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21st December 2005

*Alan Chesworth
Housing Initiatives*

Dear Alan

Re: Blackburne House students' visit to Housing Initiatives

You recently welcomed a third group of Blackburne House / Chartered Institute of Housing students to your Bootle project, and I wanted to write and express my thanks. The programme we run is the Level 2 Certificate in Housing – this is an introductory qualification, for people who are either new to housing, or new to study. As you know – having sponsored one of your own members of staff on the programme – the students come from a wide spread of organisations, and range in age from their early 20s to late 50s.

The visit to Housing Initiatives has come to be one of the highlights of the programme; the students invariably find it interesting, uplifting and frequently moving. They are struck, I think, by the evident satisfaction of the tenants, and your own commitment and motivation to the work you do. In most cases the visit, and particularly the opportunity to meet the tenants, gives the students a deeper insight into the lives of people with learning disabilities, and the possibilities for empowering and independence-creating models of housing provision. For many working in larger RSLs, the visit serves as an insight into the values and motives on which the voluntary housing movement was founded.

Some of the comments from the most recent group included:

"It is clear Alan and his staff are very passionate about the care offered to those in their care... it was a wonderful experience to see a socially excluded group given the opportunity to have a say in their lives and I see this company as a way forward in empowering individuals." (Probation Service worker)

"I personally found what Mr Chesworth has done extraordinary and it made me feel uplifted and emotional of how he gave them the right and the responsibility they deserve to become tenants... I really admired the whole idea and the effort behind it." (Bilingual Housing Officer, RSL)

"I was a little subdued as I was waling around the house but I too have someone within my family who maybe in years to come will want to live independently, however if I knew they would have the chance of living in a safe environment the likes of what we seen I would rest easily." (Sure Start worker)

"A key to their success seems to lie in the motivation of the managing director who is very personally involved in the day to day running of the scheme. He is in touch and friendly with all the residents and the house had a good sense of friendship,

understanding and cooperation. This surely lies in the fact that the MD has an empathetic understanding of the needs of the residents due to his own personal experience. The visit reminded me that there are some excellent success stories out there and reinforced my belief that the personal touch is essential to housing policy and practice.” (Housing Officer, RSL)

“The whole concept of ‘supporting people’ is to provide a home where the individual is a tenant with all the rights and security that go with a tenancy. Housing Initiatives UK do exactly that – Alan and his team have developed a truly inspirational project with the right amount of compassion and commitment.” (Sure Start drugs worker)

Once again, I am extremely grateful to you for your generosity with you time in introducing us to the project and it's tenants. I very much hope it is an experience we will be able to offer the next CIH Level 2 group (due to start January 2006), and I wish you all the best in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Jones
Lead Tutor, Housing