

2010 National Training Awards

Organisation Case Study: Anchor House

Homeless Charity Helps Residents Back Into Workplace

Charity Anchor House has achieved phenomenal success housing and training homeless people with deprived backgrounds, multiple criminal offences and drug addictions, and helping them back to work.

As a result of the charity's training and Personal Development Plans for all residents, several have won national awards over the last few years. One was Apprentice of the Year in 2007, once achieved Best People Back to Work 2009, and one was City Airport Employee of the Year 2010. Last year, Anchor House saw 28 residents gain employment, and 49 were rehoused.

Anchor House is based in Canning Town, the most deprived ward in Newham, the sixth most deprived London borough. The residential and life skills centre is home to 118 residents.

The charity runs training programmes for literacy, numeracy and IT, among others, as well as offering alcohol, drug and outreach services to the local community, for which it has over 2500 individual visits every quarter.

From April 2007 to April 2010, Anchor House developed and ran the Aspirations Programme, offering Personal Development Plans to every resident, and a Welcome Host course aimed at improving their communication skills.

This uses a mixture of classroom, one-to-one and computer based training, depending on the capabilities of each individual. The next stage of learning is an integrated e-learning system delivered to the residents' room.

The programme is delivered by the charity's own staff, as well as external providers on site and at external venues. In the last year, Anchor House had over 1000 training programme achievements in 12 training streams.

Sue Bouckley, Director at training company Learning and Skills Solutions Ltd, which works with Anchor House, comments, "Anchor House has developed a learning environment for both residents and the wider community that is achieving major successes both in training and educational qualifications and their outcomes are of the highest order. Working with partners they have managed to establish an integrated training environment with a coherent set of pathways for some of the most marginalised in society."

She adds, "We never cease to be amazed by their attitude, approach and results. The site has achieved accreditations from City and Guilds, Prometric accreditation for CSCS, successful Ofsted inspections for both academic and vocational studies, they have recently expanded into art, music and social cohesion training, and shortly e-learning will be introduced. As a community based training facility we haven't seen anything like it."

Since the introduction of the Aspirations Programme, the charity has seen the employment rate of its trainees rise from five a year to 39, which is a significant achievement considering clients' lack of motivation and personal difficulties.

“Our clients range from being illiterate to degree holders, from the motivated to those who have not worked in 20 years. We measure success by the number back into work, the number rehoused, the reduction in offending and the development of community cohesion” says Anchor House director Keith Fernett.

He adds, “Our aim is to get out residents to be good citizens, capable of independent living and able to work. The cost benefits for society are immense. With unemployment alone we have saved society about £1 million by reducing the benefits bill. A Heroin addict can cost society up to £700,000, and we are saving a considerable amount each year. We have reduced the rate of reoffending saving an average of £60,000 per annum.”

Anchor House reassesses its programmes each year, which are dependent on multiple agencies and funding streams.