

EDITION 19: AUTUMN 2014

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

ACCESS SERVICES AT A TIME THAT'S CONVENIENT FOR YOU

Have you seen our new websites? We recently worked with residents to improve our Housing website, www.octaviahousing.org.uk making it a more useful tool for tenants and homeowners to contact us, report issues, find out about new services on offer and the latest news and events.

All residents can also register to access their own secure online account through our website where you can see:

- ▶ Your rent account
- ▶ The details we hold about you (and update your details if necessary)
- ▶ Report and track repairs and much more.



We also have some other new websites including:

- ▶ www.octavia.org.uk is our overarching site – showing all the information about us, our history and our developments.
- ▶ www.octavialiving.org.uk here you can view all Octavia homes to buy (including the latest shared ownership opportunities).
- ▶ www.octaviasupport.org.uk is for anyone looking for care and support services.

We provide free internet access for all residents at our office reception.

If you would like instructions on how to access your account online or give us feedback on our new websites, then please call us on 020 8354 5500 or email update@octavia.org.uk.

If you would like some help in getting online or with basic computer skills – we can also help by setting you up with a Digital Champion who will visit you at your home, our offices or an internet café and providing free, one to one training. At the moment this service is only available to tenants living in Kensington and Chelsea due to funding restrictions.

Thanks to all the residents who helped us when creating these new sites – your help was invaluable.

What do you think of
this newsletter?

Let us know at: [E update@octavia.org.uk](mailto: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

Summer success for young Octavia job seekers

Our employment and training service delivers one to one advice for tenants looking for work, training or volunteering opportunities. This includes help with CV's, completing job applications or preparing for a job interview.

Over the summer the team met 15 eager candidates interested in positions in plumbing (a placement with Mears, our day to day repairs contractors), youth work and administration.

We held workshops covering various areas involved in getting a job, such as confidence building, interview techniques and how to complete an application which gave candidates tools to help them throughout the employment process. As a result, two young Octavia tenants have been successfully recruited and will

be joining the Foundation team this November.

This service is delivered through the Octavia Foundation. If you too would like help to find a job or would like to attend one of our workshops, please contact Kyrsha Haynes on 020 8354 5686 or email kyrsha.haynes@octaviafoundation.org.uk



BE INVOLVED

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



The Tenant Steering Group (TSG), a group of elected tenants who represent the needs of Octavia tenants, held their Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 24 September at Octavia's offices. The lively AGM was attended by 35 tenants.

Noel Brosnan, Octavia's Director of Asset Management gave a presentation about energy efficiency and gave examples of Octavia properties that have benefitted from energy works. Maeve MacAvock,

Director of Housing and Care also gave a presentation about our 'Did You Know, We Do That Too' campaign (See our other articles).

Finally, Ian MacLeod, TSG Chair provided residents with an update on the work of the TSG, highlighting key successes over the year.

Residents had the opportunity to raise issues which included: maintenance of homes including windows, insulation, boilers and problems with damp. Residents also asked questions regarding

transfers, overcrowding and anti-social behaviour. Queries are being followed-up and actioned. They also wanted more contact with the TSG, which is a topic that the TSG will discuss at their next meeting held on 26 November.

The TSG Secretariat Election results were announced. Ian MacLeod was voted in as the new Chair of the TSG and we are now looking for new members.

Octavia tenants will receive a nomination form in January 2015 if you want to represent the views of your neighbours and local area by nominating yourself to join the group.

TSG Members Elections will be running in January 2015. The TSG meet every six weeks on a Wednesday evening from 6-8pm. For an informal discussion regarding the TSG, please contact Anna de Souza, Resident Involvement Manager on 020 8354 5674.



DID YOU KNOW?

We do that too!

Octavia tenants have access to a whole range of services, including some you may not expect. Every month we have been promoting a few services as part of this campaign to make sure that tenants are aware of the benefits available to them as an Octavia resident.

Advice on benefits debt and budgeting

Debt advice

We offer free, independent, confidential advice to help you manage any debts you may have. We work in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to offer one to one drop-in advice surgery sessions and we are partners with the debt advice charity StepChange, which provides free and confidential information over the phone and online.

If you are experiencing problems paying your rent, or struggling to repay debts from credit cards, fuel payments, overdrafts or bills from mail order catalogues, the one to one advice surgeries or the StepChange phone and online services offer practical guidance and can help you to reduce the money you owe.

The Citizens Advice Bureau debt advice surgery is held at our offices on Kensal Road, W10 5BN, every Thursday from 9.30am – 12.30pm (no appointment needed) and 1.30pm – 4.30pm (appointments only). You can also contact StepChange via their website www.stepchange.org or by calling 0800 138 1111 (free from all phones, including mobiles).

Benefits Advice

This service is free, independent and confidential providing help with issues relating to benefits such as:

- ▶ which benefits you may be entitled to;
 - ▶ how to go about claiming them;
 - ▶ help with completing benefits claims forms;
 - ▶ what the switch to Universal Credit means for you and how direct payments will affect the way you pay your rent; and
 - ▶ help you to appeal if you are having problems with your benefits.
- ▶ working with you to develop a budget for your household;
 - ▶ helping you to identify suitable bank accounts and related financial products, including affordable credit;
 - ▶ advising you about utilities, welfare benefits, debt, hardship grants and help with jobs and training; and
 - ▶ informing you about how new welfare reform changes might affect you.

We also have a financial inclusion officer who can offer greater support with budgeting, maximising your income and reducing debts.



The benefits advice surgery is held at our offices on Kensal Road, W10 5BN, every Friday from 9.30am – 12.30pm (no appointment needed) and 1.30pm – 4.30pm (appointments only). You can drop in in the morning for general advice and if you need more support an afternoon appointment will be booked for you.

Budgeting Advice

We can help you to manage your money better by:

Affordable Banking

As an Octavia tenant you are eligible to join Your Credit Union Kensington & Chelsea, a not-for-profit bank based in the borough of Kensington & Chelsea. As you are an Octavia tenant, you do not have to live in the borough to join the credit union, which would normally be required.

Credit unions are not-for-profit financial co-operatives that are owned and controlled by their members. Your Credit Union offers fair and affordable borrowing and saving facilities. Their loans have much lower interest charges than payday loan companies or loan sharks.

When you save with Your Credit Union your money is 100% safe as it is guaranteed by the Financial Conduct Authority. To find out more about Your Credit Union, visit www.yourcu.co.uk or phone 020 7605 6341.

Energy and money saving

Did you know... we can help you to reduce your energy bills this winter with our Energy Advice Service?

Rising gas and electricity prices are a real concern for most of us. Our energy team can support you to make simple changes that will help reduce the bills without reducing your comfort levels through:

- Home energy checks
- Advice on how to switch suppliers to get the best deals

- Information about grants and other funds to improve the energy efficiency of your home
- Energy events



We are also running a number of projects that improve the thermal comfort of homes and keep energy bills low. Research has shown that one of the biggest factors in reducing energy usage in the home is resident awareness. We are taking part in a national study to learn about how we can improve the way we make residents aware of their energy use and the ways they can reduce bills. Here are our top 10 tips on what you should do and why:

You Should	Why?
Replace your old fridge with an 'A' rated model. If older than 10 years this is worth doing.	The seals around the door usually harden with age and leak cold air. This then makes the fridge work harder and costs you money.
Never leave freezer or fridge doors open.	Every minute the door is open it takes 3 minutes at full power to cool it down to the optimum temperature.
Never allow more than 6mm of frost to build up in the freezer.	The more frost the less efficient the freezer is. Ice is a really good insulator, ask an Eskimo!
Keep the back of the fridge free from dust and grease, allow air to pass freely at the back.	This will improve the time it takes to cool the fridge or freezer down to the required temperature.
Cover sauce pans with a lid when possible.	This keeps the temperature constant and uses less energy.
Once water has boiled in the saucepan turn the heat down to a simmer.	Water boils at 100°C if you turn the gas high it doesn't get any hotter.
Match the saucepan with the size of the item you are cooking	So that you don't boil water unnecessarily.
Don't overheat your home	Turning the thermostat down by 1°C will save on average 10% of the bill.
Only fill the kettle with enough water to cover the element if making a single cup of tea.	This saves water and energy.
Use your Central heating programmer to control the on/off times to suit your occupancy pattern.	So that you don't have the heating on when no one is at home. Instead adjust the times to suit you. An example, turn off the heating 30-45 minutes before leaving your home.

Another place to look is the Energy Saving Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/ This is a government funded site that offers good advice and good information for residents. Take a look at the tips for saving energy and money on electricity, gas and water.

For more advice, please ask about the energy advice service as part of our Did You know campaign or look out for Octavia energy advice days run by the Energy Manager.

Get to know our new Board Members

Following an open recruitment process, we recently selected two new resident board members, here is some information about them:

Aldo (Williams) is a shared owner of an Octavia property. He holds a doctorate in public health and is currently working within the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust.



Rosalind (Stevens) is an Octavia tenant who has over 20 years' experience as a policy advisor. She specialises in governance, transparency and accountability in multiple sectors. She also has several years' experience of volunteer work with the Octavia Foundation and of various roles with the Westminster City Council Futures Regeneration Programme.



Are you a Good Neighbour?

If you keep excessive noise down at night and say hello to other residents you are likely to be a good neighbour. Who says? You do! Octavia's Viewpoint residents were asked in a recent survey what were the five things that made a good neighbour and these two came out on top. They were closely followed by keeping the volume of music and television down, keeping stairs and landings clean and free of rubbish, and keeping a friendly eye on the elderly.

It is clear from what residents are saying that a little consideration and exchanging greetings goes a long way to helping create a pleasant and enjoyable place to live.

We sent you a postcard

Every year we create a report for our tenants and homeowners to see how we have performed over the past year.



Last year's annual report received more feedback and engagement from residents when it was made available online, which is why the full copy of this report is now available to be viewed at: www.report2014.octaviahousing.org.uk with a hardcopy summary available to residents on request by calling 020 8354 5665 or email update@octavia.org.uk

Here's what some of our residents had to say about our services...



"Octavia's handyman service does anything that you need doing. They change the lights, and they take all the light fittings down so I can wash them. They are called the Silver Saints - and they are. I had something wrong with my television and the man fixed my telly while he was here. They'd come round to do something else; I just asked him to have a look at my telly and tell me what was wrong with it, and he fixed it. They are first class. It doesn't matter how small or how big the job is. And if they say 'we'll be here at 10 o'clock' they are here at 10. And really that's quite important to me because I'm very punctual. I think they are brilliant." Maureen



"I met Eve three years ago through the Octavia Foundation. I found out about the service through one of Octavia's fun days for tenants. The befriending scheme is great because you are matched with someone who shares your interests. It's now a part of our lives to meet, we never sit in silence! I get a different perspective from Eve and we like to chat about history, we share things and we learn from each other" Rosalind

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:

Performance indicator	August 2014	Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % rent due (general needs)	4.9%	5.1%	😊
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	100.6%	100.15%	😊
Standard voids – average re-let time in days (year to date)	19	20	😊
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	99.1%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	100%	98%	😊
% of routine repairs completed within target time	99.5%	98%	😊
% responses to anti-social behaviour reports within target time	100%	95%	😊
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (switchboard)	16	14	😐
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (repairs line)	13	14	😊
% responses to complaints within target time	100%	99%	😊
Satisfaction with Octavia's overall service (from completed repairs survey)	96%	94%	😊

Our office opening hours over Christmas



Wednesday 24 December 2013
Normal service from 9am – 4pm

Christmas day and Boxing day **Office closed**

Monday 29 December **10am - 4pm**
(telephone emergency service only)

Tuesday 30 December **10am - 4pm**
(telephone emergency service only)

Wednesday 31 December **10am - 4pm**
(telephone emergency service only)

Thursday 1 January 2015 **Office closed**

Friday 2 January 2015 **Normal service resumes**

Please note that if you have an emergency over the festive period, our out of hours emergency repairs service will still be running. Please dial 020 8354 5500 for any emergencies.

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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