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Homeless charity saves tax payers £5 million

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Patron Jeremy Paxman on recent visit

A small homeless charity in East London has been found to have saved society and tax payers more than £5 million a year by helping to turn around the lives of its homeless residents. A report undertaken by experts at Oxford Economics found that Anchor House, residential and life-skills centre in Canning Town, Newham, provides £3.98 in benefits to society for every £1 invested in its operations.

Anchor House director, Keith Fernett, says the charity decided to put itself under the microscope in the lead up to its 17 October £9.3 million appeal launch to prove to its supporters how much of a difference they are indeed making. "We are in the business of turning lives around and as a result of our work there are huge cost savings to society," Mr Fernett said.

"Because of our grass-roots support we saved society up to £3.2 million from lower crime, £388,000 through increased employment and £225,000 by hosting Alcoholics Anonymous."

The report also found that Anchor House saved the NHS £22,000 in hospital admissions, £14,000 in hospital outpatient treatments, £10,000 in acute mental health services and £5,000 in A&E treatment.

The award winning and nationally acclaimed charity accommodates up to 180 single homeless people each year, and addresses the root causes of homelessness through training, education, volunteering and personal rehabilitation.

Monsignor John Armitage, the charity's chairman and Vicar General of Brentwood Diocese, says despite Anchor House being a small charity with limited resources and operating in one of England's most deprived boroughs, the results achieved are "astounding".

"Last year 58 of our residents moved on to independent living, 32 were in employment and we trained more than 1,249 locals within the community," Monsignor John said. "We are foot soldiers of the Big Society initiative and this report proves that.

"Anchor House is a charity worthy of investment, not only because it succeeds and makes a difference, but because it is focused on helping society's most marginalised and vulnerable who are often over looked."

Andrew Logan from Oxford Economic says social return on investment (SROI) is a popular metric used to quantify the positive impacts charities and other types of institutions generate per £1 invested, however there is still very few charities taking advantage of it.

"To calculate the SROI a charity needs to monetarise the economic, social and environmental outcomes that its efforts produce over the time of investment and then divide it by the costs," Mr Logan said.

"This isn't an easy task and can be off-putting for charities with limited time and resources.

"But in comparison to other SROI studies of homeless projects which have been conducted in the UK, Anchor House was found to provide an exceptional high return to society."

To download a copy of the report or make a donation visit www.anchorhouseuk.org.

Anchor House is a project addressing the root causes of homelessness: deprivation; drug addiction; mental illness; unemployment; lack of skills/education and crime. Canning Town, in the London Borough of Newham, is the third most deprived borough in England and Wales.

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