

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

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Call us now urges New Charter

Picture available

Tenants of New Charter Homes are being urged to contact the landlord if they need assistance to pay their rent and other household costs.

The offer of help comes as forecasts predict average rents will rise by just over £4 a week from October. A government plan to equalise local rents by 2012 requires New Charter to increase by around 5.5%.

New Charter Homes is unusual in that it has an annual rent review from October. Most other landlords increased their rents last April.

Around 1,300 tenants will have the best news of all – no increase. Generally, the law only allows rents to increase if tenants have been with the landlord for twelve months.

The remainder of New Charter Homes' tenants will see rents rise to reflect the type and size of accommodation they occupy. For the last nine years, tenants have paid less with New Charter than any other local landlord. But government expects all homes to be at or near the target rent for the locality in three years time.

Satisfaction of tenants with New Charter has meant the landlord has topped the English league table of large landlords for the last four years. Its current rating of 93% is complimented by 77% of tenants who say their rent is good value for money.

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance Martin Frost has seen a slight increase in the number of tenants struggling in the recession. "We've had a small fall in the collection rate over the last twelve months, which is unsurprising given the difficult times many are facing", he said. "But we've been able to help many tenants with both their household budgets and their



benefits entitlements which has protected their incomes. It's much easier to help customers early, rather than have to help with multiple debts later on.

"Our forecast increase is based on 50 rent weeks a year for almost all our 14,475 homes. Tenants who are up to date with their accounts will keep their two rent-free weeks at Christmas."

New Charter provides a range of welfare and benefits direct, and all new tenants are offered household budgeting skills. Through the Money information Network Tameside (MiNT), New Charter also helps more residents improve their financial skills and knowledge.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £59million a year and a workforce of 840, New Charter is one of the region's largest Registered Social Landlords, and is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, a Government watchdog. By incorporating Gedling Homes, the Group owns 18,600 homes. It was named in the Sunday Times best 100 companies to work for in 2009.
2. Tenants can contact New Charter for help at any of its four local shops or by telephoning 0161 331 2050.
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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