

Manningham Housing Association

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

Introduction

Manningham Housing Association (MHA) has a proud history of providing homes and services to communities in Bradford and Keighley. Established in 1986, MHA arose from research conducted by the Bangladeshi Youth Organisation, which examined the housing needs of Black and Asian communities in Bradford and identified a need for larger family homes. Since then, MHA has expanded from just two properties to over 1,400 homes, accommodating more than 6,000 residents, with over two-thirds of our homes having three bedrooms or more.

Approximately 80% of our residents come from BME backgrounds, but we are committed to serving individuals from all backgrounds.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are central to our vision of “Investing and Developing in Diverse Neighbourhoods Where People Want to Live and Thrive.” Our mission is to provide high-quality homes and services that meet the needs of our diverse communities. Whilst our work has particularly focused on providing larger homes and services to South Asian families, we recognise that our communities are diverse. We support people from all heritages (s) and backgrounds. Our work on equality, diversity and inclusion expands by advancing support for others, including LGBTQ+ communities, people with disability and the impact of a poorer socioeconomic status. Our core values are Customer First, Passionate about our work, Accountability and Embrace Diversity.

One of the four key strands of our current Corporate Strategy focuses on ‘Tackling Inequalities in the BME Community,’ which includes

- Being a leading voice for the BME community.
- Raising awareness of BME issues at both local and national levels.
- Understanding customer insights and delivering an effective resident engagement model.
- Empowering staff and residents to create meaningful change.

Current Context

Our core mission is to provide high-quality, affordable homes and services for those in greatest need in the Bradford district. This mission remains as relevant today as it was in 1986.

Recent high-profile issues such as damp and mould, and fire safety concerns in the social housing sector, have raised questions about organisations’ cultures and how well they focus on customers. This has led to increased regulatory scrutiny, with The Better Social Housing Review identifying ethnicity as a key factor influencing the quality of housing and services.

The increasing cost of living disproportionately affects people on lower incomes, and people from minoritised groups such as BME communities and disabled people are more likely to be on lower incomes, leading to greater inequality.

Our society has experienced growing social divisions, marked by increasingly polarised political and social views, along with a troubling rise in far-right extremism, racism and islamophobia. The recent riots, sparked by rumours and misinformation, underscore the significant threat these trends pose to the cohesion and stability of our communities.

The new Labour Government has set out several priorities concerning equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), with a particular focus on socioeconomic status, racial equality, gender equality, disability rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. The Autumn Statement also showed a stronger emphasis on funding for employability initiatives and tackling violence against women and girls.

MHA is committed to being a progressive and forward-thinking housing provider and employer by developing a comprehensive EDI strategy for the next three years. This strategy builds on MHA's strong commitment to meeting the needs of the South Asian community in Bradford and aims to lead the region and sector on EDI matters.

The strategy was created with external support from HDN, which included both internal and external consultations, as well as board engagement, and uses data from the NHF Data Tool along with detailed demographic information. Additionally, it considers new regulations and reports from the Housing Ombudsman.

Our Communities

Our first homes were in Manningham Ward in Bradford, our homes are now also located in Bowling and Barkerend, City Ward, Little Horton, Toller and Keighly Central.

Manningham Housing Association (MHA) proudly serves vibrant, diverse communities in Bradford and Keighley. These neighbourhoods are rich in cultural heritage, reflecting the unique contributions of individuals from South Asian and other BME backgrounds who make up over 80% of our residents. These communities have fostered deep social connections and a commitment to mutual support. While challenges such as housing inequality and socio-economic disparities persist, the strength and resourcefulness of our residents drive meaningful purpose and inspire initiatives that celebrate inclusivity, enhance well-being, and create opportunities for future generations.



Figure 1 Weekly residents' meeting at Anchor Court, fostering open dialogue and community engagement

All these areas vary but have in common higher levels of deprivation. This results in lower life expectancy (Females born in the most deprived areas can expect to live an average of 9 years less than the average, and for males, it is 11 years less) and lower levels of qualification.

Bradford has the third highest level of residential segregation in England, with nearly a third of Council wards having a BME population of over 50%. (Source: A Stronger Communities Strategy for Bradford District 2018-23). Housing outcomes differ greatly among groups, with ethnic minority communities—especially Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani households—having much lower homeownership rates than White British households. This inequality leads to housing instability, with ethnic minorities being more likely to live in deprived areas. Overcrowding is also a major issue; for example, Manningham Ward has the highest percentage (6.7%) of households with eight or more people.

Where we are now

The **Leadership** of the organisation is committed to EDI. It serves as a role model for BME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) specialist housing provision, with the CEO acting as the EDI Lead for the National Housing Federation (NHF) CEO's Leadership Group and co-chairing the Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Group. Earlier this year, MHA became the first housing association globally to achieve ISO 30415, an international standard for Diversity and Inclusion in HR Management, highlighting its commitment to excellent practices in this area.

Board members and executives emphasise the importance of embedding EDI in all aspects of the organisation's work and recognise the benefits this brings to the organisation, its customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders. While the Board and executive leadership are diverse, there are areas where diversity can be improved.

The strategy aims to address all aspects of diversity, improve collaboration to meet housing needs support community cohesion, and strengthen links between the Corporate Plan and its implementation. It also has a focus on better governance and Equality Impact Assessments.

Colleagues describe a positive, welcoming, and inclusive workplace that is multicultural, multilingual, and reflective of the communities it serves. They feel comfortable expressing their views openly and experience a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, employees appreciate the good benefits offered.

The workforce is diverse, although there is less representation in senior roles, and as a small organisation, there are limited opportunities for advancement. We are committed to providing opportunities for customers and local community members to gain employment with us.

ISO 30415 was awarded in November 2023, describing MHA as an exceptional organisation. This is an internationally recognised Standard, focusing on the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and the award provides strong assurance that we have strong ED&I systems and processes in place.



Figure 2 MHA staff actively organising and volunteering at the MELA event, ensuring a memorable experience for all attendees

Feedback from colleagues highlights several key areas for improvement, including better communication and teamwork, fairer remote working options, addressing recruitment and retention challenges, creating more opportunities for career growth, and investing more in staff development. Colleague feedback has suggested the need to better understand various disabilities and the support required to meet the diverse needs of disabled customers and employees, and that we should actively seek development opportunities both within and outside our organisation. We also recognise that some of our HR policies and processes could be strengthened.

Customers trust our organisation, with an impressive 93% of our tenants feeling that they are treated fairly and with respect, far surpassing the Housemark median of 78.2%. This reflects

our commitment to building trust and maintaining respectful relationships with our tenants. We also maintain a 4.7-star rating on Google.

While the Housemark median for satisfaction with complaint handling is 34%, MHA achieved 41.3%. While this is similar to other housing associations, we are dedicated to improving our complaint resolution processes.

Active customer engagement is facilitated through our Customer Experience Committee, which is part of the formal governance structure of MHA, along with our Customer Panel, which supports community engagement initiatives. This panel provides tenants the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, influencing service delivery and helping to review tenant policies.

We are currently running a project focused on understanding customer vulnerabilities to better meet their needs. These efforts aim to ensure MHA's services effectively support our tenants. Also, our under-occupancy project provides ongoing support by monitoring diverse customer needs, and we use customer profiling forms to gather EDI information. This data helps us evaluate how well our services match customer expectations.

One of our biggest challenges is the size of our waiting list which has over 8,000 households seeking homes, with only approximately 40 * lets available each year. This demonstrates the high levels of unmet needs within our communities. *34 during 2023-2024 and so far, 44 for the 2024-25 period, is expected to reach up to 55 this financial year due to new building.

We also recognise that many of our customers reside in some of the most deprived and segregated wards in the country. This reality drives our strategy, which places a strong emphasis on supporting life chances by working together to create opportunities and fostering community cohesion.

While our organisation focuses on meeting the needs of the South Asian community, it is vital not to overlook the changing demographics in the areas we serve. We must stay responsive to changing needs and aspects of diversity, including intersectional issues, over time. Our new strategy aims to better understand and meet the current and future needs of all our customers.



Figure 3 Connecting with the community: Staff engage with customers during the Scheme Focus event, sharing updates and fostering meaningful conversations throughout the day.

Community – MHA is a specialist BME Housing Association, committed to working in some of the most deprived communities in Bradford.

Feedback from our partners highlights MHA's strong leadership and partnership role in EDI issues. They recognise our contributions to delivering new homes, achieving high Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), and our commitment to community events and engagement. Our partners appreciate how we amplify the voice of the BME community. They believe our priorities are aligned with addressing housing needs and tackling deprivation and exclusion. Many would like to see more opportunities for collaboration and co-production, a greater focus on youth-led initiatives, and a stronger role in promoting community cohesion.

We have recently developed a Community Investment Strategy aimed at improving community well-being and sustainability. The 2019-2022 strategy positively impacted over 4,800 individuals and secured more than £391,000 in external funding. The new strategy focuses on reducing health inequalities, combating social deprivation, improving training and employment opportunities, and addressing fuel poverty and welfare reforms. We will measure the impact of our activities using the HACT Social Value Tool.

We know that our ambitions, along with the needs and opportunities of the communities we serve, will always be more than what we can do alone. By working in partnership and focusing our efforts, we can have the greatest impact.



Figure 4 Health check-in action: staff gets a free health check-up during our vibrant MELA event, where staff and customers enjoy a variety of activities, including this important wellness opportunity.

Where we want to be – our Strategic Objectives and Tactical Steps

Based on our analysis of where we currently stand with leadership, customers, workforce, and community, we have set five key priorities. These priorities will steer and focus our EDI activities, as outlined in our EDI Action Plan, as well as in other strategies like our Growth Strategy, Engagement Strategy, People Strategy, and Communities Strategy.

The 5 Priorities are:

1. Understand and meet the needs of our diverse people and places
2. Supporting life chances and working together to create opportunities
3. Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce and leadership
4. Supporting Cohesive and Connected Communities
5. Amplify community voices to model EDI best practices in housing

Understand and meet the needs of our diverse people and places

We will have a deep and thorough understanding of our current and future customers, enabling us to develop and deliver homes and services that meet their diverse needs and aspirations.

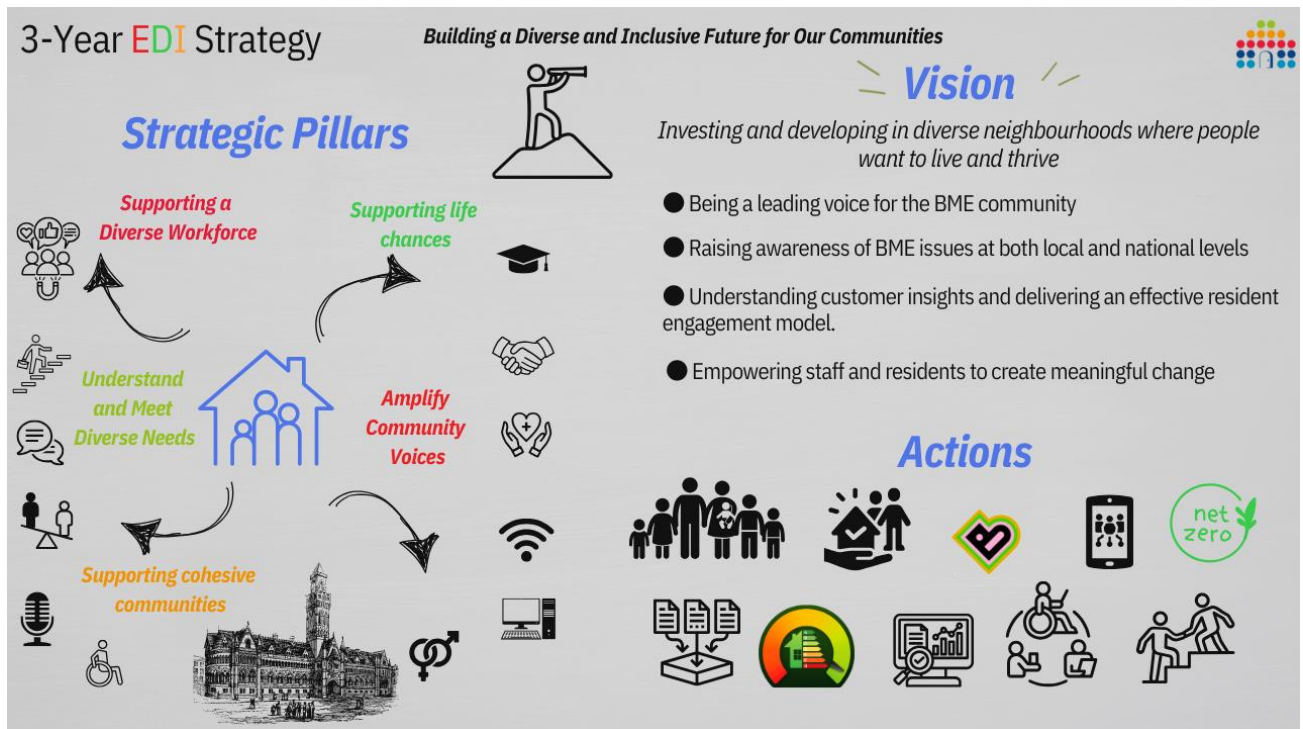


Figure 5 The icons represent key themes such as opportunity, dialogue, inclusivity, collaboration, sustainability, and the importance of addressing challenges that arise when departing from having a decent home, reinforcing our commitment to building diverse and thriving communities

EDI tactical steps:

- Understand the current and future housing needs of our communities.
- Using data (stock and customer) intelligently to improve service design and respond to individual customers' needs.
- Increase the supply of homes through our development and in partnership.
- Ensure our homes meet the needs of our communities (including larger multi-generational families) and quality and future-fit housing standards.
- Utilise our current housing stock efficiently.

Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce and leadership

Our workforce and leadership team will reflect, understand and respond to the needs of the diverse communities we serve, We will create development opportunities, and promote an inclusive workplace where all voices are valued.

EDI tactical steps:

- Develop a diverse Board and Leadership team
- Ensure our workforce and leadership are representative of all the communities they serve

- Work with partners to provide development and leadership pathways within and across the sector
- Ensure our workforce understands and responds to meet the needs of our diverse communities
- Further develop better organisational communication and teamwork to enhance inclusion and maximise impact.

Supporting life chances and working together to create opportunities.

We will improve quality of life and opportunities through initiatives focused on employment, health, well-being, and educational attainment. We will tackle exclusion and seek to understand intersectionality within our communities, ensuring that no one is left behind in accessing better opportunities.

EDI tactical steps:

- Tackle Exclusion by Promoting Financial and Digital Inclusion, While Breaking Down Language Barriers
- Collaborate to improve Employability Skills, Work Placements and Apprenticeships
- Collaboration to Improve Well-being and tackle Health Inequalities
- Supporting Educational Attainment and building opportunities for young people
- Recognise the multi-dimensional nature of inequality, and support our customers who face discrimination, including our LGBTQ+ community.

Supporting Cohesive and Connected Communities

We will collaborate with our partners and communities to create new opportunities for people of all ages, while actively challenging discrimination and misinformation. We will foster harmonious, connected communities where understanding and unity flourish among diverse groups.

EDI tactical steps:

- Organise events fostering understanding among diverse groups
- Collaborate to improve diversity and cohesion across Bradford neighbourhoods
- Challenge discrimination
- Challenge misinformation through communication channels
- Act as a place shaper in partnership to address deprivation in BME neighbourhoods

Amplify community voices to model EDI best practices in housing

We will build on our proud history, and the strengths of our communities and partnerships to create and share best practices as a specialist BME Housing Association. We will capitalise

on the opportunities of Bradford City of Culture 2025 to amplify the talent, creativity and strength of our communities and build cohesive communities.

EDI tactical steps:

- Share EDI best practices within the sector in collaboration with partners to embrace diversity.
- Model diverse housing designs and provisions.
- Be a model of an anti-racist organisation.
- Promoting BME art, culture, and heritage through the opportunities of Bradford City of Culture 2025.

How we will track progress

This three-year strategy outlines our long-term vision for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives. To ensure we achieve these objectives, we have developed an Annual Action Plan that aligns with our strategic priorities and tactical steps. The Action Plan sets out clear, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives and high-level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress.

To maintain relevance and focus, the Action Plan will undergo an annual review and update process, engaging key stakeholders, including customers, colleagues, and external partners. We will utilise our Customer Panel and Community Connectors to ensure we engage with all members of our community.

Governance and Oversight

The Strategy and Action Plan will be governed by a Steering Group, which will include senior representatives from key business areas, the CEO, and a Board Member. The Steering Group will hold regular reviews to assess progress, address challenges, and adjust courses where needed.



Figure 6 Historic moment: MHA staff celebrate the opening of a new housing scheme, marking a significant milestone in our commitment to the community

Progress Tracking and Accountability

Progress will be tracked using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring that we measure both outcomes and the impact of our initiatives. Reports will be provided every quarter for the HR and Governance Committee and the Customer Experience Committee, outlining progress against KPIs, any risks or issues, and actions taken to mitigate them.

Annual Report to the Board

An Annual Report will be presented to the Board, providing a comprehensive update on progress towards the Strategy and Action Plan, alongside an analysis of successes, challenges, and lessons learned. This report will also include recommendations for refining the Strategy and adjusting priorities for the upcoming year.

By embedding a robust system of regular tracking, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, we will ensure that our EDI initiatives remain impactful, responsive, and aligned with our long-term goals.