

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

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Dragons show their hands

Pictures available

A Dragons Den-style inquisition greeted employees who wanted to extend their learning. And the dragons decided they were “in” on ambitions as diverse as hand massage, learning Turkish and ballroom dancing.

New Charter invited staff to bid for extra learning and development opportunities beyond the work-related training programmes which helped us achieve an ‘outstanding’ 2 star assessment from Best Companies this year.

Despite the apparent ferocity of the dragons, staff responded with ideas to extend their learning in their personal lives. More than £5,000 was available.

New Charter’s Group Director of Organisational Development Christine Amyes was one of the dragons. She said: “As well as being fun, we found several applications which we could link to our business objectives. So our awards went a lot further than the £5,000 we’d set aside. We were taken aback by the quality of some ideas. Those who entered the spirit of the occasion probably found us more fluffy than fiery!”

“The message we wanted to give was that learning any new skill is valuable. Employees who are keen to learn outside work are almost certainly committed to refreshing their skills for the business. We hope this will keep us at the top of our sector.”

The dragons also included Group Chief Executive Ian Munro, Head of People Development Jane Blackburn and Learning Centre Co-ordinator Hannah Grantham.

Among the winners to emerge from the Dragons Den unscathed but clutching a prize was Building Company supervisor Dave Birtwistle. “My family love Turkey as a holiday destination, but like many Brits abroad, I’m just not proficient in their language. This award enables me to follow an evening class in Turkish. I plan to shock some of the locals with my fluency on my next visit!”



The longest-serving employee at New Charter is Joyce Malpas from Human Resources. She won over the dragons with an ambition to learn hand massage. “I’ve always found having a hand massage relaxing, and I now have the chance to learn the skill. I was a little apprehensive as I entered the den...but soon had them eating out of my hand!” she said.

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. New Charter’s commitment to learning extends beyond simple business-related objectives. It involves customers to deliver an award-winning customer care course, runs its own accredited Institute of Leadership and Management courses and runs a Learning Centre for employees, their families and customers with trade union funding.
3. The dragons also agreed to help fund regular and advanced driving lessons, swimming tuition, courses in interior design, fashion, piano, Spanish, dance, golf and horseriding.
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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