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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **First of its kind housing facility is officially opened**

A brand new Supported Housing Unit, which is set to revolutionise the existing support on offer to people who are homeless was officially opened on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 by Mayor Martin Winter.

The facility is part of the Government's 'Places of Change Programme' and has been built in partnership by Chevin Housing Association, Doncaster Council and M25 Housing Support Group, a Doncaster-based charity which supports people who are homeless or those who may be facing homelessness.

Situated on the borough's Waterfront location, Wharf House, is one of the first supported housing units of its kind to be opened in the country as it not only offers accommodation it provides training opportunities to help people get back into employment.

The exemplar facility for single people aged over 16 years old, represents a new way of helping vulnerable people facing homelessness and is just one of a number of preventative elements within Doncaster Council's plan to tackle the issue.

The new style 30-bed accommodation will offer residents well-being and medical support, as well as the integral training workshop. The training workshop focusing on car mechanic skills will be delivered in partnership with Doncaster College. Other training opportunities include developing social enterprises and it is hoped that the training opportunities will equip residents with the skills to assist them into education or employment.

The building provides a reception area, health suite with consulting and counselling rooms, 16 en-suite rooms with shared kitchens, 14 direct access rooms with meals provided, training room, gym, kitchen, courtyard and a training kitchen and mechanics workshop for residents to attend the training sessions.

The new facility will replace the existing supported housing unit on Union Street, which will now be closed.

**Speaking of the launch Mayor Martin Winter, said:** “I am thrilled to be able to officially open a fine example of innovation at its best. Here in Doncaster we are committed to helping people and through Wharf House, which forms a 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach to homelessness, we are able to give people living on the streets the basic life skills, training and healthcare as well as providing employment opportunities, which will help to get them back into the workplace. Now we can look forward to reducing the number of vulnerable homeless people facing a life on the streets.”

**Steve Close, Group Chief Executive of the Chevin Housing Group, said:** “Wharf House is an excellent example of what can be achieved through partnership working. This high quality facility will provide local young people facing homelessness with good quality accommodation and where necessary, the support they need to help them to further their education or develop their skills to find employment.”

**Richard Cunningham of the Homes and Community Agency** praised the scheme and the work that all the partners had put in to achieve such a superb facility. He looked forward to seeing the fruits of M25’s work in giving residents an opportunity to learn and develop new skills.

**Ashley Costello Chair of M25** said “Wharf House is about providing the best service possible and giving people the best chance to make the steps they need to make to successfully resettle and sustain themselves”.

**-Ends-**

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## **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 6,500 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.