

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Minister unveils homeless centre



Photographs available of opening

Housing Minister Rt. Hon. Keith Hill was in Ashton-under-Lyne yesterday (Monday) to open New Charter Housing Trust Group's refurbished home less persons centre.

New Charter invited the Minister to see for himself the quality of accommodation at Gibson Terrace, the main hostel for homelessness in Tameside. It was emptied in December 2003 for a £1.6m refit. The existing building was redesigned and refurbished to provide 20 flats. New build extensions have been created in the old rear yard to provide new support facilities and form a completely secure environment. It now reopens its doors to provide first class facilities for all types of homeless households.

Accompanied by Ian Munro, Group Chief Executive of New Charter and local MP David Heyes, the Minister looked round two of the flats, including one adapted for the disabled.



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A secure environment with round the clock staffing and CCTV protects vulnerable residents. All flats are fully self-contained with modern bathrooms and kitchens, and range in size from bedsitters to large four-bedroomed.

Keith Hill unveiled a plaque to commemorate the reopening and complimented New Charter on its contribution to the Tameside area since the transfer of homes in March 2000. He was particularly impressed with the quality of Gibson Terrace.

Ian Munro Group Chief Executive of New Charter said: “We’ve kept the original listed building features, but brought the building up to modern standards for fire, noise, and thermal insulation. Refurbishing Gibson Terrace is central to improving all supported housing services. We want to use these excellent facilities to reduce the ordeal of becoming homeless, and help combat social exclusion. I'm delighted the Minister has made time to see the benefits of a good partnership between us, Tameside Council, The Housing Corporation and other agencies”.

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of almost £60million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the country’s largest Registered Social Landlords, and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog. It owns just under 14,900 homes.
2. New Charter provides all homeless services within Tameside on behalf of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. In recent years a comprehensive programme of service improvements has been put in place including: increased provision to avoid the use of bed and breakfast; more support workers to prevent homelessness and sustain future

tenancies; and a new housing advice centre. The Gibson Terrace refurbishment is a key part of the strategy.

3. The Building: built in the 1860's, the terrace was originally 12 houses for senior workers at the adjacent cotton mill. It is a remaining portion of a model village built by the industrialist and philanthropist Hugh Mason. It is a listed building.

In the late 1970's, Tameside Council converted it to a hostel. By the 1990's, it was worn out and failing to meet changing homelessness needs. The building was very insecure (unsafe for staff and residents), cold, noisy, had inadequate fire escapes, and had only two bathrooms for 24 families. New Charter bought it in March 2000.

4. Costs and Funding:  
Full project cost = £1.55m (building costs, fees, acquisition of some adjacent mill land)  
Funding:  
Housing Corporation £0.995m  
Tameside Council (Local Authority Social Housing Grant) £0.25m  
New Charter Housing Trust Group £0.305m

5. Partners:  
B & E Boys Ltd. - builders  
Places for People - development agents  
Dane Ashworth Cottam - architects  
Stephen Davies Associates - quantity surveyors

6. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project to improve housing associations' performance, and challenge negative perceptions of the sector and its customers. The project was launched at the National Housing Federation's annual conference in 2003. To date, 75 per cent of the sector's stock – over 1.4 million homes – is managed by associations who have joined the initiative and made fresh commitments to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence.

#### **CONTACTS:**

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

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