

For the common good

Resident's annual
report 2019/20



Message from our Chief Executive, Sandra Skeete



It's been just over a year since I joined Octavia as Chief Executive. It's a real privilege to lead an organisation with such a strong social purpose and an engaged resident community.

This year's Annual Report outlines our progress for 2019-20 across our homes, support and care. It provides information on how well we are delivering services, along with insightful feedback from people who live in our homes, benefit from our care or support services, and have been inspired by our community projects. You will see that we are doing well in many areas. However, we're not complacent and are constantly learning and making improvements where we know, or you tell us, that we can do better.

Our performance

It's essential that we get our service right and I'm pleased to report we are performing at or close to our targets in most areas. More than 80% of residents said they were happy with our service and 95% said they were happy with their last repair.



The safety of our homes remains an absolute priority and we are pressing ahead with fire safety improvements in homes that require them, in line with new regulations. 2020 has proved to be a very challenging year but I'm pleased to report that our organisation is coping well. By responding to the pandemic and adapting how we work, we have continued to provide our key services and minimised disruption. Thank you for your patience and co-operation as we take the necessary measures to keep residents, colleagues and contractors, safe.

Partnership working

More than any other, this has been a year that has highlighted the importance of community and I'd like to thank all residents, volunteers and partners who have worked with us to deliver extra support to people who needed it. We could not have achieved so much without your help. It's been a team effort that our founder, Octavia Hill, would have been proud of.

Going forward, as we continue to work to improve our services, our partnerships with you will be more important than ever.

This is your voice



Keith has been an Octavia resident for over 30 years and for the last four years has been actively engaged as a consultation volunteer. He is a member of our resident consultation group, Your Voice. The group currently consists of 11 residents and three independent housing specialists. It independently influences and helps shape Octavia's services and reports directly to the Board.

Octavia values what you say

Keith explains more about how this resident-involved group has been influencing Octavia's work and why it's more important than ever for people to get involved:

"I signed up to Your Voice when I saw a piece in Octavia's residents' newsletter and decided to go for it. It's been a really good

experience to learn what's going on and be part of a team that scrutinises Octavia's work in a positive way. Octavia actively encourages this. Board members and our Chief Executive have joined our meetings. It's clear Your Voice means something and Octavia genuinely values what we say.

"We look at all areas of Octavia's services. This year we've made a big contribution to developing Octavia's Environmental Sustainability Strategy, which sets out how we will help reduce our carbon footprint. The environment is a hot topic that people rightly feel strongly about. Octavia wants to be as green as possible and wants residents to shape its plans. We've met with inspiring experts and learnt from others to create a plan that will make a lasting difference to our neighbourhoods.



“More recently of course, reacting to Covid-19 has been very important. The crisis has really brought home for all of us how essential resident involvement is. There’s lots of questions to be asked about what the ‘new normal’ means, how residents and staff need to be supported, and how this will impact the work Octavia does.

“It’s important that residents of all ages and backgrounds are part of these conversations so that we are all represented. Your Voice is a brilliant opportunity to

represent your neighbourhood and influence Octavia’s services.”

How you can get involved

Residents are involved in shaping Octavia in various ways. As well as Your Voice, they join digital consultation channels, act as ‘mystery shoppers’ and form focus groups. If you would like to know how you can be more involved as a resident, please contact us on **0208 354 5500** and ask to speak to Peter Walkinshaw, our Resident Involvement Manager.

815

tenants and home owners were consulted to involve them in our services

74%

of residents say Octavia gives you the chance to make your views known

A year at a glance

Our highlights and learnings

Our focus and drive is always ‘people not profit’. Here’s a look at our highlights and learnings across our homes, care and support services.



Homes

“To everyone at Octavia, thank you for allowing myself and my little boy to live this exciting chapter in our lives.”

- ▶ **87%** of Octavia residents are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live in
- ▶ **82%** of you are satisfied with Octavia’s service
- ▶ **95%** of you are happy with your last repair
- ▶ **92%** of complaints were resolved by our local service managers
- ▶ More than **1,000** residents have signed up to our new My Octavia app - 20% of them are homeowners
- ▶ **100%** of our homes and properties have a valid gas safety certificate
- ▶ We have increased the energy efficiency rating of our homes and properties
- ▶ We developed **155** new affordable homes for Londoners



Care

“I cannot praise Octavia staff enough. They have so much love for my family member. I’m so thankful they are there.”

- ▶ **90%** of our residents would recommend Octavia’s Care and Support service
- ▶ All of our **seven** residential extra care schemes received a ‘Good’ Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating – two with ‘**Outstanding**’ for responsiveness
- ▶ We provided **2,526** hours of **befriending** support to help prevent isolation and loneliness
- ▶ We completed **232** adaptations to residents’ homes and provided support to **128** residents to enable them to continue to live independently



Support

“I was always interested in film but I never thought a career in the industry was possible.”

- ▶ We awarded **£42,581** to small local grassroots charities, helping to sustain the important contribution these organisations make to the community
- ▶ We provided life-enhancing opportunities for **338** young people through our digital media projects, an increase of **100** compared with 2018/19
- ▶ We supported **276** people into employment and training and provided **261** residents with debt and welfare support
- ▶ We connected **1,019** volunteers to supporting others in their community

Responding to Covid-19

“I am finding the current situation difficult like everyone else. Speaking to Anne has really put things into perspective. She always puts a huge smile on my face.”

We responded quickly to the pandemic, through adapting our business, mobilising our colleagues and running our key services throughout. Health and safety remains a top priority for us, along with reaching out to support our older and vulnerable residents and providing benefit advice to those in need.

“As I am 92, I have been practicing shielding measures. I am amazed at how Octavia have been so good with contacting residents. I never looked at my landlord for any other purpose than providing accommodation. After this experience, I would now feel confident enough to ask for support if I needed it. Thank you Octavia for everything you are doing.”

Listening to you

We are proactive in learning from your ideas, concerns and complaints. We consulted with 815 residents during 2019/20 through surveys, events, focus groups and via Your Voice.

Responsiveness

You said: You wanted us to respond faster when you contacted us by telephone to request a service.

We did: Developed our Contact team to deliver more services to you during your call and reduced the amount of time we take to call you back.

My Octavia app

You said: We would like better online self-service options for reporting and staying in touch.

We did: Launched our 'My Octavia' app in September 2019, giving residents 24-hour access to view rent balances, statements and transactions, track reported repairs and contact us.

Repairs

You said: The repairs reporting process is confusing for new residents during their first weeks of living in their home.

We did: Changed the process for new residents to improve it.

You said: Repairs to shared areas are taking too long to complete.

We did: Visited 160 residents to find out more about your experience. We then made changes to improve communications around large repairs such as replacing lifts or entrance doors, providing residents with regular updates.

Home viewings have gone virtual

We've taken our home viewings online by offering virtual tours, enabling us to continue to offer homes for rent and shared ownership during the Covid-19 lockdown



Cleaning

You said: We have concerns about the quality of cleaning at some schemes.

We did: We worked with residents and caretakers at identified schemes to improve the service and satisfaction, achieving a recent 80% resident satisfaction rating with the cleaning service.

Homeowners

You said: You wanted more clarity on your service charges.

We did: Appointed a dedicated service charge officer for homeowners, so we can respond to your service charge enquiries more quickly and effectively. We've also improved how we inform residents about their service charge statements and estimates through a new personalised booklet.

Complaints

Our complaints process enables any issues to be resolved and provides us with a robust framework for learning.

We received 115 complaints in 2019/20, a reduction on the 141 reported in 2018/19. 40% of complaints received were about repairs, 19% about planned works, 8% concerning leaseholder or shared owner issues, and 6% regarding lettings and transfers.

- ▶ 92% were resolved locally by our service managers
- ▶ Our average response time was within our service standard of ten days
- ▶ Nine complaints were escalated to our independent complaints panel, two were upheld
- ▶ Seven were taken to the Housing Ombudsman. Following the feedback from one case, we have reviewed and updated our Compensation Policy

In each case we have learnt, responded and made changes to the way we do things.

The facts and the figures

how we are doing in more detail

Our performance throughout the year has been good and we are ambitious to do better.

Octavia Chair, Sandeep Katwala

We set targets for all areas of our work to make sure we are:

- ▶ offering a good quality and reliable service our residents can trust
- ▶ have clear objectives that everyone at Octavia is working to
- ▶ meeting the key requirements set by the Government
- ▶ achieving high standards that compare positively with other leading housing associations

The table opposite explains how we are doing with our core services and how

we compare with other London housing associations. Prior to March 2020, our rent collection was on target, however as anticipated, coronavirus impacted some of our residents' finances and, in turn, our work in this area.

2020 Star survey

This year we carried out our three-yearly Star survey - a confidential survey open to all residents.

The results showed residents have high satisfaction (80% or more) with their neighbourhood, homes and the quality of Octavia's services. Thanks to 589 of you who completed the survey, we know:

- ▶ 79% of residents find Octavia easy to deal with

Performance indicator	Outcome 2019/20	Our target	London comparison*
Rent arrears as % of rent due	4.1%	3.9%	✓
Rent collection as % of rent due	99.9%	100%	✓
Average time to re-let an empty home (void)	21 days	21 days	✓
Completed emergency repairs on target	99%	99%	✓
% residents satisfied with last repair	95%	93%	✓
% of properties with valid landlord gas safety certificates	100%	100%	✓
Response to ASB reports within target time	100%	95%	✓
Average call answered in seconds	15	20	✓

* London HouseMark comparison

✓ top quartile ✓ upper median ✓ median

- ▶ 70% of residents are satisfied Octavia listened to your views
- ▶ 82% of residents are satisfied that Octavia's rent offers value for money
- ▶ 60% of tenants are happy that their service charges provide value for money

Our performance on anti-social behaviour (ASB) was above target, with an overall 69% satisfaction rating for how the reports were handled and 76% for how they were resolved.

We also surveyed our leaseholders and shared owners to get their views and were disappointed to learn that satisfaction has reduced. We are very clear on the areas where we need to improve and some changes have already been made, especially in the area of service charges information and value for money. In the coming year we will also focus on communal repairs and providing a more responsive service. This is a high priority for Octavia and we will be consulting our homeowners in 2021 to make sure we are improving.

Looking after your home

We spent £8.44m on routine maintenance, planned maintenance, and major repairs to homes. We have higher repairs and maintenance costs than some housing providers because many of our homes are older heritage properties in central London. We believe in investing in our homes for the longer term. We also spend more on energy efficiency to help reduce energy bills for residents.

Our finances

Our financial performance remains strong, enabling us to invest in the communities we serve and to build more needed homes for Londoners. To find out more about our finances for the year, see our Annual Report and Financial Statements on our website at: www.octavia.org.uk/AnnualReport2020

Our people

The wellbeing and motivation of our diverse workforce goes hand-in-hand with the delivery of good services. We retained our Investors in People Silver Accreditation in February 2020 and achieved a London Healthy Workplace Award in November 2019.

The people behind the numbers

Good homes

Octavia manages 5,211 homes across London. Our commitment to 'people not profit' means 50% of our new homes are for social/ affordable rent. We are also creating more homes for shared ownership, giving Londoners the opportunity to own a permanent home.

We are developing in partnership more than **1,400** new homes for Londoners by 2023

 This is the home for us



Janice, a library manager, and her husband Francisco, an immigration officer, viewed several developments across west London before discovering their dream home was right on their doorstep - a two bedroom apartment at Octavia's Witley Wharf in Southall.

“As soon as I walked in, it met all my expectations. I had this gut feeling, the type you get when you step into a home and you know it’s the right one for you. The layout was perfect, and I could immediately picture us living there,” said Janice.

“The sales process was 10 out of 10. Octavia provided support at every stage and communication between every person in the chain was excellent.”

This was especially important as Janice and Franciso were buying their new home as the ‘lockdown’ in March began. “I knew that Octavia wouldn’t be able to provide all the answers due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, but the reassurances we received during the crisis definitely helped us to stay positive.

“It was an amazing feeling to have dinner in our new home for the first time. In our previous place, we had a separate sitting room and kitchen which led to a feeling of disconnect between the family. It makes a real difference being able to prepare a meal in our kitchen and chat to my husband and children.”

It’s like we’ve won the lottery

**Research manager at Imperial College
Yingqi and his family have been happily living in their home, a two bedroom flat in Octavia’s award-winning Sulgrave Gardens development in Shepherd’s Bush, for six years.**

“We moved to London and rented in Hammersmith until 2014. Looking for a place to buy, we were hoping to remain in the same area as our children go to school

here. At the start of our buying journey, it didn’t seem like this would be possible, so we widened our search, looking at places further and further out of central London. We were still finding that everywhere was too expensive for us.”



That was until Yingqi found Octavia’s (then new) shared ownership homes at Sulgrave Gardens.

Six years on, and Yingqi and his family are very happy in their Octavia home. “We are really grateful to Octavia for providing our family with an affordable home in such a central and convenient spot. Our development has a neighbourhood feel and everyone is very friendly, which is a real plus. It was great to be able to move in straight away without having to spend money on refurbishing and decorating. The sustainable design of our home also means that it is easy to keep energy bills down. It’s a win-win situation.”

Support

Now that I have some experience under my belt, I've set myself a goal of writing and directing my own short film.

In 2019/20, Octavia engaged with 338 young people through a wide-ranging and inspiring digital programme of free-to-attend activities. Birth of Cool is a great example of this. An 18-month digital media initiative for 13-25 year olds, the Octavia project is supported by top industry professionals and has helped 100 young people learn skills to carve creative career paths in the film and digital media industry.



Shereen was one of several young people who led on the production of the project's 2019 'Punk Road' documentary film. Nominated for three regional film festival awards, Punk Road explores how the Kings Road became the heart of the Punk Music movement in the 1970s.

"I was always really interested in film, but I never thought a career in the industry was possible," said Shereen. "It seemed like an option for people who had financial backing, contacts and years of experience. I had a lightbulb moment after joining Birth of Cool, when Octavia's digital project manager

told us about the opportunities that were within our reach. I felt empowered by this knowledge. His guidance helped me to realise that I may actually be able to pursue a career in the field."

The inspirational experience has encouraged Shereen to press ahead with an ambition to write and direct her own film. "The script writing is already underway. In the meantime, I'm seeking to continue to assist on various productions so that I consolidate and hone the skills I have gained."

When we start our call Anne is usually down, but by the end we are always laughing and joking. She always says to me – "Rob you have given me hope and brought me happiness."

Our research has shown Octavia's befriending schemes provide considerable comfort for socially isolated older people – helping them to be more confident and develop a sense of wellbeing.

Rob, from Ireland, answered Octavia's call for more volunteers to support people isolated during the lockdown through our telephone befriending service. He was matched with Anne, 84 and also Irish, and the pair bonded over a love of travelling and tales from the 'old country'. They have been enjoying frequent calls with one another for several months.

"When I heard about Octavia's telephone befriending service, I was eager to get involved. I wanted to give something back and I knew there would be someone out there in need of a person to take time to just chat or take their mind off things."

Compassionate care

We care, we connect and we look after our older and vulnerable residents with tailored compassionate support. Our range of not-for-profit services includes day care, personalised outreach, extra care and sheltered housing. We support people to live independently and we specialise in providing award-winning care.

I like to treat the people I look after as though they are my family.

Bridget has been a professional carer for nine years. She looks after our residents at Highlever House, an Octavia extra care scheme for people with moderate to severe dementia.

In March 2020, Bridget was awarded a Great British Care Award for her outstanding professionalism. The award recognised her efforts in helping to make the long standing wish of one Highlever resident, Maureen, come true, when she arranged to reunite her with her sister in Limerick. Bridget was 'honoured' to be invited by Maureen's family to accompany her on the trip to Ireland.

After returning to London Bridget noticed how the trip had made a positive difference to Maureen. "We spoke about it a lot when we came back. She was so happy and loved the attention. It was a huge boost for her wellbeing. It's like she has accomplished something that was on her mind.

"It's very rewarding working in care and it's so fulfilling. You can tell you are doing a good job. You can see it in residents' faces or their behaviour - when they tell you themselves it's the best feeling."

Friendly, professional and helpful

Sarah contacted us to praise our adaptation service, after our contractor made changes to her grandmother's Octavia home so she could continue to live independently.

"They kept us informed at every step of the way, communicating with us well before the process started. Everything was explained clearly and our opinions and preferences were placed at the forefront. They were available to answer queries, always friendly and professional and extremely helpful, and often went out of their way to accommodate our needs.

"It's so much easier for my grandma to get around now and it just looks lovely. We're very happy and grateful for the result."



For 24-hour access to rent balances, statements and transactions, and to track reported repairs, use our resident app. Find out more at: www.octaviahousing.org.uk/MyOctavia

To find out how you can get more involved in helping shape our services, contact our Resident Involvement Manager, Peter.Walkinshaw@octavia.org.uk



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