

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

26th March 2008

Minister opens unique homes



Photographs available with Rt Hon James Purnell MP and residents at Beaumont Place, Stephens Road, Stalybridge

A Cabinet Minister made time to open New Charter's latest innovative housing development, Beaumont Place in Stalybridge. This unique project provides 25 one bed apartments for adults with learning difficulties. For many customers, it will be their first experience of independent living.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Rt. Hon. James Purnell, who is also MP for Stalybridge and Hyde, travelled up from London specially to honour a commitment he made before his recent promotion.

The Minister was welcomed by Group Chief Executive Ian Munro. He was joined by Chair of New Charter Ged Cooney and Tameside Councillor Bernard Walsh as he unveiled a commemorative plaque. Afterwards, he accompanied residents as they placed personal memorabilia about their lives in a lead time capsule in the grounds. One resident, Carol Green then proudly showed Mr Purnell round her new apartment.

Residents previously lived in Staley House, a Tameside Council-owned 1960s building less than 100m from the new development. It needed extensive refurbishment. Each resident had their own small room, but none had separate bathrooms. The Council recognised residents needed better and more independent living accommodation, but could not fund this. Residents wanted to keep their community together.

New Charter owned land in the vicinity and worked with the Council for three years to produce an innovative scheme to meet the particular needs of Staley House residents. The Housing Corporation generously supported the scheme financially.



iN business for neighbourhoods

Beaumont Place has been sensitively designed, taking advantage of a sloping site to integrate carefully with the surrounding housing estate. All 25 apartments have a double bedroom, lounge, bathroom and kitchen. All are fully wheelchair accessible with level access showers. Residents chose kitchen finishes and colours, and individual adaptations were made to bespoke each apartment.

Care is provided by Tameside MBC Adult Services within each apartment. Extensive communal facilities have been provided to give extra care. The scheme has two large communal lounges, a dining room, a commercial kitchen, a quiet room, two assisted bathrooms, a laundry and various staff facilities. All locks are electronic, and flooring and signage is colour coordinated to help any resident or visitor fully use the building. New Charter provides the main meal of the day for residents.

Group Chief Executive Ian Munro was pleased the Minister had been able to officially open the scheme. "Like Mr Purnell, New Charter has grown in stature over the last few years. Our financial strength means we can take on these projects, although we are grateful for the Housing Corporation's assistance on Beaumont Place. Perhaps more importantly, our desire to put the customer at the heart of what we do means we naturally engaged with the special needs of residents."

Councillor Bernard Walsh paid tribute to the involvement of all parties. He said "As a parent of a son with learning difficulties, I know what a fantastic difference this place will make to residents' lives. Our staff have played their part to ease the residents' concerns about a move. I'm delighted that we have kept this community together, and provided some first class facilities."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. New Charter owns and manages almost 15,000 homes for rent, mainly in Tameside, Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £53million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the North West's largest Registered Social Landlords, and incorporates Aksa Housing Association.
2. Construction cost was £3.156m, full project costs approximately £3.4m. The project was supported by a grant of £1.25m from The Housing Corporation, the remainder funded by New Charter. Beaumont Place took 13 months to complete, and opened on time and on budget in February.
3. DAC Architects, Rowlinson Construction, and Davis Langdon (Quantity Surveyors) were the development team.
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.

CONTACT:

David Rigby - New Charter 0161 331 2000

ENDS