

PRESS RELEASE

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Gas blows out tenant

A tenant's wilful neglect for gas safety has led to her eviction.

Despite many letters and visits, Sharon Walker refused to let us get into her first floor flat on Hitchen Drive in Dukinfield. In a first for New Charter, we successfully applied in August to Tameside County Court to obtain a possession order suspended for 28 days. But the tenants' continued failure to let us in meant we went back to Tameside County Court and the eviction took place yesterday (Tuesday).

That's not all that Walker lost. The disregard for her own safety and defiance of our attempts to get in has also cost her £500 in court costs awarded to New Charter.

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. When burning properly, gas is a safe fuel but we are determined to assure the safety of customers. Almost all 15,000 homes have gas, and so get an annual visit from our own CORGI-registered gas fitters. However, and



despite exhaustive attempts to agree access times, a few tenants are putting themselves at risk by failing to let the landlord in.

Danny McLoughlin, New Charter's Director of Legal Services was pleased with the judgement. "This is a success for us, but it defies all common sense that Walker failed to respond. She is the first tenant to lose her home for this reason. New Charter extended working hours on gas safety until 6.00pm each day and on Saturday mornings, so there was no excuse for not letting us in. It's a clear message from the Court that, as well as rights, tenants have responsibilities."

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 £48million 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. By incorporating Aksa Housing Association recently, the Group owns over 15,000 homes.
2. The duty to check gas fittings and flues yearly is contained in the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.
3. **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, 80 per cent of the sector's stock – over 1.5 million homes – is managed by associations who have joined the initiative and made fresh commitments to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence.

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