

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

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X-traordinary!

Picture of Ian Munro available

Ten years ago, a groundbreaking new company bought the entire council housing stock in Tameside, Greater Manchester. At the time, it wasn't even sure tenants could get its name right.

But a decade later, the New Charter Housing Trust Group has achieved national recognition and what most companies can only dream of – the award of three stars in the Best Companies accreditation. Just 50 companies in Britain hold the coveted prize.

The Group is based in Ashton-under-Lyne and alongside the New Charter brand includes Oldham-based Aksa Housing Association and Nottinghamshire's Gedling Homes.

Labelled 'one to watch' in 2008, the social housing provider broke into Best Companies listing with two stars last year.

Best Companies uses a 'Michelin style' star rating for organisations that demonstrate high levels of employee engagement. Based on staff feedback, organisations receive a Best Companies index score which determines their star rating compared to a fixed standard. One star is first class, two stars are outstanding but three stars are extraordinary.

New Charter's Group Chief Executive Ian Munro said: "We are all about customers and they consistently tell me a great company is made by its great people. We've worked hard to be a good employer as well as a great landlord. I believe a well trained and happy workforce is also a high performer.

"The results of the Best Companies survey should come as no surprise to me, as we listen constantly to our many employees. But I am thrilled to get the best endorsement, alongside the best companies in Britain.

"At present I'm struggling to understand how we can improve on this rating - but the extraordinary people who work for me know I'll set a higher target soon!"



By setting up Gedling Homes, the Group effectively recruited more than 10% of its workforce in the last year. But new recruits are as positive as the more established staff.

Paul Willmore joined New Charter recently as a Neighbourhood Management Assistant. “My background was in sales, but I wanted a career change to something more customer-focused and local. Colleagues confirmed that this was a great employer, and I liked the look of the setup.

“I’ve been here a month and I know I’ve made the right choice. The homes and environment were much better than I thought. The induction alone showed me that from top to bottom, people are friendly and professional. So the claim to be about ‘Great Homes, Great Neighbourhoods, Great People’ is spot on. The pride is infectious and the place feels like the premiership of housing associations!”

Jonathan Austin, founder and Chief Executive of Best Companies said: “We would like to congratulate New Charter on its outstanding achievement. An engaged workforce is essential as organisations move out of the recession and into a more stable economic situation. Organisations like New Charter that have kept on engaging their staff and making sure they are involved in the business will be in a good position for the future and should be congratulated for their efforts”.

The same employee engagement methodology used by Best Companies is used to produce the prestigious Sunday Times 100 best companies to work for. That list will be published next month.

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 880, 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 100 best companies to work for in 2009.
2. The employee surveys were carried out by Best Companies Ltd. The views of more than 270,000 employees from over 1,080 companies were fed into this year’s results. The survey is a unique insight into the minds of UK employees. It illustrates what’s important to today’s workforce and how the companies featured on the lists recognise the rewards of listening to and caring for their employees.
3. Best Companies’ methodology identifies workplace performance and best practice according to eight key factors. These are:
 - Leadership
 - Personal Growth
 - My Team
 - Fair Deal
 - My Company
 - My Manager
 - Giving Something Back
 - Wellbeing



The factors are particularly significant as they are defined through the results from the survey process, and therefore by employees themselves, as critical factors in workplace engagement.

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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