

OCTAVIA 



Building on
our legacy

Communities Strategy
2021-2024



We will seek
to reach
4400 people
per year by
2024

Our purpose

Octavia will tackle inequality by empowering people to live well and connect.

For over 150 years, Octavia has stayed true to its social purpose by providing good quality, affordable homes, support and opportunity to enable people on lower incomes to live in central and west London.

We have built a unique offer that puts people and communities first, harnessing the skills and commitment of our colleagues, partners and stakeholders to build and sustain thriving and diverse communities that enrich the lives of everyone who lives in them.

With the pandemic laying bare pre-existing inequalities and triggering long overdue conversations about community, opportunity, housing and health, that offer is just as relevant today – perhaps even more so – as it was when we were founded by Victorian philanthropist Octavia Hill in 1865.



To build on our proud legacy of delivering equality in our communities, we will:

Maximise opportunities through our community activity to provide better outcomes for people, fostering partnerships that deliver social value and build resilience.

Harness our services to target underlying inequality of outcomes for disadvantaged groups. We will make these commitments our priority for as long as is needed.

Expand our employment support and access to financial inclusion services to increase our impact, facilitate entrepreneurship and provide training to help people to develop their careers and take up new opportunities.

Support wellbeing, inclusion and tackle loneliness and isolation amongst older people and promote skills development and better life chances for younger people through inspiring opportunities.

Raise funds, develop partnerships with local people, our community and business partners, and corporate business and attract volunteers to help us deliver this aim.

We will seek to reach 4400 people per year by 2024, working with them for longer with greater impact. We measure our impact in terms of how people feel they are living well and connecting more.



Helping people through COVID-19



Our community projects provided a lifeline for people of all ages who felt cut off from the world around them by the pandemic.

We are very grateful to our 300 volunteers for helping us to deliver these projects.

Context

The people we support are frequently at risk of isolation, at risk of having low levels of resilience, confidence and aspirations or at risk of having limited employability skills.

The economic and social impact of the pandemic has been the biggest health emergency the world has faced in over a generation. The disproportionate impact on some groups of society has laid bare pre-existing inequalities. Addressing the economic and social impact on our residents and communities is a key consideration in shaping our corporate strategy.

For many people living in our communities, there are limited opportunities to interact and connect with others different from themselves e.g. intergenerational connections; volunteers who may be new to their community. The importance of having digital skills in order to be able to connect with others has been highlighted during the past year and will continue to be a strong indicator of ability to connect, as the world gradually reopens.

Societal inequalities can limit access to opportunities and specific career paths. A lack of diversity across many sectors, especially in senior positions, means there isn't yet the level of role modelling we'd want to see for younger people from the communities we work in and this can lead to their aspirations feeling unachievable. High levels of insecure employment and unemployment across all ages, exacerbated by the effects of Covid-19 on the economy, only adds to this bleak picture for those seeking paid work. A lack of transfer of wealth from one generation to the next can cause increased inequality and this can limit opportunity for the next generation.

We believe that building and retaining the trust of those we work with over time is fundamental to meeting our mission and building vibrant communities.



A coffee and a chat
does wonders for my
mental health

Our projects aim to support individuals in multiple, varied ways over sustained periods of time. For example, anywhere from 6 months for befrienders, to 5 years for young people.



Where are we now

The Better Lives community strategy 2018-21 sought to increase the reach of Octavia to 5000 people per annum through a range of projects, offered by Octavia or external partners, from annual events to sustained relationships, over 3 years.

Over the course of the strategy we initially reached 7000 people in year 1 (with 4800 people reached as a result of £130k Better Lives Community funding), though this had reduced to 3282 by year 3. The last year was curtailed by the extraordinary impact of Covid, creating both a need to focus on those people we already knew who needed support and an opportunity to adapt our services and make more use of technology. This enabled us to reach out to a wider group of volunteers who could support individuals over the phone via befriending.

Through the strategy we have grown the Outreach, befriending and activity project from 407 to 879, befriending volunteers from 126 to 200 and developed our new media and arts project for young people at its new Base at the Reed Community Centre. Note that overall volunteering figures decreased from 1019 in year 2, to 289 in year 3. This was due to retail store closures and an inability to run corporate events due to Covid. 71% of this drop is accounted for by a reduction in numbers of corporate volunteers, which should pick up now stores have reopened.

The research project we undertook with NPC completed in 2021 and evidenced the significant impact of the outreach, befriending and activity project on reducing loneliness, improving wellbeing and physical health by empowering people to access the right health care and join in with activities that help them 'live well'. The theory of change model (NPC Theory of Change) used to drive the research has provided a methodology for modelling our services, determining measures and optimising

Our creative youth projects have a strong track record for attracting a diverse range of young people into our services, many of whom develop increased confidence, skills and aspirations as a result and go on to further opportunities.



impact and has been put to use across all our projects to determine the outcomes and what activities are required to deliver this. This work has informed the development of this strategy.

The research highlighted the value of sustained work with individuals both 1-1 and in groups rather than one off engagements. This means success is not so much about the number of people we reach, but the longer-term sustained impact we have on their lives and interactions with other projects we provide. Through the theory of change we have understood this applies to all our community projects and that there are common outcomes for people that ensure the greatest impact. This has led us to focus our work on a defined set of outcomes for people.

An exemplar in Communities – where we want to be in 2024

Octavia is viewed as an exemplar community provider, tackling inequality by empowering people to live well and connect.

Octavia will work with a diverse range of people experiencing inequality, younger and older people, those finding it hard to access work or in debt through an inclusive approach. We will build capacity within individuals, empowering them to feel more confident, resilient, less lonely, that they belong and are able to connect with others and live well. We will raise awareness of opportunities, enabling people to access them, building on their skills and using their talents, so they achieve the outcomes they want, improving their wellbeing and financial resilience.



How will we get there

As 'One Octavia' we will work together to empower people to live well and connect to;



Optimise our impact

Focusing our efforts on projects that have the greatest impact on those experiencing inequalities, those we excel in and those that are most needed in the communities in which we work. We will;

- empower older people through exemplar outreach support, befriending, group and 1:1 activities.
- empower younger people through exemplar digital media and creative arts projects and enable them to access a range of higher education & employment opportunities.
- empower people to be financially included and enable them to access employment and development opportunities.
- research and determine ways to tackle generational wealth inequalities.

Tackle Inequality

Enabling access and inclusiveness for residents and people in the wider community who are experiencing inequalities. We will;

- actively monitor and address under representation of groups within the community using our services.
- utilise our role as a landlord and community support provider to reach out to underrepresented groups in the community.
- co-produce and commission services to ensure they meet the needs of groups within our communities.



People-centred

Structure them into the right pathway so that each of our residents and those in the wider local community can access them at the right stage (removing any 'barriers' that may obstruct access). We will;

- sustain relationships for longer, demonstrating greater impact by effectively tracking the service user's journey and outcomes.
- clearly define and publicise pathways for people using our services.
- establish a resident 'one stop shop for support' bringing together tenancy support and adaptations with handyperson, gardening, adaptations and food referrals.

Modern and Engaging

Utilise technology to track the impact of projects on people's lives and operate a hybrid service model that reaches people in different ways. We will;

- develop a new digital literacy programme, across Octavia schemes and within the community as part of our activity offer to improve accessibility and support a hybrid of face-face, telephone and on-line contact.
- utilise technology to enable staff to capture activity and relationship data to evidence impact and outcomes.



Build our legacy

Bring together services and offers for residents and people in the community, develop diverse community partnerships and sustainably grow projects. We will;

- optimise the impact of the Octavia Foundation by bringing together fundraising, partnering, grant funding (organisation and individual) and monitoring functions into one team.
- grow our fundraising capacity and funds to fully cover the costs of new community projects and increase new funds for existing projects.
- foster relationships, collaborate and develop partnerships with our contractors, like minded businesses and individuals to enable them to support the communities in which they live and operate.
- attract, grow and retain our pool of volunteers to support the successful operation of our retail and support projects.



How will we know we have succeeded



Volunteer

Key measures	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Number of local people empowered to live well and connect*	4000	4200	4400
Number of volunteers	300	350	400
Sustainability of income: fundraising & contracts	£250k	£325k	£425k
Sustainability of income: investments	£170k	£170k	£170k
Social return on investment	1:15	1:15	1:15
Satisfaction with services	95%	95%	95%

Outcome measures	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Ensuring those we support are reflective of the diversity across our communities	EDI vs. pop.	EDI vs. pop.	EDI vs. pop.
Reduced feelings of loneliness	35%	40%	45%
Feeling more empowered (incl. Increased resilience, confidence and aspirations)	25%	30%	35%
Greater feeling of belonging and connection in their community	25%	30%	35%
Improved health and wellbeing	25%	30%	35%
Increased knowledge of available opportunities/services	25%	30%	35%

*Each project activity will have key measures with targets – people into employment, people into retail volunteering, people into education



Impact assessment

The aim of our projects is to be inclusive and represent the local populations in which we work and through sustained growth and longer relationships we will reach more people with greater impact.

Given the focus on inclusiveness we need to regularly review and address under-representation to ensure we are reaching all those in need. We have identified a need to attract more Black and Asian people into volunteering, particularly into befriending. We would like to attract more people aged over 55 to become volunteers and engage with our employment services. We would

like to increase the number of male befriendees and retail volunteers and ensure people with disabilities, defined by 'activity limiting health problem or disability by extent of limitation' are attracted to and can access all of our projects. We want to continue to ensure that those identifying as LGBTQIA+ feel welcomed as volunteers and service users at Octavia.



If our plans for the future have inspired you to support Octavia's community work further, or for the first time, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@octavia.org.uk



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