

EDITION 20: WINTER 2015 - Simple up to date, important news for Octavia residents

# UPDATE NEWSLETTER



## NEW YEAR - NEW YOU?

As an Octavia tenant or local resident, we can help you to get into work, get a new job or gain new skills, experience and more.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**We do that too!**

At the end of January we held a free 'New Year, New you' employment and training event at St Charles College in W10 where we met with lots of Octavia tenants to discuss how we can help with writing CVs, interview techniques and providing mentoring, training and job opportunities.

Residents were also able to speak with a number of local employers and find out about job options, training and volunteering opportunities.



**Octavia Foundation**

The Octavia Foundation have helped hundreds of people to find employment and reach new opportunities. It's never too late. They offer a free employment and training service to local residents living in Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Brent or Hammersmith and Fulham and we have a dedicated advisor for all Octavia tenants.

To find out more visit our website [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/wedothattoo](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/wedothattoo) or look at the booklet enclosed with this newsletter

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](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk)

W [www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk)

## Want to feature alongside Alan Johnson MP, Ian Hislop, and Tamsin Greig in a brand new project?

Next year, we will be publishing a book to mark the 150th anniversary of the year in which our Founder, Octavia Hill, acquired her first property in Marylebone, beginning a life's work of public service. The book is provisionally titled 'A Noble Life', and will feature contributions from high-profile individuals such as Alan Johnson MP and a range of other well-known figures.

We also want to get contributions from Octavia residents, employees and members of the local west London community and we are asking for anyone interested in being involved to contact us.

We want to speak to residents who think they have something to say about Octavia's ambition as she described it: '...to make individual life noble, homes happy and family life good'.

We want to know:

- ▶ What does your home mean to you?
- ▶ What role has family played in your life?
- ▶ What impact has the changing nature of this area had on you?
- ▶ What would you say to Octavia Hill if she was around today?
- ▶ And what do you think it means to have a noble life in 2015?

If you would like to discuss these ideas, and are happy to be interviewed in early February, please contact Louise Ashwell on 020 8354 5691 or email [Louise.Ashwell@octavia.org.uk](mailto:Louise.Ashwell@octavia.org.uk). She can answer any questions, and would love to hear your own thoughts and ideas about the project.

## BE INVOLVED

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

### End of year parties

At the end of last year we worked with a number of Resident Associations to organise local Christmas gatherings. Social events play a key role in strengthening neighbour relationships and rapport



with Octavia by allowing residents to address local concerns while also giving people an opportunity to communicate in a relaxed environment and form friendships.

On Sunday 7 December, the Peel House Residents Association organised a fantastic end of year

party at one of the flats inside the scheme in Pimlico. As one of our larger mixed tenure developments, the day was a great opportunity for neighbours to meet each other and celebrate the run up to Christmas with face-painting, good home-cooked food, music and games.

Over 40 residents attended alongside Anna De Souza, Octavia's resident Involvement Manager, who was also invited.

Anna was able to speak to a range of Peel House residents who said that they would really encourage more social events. The children in particular enjoyed the face painting provided by Joanna Berridge and party games, led by Caretaker Michael.

Thanks to the Resident Association for organising the afternoon party and for demonstrating the positive community impact that a great party can have.

On Wednesday 10 December the Waites Court Residents Association held their General Meeting in their

community room followed by an end of year Christmas gathering attended by just under 20 residents. A number of communal and individual concerns were addressed at the formal part of the meeting, which was followed by a wonderful spread of sweet and savoury home-made treats from the residents alongside Christmas music provided by Carolyn Parsons, Chair of the Resident Association.

On Friday 12 December, Octavia held a Christmas gathering for the residents of Brightwells and Lowlands Residents Association in the local Church hall. The event was a fantastic opportunity for new and longstanding residents to get together, many of whom had not had the opportunity to do so for some time. Residents helped out in the kitchen to keep the teas and coffees going and enjoyed some food and music whilst having the opportunity to mingle and catch up with one another.

The feedback was unanimously positive. One of the residents said 'I



## Parking controls



At many of our properties, parking control measures are in place because spaces are limited. Wherever parking control is in place, signs will be clearly displayed to notify residents, visitors, and members of the public. If you want to park at a scheme where parking control measures are in place, you must display a valid parking permit (motorbikes do not need permits).

As an Octavia resident, you can apply for a permit for a small fee. We allocate permits via a waiting list or a ballot. Please visit our website or ask for a full factsheet on how to apply.

If someone is parked in your space you should contact our Customer Services Team (Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm) or the Parking Contractor outside of normal office hours on 01992 764 520. Please do not park in someone else's parking space as the parking contractor may issue you with a fine and we are unable to refund you.

### What if someone has abandoned a vehicle where I live?

If you believe a vehicle has been abandoned on Octavia property, please pass the vehicle details onto a member of our Customer Services Team, or contact our parking contractor direct if you have controlled parking where you live. If you suspect a vehicle has been abandoned on a public highway (for example a road outside your property), or on land you purchased with your home, you should contact the local authority. Please visit

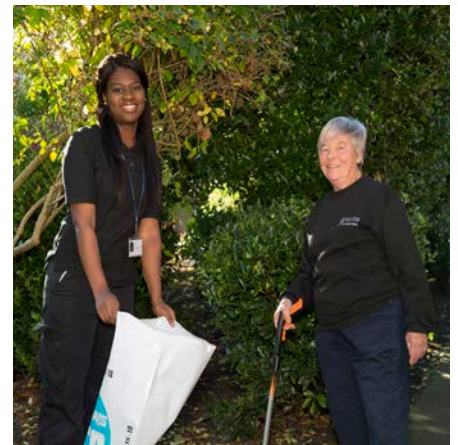
[www.gov.uk/report-abandoned-vehicle](http://www.gov.uk/report-abandoned-vehicle) for more details.

For further Information visit our website or request a copy of our Car Parks and Parking factsheet.

## Changes to our Estate Services

You may have recently noticed some new vans appearing on some of our schemes, this is due to the fact that we are now providing a mobile cleaning service which has replaced the previous cleaning service provided by an outside contractor, Pinnacle.

We believe the new service will provide better value for money, and cost savings to many of our residents who were previously receiving a service from Pinnacle.



We have also recently appointed John O'Conner, as our new grounds maintenance provider from January 2015. John O'Conner is a specialist provider, with significant experience in providing services in the social housing sector.

If you would like any more information on these services, please contact a member of the Estate Services team.



just wanted to say a big thank you from us all for the lovely Christmas Party that you organised. The food was fabulous. Everyone really enjoyed it. This is the only get together the neighbours have had this year and a bonding session all in one'.



Octavia can offer support to residents who would like to set up a Resident Association by providing an annual grant subject to the Resident Association meeting the minimum criteria. For more information and to request a guide on how to set up a Resident Association please contact Anna de Souza.

# INFORMATION AND SERVICES FOR YOU, FASTER. DON'T MISS OUT ON VISITING OUR NEW WEBSITES



Visit: [www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk) to manage your rent account, follow the progress of your repairs and see all the contact details of staff who deal with your home in one place.

## Our other sites may interest you...



We provide a wide range of care and support services that help older and vulnerable adults living in west and central London to stay as active and independent as possible.

Find out more about these services by visiting: [www.octaviasupport.org.uk](http://www.octaviasupport.org.uk).



Looking to buy? Visit us at: [www.octavialiving.org.uk](http://www.octavialiving.org.uk) to view all Octavia homes to buy, including the latest shared ownership opportunities.



Visit our general website [www.octavia.org.uk](http://www.octavia.org.uk) to see all the information about us, our history and our developments.

We provide free internet access for all residents at our office



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 0208 354 5500 or email [update@octavia.org.uk](mailto:update@octavia.org.uk).

# TIME TO TEST



**You are at least four times more likely to die in a fire in your home if you have no working smoke alarm**

Test your smoke alarms on the first of every month, then you know that they're working. Don't take risks with your family when a simple action is all that's needed. It's your life, take extra care of it.

In England over 200 people die each year in fires in their homes. These are often caused by smoking materials, cooking accidents, candles and faulty electrical wiring or appliances – especially heaters.

## These simple steps can reduce the risk of fire and keep everyone safer:



Fit smoke alarms on every level of your home



Test them on the 1st of every month and never take out the batteries



Plan your escape route and make sure everyone knows it



Put cigarettes out – right out – and never smoke in bed



Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended



Make a bedtime check last thing at night to reduce fire risks – eg unplug heaters



Never try to tackle a fire yourself

**If a fire breaks out in your home. Get out, stay out and call 999**

[www.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.gov.uk/firekills)



## Welfare Reform changes for single jobseekers

The Government is continuing to roll out its welfare reforms. From this year new claims from single people who would otherwise be eligible for Job Seekers Allowance will go onto Universal Credit.

Universal Credit is a new benefit – a single monthly payment in arrears which is paid direct to claimants that includes help with your rent. This means that claimants have to take responsibility to pay their full rent to their landlord themselves. This is happening in Barnet, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow and Wandsworth from February 2015. It is expected that this will be extended to the following boroughs at some point from May 2015 onwards: Camden, Westminster, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Southwark.

If you make a new claim for Job Seekers Allowance, you will be

informed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) whether you will be receiving Universal Credit. If you are worried about managing monthly payments and falling into arrears the DWP will consider making a payment direct to your landlord, but you would need to explain why you cannot manage monthly payments yourself. If you are notified that you will be receiving Universal Credit in the future please contact your Income Officer. We will be able to provide information you will need to support your claim. We are also able to provide advice on monthly budgeting and we can support you in your search for work.



## 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	October 2014	Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % rent due (general needs)	4.97%	5.1%	😊
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	100.8%	100.15%	😐
Standard voids – average re-let time in days (year to date)	19	20	😊
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	100%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	100%	98%	😊
% of routine repairs completed within target time	99.71%	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)	17	14	😐
% responses to complaints within target time	100%	99%	😊
Satisfaction with Octavia's overall service (from completed repairs survey)	98%	94%	😊

### Privacy Policy and how we use your information

Keeping your contact details up to date is really important because it means that we can get in touch with you if there is an emergency. You can update your information at any time via our website or by contacting your neighbourhood officer.

Recently we updated some of our policies around how we handle your personal information and the way we manage privacy on our website. You can see the full policies on our website at [www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk). Alternatively we can also send you a copy of our factsheets: 'How we use your personal data', 'Website privacy policy' or 'Accessing your files'. Please e-mail [info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk).

### Date in your diary



Our 2015 diary is now available on request. Please email [update@octavia.org.uk](mailto:update@octavia.org.uk) or call **020 8354 5665** to get your copy. They go fast so contact us soon.

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

Afsoomaali Español العربية ትግርኛ  
বাংলা Français Português Shqip فارسی