

# PRESS RELEASE

24<sup>th</sup> September 2003

## iN at the start



Photographs of projects available – see notes

New Charter is backing the national campaign called **iN business for neighbourhoods** launched today (Wednesday) at the National Housing Federation's annual conference in Birmingham. Housing associations across the country are joining forces to champion their work in the community.

The campaign is about repositioning the work – and the reputation – of housing organisations. It also challenges housing associations to continue to improve their performance and provide more neighbourhood services, following the example of many North West housing providers like us who have led the way in helping to transform neighbourhoods.

The campaign aims to correct the view that housing associations only provide poor quality homes for the poor, the deprived and the vulnerable – and little else. The key focus of the campaign is putting the pride back into communities, making them places where people

want to live. New Charter was created to improve dramatically the rented housing in Tameside. We spent over £50million in our first three years alone to improve people's homes – and lives.

New Charter has been chosen as one of the campaign's early adopters. There will be some visual signs of the rebranding appearing around the area in the next week. The other national events today are the launch of a report on the future of the sector and the manifesto for change, which will highlight successes across the country.

New Charter's Head of Business Development, David Rigby said: "This is not simply an exercise to rebadge the sector. The origins are in a MORI opinion survey in 2001 that showed housing associations were held in poor regard by many sections of society. The National Housing Federation has asked associations to form an alliance to press home what we do and can do about housing and related neighbourhood problems. Like all local associations, we have much to be proud about in New Charter. It's time to blow our trumpet."

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. New Charter will be using the strapline – iN business for neighbourhoods – on-site signboards and website over the next few days. New literature will be rebadged as well.
2. Some of the existing projects that embody New Charter's contribution to the campaign are:
  - Tackling anti-social behaviour by using Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO), Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, injunctions, legal undertakings and mediation. New Charter was one of the first in the country to win an ASBO – against someone who was not a tenant.

- Developing residents' skills in participation, communication and negotiation to improve neighbourhoods. The spectacular refurbishment of Assheton House in Ashton-under-Lyne is a good example (photo).
  - Providing a 7-days a week service of mobile caretakers, able to respond to refuse clearing, as well as regular maintenance. Runs the Annual Spring Clean, which cleared 110 tonnes of rubbish from the local area in 2003.
  - Instigating and supporting people to form alliances and groups, with financial resources. Helping these to draw up and deliver action in their own communities. A current example is our involvement in the campaign to fight a sub-post office closure in Stalybridge.
  - Recruiting and developing 14 modern apprentices a year for the last three years. These young people are drawn from the communities we serve (photo).
  - Building new housing in Audenshaw and Ashton-under-Lyne for unmet demand. A scheme of 21 flats at Crickets Lane in Ashton will be ready in January 2004 to accommodate a community whose homes will be demolished to make way for the Metrolink tram terminus.
  - Directly employing over 300 building workers in a separate company in the Group. Over 83% of these live within the local authority boundary. Compiling a skills register from within our tenant community.
3. The National Housing Federation is the representative body of around 1,400 not-for-profit independent social landlords – commonly known as housing associations. They provide over 1.8 million homes across England.
  4. The Federation has 110 members operating in the North West. Between them they manage 220,585 homes and last year built a further 2,176. They have a combined turnover of £758 million and employ almost 13,000 staff. (NB: These figures do not include Merseyside associations).
  5. 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 £49million 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:**

**David Rigby or Paula Thomas - New Charter Publicity 0161 331 2000**

**James Rae, PR consultant, NHF North Region 07919 156432**

**ENDS**