

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

RESIDENT ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15



How have Octavia performed over the last year?



What do the 2015 budget announcements mean for residents?



What are Octavia's plans for 2015?

How are you helping residents affected by the welfare cuts?



Welcome to this special edition of our newsletter, where we explain about some of the things we've done over the past year, how residents have been involved in our work, our performance and satisfaction ratings, and plans for the future.

This year we launched our **Did you know? We do that too!** campaign aimed at making sure residents knew about the free services available to them – services that help people back into work, gain new skills, manage their money, get help at home, and more.

A changing world – The Budget 2015

This newsletter went to the printers after the Chancellor announced the budget proposals. The changes he is proposing will have a significant effect on many residents. There will be changes to welfare benefits, there are proposals for rent reductions for the next five years, and for those on higher incomes, possibly rent increases. On top of this there is an intention to extend the Right to Buy to all housing associations. Many of the details of the proposals are not clear and so at this stage we cannot tell you what to expect in detail. But as we find out more, we will publish updates on our website and in future editions of this newsletter.

Repairs and home maintenance

In 2014/15 our repairs service consistently met targets with satisfaction over 90%. However, we know there is more we can do and we started a programme of repairs focus groups which will help us understand residents' experiences better.



This year in numbers:

18,250 day-to-day repairs

95 kitchen replacements

95 bathroom replacements

95% (average) resident satisfaction with the repairs service

330 tenants supported through our handyman service

Your home and neighbourhood



"We've had a stairlift and a handrail installed in the bathroom. It has made a very big difference. My husband's mobility is not very good and it enables him to move around the flat rather than staying in one room because he can't go up and down the stairs by himself." —Ruby

We focus on care for the individual, supporting older and vulnerable adults to stay active, take care of themselves, continue to be part of their local community and to stay as independent as they wish for as long as possible. For more information on the types of services we provide, please visit www.octaviasupport.org.uk.

In November, the Care Quality Commission visited one of our extra care schemes, James Hill House and awarded it an overall rating of 'good', with the same 'good' standard achieved in the five themes of the inspection: safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

This year in numbers:

19 major adaptations

93 minor home adaptations

Supported **2** households to move to more suitable adapted properties

96% satisfaction with adaptations made

120 members at our **3** day centres, which scored **99%** satisfaction rating

123 people received help through our floating support service, which scored a **90%** satisfaction rating

89 people referred to the Housing Caseworker service (the purpose of this service is to visit tenants living in general housing who may have support needs and to help them access the appropriate support service).

£ Rent and money

One of our priorities this year has been to help tenants who have been affected by changes to the welfare system.

This year in numbers:

307 tenants supported by our financial inclusion officer

227 tenants supported with welfare reform advice through our home-visit universal credit awareness programme

1,040 one-to-one debt and benefits advice sessions, run in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau

80% of residents feel their rent provides value for money



During 2014/15 our average rent went up from £116.63 a week to £122.67 a week. The increase was mostly due to the government's 'target rent' formula for setting rent levels. Our average rent as a percentage of the private market equivalent went down from 28% to 25%, and remains well below the government's target level for social housing.

👤 Digital Champions

Digital Champions is our digital inclusion service, which helps tenants and residents in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to improve their computer skills. These skills have become increasingly important, with many employment and benefits applications having to be completed online.



The year in numbers:

25 tenants took part in the Digital Champions scheme by the end of March 2015

160 hours of one-to-one support provided by volunteers

"I have never used a computer before, but my Digital Champion William has lots of patience with me. I am still learning and will continue to try my best." —Mr Milanovic, service user

🏠 Moving home

When a tenant wants to move home, we recommend they consider a home swap or buying a home through shared ownership, as well as registering on our transfer waiting list. This year we provided homes to more first-time buyers and shared owners than ever before. For more information, please visit our website or go to; www.locata.org.uk and www.homeswapper.co.uk. Remember you can access the internet for free at our Octavia head office.

This year in numbers:

149 lettings, including **22** at new developments

52 transfers

20 mutual exchanges and home swaps made

£ Energy advice

Our energy team offers tenants free advice on saving energy, including home energy checks, help with energy supplier comparisons and information about grants.

We have recently secured planning permission to add external insulation to some properties in the W9 area of Westminster, which will improve the comfort of residents and also reduce energy bills.

This year in numbers:

Cavity wall insulation added to **115** flats

External wall insulation added to **6** flats and **1** house

Draught proofing installed on **238** flats

New double glazed windows installed on **100** flats

Boilers replaced at **237** flats



Community



Volunteering with Octavia is a great chance for you to get involved in your local community, meet new people and gain new skills and experiences that will enhance your CV and employment prospects.

This year, we helped 25 residents find voluntary work in the Octavia Foundation charity shops, at our youth activities, in office or care home roles, and in our befriending service for older or vulnerable local people.

“For anyone looking to acquire more skills, volunteering with Octavia is a really good first step. It’s helped to get me out of the house for one thing, but it’s also got me motivated and excited for future job opportunities. I know I’m getting useful knowledge and experience for any future paid role.” – [Vaniche, volunteer](#)



Shared areas, car parks and gardens

In May 2014, we carried out an Estate Services survey as an opportunity for residents to feedback on the services they are receiving. The survey was sent out to 2,100 residents and we received 196 responses (9%).

Of the responses received:

65% residents were satisfied with our overall estate service

64% residents were satisfied with the cleaning of internal shared areas

66% residents were satisfied with cleaning of external shared areas

63% residents were satisfied with the grounds maintenance service

Following this feedback, we have made some changes to the way some of our services are delivered, including the start of our in-house mobile caretaker service and a new partnership with John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance to provide a grounds maintenance service to our properties. We will carry out regular inspections and spot-checks to measure if these changes will provide better value for money for our residents.

Resident Inspectors will also be carrying out a number of inspections over the next year, and will feedback their views on the services being delivered, and areas where they believe improvements can be made.

We also carried out improvements to the shared areas of some of our properties:

- ▶ stripping and sealing the communal stairs at Mulberry Court to make them easier to maintain;
- ▶ improving bin storage at properties on Randolph Avenue, Oakington Road and Fernhead Road; and
- ▶ adding extra security lighting for residents at Waites Court and Lonsdale Road.

This year, 26 older or vulnerable tenants received help with gardening through our free Garden Guardians service.

Employment and training



Our employment and training service supports Octavia residents of working age and anyone that lives or has studied in Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Brent or Hammersmith and Fulham. They will be recruiting for this year's apprenticeship and internship programme in July 2015 so look out for the flyer or call the employment team now on [020 8354 5686](tel:02083545686) for further information.

"I met with an employment advisor whose role is specifically to help Octavia tenants to find work. We talked about what I'd done so far and what I was looking to do in the future. A week later, I got a call to say the lettings team at Octavia were looking for a volunteer administrator. Taking up this position gave me really helpful experience. Bit by bit, I got more responsibility and practice." —Nura

This year in numbers:

26 residents supported into work

121 residents registered on employment support projects

Young tenants

A highlight of the year was The Story of Queens Park Rangers, an intergenerational media project which brought together young people, fans and the local community surrounding the football team. The project produced a film called The R' Story that was screened all over London.



This year in numbers:

165 children and young people took part in activities at BASE (our award-winning club for 7–21 year olds)

More than **1,000** people watched The R' Story film at local venues including The Bush Theatre, Westfield shopping centre and The Tricycle

7 young people involved with the film secured employment in the media industry

Resident involvement



The Services Scrutiny Panel work on priorities that residents identify at our annual Your Space event each year. This year, they focused on service charges and communication. The panel made a number of recommendations for service charges including reviewing our policy so it is up to date and improving the information available so residents can more easily see what services are provided at their scheme and the cost of those services. All the members of the panel, which includes 3 residents, offer their time on a voluntary basis and delve into the detail of each of the services they

A range of other resident involvement activities took place including:

More than **350** residents attended our Your Space event in June 2014

18 resident meetings and **7** drop-in surgeries as well as **4** interactive workshops and **3** focus groups

More than **35** residents came along to the Tenant Steering Group's annual general meeting

We helped our Resident Associations organise local social events and arranged a grand tour of the Houses of Parliament

scrutinise. Their reports to the Board play an important role in ensuring that services continue to improve and meet the needs and expectations of residents.

Special thanks to our Resident Inspectors who have been out and about obtaining feedback from other residents on projects involving how we communicate with residents living in blocks, feedback from new homeowners at Elizabeth House, inspections of void properties and capturing resident experiences of the Quest day centre.

Complaints

We received 114 complaints (down from 141 in 2013/14). 96% of complaints were responded to within our target timeframes. Although the majority of complaints (89%) were resolved at the earliest stages, residents were unhappy with 12 responses and took those complaints to our independent Complaints Panel. The Panel upheld 2 of the complaints due to delays in repairs and delays in putting the right defects in a new scheme. We always review complaints so we can improve in the future.



Future plans and performance

“Moving into extra care schemes at the right time prevents vulnerable residents’ needs increasing to a level where they are unable to continue to live independently.”

—Councillor Lily Bath, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

We will soon welcome the first residents of Park Lodge House, a development of 36 apartments that have been specially designed for older people with care needs. Located in Hounslow, Park Lodge House will support residents to live independently and maintain social links and family relationships.

The new, expanded Kensington Day Centre will be complete by spring 2016 and will offer three flexible areas which can be arranged into open, accessible public spaces or quieter spaces for private meetings, therapies and treatments along with a café, and a diverse program of activities for those over 50.

New developments

Campden Hill Road, W8
11 family-sized affordable rented homes

Fitzroy Place, Westminster
54 affordable homes (40 rented) at the former Middlesex Hospital in the area known as Fitzrovia

Walpole Lodge, Putney Plaza, Wandsworth
34 shared ownership homes

Anti-social behaviour

The government has made substantial changes to the law on anti-social behaviour. The changes focus on putting the needs of victims first and giving local authorities, police and social landlords extra powers to respond to reports of anti-social behaviour.

New measures include the Community Trigger, which gives people who are not happy with how their report of anti-social behaviour has been handled the right to ask for an independent review. It is up to local authorities to decide how the Community Trigger will work in their area, but it will typically apply if someone has complained three times in a six month period and feels nothing has been done.

The Community Remedy is designed to give victims of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour more of a say in how the offender is dealt with. Each police force will consult with members of the public and community representatives to produce a Community Remedy document for its area.

We have revised our procedures on anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes to reflect the changes in the law, and continue to provide training for our frontline staff on tackling anti-social behaviour.

Visit our website for all our latest policies and information.

Welfare reform

We will continue to provide advice and support to residents affected by welfare reform changes such as the bedroom tax, benefits cap and Universal Credit, both directly and through the debt and benefits advice service we provide in partnership with Citizens Advice. We will also look for opportunities to provide new types of support to meet the needs of residents.

The Octavia Foundation will continue to support people back into work and develop digital skills that will help their employment prospects and assist them to access benefits and other important services online.

Tenancy fraud

In 2014/15, we recovered nine properties from tenants who were illegally sub-letting or not using the property as their principal home. Sub-letting is not only a breach of tenancy – it is also a criminal offence. In the coming year we will conduct further checks and audits to identify tenancy fraud, to make sure that everyone living in an Octavia home is entitled to do so.

A major milestone for Octavia

2015 is the 150th anniversary of Octavia Hill acquiring her first property to rent to Londoners on low incomes. Later in the year, we will be publishing *A Life More Noble*, a book full of stories and reflections from residents, staff and well-known figures including Ian Hislop, Alan Johnson, Deborah Meaden and Maxine Peake.

Many thanks to the residents who have shared their stories with us for this project. We're still looking for photographs which show how our homes and neighbourhoods have changed over the years. If you have an old photo featuring your home, please email louise.ashwell@octavia.org.uk or call 020 8354 5691.



Look out for our Golden Ticket



We are planning some exciting events this year, one of which will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of when Octavia Hill acquired her first property. In the next few months, we will be sending out a few golden entry tickets for these events. You never know, you and one other person could have the opportunity to come and enjoy this event as a VIP guest!

What do you think of this annual report? [Let us know at update@octavia.org.uk](mailto:update@octavia.org.uk)

If you need any part of this information in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or explained in a different language, please email update@octavia.org.uk

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