

Achievements of homeless people celebrated at awards ceremony

London: Much laughter, fun and celebration was had at the Caritas Anchor House Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 13th April. There was a fantastic turn out at the Newham homeless charity's awards ceremony - an annual event which celebrates the incredible achievements those who call Caritas Anchor House home, and recognises the hard work of their staff and community partners.

The evening started with an acoustic performance by group You & Me from YouPress - a social enterprise in Newham which brings people together to empower those often excluded from society. Guests were then treated to a film celebrating the achievements over the past 12 months, and the work that Caritas Anchor House does to create positive change to the lives of homeless people.

Keith Fernet, Chief Executive, and Mgr John Armitage, Chair of Trustees at the charity, presented awards to 40 homeless residents who have dedicated hundreds of hours of their time volunteering, while 15 residents were awarded for their successes at recent work placements and apprenticeships.

Lee Sullivan, who has been a resident at Caritas Anchor House for under four months, won the Education, Training and Employment Achievement of the Year award. Having been unemployed since the summer, Lee has now successfully completed a course at the Ilford TUCA

Academy and is now preparing himself for employment in tunnel excavation and underground construction.

Debbie Brown, who moved to the charity in October, won the Best Contribution Award for her energy, leadership skills, consistent volunteering and her involvement in campaigning for affordable housing in Newham. Just recently Debbie met Iain Duncan Smith, while in his role as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and had the opportunity to tell him about her background and hopes for the future. To her surprise, Mr Duncan Smith was so impressed that he offered her a work placement in his private office.

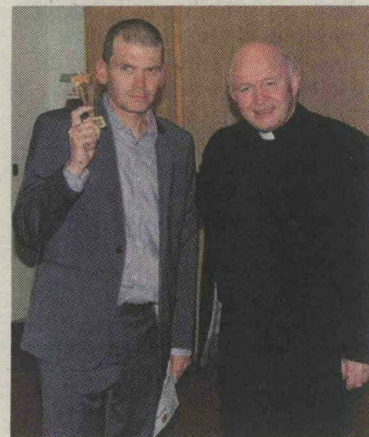
For one week in February, Debbie worked from the private office of Mr Duncan Smith at Caxton House, shadowing his Personal Assistant. She was able to spend time with other teams at the DWP, including the speechwriting, pensions, media, disabled persons unit and job seekers allowance teams, where she supported them with administrative tasks. Debbie was also delighted to be invited to the Houses of Parliament as a guest of Baroness Altmann.

Debbie said "I have been at Caritas Anchor House for only six months and have achieved more in that time than I have in the last 20 years. They have completely changed my life. I want to secure a job, and they have given me belief in myself that I can!"

'Dress for Success' and 'Suited

and Booted' were jointly named our Community Partners of the Year. The organisations provide support to vulnerable and low-income individuals - including Caritas Anchor House residents - by providing suitable interview clothing, interview advice and mentoring.

Keith Fernet, Chief Executive of Caritas Anchor House, said, "It is always a pleasure to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the homeless people that call Caritas Anchor House home, who have had to deal with so much adversity in their lives. Thank you too to our Community Partner award winners, Dress for Success and Suited and Booted. The services they provide have helped to support our residents, and many others, in their journeys to employment."



Caritas Anchor House resident Lee with Mgr John Armitage

