



# PRESS RELEASE

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## A WINNING APPROACH FOR LOCAL HOMELESS

First-class customer care and constant improvement has won a five-year contract for New Charter's Housing Aid Centre.

The Homelessness and Housing Advice Service is based at 50 Warrington Street in Ashton-under-Lyne. The service is provided by the Registered Social Landlord on behalf of Tameside MBC. All Council homes were transferred to the New Charter Housing Trust Group in March 2000. Additionally, Tameside contracted with the Group to provide its statutory service until April 2003.

In the last three years, Housing Aid housed almost 1200 homeless families and helped and advised many more people threatened with homelessness. Nationally and locally, the trend of homelessness is still upwards, with relationship breakdown and domestic violence acknowledged as major causes.

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Other organisations were invited to run the service, but New Charter won the contract until 2008 based in part on the excellent customer rating of the Housing Aid Centre. An independent survey last summer showed a staggering 100% customer satisfaction from those using the service.

The service came under the microscope of the Audit Commission Inspectors last year as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. They awarded it a one star service commendation with excellent prospects for improvement. The inspection report praised a number of key strengths including effective partnerships that are helping to provide a range of housing advice support and accommodation. Clear policies and procedures were in place that demonstrated the quality of the service.

Commenting on the contract award, David Rigby, Head of Business Development at New Charter said, "I am particularly pleased the excellent customer service provided by our staff at Housing Aid has helped us win this work. Last summer, the Audit Commission recognised our customer focused approach to the provision of Homelessness and Housing Advice Services, and independent survey results back up our own surveys of customers. A number of the weaknesses identified were for service areas still directly provided by Tameside Council. Our approach has been to assist and work with the Council to improve these areas."

**ENDS**

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