

PRESS RELEASE

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Valid arguments



Portrait of Group Chief Executive Ian Munro available

An independent check on the data provided by major housing associations has uncovered an alarming number of deficiencies.

The Housing Corporation has responded by issuing instructions to housing associations to obtain independent validation on performance information before the end of March 2005.

The report produced after independent validations were undertaken in 39 of the largest associations did not identify those who were assessed – something which puzzles New Charter’s Group Chief Executive, Ian Munro. “There is supposed to be openness and accountability across the sector which doesn’t seem to be consistent with the anonymised results” he said. “I’m identifying New Charter (*number 13 in the results*) because there is an important ethical issue about being honest with customers and others about performance. The validation exposes a considerable number of deficiencies, yet this information has often shaped how an association is regarded by regulators”.



business for neighbourhoods

The data has also been used by the Audit Commission inspectors in scoping and reporting on the performance and efficiency across associations. Being clear and explicit about the association's contribution is also an essential element of the **iN business for neighbourhoods** campaign.

One surprising part of the results was that nearly 80% of associations audited were calculating their relet turnaround times wrongly. Others have imperfect systems to record the amount of rent being paid by tenants.

Munro added "We started out just over four years ago determined to use the right information about ourselves and our performance to help us focus on continual improvement. Being honest and upfront about this is an essential part of improving, but I hear negative references from others in the sector to our openness. I haven't heard what action the Housing Corporation will be taking with those associations who received a large number of "non-compliance" scores - but some lead regulators could be very busy over the next few weeks".

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. 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. With a turnover of £57million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the twenty largest Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog.
2. The pilot validations were required by The Housing Corporation and commissioned from three national management and accountancy consultancies. New Charter was audited by RSM Robson Rhodes in March/April 2004.

3. See Housing Corporation Circular 06/04 (August 2004). The object is to ensure that published Performance Indicators are accurate and consistent across the housing association sector.

4. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a major new campaign, through which housing associations and companies across England are demonstrating the positive difference they make to people's homes, communities and quality of life. New Charter is one of over 360 housing companies and associations supporting the initiative. We've made a commitment to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence. These commitments include -
New Charter will pursue excellence and improvement;
New Charter will work with regulators and inspectors to build a culture of challenge and change.

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