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NEWS RELEASE

GETTING IN GEAR IN THE NEW YEAR

Eleven youngsters aged between 17 and 25 from Fitzwilliam and Kingsley have been successful in securing places on a driving project being run by Chevin Housing.

Nine of the youngsters braved the wintry conditions last week to sign up for the project which offers 20 hours worth of lessons along with one shot at the practical and theory tests all free of charge.

Applicants for the project had to complete an application form and attend an interview to explain how learning to drive and gaining driving skills would help them get in to employment or further education/training.

The project is being administered by Chevin Housing working with volunteers from the local community. Funding has been received through Grassroots Grants which is a Community Foundation for the Wakefield District providing funding for community projects across the Borough.

Since the year 2000, over 120 youngsters from the Fitzwilliam and Kingsley area have gone through the project with an excellent pass rate and success in gaining employment or further education/training.

Glenn Burton, Community Development Officer at Chevin Housing said "The project is part of Chevin Housing Group's long-term investment in the two villages. In the current economic climate for some youngsters and their families it is not a priority for money to be spent on driving lessons so it was fantastic when we heard we had been successful in securing funding to run the project again in this area. Working with the community on projects like this makes a huge difference not only to the youngsters involved but to the community who kindly volunteer to help to run and make the projects a success".

Anthony Crapper aged 18 (stood back left of photo) said "I am so pleased I have got a place on the driving project. I am currently studying Business Studies at Hemsworth Arts and Communities College and want to carry on my studies at University. I hope to be successful in passing my test first time, meaning I can then get a car which will help me to get to University and other lecture venues so much easier. I am a keen football supporter and enjoy going to matches so I am sure when I get my car my friends will all be expecting to be chauffeur driven by me!!

Cont

Photographed braving the winter weather: The nine youngsters who signed up for the project along with Glenn Burton, Community Development Officer at Chevin Housing (**stood next to last right of photo**) and David Tonne, Driving Instructor at Drivewise Driving School (**stood last right of photo**).

Notes to Editors

Chevin Housing Group

The Chevin Housing Group was formed in 2001 following the merger of a number of associations who had been in operation from as far back as 1974. The current group consists of Chevin Housing Association Ltd, Harewood Housing Society Ltd and Synergy Housing Solutions Ltd.

The vision for the Chevin Group is, 'building a better future for people and communities'. In order to achieve this we are involved in a diverse range of activities. These include; managing and maintaining rented and leasehold homes, the development of new and refurbished homes (including rented, leasehold and sale options) and regeneration services, working in partnership with local people to enable them to play a part in the future of their neighbourhoods.

The Group operates across Yorkshire and the Humber and North Nottinghamshire, with around 7,000 rented homes in management. We also manage a further 1650 leasehold homes which include 750 private sector flats.

The Group's reinvestment programme is around £6m per annum and the Development Programme is producing around 250 new homes each year. In 2004 the Group formed the Synergy partnership which is a regional based development partnership of associations with Chevin Housing Group as the lead partner for delivery. Synergy Housing Solutions Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Chevin provides a development service to the Synergy partners.

An inspection carried out by the Audit Commission in 2006 determined that Chevin provides a good 2 star service with promising prospects for improvement. The report commented that, 'Chevin is a customer focussed organisation, which develops services based on customer feedback'.

The Group employs around 200 staff headed by the Group Chief Executive, Steve Close.