

EDITION 18: SUMMER 2014 - *Simple to date, important news that affects Octavia residents*

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

DID YOU KNOW?



As an Octavia tenant you have access to a number of services that you may not be aware of, all at no cost to you.

Visit octaviahousing.org.uk/wedothatoo to find out more about services including:

- Employment and training
- Apprenticeships and opportunities for young people
- Care and support services
- Shared area improvements
- Benefits advice, debt advice and budgeting help
- Energy advice

We are just about to launch this year apprenticeship scheme, please see inside for more information.

Summer 'Future Olympians' – keep your children busy this summer

One of our partners Solidarity Sports are offering a free summer sports programme for children aged 7-11 running from 28th July to 22 August, from 12-4pm every day. Every child will get a free healthy lunch and a chance to try out different team sports including a week of tennis. Taking place at Rugby Portobello Trust, 221 Walmer Road London W11 4EY. To book a place contact Sean on 0207 376 0032 or 07958 599 922.



What do you think of this newsletter?

Let us know at: E update@octavia.org.uk

Contact us

Repairs:

T 0800 479 0011 (freephone)

Customer Services:

T 020 8354 5500 E info@octavia.org.uk

W www.octaviahousing.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW?



Apprenticeships and paid Internships



We are running two different types of schemes for our residents.

Residents aged 16-24 years who are unemployed and not in full-time education can apply to join our annual apprenticeship scheme. Residents who have completed a degree and are aged up to 25 can apply to join our paid internship scheme. Subject to funding every year, these schemes offer up to five young people the chance to work with Octavia for a year and study or train at the same time.



We have kick-started a lots of young careers into different industries and professions since the schemes began. We offer support and guidance along the way. In November 2013, Beth Wright started at Octavia as Apprentice Care and Support Administrator.

"I found out about the role through my Mum and Dad, they got a letter from Octavia and they suggested to me that I went for it. I decided to apply to get more experience in this field and to get an opportunity. I was looking for work for around six months and it was really difficult to find something. I'm really enjoying what I'm doing, all of the different aspects, there's loads going on. I like what the support workers do, I've grown up in this area and they give back to my community, so it would be a nice thing for me to aim for. This apprenticeship will help me to get a job in the future; I'm getting loads of experience, so I'll be able to show them what I've learnt. It's a really great opportunity and more young people need to take it."

This month we will begin recruiting for apprenticeships in Administration, Youth Work and Plumbing. For more information or just to reserve a space at any of our events taking place on the 25th, 29th July and 1st August, please contact Kyrsha Haynes at the Foundation on 020 8354 5686 or email kyrsha.haynes@octavia.org.uk



Employment and training



Aside from our apprenticeships scheme we offer a free employment

and training service through the Octavia Foundation, our sister charity. The service is available to Octavia tenants and anyone in your household as well as other residents over the age of 16 who live in Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Brent or Hammersmith & Fulham.

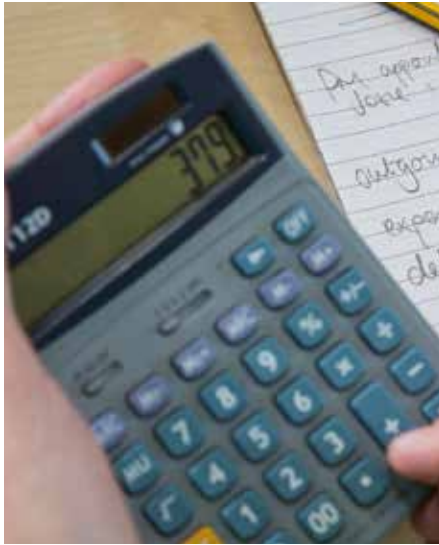
We tailor our service to your needs and our aim is to build relationships and support people over long periods of time.

We can provide help with:

- ▶ one-to-one mentoring and support during your job search;
- ▶ creating or updating your CV and preparing for interviews;
- ▶ completing application forms;
- ▶ free internet access to jobsites; and
- ▶ finding work placements, training courses and volunteering opportunities.

You can also visit the Advice Plus Job Shop for advice on how to find a job, help writing your CV and use computers to search and apply for the latest vacancies online; drop in every Monday 1-4pm at the Beethoven Centre in Queens Park. Contact Kyrsha Haynes on 0208 354 5686 to find out more information about both services.

Time to review your household budget



It is a good idea to review your household budget from time to time to see what changes could be made to reduce your outgoings, clear debts and save money for important events in your life. Comparison websites can help you to quickly scour the market for the best deals. You could save yourself hundreds of pounds each year by just comparing the providers of your services and then switching provider! And it only takes a few minutes! We asked our communications group to analyse the following comparison sites for us and here's what they said:

1. ★★★★★



My Home Energy Switch
www.nhf.billscutter.com

Tenants said: 'This website is great because you do not need to set up an account to get a quote. Also tells you how long it will take to complete and saves your details as you go along, so you can return at any time.'

2. ★★★★★



Compare the market
www.comparethemarket.com

Tenants said: 'This website is simple, engaging, colourful and useful to use if English is not

BE INVOLVED

Contact Anna de Souza, Resident Involvement Manager:
020 8354 5674 or anna.desouza@octavia.org.uk or visit our website.

YourSpace! 2014

Another year and another fun filled event. This year's YourSpace, our annual fun day for residents, was better than ever with over 350 residents of all ages attending the new venue of St Charles College in Ladbrooke Grove. We gathered residents' views on the priorities for the year ahead, promoted a number of services that we have on offer to help sustain tenancies and enjoyed some fun activities for all.

The day was a great way to meet Octavia staff, Mears representatives, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and many other community organisations, neighbours and friends. The feature of the day was our brand new 'Did you know... We do that too' campaign which highlights the range of 'personalised' services that we have available to tenants to help them sustain their tenancies (visit octaviahousing.org.uk/wedothattoo for more information or pick up your brochure in our Reception).

There were also lots of fun activities, including face painting, nail art,

family portraits, mural painting, Solidarity Sports smoothie making and sports activities and a special Silver Comedy show for older people. The day came to an end with a delicious Caribbean lunch and announcement of the prize draw winners. Prizes included a Samsung Galaxy tablet kindly donated by our contractors Willmott Dixon, a £80 Halfords Vouchers kindly donated by Village Heating and a £75 Amazon voucher kindly donated by Lewis Silkin. Thank you to all who participated and to all those who gave their feedback about the services they receive and their views about where we should focus our attentions in the year ahead.



Pay your rent on time and win £1000

It pays to pay your rent. Every 3 months we have a prize draw for residents who pay their rent by direct debit with the chance to win £250. We also offer all residents who have a clear rent account at the end of our financial year the chance to win £1000 in an annual prize draw.

Congratulations to Mr Clive Hall who won this year's prize.

"We've lived in an Octavia home since 1972, and we've been in this flat since 1989."



your first language. There are three simple steps and you do not need to set up an account to get a quote.'

3. ★ ★ ★ ★



Money Supermarket
www.moneysupermarket.com

Tenants said: 'There is a good menu bar at the top of the site, which allows you to know how many steps you have left without having to set up an account.'

Some other sites you may want to check out are www.uswitch.com and www.confused.com



If you pay your rent by direct debit, your name goes into a raffle and each month someone gets picked out. They rang me last month – it was a Friday morning, about half past nine. I can't remember what I was doing but the lady said: 'Mr Hall, you've won a thousand pounds.' I said thanks, but I was surprised – Octavia have so many tenants, so for my name to come up was really unexpected. I kept smiling the whole rest of the day. They are pretty good people. I think I've spent it already, before I've even got the cheque! Now I want to win the lottery. I've got a funny feeling about it."



How clean is your shower?



Are you aware that it is possible for the water that you shower in to be contaminated with bacteria?

This can be a problem but simple precautions can keep your shower water clean:

- ▶ Inspect your shower-head regularly and if there is limescale or other visible dirt which can allow germs to grow, clean it using a brush then soak it in a cleaning solution [cleaning your shower head will also improve the flow of water for a better, wetter shower]
- ▶ If you have a shower with a flexible hose, keep the shower-head on the wall support provided which will prevent any water remaining in the hose.
- ▶ Following a holiday or if the shower has not been used an extended period, it is important to flush the pipes and hose before taking a shower. You should run the shower hot for at least 2 minutes before getting into it.

Get a financial check-up



Your Credit Union is offering all loan applicants a financial check-up which will include giving members free access to their credit report and information; how to avoid making mistakes when trying to recover from a bad credit rating and how to challenge wrong information.

For further information contact YourCU visit: www.yourcu.co.uk or call: 020 7605 6341.

Do you have Home Contents Insurance?



Octavia do not cover the contents of your home against loss or damage. We realise home contents insurance may be the last thing on many tenants' minds, especially when there are so many other outgoings. You may be aware of the special affordable home contents insurance scheme available to **Octavia Housing tenants**.

For more information, please contact us for a free information pack.

Hate – Don't put up with it – Report it!



A hate incident is when someone targets you in any way because of your race, disability, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity and nationality. We will not tolerate hate related harassment of any of our residents or their neighbours. We see this behaviour as a serious form of anti-social behaviour and we will take action to make sure the incidents stop.

If you have experienced a hate incident, we want to hear from you. We will always treat what you tell us with the strictest confidence and consult you before we take any action. We will never tell the perpetrator who made the complaint without your consent. To report a hate incident, contact your Neighbourhood Officer, Leasehold Services Officer or Supported Housing Officer on 020 8354 5500 or visit our website for more information.



Unchecked boilers are potentially killers

As your landlord, we are required by law to carry out annual gas safety checks. As part of tenancy agreements, you must allow us into your home to perform these checks. Octavia was recently successful in securing an Injunction against a tenant to enable us to access their home to carry out the mandatory gas check. What was unique about this order was that the Court awarded access to carry out the test for the lifetime of the tenancy. The tenant also had to pay court costs of £700.

To avoid this happening to you, please allow access to carry out this test.

Tenants satisfaction with our approach in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour



The feedback you provide helps us to improve how we deal with Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Disputes. In the last financial year (2012-2013), we fully investigated and closed 60 reported cases. We received feedback from just under half of the residents who had made a complaint (47%). Two main points included:

- ▶ How satisfied the complainant was with how the case was handled by staff – 68% of our residents said they were satisfied, and
- ▶ How satisfied they were with the final outcome of the case – 64% of residents said they were satisfied.

It is really useful to get your feedback in this area so we have introduced a new incentive scheme to encourage you to give us more information after a case has been closed. Residents who complete and return our survey will be entered into a quarterly prize draw and will have a chance to win £25.00 in High Street Gift Vouchers. You can also always give us general feedback via our website.

Our performance

We closely monitor performance in all areas of our work in order to improve. A summary of how we are doing in key areas is below.

The figures given below are an average of results every three months:

Services	Apr-Jun 2013	July-Sept 2013	Oct-Dec 2013	Jan-Mar 2014	Our target
Resident satisfaction					
Your satisfaction with our service overall (results from our internal survey)	96%	93%	96%	96%	90%
Repairs completed on time					
Emergency	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%
Urgent	98.9%	99.8%	99.3%	99.7%	98%
Routine	99.2%	99.2%	99.6%	99.7%	98%
In your neighbourhood					
Number of anti-social behaviour cases reported (average per month)	2	2	4	7	
Calls answered in time					
To our customer services line	92%	93%	93%	92%	94%
To our repairs line	93%	92%	93%	94%	94%
Lettings					
Lettings to local authority nominations	28%	487%	75%	44%	
Lettings to transfers	49%	36%	21%	41%	
Other lettings	23%	16%	4%	15%	

Authorised absence and abandoned properties policy

There are literally thousands of people waiting to get an affordable property. If we suspect that a resident has abandoned their property, and/or they have a principle home somewhere else we will take action to take back the tenancy. There are a number of ways you can help us take appropriate action if you plan on being away from your home for an extended period.

Please contact your Neighbourhood / Supported Housing Officer if you would like to discuss an extended absence from your property, or you suspect that property has been abandoned and/or the resident has a principle home elsewhere. You can download a copy of the Authorised Absence and Abandoned Properties Policy from our website, or call us on 020 8354 5500 in confidence if you would like a copy in the post.

Be aware of fire risks in your block



It's important to know your fire plan and to know your responsibilities. If you do not know your fire plan for your block then please contact us or visit knowtheplan.co.uk for advice from London Fire Brigade.

WELFARE REFORM

WE CAN HELP YOU TAKE CONTROL!

We know that many tenants are worried about what these changes mean but we can provide you with advice and support if you will be affected. For more information, please contact our Financial Inclusion Officer on 0208 354 5638.

Please contact us if you need any part of this information in Braille, on audio tape or explained in a different language.

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