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Praise for success of business-minded homeless charity

Leading political figures have paid tribute to the work of a pioneering homeless charity run by a former management consultant that has helped hundreds of people to rebuild their lives.



Lord O'Donnell, the former Cabinet Secretary. Photo: DAVID ROSE

By **Sam Marsden**

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Lord O'Donnell, the former Cabinet Secretary, led praise for the "fantastic" work done by Anchor House in the deprived area of Canning Town in Newham, east London.

He cited research that found that every £1 spent by the charity, which provided a home and support for over 200 people in need last year, produced £4 worth of social benefit.

Explaining why he decided to become a patron of the cause, he said: "I went to see Anchor House and met the people there, and realised that this is an area where people are trying incredibly hard to deal with some of the most difficult cases and are making a difference."

Lord O'Donnell joined other high-profile supporters from the worlds of politics, sport and showbusiness, among them former England footballer Sol Campbell and ex-EastEnders star Anita Dobson, at a reception for Anchor House at the House of Commons today to mark World Homeless Day.

Unusually for a charity, Anchor House's senior management all have backgrounds in the business world, and it is run like a company, with personal development plans for residents to help them deal with their problems, find jobs and live independent lives.

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Director Keith Fernett, a trained economist who previously worked as a management consultant, said: "We are challenging the norms of how to deal with the homeless, and our results have gone through the roof."

Dominic Raab, the Conservative MP for Esher and Walton, said Anchor House was a "brilliant, revolutionary, inspiring" charity with a "professional cutting edge" that he had not seen elsewhere in the voluntary sector.

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