

# RESIDENTS' ANNUAL REPORT

## 2015/16



Each year, we produce an annual report for residents, which details some of the things that we have done over the last twelve months.

In this document we aim to provide a summary of how we, and the many dedicated residents who regularly attend committees and focus groups or who give their feedback more generally, have worked to improve our properties and the services that we offer to residents and wider local communities.

### INSIDE:

- ▶ A round up of the year.
- ▶ Residents' priorities (You Said... We Did).
- ▶ Performance highlights and satisfaction ratings.
- ▶ Reshaping our teams to provide a better service.
- ▶ Our plans for next year.

# WELCOME



Our ambition has always been to provide good homes and opportunities for better lives – a sentiment inspired by our Founder, Octavia Hill who started her work in housing 150 years ago. During a year filled with significant policy changes and economic pressures for both Octavia and our residents, her inspiration remains an important guide as to how we invest for the next 150 years.

Throughout the year we completed new homes; invested substantially in improving existing homes; and made changes to develop and improve services for residents including adding to our care and support services for older people.

Highlights for the year include marking our 150th anniversary; merging with Ducane Housing Association, a small organisation with likeminded ethos and ambition; completing 168 new homes; and opening a brand new care home in Hounslow.

2015 marked 150 years since Octavia Hill acquired her first property.

We produced a book made up of contributions from our residents, staff, celebrities, service users and others, who reflect on her ambition to make “individual life noble, homes happy and family life good”.

Visit [www.lifemorenable.co.uk](http://www.lifemorenable.co.uk) for more information. Also thanks to everyone who helped and provided their stories.



We opened up a state of the art facility designed specifically for older residents with extra care needs.

Park Lodge House was developed in close partnership with Hounslow Local Authority and is situated at Sutton Lane, Hounslow, providing 36 homes for older people. The scheme has created a beautiful community atmosphere, where residents can live independently with 24 hour support and have the use of excellent communal facilities including a specially designed landscaped garden.



# YOU SAID... WE DID



During 2015/16 residents gave us feedback in a number of ways including at Your Space (our annual resident fun day), by completing surveys, and attending focus groups.

Here are some highlights of what residents said, and what we did.

**“** You said...  
*Getting repairs right the first time is a top priority.*

**We did...**

We consistently met target times for repairs. We have also increased the number of inspections carried out after jobs are completed to ensure that the quality of work is high. The Services Scrutiny Panel have also been working with us to ensure more jobs are completed right the first time.

**“** You said...  
*Energy efficiency is important – what are Octavia doing to make homes more efficient?*

**We did...**

We offer energy advice to residents. Over the last year we completed a programme of cavity wall and loft insulations. This year we are starting on a programme of works to install external wall insulation to some of our street properties. Our target is to get all of our properties up to at least a 'C' energy efficiency rating by 2023.

**“** You said...  
*The complaints process is too long and faster resolutions are needed.*

**We did...**

We are reviewing our Complaints Policy and will look to shorten the complaints process and introduce a new 'early resolution' stage where our focus is to sort out the problems quickly.

**“** You said...  
*Defects (for new residents) can take too long to put right.*

**We did...**

We are monitoring any defects problems more closely through our IT Contact Management System. The number of defects needing repeat calls to sort out the problems are reducing as a result.

**“** You said...  
*Welfare Reform is a big concern.*

**We did...**

We provided the Tenants Steering Group with regular reports on the impact Welfare Reform was having. We also worked with the Citizens Advice Bureau to give over 1,000 appointments for welfare and debt advice. 21 households affected by the Spare Room Subsidy (also known as the 'bedroom tax') have been assisted to move to a smaller property. We visited over 75 households to discuss the new Universal Credit benefit which is gradually replacing housing benefit.

**“** You said...  
*The Tenants Steering Group asked that residents be made more aware of all their options when considering an adaptation.*

**We did...**

Our new Adaptations Policy has a more complete approach. Our Support team assess a resident's needs with them, and provide the resident with full information about the choices open to them. This may include minor and/or major adaptations, or a move to a more suitable property.

# PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS – HOW DID WE DO LAST YEAR?

## £ Rent and money

The average market rent in London increased by around 8% and the number of people who are seeking affordable homes in London continues to rise with over 263,000 households on waiting lists for London boroughs (an increase of over 7,000 last year according to Halifax Plc). Meanwhile, Octavia rents reduced by 1% last year, keeping our average rent levels to below 30% of market levels. We also built 168 new homes – 112 for social rent and 56 for shared ownership and are in the midst of building more.

Many residents have been feeling the effects of welfare reform changes and plans were introduced to reduce the maximum benefits per household to £442 per week for couples and £296 per week for single people, starting in

autumn 2016. With this in mind, we increased promotion of our debt advice service and made more personal visits to households most severely affected.

- ▶ **75** residents supported with welfare reform advice through our home-visit universal credit awareness programme.
- ▶ **1040** one-to-one debt and benefits advice sessions, run in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau provided.
- ▶ **80%** of surveyed residents told us that they felt that their rent provides value for money.



## 🔧 Repairs and home maintenance

Our aim is to maintain your homes to a good standard while ensuring value for money. Many of our homes are built in the Victorian era, located in conservation areas and some are listed buildings, all of which can make works more challenging and expensive. Part of the way we tackle this issue is to invest in additional works as part of our cyclical programme (trying to do more work in one go and investing in long term improvements). We also increased investment in new kitchens and bathrooms and major repairs over the year and we made changes to our contracts with Mears and Village Heating Ltd who provide repairs and gas servicing, which resulted in a better service and reduction in costs.



- ▶ **17,884** day-to-day repairs.
- ▶ **120** kitchen replacements.
- ▶ **109** bathroom replacements.
- ▶ **452** tenants supported through our handyman service.

## £ Energy and fuel bills

On average our properties have a generally low energy rating but fuel bills are a growing concern for residents and so we continue to invest in energy works (last year was our third of a ten year project to improve energy performance of our properties). We also managed to overcome local planning guidance issues which previously prevented wall insulation works to some of our older properties and we offer all residents free energy advice through workshops, on our website and in our publications.



- ▶ External wall insulation added to **6** homes.
- ▶ Draught proofing installed on **233** homes.
- ▶ New double glazed windows installed on **28** homes.
- ▶ Boilers replaced at **102** flats.
- ▶ **28** properties had loft insulation increased to a depth of 300mm.

## Employment and training

One way of helping support residents in the challenging economic climate is to assist with training and employment opportunities. We have provided apprenticeships; offered volunteering and work placements; and partnered with local boroughs to provide support.

This year we are also launching a new programme offering workshops on CV writing, interview preparation and confidence building.

Visit [www.octaviafoundation.org.uk](http://www.octaviafoundation.org.uk) for the latest information.



- ▶ **26** residents were supported into work.
- ▶ We visited a number of homes alongside the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and managed to speak with **30** residents, who were interested in finding out more about this service. We will be doing some more visits before the end of the year.

## Home and neighbourhood

Over the year we made some big changes to the way our teams are structured so that we can respond to resident's queries more efficiently (more details later our report). The year saw complaints fall from 114 in 2014/15 to 111 and we responded to 96% in target timeframes.



- ▶ **82%** of residents were satisfied with the service provided from Octavia (up **14%** from 3 years prior)\*
- ▶ **86%** are satisfied with your neighbourhood as a place to live (up **10%**)\*
- ▶ **78%** are satisfied with the quality of your homes (up **4%**)
- ▶ **6** properties recovered due to illegal subletting (where residents were letting out their homes for a profit).

\*Results from latest satisfaction survey held in 2016

## Communal areas

Our Residential and Mobile Caretaker teams, take great pride in maintaining our properties to a high standard.

The teams also regularly work with residents to implement ideas for improvements. This year improvements at different schemes included increasing CCTV, redesigning bin storage areas and improving gardens. These are small changes but they can have a big impact.



Residents rated our communal services on a scale of 1–10:

- ▶ Our overall communal services — **7.5**
- ▶ Cleaning of communal services — **8**
- ▶ Grounds maintenance service — **7.4**
- ▶ Value for money of communal services — **7.8**

Source: Monthly Resident Satisfaction Survey, October 2016

## Young People

Providing opportunities for young people is an important part of our mission. Through the Octavia Foundation charity shops we fund projects for young people which focus on improving their skills, employability, confidence and more.



- ▶ **116** children and young people took part in activities at BASE (our award-winning club for 7–21 year olds).
- ▶ **75** young people took part in the exciting photography project *Yo! London*. They undertook documentary film training and a photography master class from Charlie Phillips (famous local photographer). World renowned photographer Rankin also attended the launch and took part in a Q&A session for a live audience of residents and other supporters.

## Moving home

The demand for affordable housing is increasing but we work with the national services Locata ([www.locata.org.uk](http://www.locata.org.uk)) and homeswapper ([www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)) to be able to offer Octavia residents more options should they want to move. We also offer incentives to encourage residents who no longer need the space they have to move to smaller properties.

The average number of days we have a vacant property after residents have moved out was also reduced by 6 days this year, which means we were able to provide homes faster to people waiting.

On the home ownership side, the average price of a property in London increased over the year to £530,000 (around 18 times the average income), which means that buying a home is becoming even more difficult for many. Over the year we provided more shared ownership properties with the aim of giving local people a chance of owning a share of a home in London, close to where they work or where they had been living.

- ▶ **250** lettings.
- ▶ **69** transfers.
- ▶ **16** mutual exchanges and home swaps.



## Community, care and support

A high percentage of Octavia residents are over 50 and the trend is that we are all living longer – which means we have been growing our support for older people when around the country funding for care and support services is generally being reduced.

Last year, we opened a new extra-care scheme and are in the process of building another one, which will bring our total number of extra-care facilities to seven. We also made improvements to our adaptations service so that people can continue to live in their homes independently for longer.

All our care homes continue to receive positive ratings from the Care Quality Commission and over the year, a survey of service users reported 96% satisfaction.

- ▶ **3,434** hours of befriending given. This is where vital emotional support is provided to people who are isolated. Each individual is carefully matched with a volunteer befriender who visits every week for at least six months.
- ▶ **43** major adaptations made and **182** minor adaptations provided.
- ▶ **100%** satisfaction with the adaptations.
- ▶ **142** members attended our **3** day centres, which scored a **100%** overall satisfaction rating.
- ▶ **83** people received help through our floating support service, which scored a **100%** overall satisfaction rating.
- ▶ We have expanded the reach of our floating support, which means the service is now available for people 18 and over.



## Resident involvement

We involve residents in various ways to help shape how we deliver all our services. The Services Scrutiny Panel (SSP) is one of Octavia's key groups where residents can closely look at how well specific services are doing and make recommendations on how we can improve. The Panel work on priorities from the wider resident group, which are gathered at various resident events and from ongoing performance information. All the members of the Panel, which includes 5 residents, offer their time on a voluntary basis and check our services in detail.

In 2015/16 they completed their check on service charge information. The Panel recommended that we use new software to set service charges to improve accuracy, and we have changed statements and communications to make charging detail clearer and easier to understand. Their latest project is a review of our communal cleaning services and they are currently looking at how we can more effectively communicate and monitor standards.

The Panel report their recommendations to the Board and play an important role in ensuring we listen to resident feedback and our services continue to improve.

- ▶ More than **250** residents attended our Your Space event in June 2015.
- ▶ More than **22** residents came along to the Tenant Steering Group's annual general meeting in November 2015.
- ▶ We helped **5** active resident groups in Pimlico, Wembley, St John's Wood, West Hampstead and Fulham to organise a range of local social events, including resident consultation meetings, summer and end of year parties.



# RESHAPING THE SERVICE WE PROVIDE

In a recent survey, some of you told us that you wanted a clear understanding of our organisational structure, including any changes within teams and staff roles and responsibilities. Over the year we changed our services to improve how quickly and efficiently we can respond to your enquiries. As part of these improvements, we reshaped four of our existing teams. What do these changes mean for residents?

## Customer Contact Team

In March 2016, we opened the phone lines to our new Customer Contact Team, who are able to deal with a range of enquires at the first point of contact, including:

- ▶ Basic advice on all services.
- ▶ Rent account information, including balances and if housing benefit has been received on your account.
- ▶ Advice about exchanging your home.
- ▶ Support in registering residents for a transfer.
- ▶ Making an appointment with a surveyor.
- ▶ Car parking permit requests and enquiries.
- ▶ Web PIN access codes so that you can use your personal secure online account ('My Account') to report issues or access basic information, such as your rent balance or property information.

This means that you no longer need to contact the income team about making a rent payment or enquiring about a service charge, but your Income Officer can still help with matters relating to housing benefit, budgeting and sustaining your tenancy.

We also invested in staff training and technology to ensure we deliver a better service and we appointed a new Customer Contact Manager (Kim Parkins) to oversee the change.



*"Our aim is to provide a quicker service to residents. Overtime we will be adding to the list of tasks we can manage through the contact team so we can deal with more things at the first point of contact."*

**Kim Parkins, Customer Contact Manager**

## Resident Services Officers

Since February a new team of Resident Services Officers (RSOs), previously referred to as Neighbourhood Officers, are on hand to deal with day to day tenancy issues, which includes providing initial support or signposting to other services available for some of our more vulnerable residents. They also report back any concerns or feedback from residents and are helping to organise more community events, which means we are more in touch.



*"I am really keen to get to know residents well and provide a good service – especially where cases are complex, so that I can refer them if additional support is required."*

**Meleta Brown, Resident Services Officer**

## Investigation Officers

We take all reports of illegal or anti-social behaviour seriously, look into them thoroughly and take robust action to tackle the problems.

To help us investigate and resolve these issues in the most effective way, we appointed two Investigation Officers who are dedicated to investigating reports of anti-social behaviour and tenancy fraud. These issues can be complicated and they take up considerable time. Having two officers who are devoted only to these issues means that anyone experiencing or involved in cases of this nature has one contact who specialises in managing this process and keeping them informed.



*"The most important people I speak to in tackling ASB and Tenancy Fraud are the people directly affected by these behaviours. I look forward to working with residents to make sure that everyone has the right to live peacefully in their neighbourhood."*

**Simon Boden, Investigation Officer**

## Communal Services Team

In January 2016, we appointed 3 Communal Services Team Leaders who are responsible for monitoring our cleaning and caretaking services, and other issues relating to the shared areas of our properties, such as grounds maintenance.

Their role is to monitor standards, keep shared areas free from any obstructions or personal belongings that could create a fire risk, and ensure that relevant fire safety signage is visible in all of our properties. The team also have a specific role to work with residents by encouraging them to come forward in identifying potential improvements in their communal areas.

In the past year, we have helped implement improvements at our properties, such as:



- ▶ Installing additional CCTV at a scheme in W12.
- ▶ Developing bin storage areas in W9.
- ▶ Improving gardens in SW6.

If you have a suggestion then please call our Customer Contact Team and ask for a form to be sent out to you.





## Home Ownership and Commercial Services Team

This year, we increased the resources in our 'Alternative Tenures team' (a slightly odd name that caused many people to regularly ask us what it meant) and renamed the service to be called Home Ownership and Commercial Services, which far better reflects what they do and is hopefully a lot clearer for residents and home owners. We will be recruiting for a new Home Ownership Manager who will focus on improving home owners' satisfaction with our service.

The Home Ownership and Commercial Services team will be working towards making sure that the services provided by us and our contractors are improving an offer value for money.



This year, we held a focus group with home owners to discuss their top priorities and here's what they said:

“ Offer better information to prospective buyers, so they understand the product they are buying.

“ Improve transparency in service charges and quality of information provided.

“ Provide better information about the financial realities of home ownership.

“ Resolve issues relating to anti-social behaviour and nuisance effectively.

“ Offer clearer guidance about repair and maintenance responsibilities.

“ Provide a more tailored information and support service.

“ Improve communication by offering efficient ways to get in contact.



Shared Owners, Alexandra and Victoria Webb

Here's what we have done so far to achieve some of these priorities:

✓ Produced a new guide to shared ownership.

✓ Monitoring of repairs to communal areas has improved and a target has been set for post-inspection.

✓ Our website now has more information available on the services we offer and highlights the responsibilities of both parties.

✓ The Customer Contact Team are being trained to provide more information to home owners and have been the first point of contact on recent mail-outs

✓ We now send out quarterly newsletters, which will be sent by email to those who prefer an online version.

✓ We have increased the number of email addresses and phone numbers on our system so that we can contact residents by text and email with general and scheme specific information.

✓ An After-Care Officer has been appointed to work with home owners and contractors on providing an excellent defects and post-sale service.

For more information on this service, please visit [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/for-homeowners](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/for-homeowners)

# WHAT'S NEXT? OUR PLANS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

## Developing more affordable homes

The number of affordable homes in London is still very low and we know that many more families need homes with affordable rents close to where they work or where they have grown up. Our target is to increase our stock by 3% each year. We are currently on target to achieve this despite the reductions in available funding and the limited opportunities in the Capital to build new homes. Our latest developments include:

### THE REED, CONVENT GARDENS W11

The centre will be a new, modern space that brings together diverse groups across generations. This is a redevelopment of what used to be The Kensington Day Centre that provided support for older people. The new Reed Centre will replace the previous Day Care opportunities for older adults and provide a vibrant new hub for young people with state of the art IT facilities to help them learn media and coding skills. The Reed will be a social and modern facility for the whole community.



Gladstone Village, Cricklewood, NW2

### JANE LIDDERDALE HOUSE, CONVENT GARDENS W11

**13** new affordable rented homes for older people (located above The Reed).

### GLADSTONE VILLAGE, CRICKLEWOOD NW2

We are building **8** affordable rented homes and **6** for shared ownership.

### BRIDGEWHARF HOUSE, ISLEWORTH TW7

A brand new extra care scheme for older people with **36** flats (**4** for shared ownership).

### NORTH WHARF ROAD, W2

**25** affordable rented homes and **2** for shared ownership.

### CHADWICK STREET, SW1

**11** affordable rented homes.

### FERNSHAW ROAD, SW10

**3** affordable rented homes.

For more information on these developments, please visit [www.octavia.org.uk](http://www.octavia.org.uk)

## Improving and expanding services

In the coming year we will continue to look at ways to improve our services and provide effective support for residents. Our priorities include:

- ▶ Continuing advice and support for those affected by welfare reform. This includes the steadily increasing number of residents who are starting to receive Universal Credit instead of housing benefit and are now responsible for paying their rent directly to Octavia.
- ▶ Expanding the range of enquiries and requests that can be handled by our new Customer Contact Team.
- ▶ Improving communication and monitoring of standards with our communal cleaning service, and involving residents in that process.
- ▶ Increasing the satisfaction that our home owners have with our services. Our aim is to make services more efficient and to be clearer about the responsibilities of each party (home owners and us).
- ▶ We are implementing a review of the supported housing service and looking at how we ensure we are supporting those living in their own home by considering both their adaptation and support needs together.



# WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS REPORT?

ENTER OUR PRIZE DRAW FOR A  
CHANCE TO WIN A **£50 VOUCHER**  
**OF YOUR CHOICE.**

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by 9 December 2016.

If you would like more information on our services,  
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