

"Why aren't we looking after each other?" - Jeremy Paxman in call to tackle London's homeless problem

By Rob Virtue on October 16, 2014 9:14 AM | Tagged with: Caritas Anchor House, Jeremy Paxman



Many a politician or university student has felt the force of Jeremy Paxman's ire. But there's one group of people who bring out the former Newsnight presenter's compassionate side.

A patron of homeless charity Caritas Anchor House, he revealed it was the "contempt" shown to those who have ended up on the streets that persuaded him to fight their corner.

"When people ask you to think about charities you've got a serious decision to make," said the 64-year-old.

"I decided homelessness was for me. Most people are scared of homeless people because they think they're off their heads. There's contempt aimed at them from people who say 'I've got a roof over my head why haven't you?'"

"But there's a very narrow distinction between the life most of us lead and one of complete and utter chaos and it doesn't take much for it to change. It can be something like losing your job or falling out with your parents."

Mr Paxman was speaking on World Homeless Day last Thursday at a House of Commons event organised by Anchor House, the charity based at Canning Town.

The journalist and TV presenter has supported the charity since visiting in 2011. He said he was impressed by the support they offered those on the street.

"It all comes back to individual issues and the only way you can solve them is through individual decisions," he said.

"It's a sensible support system it offers and not namby pamby. It gives people the chance to get their lives back. Anybody on this journey is doing something much bigger than anything I've had to do."

The broadcaster is a regular visitor to the east London charity. And he is moved every time he visits the residents.



"I last went there a month ago and what most struck me was something very simple," he said. "I asked what they liked about the place and someone said 'it's great because they say good morning to you'."

"Imagine living in a world where people don't say 'good morning' just because you're homeless."

So does he make sure he says hello to homeless people in the street?

"I try to," said Paxman. "But I'm sure I sometimes fail. We've just got to remember that we're all human beings."

"When I was growing up you didn't see homeless people or beggars but you occasionally saw tramps and if you were compassionate then you'd give them something to eat."

"The growth of homelessness is a distressing thing. Something is not working in the way we look after each other."

Fellow broadcast journalist Julie Etchingham is also a patron of Anchor House, having first got involved with the charity around four years ago.

She said it was a visit to east London and conversations with the residents she found living there that cemented her support.

The charity has so far raised almost £10million towards a £15million extension to its east London facility – a complex of 25 studio apartments designed to help people in the transition back to independent living.

Ms Etchingham said it would be a fantastic addition.



"The charity helps homeless people receive the correct treatment and then puts them through a training process for job and life skills," she said.

"It holds their hand in the most supportive way."

Go to caritasanchorhouse.org.uk.

Share: | [Permalink](#) | [Tweet](#) | [f](#)

Older/Newer

« [Blonde's Eye View: Can Wharf workers really give up vices for October](#)

Top Stories

1. Dubai firm buys Isle of Dogs' Asda
2. Silvertown crossing to trigger Blackwall toll
3. Firework displays in east and south-east London
4. This week's Tube strike cancelled
5. Thugs attack Good Samaritan

Competitions



Enter all Wharf competitions here

Columnists



Read the latest thoughts from The Wharf's columnists

What's On



Latest reviews, previews, gossip and interviews from the world of events and entertainment

Food



Latest news, reviews, snippets and features on what to eat and where to eat

Tweets

[Follow](#)

The Wharf @the_wharf 21h
Wondered what the dancers outside the Jubilee line station are up to? wharf.co.uk/2014/10/dancer...

Expand

The Wharf @the_wharf 22h
Almost 50% of children in Tower Hamlets live in poverty, according to research from Campaign to End Child Poverty wharf.co.uk/2014/10/nearly...

Expand

The Wharf @the_wharf 23h
Football: Who's got the cheapest seats and who's got the best value pies? See our graph #whufc #millwallfc #cafc wharf.co.uk/2014/10/how-do...

Expand

The Wharf @the_wharf 15 Oct
Book review: More Fool Me, by @stephenfry wharf.co.uk/2014/10/book-r...

pic.twitter.com/aA5dsyJjcC

Stephen Fry
More Fool Me

Tweet to @the_wharf

Facebook



Like The Wharf on Facebook

Twitter



Follow The Wharf on Twitter

Contact Us



Click here if you have a story or want to place an advert

How we use Cookies



Read The Wharf's E-Editions

