

EDITION 38: WINTER 2020 - Simple, up-to-date, important news for Octavia residents

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

WE'VE GOT A NEW LOOK

OCTAVIA 

We are making some changes to the way we look which you will start to notice over the next few weeks. This is part of a bigger project focused on making our services better.

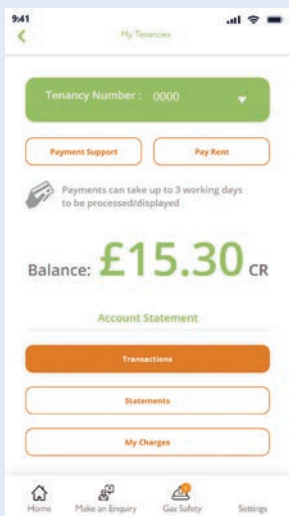
The Octavia logo is being updated (you can see the new one above), and over time you will see a difference to our website too. Anyone who attended one of our last two big annual resident events will have already seen the new look. If this includes you, thank you for your positive feedback.

The changes are part of a larger plan to change how we deliver our services, with the aim of making the range of ways we can help you and your neighbours clearer and more convenient for you to access. Many service requests can now be handled straight away by our Contact Team when you call them. We have also reduced the amount of time we take to respond to you when you contact us by email and we have further plans ahead.

The developments are all designed to make us more effective as one organisation, with staff working together as a unified team to deliver the improved services that you have told us you want.

The changes are being introduced gradually, to ensure they are both cost-effective and deliver the desired improvements.

We would love to hear about what you think about the changes, so if you have any feedback please let us know by emailing us at: update@octavia.org.uk.



Rent statements are now online

Following feedback, we have been making changes to provide more ways for you to contact us. You now have more flexibility with accessing our services online through our new My Octavia app. The app allows you to see your up-to-date rent balance and rent statements, and track your reported repairs, at any time of day, while you are on the go. You can also use it to change the contact information we hold for you, such as your email address or phone number.

As your rent statements, including historic statements, are now fully accessible online via My Octavia, from Spring 2020 we will no longer automatically post these to you every three months. Being fully online with this service is more convenient for you. It also enables us to reduce our printing costs, so we can invest further in improving our services.

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What do you think of
this newsletter?

Let us know at: 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

Hundreds of residents are already using the app and feedback has been really positive, with more than 90% of users who have given us feedback saying it is quick to install and easy to use.

To start using the app, go to: www.octaviahousing.org.uk/MyOctavia and follow the set-up guide.

We will still provide printed rent statements for anyone who prefers to receive them this way. If you want to keep receiving your rent statements by post, you can 'opt in' to this service by emailing us at info@octavia.org.uk, or by calling the Contact Team, to request this.

New Year, new opportunities



If you are looking for a job, or to move into better paid work, there is a free training programme available to help get you motivated. Octavia is partnering with other local housing associations to provide the 'Transform and Achieve' course, designed to support people to make positive lifestyle changes to get them on track with finding better employment.

As well as help with job searching, interview preparation and how to be more job ready, this course is aimed at building your confidence. It also has advice on wellbeing, physical fitness and diet. So, this New Year why not take advantage of this opportunity to transform into a new, job-ready you? Who knows where it might lead.

The course runs for two days a week, for six weeks (Tuesdays and Thursdays). An enrolment day will be held at the Beethoven Centre, W9 on Tuesday 11 February 2020 from 11am to 4pm. To find out more, or to register an interest in enrolling, please contact us ([020 8354 5500](tel:02083545500)) and ask to speak to Kyrsha Haynes, or email Kyrsha on Kyrsha.haynes@octaviafoundation.org.uk.

Hotpoint and Indesit washing machine recall

In December, Whirlpool issued a product recall on certain models of washing machines manufactured under the Hotpoint and Indesit brands between 2014 and 2018.



This is due to a defective door catch on certain models, which can overheat during use, resulting in a risk of fire.

If you have a washing machine from Hotpoint or Indesit and have not yet checked if your machine is a recalled model, you are advised to unplug the machine and do not use it until you have checked.

You can find a list of models recalled on the Government website, www.productrecall.campaign.gov.uk/

If your model is on the list, contact Whirlpool on their freephone hotline 0800 316 1442 or register on the Whirlpool website: www.washingmachinerecall.whirlpool.co.uk/

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With all kitchen appliances, known as 'white goods', you should always be alert to signs that they are not working properly. Please follow this safety advice from the London Fire Brigade:

- ▶ If your appliance starts making a strange noise, don't ignore it – if you suspect there might be a problem, always unplug it and contact the manufacturer or a qualified repair technician.
- ▶ Check your appliances haven't been recalled – most fires, where white goods are the source of ignition, are not down to anything you've done. It's a good idea to regularly check your appliances haven't been recalled. You can do this by checking the Government's product recall site, the manufacturer's website, or via Electrical Safety First's recall register www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/.
- ▶ Always keep your white goods in a safe place out of the way – for example, don't be tempted to put a freezer in a hallway. If a fire does break out in your home, you need all escape routes to be clear.
- ▶ Fit smoke and heat alarms – fit an alarm in every room where a fire could start, and make sure they are tested regularly.
- ▶ Register your appliance online at www.registermyappliance.org.uk/ – by registering your appliance, you'll be informed if the manufacturers identify any issues with the product you have bought.

Octavia carers are award winners



Another member of Octavia's award-winning care staff has won a care award. Bridget Keane, a care assistant working at Octavia's Highlever Road extra care scheme, has won the 'Dementia Carer Award 2019' for the London region 'Great British Care Awards'.

Bridget wowed the judges when they learned of her professionalism and compassion in providing personalised care for residents at Octavia's specialist facility for older people with dementia in North Kensington.

Octavia's care teams run seven extra care schemes in central and west London. We are also an award-winning care employer – and we are currently looking to recruit new care staff. If you would like to know more about working as a carer with Octavia, you can find the opportunities available at: www.morganhunt.com/minisites/octavia.

Responding to the climate emergency

Are you concerned about the environmental issues facing our planet? Do you want to learn more about what needs to happen to improve the current situation and how Octavia aims to respond?

We are developing a strategy to meet the current climate crisis and we are inviting residents who would like to contribute, to help us.

We are holding a one-day workshop in April and we are inviting residents to come along. The day will involve contributions from specialist speakers, plus an opportunity to discuss the key issues being faced and what steps we could be taking.

The proposals from the day will help us develop our environment emergency response strategy, which will be published later in 2020. If this is something that you would like to get involved with, contact Billy Clifflen on be.involved@octavia.org.uk.

New Year resolutions – why not make a difference by volunteering?



The decorations are packed away for another year, and this is a time when lots of people make New Year's resolutions. What are yours? Joining the gym? Saving money? Getting more organised?

How about helping people in your neighbourhood? Volunteering is a simple but really important way to make a real difference to other people. Our volunteers also report that they find the work very rewarding.

We asked Liz Shipsey, Octavia's Employment and Volunteer Services Manager, about what it's like to volunteer with one of Octavia's community projects.

'Not many people know that Octavia does much more than just provide homes for people. We also provide support for many people living in our communities and we rely on our amazing volunteers to help us do this.'

'People volunteer with us in a variety of ways and they come to us for different reasons. Some are looking to upskill or change their career, others want to give something back to their community or to do something positive and useful with their spare time. Whatever the reason, our volunteer team is always open to talking about how they would like to contribute and we will match them with an opportunity that suits them best.'

'Some of our volunteers support us in our shops with fantastic customer service, sorting donations and designing displays. They are essential in helping us to raise the funds we need for our community projects.'

'Others volunteer as befrienders, sharing an hour of their time each week with an older person in their community. It's an exceptionally important role and although we ask befrienders to commit for six months, we often find that once we have matched a befriender with one of our befriendees, the bond of friendship can grow strong and continue for many years.'

'An hour's visit, every week, can make a world of difference to someone who is unable to leave home and has few, if any, friends or family living nearby. People who struggle to get out and about can be extremely isolated and lonely. Our befriender scheme ensures that these people continue to be connected to others in their community.'

'We live in such digital age today that we are in danger of forgetting the importance of face-to-face conversation and how essential it is for everyone's wellbeing. Our volunteer befrienders contribute massively to meeting a need for companionship and at the same time, gain huge rewards from the friendship themselves.'

If you would like to find out more about volunteering with Octavia, email us at volunteering@octavia.org.uk or call us on **020 8354 5500** and ask to speak to someone in the volunteer team.

New Octavia shop in Kensington



We are looking forward to opening a new Octavia charity shop in Golborne Road, Kensington, in the Spring. The new store is in the heart of one of our core boroughs which makes the new shop even more exciting for us. Preparations are well under way and we are hoping to open the doors to customers within the next few weeks, so look out for it if you are in the area.

The income from our charity shops is vital with helping us raise the funds we need to support projects for local people. Among other things, the money raised goes towards funding training, skills and confidence-building for young people, and befriending for older or lonely people. If you are passing any Octavia shop, please take the time to pop in for a browse – we pride ourselves with having lots of good quality, pre-loved items for sale. To find your nearest Octavia shop, see: www.octaviafoundation.org.uk/charity_shops/

Celebrating the punk history of London's Kings Road

Our Lottery Funded digital media project *'The Birth of Cool'* is now well underway and encouraging young people to creatively reimagine the iconic history of the Kings Road in the 1950s to 1980s through modern media technology. It is demonstrating to a new, younger audience the influence that local people had on music, fashion, culture and the rest of UK society.

Following the successful showcase of the project's first film *'The Punk Road'* in December, which depicted the powerful effect the Kings Road had on Punk culture, this Spring the team moves on to creating a fashion concept film, supported by the fashion historian and author Amber Butchart, which will feature t-shirt designs influenced by the legendary area.

The *Birth of Cool* is being run from Octavia's flagship community hub, The Reed, in North Kensington, which offers young people free, informal digital training using industry standard recording and editing equipment provided by the organisation's digital youth club.



Half-term activities at The Reed



As usual, we will be running half-term activities for young people aged 10-21 from February 17-21 at The Reed, our community hub near Portobello Road. The programme will include a mixture of creative digital workshops and outings related to music production, filmmaking, photography, art and design and gaming.

The sessions are open to all skill levels, from beginners who would like to have a go, to those interested in working in the digital and creative media industries. To register your interest to attend please contact conor.lynch@octaviafoundation.org.uk. All activities will be free on a first come first served basis. Go to the website for further information: www.octaviafoundation.org.uk/our_work/young_people_children

Seeking a new home this year?



Octavia tenants who wish to move home can successfully do this through 'mutual exchange'. This process allows two households to swap homes, even if the other household has a different social landlord. If you apply for a mutual exchange it will not affect the success of any applications you make for a housing transfer but it could greatly increase your chance of moving more quickly. You are not restricted to moving within your borough either. You can exchange with people living anywhere in the country, so long as you both have permission from your landlord.

If you are interested in moving through a mutual exchange, there are some websites that can help you find someone to swap with. Some of these are free and others charge a small fee.

We recommend looking at:

- ▶ www.homeswapper.co.uk; or
- ▶ www.movemakerapp.co.uk

You should also contact your local council, as it may have an exchange scheme available. For further information, call us and ask to speak to your Resident Services Officer.

Door safety



It is essential that doors providing access to escape routes are quick and easy to open in the event of a fire.

All doors where security locks are fitted should have locks that open easily without a key on the inside, so they can be opened quickly in an emergency.

If you have a security door to the entrance of your home that does not have an easy-to-use 'thumb-turn' lock, or if you think your lock is broken, please contact the repairs team to make an appointment for us to come to your home.

Tackling tenancy fraud

Every time one of our properties is occupied by someone who has no right to live there, an individual or a family in genuine need of housing, is left without a home. Octavia recognises the need for our homes to be occupied by those who are legally entitled to live in them so we actively investigate reports of tenancy fraud.

A recent investigation by our Housing Team led to obtaining a Court Order to regain possession of a two-bedroom property. The investigation revealed that the tenant had moved abroad and rented out the home to someone else without our knowledge or permission. This type of fraud is known as 'unlawful subletting'. This is where a tenant lets out their council or housing association home without the knowledge or permission of their landlord. They often continue to pay the rent for the property to their landlord but charge someone they are subletting to a much higher rate. It is unlawful and unfair for tenants to sublet, and to profit from, a home which could be given to someone legally entitled to occupy it.

There are other ways in which a tenant could be carrying out a tenancy fraud. If you suspect someone is responsible for committing tenancy fraud, or you feel their Octavia home is no longer their main home, contact our Tenancy Fraud Hotline on [020 8354 5575](tel:02083545575), or email us at investigate@octavia.org.uk. Reports can be made anonymously and information we receive is taken seriously and treated in the strictest confidence. If we find evidence of tenancy fraud we will take legal action.

We are making it easier to contact us by email or phone



The Contact Team work from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) to handle service requests. You can call them on 020 8354 5500 or email at info@octavia.org.uk.

Reporting a repair

Call us between 8.30am and 5pm to report a repair and outside of these hours and at weekends to report an emergency repair.

Paying rent

To make a rent payment you can call the Contact Team or call 'allpay' directly on 033 0041 6497. The allpay phone payment service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Want to talk to us?

We are always available for people who need to talk to us face-to-face. Please call us to arrange an appointment to see us at our offices at Emily House.

For more information on how to contact us go to: www.octaviahousing.org.uk/contact-us

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 have set ourselves a target for the year April 2019 to March 2020 for each indicator and this information shows how we are doing this year so far.

We are doing well in a number of areas, including completing repairs on time and responding to reports of anti-social behaviour quickly. Our rent collection performance is steady. We are especially focused on supporting residents affected by welfare reform and we will continue to monitor this area closely.

Performance indicator	November 2019	Target	Rating
Rent arrears as % of rent due (general needs)	4.1%	3.9%	☹️
Rent collection as % of rent due (general needs)	99.4%	100.3%	☹️
Standard voids – average re-let time in days	20	22	😊
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	99.6%	99%	😊
% of urgent repairs completed within target time	99.1%	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)	17	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)	96%	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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