

EDITION 39: SPRING 2020 - Simple, up-to-date, important news for Octavia residents

# UPDATE NEWSLETTER

## Responding to the COVID-19 emergency



We hope you are keeping well during this difficult time.

As you will appreciate, it has been necessary to make some changes to our services in order to help protect and support people during the Coronavirus emergency. We have been updating our website regularly with the latest service information. This is where you can always find up-to-date advice about the help we have available for you or others in your neighbourhood, as well as any alerts to changes to usual services: [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/covid-19).

This newsletter also provides a lot of information about what we are doing to help support residents and other local people at this time. If you need advice with managing your finances, with job-hunting, or if you are unable to leave your home and need support with food-shopping or other assistance, or if you are feeling too isolated or lonely – please get in touch. We are here to help.

### Please keep safe

As this newsletter went to press, the Government was asking us to continue to follow the lockdown measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible.

Until we are advised otherwise, we are being asked to avoid leaving our home, except to carry out a small number of approved tasks, including food shopping, dealing with a medical need, exercising outside and travelling to work (if you cannot work from home). This is an evolving situation and we are urging everyone to keep up to date with the latest advice about social distancing from the Government and the NHS. The latest Government advice can be found on their website: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

What do you think of this newsletter?

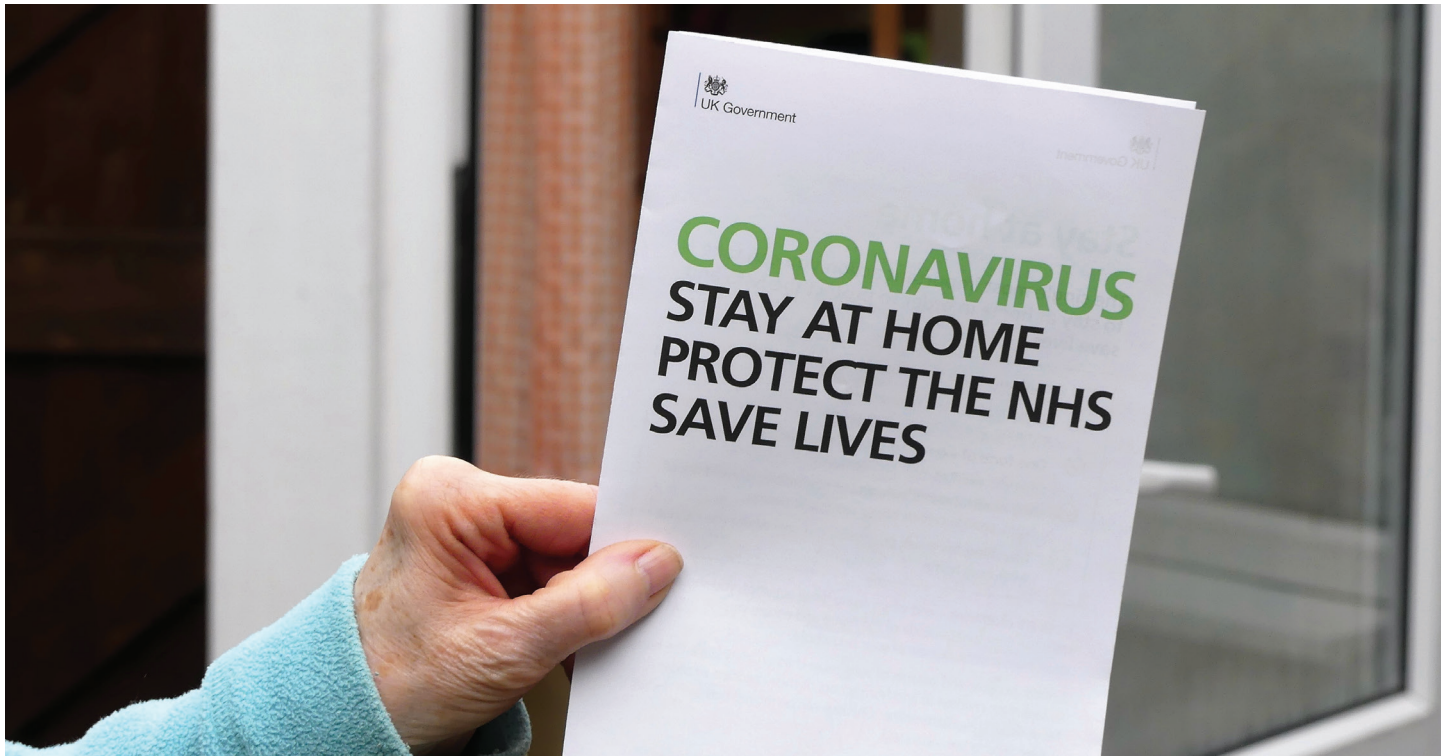
Let us know at: [E update@octavia.org.uk](mailto:Update@octavia.org.uk)

### Contact us

Repairs: T 020 8354 5500 (including emergency out-of-hours)  
Contact team: T 020 8354 5500 E [info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk)  
W [www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk)



## Prioritising safety



We are taking extra measures to combat the spread of the virus in our buildings. Our caretaking staff are focused on keeping communal areas clean by concentrating on areas such as door handles, handrails and lift panels. Because of this, other cleaning services may be slightly different from usual.

In line with Government advice, in many buildings we have had to restrict access to some areas, including children's play areas. We are also asking everyone to be considerate of others when using shared areas inside and around your home. As always, we ask that you keep all shared areas free of belongings for fire safety reasons, but this will also help to provide more space for people to pass safely. It is very important that if you need to leave your home, you maintain social distancing from anyone who is not a member of your own household at all times.

In our extra care schemes our Care staff are taking stringent measures to help keep people shielded and safe. They are also paying special attention to supporting the wellbeing of residents, through helping them to keep in touch with friends and family with telephone and video phone calls. They are also providing arts and craft activities to keep people entertained and engaged with others as much as possible.



## Urgent works and emergency repairs



Please continue to report repairs. We are carrying out all emergency repairs and we are recording all other reported repairs on our systems so that these can be scheduled to be completed after the lockdown period comes to an end.

We are also continuing to carry out essential health and safety works, such as gas, boiler and electricity safety checks. Please allow us to enter your home for these important appointments. All of our staff and contractors know to comply with the social distancing guidelines. They also carry PPE equipment with them, if this is required.

## Help for anyone self-isolating or shielding

If you are over 70 years old, we will already have been in touch to ask if you need any support while you are isolating at home. We are helping lots of residents with things like food shopping and delivering prescription drugs. If you are shielding at home and we haven't spoken to you yet, or if you are worried about an older or vulnerable person in your neighbourhood who you think may benefit from this kind of help, please contact us on 0208 354 5500.

## Reed and KDC staff help distribute free meals

As many residents will know, we usually provide a range of community activities for older and younger people at the Reed, our Community Hub off Portobello Road, which we were unable to continue with safely during lockdown. However, our Reed and KDC Care staff have been as busy as ever, distributing free meals and food parcels to older people who need them. We are very grateful to local charity Dad's House and Chelsea Football Club for their continued support. You can read more about this on our website.

We have also been able to continue our usual support with distribution of food bank vouchers. If you want to know more about getting help from a food bank, see information about food bank referrals.



## Base@theReed goes virtual



Our four-nights-a-week digital training and social support for younger people, also usually held at the Reed, has not been able to continue as normal, but this has not stopped our creative digital team from finding alternative entertainment for younger residents during the lockdown. They've set up a programme of stimulating online activities instead. From creatively alternative ways to share their favourite lockdown activities, to music and animation creations, Base@Home has lots of fun ways to stimulate the imagination, help young people stay connected and keep you occupied while at home.

The activities are free for young people aged 10-21. The programme includes a mixture of digital workshops related to music production, filmmaking, photography, art and design and gaming, with the schedule updated weekly. You can find out more about the programme on our website and Base Instagram account:

- [bit.ly/baseatthereed](http://bit.ly/baseatthereed)
- [instagram.com/weareoctavia](https://www.instagram.com/weareoctavia)

The sessions are open to everyone interested in having some digital fun and (virtually) meeting new people. If you are interested in joining in, or you know a young person who is, please sign up via this link:

<http://bit.ly/basehomesignup>.



## Volunteer befrienders prevent social isolation

Our volunteer befrienders always do an amazing job but they have been particularly fantastic since the social restrictions caused by the Coronavirus started. When faced with not being able to meet their matched 'befriendees' face-to-face, many of our befrienders have been able to switch their regular befriending sessions to telephone conversations instead.

We have also seen an incredible response from other local people who have signed up to help. Well over 100 new volunteers have joined us to help with this project. Every new volunteer is trained remotely via the online platform Zoom, before being matched with an older individual in the community. We really appreciate everyone's support for our befriending project. We are sure these extra efforts will make a huge difference with helping older, isolated people feel more supported by their community.

If you want to know more about volunteering with us, go to: [www.octaviafoundation.org.uk/volunteer/volunteer\\_roles/befriending](http://www.octaviafoundation.org.uk/volunteer/volunteer_roles/befriending)



## COVID-19 related financial assistance



The Government has confirmed that everyone must continue to pay rent and service charges during this time but we are very aware that the Coronavirus outbreak is causing financial hardship for lots of people. The Government has set up a number of initiatives to help. If you have seen a drop in income as a result of the virus, we can help you understand what support is available and how to access it.

### Universal Credit and other benefits

There have been changes to benefits available to help people facing financial difficulty or a reduction in household income because of the virus. You may be able to claim Universal Credit and New Style Jobseeker's allowance, as well as council tax support. If you already claim benefits or Universal Credit and your income is reduced, there are also special measures in place to help you. Please make sure you stay up to date on what you need to do for your circumstances.

If you are seeking employment, we can put you in touch with organisations that can help. Contact us on [info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk) if you would like to know more about this.

If you are unable to work because you are unwell with COVID-19 and you are eligible for Statutory Sick Pay, the Government has confirmed this will be paid from day one, rather than from the fourth day of your illness.

For more information on benefit support available, go to: [www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/](http://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/)



## Managing debt

If you are experiencing problems in paying your rent or service charges, please contact us immediately. Our Income Team can offer benefits advice over the phone on 020 8354 5500, Monday-Friday 10am-4pm. We can also help you to access support through our partners, including:

- Citizens Advice - We work in partnership with Citizens Advice to provide free, independent and confidential advice on debts and benefits over the phone. Simply call us on 020 8354 5500 to make a telephone appointment (CAB will call you back) or call your local CAB directly.
- Stepchange - We also work with the debt advice charity Stepchange to provide you with immediate advice on freephone (including mobiles) 0800 138 1112. You can also use their secure debt remedy tool on their website: [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

For further information on how to access benefit and debt advice, visit our website: [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/covid-19)



## Care staff celebrated for making a difference



Earlier this year, Care Talk magazine featured two members of our Care team as some of 'The Best of the Best' in the profession. Winner of London's 'Dementia Carer of the Year' 2019 award, Bridget Kean, was chosen after her determination and compassion to Care led her to reunite Octavia resident, Maureen, with her family in Ireland. The trip had a long-lasting impact on Maureen, as she "accomplished something that fulfilled a great need in her."

Bridgewater House carer, Lorna Maclean's, work was also highlighted as a real-life example of excellence. Speaking to Care Talk, Lorna (pictured) shared how she has been weaving wellbeing into resident activities through the launch of a popular knitting club. They were both commended for their caring and inspirational approaches, and for tailoring care to put the needs of people first.

Both feature articles are available to read on the Care Talk website: [www.caretalk.co.uk/](http://www.caretalk.co.uk/)



## At home shouldn't mean at risk

Whilst the Government is asking for people to stay at home as much as possible in order to protect the NHS and care services and save lives, it also acknowledges that this can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing, or feel at risk of, domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is unacceptable in any situation and there is no excuse for it. If you need help with domestic abuse, or if you are concerned about a neighbour who you think is at risk, please contact us on **020 8354 5500**. We have trained staff who can explain the options available to help you.

If you are in immediate danger, please call 999 and ask for the police. You can make a 'silent call' to the police if it is not safe for you to speak, by dialling 999 and then pressing 55 when prompted.

## Extra care schemes rated as 'good' by the CQC



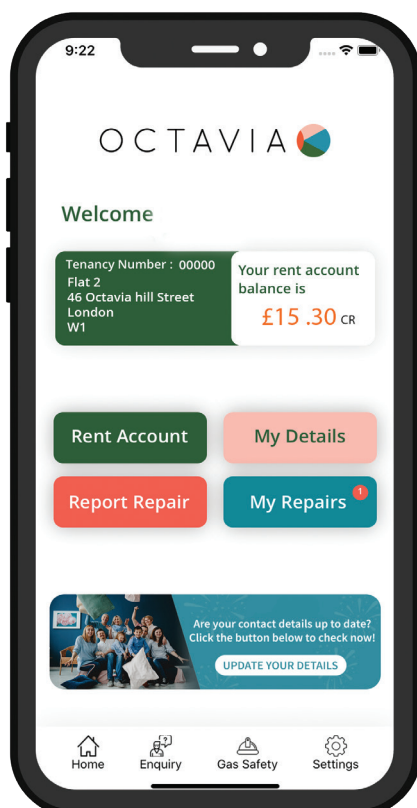
In March, the health and social care regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), awarded three of our extra care schemes with an overall rating of 'good'. Park Lodge House in Hounslow, Highlever Road, a specialist dementia scheme in North Kensington, and Burgess Fields in North Kensington, achieved good ratings in all areas of safety, effectiveness, caring, responsiveness and being well-led.

According to the CQC reports, Highlever residents and their relatives praised the "positive and compassionate approach" of our Care staff, with one family member saying, "When I leave here I am certain my mother is in safe hands." At Park Lodge a resident reported "It's good here. I feel safe

with the staff". At Burgess Fields the CQC reported "a good standard of care" and one relative of a resident commented, "staff are very dedicated and caring and good at communicating issues. I think my family member is very lucky".

For more about Octavia extra care, go to: [www.octaviasupport.org.uk/our\\_services/extra\\_care\\_housing](http://www.octaviasupport.org.uk/our_services/extra_care_housing)

## My Octavia has a new look



We are making some changes to our resident app, My Octavia. More than 900 residents are now using the app, which is a great tool for keeping up to date with your current rent balance, transactions and rent statements.

We've re-designed the app to improve user experience. Changes include making the look and feel more user friendly and making the text larger and easier to read. The app update is being released in May. Existing app users will need to update the app on their phone to benefit from the new features.

If you haven't tried My Octavia yet, why not set up your account now? It is easy to use and it works on both Apple and Android smartphones. For more information, go to: [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/MyOctavia](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/MyOctavia).

## Food bank referrals



We are continuing to help people with providing food bank referrals.

If you are unable to afford to buy food, please contact us on 020 8354 5500 so we can issue you with a voucher for your local food bank.

Even if you are self-isolating or shielding, we can arrange for the food bank to deliver your food parcel straight to your home.

## Residents feedback on our COVID-19 response

Social distancing did not prevent our resident involvement group, Your Voice, from meeting last month. The group held their first video conference meeting in April to discuss Octavia's response to the Coronavirus outbreak and to gather feedback from residents on how well we are doing.

The group felt Octavia is responding well to the crisis, and we were especially pleased to hear one member describe it as "exemplary". The group's main focus was around concern for residents who we know are facing financial impacts because of the virus. They were keen to ensure that Octavia provides useful advice and support for anyone who finds it hard to pay rent at this time.

After the success of this first video conference, the group plans to hold more meetings online, so that they can continue to monitor our response to COVID-19 and, going forward, continue to help shape our services.

If you would like more information on how you can be more involved as a resident, then please call [020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500) and ask to speak to our Resident Involvement Manager. You can also email us on [info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk).

## Silver for investing in people



Octavia has retained a 'Silver' award from the employers' accreditation body, Investors In People (IIP), following an assessment earlier this year. According to the IIP report, a key area of strength for Octavia is how well our staff identify with our strong legacy and social purpose. Staff recognition, support for wellbeing and our values driven approach, were also noted as key areas of strength. IIP is a journey of continuous improvement. We will be looking closely at the report's recommendations to see where we can do even better as an employer.

At a time when so many of our staff are being recognised nationally for caring for local people and for providing front-line services, we are pleased to retain our Silver status and want to ensure that we support all our staff to work together to achieve our mission.



## 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 repairs on time and responding to reports of anti-social behaviour quickly. Our performance in a few areas has been impacted by the temporary changes we have made to our services due to COVID-19. For example, rent collection and answering calls were both lower than expected in the last two weeks of March. But in spite of this challenge, performance has stabilised and we finished very close to our targets by the end of March. We will continue to monitor these areas closely.

Performance indicator	March 2020	Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % of rent due (general needs)	4.1%	3.9%	☹️
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	99.8%	100.3%	☹️
Standard voids – average re-let time in days	21	21	😊
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	99.9%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	99.2%	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)	21	20	☹️
Average speed of phone calls pick up in seconds (repairs line)	6	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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