



#BeInvolved

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT  
2015/16



# RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015/16

This report highlights the progress we have made against the #BelInvolved Resident Involvement Strategy 2015-18. Some of the ways residents have been involved include:

- ▶ Over 470 residents attended one or more local Octavia event.
- ▶ 162 residents took part in formal or informal consultation about one of our services.
- ▶ The Services Scrutiny Panel carried out 3 scrutiny projects to check our service quality.
- ▶ Resident Inspectors were involved in 6 projects to help us improve in certain areas.
- ▶ Over 219 residents provided their feedback by attending focus groups or completing surveys.
- ▶ We provided training to 8 of our most involved residents so they can be even more effective.
- ▶ Your Space 2015 (our annual fun day) attracted over 250 residents.

Our Tenants Steering Group (TSG) Chair and Resident Board member shares his thoughts about the importance of being involved:

*“Involvement is empowerment. It gives you a voice and the opportunity to be heard by the very people who can resolve issues. We are very lucky as Octavia tenants to be housed by an organisation that actively encourages tenant involvement and I would urge anyone to take the opportunity of helping to ensure that in forty years’ time there will still be Octavia tenants that can have a positive impact on their environment whatever shape the sector may take by then”.*

**Steve Smith, TSG Chair and Board member**



Every year we compare the value for money of our service, including our Resident Involvement work, against other London Housing Associations through House Mark, an independent research agency. The benchmarking looks at cost and how we have performed including resident satisfaction that we are taking their views into account. Our Resident Involvement work is rated as top quartile (namely our cost are in the lowest 25% and our performance in the top 25%):

*Resident Involvement VfM dashboard (Octavia against London Associations):*



## WHAT IS THIS REPORT ALL ABOUT?

Octavia believes that good homes make for better lives. To help us achieve this, we involve residents and want them to genuinely influence what we do. This report looks at the different ways residents have been involved over the past year, and what has changed as a result.

### Are we succeeding?

We want to check we are succeeding and achieving the aims set out in the #BeInvolved strategy. The following system is be used below to assess each involvement activity:



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Further progress needed



Work has not started, urgent priority for the year ahead

## TSG - Influencing policy and responding to resident priorities



The Tenant Steering Group (TSG) are a group of tenants, elected by tenants to represent the views of Octavia tenants. The TSG aim to help improve services by ensuring policies and procedures are fair and meet the needs of residents.

### Some examples of their impact are:

#### Adaptations Policy

*You said...* The TSG wanted assurance that residents will not be pressured into moving and for there to be targets when completing adaptations.

*We did...* The amended policy is clear that residents are supported to make informed choices and to remain in their home if they choose, and there are set timescales for completing adaptation works.

#### Complaints Policy

*You said...* TSG had concerns that the proposed new process whilst being shorter may impact on the quality of responses.

*We did...* We agreed to pilot the changes and report back to TSG in 2017.

#### ASB and Neighbour Dispute Policy

*You said...* TSG said that sometimes residents

reporting ASB were not kept updated on progress.

*We did...* We restructured our housing teams and there are now two specialist posts focused on resolving ASB and tackling tenancy fraud.

#### Compensation Policy

*You said...* TSG thought some of the compensation rates were too low and out of date.

*We did...* Increased the majority of compensation rates in line with inflation.

#### Repairs service

*You said...* Residents said that straight forward problems were sorted out well and quickly. Some residents at two focus groups said the service was not responsive enough, and sometimes operatives attended and expected a different repair.

*We did...* TSG asked for mystery shopping to check if Officers returned calls within service standards and asked Resident Inspectors to listen in on some repairs calls to check if repairs were being diagnosed thoroughly. We ensured both checks were completed and addressed performance issues with relevant Officers.



Further progress needed

#### Looking forward

The TSG members are meeting more residents at local events and taking part in Walkabout Wednesdays (our check on Communal Services every 6 months). By doing so they will gain wider feedback and be even more effective in representing fellow residents.

## VIEW POINT - Octavia's customer pool



View Point is our resident consultative pool. Members can provide their feedback online, by phone or by post and at a time which is convenient for them. This is an easy and flexible way for residents to be involved. Viewpoint members often provide their views at focus groups and through surveys. Membership increased to 518, and the residents attended focus groups responded to a range of surveys including:

### Our communication on local issues

*You said...* You said our Caretakers were doing a great job, but we should keep Caretakers more informed about planned works, new residents and other tenancy and estate matters.

*We did...* Managers of the different teams now attend Caretakers team meetings periodically to update them on any changes to their service.

### Design of new schemes

*You said...* We surveyed residents who moved into one of our new schemes. We were pleased that 98% of residents said they were happy with their new home. The main issues raised were about delays in sorting out defects, and issues around storage and ventilation.

*We did...* We are tracking our defects more closely on our contact management system and repeat calls about defects have decreased. Storage, ventilation and other design issues raised will feed into the next review of our Design Brief.

### How we deal with complaints

*You said...* Residents who had made a recent complaint attended a focus group. They said we resolved straight forward issues well, but the complaints process was too long.

*We did...* We are looking to shorten the number of stages in our complaints procedure. We will pilot this change later in the year for a period to make sure we can respond more quickly and still be thorough in our complaints handling.

### The sales process for home owners

*You said...* Home owners were generally happy with the sales process and said that Octavia staff were helpful and informative. A number however had negative views about solicitors and independent financial advisors they had used.

*We did...* With the consent of home owners concerned, we passed on the feedback to relevant solicitors and financial advisors.

### Octavia Foundation services

*You said...* Some of our Viewpoint members said they were particularly interested in receiving information about employment and training.

*We did...* We work closely with colleagues in the Octavia Foundation Employment and Training service, and consulted interested residents about internship and apprenticeship opportunities when these came up during the year.



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### Looking forward

We want to get a wide range of resident views and will look at ways to get more feedback from younger residents. We also want to get some on-going feedback on our customer service and are piloting a tracker survey with Viewpoint members.

## RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION - A strong collective voice



Forming a Resident Association can be extremely rewarding, help build a strong and collective resident voice, provide an impetus to organise social events, and strengthen cases for estate improvements. Octavia actively support these groups, and provide financial support in the form of start-up grants and annual grants of £250 subject to meeting the criteria to become an officially recognised group. We worked with and supported Resident Associations at:

- ▶ Peel House
- ▶ Waites Court
- ▶ Kenley Walk
- ▶ Brightwells and Lowlands
- ▶ Cochrane Street

We are proud of the efforts of our Resident Associations who over the last year:

- ▶ Helped bid for shared area improvements
- ▶ Carried out joint estate walkabouts
- ▶ Organised resident social events
- ▶ Worked with Octavia to provide evidence to tackle ASB and tenancy fraud cases
- ▶ Assisted elderly and disabled residents to attend events and advocating for them

### Decisions about cyclical works

*You said...* Residents at Cochrane Street had differing views about whether windows should be renovated during cyclical works.

*We did...* We carried out an anonymous ballot of residents, and works to windows have started in the blocks where the majority of residents voted in favour of the works.

### Working together to tackle ASB

*You said...* Waites Court residents experienced on-going problems with young people causing noise and disturbance.

*We did...* With the help of Octavia staff, residents came together and agreed rules around when and where people can gather, play and socialise. This has helped reduce the neighbour issues significantly.

### Improving service charge information

*You said...* Peel House residents told us they wanted clearer information about service charges.

*We did...* We worked with residents including several residents from Peel House to re-design our service charge statements and letters so the key information stands out.



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### Looking forward

We will continue to encourage residents to set up local resident groups and support them in doing so when there is an interest.

## LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS



Every year money is put aside to improve the shared areas at some of our homes. Octavia use this money to carry out works that go beyond the normal responsibilities of a landlord. Residents who live in a rented property or a mixed tenure development can bid for a grant to improve their shared areas.

### Improving communal areas

*You said...* Residents across different schemes applied for funding towards improvements especially to enhance security.

*We did...* A panel of residents considered the improvements applications and approved bids for CCTV, a new lockable gate, improved bin areas, and a new secure entrance mat. Andy Carlisle, Communal Services Manager said:

*"The improvements bidding scheme has enabled the team to work closely with residents on their ideas for improving the shared areas of their buildings and developments. As residents, they know better than anyone what improvements would make a difference."*

### Acting on residents' feedback

*You said...* Residents at Yourspace (our annual resident fun day event) highlighted communal services as one of their priorities.

*We did...* To gain a better understanding of what the local issues are, the Communal Services team now carry out their 'Power Hour' survey each month. Where a resident express dissatisfaction with the service this is followed up, where a scheme is scoring less well the scheme is prioritised for inspection.



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## LOCAL EVENTS

Holding local events are a great way for residents to meet their neighbours and to build a sense of community. We held a range of local events across different schemes tailoring the event to the issues that local residents bring up, for example holding service surgeries if there is a range of individual enquiries, a formal meeting if there is a particular issue common to many residents, or a fun and informal get-together if the purpose is social.

### Holding more successful local events

*You said...* In a survey on local communication, residents said they wanted more local events.

*We did...* Over 450 residents attended local events in the year. One of the most successful was the summer party at Peel House attended by over 50 residents. The Peel House Resident Association Chair said:

*"These events are crucial as they encourage residents to meet their neighbours and inspire a sense of community. Special thanks to Joanna the face painter and Michael the caretaker who did a fantastic job entertaining the children. We are looking forward to our next party with even more residents getting involved."*



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# COMMUNICATIONS AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT



Our Communications Team have received some valuable feedback on Octavia’s approach to Communications and the main Octavia publications such as the annual report and resident newsletters.

## Annual report

*You said...* Residents at a Communications Group liked the draft new design of the annual report (a special edition of the newsletter), especially the case studies. They gave some feedback on colours and layout preferences.

*We did...* The 2015-16 annual report incorporated the Communications Group’s feedback. The feedback we received was positive, that it was easy to read and consistent in style. Neha Bhatt, Communications and PR Officer said:

*“We will continue to reach out to a wider audience. We are also looking at a wider communications strategy to improve the way we communicate with residents. The Communications Group has enabled us to get instant feedback, allowing us to produce the best possible newsletter and annual report”.*

## Resident communications strategy

*You said...* Our Head of Communications met with the TSG to get their views on our future approach to resident communications. An interesting discussion ensued especially around how and to what extent Octavia promotes digital channels. The TSG felt a wider focus group meeting was needed.

*We did...* We will organise a wider focus group on this topic inviting TSG members and residents on Viewpoint.

## A Life More Noble

*You said...* To mark our 150th anniversary, we published a book called “A life more noble” (a quote from our founder, Octavia Hill). Residents, staff, and well known figures contributed articles about what a ‘noble life’ meant for them.

*We did...* We launched the book inviting all the contributors with a debate about the themes in the book and social housing today. The book has attracted attention in the national press and was widely distributed, contributing to current debates about the future of social housing in the 21st century.



**Further progress needed**

## Looking forward

We will review the Update newsletter and the way we communicate key messages to residents. We will also involve residents on how we can improve the Resident Login on our website and how best to promote the transactions residents can carry out online.

## SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL AND RESIDENT INSPECTORS



The Services Scrutiny Panel (SSP) consists of residents and independent members. The Panel looks in depth into 2 or 3 service areas each year to identify improvements, choosing the areas based on resident feedback.

Our Resident Inspectors are a group of residents who check on service quality and provide feedback to help us improve services. They receive support and training to help them carry out the checks effectively.

The SSP completed a number of scrutiny projects over the year and were assisted by Resident Inspectors on all these projects:

### ASB and Neighbour Disputes

*You said...* In the previous year, SSP carried out a check on our ASB service. Some residents who reported ASB problems had concerns that they were not kept updated on progress.

*We did...* Earlier this year we restructured the housing management team and introduced two new specialist roles to tackle ASB and tenancy fraud. These Officers have brought added skills to the team.

### Service Charges

*You said...* The SSP surveyed residents and conducted a focus group on satisfaction with service charge information. Residents wanted

clearer information and also more quality checks to make sure the information is correct.

*We did...* We reviewed all our written and online service charge information with a group of residents. We reviewed the service charge setting procedure and put in place more checks by managers, we also brought in new service charge software to help make the process more robust.

### Local communication

*You said...* The SSP looked at how Octavia communicates with residents about common local issues. They carried out a survey and asked Resident Inspectors to carry out door knocking to add to the feedback. A number of residents said they wanted more communication by email, were positive about their Caretaker and felt more could be done to keep Caretakers updated.

*We did...* We are checking for residents' recorded communication preferences when we contact them. Managers of key services have attended recent Caretakers team meetings to update them on service changes.



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### Looking forward

The SSP is currently in the process of checking our standards in Communal Services. They receive a range of customer insight reports and will be reviewing those reports to identify future areas for scrutiny checks.

Our Resident Inspectors will be involved in more service improvement projects in 2016-17 including listening into live repairs calls to check how repairs are being diagnosed, and mystery shopping to test our responsiveness when they contact us.

# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF INVOLVED RESIDENTS



In 2015-16 a number of involved residents attended training to learn new skills, share their experiences with other residents, and enhance their experience of being involved.

Residents have taken part in a variety of training including:

- ▶ Equality and Diversity training
- ▶ Safeguarding training
- ▶ Chairing meetings
- ▶ Attending two LSE conferences on energy efficiency at Trafford Hall
- ▶ Attending London Tenant Scrutiny workshops
- ▶ Becoming a Service Development Volunteer
- ▶ Resident Inspector training

## Understanding our services and working with data

*You said...* We recruited a number of new Resident Inspectors in the year who wanted to know more about the services Octavia provide, how to work with data, and get the most out of performance reports.

*We did...* Octavia's Service Development Team provided training to new Inspectors including on: Octavia's history, where our properties are located, who we house, how to carry out and interpret surveys, how to view and analyse

performance information.

## Chairing meetings

*You said...* Some of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of our resident groups wanted some formal training on how to chair meetings effectively.

*We did...* Our partners at Ealing Council offered free training to involved residents on chairing meetings, focused on making sure groups made decisions or recommendations, stayed on topic, are respectful with each other, and keeping to time.

## Volunteering

*You said...* A member of the TSG wanted to volunteer at Octavia to discover at first-hand what it was like to work at Octavia and to enhance her skills in office work.

*We did...* The TSG member was offered a six months volunteering opportunity with the Service Development Team. They helped to organise resident involvement events, took part in consulting with fellow residents about local communication, and provided support working with performance data. They brought a valuable resident perspective to our involvement work, and benefited from the experience themselves gaining in confidence. The TSG member has since applied for and secured employment with Octavia Housing.



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## Looking forward

We are committed to providing involved residents with a range of training and opportunities for development so they are effective in their involvement roles. We will re-run the training for new Resident Inspectors.

## YOUR SPACE 2015 - our biggest resident involvement yet



Your Space our annual resident fun day aims to engage with as many Octavia residents as possible. It is also an opportunity to promote our wide range of services to residents and get feedback on their priorities.

Your Space 2015 took place at St Charles College in Ladbrooke Grove and welcomed over 250 residents:

- ▶ There was a range of information stalls promoting energy efficiency, employment and training, care and support, debt and welfare advice, and accessing your account online.
- ▶ All of our main services were represented including Neighbourhood, Home Ownership, Communal Services, Development, Asset Management and Income.
- ▶ We were joined by community partners including Your Credit Union, the Safer Neighbourhood Team, and the Citizen Advice Bureau.
- ▶ Residents enjoyed a range of free and fun activities for all ages including a Silver Comedy session with our care and support scheme residents, dance mats, nail art, youth workshop, free family portraits, face painting, seated chair and Indian head massage, and smoothie making and sports activities with Solidarity Sports.

- ▶ Christopher Comnenos, an Octavia resident, provided some delicious cakes courtesy of his new business Kensington Cakes. Residents enjoyed a Caribbean meal from Mum's Takeaway or a hot jacket potato from Juicy Jackets. Staff and residents contributed to a sale of homemade cakes which raised £88 for the Nepal earthquake fund.
- ▶ Special thanks to our contractors Mears who donated a Samsung Digital tablet and £100 shopping vouchers, Village Heating who donated a £80 Halfords Voucher and John O'Conner who donated some lovely home garden plants for our prize draw.

### Residents' priorities

*You said...* We asked residents at Your Space what their top priorities were and to vote on all the suggested priorities.

*We did...* The top priorities from the vote were considered and taken forward by either the Service Scrutiny Panel (who looked at Service Charges and into local communication), or the Tenants Steering Group (who looked at our repairs performance and asked the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to come to Octavia and talk about housing options for younger people).



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### Looking forward

We will continue to refresh the range of activities available at Your Space. The success of Your Space is based on its social and fun character, hundreds of residents from different areas of London coming together with staff and local partners. We want to continue with that purpose and build on the success.

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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