



MERTON PRIORY HOMES

Enhancing Life Chances

**Resident
Checked** ✓



2010 - 2011 In Review
Merton Priority Homes

**Merton Priory Homes, The Grange, 1 Central Road,
Morden, Surrey, SM4 5PQ
www.mertonprioryhomes.org
Tel: 0300 500 3000**

You can view our policies, publications and your tenant handbook on our website.

If you would like this document in large print, Braille, audio, an alternative format or in a different language contact us.

Part of The Circle Housing Group

We're one of 12 partners within Circle. Being part of a larger group means we have more financial security and more influence to achieve better deals with suppliers to deliver value for money for you.

We are first and foremost a Registered Provider and charity. We retain our individual and independent approach and run our services to meet your needs.



How has the last year gone

Merton Priory Homes' Managing Director **Pauline Ford** discusses the last 12 months with resident **Lesley Sorrell** and leaseholder **Nigel Skayman**

Pauline Ford



Interviewer: It's been a busy year at Merton Priory Homes (MPH) and a year since we made our Local Offer promises to you. Lesley and Nigel, you have been very active in our resident involvement activities in MPH's first year and we wanted to capture your thoughts on how it has been from a resident and leaseholder perspective.

So how has the last year gone?

Pauline: From my perspective pretty well. Lots of work has been started and by the end of April, 62 of the 91 promises had been delivered. We made a good start on bringing homes up to a good standard, with 500 homes improved so far.

We have also introduced a range of new services and ways of working which we hope will make life easier for our residents.

Lesley: I find that the staff team at MPH are far more responsive than was my experience with the council – there has been a positive change in attitude and a

willingness to respond and make things happen.

Nigel: I definitely agree with Lesley's comments. There seems to be much more money available now to get things done. The team has a much more proactive approach.

I also felt that there is a better conversation taking place with leaseholders and we are able to buy into improvements.

There are some great examples of staff working with the police and other partners to resolve a range of anti-social behaviour problems. They include anything from dangerous dogs to a recent injunction with a power of arrest for a very serious case.

Lesley: There are a lot more residents actively involved and committing time to helping MPH develop.

I think more work is needed to get a wider range of age groups and people

at Merton Priory Homes?

from different backgrounds involved.

Interviewer: MPH staff have been busy making improvements to many areas of the service, but we know there is still work to be done. What still needs to improve?

Lesley: Telephone calls need to be answered more quickly. This is a regular area of concern from residents.

Pauline: We are aware of the problems in this area. In our first year we set up our customer contact centre as the majority of residents contact us by telephone.

We are making further investments in both our equipment and staff to improve how quickly we answer calls, but we also want to answer more of your enquiries at that first point of contact so you don't get passed between different staff.

Nigel: MPH needs to publicise its work more and perhaps do more events like roadshows and estate based surgeries – it is important that the staff come out

and meet residents on the estates and see things first hand.

Interviewer: MPH has been making many changes for the better. What are your hopes for improvements in the year ahead?

Pauline: We would like more residents to be able to see the difference the change in landlord has made so will continue to deliver the home improvements programme.

We are keen to demonstrate that we are learning from our mistakes and taking account of residents' views on our services. We will strive to increase the number of repairs we complete on the first visit too.

Lesley: It is really important that you work even harder at getting the message across that MPH is different and will deliver its promises.

There is still a perception among residents that they won't bother get

in touch because things won't get done. MPH needs to ensure that residents realise this is not the case and positive changes are happening.

Pauline: That's a key message we want to really shout about next year. MPH is a new organisation and things have changed for residents. We are listening to resident concerns and rely on people to contact us about any issues, problems or ideas for improvement. We look forward to improving our contact with residents and gaining more valuable feedback in the year ahead.

Lesley and Nigel



Getting you involved

Performance 2010- 2011

Our performance has been compared with four other local housing providers so you can see how we are doing.

	MPH	Amicus Horizon	L&Q	Moat	Wandle
Satisfaction with views taken into account	80.0%	62.4%	58.4%	49.5%	56.0%
Satisfaction with landlord services	76.0%	67.7%	80.2%	74.0%	69.0%
Complaints resolved at first stage	95.5%	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable

My Say



Nigel Skayman chairs two Merton Priory Homes' groups: the Leaseholders Forum and the Community Safety Service Improvement Group. He explains why he got involved...

"I am seeking to get the best I can for where I live by getting involved with community organisations. I was involved in transitional groups before homes transferred from Merton Council but was unsuccessful in seeking a place on the Board. I looked into other areas I could get involved with, where my input could be of use, but most importantly would be listened to and not be bound by restraints as much as under council control.

"Resident involvement is important in delivering what is wanted - without resident input too many assumptions are made. Resident input is more closely listened to under housing associations so as a result people are more inclined to get involved as they feel their views and ideas are being taken on board and developed, and they see their ideas being listened to and acted upon."

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- held a conference to find out more about residents needs and wishes. The feedback from this event is helping us to ensure services better meet your needs
- organised Service Improvement Groups which help to look at the work taking place at MPH and shape future services
- held resident forums which allow us to share information and invite resident feedback through regular discussions
- recruited new board members, including a new resident board member
- put forward residents to be members of the Circle wide group RASP (Resident and Service Users Panel)
- formed Decent Homes consultation groups
- set up mystery shopping so residents can offer invaluable and ongoing feedback
- formed a focus group to deal with issues including empty homes and how we decide who gets homes

Make better use of complaints and compliments we receive to learn lessons and improve services

Increase the ways that people who use our services are directly involved in helping us improve the customer experience

Provide the call centre staff with more information and authority so that they can fully deal with more enquiries without needing to transfer the call

Develop our use of technology to increase the ways customers can contact us

Develop our website so that more information is online and that more services can be arranged through the internet

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- place more emphasis on residents being involved in forward planning and decision making
- set up a scrutiny panel
- restructure our Neighbourhood team to include more staff, more contact points for residents and more focus on resident involvement
- establish focus groups to support changes made to services
- increase the number of Service Improvement Groups

Giving you what you asked for...



Looking after your homes

Performance 2010- 2011

Our performance has been compared with four other local housing providers so you can see how we are doing.

	MPH	Amicus Horizon	L&Q	Moat	Wandle
Repairs completed on time	99.0%	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
Satisfaction with repairs	96.3%	54.7%	77.8%	66.0%	62.0%
Homes meeting Decent Homes standard	78.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Homes with valid gas safety certificate	99.9%	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable

My Say



“My kitchen is now more practical with good storage. I liked the wide selection of colour choices and the workmen were very polite and sociable. My grandson loved having real ‘Bob the Builder’ workmen in the house and tried to work alongside them with his toy JCB digger. We’ll miss them lots. I’m so happy with the end result. Thank you Merton Priory Homes”. *Mrs Everitt, Gale Close*

My Say



“The kitchen and the colour choices are fantastic. The workmen that installed them were friendly and sociable and a good laugh. Two in particular were smashing; they really made us feel at ease. Nothing was too much trouble for them. We’re also very pleased with the bathroom. The neighbours have been in to have a look and they’ve loved it. We are really happy with the service we have received from MPH.” *Christine and Derek Homes, Flaxley Road*

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o quickly appointed Osborne after repairs contractor Connaught collapsed
- o started a free disabled adaptations and redecoration work for older and vulnerable tenants started
- o carried out 24,000 repairs
- o launched our handy person and gardening services for older and vulnerable residents
- o introduced improvements to increase resident satisfaction with maintenance contracts for lifts, door entry, heating and water supply
- o started the major works programme in January 2011 and by the end of April, 610 homes had been improved and with high levels of resident satisfaction
- o provided new play equipment and fencing for the play area at Gilbert Close, High Path Estate

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o replace 1,250 kitchens, 1,150 bathrooms, 775 heating systems, 625 electrics and 700 doors
- o carry out external painting to all small blocks and street properties that need it, spending around £28million this year improving homes
- o continue to improve the environment and external appearance of all areas with our environmental improvement programme
- o complete improvement programmes on the estates including setting up community gardening schemes where residents have asked for them

Giving you what you asked for...

Improve the way we and our contractors arrange access to carry out repairs to your home

Increase the number of repairs we complete on the first visit

Increase the support we provide to older residents who find the disruption of major home improvement difficult to cope with

Run repairs and environment days on estates

Help residents improve the energy efficiency of their home through advice and practical help



Providing homes

Performance 2010- 2011

Our performance has been compared with four other local housing providers so you can see how we are doing.

	MPH	Amicus Horizon	L&Q	Moat	Wandle
Average re-let turnaround times (days)	36.9	Data unavailable	47.7	Data unavailable	42.5
Dwelling vacant	0.5%	0.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.5%

My Say



“My family was previously in a one bedroom flat in Oxted Close. My two sons shared the same bedroom as my partner and I. My eldest son was in full time school and my youngest was a newborn so when he woke in the night he would wake us all and my eldest was always tired. The process of finding an exchange partner was long and I began to wonder if I would ever be able to move to a bigger home.

“When I found the property at New Close I was keen to move in. Although the house was not decorated very well I saw the potential. Now the exchange has been completed we have a family home. Both boys have their own bedrooms and we have a garden for them to play in, they love it. It took some work to get it to how we wanted but in the end it was worth the wait!”

Jade Hogan, New Close

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o regularly communicated with residents to explain changes. This included holding surgeries before rents were increased and meeting with residents to discuss any planned changes to their benefits
- o offered all transferring residents the opportunity to sign retained rights tenancies within six months of transfer
- o held a focus group so residents could better understand the process of how homes are allocated to resident

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o update tenants on our review of empty homes, which looks at the lettable standard and nominations process. We will use feedback from our Service Improvement Group, made up of residents, to do this
- o discuss all relevant issues with tenants, including Housing Benefit reforms, affordable rents, fixed term tenancies and any rent increases
- o contact tenants who have not returned their tenancy agreements since their homes transferred to MPH. This will also help us to plan work around making sure that tenants are not subletting and the residents living in our properties are who they should be
- o ensure residents are kept informed of other partnership work, planned with Merton Council. This will include a project linked to the Mobility Scheme, where MPH residents will be offered incentives to move to smaller properties more suitable for their needs, particularly if they cannot afford or manage the one as big as their current home

Giving you what you asked for...

Further develop our approach to improving customers' opportunity to get specialist advice on debt and money issues

Provide support for vulnerable households to help them maintain their tenancies

Develop the options for residents wishing to move to a smaller home

Target housing fraud to ensure that our homes are being lived in by the legal tenant

Take a partnership approach to working with other agencies and those affected by Anti Social Behaviour

Increase the number of MPH residents who are members of the Credit Union



Building communities

“Merton Priory Homes has a duty to maintain and safeguard neighbourhoods and communities, working with partner organisations and agencies where necessary.”

My Say



MPH resident Neville Brown was referred to the Moving Forward Programme, just one of a number of schemes MPH is involved in to help residents gain access to training and employment.

Having worked in the construction industry for many years, in September 2010 Neville was made redundant and had struggled to find alternative employment.

Neville has now learned new skills in renovating and repairing furniture and found temporary employment working in construction.

“Being on the Moving Forward Programme helped to build my confidence and find new employment. It is a temporary position however I now have renewed zest and confidence which I hope will lead to a permanent position in construction again.”

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o worked in partnership with other local organisations, including Safer Merton.
- o launched five junior warden schemes involving 178 local children. The scheme received positive comments from school staff, the Mayor of Merton and local councillors
- o developed a Community Safety delivery and action plan with residents
- o introduced dog watch – which is a responsible dog ownership programme
- o worked with partners to deliver ‘MoneyTalk’ a money related advice event to over 700 residents
- o developed a partnership with Croydon and Sutton Council to provide a credit union for Merton residents
- o held an Employment and Training event with guest speaker Lee McQueen from BBC’s The Apprentice
- o launched a £1million community fund

Plans for 11/12

- o We will:
- o review Neighbourhood Warden service offer
- o review Neighbourhood Warden service agreements with other local housing providers
- o introduce a Community Safety accreditation scheme
- o introduce a new dedicated Community Safety team
- o launch another 3-4 junior warden schemes in Autumn 2011
- o new ASB management software
- o plan a community day in High Path
- o work closely with Merton Council, contractors and partners to provide employment and training opportunities for residents
- o deliver a social and business enterprise course for residents to develop five local businesses
- o building a construction and skills centre to deliver apprenticeship training for residents aged 16-65 years

Giving you what you asked for...

Develop how we use estate inspections and how residents are involved in monitoring service standards

Work with Merton Council and residents to deal with dog fouling by providing additional bins and increase the targeting of problem locations

Provide easier and more convenient ways for residents to dispose of bulk rubbish items such as settees and white goods

Develop our approach to cleaning communal areas and litter picking to improve resident satisfaction

Improve on our current performance of removing fly tipping within five working days

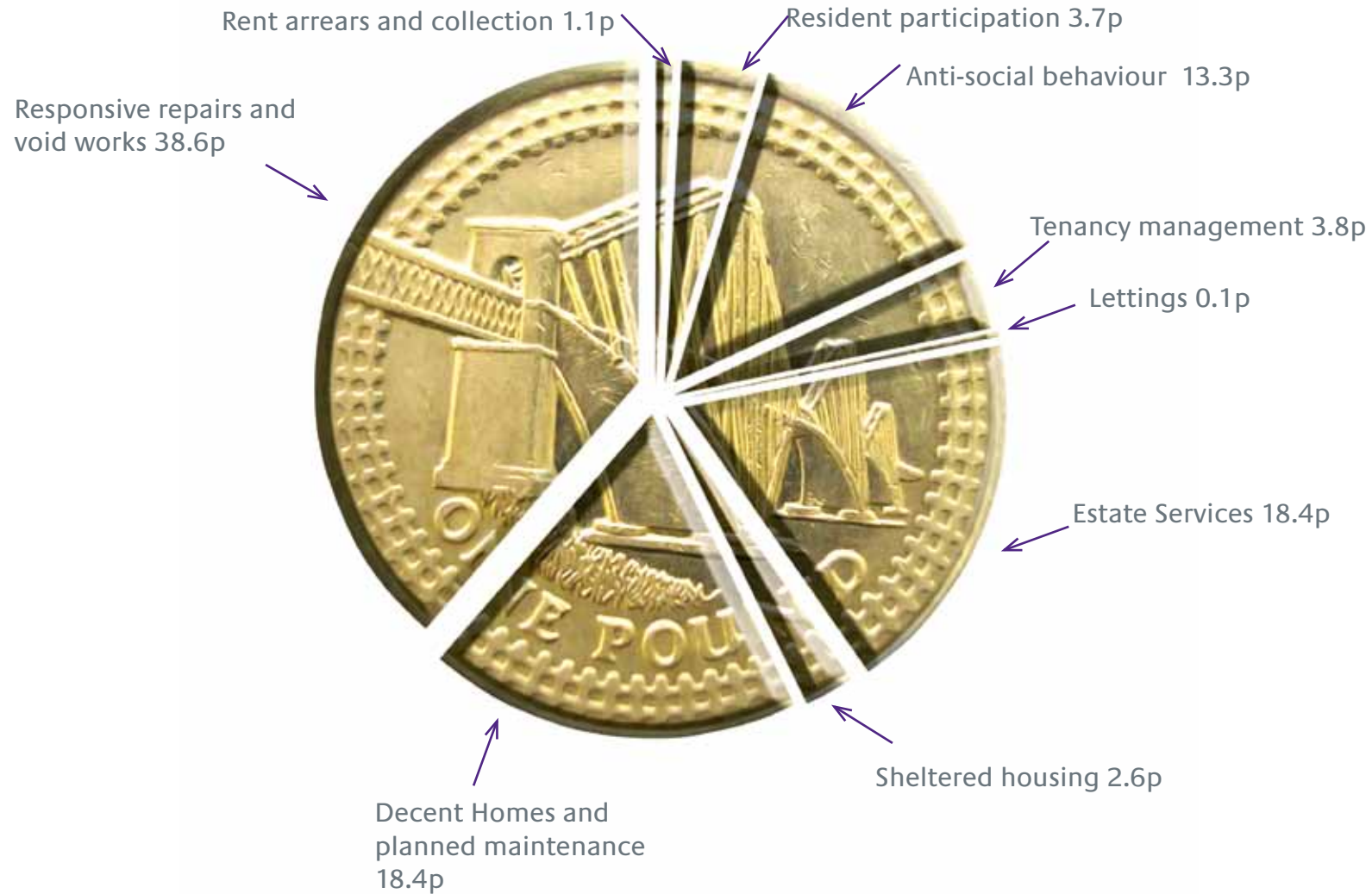
Introduce community garden schemes

Invest £1m in community schemes by 2015



Offering value for money

Every pound of your rent money goes into the services we provide. Here is how we spend it. 2010/2011 was Merton Priory Homes' first year so we are not able to compare the figures below to previous years.



Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o successfully renegotiated our gas servicing contract from £152 per home to £130.
- o reduced our gas boiler installation costs from an average of £2,468 to £1,993 - a 19% reduction. This means we have further money to invest in more improvements.
- o started a programme of ensuring that everything we do offers Value for Money (VfM). We have made steady progress on the programme, which includes:-
 - providing training sessions for staff and residents to increase their understanding about VfM
 - developing a VfM delivery plan with residents and staff
 - creating a VfM register which will be used to record all savings, efficiencies and improvements
 - using the advantage of being part of the Circle group and the scale of our 10 year investment programme to ensure cost savings through economies of scale

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o continue with the VfM programme
- o create, through Service Improvement Groups, a programme of reviews which will include ensuring all services provide improved value for money
- o improve our reporting of financial performance to enable managers and staff to understand their costs better and the key influences on those costs
- o create a Scrutiny Panel of residents to look at the value for money we deliver
- o consult residents on how we allocate and prioritise spending
- o involve residents wherever practical in discussions on setting budgets
- o monitor our financial performance against our own past performance, other housing providers both inside the Circle group and outside
- o develop the concept of the 'rent pound' to identify for residents how each pound of their rent is spent

Performance 2010- 2011

Our performance has been compared with four other local housing providers so you can see how we are doing.

	MPH	Amicus Horizon	L&Q	Moat	Wandle
Rent collected as % of rent due	98.6%	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
Current resident arrears as % of rent due	5.5%	Data unavailable	5.6%	5.4%	5.3%



Making decisions

Merton Priory Homes' Board is made up of 15 members – five independents, four council members of Merton Council, and six residents. It's their job to ensure Merton Priory Homes is well managed, financially viable and performs to a high standard.

About you

Age:
More than 42% of Merton Priory Homes residents are aged between 35-54

Gender:
63% of Merton Priory Homes residents are women

Ethnicity:
63% of Merton Priory Homes residents are white, 2% are of mixed ethnicity, 10% are Asian (including Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi), 14% are Black (including Caribbean and African). Data is not available for 11% of residents

Disability:
18% of Merton Priory Homes residents said they have a disability, 39% said they do not have a disability and the other 43% did not reveal that information

How have residents have been involved in this document?

A copy of last year's residents' review was sent to every resident. Within it we included a survey asking for feedback and offering the chance to join our Circle Group wide residents group - Communications Connectors.

Based on what you told us we have made several changes this year. This includes simplifying the text to be more reader friendly, not using technical jargon and reducing the corporate feel of the document.

Feedback from this group means that this year we will not send this document to every resident. A summary version will be included within the Autumn 2011 edition of our resident newspaper Home Matters. Copies of the full document will be sent to any resident that requests one and a PDF version of the document will also be available on the Merton Priory Homes website.

Our Communications Connectors group now has nearly 300 residents signed up and we asked them what format they would like this document to take this year and what information.

By not sending copies to every resident we will save paper wastage and money that can be spent on the services you want to see improved.

Two residents took part in an interview for the introduction to this document. This was to give an honest and transparent view on how the last year has gone.

We took the draft version of this document to the Merton Priory Homes' Residents Forum and following their comments made some slight changes to the text wording.

