

EDITION 37: AUTUMN 2019 - Simple, up-to-date, important news for Octavia residents

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

OLDER RESIDENTS REVISIT THE STREETS OF THEIR YOUTH



Residents from Octavia's Leonora House extra care scheme have been 'virtually' cycling all over London since September, without leaving the warmth and comfort of the scheme's lounge – not a bad idea with all the rain we have been having.

Leonora House was loaned a brand-new bike as part of a national scheme. It was designed to help keep the residents active – with the added challenge of seeing how many miles they could clock up between them during the month of September.

The virtual cycling challenge event, held during World Alzheimer's Month, promoted the importance of sensory stimulation and exercise for older people with dementia.

Leonora residents enjoyed touring parts of London they had visited before, sometimes many years ago, through choosing their favourite locations from a selection of pre-recorded video routes.

Thanks to support from Westminster Cllr Lorraine Dean, Leonora House was chosen as one of a handful of schemes across London to benefit from taking part in the cycling challenge using the virtual bike. The Norwegian company, Motitech, which provided the bike and organised the challenge has left the bike with residents so they can continue to use it over the next few weeks.

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 020 8354 5500 (including emergency out-of-hours)

Contact team:

T 020 8354 5500 E info@octavia.org.uk

W www.octaviahousing.org.uk

Roaring and rocking for Silver Sunday



Held on the first Sunday of October, Silver Sunday is a national celebration of older people and their contribution to communities. It offers a variety of free activities for people over 65 to encourage them to enjoy keeping active in body and spirit, as well as to try new things, meet their neighbours and feel more connected with their local community.

In celebration of the occasion, we held special Silver Sunday events at several of our extra care schemes throughout the day.

Residents and their friends at James Hill House in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea enjoyed chair exercises, tasty food, and a live performance by Dance West dance company.

At another of our schemes, Leonora House, in Westminster, Octavia residents and their families enjoyed arts and crafts sessions, hand massages and a rocking show from tribute singer Chris Dyke, a.k.a. Elvis Presley.

At Park Lodge in Hounslow, celebrations included harking back to the 'roaring 20s', with a buffet lunch followed by mocktails and cake, and a Charleston dance lesson with live band music.

We were also very pleased to welcome visits from local councillors and dignitaries to each of our schemes throughout the day.

Thanks for giving us your views



Thank you to everyone who responded to our recent Communal Services survey and the useful feedback you gave us. 70% of residents surveyed were satisfied with the service overall, which is a positive increase from the previous year.

As a result of the views we received, we also carried out some unannounced spot-check visits to schemes. The findings of these checks and your feedback, including ideas for scheme improvements, have been put into an action plan so we can make sure we are keeping track of progress.

Do you have an idea for improving the communal areas where you live? Let us know

Every year, we put aside funds to be used to improve shared areas on our estates, in blocks and around street properties. If you, together with your neighbours, have an idea for how we can improve the area around your homes, you can bid for a share of this fund.

In the past, successful bids have included improving bin stores, landscaping of garden areas, and greater security.

All bids will be considered by a resident panel, which decides which projects get funding. For more information on how to bid, or if you would like to get more involved with shaping our services by becoming a resident panel member, contact your Communal Services Team Leader, Building Support Team Leader or Residential Building Manager on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) or email info@octavia.org.uk

5 things you should know about our employment and volunteering service



Our employment and training team offer one-to-one advice and guidance for residents to apply for and gain paid employment. We can support you in your search for a job, help you to find a volunteer placement to expand your CV and help build your confidence. But, did you know...

1. We provide access to volunteering at Octavia's head office where you can develop skills within a specific role, e.g. administration, project management, or care and support.
2. You can receive paid work experience and training on a construction site (for a minimum of six months) or, work as a tradesperson (carpentry, gas, plumbing and labouring); all whilst developing your skills and receiving a weekly wage (subject to meeting eligibility criteria).
3. We can provide you with clothes for an interview, with the option of receiving five additional pieces of clothing upon securing a job, which can see you through until your first pay cheque.
4. You can join in several free self-employment workshops covering areas such as Marketing, Web Design, Business Planning and Taxation.
5. We can help you to apply for grants, which can help fund your education and cover costs for books and other learning materials, like a reconditioned laptop.

For more information, as well as assistance with CV applications and interview preparation, please contact Kyrsha Haynes on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500)/Kyrsha.haynes@octaviafoundation.org.uk

Crime and CCTV

We have CCTV installed at a number of our buildings and estates to improve safety and prevent crime. If you believe a crime has been committed where you live, you should report this to the police as soon as possible. They will then request the footage from us if they believe it will aid them with the investigation. It is worth noting that we do not keep footage for any period longer than 30 days, as stated in our CCTV policy.

Some residents also ask our permission to install CCTV outside their homes. We understand why residents might want to install cameras, but to protect the privacy of other residents we do not allow this. This includes in the shared areas of our homes, or anywhere that covers any shared or public areas. This is to protect the privacy of residents. If you have any unauthorised CCTV in these areas, it is likely that the equipment will be removed. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact us and ask to speak to your Communal Services Team Leader.



Shared reading groups

We have partnered with *The Reader* - a national charity with an aim to bring people together through reading - to offer our residents free, weekly shared reading groups.

At these groups people are invited to read books aloud and then discuss with the group thoughts about the text. You don't have to be prepared to read aloud to join a reading group. You are welcome to sit back and listen and then join in the conversation if you want to. Reading groups have been proven to help people relax, meet new friends and enjoy conversation.

Reading groups are held at the following times:

Tuesdays 1-2pm

Queen's Park Library, 666 Harrow Rd, W10 4NE

Wednesday 4.30-5.30pm

Miranda House, 21 Penzance Pl, Notting Hill, W11 4PD

If you would like to take part or would like more information, contact Erin at erincarlstrom@thereader.org.uk / 07483 972 020.

Keeping shared areas clear and tidy



Our top priority is resident safety. It is really important for the shared areas of our buildings to be kept free from any personal belongings. This is a requirement set out in all tenancy and lease agreements, and we regularly check to see that it is applied.

Items like shoes and shoe-racks, pot plants, tables, bikes, buggies and scooters are not allowed in shared areas because they increase the risk of fires starting and may block escape routes or access for emergency services.

If items are found in shared areas, we will ask the owners to remove them and if they are not removed, we arrange for their removal and disposal, and charge the cost of this back to the owner or the block. We are unable to store items that we remove.

We understand when some residents are not happy for their items to be removed, but it is really important to make sure that the shared areas of our buildings are kept safe at all times, and we ask for your co-operation by reporting items left in shared areas and by keeping all personal belongings in your own homes.

If you are aware of items being stored in the shared areas where you live, please do let us know so that we can take action. If you can, please send us a photo of the item that needs to be removed. This helps our staff deal with the issue more quickly.

For more information about our communal services, talk to your Communal Services Team Leader, Building Support Team Leader or Residential Building Manager on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500).

Deep clean service – how are we doing?



If you receive communal cleaning services from Octavia, you may notice your block has recently benefited from work from our 'deep clean' team. A deep clean goes beyond our usual caretaking services and may include carpet cleaning, floor polishing and power washing.

This is a new team and we trialled the service at a number of schemes last year where residents had requested this type of service and received positive feedback.

We carry out a deep clean of all our estates and blocks every 1-2 years. If the area around your home has been deep cleaned recently, we would really value you letting us know what you think of the service. To provide your feedback contact the Communal Services Team on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500).

Activities for younger residents at Base@theReed



Our latest creative project for young people – *The Birth of Cool* is now entering its third phase, covering Fashion and Design, Photography and Blogging. The Birth of Cool is an exciting digital media project exploring what made the 50's to 80's on the King's Road such a unique period of time and young people from the local area have been involved in all aspects of the creative process. They will now be creating digital fashion designs and style photography with industry professionals and platforming it online as part of a live exhibit, just in time for London Fashion Week in January.

The programme runs every Thursday from 5-8.30pm at our community hub The Reed, W11. If you would like more information, please email Tommy at Thomas.edwards@octaviafoundation.org.uk

Spotting a leaky loo

Did you know a single leaky loo can waste up to 400 litres of water per day? This is equivalent to five full bath tubs. When you have a leaky loo, the water just dribbles away down the back of the pan (inside the toilet) and means leaks often go unnoticed. A leaky loo may increase your water bills and is bad for the environment.

If you can hear a flow of water when the toilet hasn't been flushed or can see a slight but constant trickle at the back of the toilet pan, you may have a leaky loo. Here's how to test if your loo is leaking in a few simple steps:

1. Wait until 30 minutes after the last flush, then wipe the back of the pan dry with toilet tissue.
2. Place a new, dry sheet of toilet tissue across the back of the pan. Leave it in place for up to three hours without using the toilet (it might be best to do this overnight).
3. If the paper is wet or torn in the morning, you know you have a leaky loo.

If you think you have a leaky loo and would like to report this, contact us on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) and press 1 to report a repair.



Fire door safety



A door's a door, yes? No, a fire door is an engineered safety device that is a crucial part of the passive fire protection of every commercial, public and multiple occupancy building.

Fire Door Safety Week was launched in 2013 to increase public understanding of the role that fire doors play in protecting life and property. To save lives, they must work correctly, and there are 5 simple checks you can undertake:

1. Certification - look for a label or plug on top (or occasionally on the side) of the door.
2. Gaps - check the gaps around the top and sides of the door are consistently less than 4mm when the door's closed. The gap under the door can be slightly larger (up to 8mm), but it does depend on the door. Ideally, you should not see light under the door.
3. Seals - check the seals around the door or frame. Check they're intact with no sign of damage.

4. Hinges - check all hinges are firmly fixed (three or more of them), with no missing or broken screws.

5. Closing properly - check the door closes firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame.

If you notice any issue with a fire door (including flat entrance doors), at your scheme, please report them to our Repairs Team on [0208 354 5500](tel:02083545500).

Resident's Annual Review



Every year we produce a report to keep our residents and the people who use our services up to date on some of the important things that we have done over the last twelve months. This includes how we have invested in homes and in keeping them maintained, any changes or improvements to services we have on offer and how residents have been involved in our policies and in projects we run in different communities.

Our report has now been published and is available for download on our website www.octavia.org.uk/about-octavia-housing/publications. Alternatively, if you would like a free hard copy of the report please email update@octavia.org.uk with your name and address or call us on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) to request your copy.

Need help with budgeting or managing debts?



People can face financial difficulties at any time in their lives, often caused by an unexpected change of circumstances such as benefit changes, reduction in income, ill health or unplanned expenses.

We have a financial inclusion service to support residents during these difficult times. This service is focused on helping people maximise their income, manage budgets and sustain their tenancy.

Universal Credit (a means tested benefit) is now operating in our area and some residents have found this challenging. We are committed to supporting residents through these changes and, as an extra support, we have appointed an additional member to the Octavia Financial Inclusion Team.

The team can help you with:

- ▶ Budgeting advice to ensure you can manage to pay your main bills.
- ▶ Support to help you to maintain your tenancy if you are experiencing difficulties.
- ▶ Referral to a food bank.

The team can also make referrals to services for:

- ▶ Access to independent and free benefit and debt advice.
- ▶ Helping you to get a job or a better paid job.
- ▶ Energy advice to manage and reduce your fuel bills.

If you are in difficulty, we are here to help. Contact your Income Officer on [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) if you need our support.

Christmas opening hours

Our Christmas opening hours are as follows. We will be operating an emergency out-of-hours repairs service throughout the holidays which you can access by calling [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500).

Tuesday 24 December

Office closes at 4pm

Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 December

Office closed

Friday 27, Monday 30 & Tuesday 31 December

Limited service provided from 10am - 4pm

Wednesday 1 January 2020

Office closed

Thursday 2 January 2020

Office open at 9am as normal

Our performance

We check on our 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 including completing emergency repairs on time and letting our vacant properties quickly. Our rent arrears and collection performance are progressing well to achieve the end of year target, and we are doing all we can to support residents affected by welfare reform; we will continue to monitor this closely.

Performance indicator	August 2019	March 2020 Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % of rent due (general needs)	4.5%	3.9%	☹️
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	100.2%	100.3%	☹️
Standard voids – average re-let time in days	21	22	😊
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	100%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	99.3%	99%	😊
% 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 (customer contact team)	19	20	😊
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (repairs line)	5	20	😊
Average time to respond to complaints (in days)	10	10	😊
Satisfaction with Octavia's overall service (from our completed repairs survey)	95%	95%	😊

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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