

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

INVESTING IN LOWER ENERGY COSTS



Our aim is to upgrade the homes that need it and while this will take time, we want to get to a point where as a housing provider, we are proud of every property we own.

Grahame Hindes, Chief Executive

Did you know, more accidents happen in the home than anywhere else?

Data from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents describes how nationally there are approximately 6,000 deaths each year as the result of a home accident and more than two million children are taken to A&E after accidents in and around the home. Children are particularly at risk from falls and annually more than 4,200 children are involved in falls on stairs and 4,000 children are injured falling from windows.

To help you keep safe in your home, we have issued a new home safety factsheet, which contains important advice not only about protecting against falls but also safety in the kitchen, asbestos, electricity and water hygiene. A copy of the factsheet can be downloaded via our website. Alternatively you can email or call us to request a copy.

As of July we start works to upgrade the energy efficiency of 50 homes on Ashmore Road in Maida Vale. It has been a long and challenging process to get all of the permissions that we need. Nevertheless, the planning has now been agreed and the rules have changed so that in future getting approval for Westminster schemes will be a much quicker process.

Here's what we are doing...

We are putting external wall cladding on the rear of many of the Ashmore properties. It is part of a programme which we are doing over a ten year period with the aim of getting all of our homes up to a good energy standard. We have been replacing windows, changing boilers and doing various other things to make sure that we can keep running costs on our homes as low as possible.

The programme of investment runs into millions of pounds. We are not going to increase rents for the properties that have works and so it will be residents that benefit through lower fuel costs. The consequence of this is that we need to do the works as cost effectively as we can and so we are trying to link as much as possible to the redecoration programme because every time we put up scaffold it costs a lot of money.

What do you think of this newsletter?

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

Contact us

Repairs: [T 0800 479 0011 \(freephone\)](tel:08004790011)
Customer Services: [T 020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) [E info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk)
[W www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk)

What's coming up?

JOIN US FOR DEBT AWARENESS WEEK AND MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE WITH SMALL CHANGE

Monday 5th-Friday 9th September 2016

Debt Awareness Week

Do you want to be better at managing your money? Are you in debt or fearful that you will get into debt?

You are not alone and we can help. It is never too late to get some advice.

From 5-9th September we are running a Debt Awareness Week. Visit us at Emily House from 5-9th September when throughout the week specialist debt and money management advisors will be on hand to give one-to-one advice and help; employment and training advisors will be ready to let you know about local jobs available or how you can improve your employment prospects or get into work or training; and there will be some goody bags, competitions and prizes to be won.

Check our website nearer the time for more information. One-to-one advice is available Monday and Tuesday from our income team and Thursday and Friday from the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

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. We are doing well in a number of areas, and will be looking to improve on how quickly we let void properties and be more consistent in responding to ASB within target times.

Performance indicator	April 2016	Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % rent due (general needs)	5.25%	4.8%	☹️
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	99.42%	100.1%	☹️
Standard voids – average re-let time in days (year to date)	25	20	☹️
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	100%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	99%	98%	😊
% of routine repairs completed within target time	100%	98%	😊
% responses to anti-social behaviour reports within target time	80%	95%	☹️
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (switchboard)	6	14	😊
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (repairs line)	16	14	☹️
% responses to complaints within target time	100%	99%	😊
Satisfaction with Octavia's overall service (from completed repairs survey)	95%	95%	😊

Pay your rent on time and win £1000

If you have a clear rent account at the end of our financial year, you are entered into our annual competition to win £1000. Congratulations to this year's winner, Paula Algin who came in to collect her cheque.

'I received a phone call from my Income Officer, Breda. I was surprised and delighted to know that I had won £1000. I didn't even know I was entered into a draw, but I'm told you get entered in automatically if you pay your rent on time. Paying by direct debit is so easy that I don't have to think about it. I have been a resident since 1999. I will be using the money to pay off some medical bills. The money has certainly come through at a time I really needed it, thank you!'



Want to receive your newsletters via email?

If you prefer to receive your newsletters via email, then all you have to do is sign up via our website www.octaviahousing.org.uk and fill out a short form.

Help us to reduce the cost of postage, save trees and be more environmentally friendly.



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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Putting a stop to anti-social behaviour (ASB)

In May, we worked with residents and the police to obtain a Closure Order against a property where drug activity and anti-social behaviour were suspected.

Thanks to the neighbours careful reporting of ASB and suspicious activities, we were able to assist police, who found evidence of drugs and made arrests.

The tenant of the property was identified as being vulnerable and had no control of who was visiting the flat. Safeguarding was set up involving numerous agencies and a plan was made including a drug rehabilitation programme. During this time, we supported a Closure Order, which prevents any unauthorised person entering the flat and if they do, they could be arrested. We now intend to recover possession once the tenant has been moved to a safe and supportive environment.

"This is a great result and demonstrates the value of joined up partnership working. The Closure Order will provide much needed respite for residents in the immediate area and a vulnerable tenant is now accessing the help that they need."

Elizabeth Rowland, Housing Services Manager at Octavia

Closure Orders were introduced as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Where a Closure Order is in place, we can apply for possession. If you are

experiencing similar problems in the area you live in please call our Customer Contact Team on **020 8354 5500** or the police on '101' (non-emergency number). If you wish to report a crime anonymously then please call Crime Stoppers on **0800 555 111**.



Local Housing Allowance

As part of Welfare Reform, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have introduced Local Housing Allowance (LHA) caps for the social housing sector.

Who will be affected?

Anyone under 35 years old who does not have dependent children living with them on a full time basis.

What will it mean for me?

If you have signed a new or renewed tenancy from 1 April 2016, any housing benefit (or the housing element of the Universal Credit) that you receive from 1 April 2018 could be restricted. Your eligible rent will be capped to a shared accommodation rate even if you do not share your home with anyone else.

What do I need to do now?

You will need to think about whether the rent you will be paying in the social housing sector is higher than that allowed for the private rented sector. You will also need to consider how you will be able to afford any possible shortfall in your rent come 2018.

What we are doing to support you?

We want to make sure that anyone who is offered a tenancy from the 1 April 2016 - will be able to afford the current rent and any changes following the implementation of the LHA in 2018.

For this reason, careful consideration is given to offering tenancies to those who can show that they have been in work consistently for at least 12 months. We will also complete a full income and expenditure assessment to ensure that the tenancy can be maintained.

Handling your enquires

If you call our Customer Contact Team, we will need to ask you for more information about the nature of your call to see if we can resolve your enquiry at the first point of contact, before directing you to another department.

If you are calling about your rent account, then having your date of birth and home address at hand helps to speed up the process when verifying your identity, before we provide any information about your rent account. It is important we do everything we can to protect your personal data and resolve your enquiry in the best and most effective way.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE?



We can help you with career advice, application assistance, coaching, mentoring and fulfilling your employment related goals.

Our employment and volunteering service is offered all year round to Octavia residents. Visit our offices or call us on 020 8354 5686/ 5682 to discuss your personal needs. More information can also be found on our website at www.octaviafoundation.org.uk

- Looking for work?
- Need help with updating or creating a CV?
- Looking to update your skills through training or volunteering?

BE INVOLVED

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



Our Services Scrutiny Panel (SSP) has 4 new members

We would like to welcome three residents to our services scrutiny panel; Candy White, Georgina George, Yared Bizuneh and one new independent member, June Robertson.

The SSP meets four times a year and 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.

This year, they are looking at standards of communal cleaning and how many repairs are completed on the first visit.

If you would like more information on the SSP then please contact our Resident Involvement Manager, Anna de Souza on **020 8354 5674**.

Our translation and interpretation services



If you speak a different language, or have a hearing impairment and need a signer, or are partially sighted and need documents in large font, we work with a number of translation and interpretation services. Please inform us if you need to communicate with us using one of these services, whether this is over the phone, in person, or you want to attend a residents meeting. We want to ensure all our residents have equal access to our services.

Keeping pets and animals

Sadly not all our properties or estates are suitable for pets. Before you consider buying a pet, please get written permission from us. When considering applications, we take into account the type of pet, alongside the type of property you live in.

Applications are often also refused if:

- you want to keep a dog in one of our developments that has been designated as a 'No Dogs' scheme;
- you want to keep a dog that is outlawed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991;
- you want to keep an exotic pet, livestock, poultry or horses;
- if your property has a communal entrance and you do not have sole use of your own garden;
- you want to keep more than two cats or dogs (maximum of two animals);

- you want to keep an unreasonable number of smaller animals.

If you are thinking of getting a new pet or already own a pet and have not been given written permission, then please contact our Customer Contact Team as soon as possible to obtain a pet application form on **020 8354 5500**.



Contents insurance: Are you covered?

We cover buildings insurance for your home, but we do not cover contents insurance. It's wise to make sure you have contents insurance to cover loss or damage to your personal belongings.

Getting cover organised is simple and can be more affordable than you might think. Paying around £10 a month can give you the security of knowing that your precious possessions are covered, should the worst happen.

Our insurance only extends to the fabric of the building that you live in (the structure of your home, water and gas pipes, communal areas) and only some features within your flat. This means that you are responsible for much more, including fixtures and fittings you

install, internal decoration, and your possessions. Risks include theft, fire, flood and water damage, and other accidental damage including, decoration and furniture.

The good news is that we have secured affordable home contents insurance from a special scheme available to Octavia residents called My Home Contents Insurance. There are no minimum property security requirements and there are no policy excesses, so you don't have to pay any part of a claim. In addition, damaged items are replaced on a 'new for old' basis. This is not the case for compensation for damage caused by events that are our responsibility (which is based on the value of the item at the time it was damaged), so your cover would make sure you get a new replacement.

The insurance can be paid fortnightly or monthly in cash at any Post Office or Payzone outlet, monthly by Direct Debit, or annually by cheque, postal order, debit or credit card. The amount you pay depends on

your circumstances, but a typical premium to cover contents worth £10,000 would be in the region of £10-£15 a month. This is more expensive than some of the other options on the market (see below) but the terms and conditions are favourable.

It is easy to apply for cover. You can call My Home on 0345 450 7288 or visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk. Alternatively, you can also contact us on 020 8354 5500 for a free information pack or find your own cover.

Other websites rated as the best for user-experience, security and value for money by a group of tenants include: www.comparethemarket.com and www.moneysupermarket.com. Insurance purchased through these sites is likely to work out cheaper per month than My Home, but you need to keep an eye out for the particular terms of your policy. For example you would normally have to pay an excess (the first £100-£250) of any claim you make.

What would this mean in practice?

Imagine there is a storm and the roof of your block springs a leak. You were away for the weekend and when you get back you find there is damage to the inside of your property - the wall plaster is stained with large cracks, the carpet is stained in your living room, and your sofa and a cupboard with clothes in it, are both seriously damaged.

What we would do:

Repair any serious damage to the plaster inside your property and make sure the leak is repaired.

What you would be responsible for:

Repainting the wall and cleaning or replacing the carpet and any damaged possessions. You would have to pay for this yourself, or if you have insurance, you could make a claim.