

Background

Manningham Housing Association (MHA) is a registered social housing provider. The Association provides general needs, sheltered and supported housing for rent and shared ownership. MHA provides housing for people in need in a way that leads to sustainable and balanced communities where people want to live, work and play.

Our mission is to empower communities to be successful and vibrant. We focus on quality, making a difference and fairness in the way we provide housing services in the communities we serve.

This policy sets out how we will involve residents in the services that we provide. We have taken account of the following legislation and publications:

- Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996 which introduced Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grants
- Sections 150, 151 and Schedule 9 of the Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Audit Commission's Report – Improving Services Through Resident Involvement (2004)
- Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) - National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts (2005)
- Freedom of Information Act 2005
- Housing Corporation's People First: Delivering Change Through Involvement (Circular 05/07)

We are aware that the new regulator of tenant services is the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The TSA will in due time publish their own standards to replace Housing Corporation standards.

We use the words "Tenants" and "Residents" interchangeably.

Reasons for Involvement

There are five main reasons why we are committed to resident involvement. We aim to:

- Improve our services by listening to residents and learning from their experience of our services;
- Enhance our accountability to our residents by involving them in the way we deliver our services, set performance outcomes and monitor their achievement;
- Encourage community cohesion by enabling residents to get together through social, recreational and educational activities;
- Undertake community development by focusing on neighbourhood needs as expressed by our residents;
- Tackle worklessness by assisting our residents to gain the necessary work and social skills that can give them confidence to start their own business, apply for jobs or volunteer to gain work-based experience.

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Opportunities for Involvement

There are three key opportunities for resident involvement with the Association. These are:

- Involvement in the decision-making process

This is where residents help to make a decision jointly with our staff, or where residents are asked to make a decision themselves. Involvement in the decision-making process can be through any of the following ways:

- Membership of the Association's Board of Management
- Participation in the shortlisting and interviewing of key members of staff
- Membership of specific service improvement groups
- Membership of local resident associations working in partnership with the Association

This list is not exhaustive.

- Influencing the decision-making process

This is where the Association asks for residents' views before making a decision. This helps us to make better-informed decisions and improve the quality of our services. Residents can influence the decision-making process by taking part in:

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Mystery shopping
- Investment programme consultation
- Special interest groups and forums
- Ideas for security and environmental projects
- Leaseholders' forums
- Estate management inspections
- Annual tenant and leaseholder conference
- Tenant satisfaction surveys; completing satisfaction cards
- Compliments, complaints and suggestions
- Local Residents Associations
- Newsletter Committee

This list is not exhaustive.

- Making appropriate use of service information

This is where residents receive information about what MHA is doing or is intending to do. This enables them to make the best use of available services. Information will be provided in various ways, including:

- Roadshows
- Newsletter
- Attending Board meetings
- Websites
- Local meetings
- Open days and events
- Here for You activities

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- Leaflets
- Welcome packs

In providing information, we will make use of:

- Plain language
- Large print, if requested, subject to our resources
- Interpreting facility, if requested, subject to our resources
- Oral description or explanation of the information residents have requested, in addition to or in place of written information
- Audio CDs and video DVDs, where applicable and subject to our resources
- Electronic mail and downloads from the Association's website, where applicable
- The residents' quarterly newsletter, Feedback

In addition, we will ensure that service information is:

- Of good quality, timely and tailored to residents' needs
- Available at our reception areas and on electronic display screens, where applicable

Resident Consultation

Consultation is the process of asking for residents' views before making a decision. The Association will consult residents when we are seeking to:

- Introduce a new housing service
- Change the way we provide a current service
- Identify issues which concern our residents, which need to be addressed
- Identify the best way to provide a particular service as part of learning from service complaints

We will consult residents in any of the following ways, depending on the subject of consultation, in terms of which residents will be affected, how, when and why and what level of feedback is acceptable before a decision can be made:

- Leaflet advising residents of the main points of the proposal and how to put forward their views
- Personalised letters providing information as contained in the leaflet
- Posters and leaflets displayed in office reception areas explaining how consultation will be carried out and how residents can put forward their views
- Posters and leaflets displayed on Estate notice boards
- Surgeries in convenient and accessible locations at appropriate times where residents can put forward their views and discuss the proposals
- Local open meetings for the purposes of introducing the proposals, providing additional information and seeking residents' views
- Response cards for responsive maintenance
- Door-to-door visits
- Door knocking by staff to obtain the views of residents face-to-face
- Scheme-based resident meetings
- Scheme visits, inspections and walkabouts in conjunction with residents
- Meetings of the Association's global Tenants Association
- Residents Newsletter (**Feedback**, currently published quarterly)

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- MHA's Resident Conferences
- Use of external consultants
- Opinion-sampling via written questionnaire for self-completion with pre-paid envelopes for return or telephone response service and interviews
- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys, especially, the three-yearly STATUS Survey
- Home visits to residents to gain their personal opinions confidentially
- "Opinion" or "Feedback" menu on the Association's website
- Focus groups
- Roadshows
- Open public meetings
- Survey of resident Board members and officers of resident groups

This is not an exhaustive list. Generally where the subject for consultation affects all residents MHA will consult all residents. However, those residents most affected by the proposal may be targeted for more detailed consultation. Where the subject for consultation affects only some residents - e.g. the elderly or scheme-based initiatives - normally only those residents affected will be consulted.

We will make reasonable efforts to ensure that any written material made available for consultation is clearly marked 'for consultation' and, where reasonable, issued separately from other written information. The Association will ensure that consultation meetings have:

- Clear objectives and a mandate
- A clear action plan to deal with matters arising
- Arrangements for reporting back the outcome, including feedback to those who took part.

Every effort will be made to ensure that consultation meetings are:

- Publicised effectively and in good time
- Held at suitable times in accessible places to maximise attendance
- Properly chaired and conducted in a fair and democratic way so that everyone gets a chance to have their say and is kept informed.
- Provide any necessary support and training to ensure this can happen

In addition, in order to encourage attendance and participation, the following incentives will be considered, subject to our resources:

- Baby sitting/crèche facilities
- Transport
- Refreshments
- Light entertainment – music, dance, drama, face-painting, magic, raconteurs, etc.
- "Thank You" vouchers
- Raffle draws
- Interpretation facilities provided, if necessary

Where required, the Association will keep the personal details of the residents participating in the consultation confidential. For example, the names and addresses of residents filling

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in resident satisfaction surveys will not be passed onto anyone in breach of the Association's obligations within the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Feedback to Residents Following Consultation

We will ensure that residents receive feedback as soon as possible following consultation. Generally, we will provide feedback within 3 months of concluding the consultation process. However, for more extensive consultations, the feedback timescale will be within 6 months, for instance, for a major MHA-wide survey. Feedback will include the following information:

- How many residents responded
- An analysis of views expressed
- Which views/ideas will be acted on
- Why certain views/ideas will not be acted on
- What happens next

Methods for providing feedback will include:

- Results of Resident Satisfaction Survey sent to all residents or applicable residents, for instance, where the survey was a scheme-based survey
- Specific leaflets sent to residents consulted
- Newsletter to all residents
- Presentations to resident groups and at resident meetings
- Follow-up meetings
- Annual Report

Community Involvement

We know that there are certain housing issues which we cannot address in isolation of the wider community in which we operate and where our residents live. Therefore, as may be applicable, we will seek to address our residents' housing needs:

- Within the context of the wider community's needs; and
- Alongside other community-based issues, such as anti-social behaviour, crime and vandalism; generational worklessness, skills training, local transport and environmental concerns, children's play facilities, health, etc.

We will encourage individuals and groups to become involved in working to develop their own communities and in the management of their homes through:

- Community volunteering through our Mutual Aid approach
- Community groups & Residents Associations
- Neighbourhood Forums/Panels & Focus Groups
- Youth Forums
- Estate Agreements
- Partnership working with MHA
- Management of certain housing services by local residents, where applicable

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Community Volunteering

A key aspect of our letting service is “Mutual Aid” whereby new residents identify the skills they want to use in benefit of their neighbours.

We will encourage our residents to provide support, help and assistance in some way to their neighbours and develop their community through, for instance, baby-sitting, painting and decorating, organising family fun days, filling out Benefit forms, dropping children off at school, watching out for elderly and vulnerable residents, running coaching sessions for local children, Neighbourhood Watch schemes, etc.

We will encourage and support:

- **Informal action groups** - for instance, parents walking children to school, sports teams, campaigns for play facilities or against crime and vandalism.
- **Formal action groups** – for instance, local groups wishing to adopt more formalised structures, in response to particular circumstances such as the need to account for money, hiring or leasing premises, employing a paid worker, etc.
- **Mutual economic groups** – for instance, groups arising from the Local Economic Growth Initiative (LEGI) set up to meet the economic needs of local residents; credit unions, food co-operatives, community cafes, and local exchange trading schemes (LETS).
- **Informal resident groups** – These may well be small groups of residents who share a common goal, for instance, environmental and landscaping concerns, community safety concerns, etc. Meetings may be held on an ad-hoc basis as issues arise. Such groups may not have a Chairperson, committee or constitution.
- **Formal resident groups** - a group of residents from a defined neighbourhood or area, with agreed aims, principles and practices. They may well have a Chairperson and management committee.

Community and Resident Groups

We will promote and support community and resident groups which:

- Demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities
- Are representative of a fair cross-section of residents in the area within which they operate
- Have systems for monitoring performance in terms of equal opportunities
- Have transparent voting and nomination procedures

Tenant Board Membership

We will not put a limit on the number of tenants that can join our Board of Management. However, the Board reserves the right to determine how many tenant Board members are required in any year.

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As with other applicants for Board membership, tenants will need to apply to become a member of the Association's Board. The following criteria will apply:

- They have held a tenancy with the Association for at least 3 years
- They are not in breach of their tenancy obligation
- They are not or have not been subject to a possession order in the last three years
- They are recommended by their local residents association or the global tenants association
- No issues about their tenancy that can affect their credibility or integrity as a tenant board member

The Director of Housing will head a shortlisting panel, including at least one current tenant Board member. The panel will assess all applications, interview shortlisted applicants and make recommendations to the Board. The Board reserves the right to appoint or reject recommended applicants. Where recommended applicants are rejected, the Board will provide written notification of their decision, including clear grounds for the decision based firmly on the relevant facts of the case to the applicants. There will be no right of appeal.

Tenant Board members will serve a term of office on the Board, as may be prescribed for Board members but can re-apply for further terms as outlined above.

The role of Tenant Board Members

The primary role of Tenant Board members is to contribute to the Association's decision-making process by:

- Sharing their experiences of the Association's housing services
- Presenting the views of other residents, especially, where such views have been expressed in writing or contained in the notes of residents meetings
- Making the Board aware of and articulating the effects that decisions taken at Board level will have on MHA's residents
- Contributing their knowledge and skill in benefit of the Association's mission and vision

Tenant Board members are not expected to bring complaints to Board meetings. The Association's Complaints Policy and Procedure must be used for all service complaints. In order to avoid conflict of interest, tenant Board members are not expected to use their membership of the Board or attendance at Board meetings as an opportunity to:

- Complain about services
- Seek redress or special treatment for their personal schemes or interests
- Focus only on tenant-related issues
- Campaign for tenant causes

Tenant Board members are expected to take part regularly in resident association meetings and activities. They are expected to give quality feedback at resident meetings about the work of the Association whilst respecting confidentiality and other requirements of data protection. Board meetings may include an agenda item to receive feedback from Tenant Board members from their participation at resident meetings and resident association meetings.

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Support for Tenant Board Members

In addition to any support provided to other Board members, MHA will be willing to consider additional support for tenant Board members.

Resources for Resident Involvement

We will ensure that there are adequate resources both financial and staffing to ensure the effective implementation of this policy. In particular MHA will commit an adequate budget each year or sufficient resources within existing budgets to meet the reasonable direct costs associated with this policy.

Involving Hard to Reach Residents

MHA is a Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) housing association. For various social and economic reasons, BME residents often find it more challenging to participate in resident involvement activities. This makes them hard to reach. Other hard to reach groups will include residents with childcare issues, disabilities, supported housing requirements, and those who are in full time work.

Various actions outlined in other sections of this policy will assist the Association to reach many hard to reach groups. However, additionally, we will focus on:

- Empowering BME residents
- Paying greater attention to the diverse needs of our residents
- Ensuring that our services recognise the lifestyles and aspirations of our residents
- Promoting proactively the benefits of resident involvement

Monitoring and Review

We will monitor and review this policy in conjunction with residents to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to the Association's stated aims and objectives.

The Director of Housing has overall responsibility for the on-going monitoring of the policy through the work of frontline staff, particularly those engaged in resident involvement directly. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Housing.