

Praise for a homeless charity with £1m bill

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THE former Shadow Minister of State for Employment, Stephen Timms MP, has praised a Catholic charity's work to provide a sustainable path out of homelessness and its "capacity to transform despair into hope".

The comment was made at a reception to mark World Homeless Day at the House of Lords, hosted by homeless charity Caritas **Anchor House** and sponsored by The Global Noticeboard.

"What's fantastic about Caritas **Anchor House** is that it gives people the prospect of a decent future, people that thought they

would never have one, and support them into employment," said Mr Timms.

Caritas **Anchor House** provides accommodation and support to single homeless people. It works with vulnerable groups, including those experiencing substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems and offending. Last year alone, it provided a home for 231 people, helped 71 into independent living and supporting 63 into employment.

The charity, based in the London Borough of Newham, was commended by event host Field Marshal Lord Guthrie on its life-changing work, while operating in the second most deprived borough in the country.

The charity has embarked on a vital development to improve and expand their services, including 25 'move-on' flats, to support homeless people into independent living.

However, it has recently been told by HM Revenue and Customs that it now faces an additional VAT bill of £1 million for this development.

Speaker Lord Gus O'Donnell, former Cabinet Secretary, expressed concern about the impact of the decision from HMRC.

"I hope that the disputes with HMRC will be resolved in a successful way," he said. "It's a win all round and it is doing work that is very difficult and yet still making a real difference."

