

Catholic charity is offering home and hope for the future

Rebekah Warburton

CATHOLIC homeless charity Caritas Anchor House has completed the construction of 25 move-on flats for previously homeless people.

Located in Newham, East London, one of the most deprived areas of the country, Caritas Anchor House provides accommodation and support for up to 250 single homeless people each year, addressing the root causes of homelessness through training, education and personal rehabilitation.

As the move from the supportive environment of Caritas Anchor House to independent living can sometimes be difficult, the move on flats will operate as a halfway point between the two states, helping ensure that residents are able to sustain their independence long term.

Whilst in the flats, adjacent to Caritas Anchor House, residents will have full responsibility for all aspects of their everyday lives, such as money management and cooking, but can continue to access Caritas Anchor House's support services if needed.

Each of the 25 studio flats are equipped with an ensuite bathroom, integrated kitchen, a dining table and chairs, a television and armchair, as well as a bed and wardrobe.

Debbie, one of the first residents to move into the flats, said: "For me it is about being able to look after yourself again, being able to take responsibility for things like what you want to eat



Support – Keith Fernett, chief executive of Caritas Anchor House

and when you want to eat."

Debbie says the physical proximity of having Caritas Anchor House next door offers "the confidence of knowing that someone is still here".

Keith Fernett, chief executive of Caritas Anchor House, said: "I am delighted our move-on flats are completed and that 25 of our residents have now taken the next step in their journey to independent living.

"Caritas Anchor House's capacity has now increased, so we will be able to support more people than ever before."

The flats form part of the charity's £15.3 million Home and Hope Appeal, launched in 2011 to transform the organisation and provision of home-

less services in Newham.

The first phase involved refurbishing existing residential rooms into individual learning zones, complete with a bedroom and workspace.

The move-on flats form phase two and work has now begun on the final phase, the construction of facilities for training and education, as well as health and wellbeing provisions.

In 2015 the charity was informed by HMRC it had to pay an additional £1 million in VAT on the building works of the move on flats, than originally advised.

Caritas Anchor House successfully appealed to have the decision overturned and will not have to pay further VAT on its construction works until 2018, when we expect our development to be complete.

The completion of the flats comes at a time when figures show homeless has risen 16 per cent in one year in England, and in Newham alone, the rough sleeper count has increased by 46 per cent.

However, The Homelessness Reduction Bill aims to reform current homelessness legislation to provide support for those who are homeless or at risk of losing their home, and, having recently passed its third reading in the Commons, is due to be debated in the House of Lords this month.

■ For more information or to donate online, visit: www.caritasanchorhouse.org.uk