rough sleeping, offending behaviour and long-term drug and alcohol use.

After 18 months, he has reconnected with his family. He is receiving benefits and paying his own bills.

For every £1 spent on our Housing First scheme, there has been a saving of £13.24 to the state

Services for homeless women

Rough sleeping is dangerous for everyone but homeless women face increased risks of violence and abuse. Covid-19 has posed an even more urgent threat for female rough sleepers and women at risk of homelessness.

With lockdown measures in place, the risk of serious harm from domestic abuse rose sharply. Many women were trapped in unsafe homes facing a choice between homelessness or staying with their abuser.

Lockdown also ended temporary housing arrangements for many, leaving women with even fewer options for safety. Porchlight clients say they've been forced into staying with people they barely know or engaging in survival sex, just to keep a roof over their heads.

As part of an ongoing project, we've employed a women's services development manager to help us design services in a way that homeless women can feel safe. We've also employed specialist outreach workers to work with women on the streets.

"A lot of women I support have fled domestic violence. They find it easier to trust me, to talk about the issues they're facing, and to think about moving forward with their lives."

Simone, outreach worker



We've set up a rapid rehousing fund which is being used to buy essential and discretionary items such as rent deposits, clothing, nights in B&Bs, ID, travel to support groups and counselling sessions.

Our strategy for improving services for homeless women

Our experiences of supporting homeless women through the pandemic have informed our new **three-year strategy** for developing our women's services.



This year, our specialist outreach workers supported 33 homeless women

We're running training sessions for other organisations on best practices for working with homeless women; we've established a stakeholder's group to share learnings and champion change; and we've published a toolkit for professionals, which can be downloaded from our website.

We're hoping to build on this important work through our Safe Place appeal so that we can help more women move off the streets as quickly as possible and give them the chance to live with dignity and respect.

Sadia's story

Sadia spent a month sleeping rough in freezing conditions, occasionally finding somewhere to sofa surf for the night.

Now she is using her experience of homelessness to help women in similar situations by working with us to develop specialist support for other female rough sleepers in Kent.

"I want to use my experience to give something back to other women who are on the streets right now."



Porchlight
A safe place to call home



Youth and family services

Underlying causes of homelessness are often traced back to childhood. We're helping young people tackle the issues they're facing so they can stay safe and well.

Tackling isolation

LGBT+ young people are at higher risk of homelessness and mental health issues because of discrimination, lack of acceptance and abuse. But because there are so few specialist services available, this vulnerable group can struggle to find the emotional and social support they need.

As a result, LGBT+ young people can feel segregated and cut off from others. Feelings of loneliness and isolation can exacerbate problems they are already facing. We're proud to run the BeYou Project, a Kent-wide service that helps LGBT+ young people to feel included and to build the resilience to manage their problems – now and in the future.

During the pandemic we've continued to run our BeYou meet-ups online and have introduced sessions specifically for LGBT+ young people from faith or BAME backgrounds.

We also offer virtual support around gender identity for under-12s and their families.

Our BeYou service is expanding into Medway, thanks to funding from the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

Many young people have reported feeling more isolated because of the pandemic, and this expansion means that more of them will have somewhere to turn for help.



Tyde's story

Tyde was assigned female at birth but is in the process of transitioning to male. He has been able to turn to our BeYou team, some of whom have similar experiences with transitioning:

“The team have been really good at supporting me. I was a bit worried about some elements of the transition process, but if I sent an email I'd always get a response really quickly.”

Tyde made new friends at the BeYou meet-ups and has now become a BeYou volunteer.

“BeYou has given me a lot and I want to give something back because some young people don't have any other place to be themselves.”

This year, BeYou ran 232 support groups for 134 individuals

the **BeYou**
PROJECT

thebeyouproject.co.uk

Strengthening communities

In areas known for antisocial behaviour, we use creative approaches to engage hard-to-reach young people. By building connections through activities young people are passionate about, we help them feel more confident and a greater part of the community.

An evaluation showed that the young people entering our Bexley Adolescent Support Service had wellbeing levels below the national average. With our help their wellbeing improved to national standards, meaning they will have a much stronger start to adult life.

92% of young people said they had noticed a positive difference in their mental health after receiving support



Our Stepping Stones project, also funded by Bexley Council, provided short-term housing and extra help for young people in the same area.

Expanding our support for young people

Education helps young people have the best possible start in life. Thanks to funding from Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust, we were able to provide laptops and other essential items to struggling families during lockdown.

Some young people had been using phones to study, others were sharing a laptop with siblings, and some had nothing at all. We were able to prevent children missing out on valuable learning during an already challenging time.

In response to the higher number of young people experiencing anxiety because of the pandemic, Porchlight's Adolescent Wellbeing Service (PAWS) expanded its service from Thanet to include Ashford and Folkestone.



The service offers tailored, intensive one-to-one support to young people aged 10-16, helping them to develop their resilience and improve their emotional wellbeing.

A parent of Frankie, a young person supported by the service, said “I feel the most invaluable piece of help our PAWS worker has given us is to reassure our daughter that not all doctors/teachers are against her.

“This helped her open up to her psychologist about her true feelings which resulted in an autism diagnosis.”



Preventing homelessness by tackling the causes, early on

We know that if we're going to turn the tide on homelessness in Kent, we need to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

Poverty, family breakdown, growing up in care, not being in education, employment or training, and mental ill health are all causes of homelessness amongst young people. We identify groups and individuals who are at risk, responding to the early warning signs and preventing young people from reaching crisis point.

Much of our homelessness prevention work is targeted in areas of deprivation, helping the most vulnerable people to break the cycle of poverty and inequality.

“We know that just reacting when someone becomes homeless is too late. Any problems that led to them becoming homeless are likely to have become more complex and harder to resolve.”

By working with young people – and their families – at a very early stage, we help them to manage their emotional and mental health and stop any other problems from becoming more serious. With the right support at the right time, we can give young people the best chance of a positive future.”

Claire Williams, head of homelessness services



Community and preventative services

We want people struggling with mental health issues to easily access the help they need and we're targeting our support where it's needed most.

People experiencing deprivation are already at greater risk of mental and physical ill health and the extra emotional strain caused by Covid-related job losses, worries about money, housing, heating and food is increasing those inequalities.

Our teams are based in the most deprived communities, providing holistic support that addresses all of the challenges a person faces to help them stay well and manage their own lives.

64% of referrals were from the most deprived areas of Kent



During lockdown, our teams stayed in regular contact with those who are struggling, listening to their concerns, sharing mental health coping techniques, and helping them access support for housing, money and health issues, as well as more specialist help if needed.



This year, our Live Well Kent community mental health service supported more than 5,800 people across Kent

We ran online group activities such as cookery workshops, mindfulness, relaxation and art sessions, and virtual meet-ups so that people felt connected with others.

If someone was finding it difficult to access virtual support, we sourced smart phones and tablets so they could talk to their support workers via video call. Information bundles were printed off for those who do not use the internet at all. We also continued to offer in-person support for those who needed it most.

36% of people supported by Live Well Kent had a serious mental illness

Live Well Kent expanding into Medway

To meet the growing need in our communities, Live Well Kent is expanding to support people in Medway.

Live Well Kent works with people (aged 17+) in local communities to provide preventative, early intervention and recovery focused services.

Its services provide a mix of practical and emotional support and advice; they are focused on the individual and often meet a range of different needs all in one place.

Live Well Kent & Medway is run by Porchlight and the charity Shaw Trust on behalf of Kent County Council and NHS Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Groups.



Breaking down barriers

When you're struggling with your mental health, it can feel like a barrier to getting into work. Our Aspirations service, which is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, helps people improve their employment prospects. It does this by helping people manage their mental health and regain their independence.

This year, our Aspirations service supported 35 people into employment.

Berni's story

Berni's mental health suffered during lockdown. We gave her emotional support and provided a laptop so her daughter could learn from home and Berni could access online social groups.



“When I first spoke to Paul from Aspirations, I was relieved because I didn't feel judged at all. He asked me about my interests and what I wanted to do in the future.”

We helped Berni apply for a cake decorating course, and she now plans to start her own cake business when the pandemic is over.

“I am so much more confident now and things are really looking up.”

Tackling loneliness

Loneliness and isolation are serious problems that have become heightened by coronavirus lockdowns. Our community inclusion team support people who feel lonely or cut off from others. People like Sharona, who was experiencing anxiety and agoraphobia and felt that the world was moving on without her.

Specialist support – severe mental illness

We launched a new service which carries out physical health and wellbeing checks on people with severe mental illnesses (SMI) such as schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder and other psychotic disorders.

We know from national research that people with severe and prolonged mental illnesses are at risk of dying younger but, for many, this can be avoided with regular health checks. The new service, funded by Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, helps people to get checked for conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and lung diseases, as well as accessing support to manage their mental health.

She received regular check-ins from her Porchlight worker and also took part in our online workshop about managing anxiety. We also invited Sharona to virtual coffee mornings, quizzes and crochet sessions attended by our other clients, giving her the chance to form new friendships and hear how others manage their mental health.

Sharona now feels confident enough to leave the house and has gone shopping for the first time in years. She has also started running online support groups for other clients, sharing what she's learned and being there for those who are struggling with their mental health.



Preparing for the future

We expect the pandemic to continue to affect people's mental health as the government's protection measures – the £20 universal credit uplift, the furlough scheme and the eviction ban – come to an end and we see the longer-term impact on individuals and communities.

We are planning for an increase in demand for our services, putting the resources in place to take action quickly and effectively to help communities recover.



Employment, education and training

Many of the people we support experience wide-ranging disadvantage and social exclusion – we help them feel a greater sense of belonging in their community.

The pandemic has put homeless and vulnerable people at even greater risk of isolation. We’ve done our best to ensure nobody has to cope alone by moving our community ‘hubs’ online, as well as continuing to run them in person in a Covid-safe way and where government restrictions allow.

Based in local spaces like community centres, churches and leisure centres, our hubs help people integrate into the local community and feel more confident about moving on from our support when the time comes.

We’ve ensured that people can still access the valuable support offered by Porchlight and our partners – whether that’s meeting with their keyworker, getting employment advice or support with their mental health, drug or alcohol recovery.

They can also get involved with virtual learning and social activities such as cookery lessons, book clubs, and quizzes.

Online meet-ups will continue even when in-person activities have fully resumed, as we’ve found this format useful for building the confidence of those who feel anxious about attending. People can sit in on sessions with their cameras and microphones switched off until they feel comfortable showing themselves to the group.



If you’ve been homeless, or you’re struggling with your mental or physical health, it can count against you when going for a job. Most people we support want to work but their past can be held against them. We provide CV writing workshops and job interview training. Most importantly, we help people get where they want to go. If somebody wants to get back into an old career or retrain for a new one, we’ll help them take the necessary steps to do so.

Involving the people we support

We know that input from the people who use our services makes us better at what we do. That’s why we’re constantly working to improve opportunities for meaningful client involvement.

The pandemic has accelerated Porchlight’s adoption of digital technology and this has been a positive for our client involvement activities. We’ve seen wider participation geographically and greater engagement from people in our community services.

A big focus this year has been the development of our new strategic business plan and as part of



the process, we ran a consultation to gather the views of the Porchlight community. We consulted our staff, volunteers and clients through online message boards and a series of focus groups.

We were pleased with the level of engagement from our stakeholders – their views have helped to ensure that our strategy reflects the priorities and needs of our communities.

“ It was a very good mix of people. The group has a lot of strong people who have been cut down and are trying to find their strength again and Porchlight had really supported them. No one was judged. No one was dismissed. Everyone was heard. ”

A client comment on their experience of our strategy consultation

Staying connected

Over the year, we ran two surveys of staff and clients to find out how the coronavirus was impacting on their lives and personal wellbeing. We wanted to understand more about how our people were responding to the pandemic and how well supported they feel by us as an organisation.

157 staff and 105 clients took part in our survey



Social isolation and anxiety were the two biggest challenges for our staff and our clients. We recognise the pressure everyone has been under and we regularly remind people of the range of mental health and wellbeing support that’s available, trying to offer comfort and encouraging them to reach out if they are struggling.

That’s why, as a token of appreciation for their efforts during a very difficult year, we gave our

staff three extra days of annual leave.

Our surveys highlighted the need for everyone to stay connected. Some staff found it difficult to transition to delivering support and activities online so we provided guidance on how to create safe spaces for clients.

We made recommendations on the most appropriate meet-up tools, as well as how to use chat functions, breakout areas and file sharing.

The responses to the surveys also showed excitement and interest in what digital tools can offer – staff reported that virtual working allows them to work with clients who are harder to reach because people who struggle with social interaction can use virtual settings to build their confidence.



64% of clients who shared their views said they felt there was value in the charity continuing to use virtual methods and video calling

Recruitment was frozen for a time but when it opened up, our clients adapted their skills to sit on virtual interview panels. This is a critical part of our involvement activity – it’s about working together in equal partnership but we’re also sending potential employees a strong message about Porchlight’s values.

This year, in spite of all the challenges, 64% of interview panels included client representatives.



“ I can’t believe I’m doing this! ”

One hub participant used to feel too nervous to turn on her camera, now she dances around the room during the music round of our weekly quiz



Becoming work ready

Work is the best route out of homelessness and poverty and we’re helping more people than ever access the opportunities they need to turn their lives around.

Structure and governance

Governance

Porchlight was founded in 1974 and is registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 267116). Our registered office address is 18-19 Watling Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2UA.

We are governed by a board of trustees of up to 15 members which meets formally six times a year. Our governing document is the Memorandum and Articles of Association, revised in September 2020.

Our trustees are volunteers who use their skills, experience and sound judgement to help the charity achieve its aims. They ensure that the charity has a clear strategy, and that our work and goals are in line with our vision.

Our board members sit on sub-committees that focus on particular areas of work or projects, for example, finance and risk, and fundraising and communications (see page 4 for details). However, they delegate the day-to-day running of the charity to the staff team via our chief executive.

Trustee recruitment is managed by an appointment panel which includes our chair, our chief executive and one trustee. New trustees are given a full induction to ensure that they understand their role and responsibilities and have a good understanding of the charity's work overall.

Porchlight's trustees are able to commit to an open-ended length of service, however we carry out regular skills audits to ensure that we have the right mix of experience to run the charity effectively and in the interests of the people it was set up to support.

Last year, we carried out some external governance training to ensure our board members remain fully up to date on their roles and responsibilities as trustees.

Remuneration of employees

Our pay structure, including the pay of our leadership team and chief executive, is reviewed and approved by the trustees who make decisions using external benchmarking tools such as the ACEVO pay and equalities survey. We also take account of pay practice in other voluntary sector organisations. We are looking at undertaking a salary review for the whole organisation this year.

Partnership working

Porchlight works in partnership with Kent County Council, Medway Council, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dartford Borough Council, Dover District Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Swale Borough Council, Thanet District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, London Borough of Bexley, East Sussex County Council, NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, and Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group. We are a joint lead provider of Kent Homeless Connect with the charity Look Ahead and of Live Well Kent with the charity The Shaw Trust. Porchlight also manages properties owned by the following registered providers: Clarion, East Kent Housing, Home Group, Orbit, Optivo, Riverside, Southern Housing Group.

Public benefit

The trustees confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities and setting appropriate policies for the year. The trustees are confident that Porchlight meets the Public Benefit requirements.

Fundraising



Thanks to your support, we're helping people through the pandemic and beyond.

We're so grateful for the creativity and compassion of our donors and supporters who have not let coronavirus restrictions prevent them from helping others.

When coronavirus delayed many of the important fundraising activities we had planned, people and businesses found creative new ways to support our work. There were virtual sleep outs, socially distanced exercise challenges, virtual DJ sets and much more. One ingenious challenge saw a mother and daughter climb the equivalent of Mount Everest using their stairs at home.

Our thanks go out to them and every corporate partner, community and faith group, every major donor and individual funder who supported us over the year to raise £1,137,386 (of which £973,097 was from voluntary donations). It means that we can be here to support the vulnerable people who need us more than ever before.

We continued our appeal to raise funds for female rough sleepers. It has allowed us to get extra support in place, including a rapid rehousing fund which is used to quickly move women from the streets into emergency accommodation.

Donors to Porchlight can be confident that we comply with the regulatory standards for fundraising. We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and are committed to the

Fundraising Promise, and we adhere to the Code of Fundraising Practice which covers the requirements charities must follow as set out in the Charities Act 2016.

All of our fundraising staff are members of the Institute of Fundraising. We have safeguards in place to protect our supporters and the reputation of our charity. We ensure that all third parties have safeguarding measures in place too and we expect everyone to comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

We take any concerns about our fundraising activities very seriously. Our complaints policy is featured on our website and clearly explains how people can make a complaint. This year, we received 21 complaints about our fundraising activity and reported them to the Fundraising Regulator. We are signed up to the Fundraising Preference Service to allow people to opt out of receiving fundraising communications from us and, this year, we actioned one request.



Our fundraising year in numbers

- 30 online talks, workshops and school assemblies reached over 1,500 children and adults
- Our corporate supporters raised £193,998
- Three giving appeals raised £302,263 in funds
- 710 new donors supported us





porchlight.org.uk