

PRESS RELEASE

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FORMER WORLD BOXING CHAMPION AND EASTENDER STAR SUPPORT AWARD WINNING HOMELESS CHARITY

Former Carry On and EastEnder actress, Barbara Windsor MBE, has joined former World Boxing Champion and ITV's Hell's Kitchen winner, Barry McGuigan MBE, to help raise much needed funds for award winning homeless charity Anchor House.

They have joined the growing list of celebrity patrons supporting the East London charity, including BBC's Jeremy Paxman, former MP Ann Widdecombe and ITV News at Ten presenter Julie Etchingham.

Located in Canning Town, in one of the most deprived areas of the country, Anchor House provides accommodation for up to 180 single homeless people each year. It addresses the root causes of homelessness through training, education and personal rehabilitation.

As patrons, Ms Windsor and Mr McGuigan will be helping to raise awareness for the charity's £9 million Home and Hope Appeal which is aiming to fund a new 21st century training and education facility with move-on transitional accommodation.

Born in Shoreditch, Ms Windsor says she is very happy to be coming back to her roots – supporting an innovative centre that's just a stone's throw away from where her acting career began – in Stratford's local theatre workshops.

"I applaud Anchor House for the work that they are doing and look forward to working with them," Ms Windsor said.

"They are innovative and are empowering the homeless to help themselves through a programme that's designed by the homeless and for the homeless."

Irish born champion boxer, Barry McGuigan, knows only too well what the importance of physical fitness and health is in transforming lives. As a patron, he aims to support the growth of Anchor House's health and wellbeing programmes.

"When I first visited Anchor House, what struck me most was how happy, respectful and grateful the residents were," Mr McGuigan said.

"They felt really lucky to be at Anchor House and to be given the opportunity to turn their lives around. And I believe fitness and education has played a big part in that.

"It's not just been about giving them a bed, because that's only the start of it. It's about giving them the skills and knowledge to manage their problems and take full responsibility for their lives."

Over the last 12 months to 31st March 2011, Anchor House has achieved:

- 95% of residents were involved in positive transitional activities
- 32 residents obtained part-time or full-time employment
- 58 residents moved on to independent living.

For more information or to donate online, go to www.anchorhouseuk.org.

PHOTOGRAPHS:



Caption: Barbara Windsor MBE



Caption: Barry McGuigan MBE with Anchor House resident Thomas Downes



Caption: Barbara Windsor MBE with residents and staff at Anchor House

EDITORS NOTE:

Based in Canning Town, an area of high deprivation – the third most deprived borough in the country, Anchor House is a nationally acclaimed flagship project addressing the root causes of homelessness: deprivation; drug addiction; mental illness; unemployment; lack of skills/education and crime. It is a registered charity providing accommodation for up to 180 single homeless people each year. It also provides a wide range of accredited vocational training courses in construction, electrical, plumbing and distance learning for both residents and the local community.

Anchor House has been so successful in helping homeless people back into work that in November 2010 it won four National Training Awards by the UK Skills Centre and Anchor House's Employment and Training Officer Aggie Chikiwa (former resident) was awarded UK National Trainer of the Year.

It was also awarded the Charity Times Award for Best Use of Technology and was a finalist in the Third Sector Excellence Awards for Financial Management. And in 2006 and 2008, it won the Michael Whippman Award for Innovation in Homelessness.

From data taken from the '2010 Trust for London' and 'New Policy Institute', the London Borough of Newham, is at the wrong end of every indicator including health, homelessness, unemployment and work opportunities. Canning Town specifically is the most deprived ward in the third most deprived borough in the country, and is ranked third in the country for income deprivation affecting children and second in the country for income deprivation affecting older people. On top of this Newham has one of the highest rates of child poverty in London.

During 2009-10, Newham had over 36,000 households on the Housing Register (applying for a place in social housing) and around 3,500 households in temporary accommodation. Newham has the highest single homelessness population in the UK. Skills shortages are a major problem and significantly higher than across London as a whole. In 2009, 19.1% of people in Newham aged 16-64 had no qualifications. Only 24.2% were qualified to NVQ level 4 or above. This compares to London averages of 11.8% with no qualification and 39.7% at NVQ level 4 and above.

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