

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Tenants see double at awards night

Two tenants of New Charter in Greater Manchester were recognised for their courage and contribution at the Respect Awards for Taking a Stand (RAFTAS) this week.

Darren Holmes of Stalybridge and Taff Jeffery of Dukinfield were each presented with £1,000 by Home Secretary John Reid and Louise Casey, the Government's Co-ordinator for Respect at a ceremony in London.

The RAFTAS recognise the commitment, energy and courage of people who make their neighbourhoods better places to live, and who inspire others to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Darren Holmes is in his mid-twenties and, by his own admission, was involved in minor crime which affects the lives of the community and estate issues. But he used his status of becoming a dad to change how he and many others related to authority on the Crowswood estate in Stalybridge. He enlisted the help of New Charter's staff to start a local football team, targeting the youths whose behaviour was challenging all residents and agencies. Almost immediately, incidents reduced, a pride in the area replaced the vandalism, and Darren has gone on to gain sports coaching qualifications. But not everyone was enthusiastic, and Darren has had to deal with aggression aimed at him.

He plans to use his £1000 award to widen the football club to other age groups and put another volunteer through the coaching qualifications he followed.

Taff Jeffery became Chair of Central Residents Action Group in Dukinfield five years ago, and brought renewed optimism to his neighbourhood. There have been several notorious families and individuals living in the area, and Taff was never intimidated by them. When residents were too frightened to report and give statements, Taff came forward and enabled the authorities to gather evidence to evict or prosecute. He gained and retains the confidence of young people in the area, and coordinates the Home Watch scheme for 100 properties surrounding his home. He was a major part of the success of "Central in Bloom" which won a merit in the Neighbourhood category of the North West in Bloom Awards.

Taff intends to put his £1,000 award to improving CCTV coverage and environmental features to design out crime on Central.

New Charter's Director of Tenancy Services, Tony Powell said: "It might be easier just to close your door on anti-social behaviour, but our neighbourhoods are the better for people like Darren and Taff. They represent the best of our communities – residents who care about others, and are prepared to speak out and take action to promote respect and the values of neighbours living peacefully together. Both of them have stood up to intimidation. They have successfully worked to provide alternative ways of getting involved in neighbourhoods. New Charter is **iN business for neighbourhoods** and these two residents are helping us improve the quality of life on their estates."

## 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 just under 15,000 homes.
2. The Taking A Stand awards celebrate the bravery and courage of people who have taken a stand against anti-social behaviour. The awards are run in partnership with Crime Concern and recognise those who transformed their neighbourhoods by tackling problems such as vandalism, nuisance neighbours, intimidation and graffiti. Darren Holmes and Taff Jeffery were nominated by staff at New Charter who believe both deserve recognition for their efforts to tackle problems.
3. For supporting quotes from Louise Casey, please visit:  
<http://www.respect.gov.uk/article.aspx?id=9266>
4. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project highlighting housing associations' performance. As social businesses, housing associations do not make profit. They offer homes for rent and sale at prices local people can afford. Housing associations provide more than homes - they help create places where people want to live. Wherever you see the **iN business for neighbourhoods** sign, something great is happening in the area. Housing Associations who display this logo are committed to their customers, the neighbourhoods they work in and strive for excellence in everything they do.

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