

10. Methodist Homes (MHA)

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1. General report

- 1.1 During the past year many aspects of MHA's operations gradually returned to greater normality. The guidance on wearing masks changed, though with care homes in England being the last locations where the restriction was lifted. It came as a relief to staff and visitors when mandatory face coverings were no longer required (except in special circumstances), not least to many residents who rely on facial expressions and lip reading in order to communicate.
- 1.2 In 2023 MHA marks its 80th anniversary. Set up before the advent of the National Health Service, today the charity is the largest charitable care provider across England, Scotland, and Wales. It cares for and supports more than 18,000 older people through its 88 care homes, 69 retirement living communities and 50 community-based schemes, which help alleviate loneliness and isolation among older people living independently in the community.
- 1.3 We continue to invest in and embrace technology for the benefit of the older people whom we care for and support – this has included the development of an MHA Active App, digital care plans being piloted, and our later life hub on the MHA website.
- 1.4 During the year we developed a Blueprint for retirement living, focusing more on housing with care. As part of this revised strategy, we withdrew from the management of services at Adlington House in Otley, Brooklands House in Stafford, and Adlington House in Urmston.
- 1.5 In the course of 2023 blueprints for care homes and community support will be completed as we work to ensure that MHA services evolve to meet the needs, challenges and opportunities for future generations and which continue to embody its enduring values, informed by MHA's Methodist heritage and the Revd Walter Hall's founding vision.
- 1.6 We also closed MHA Richmond care home on the south coast due to over provision in the area, with the majority of residents and most of the staff transferring to MHA Lauriston care home just a few miles down the road.

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- 1.7 Growing out of MHA's overall strategic plan there are now five specialist strategies – dementia, music therapy, end of life, green care, and spirituality. Alongside this we have launched a nursing strategy, bringing additional focus to this important area of our work.
- 1.8 Volunteering continues to be a vital part of MHA's work, bringing benefits to residents, members, colleagues and the volunteers themselves. The role of people willing to give their time to be part of MHA is an invaluable addition to the care and support we provide, and a new 'volunteering strategy' is in development.
- 1.9 Our music therapy team were featured as part of the [Light up my Life](#) report with Casio and Music For Dementia. This gave us lots of great media coverage. The benefit of music for everyone, and especially for people living with dementia, continues to be reported across the media and in new research papers.
- 1.10 During the year MHA Communities provided support to more than 15,000 older people across the 192 local sites. Our membership base sat at nearly 11,500 older people on 31 January 2023. Our 151 employed colleagues and 2,130 volunteers delivered a monthly average of 1,133 face-to-face groups, clubs, classes and activities in various community settings, including in a number of Methodist churches across England and Wales.
- 1.11 MHA employs 140 chaplains, working across our residential services. This is the second year in which we have conducted a survey to record the activities of chaplains during one week in February. In 2022, given further lockdown restrictions which prevented gatherings in Retirement Living, the support offered by chaplains was weighted more than usual towards one-to-one pastoral care. Care for staff colleagues also featured prominently in the findings of the annual survey.
- 1.12 We continue to campaign for greater fairness in adult social care. Everyone appears to see the need for reform, but there is a lack of political will to bring it about. MHA's #FixCareForAll campaign has brought focus to our calls for change and drawn considerable support from across society. MHA made a significant contribution in support of the Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care. This included access to one of our services and a meeting with the Board's 'Future of Care' working group.
- 1.13 Since the start of the pandemic, it seems that MHA has hardly been out of the media. At the end of 2022 this included the Archbishop of Canterbury recording his BBC New Year message at MHA Bradbury Grange in Whitstable, and footage of MHA Hall Grange used in the filming of the King's Christmas message.

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- 1.14 While we lobby for changes that will aid the recruitment and retention of staff (not least in fees and pay) MHA makes every effort to recognise the excellent work of colleagues across the charity. We have continued to hold our annual 'OSCARS' event which recognises the outstanding work of individuals and teams across the whole of MHA.

2. Challenging Operating Environment

- 2.1 We continue to face an increasing recruitment and retention challenge, along with the whole of the social care sector. In rising to this challenge MHA continues to be a Real Living Wage employer, and from April 2023 exceeds this rate for waged care workers. In October 2022 MHA gave this group a supplementary pay award. At the time of preparing this report there are 165,000 vacancies in social care. The consequence is a much higher number of agency care and support staff which erodes continuity of care and increases costs.
- 2.2 In the wake of national lockdowns MHA has faced a confluence of adverse financial impacts. With reduced workforce numbers across the sector, MHA has seen the cost of agency workers triple to £11 million along with steep hikes in energy, rising from £6 million to £18 million in 18 months. Understandably, care homes and community spaces for older people cannot be cold and this element of our costs is consequently disproportionately high. MHA is only eligible for less than £1 million of government support with increased energy costs. In addition, MHA going forward must tackle a backlog of building maintenance and refurbishments. As a result MHA's operating margins are very tight, and a care home fee rise of over 11% in 2023 is unavoidable. This further widens the gap between the actual cost of care and the fees local authorities pay as they contend with their longstanding funding shortfalls, leaving families to top up and self-funders paying more.
- 2.3 In the cost-of-living crisis our work in communities has been especially important. We convened an inter-departmental group to focus on the challenges that were emerging, providing advice and guidance as well as making practical changes to reduce energy costs. MHA Communities research (www.mha.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/mha-warns-older-people-will-become-increasingly-isolated-rising-costs-start-bite/) has highlighted the reality that there are increasing numbers of older people who cannot afford transport costs to get to vital activities aimed at combating loneliness and isolation.
- 2.4 Derby City Council is in discussions with MHA regarding the purchase of Epworth House as part of its flood alleviation project for the city centre. This is likely to take place in the 2023/24 financial year and it is intended that MHA's head offices will continue to be in Derby.

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3. Accounts and Governance

- 3.1 The latest audited accounts are available on request from our website or from Epworth House. Our Annual Impact Statement, which tells the story of MHA's activities, is also available on the website or from Epworth House.
- 3.2 During the year Cath Biddle stepped down from the Trustees; Hilary Cocker retired, and we welcomed Anne Anketell and Dr Richard Vautrey (a former Vice-President of the Conference) as new members of the Board.
- 3.3 The Trustees who oversee the work of the Charity continue to offer excellent advice and guidance, sharing between them considerable expertise across the range of MHA's activities. The focus of MHA's holistic approach to care is at the root of their willingness to serve as Board members, and they bring a range of spiritual and belief commitments to the role.

4. Other Notable Events in the Year

- 4.1 As with countless people around the world, the MHA family celebrated HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with events across all our services. Within a short space of time we experienced sadness at the news of the death of HM The Queen. Across MHA, people met to mark the occasion of the State Funeral on 19 September. Being contemporaries of the late Queen, many of our residents shared memories of her astonishing reign and spirit of public service.
- 4.2 In February 2023 we were delighted to receive a visit to Epworth House, Derby, by the President of the Conference, the Revd Graham Thompson. During the visit the President met the longest serving member of staff at Epworth House, Fiona Dennis, who was present at the dedication of the building by the then President of the Conference in 1991.
- 4.3 We provided a wealth of materials for churches to mark MHA Sunday, with a theme of 'Growing Together' exploring the value of our outside spaces for older people, relatives, volunteers and colleagues. MHA Sunday in 2023 will have a focus of intergenerational collaboration and is due to take place on Sunday 11 June.
- 4.4 All within MHA are very grateful and value greatly the continuing prayers, volunteering, engagement and financial support received from Methodists locally and nationally.

***RESOLUTION

- 10/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**