



**Muirhouse
Housing
Association**

Muirhouse Housing Association Development Strategy



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this strategy is to give our commitment to community development in keeping with our organisational vision, values and objectives, and to outline how we will prioritise, plan and measure our activities to meet our goal *“to have MHA play a leading role in bettering the lives of our residents and their families”*¹.
- 1.2 We define community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems whether economic, social, environmental or cultural. This can range from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community.

“Community development is a process by which communities:

- *become more responsible*
- *organize and plan together*
- *develop healthy lifestyle options*
- *empower themselves*
- *reduce poverty and suffering*
- *create employment and economic opportunities*
- *achieve social, economic, cultural and environmental goals”*²

- 1.3 Our area of operation is Muirhouse and Drylaw where we have housing stock within the broader area of North Edinburgh. However we see our community as not just being defined by physical location. Communities can also be defined by common cultural heritage, language and beliefs or shared interest. For example an individual can be part of a neighbourhood community, a religious community or a community of shared interests. *“Relationships whether with people or the land, define a community for each individual.”*³
- 1.3 We see community development as a natural extension of our core business operations of housing management, tenant participation and service improvement, and our place and standing in the community.

2. Our Commitment, Vision and Values

- 2.1 Our overall mission is to work in partnership with the local community to provide homes and create a better Muirhouse.
- 2.2 Our vision is that we will be a Community Anchor, playing a key role in attracting mixed investment to improve the facilities, resources and opportunities in the area.
- 2.3 Our values shape how we do business and will underpin the work we do on community development:
- Excellence: we are committed to providing a high quality, customer focussed service that demonstrates value for money, delivered by great staff

- **Accountability:** our governing body and leadership team will provide strong strategic leadership and oversight, ensuring tenants' interests are protected and at the forefront of all that we do. We will ensure our actions are transparent.
 - **Partnership Working:** we will continue to be a proactive and leading member of the local community, seeking out new, innovative ways to address issues that impact on Muirhouse.
- 2.4 As part of the MHA Business Plan objective to become an effective community anchor, we want to be a significant force in driving positive change and improved life opportunities for those who live in our community
- 2.5 We will explore business development opportunities for MH4 to examine the potential for growth eg social enterprise activities linked to our community development agenda.
- 2.5 The strategic objectives set by MH4 Business Plan aim to generate profit to be invested back into the Muirhouse community via gift aid to MHA. The desired outcome of which will be a programme of wider action activities to improve the quality of life for our community.
- 2.6 In harmony with our overall mission, vision and objectives to play a leading role in bettering the lives of our residents and families and our values, this strategy refers to the money, time skills and expertise we will invest to enhance the lives of local people and help to create a place where people want to live and work and to support tenants and residents to deliver the changes they want to see in their neighbourhoods.

3. Context

3.1 Social Housing Charter

3.1.1 Our commitment to community development will also help ensure that we meet our obligations as part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The standards and outcomes relevant to our strategy are:

- *Outcome 1: Equalities*

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that: Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

- *Outcome 2: Communication*

Social landlords manage their businesses so that: Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

- *Outcome 6: Neighbourhood and community*

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that: Tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

- *Outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment*

Social landlords ensure that: Tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home: and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and other organisations.

3.2 Community Empowerment Act

3.2.1 The Community Empowerment Act aims to improve outcomes for communities by improving the process of community planning and ensuring that local service providers work together even more closely with communities to meet the needs of the people who use them.

3.2.2 The Act requires that Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), exist in every Scottish local authority and that they plan and deliver local outcomes and engage and involve communities at all stages. We have been involved at a strategic level through the Edinburgh Affordable Housing Partnership.

3.2.3 Locality plans are also introduced in the Act particularly for smaller areas where there are 'significantly poorer outcomes' than elsewhere in the local authority area, or in Scotland generally. We are now part of Edinburgh's North West Locality and have been consulted about the priorities for the area through our membership of the Forth and Leith Voluntary Sector Forum. This is a key opportunity for MHA, community groups and organisations to play a part in identifying the key needs and issues in the community, to be involved in defining relevant outcomes and to propose ways in which the community can draw on its local knowledge, organisation and people to shape and benefit from the process and will inform our strategy and action plan.

3.3 Socio-economic Factors

3.3.1 There is no doubt that Muirhouse is an area of significant economic and social deprivation. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation published in August 2016, Muirhouse is the most deprived area in Edinburgh and the 6th most deprived area in Scotland.

3.3.2 The index looks at seven different domains of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access, Crime and Housing. Muirhouse is listed within the 5% of most deprived areas in Scotland and in the Edinburgh top ten list for 4 out of 7 of these domains - Income, Employment, Health and Education and the following table give the ranking in relation to Edinburgh and Scotland.

Domain	Rank in Edinburgh	Rank in Scotland	Deprivation levels
Income	2	24	45% on benefits or tax credits
Employment	3	9	45% of working age people who are employment deprived and on certain benefits
Health	1	13	Based on indicators for mortality rates, hospital stays related to drug/ alcohol misuse, low birth weight, population prescribed drugs for anxiety, depression or psychosis
Education	1	21	Based on school pupil attendance, leavers attainment, number of working age with no qualifications, number of people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training, proportion of 17-21 year olds entering full time higher education.

3.3.3 The Index shows that many people in Muirhouse experience multiple deprivation and emphasises the greater need for support and intervention. It is imperative therefore that our activities go beyond 'bricks and mortar' and that we make a clear commitment through our strategies and actions to add social value to the broader costs and benefits of what we do.

3.5 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

3.5.1 We carried out a Tenants Satisfaction Survey in December 2016 where our customers told us what their priorities are, which areas of our service they are dissatisfied with and which areas they would like us to develop.

3.5.2 As part of this survey, we collected statistics on Fuel poverty. Informing the community development strategy is Muirhouse HA's recent tenant survey. Feedback from 190 tenants (of Muirhouse HA's 510 tenants) shows that over half (52%) are in fuel poverty, and nearly a quarter (24%) in severe fuel poverty. Certain groups of tenants are much more vulnerable: for instance nearly threequarters (74%) of lone parents are in fuel poverty. When asked what services they would like to see provided by Muirhouse HA, tenants indicated that a fuel poverty support service should be a top priority.

4. **Developing the strategy**

4.1 We have recently started working in partnership with Communities Action North, the Council and other local agencies as part of the 'Muirhouse Strategy Group' to share ideas and information, and to support the setting up of a Muirhouse Community Development Trust whereby local people will be responsible for decision making on how resources are spent in their area.

4.2 As part of the Forth and Inverleith Voluntary Sector Forum, we have been involved in setting the community priorities for the North West Locality Improvement Plan. The members of the s Forum identified the following priorities for Muirhouse:

- Support for community organisations
- Properly funded youth provision, after school activities, music, sport, art
- Better standard of street cleaning and road maintenance
- Increased funding to address mental health issues
- All organisations and agencies to pay living wage
- Increase household incomes
- Use imaginative ways to create well-paid service employment
- Maximise benefit take-up
- Social space for people to meet, grow
- Early years centre for childcare

4.3 The proposed themes for the North West Locality Improvement Plan to focus on are:

- Place (e.g. green space, planning, parks and recreation, waste management)
- Children, Young People & Families (eg School, play, activities, informal learning)
- Employment(e.g. Young people, adults, further education, training, CV support)
- Health and Social Care (e.g. GP access, maternity, hospital, mental health)
- Community Safety (e.g. policing, housebreaking, motorbikes, alcohol misuse)

4.3 Our customers identified through our tenants satisfaction the following areas as a priority for improvement.

- Children's play facilities
- Youth clubs and activities for young people.
- Maintenance of Common areas
- Taking action on dog fouling, disruptive children/ teenagers, car parking, rubbish and litter
- Help and support with Energy Advice and Welfare Benefits.

4.4 When asked which additional services they would like MHA to offer or support, our customers said their top priority was Energy Advice, followed by Welfare rights and benefit advice. We will therefore focus on identifying partners and funding as part of our action plan to prioritise providing these services as soon as possible.

4.5 In summary we have decided on our priorities based on:

- What our residents have told us, including which issues are important to them
- The needs of the communities where we work based on available socio-economic data
- Our own information including housing data and resident satisfaction surveys
- Where we feel we can make a difference based on our skills and experience and those of other partner organisations.

5. Our Priorities

We will aim to support projects and programmes which support the following themes:

❖ **Improving the Neighbourhood and Environment**

Supporting the better use of outdoor spaces
Helping people to keep places and spaces attractive and well maintained.
Encouraging the reduction of waste through recycling and reuse.

❖ **Strengthening the Community**

Developing long-term, resident-led models of community development.
Facilitating community information sharing and communication
Promoting opportunities for the black and minority ethnic community

❖ **Increasing Wealth and Opportunities**

Improving access to affordable credit and budgeting advice.
Helping residents to maximise household income through welfare and benefits advice

Helping to reduce fuel poverty.
Promoting digital inclusion to enable access to online banking and financial services
Helping people into education, employment, training and apprenticeships allowing them to reach their potential

❖ **Boosting Health and Wellbeing**

Increasing access to affordable and healthy food
Increasing access to local sports facilities and activities
Providing opportunities for social interaction for those who are lonely or at risk of isolation

❖ **Supporting Children and Young People**

Working with schools to increase educational attainment
Supporting the provision of projects and activities designed to reduce antisocial behaviour.
Supporting work placements and work experience
Increasing access to local sports facilities and activities

6. Our Approach

We will make substantial investments in community projects and groups through 4 possible routes.

- 6.1 Where we identify gaps in local services we will work in partnership with other agencies through direct funding from our Community Investment budget, or where possible through grant applications/ match funding to bridge these gaps and increase the range and effectiveness of our service provision. Eg Fuel Energy Advice, and Welfare Rights Advice service
- 6.2 We will establish a budget for one-off small amounts of funding to support local activities called The Community Chest Fund. This will be a sum available from 1 April each year to the 31 March of the following year which community groups may apply for. This money will be gift aided to MHA by our subsidiary MH4. Our MH4 Board will review the applications and make recommendations for the MHA Board to award the grants. We will prepare a detailed procedure with eligibility criteria, an application form and guidance for groups. There will be requirement for feedback and assessment. We will formally monitor these projects and carry out social impact assessments
- 6.3 We will also consider investing in our community by giving support in-kind, for example giving staff time and expertise for advice in governance and finance for local voluntary Boards, subject to resources. In-kind support, giving staff time and expertise for advice eg in governance and finance for local voluntary Boards etc.
- 6.4 We will make one-off donations to local groups or initiatives in line with our Donations Policy, for example Pensioners' Christmas Party. There may be

cases where we may wish to give a direct donation to an organisation with 'no strings' in that it is a straight financial gift with no requirement for monitoring or feedback, and this will be covered by our Donations Policy.

7. Links with other policies and strategies

Equalities and Diversity policy

Tenant and Community Participation Policy

Tenant participation policy

Donations policy

8. Measuring success

We will ask for feedback from our partners and customers to measure the success of our projects. We will look into methodologies to measure the social impact such as 'Social Return on Investment' and carry out impact assessments. Actual monetary value is not as important as unravelling the social value story and understanding where the benefit lies. We will report quarterly to the Board