

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

The funeral ceremony was held on Saturday 17 April at 3pm in Windsor. Additional information about both the funeral and His Royal Highness can be found at <https://www.royal.uk/>

Kent Homeless Connect – A Message of Hope

Kent County Council (KCC), with partners Porchlight and Look Ahead, have a message of hope for some of the county's most vulnerable people on World Health Day which was on the 7th April.

Kent Homeless Connect (KHC) has been designed by Kent County Council (KCC) for people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of being homeless, who also have complex needs such as mental or physical ill health or drug or alcohol problems. It is delivered by two charity partners – Porchlight and Look Ahead, bringing together a wealth of services and providing people with a one-stop-shop approach to finding the support they need.

Steve Kennett spent three years living on the streets, battling his addiction to drugs, before eventually going into recovery. He entered a rehabilitation centre that he later became a volunteer for. The support Steve received enabled him to obtain valuable qualifications and he went on to gain full time employment with KHC in Tunbridge Wells, using his experience and understanding to help others to turn their lives around. In Steve's words:

“This service is so important because people who are in the desperate place that I once was, will find it much easier to get support.

“If you are living on the streets anything that makes it easier for you to get support, or for your family and friends to find help for you, is so important.”

Designed for equal access to services, regardless of postcode, Kent Homeless Connect works across the entire county and is a first for Kent. It means that support is simple to reach because it brings together access to services across local authority boundaries.

Kent Homeless Connect recognises that people with very complex needs are likely to need support from a range of services at once. It brings together local expertise to make that possible throughout Kent, so support can be coordinated and tailored to the needs of each individual wherever they are, ensuring some of the most vulnerable people in the community are able to quickly access the right high-quality support.

The Covid-19 crisis has increased the health inequalities for this hard-to-reach group and a new website has just been launched to help potential clients and professionals access the service easily, along with an online eligibility checker, that identifies

whether someone qualifies for this specialist support. The website, and further information can be found at <https://kenthomelessconnect.org.uk/>

Clare Maynard, KCC Interim Strategic Commissioner said:

“KCC is committed to making access to vital services as easy as possible for those in need of support and is extremely proud of the success of the Kent Homeless Connect partnership service in achieving this.

“By bringing together a wealth of specialised services for homeless people with complex needs into a single point of contact, some of our most vulnerable people been able to vastly improve their health and quality of life by quickly finding the right combination of support without the sometimes confusing need to navigate services individually.

“The launch of the streamlined new website will go on to further simplify access to this service and I would like to thank our partners, Porchlight and Look Ahead for their hard work in making all of this possible.”

Donna Pearson, Head of Operations at Look Ahead said:

“Look Ahead is delighted to increase access to those who need it the most in Kent. We are pleased to work in partnership with Porchlight to deliver these services on behalf of KCC.

“We are committed to bringing the highest quality service within easy reach of vulnerable homeless people with the most need and we hope, that with the launch of the Kent Homeless Connect website, even more people will be able to access support. Our aim is to continue providing specialist help for people to recover from homelessness giving them the tools to begin a new chapter in their lives.”

Sarah Porter, Porchlight Performance and Partnership Manager stated “The theme of this year’s World Health Day is building a fairer, healthier world for everyone. People who are vulnerably housed or homeless, particularly those who are rough sleeping, have some of the worst health outcomes in the country. For people with very complex, overlapping issues such as mental ill health and substance misuse, it can be hard to access the care and support they need.

“Kent Homeless Connect brings together a network of services to address people’s needs in a connected way, ensuring that the right support, focused on the individual, is in place.

“Porchlight is very proud to be working with Kent County Council and Look Ahead to deliver this important service. The launch of the new website will help more people with very complex needs access specialist and targeted support so they can regain their independence and move towards a more positive future.”

If you are interested in receiving support from Kent Homeless Connect for yourself, or someone you know, you can call free on [0800 567 7699](tel:08005677699) or email info@khc.org.uk

In the 21st century it is a disgrace that many homeless people in our county and nationally should have to endure night after night sleeping in an insecure place open to the elements without one substantial hot meal a day. It would be lovely to see the local authorities construct or convert

buildings into small purpose built hostels in each major town in our county where the homeless could have a safe room on a temporary basis for up to six months to allow the collaborative partnerships to arrange for them permanent accommodation, which would provide the vital points of having an address, in order that they can open a bank/ post office account which are one of the very reasons they have difficulties applying for rented accommodation and job interviews. Let us put other projects which will be costing millions of pounds, such as the Dover Fast Track bus service, on hold until we have resolved the very pressing issue of caring for our very own people first.
Signing out. Thank you all.

Geoffrey Lymer
Kent County Councillor
Dover West Ward