



manningham

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Community Investment Strategy

2023-2026

Improving quality of life and making a difference

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Community Investment Drivers
3. The Aims
4. Community Investment Principles
5. Our Community Investment Approach
6. Our Key Strategic Objectives
7. Community Development
8. Corporate Social Responsibility
9. Social Investment in Return
10. Action Plan

1. Introduction

When we talk about community investment in a housing association context, we mean the work that social housing organisations do alongside people and communities to help them thrive.

Manningham Housing Association's (MHA) 'Community Investment Strategy' 2019-2022 was our first commitment to how we will support, engage, and invest in community sustainability. The strategy provided a framework for supporting community investment activities that contributed to social and economic changes and created opportunities that helped empower and improve the quality of life of local people. It helped build more resilient communities in neighbourhoods where we work. The success of our current strategy has led to MHA now being seen as a key partner in Bradford delivering community development initiatives.

The first community consultation leading to the development of the current strategy was commissioned to Unify Communities Ltd. A range of priorities and themes emerged from these consultations:

- Community integration and address residential segregation
- Health; both physical and mental health wellbeing
- Employment; skills and training, mentoring, and volunteering opportunities
- Address a range of women issues i.e., empowerment, employment & training, low income, healthy living, tackle loneliness and domestic violence

Several key projects were developed and delivered in partnership with a range of statutory and VCFS organisations in Bradford and Keighley. The projects created positive opportunities to foster multi-agency partnership working across the district for greater impact and collaboration and attracted inward investment to deliver the much-needed programmes.

Some of the key project delivered were:

- Bradford Building Bridges Project
- Let's get on Project
- BAME Ladies Smashing Boundaries
- Young in Covid

Over 4800 people from different and diverse backgrounds benefited from the services of these projects. It attracted over £391,000 external capital and revenue funding and created a greater relationship with local, regional, and national partners. Bradford Building Bridges also received a national recognition for its community cohesion work.

These projects also had their own challenges and difficulties. For example, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we had to re-design provisions considering the national lockdown. Remote working brought opportunities and challenges, lack of digital skills and access to hardware for online provision was a major barrier for our beneficiaries.

Whilst the Building Bridges Bradford was an award-winning project, the short-term nature of the project meant it was difficult to sustain the project longer term. Recruiting and retaining staff on six-month contracts was very challenging.

We continue to aim to work in partnership with all our stakeholders to deliver our revised and tenant-led community investment priorities.

When revising and reviewing our existing strategy, we ask ourselves ‘What is Community Partnership? What is Community Investment? What issues do we aim to address? Why should we invest in our communities? What are the benefits of community investment to our communities? How does community investment benefit us as social landlords? And how does it benefit the wider society?’

This new strategy has been developed based on community feedback consultation at MHA Mela held on 1st September at Bradford Football Stadium and subsequent focus group discussions at various tenants’ meetings, consulting staff of MHA and key partner agencies working in different neighbourhoods in Bradford and Keighley. The key priorities for our new Community Investment Strategy have been identified from this consultation.

This strategy has been developed and designed to both elevate the use of our internal resources, as well as attract external funding that can help maximise benefits and improve the quality of life for our residents and communities. We recognise that a focused community-led approach is more beneficial for us and our communities. A strategic approach to community investment will enhance our reputation, and business and improve local engagement. The focus will be on on reducing health inequality, tackling social deprivation, combating poverty, improving training and employability, fuel poverty and energy efficiency, sustaining tenancies and lessen the impact of welfare reforms and the continuing increase on cost of living and soaring energy prices.

The creation of Community Partnership and Investment Team using our own resources has:

- Provided a platform for promoting the importance of community investment both inside and outside of the social housing provisions by MHA
- Provided a mechanism for community investment professionals within the housing and VCFS organisations, to share and develop their practice and collaborate with each other
- Ensured that community partnership and investment support social housing organisations operating in Bradford district and its partners, as we all evolve our services and relationships with their customers and communities.

2. Community Investment Drivers

Bradford District is ranked 5th most income deprived and 6th most employment deprived local authority in England identified through the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. 15% of the district’s households are in fuel poverty, 22% of children are living below the poverty line and 13% of working age people have no qualifications. This measures the actual number of

people experiencing income deprivation and is the same position as in 2010. The city is also one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the country with a 36% BAME population. The new migrant communities from eastern European countries, the refugee and asylum communities from African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries also made Bradford as their home in large numbers. Bradford has the third highest level of residential segregation in England with nearly a third of Council wards having a BAME population of over 50%. (Source: A Stronger Communities Strategy for Bradford District 2018-23). Our specialist BAME housing organisation role, deep-rooted in the community provides us the influence and leverage in addressing some of the pressing social disadvantages and allowing us to champion BAME issues both locally and regionally.

Bradford was successful as one of the national pilots for the governments Community Integration agenda. We will work with Bradford Council in supporting this work. The Government's Race Disparity Audit published in 2017 highlights some significant challenges for the country in key areas of community, education, labour market participation and income, housing, crime and policing, criminal justice system and health and public sector workforce. The extended austerity, welfare reforms and current cost of living crisis have impacted the more socially disadvantaged groups within our communities.

3. The Aims

The aim of the strategy is to provide a strategic approach, clarity of purpose, future direction, and community investment priorities for the benefit of our communities. Much has changed since our last Community Investment Strategy. In the development of this strategy, we have considered these changes and how they may impact on our residents, the communities they live in and us as an organisation. We have taken into consideration several factors. These include setting our strategic objectives and for the strategy to be sustainable. We will:

- Connect our strategy to our overall corporate plan
- Focus on tenants, residents, and local communities
- Continue to engage our residents and specialist strategic partner organisations from statutory and Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations (VCFS)
- Use both internal and external resources to support our initiatives
- Combine community development and tenant engagement efforts
- Identify and expand on our community initiatives and its priorities
- Measure our social return in investment
- Set a three-year strategy with a practical action plan Monitor how we performed in delivering the Community Investment Strategy
- Value what residents have told us, including which issues are important to them
- Evaluate our own information, including housing data and resident satisfaction surveys
- Engage where we feel we can make a difference, based on our skills and experience and those of other partner organisations

4. Community Investment Principles

The community investment strategy is aligned to our corporate strategy's aim of 'Doing More Than Just Housing' by developing and implementing our community investment offer. Community investment entails a broad range of activities that are undertaken by housing associations to achieve community sustainability. We believe a well-defined community investment strategy is one with guiding principles and is internally aligned with our business goals. Our strategy will selectively focus on community priorities that have been identified in recent consultations. These will allow us to leverage our unique role as a local BAME service provider and help to address the multiple needs of our residents and communities. Whilst the consultation for the purpose of this strategy has been around the needs of our tenants and the BAME communities, we also understand that within our local communities, and within the BAME communities, we have people from other protected characteristics who are impacted by these same issues for whom we will need to have targeted interventions.

We believe the selected priorities will produce a positive impact and help us address local needs. We will ensure each project has a defined business case that will be assessed for both risks, opportunities, and measured outcomes.

Our new strategy takes a more strategic approach in the delivery of several actions identified in our corporate plan, such as assisting the local authority to address issues around tackling BME homelessness and our priorities and action plan will be revised as we explore new opportunities to address these issues.

5. Our Community Investment Approach.

Key aspects of developing our community investment strategy involved:

- Board and staff consultation to internally align our strategy with the core business
- Consultation with key partners in Bradford, including statutory and the VCF sector.
- Initial engagement with our Customer Panel
- Tenants' and residents' consultation at MHA Mela and at several tenants' focus group meetings

In developing our strategy, we have engaged with local organisations. This has helped us to better understand the local context activities and priorities in Bradford and align these to our strategy. We have developed a three-year strategy 2023-2025, with a supporting action plan and progress will be reviewed annually. We aim to best use internal resources and attract external funding to maximise benefits for our residents and local communities. A key feature of measuring the success of our approach will be our social and added value purpose. The strategy will continuously evolve with our business priorities and new funding opportunities, and such the selected priority themes are not exclusive. We want to ensure our community investment activities and project selection are sustainable both in the short and long term. Therefore, we will need to continue to engage local partners, as well as invest in capacity

building of our staff and residents. We also recognise the need to actively pursue partnership working arrangements to help us deliver our community priorities, and finally we will need to ensure we measure the return on our investments and effectively communicate this to all our stakeholders.

6. Our Key Strategic Objectives

Our community investment strategy sets out some core strategic objectives that will steer our work. The strategic objectives will be delivered with set aims and achievements for each of priority areas. The objectives below are listed in priority order based on the consultations we carried out.

Objective 1- The Need and Aspirations of MHA Tenants

The goal is to help MHA identify, understand, and prioritise the needs of our customers and improve performance in service delivery:

- Carry out community research to identify needs, demands and aspirations of our tenants
- Carry out issue-based community consultation and focus group discussions to plan and meet specific needs

Objective 2- Financial inclusion and better Advice, Information and Guidance

MHA aims to provide accurate and impartial information, advice, and guidance on a full range of services including financial inclusion and cost of living support to our tenants:

- Develop projects that will increase the capacity of community investment teams and partner organisations to provide better community-led action projects
- Develop community and voluntary sector partnership projects to provide better information advice and guidance to residents within and around our targeted priority neighbourhoods
- Facilitate access to ICT training to those who are digitally excluded and build their capacity on using ICT to manage benefit accounts and tax accounts with HMRC
- Provide energy efficiency advice including supplier switching to help people save money and reduce fuel bills
- Promote the use of Bradford Credit Union, low-cost loans, and affordable banking to reduce the use of doorstep lenders/loan sharks

Objective 3: Improving Health and Well-being including mental health

MHA will endeavour to create a Health and Housing partnership with NHS to level up access to health and open the door for career pathways. We will also look at other good practice examples of health and housing working together including a national model on social prescribing. MHA will support and complement the NHS 'Integrated Care Partnership' and work towards addressing issues amongst the silent minorities those who do not report any health and housing issues:

- Develop partnership working and support initiatives to help people with physical and mental health well-being
- Support partner organisation Active Bradford in delivering the current JUMP Programmes till the end of March 2024
- Initiate health improvement projects to address health inequalities and chronic health matters amongst the BAME communities
- Work with Development Team to incorporate health when it comes to designing new-build homes

Objective 4: Employability Skills and Work Placement Programmes include Volunteering

We want our communities to be strong and resilient. We will support people with essential employability skills, personal qualities and values that enable people into rewarding and sustainable employment. MHA will invest in people especially the unemployed, new migrant communities and young people to equip them with new skills to help them into the employment ladder. We will:

- Identify needs and demand for employability training amongst unemployed tenants and residents and those who are on Universal Credit and other long-term unemployment benefits
- Identify and support members of non-dependant households seeking training and employment, diversifying skills and especially those who are unemployed graduates
- Develop a robust volunteering and work placement programme for our tenants and members of our communities including university placements in all functions of our business
- Maximise employment and training opportunities through our procurement and supply arrangements
- Develop and invest in accredited training using local partners such as Bradford and Leeds College
- Develop a handyperson Building Trade Agency type project to train young unemployed people within our tenancy to carry out minor, small and non-emergency jobs
- Develop an inclusive employability project 'Opening Doors' to housing and related jobs for the Refugee and new migrant communities of Bradford

Objective 5: Work in Partnership with Statutory and VCFS Organisations

MHA will continue to provide support and build new partnerships in neighbourhoods where we have housing stock. We will provide support when it is needed to our strategic community partners so that they can continue to work with our tenants and members of our communities to deliver a wide range of services:

- Support charities and social enterprises, and SMEs within our communities
- Support the development of economic activities within the areas where we work
- Support new and existing 'not for profit' groups within our communities building their capacity to deliver partnership projects
- Develop more joint working around employment and skills, healthy living, youth development, and educational attainments for underachievers at schools
- Develop partnership projects in art, culture, and heritage of communities that we work with

Objective 6: Climate Change, the Environment and Net Zero Carbon Footprint

Through investing in people, property, and the environment, we aim to make a positive difference. MHA will make a commitment to Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability through the development of environmentally sustainable projects and initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, increase biodiversity and improve MHA's environmental footprint.

- Support tenants and residents with renewable energy and harnessing rainwater, use of LED bulbs, draft proofing doors and windows to minimise fuel and water costs
- Identify and develop an appropriate site for 'Recycling and Composting' and encourage active participation of tenants and residents in recycling green and food waste
- Explore the use of affordable alternative technologies in newbuild programmes addressing net zero and carbon footprint
- We will work with community partners to tackle hunger, support food bank, invest and develop sustainable community food growing projects
- Development of Community Allotment projects within MHA housing schemes to support families to be self-sufficient in healthy food growing activities
- Initiate and support 'A Community Garden Pledge' where people will participate to grow their own vegetables, learn new skills, and develop friendship
- Explore and support the formation of Community Food Co-operative using gardens and back yards pledge to help families on the journey out of food poverty
- Community Food co-operative to provide healthy cooking classes and provide healthy lunch to Luncheon Club members using garden produce to older residents addressing social isolation and undernourishment amongst older residents

Objective 7: Older People (social isolation and loneliness)

The absence of social interactions, contacts and relationships with family and friends and with neighbours can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated:

- Identify older tenants and residents aged 60 plus with disabilities, mental health and those who may be socially lonely and isolated
- Forming new partnerships with other statutory and voluntary organisations to develop age-friendly support services for older people and people with disabilities
- Develop unique and innovative projects that address social isolation and loneliness
- Promote existing Coffee Mornings to elderly residents and engage them in other planned health improvement, educational and recreational programmes
- Provide modern learning programmes to communicate with loved ones such as live video calls using, WhatsApp, Zoom and Teams for example
- Identify older people with transferable skills and create inter-generational projects to support the younger generation
- Identify new housing needs for older people and develop plans as part of MHA growth strategy

Objective 8: Promote the Art, Culture and Heritage of BAME communities

Art, culture, heritage, and tradition signify a collection of common beliefs, values, objectives, and activities. The diverse communities within our tenancies possess one of Bradford's largest collections of Intangible Cultural Heritage of humanity which includes paintings, music, songs, dance, theatre, folk traditions, performing arts, rites, and rituals. At MHA we value all diversity and will promote some of the hidden talents among our tenancies and its people:

- Identify people with art, culture and heritage talents and promote their work to the wider community at a local, regional, and national level
- Promote and celebrate cultural diversity with others
- Develop a partnership project to attract external investment towards establishing a learning programme dedicated to 'Manningham People's Heritage'

Objective 9: Improve Educational Attainments and Access to Digital Inclusion

At MHA, we understand the great majority of our housing stocks are in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the city of Bradford. We will create and support activities that focus on improving study skills and pupils' approaches to learning; activities that may be considered to have more of a direct impact on attainment such as academic achievements in core subjects and digital skills. We will:

- Identify children from our housing schemes with low attainments at schools
- Identify core subjects that children and young people need support with

- Establish home school liaison and where possible provide after-school tutorial support provisions in targeted neighbourhoods
- Work in partnership with educational establishments, accredited training providers and funders to raise the achievement level for underachievers and bridge the gap in the digital divide
- Promote learning using the concept of the 'Living Library' model in community settings

Objective 10: Building Cohesive and Connected Communities

MHA always strive to build cohesive communities in neighbourhoods and in the city. We aspire to communities which are better able to tackle common problems, to provide mutual support and work together for a positive future. Our award-winning flagship project 'Building Bridges' demonstrated how communities can work together for better places to live. We will:

- Develop community cohesion within our housing schemes, in neighbourhoods and between different communities
- Working in partnership with LA's Strategic Equality and Diversity Team and Race Equality Network and others to connect communities with each other
- Promote social value and respect agenda to new and younger generations throughout our tenancies
- Continue to learn and promote good practise from Building Bridges Project that worked previously
- Develop a new 'Community Induction Project' targeting new housing schemes, new migrant, and refugee communities
- Support people fulfilling their vision and aspirations for their communities and between communities

7. Community Development

Manningham Housing Association has a bold vision for the future of our community development work.

At MHA, we will be developing activities that celebrate diversity and benefits for all its residents, giving priority to those in greatest need. Our community development work through our Community Investment Team will be renowned for its forward-thinking approach to community development, creating opportunities, housing solutions, learning, health and wellbeing and many other innovative and added value initiatives that improve the quality of life for our residents. We will thrive to be pioneers in creating projects that provide self-help solutions to problems.

To achieve this vision, MHA will adopt a community development approach to engage with tenants and communities in Bradford and Keighley. This strategy will prioritise tenant engagement and community development, setting standards for community capacity

building and investment services. The goal is to empower tenants at all levels and enable them to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Community development is not a single solution, but rather an approach that ensures everyone has a say in services and situations that affect them, and that supports informed choices. This strategy seeks to create a framework that supports user-driven services and successful communities run by those who live and work there.

8. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders.

The movement toward CSR has had an impact in several domains. For example, many RSLs have taken steps to improve the environmental sustainability of their operations, through measures such as installing renewable energy sources or purchasing carbon offsets.

Although CSR programmes have generally been most common among large organisations, small RSL's such as Manningham can also participate in CSR through smaller-scale programmes, such as donating to local charities, sponsoring local events, and encouraging and allowing skilled staff to contribute to community benefit, for example by allowing an accountant to provide their expertise to a local community organisation advising on financial accounts and returns. MHA will strive do our utmost to deliver in some of the key areas such as:

- Philanthropic Responsibility – Give back to society and improving the community
- Economic Responsibility – Invest in community from a position of being financially robust
- Environmental Responsibility – Engage in environmentally friendly practices and give back through programmes / projects that promotes environmental sustainability
- Carry out a skill analysis of our staff and identify key skills and talents that are available to use as part of our CSR commitments
- Identify tenants with key skills, create a Talent Pool so that CSR opportunities can be promoted amongst the pool
- Directors, experienced managers, and key staff to contribute their time in social activities to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable in society. For example:

Staff representing MHA on Tenants Association Committees, befriending and fundraising events for selected charities or even setting up MHA's own charitable fund

As part of our terms and conditions, staff can take up to four days' time off to give their time supporting local community and voluntary organisations and initiatives. This time could be used as part of our CSR commitment.

9. Social Return on Investment

Social housing organisations are in their communities' long term, and the work that communities' teams do has a tremendous impact on residents and the local area. Community investment has social value – value for residents, and value for communities – and it saves money for social housing organisations and the public purse. (HACT)

Manningham Housing will use the most up to date and modern toolkits to better understand social value and enhance our forecasting, measurement, and reporting of all our added value and housing-related services. We will measure the impact of each project and will set measurable outcomes using the HACT tool, measuring participation, monitoring, monetary value, and evaluation of outcomes. This will be reported to our board as part of our yearly review of the strategy and action plan. This will help us demonstrate our return on investment in the following categories:

- Social value: use existing resources to deliver more social outcomes and wider benefits for our neighbourhoods that make them better places to live
- Resident and community benefits: improving the lives of our residents and local communities in terms of better health & employment opportunities
- Business benefits: The reduction in some of the key performance indicators

10. Action Plan

The strategy document has a 3-year rolling action plan to achieve our community investment objectives. Year 1 focuses on key priorities identified in the consultation process, while years 2 and 3 are tentative and subject to change after a review in year 1. The action plan will be reviewed annually, and new opportunity-driven initiatives may be added if they arise.

Note:

A new Action Plan for 2026–27 has been developed to ensure the continuation of Community Investment work until a new strategy is established.