

# PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007

## Conviction of Albert Williams

A verdict of guilty of wounding with intent has been returned on Albert Williams, late of Elizabeth Avenue, Stalybridge. He had been charged with the attempted murder of Police Community Support Officer Gary Etchells.

The incident occurred on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006 when Gary Etchells was stabbed as bailiffs executed a warrant to evict Williams from his first floor flat, owned by New Charter.

Williams will be sentenced on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

“There are three issues for us to comment on, as this case concluded,” said Martin Frost, Deputy Chief Executive at New Charter.

“First, we are all relieved that Gary has made such progress on his recovery from this terrible attack. The respect we have for him has been amplified by his courage and the evident high regard in which he is held by our communities.

“Second, we are immensely proud of our five staff who were present when the stabbing happened. In the moment of crisis, they all reacted professionally and with great humanity. Those trained in First Aid administered this, despite Williams returning to throw pans of hot water at them. Gary Etchells has been kind enough to publicly acknowledge their role in the key minutes after he was stabbed. They are heroes.

“But thirdly, the case has prompted us to look at how the benefit system operates. We will be approaching the Department for Work and Pensions at the highest level to discuss the implications for people who try and save from their benefit.

“It is undoubtedly true that had Williams frittered away his benefits weekly, his housing costs would have continued to be met by benefits. He chose to live frugally, saving much of his benefits for unknown purposes. But his thrift meant his savings accumulated each year, and eventually to an amount which the regulations do not disregard.



“Williams’ case is unusual, and there can be no justification for his actions in attacking those who were carrying out the court order. But it highlights how benefits regulations can penalise saving yet disregard inappropriate spending.”

## 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 15,000 homes.
2. Tameside County Court issued a warrant to evict Williams (who was the tenant of 6 Elizabeth Avenue, Stalybridge) on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006. He had failed to pay rent for the home since his housing benefit was stopped in February 2006. He had run up arrears of over £2,300 by date of eviction. The Court was told this week he had amassed £60,000 in savings accounts.
3. **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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