



# Celebrating 30 Years

A look back through the years







**MANNINGHAM Housing Association** (MHA) is proud to be marking its 30th anniversary. Having come into existence following some research into the unmet housing needs of the Black and Asian Communities in Bradford, it is with pride that we look back across our history and our achievements in helping to meet those needs. Small opportunities are often the start of significant enterprises and the 'small acorn' of the organisation with two properties that was planted all of those years ago has grown to one that now has over 1400 homes and houses over 6000 residents.

Across our 30 years, Manningham Housing Association has shown great dynamism and had a positive impact across the Bradford and Keighley areas. Our main aims have always been to support our customers through providing predominantly larger family homes, investing in our properties, providing a good-quality repairs service and helping our tenants when they need us most. Our staff ensure they deliver the highest quality services to every one of our customers. We use our insight to provide a 'hassle free' housing service to the communities in Bradford and Keighley. Despite our size, we have gained a reputation of 'punching above our weight' in terms of achievements and our customer satisfaction is in the 92% plus bracket.

They say style is a reflection of your attitude and your personality. In the following pages there are a set of reflections from individuals involved in Manningham, both past and present including staff, Board Members and tenants. Their reflections are a testament to the energy, dedication and professionalism that has made serving the people of Bradford and Keighley so highly important to us. We mark this celebration as one milestone in our journey but we understand that the journey continues and some of the key challenges remain. Manningham Housing is ready to continue in meeting those challenges.



# Fazlul Haq

## A founding member of MHA



Faz was working as centre manager at Bradford's Bangladeshi Youth Organisation (BYO) when his work helped establish Manningham Housing Association as the first black-led housing association in the North of England, 30 years ago.

Recognising the dire need for housing among BME communities, Faz helped secure a grant from the local authority to carry out pioneering research.

"People were living in chronic overcrowding conditions. In some cases there were 18 people sharing one house, and a case of a husband and wife sharing a bedroom with seven children," Faz explains.

"The council needed evidence before they could invest in new housing, so gave us a £3,000 grant to conduct research and report back, and that's exactly what we did.

**I feel so proud that the £3,000 has grown into more than 1,400 family homes."**

Faz and a team of volunteers from BYO went house to house, interviewing people about the housing needs and priorities for Asian residents, presenting back to the council after six months of hard work.

"I shed a tear of joy when the council backed our research and Manningham Housing Association was created. The need for housing was so desperate and it was wonderful to have the backing and financial support from the local authority," he says.

From then, the need for much larger family homes in the area began to be met, allowing generations of families to live together happily and comfortably. Faz remembers very many standout moments from over the years, including MHA's work to acquire the land and set up a women and children's refuge for victims of domestic violence, and the organisation's support to rehouse refugees in Burma in the early 2000s.

**"I don't think there is any other group in Bradford or the surrounding area that can demonstrate they pioneered in such a way," he says.**

"One of the proudest moments was in the early 1990s when MHA's work was hailed by the United Nations as a hugely successful project. There could not be a better gift than that."

Since joining as a founding member of the organisation, Faz has been with Manningham Housing Association for the full three decades, before retiring in September. He hopes MHA will continue to remain independent in the future, and build on its fantastic work.

He concludes: "From the bottom of my heart I would like to thank all the past and present board members for their tireless work and positive contributions.

**Just look at the legacy we have achieved and the gift we have given to the people of Bradford."**

Original Board Members and Staff



# Alison Hadden

## Interim CEO



During her time with Manningham Housing Association, Alison Hadden has played a vital role in paving the way for the organisation to enjoy an independent future.

With increasing pressure on smaller BME focused housing associations to merge or become part of a group, Alison explains why it is vital for MHA to retain the independence which has helped to achieve so much over its 30 year history.

"In the 1980s, BME housing issues had a very loud voice and now it is very quiet," she says.

**"MHA has certainly made the right decision to remain independent and speak up as a voice for the inequality that exists, because people need to be aware."**

Alison explains that the welfare reforms are set to hit poor families and large families worst of all and further contribute to inequalities in our society. "The biggest thing that will hit the community we serve is the cap on housing allowance, which will penalise people for having a larger family," she says.

"Local housing allowance doesn't go above a four bedroom house, and we have five or six bedroom

homes, so families don't get the allowance on two of those. The family allowance is also now limited to two children, so there is a combination of benefits being hit. Even if people are in work, families are still really suffering and having to claim benefits, so these changes will have a huge impact."

**Alison believes it is vital to form stronger engagement with communities, increase integration and improve prospects.**

"If people don't feel like they have a hold in society that is when we start seeing disengagement and it can lead on to more difficult problems," she says. "There is a huge amount of work to be done, but Manningham is in a strong position to help with those issues and be a positive voice."

**We need to look at engagement strategies and work with partners to get kids to aim higher and consider university education, rather than settling for low paid jobs.**

We need to work with people in our own communities, but also with the private sector and industry in Bradford. What are they doing to help with diversity and engagement?"

While Alison has been an integral part of the process to help drive MHA forward and help maintain its independence, she has also seen first hand how the organisation operates.

"It is second to none in terms of putting customers at the heart of service delivery. It is absolutely outstanding," she says.

"It is clear to see the commitment from the staff to want to make the organisation a better place. They work really hard for the customers, who are at the forefront of staff members' minds all the time."









# Barrington Billings



## Chair of the Board

With decades of experience in housing, including working with the BME community, Barrington Billings was a perfect choice to help steer Manningham Housing Association (MHA) back to regulatory compliance, as well as to a strong and bright future.

"I have been familiar with MHA since 1988 when I worked for a large Housing Association as a Development Officer, and since then I have been operating at both an executive and non-executive level for a number of organisations, including as Chair at a housing organisation in London for six years," he explains.

**"When I saw the advert for this position I felt I had the right experience, skills and knowledge to make a positive contribution."**

It is certainly a busy and important time for MHA and the board is working through a number of priorities in order to achieve a Grade Two rating in 2018 and eventually back to a Grade One rating in the near future.

These include completing an agreed action plan via a Voluntary Undertaking to address the issues identified; recruiting a new CEO as well as new board members; reviewing and consolidating MHA finances, forming key partnerships with community groups and other agencies and embedding a new culture of strong governance throughout the organisation.

There is also a strategic aim for the composition of the board and staff of MHA to be more reflective of the local community it serves, mirroring the ethnic and demographic makeup of the area. As part of the new direction, MHA will be taking a break from undertaking any new development work while it concentrates on implementing and achieving these goals.

"One of the reasons I joined MHA was the fact that there was a unique opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation," Barrington says.

"We are now in a strong position to move forward successfully. Operationally we are performing extremely well, achieving results in the top quartile for our main KPIs, with customer satisfaction with repairs being extremely high at 98%, exceeding our target of 95%".

Barrington has a clear vision for MHA, and believes that they can build on the fantastic work already started in order to achieve its goals.

"My vision for MHA is for it to be an organisation that is clearly focused on the needs of its customer and need to continue with the great customer engagement work already begun," he says.

"We need to be an organisation that is forward thinking and one that takes a lead on issues nationally, around large family housing and community cohesion and the challenges faced by the sector in trying to address these needs. We should punch above our weight, influencing national policy and forging links internationally as well.

We should also take a lead locally and in the region in terms of housing policy and strategy regarding the housing needs of minority ethnic groups, particularly involving the South Asian community."

Barrington explains: "I think MHA is in a pivotal position to take a lead in breaking down some of the negative stereotypes, misunderstandings and misinformation circulated in the media about particular minority ethnic communities and people of different faith. There is a lot of negativity and we can be the conduit in building bridges to help develop more positive relationships for a more cohesive society.

**MHA is pivotal to healing some of those wounds within our communities."**

He sums up: "I'd like to reassure the local communities we serve that MHA will remain true to its ethos, to help those in need regardless of race, colour or religious belief. Our aim always is to do the right thing, by doing things right."

# Shaukat Ahmed



## First chair of MHA

Thirty years ago, Shaukat was a university graduate living in Manningham itself, who could see first hand the problems that overcrowding in the area were causing.

"The homes were not fit for purpose," he said.

"I used to volunteer tutoring children and they did not have any space to study at home. They were studying in the same rooms other family members were watching TV and they found it difficult to concentrate.

At the same time there was a 'brain drain' going on, with people who were doing well buying houses out of the area and moving away. I thought this cannot go on – it is essential to build bigger houses so people can stay living in Manningham."

Shaukat was involved from the start of the research that led to the creation of a milestone report into the housing needs of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Bradford, highlighting the gross overcrowding, which has since been quoted by many housing experts.

However, there was still a struggle ahead to first be registered as a BME housing association and then to obtain stock. The solution came through campaigning for recognition, and then the invention of 'stock transfer'.

Brunel and Family Housing Association transferred three large family houses and three flat blocks to MHA in 1989. This was followed by a partnership with North British Housing Association for the Hollings Square development. Twenty units were transferred from NBHA and they also acted as development agents for MHA's twenty units.

**MHA soon became the fastest growing BME housing association in the country, thanks to its tactic of 'land banking'.**

Shaukat explains: "It was our strategy that whenever land became available, we purchased it. This was a risky move, but one which paid off big time. It meant that whenever the corporation wanted innercity houses to be built, they would come to us first as the landowner."

**Shaukat remained chair of MHA for 11 years and saw many moments of "satisfaction and happiness" during that time.**

"To make sure a family is housed properly and has enough space gives them other opportunities and an overall better quality of life," he says.

**"Kids from Manningham are now doctors, solicitors, councillors and academics and the community is growing in strength.**

Another impressive achievement is that when MHA started, there was a real shortage of BME housing professionals, and we saw it as our job to create professionals from ethnic minority communities within the sector.

People started in roles with us then moved on, hopefully to better positions, and we have people who started with us who ended up being chief execs or in other high up roles in other housing associations. Now there are hundreds of BME housing professionals, but in the 80s there were just a handful, as housing wasn't seen as a profession."

He concludes: "It's incredible to see the fundamental changes that MHA has made in so many people's lives."



Shaukat outside new offices







# Abdul A Ravat

## Board vice chair



Abdul joined the MHA Board in October 2016, having had a professional relationship for almost 15 years, during his time as Lead Regulator and Lead Investor at the Housing Corporation (HC) and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA).

"When I left the HCA in 2014, I joined the subsidiary board of another local housing provider and when MHA asked me to submit an application to become a board member, I jumped at the opportunity," he says.

"Previously I was on the other side – looking at the governance, viability and programme delivery performance of MHA and now I'm working to assess the performance of the organisation of its key housing services and what our future strategy should entail.

**I think I have brought sound discipline in terms of performance, value for money, governance, liaison with our regulator, the local authority and have given critiques about how we could improve and progress.**

I have also been involved in shaping the strategic direction and the operational realities of our current position and ensured that the key positions in the organisations (CEO, FD, Board Members) have attracted and been filled with people with the right passions and competencies to take the MHA forward in its journey."

Abdul strongly believes that it is important for MHA, as a black led housing association, to retain its independence and articulate the voice of the community, despite the disparities faced by the BME communities, lack of funding and general pressures for smaller associations to merge. He believes MHA is currently in a stable financial position to face the challenges and continue its decades of success and serve its residents and communities.

"The culture of the organisation is highly professional. The board is effective and shows strong leadership and good governance – it challenges in the right way and has a clear handle on the key risks and issues that the organisation is trying to navigate through," he says.

"Organisations like MHA have endured years of struggle on behalf of BME communities up and down the country and because of that we have gained a voice and to operate as an independent entity and remain relevant."

He continues: "The strategic plan we have in place is designed to move us on incrementally and we are a viable organisation which delivers strong financial performance with great customer satisfaction. We have made a really good start and that will continue because of the structure around the board and the quality of the people on it."

Abdul says MHA is a "shining example", leading the way in delivering in a housing market like Bradford where other organisations have struggled to keep voids down and where other providers are hesitant to invest. Despite its size MHA has led that single conversation with funders and stakeholders to ensure Bradford has a sufficient slice of the national housing resources.

"During the 2011-2015 National Affordable Housing Programme, MHA delivered 97 new homes of predominately large family housing for the HCA against an initial contracted figure of 65. I had to work tooth and nail in my role as its Lead Investor to convince people that MHA was a viable investment partner to meet the affordable housing needs in Bradford," he says.

"The additional investment we made at the time represented improved overall value for money for the taxpayer and assisted the HCA to meet its targets with government. The homes were delivered without compromising on neither standards nor quality and working with local contractors and the supply chain to benefit the local economy.

There was great care taken in the design of the home for the families and households that would occupy them and that is why MHA has such fantastic customer satisfaction rates.

**We have taught the sector a lot of things and I am extremely proud of the role I have undertaken."**







# Cath Bacon

## Chair of Customer Panel and Tenant Board member



**"I would recommend anyone to come and live with Manningham. They do so much and are so inclusive,"**

Something I am really proud of is how much they give back to tenants, through opportunities, developing partnerships with other organisations to provide more services, helping develop skills and properly listening."

Cath moved into her MHA home in Wilsden three years ago and decided to get involved with the customer panel after reading about it in our magazine.

As Labour Councillor for Keighley West ward, Cath is familiar with the committee processes and had plenty of experience to bring to the organisation. The panel meets regularly, deciding its own agenda and raising issues that are of concern to tenants, for the MHA board to report back on.

"We are like a critical friend, letting them know what they are doing right, and suggesting areas they could do better," Cath, who has been chair for a few months, says.

"It has kept my interest over the years because they do go away and do what they say they will, so we can see we are having a direct say in what goes on, and when something is identified as a need it is acted on. They really are fantastic in that respect.

**The panel's main focus at the moment is to attract more members to gain a wider spread of input and opinions.**

It's about working together to make things better, and keeping a check on the board and their decisions," Cath explains.

"We're going to try to hold some meetings out in communities, instead of at head office, so people can come along and see what goes on, and we'd welcome requests from anyone who would like to have a meeting in their area. It needs to be

representative, so we need to make sure we have a good mix of gender, ethnicities and skills on the panel.

**Anyone can join, training is provided if you want more experience of what goes on, and we can arrange to meet you beforehand so you won't be going into a room full of strangers at your first meeting.**

Members are reimbursed travel expenses and food is provided.



Its other major priority is to monitor the effects of the austerity measures, benefits cap and roll out of universal credit.

We need to be confident that affected residents can be given proper help and not just told to get it sorted, so we want MHA to demonstrate what they are going to do to empower residents to help themselves," Cath explains.

"Even though MHA is small for a housing association, it punches above its weight and I am very proud of the recognition it has achieved, which is richly deserved."

# Shanaz Gul

## Long-term Tenant

For eight years Shanaz, her partner and five children were cramped in a two bedroom home while they waited for a house that would fit the needs of their family.

**That home was finally provided by Manningham Housing Association and the family has been happy in their four bedroom in Great Horton for more than 11 years.**

From not long after moving in, Shanaz has ensured she has played a central part in helping steer the future of the organisation, joining numerous committees and taking part in 'mystery shopping' exercises, helping to provide feedback from the point of view of a tenant.

**"I am involved in quite a lot of things!"**

Someone suggested I should join the panel as my English was good and they thought I'd be a good person to represent the views of other Asian tenants. I find it interesting and I have tried to encourage neighbours to get involved too. I have even taken my 18 year old son along to the customer panel so he can see what goes on."

Shanaz explains: "People come from all over the area and there is a nice atmosphere. It's good to find out what is going on in other areas and what other people's experiences are with their homes.



**Everyone is nice and makes you really welcome, no matter what department you are dealing with. People recognise you and greet you by name, which is really nice."**

Shanaz is currently the longest serving member of the customer panel, which she joined 10 years ago, and also serves on the scrutiny panel. She took part in a free two-day course, provided by MHA, to help her get the most from being a part of the scrutiny panel. She has had to give up some duties over the years as she regularly helps look after her five grandchildren and other family members.

"MHA are a brilliant landlord and really do cater for the needs of BME communities," Shanaz continues. "Since we first moved in, looking back there have been lots and lots of improvements, for example in the repairs department and how complaints are handled.

**"As landlords, they do listen to feedback and are doing a good job."**



Scheme opening Newby Square



# Nazneen Zafar

## Neighbourhood officer



From interviewing applicants and showing people into their new homes, to enforcing tenancy agreements and dealing with anti-social behaviour, it has all become second nature to Nazneen Zafar who has worked at Manningham Housing Association for 27 years.

**"It has just flown by. It really doesn't feel like 27 years, but when you stop and think about it, you do think 'wow, that's a very long time!'" she says.**

Nazneen began as an admin assistant when MHA was based at Manor Buildings and has worked at four different office locations over the years.

She recalls: "I remember being apprehensive on my first day, wondering what it would be like as I'd never had experience working in housing before. Little did I know I'd still be here nearly 30 years later!"

When work began on the Hollings Road development, Nazneen's role changed and she learned on the job, taking the lead from the housing manager. She helped arrange viewings and sign people up, which enabled her to progress to her current position.

Four years after starting, Nazneen had her first child and has worked part time ever since, praising MHA for their fairness and how accommodating they are as an employer.

**And there are plenty of happy memories to look back on over the decades.**

"When we moved into the Brearton Street offices, we had a royal visit from Prince Charles" Nazneen says.

**"He said he was really impressed and said that we were doing a great job. That was a really memorable experience and I even have photos of me rubbing shoulders with royalty!"**

There are also many day-to-day aspects of Nazneen's role that make her job so enjoyable. "It's fantastic when we let a property and you can see it has made a big difference to a person's situation," she says.



"A lot of times when they move in they will be bringing the children to see it for the first time. They might have come from a very dire overcrowding situation, with children sharing a room with three other siblings, and when they see they get to have their own room, to see the smiles on their faces is very satisfying."

Nazneen explains how it is also a great feeling when tenants who need a larger property choose to wait, rather than to move to a different housing association, because they are so happy being with MHA. And she can understand why.

"It really is a nice culture here and a family atmosphere. From the time I started up to now, it has always been a nice organisation to work for, hence why I have been here so long," she says.

**"It's been a really lovely journey for me and I plan to stay working here as long as I can."**











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