

HATE INCIDENTS



Our approach to tackling hate incidents

We do not tolerate hate-related harassment of any of our residents. We see hate incidents as a serious form of anti-social behaviour and will take action to make sure the incidents stop.

What we mean by hate incidents

A hate incident involves behaviour which is motivated by prejudice or hate of a person's race, ethnicity or nationality, disability, age, gender identity, religion or belief or sexual orientation. It may or may not be a criminal offence.

It can involve name calling, bullying, threatening behaviour, physical attacks or damage to property. It can take place in person but also through written notes, emails, text messages or social media.

What you can expect from our service

Reports of any type of anti-social behaviour are put into three categories, to help us to respond to the most serious cases first and as quickly as possible. All hate incidents fall into the two highest priority categories.

- ▶ For category A cases where there is a threat of violence, we will meet with you within 24 hours of you reporting the incident to us.
- ▶ For category B cases where there is no threat of violence, we will meet with you within three working days.



With your permission, we will contact the person responsible for the hate incident within 10 working days of your report and we will contact any witnesses within five working days. We will remove any offensive graffiti within one working day of it being reported to us.

In most instances we will contact you every week for category A cases and at least once every two weeks for category B cases, to check how you are and to give you an update on what we are doing to tackle the problem. We will do this until the case is closed.

We will only close the case when the hate incidents have stopped or we are unable to find evidence to take any further action. We will always offer to meet with you before closing the case. Your safety is our biggest concern, so even if we close a case, you can contact us at anytime if further hate incidents take place.

What will happen after you report a hate incident to us

We will meet with you to gather evidence about what has happened. We will treat what you tell us in confidence and consult you before we take any action. If you feel that your safety is threatened or a crime has been committed, then we recommend that you tell the police. We will not report an incident to the police without your permission, unless there is a risk of harm or criminal activity.

We will agree a plan of action with you and, if you agree, arrange to meet with the person causing the abuse and any witnesses. We will never tell other people who made the complaint without your agreement.

If you feel unsafe or need support while the incidents are continuing, we can help in a number of ways, including:

- ▶ securing your home – if you feel unsafe at home or your property has been damaged, we can fit new locks to secure your home or make it safer
- ▶ support agencies – we can put you in touch with specialist support agencies such as Stop Hate UK, SupportLine or Victim Support, who provide independent support and counselling
- ▶ mediation – in some cases we may suggest bringing in an independent mediator who can help you to discuss the situation with the person causing the abuse.

Tenancy action

If the individual responsible for the abuse has breached their tenancy agreement, we can take tenancy action against them. This could involve issuing a warning, asking them to sign an acceptable behaviour contract or obtaining a court possession order for their home. We will support you and any witnesses if the case goes to court.

We cannot take tenancy action against individuals who are not our tenants, but we can help in other ways, such as:

- ▶ asking their landlord to take strong action
- ▶ applying for an injunction if you feel threatened
- ▶ working with the police if a crime has been committed
- ▶ talking to parents if the problem is harassment by children.



Re-housing

In exceptional circumstances and when you are at risk of serious physical harm, we can help you to find emergency accommodation through the local authority. We can also give you a high priority for a transfer to another Octavia property, although this can still involve a long wait. We will only suggest re-housing when we have been unable to resolve the situation in other ways.

Making sure that we are succeeding

If you report a hate incident to us, we will ask for your feedback to find out if you are satisfied with our service and to find out what we can do to improve. Each year we report to our Resident Diversity Group about our work to tackle hate incidents.

Where possible we want to make sure hate incidents and other forms of anti-social behaviour do not happen in the first place. We do this by:

- ▶ informing new tenants about their rights and responsibilities, and what will happen if they breach their tenancy conditions
- ▶ issuing starter tenancies for an initial one year period to general needs tenants who have not held a social housing tenancy before
- ▶ publicising our strong approach to stopping anti-social behaviour and the cases where we have taken legal action
- ▶ organising projects for young people and other groups to encourage positive community involvement.

Hate incidents, like other forms of anti-social behaviour, are a community problem which we will always need the support of residents to tackle. Together we can stop hate incidents and make a difference, creating communities that we all want to live and work in.

How to contact us about hate incidents

For more information or to report a hate-related incident please visit our website octaviahousing.org.uk or contact the Customer Contact Team on the number below.

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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