

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

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Ged puts a shine on IT

Pictures available

A mobile caretaker from Hyde has scooped the title of Learner of the Year at New Charter's People Awards night.

Yet Ged O'Neill of Ashton Road was surprised to win the award, which is sponsored by unionlearn, the TUC's learning and skills organisation.

"I went to a lunchtime event which promoted learning opportunities. It concentrated on numeracy and literacy skills which I felt I was OK on. But it got me thinking about what other opportunities there might be for me" he said. "My current ambition is to be a caretaking team leader. Like most jobs, an IT qualification comes in handy."

Ged enrolled on an ITQ level 2, and just five months later had passed. He's now signed up to both ITQ level 3 and the Institute of Leadership & Management course run by New Charter. And like many converts to learning, he is very enthusiastic about its value.

"I'm only 44, but they call me a late life learner", he shrugged. "I do admit I left school empty-handed. I went straight into the weavers shed at Ashton Brothers in Hyde for the next 21 years. And I've done a few years in construction before I started with New Charter in 2007. If I look back, though, I've been learning for a long time."

One irony not lost on Ged is his confidence to build a computer. "Before I did my ITQ, I could build you a computer, no problem. But ask me how to work it – well, I was struggling."

Tony Saunders, union development co-ordinator with unionlearn, presented a framed certificate and £200 prize to Ged while he was at work keeping New Charter's neighbourhoods clean and tidy. Tony said: "Ged is just the sort of union member we want to encourage back into learning. He realised his progress can be helped by a commitment to brush up his skills and gain the qualifications. He's learning locally and has



the support of his union learning representatives and employer as well as unionlearn. He is a worthy winner.”

Ged was selected from more than 200 employees currently following learning and development opportunities at New Charter.

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 £70million a year and a workforce of 840, New Charter is one of the region’s largest registered providers of social housing, 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. ITQ has been designed by employers to meet the needs of today’s businesses. It is a nationally-recognised programme that takes into account individual’s existing IT skills. Learners may already have ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), or one of the CLAIT qualifications or Microsoft Office Specialist. These can count towards ITQ.
3. Unionlearn is the TUC’s learning and skills organisation. It was established by the TUC in 2006 to reach out to all members who could benefit from study at the workplace or a local college or learning provider.
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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