

new charter news

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Report it free

We are open for your repairs calls from 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday, with a 24 hour emergency service. And now if you call us from a landline to report a repair, day or night, your call is free!

We've introduced this new benefit in response to tenant feedback.

Our new number is:

0800 027 0828

It's the only number you'll need for repairs. Please update page 99 of your Tenant Handbook.



You too!

When you are top of the league, it's easy to get complacent. But not us. We're launching our next promotion for more of you to get involved with us, and make a difference.

We were delighted so many of you said earlier this year you were satisfied with opportunities to participate in New Charter. Over 89% said you were happy, a rating which is the envy of every other large landlord in England. But we plan to get even better, and need your help to do that.

We enclose our Get Involved leaflet with this newsletter. This shows the opportunities for resident involvement. Please take a few moments to read through. We have improved our performance and services by listening to tenants, but want to encourage even more tenants to contribute. We want – you, too!

So here's an invitation to every one of our tenants to come along to our annual Resident Involvement event, and let us know how we can help you to get involved.

The event is on **Tuesday 12th September** from 6.30pm at New Charter's Headquarters at Cavendish 249, Cavendish Street in Ashton-under-Lyne. It would be really helpful if you contact our Tenant Participation Team on 0161 331 2400 to register your interest.



New Charter + Federation members have been busy supporting local residents' events.

On June 17th, we attended Copley's tool bank opening which was a great success, helping raise awareness of the project which helps residents maintain their gardens. It is also bringing the community closer together by organising working groups of children to help elderly residents tend their gardens.

This weekend (15/16th July) we will be at the Mela, at Curzon Ashton's ground on Richmond Street. Mela means gathering, and the festival weekend promises to be a great event with music, a funfair, face-painting plus many other activities.

On 29th July, we will be helping out at the Micklehurst tool bank opening which is being combined with a summer fair, and will be a fantastic family event. It will be held off The Rowans in Mossley.

Our members have also been busy attending courses designed to expand our knowledge of residents issues and to find ways of helping them bring more in to their communities. The most recent event was a course on 'spaces by design'. We learnt how to advise on ways to change disused or neglected land into anything from a children's play area to a relaxing beauty spot.



Gardens on show

Wow! We had some tremendous entries for our Garden Contest 2006. Judging took place as we went to press – so some of those green fingers will have bitten nails! And we had a record number of nominations from our staff who went in search of the best gardens in each category. Here's just some of our mystery entries.



We will have a full round up of the winners in our next issue.

Performance update

We record and report on our performance to our Boards and to our Tenants' Federation, New Charter +. Our latest performance statistics are from the end of May 2006, the most recent available as we went to press.

Rents - Collection Rate	Group
Our Target	99.25%
Our Performance	99.86%
Relets - Average no. of Days Taken to Let Homes	
Our Target	28 days
Our Performance	50 days
Relets - Homes Let Each Month	
Our Target	95 homes
Our Performance	118 homes
Repairs - Emergencies - % Within 4-Hour Response	
Our Target	95%
Our Performance	100%
Repairs - Urgents - % Within 7-Day Response	
Our Target	90%
Our Performance	100%
Repairs - Routine % Within 28-Day Response	
Our Target	90%
Our Performance	95.6%

Number change

Our Anti-social behaviour helpline number has changed. If you have a complaint on anti-social behaviour, you can phone 0800 027 0522 any time day or night. You can give details of your complaint confidentially to a member of staff during normal business hours. Outside these times, you can leave a message on the answer machine service.

Please update page 99 of your tenants' handbook with the new number.

Don't get in debt, get in touch!

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New Charter puts a lot of effort into helping people pay their rent, giving you many ways to pay so you can decide which is most convenient.



We are pleased the majority of tenants pay regularly, and have no rent arrears problems.

Unfortunately, some people do struggle to pay their rent. In a minority of cases, others just don't want to pay.

Rent arrears soon start growing and can become an unmanageable debt in a very short time.

If you are struggling, we want to help.

It's important that you contact us as soon as you find you are having problems paying your rent. We can help you sort things out

by checking that you have all the welfare benefits you are entitled to, and agreeing a repayment plan for rent arrears at an amount you can afford. You may even get help from our hardship fund if you are in severe financial difficulty.

If you don't do anything about your rent arrears, we may have to refer the matter to the courts. This could eventually lead to you losing your home.

Between April 2005 and March 2006, we took court action on 298 households and evicted 114 households. We hate having to take this action but are sometimes left with no alternative.

Don't let this happen to you – we can help, but only if you tell us you are having problems.

Your Account Manager is waiting to hear from you on 0161 331 2215.

Positive parenting

It's a job many of us do, yet there's often little training beforehand!

Using warmth, love, respect, consistency and good communication in the way you behave with your child has enormous benefits.

Yet many of your complaints to us are about problems involving the behaviour of children and young people. Our investigations often show the behaviour stems from poor parenting.

As we approach the summer holidays, these type of complaints increase.

As a parent, we expect you to:

- 1) **Be there for your children**
- 2) **Accept that you are responsible for your children and what they do**
- 3) **Keep them under control**
- 4) **Guide your children – teach them right from wrong**
- 5) **Make sure they go to school**
- 6) **Know where they are, who they are with and what they are doing**
- 7) **Keep them away from people who will get them into trouble**

It's up to you to control your child's behaviour. And you, as the tenant, are responsible for their actions.

Mystery shoppers needed

Mystery shopping is a method of checking the service that our staff provide to you. Customers are trained to either make phone calls or write letters to staff on fictitious situations that test our response.

Why is it important? Well, the outcome of each mystery shop is factual evidence from the customer viewpoint of the quality of service we provide. The benefit to us is that we can improve service levels from the learning.

But there are also benefits to those doing the shopping. External trainers provide training to the highest standards, and the skills and experience you gain can help in getting employment. And you will be empowered to assess directly the service you receive from us.

It is envisaged that mystery shops will take place two or three times a year on set themes, when mystery shoppers will write a letter or make a phone call to predetermined scripts. These help measure the outcomes.

The free training required to become a mystery shopper will take place in two parts. You will need to attend on both Tuesday 19th September and Tuesday 26th September 2006 from 6pm – 9pm at our HQ in Ashton-under-Lyne.

If you would like to be involved in these sessions, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact our Tenant Participation Team on 0161 331 2400.



Maximising income, minimising debt

New Charter is committed to ensuring that tenants' incomes are maximised. We have a Welfare Benefits Advisor who is available to help ensure entitlement to welfare benefits is not being overlooked and therefore remaining unclaimed.

More money, with appropriate support, should help people stay out of debt.

To help those already in debt, we offer a Hardship Fund not only to help existing customers, but to help people back into social housing. The fund grants successful applicants up to £250 towards a single debt.

New Charter with Tameside Council sponsor a Citizens Advice Bureau general advisor on our Harbour Farm estate in Hyde.

This ensures that people have access to an important service on their doorstep when it is most needed.

The MiNT partners want to find out from YOU what information you would like to receive. New Charter's staff recently met with a SureStart Parents Forum to discuss the objectives of MiNT and created this list of 'Helpful Money Saving Tips'

- Do a weekly honest budget and keep to what you can afford
- Buy Supermarket own brands
- Make a shopping list before you go to the supermarket and stick to it
- Take a picnic on family days out
- Leave your purse at home some days
- Walk when you can
- Save a little each week for Christmas and family getaways
- Before buying takeout meals, check your fridge first
- Shop around, visit local charity shops to find that bargain
- Pass items around the family and friends – children's clothing, books, magazines, toys.

Gis a job?

We can't promise that, but we are keen that tenants seeking employment see the opportunities to work for us.

We advertise all our jobs on our website www.newcharter.co.uk. Jobcentre Plus carries details of all vacancies, and you can also call into any of our Customer Advice Centres to see opportunities. We also place adverts in the jobs sections of local press, and occasionally in some specialist national press. And with a wide range of jobs, we may have something that suits your skills and experience.

Great news - Home Contents Insurance is getting cheaper!

New Charter offers you the opportunity to join a scheme where you can pay for Home Contents Insurance along with your rent. The scheme offers 'new for old' protection for the loss of your personal belongings.

We are really pleased to announce we have negotiated a cut in the weekly cost, along with new cover and policy limits.

For tenants already on the scheme, this is a 10% cut to the existing charge, and takes effect from 10th July 2006. Everyone will receive a letter setting out the new charge and cover.

People wanting to join the scheme can also take advantage of these new rates.

The minimum cover you can get is:
£6,000 if you are over 60 years old for a weekly cost of £1.04
£9,000 if you are under 60 for a weekly cost of £1.55

Anyone who is a member of the scheme and anyone joining by the end of August 2006 will automatically be entered into a prize draw. The first prize is £60 High Street vouchers, with a runner-up prize of £20 High Street vouchers.

If you would like more details, please contact 0161 331 2221 – don't delay!

Please note conditions apply for acceptance into the scheme and there are exclusions in the insurance cover which are detailed in the policy booklet. A sample of the policy booklet is available on request.

Dear Editor



Q. I'm sure I saw a New Charter van while I was visiting my father in Middleton. Surely you don't own any homes in that area? Should I report it?

Mrs V K, Hyde

A. There's nothing suspicious about it! Our Building Company has been fantastically successful in winning repair and maintenance work across the North West, and looks after several other housing associations' properties. The profit made from this is kept within New Charter, and spent on many of the other activities our tenants want to see, particularly on regenerating our neighbourhoods.

May's Day

There must be something in the water at our Ravensfield Sheltered Scheme in Dukinfield. Our latest tenant to reach 100 years is May Braithwaite...but she's not alone. Readers may remember that Alex Cox reached the milestone last August and has 101 firmly in his sights.



May made it a weekend to remember, with the Mayor of Tameside and the press visiting her on Friday before her big day on Saturday July 1st. Friends, relations and the community at Ravensfield threw her a GREAT party ably assisted by our Scheme Co-ordinators Jane Colgan and Lynn Reece.

Not only did she receive a New Charter bouquet, but May created some sort of a record as we installed a new kitchen in time for her birthday. May puts her longevity down to a healthy lifestyle. "My love of dancing has kept me young," she said. And May's friends at Ravensfield told us she had only stopped doing the 'hokey-cokey' when she reached 99!

Scouts honour

Congratulations to Len Carter, a resident of our sheltered housing at Pendle House in Denton. He was awarded the Queen's Silver Acorn for his services to the Scouting movement in the Denton area. Len's contribution spans four decades, and friends and relations joined residents and the Mayor of Tameside to mark his splendid achievement.



Len is a familiar visitor to our Denton shop on Albert Street, and one of his paintings is displayed there. But the admiration is two-way, as Len gleefully told the press at his presentation that New Charter is the best thing that ever happened to Pendle House!

How to contact us

Our normal working hours are:

Mon to Wed 8.30am to 5pm
Thursday 8.30am to 4.30pm
Friday 8.30am to 4pm

Please note our shops open at 9am Monday to Friday and are located at: 2 Henrietta Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; 9 Albert Street, Denton; 12 Clarendon Street, Hyde; 63 Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge.

Main Switchboard: 0161 331 2000

Reporting Repairs: 0800 027 0828

We are open for your repair calls from 8am until 6pm. You can also report repairs online at www.newcharter.co.uk

Lettings General Enquiries:
0161 331 2345

Out of hours emergency telephone calls:
0800 027 0828

General Tenancy Enquiries:
0161 331 2400



World Cup Winners!

Congratulations to our World Cup colouring contest winners! As we went to press, England had been knocked out, but two sisters from Ashton were able to cheer them on from the start with their World Cup goodies. Congratulations to Sophia and Jemma Clegg of Waddicor Avenue who were our Champions!

Summertime security

As the weather improves, it is tempting to leave doors and windows open to improve ventilation. But Greater Manchester Police has this warning – open windows are an open invitation to a thief.

If you must leave a window open, first check from the outside just how easy it would be for the thief to enter your home. Never leave ground floor windows open at night. Even first floor windows can easily be entered by using 'lean to' extensions, drainpipes, or ladders left in the garden. Burglars, like rats, can squeeze themselves through very small openings...



You can pick up more literature about home security at your local Police Station.

Open to all tenants

Why not come along to a Board meeting at New Charter? They usually last no more than 2 hours and are held at Cavendish 249 in Ashton, starting at 6pm. You are not able to speak, but you can watch how the Board works, and you will have a set of papers to follow the proceedings.

Take a look at the following dates and if you can attend, or would like more information, please contact Laura Douthwaite on 0161 331 2000.

New Charter Housing (North) Ltd: Thursday 31st August, Monday 11th September, Thursday 28th September (AGM)

New Charter Housing (South) Ltd: Thursday 31st August, Wednesday 13th September, Thursday 28th September (AGM)

New Charter Housing Trust Ltd: Tuesday 15th August, Thursday 31st August, Thursday 28th September (AGM)