

# PRESS RELEASE

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## WE'RE COMING IN!



Photo of joiner drilling out locks available

New Charter is taking the unusual step of forcing entry into tenants' homes.

The landlord is so determined to get in to homes that it is turning up with joiners ready to break down doors or change locks.

But before most tenants get alarmed at the prospect, New Charter is only taking this drastic action for the safety of its customers.

Like every landlord in the country, New Charter is under a duty to undertake a safety check of all gas appliances it has installed in its homes. Almost all of its 15,500 homes have an annual visit from the company's CORGI registered gas fitters. However, and despite exhaustive attempts to agree access times, some tenants are putting themselves at risk by failing to let the landlord in.

Where gas meters are accessible from outside homes, New Charter can cap off the gas supply, denying tenants the ability to use the fuel. In extreme cases, the landlord will break in and disconnect the supply to appliances before resealing the property. Tenants face a bill of £250 to cover part costs if this action is taken.

The landlord's patience ran out for two Ashton tenants this week, and more immediate action was taken. New Charter's staff effected entry to two homes where tenants had ignored all attempts to allow access and gas services were disconnected.

A subsequent test on one tenant's gas fire showed the appliance was faulty and could have endangered the occupiers. It was taken out of service.

Ian Munro, Group Chief Executive of New Charter commented " We have been forced into this action by the wilful refusal of some tenants to give us access for the annual safety tests. When burning properly, gas is a safe fuel but we are determined to assure the safety of customers. We extended our working hours on gas safety until 6.00pm each day and on Saturday mornings, so there is no excuse for not letting us in".

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. The duty to check gas fittings and flues annually is contained in the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.
2. New Charter is using the contractual term of the Tenancy Agreement. This reserves our right to enter the property with or without force if we believe that entry is

necessary because of an emergency that could cause personal injury, or damage to the property or any property in the locality.

3. We could apply to Court for an injunction or possession order, but this would take more time and be more expensive. We would recover Court costs from tenants.
4. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage nearly 16,400 properties transferred from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester. Until September 2000, it was Britain's biggest Large-Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT). With a turnover of £49 million a year and a workforce of almost 800, New Charter is one of the twenty largest Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog.

**CONTACTS:**

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