



4th July 2005

Rural Affairs Minister visits Links!

New Rural Affairs Minister Jim Knight visited Links Foyer in Hexham this week to hear first hand about issues affecting young people, including the difficulties created by a lack of affordable housing.

Links was officially opened last November and provides much needed accommodation, advice and support services for young people in Tynedale. Mr Knight looked around one of the three three-bedroomed flats, at a workshop and into its training facilities.

Geri Rimmer, Project Coordinator at Links said: "The overall aim of Links is to help young people make the best of themselves and be able to move on to independent living." Mr Knight was extremely interested in the services and facilities that this project has been able to provide for young people in Tynedale. He met some of Links' residents and talked to them about their experiences and aspirations for the future. Mr. Knight showed particular interest in the training opportunities available at Links and was impressed by the way in which the young people viewed Links' support services in such a positive light.

Residents commented that it was a great feeling to know that "the Government were actually interested in their points of view." They also said that Jim Knight "was really nice and seemed genuinely impressed by the work that they were all doing at Links".

The Centre is a partnership project developed by Links, Nomad Housing Group and Tynedale Council and is the culmination of a huge amount of hard work by Links and its partners, over the last ten years and more, to bring all its services under one roof.

Cllr John Herron, leader of Tynedale Council said: "We are extremely pleased that the minister felt that he could learn from the examples of housing developments that we have here in Tynedale. Enabling more affordable homes to be developed in Tynedale is one of our key priorities and these are excellent examples of schemes that have met the specific needs of Tynedale residents. The minister showed a keen interest in the innovative work Tynedale is doing in this area and the visit allowed us to express our views on how Government could help us to achieve more."

Speaking about his visit Jim Knight said: "By highlighting innovative work being carried out here in the North East, and sharing examples of best practice, communities in other regions across the country may find some ideas to solve their own particular problems."