

EAST LONDON

Homeless centre 'forced to close' by greedy Newham

by Paul Donovan

NOTORIOUS Newham Council made another entry in the hall of housing shame yesterday after a homeless charity was forced to close its rough sleeper centre when the borough allegedly pulled its funding.

East London-based **Anchor House** had used £150,000 of central government cash to help set up an assessment centre in Stratford that took rough sleepers off the streets.

The centre supported people, providing accommodation at its hostel in nearby Canning Town and helping with education and training support.

But the charity's head told the Star that the council had failed to support the project when ministers decided to funnel the money through local authorities.

Anchor House director Keith Fernett said 200 people had been taken off the streets in the last year and were now living and working in the community.

"Surely if you have a high performance outfit outdoing performance targets you should use it," he said.

"At present we are funding the assessment centre out of the reserves but that can only go on until March. We need continuity funding or it will close down."

There has been further frustration for **Anchor House** over the local authority's refusal to fund a bond scheme that enables homeless centres to rehouse single homeless people in the private-rented sector, he added.

"Newham have said they won't do the scheme, so we had a landlord who said he had 19 flats for single homeless peo-

ple, Newham would not fund, so the (north-west London borough) Harrow came in and housed their homeless in the flats," said Mr Fernett.

"They are likely to add to the demand on hospitals, doctors and the police in Newham — the second most deprived area in the country."

Newham has been hit hard by government cuts to local authority funding with its social investment budgets — which include housing — slashed by 60 per cent.

But the 100 per cent Labour council's gleeful austerity agenda has created a groundswell of opposition in the borough — exemplified by the Focus E15 housing campaign.

The council has denied the allegations but had not replied to requests for comment at the time of going to press.

newsed@peoples-press.com

