

2010 National Training Awards

Individual Case Study: Aggie Chikiwa

Anchor House Trainer Gives Hope to Homeless

Aggie Chikiwa is Head of Education and Training at homeless charity Anchor House, and a mentor on the learning needs of homeless people, and his story is one of remarkable transformation.

Aggie was a professional teacher in Zimbabwe who moved to the UK in 2002, but failed to secure a teaching job because he lacked UK-based training and qualifications. He got a street cleaner job and was studying part-time to complete a Bachelor of Education Degree, but suffered an industrial injury.

Subsequently he lost his job, experienced family breakdown and then homelessness. He was offered a place at Anchor House where his life and hope were restored. As a volunteer he taught police cadets, and led functional skills and citizenship courses.

Meanwhile, he focused on continuous education, gaining three qualifications including his Bachelor of Education Degree. He used his teaching skills as a volunteer teacher of Maths, English, English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL), and Vocational and Employability Skills.

Aggie benefited from Anchor House's Aspirations Programme that places learning new skills at the heart of ending homelessness by enabling service users to find work that leads to a rewarding life.

Anchor House's residents include the long-term unemployed and homeless, who have experienced drug addiction, crime and family breakdown. As a result, the charity offers a profound service to society in restoring people to work and self-sufficient living.

Anchor House employed Aggie as a teacher in 2007 and he designed an Education and Training and Employment Programme that has gone on to help hundreds of people to engage with their families, build confidence and self-esteem, manage money and get involved in social activities. "They have become smart, self-aware citizens who are now able to leverage their intelligence, talents and skills to serve the highest good of all," says Aggie.

About his own journey he says, "My learning has increased the way I treat people with respect, compassion, empathy, brotherhood, caring and friendship. I now find residents to be constantly striving to be more disciplined, organised, skilful and productive."

Subsequently, Aggie was promoted to Head of Education and Training. And he was involved in the creation of 188 individual learning zones at the centre, allowing residents to use e-learning in their rooms. Anchor House also has two IT suites, three construction workshops and meeting rooms.

In 2009, 39 residents found jobs and 32 moved on to independent living. Every quarter the centre has over 2500 visits from the wider community to use training facilities, health programs and e-learning. In 2010, 500 people used its English, Maths and Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) training.

“Anchor House has progressed from little more than a bed and breakfast facility to a flagship Life Skills Centre, attracting media attention locally and globally”, says Aggie. He adds that the Aspirations Programme continues to transform the UK’s approach to homelessness to one built on personal aspiration and local opportunity.

Keith Fennell says, “As Director of Anchor House I became aware of Aggie when he came to us as an unemployed and homeless person who had a passion of education. His insight has helped me to develop an award-winning organisation.”

He adds, “Aggie is a complete role model for our residents, his story has inspired hundreds of homeless people, and the fact that he is now Head of Education and Training gives him enormous credibility. The distance travelled by Aggie includes gaining employment, his own home and having his family reunited and his self-confidence has been restored. Training is now cool and acceptable.”