



MHA NORTHWOOD LIVE AT HOME 1998/2020
MHA WEST LONDON COMMUNITIES 2020/

Enabling older people to live later life well and improving their quality of life

MHA, founded in 1943, is the UK's largest charity focussed solely on helping the elderly live later life well. Starting with bricks and mortar, homes and accommodation, it later began to address the needs of older people in the community. As the population has aged the number of older people living on their own has increased with loneliness just one of the issues they have to deal with.

MHA's initial response, starting some 30 years ago, was piecemeal depending on local initiatives to start up and run local "Live at Home" schemes. Northwood's, launched in 1998, was among the earliest starting with 15 members and 20 volunteers. The pattern was established from the beginning with a focus on social events, assisted shopping and befriending, whether by telephone or physical contact. Alongside the support offered to members was an active drive to raise funds locally to allow the scheme to expand and improve its member services. These efforts delivered. By 2008 the Scheme had some 100 members and about 70 active volunteers. In that year, after passing an MHA audit, the Scheme was chosen to represent the then 44 Live at Home schemes in a celebration at the House of Lords of MHA's 65th anniversary.

Continuing growth meant that by 2020 the NLAH Scheme had some 235 members. But that year also brought major change. Following a strategy review in 2019 MHA had recognised that it needed to increase the support it provides to, and expand, its local schemes, both because the need is there and because its objective is to establish national coverage of its services. This led to a rebranding of "Live at Home" as "Communities" and to a decision to take over active managerial responsibility. Implementation of these conclusions could have been at a measured pace but Covid-19 and its dramatic immediate impact on MHA's funding accelerated them. We had to share the pain with a reduction in our staff. Heading into 2021 our manager Angela Flux and her small team, all part timers, are now also responsible for our sister scheme in Ealing and have a brief for the future to extend further across West London.

Looking back over the more than 20 years that the local scheme was managed locally there have been three key factors in its success. All played their part: First the part time managers and their teams who delivered to the members; second MHA's back office support and cash contributions; and third the work of dedicated local volunteers and, in particular, those active on the Support Committee and fund raising groups. All three will continue to play their part as we emerge from "lockdown" and Angela and her team can once again offer a full range of services to our 400 West London Communities members.

19/05/21