

OCTAVIA



THE OCTAVIA FOUNDATION STRATEGY
2026 - 2031



Foreword

Communities across the UK are facing mounting pressures that are reshaping everyday life for many of the people we serve. Families are finding it harder to make ends meet, stability is slipping out of reach for those on the lowest incomes, and too many children are growing up without the security every child deserves. In this challenging environment, the purpose and potential of a reimagined Octavia Foundation come sharply into focus.

The Octavia Foundation is a long-standing community charity with a strong legacy of supporting people across central and west London who face ill health, social isolation, low income and unemployment. Over many decades, it has worked alongside local people to reduce hardship, strengthen wellbeing and create opportunities, acting as a trusted partner within the communities it serves. As part of the Octavia family, the Foundation has delivered meaningful impact, and there is now a shared ambition for greater clarity of purpose, a pathway to long-term stability and growth, stronger partnerships, more confident positive risk-taking and strengthened governance across fundraising and operations.

Despite recent improvements in the wider economy, hardship remains deeply entrenched. More than one in five people – 14.3 million – were living in poverty in 2023/24, and child poverty has reached a record high of 4.5 million children. Housing insecurity is intensifying, with rising numbers of households in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping increasing for the third consecutive year. At the same time, elevated costs for essential goods and services, coupled with high levels of fuel poverty, squeeze the budgets of low-income households. While many adults report a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood, trust and cohesion vary sharply between places, underlining the importance of sustained hyperlocal action.

This makes the Octavia Foundation's future role more important than ever. Looking ahead, the Foundation will serve as Abri Octavia's spearhead for social purpose. It will combine immediate, practical support with long-term, place-based investment that reduces hardship, strengthens tenancy sustainment and builds the assets, connections and resilience that help communities to thrive. Furthermore, its work will extend across the entirety of the Abri Octavia geography, supporting our full community of customers and colleagues.



Maggie Porteous
Chair of the Octavia Foundation



Ralph Facey
Managing Director

Our new approach brings three commitments into sharper focus:

1. Commit to places for the long term

We will concentrate resources where need and potential for impact are greatest, co-designing programmes with residents and partners and tracking outcomes such as tenancy sustainment, wellbeing, and youth progression.

2. Tackle today's pressures while building tomorrow's resilience

From income maximisation and crisis support to energy advice and retrofit pathways that cut bills and carbon, we will help households withstand cost of living shocks and build financial and energy resilience.

3. Use our voice and our data to influence change

We will contribute credible insight to national debates on homelessness prevention, social housing supply and community resilience, informed by rising temporary accommodation use and increases in rough sleeping.

Our mission is practical: to be present in neighbourhoods, to learn with our communities, and to turn evidence into impact so that the people and places we serve become safer, more secure, and more connected year on year.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to grow and sustain strategic alliances, generate the funding and influence necessary to shape fairer policies, and invest directly in our communities so everyone can improve their life chances.

Our Vision

The Octavia Foundation will be a stable, trusted, values-led and community rooted organisation that builds on Octavia Hill's legacy to deliver long term impact.

Our Beliefs

Everything we do is powered by three core beliefs:

- Everyone has the right to a safe, warm, affordable and sustainable home.
- Homes and communities are places to belong, grow, and thrive.
- Equal opportunity must exist for communities so everyone can have improved life chances.

We work with everyone on the basis of fairness, dignity, and respect. Every area of our organisation is inspired by this ongoing partnership. We are dedicated to creating communities and empowering lives.



Our Values

- **Be the difference:** We treat every individual with respect, compassion and belief in their potential. We go beyond housing to create life-changing impact in our communities.
- **Achieving together:** We work side-by-side with customers, colleagues and our partners to build strong, connected communities.
- **Always curious:** Reflecting Octavia Hill's pioneering spirit and social reform mindset, we are open-minded, thoughtful and forward-looking; we challenge convention. Our curiosity drives better homes and stronger communities.
- **Own it openly:** We act with honesty, clarity and accountability. We hold ourselves to the highest standards in service and stewardship.
- **Embrace possibility:** We see potential, where others only see limits. We take bold, decisive action to create homes, places and services that improve lives.

What the Foundation will be

The Octavia Foundation will become the spearhead for Abri Octavia's social purpose, leading our response to poverty, community cohesion, tenancy sustainment, education, opportunity and thought leadership. We will strengthen Abri Octavia's core business by improving the stability and wellbeing of the communities we serve, focusing support where need is highest, helping residents sustain their tenancy, tackling the drivers of poverty, and supporting households at risk of homelessness. Rather than delivering core tenancy casework, the Octavia Foundation will complement tenancy sustainment teams by providing preventative and community-based support that strengthens household resilience.

We will be a centre of learning and professional development for residents, colleagues and, in time, the wider sector. By building strong local partnerships and attracting external funding, we will position the Foundation as a responsible leader and trusted voice in the sector, using our resources to create meaningful change.



The long term challenges we are addressing

The Octavia Foundation strategy builds on our understanding of the long term challenges our communities face, including:

- The growing housing crisis and rising homelessness, placing increasing pressure on individuals, families and communities
- Limited access to opportunities, reducing social mobility
- Increased anxiety, social isolation, and reduced access to green space, negatively affecting health and wellbeing
- A lack of community pride and sense of belonging

How we will respond: an asset based, place focused approach

To tackle these challenges, we will champion an asset based community investment model in areas of greatest need that:

- Combines community resources to tackle inequality and barriers to opportunity
- Maximises the contributions of community organisations, charities and social enterprises, and supports community builders and emerging leaders
- Focuses on improving the quality of the environment and public spaces, ensuring Abri Octavia actively helps celebrate local heritage, spirit and character
- Continue our commitment to sustainability by supporting the transition to EPC C and our longer-term journey to net zero, putting in place practical action plans that reduce environmental impacts and ensure customers receive the support they need along the way

In 2024/25, Abri Group exceeded the national average for lettings to homeless households, allocating 883 homes (36%) vs. 23% Housing Association average of general needs properties (NHF, 2022). This greatly supports the 50+ local authorities in which we operate to meet their homelessness targets.

Resources

We will combine Abri Octavia's community investment and discretionary activities (totalling £5.9 million per annum in 2025/26) to form the cornerstone of the Foundation's strategy and action plan.

This cumulative five year investment of £29.5 million will be supplemented with:

- £2 million of additional social value contributions from our supply chain
- £1 million of external funding, donations and improved retail performance
- Gift Aid contributions from the Abri Group

By utilising Abri Octavia's combined resources, we will strengthen the Foundation to:

- Maximise joint bid funding expertise and potential across London and other operating regions
- Increase our apprenticeship intake, directing opportunities to areas with skills shortages and ensuring that people from all backgrounds feel encouraged, supported and able to pursue a trade profession
- Develop a community inclusion offer supporting employment, training, skills and education projects such as Abri Octavia's successful Good Grub Club
- Redirect existing welfare rights and crisis fund resources to support those most vulnerable to fuel poverty and rising costs



Strategic priorities and actions

Building on the ideals of social policy pioneers Octavia Hill and Herbert Collins, this strategy focuses our work within four strategic pillars:

- 1. Place based Community Zone Investment and Partnerships**
- 2. Improving Reputation, Fundraising, Retail and Community Assets**
- 3. Education, Learning and Professional Development**
- 4. Thought Leadership and Influence**

1: Place-Based Community Investment

To ensure impactful long term investment, we will use a data driven approach to identify community investment zones where need is greatest. We will triangulate Indices of Multiple Deprivation data, housing management data, and tenant satisfaction measures to develop stronger, more resilient and more empowered communities. These community investment zones will be reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to align with changing patterns of need, demand and local priorities.

Initially we will target nine investment areas, co-producing local action plans that position Abri Octavia as a large but local organisation with a neighbourhood presence. These plans will support housing management services and our ambition to secure 'Top 5' customer satisfaction by 2031.

Objectives (from 2026/27 onwards)

- Develop multi-year action plans in partnership with communities
- Build deep knowledge of local needs, insight and lived experience
- Be transparent, relational and rooted in community need
- Promote access to sustainability, skills and employment opportunities
- Establish partnerships with schools, colleges and grassroots groups
- Promote support for young people from low-income households facing reduced social mobility and lower educational and employment attainment
- Build strong neighbourhoods where residents shape local activity and feel safe
- Collaborate with local authorities, charities, health services, employers and funders
- Promote financial resilience, hardship reduction and income maximisation
- Promote health and wellbeing, reduce isolation and support independent living

Community investment zones

- Bordon & Whitehill
- Bracknell
- Bristol
- Chard
- North Paddington
- Portsmouth
- Southampton
- Windsor
- Yeovil

Across these zones, we will:

- Develop multi-year, place-based plans
- Map and activate community assets (Abri Octavia owned and otherwise)
- Commission fewer short term projects, prioritising sustainable interventions
- Improve visibility through collaborative community events
- Use local insights to shape fundraising and policy advocacy
- Empower residents through leadership development, volunteering and safer neighbourhood activities



2: Improving Reputation, Fundraising, Retail and Community Assets

We will better align retail and fundraising activities with community programmes, and champion the creation or preservation of community spaces as local hubs.

Objectives

- Develop a fundraising strategy aligned to Foundation values, aiming to generate an additional £2 million over five years
- Produce a retail portfolio action plan in 2026/27 to expand community impact, increase apprenticeships, and maximise shop spaces as community hubs and places for social action campaigns
- Explore (in 2027/28) a partnership with Crisis and Shelter to understand how the Foundation can best contribute to tackling homelessness and inequality, and how communities can engage through fundraising, campaigning and awareness raising
- Strengthen community assets as hubs of connection and pride
- Position the Foundation as a credible investment partner

We will achieve this by:

- Amplifying the link between our retail shops and the Foundation's mission
- Expanding and adapting community assets (e.g., The Reed Centre, community cafés)
- Embedding volunteering as a strategic mechanism to support delivery (including retail operations) and to strengthen community capacity
- Using Gift Aid and social value contributions more strategically
- Creating or commissioning joint programmes with other organisations
- Acting as a trusted convenor in the community
- Better telling the story of our impact

3: Education, Learning and Professional Development

From 2028 onwards, we will design and roll out a learning and accreditation offer for Abri Octavia staff and residents, expanding to the wider housing sector from 2029/30.

Objectives

- Position the Octavia Foundation at the heart of Abri Octavia’s “housing professional of the future” activities
- Explore developing an “Octavia Academy” for learning and professional development
- Create accredited pathways for residents into employment
- Strengthen the professional identity of housing roles

We will:

- Raise the profile of social housing and challenge negative narratives
- Co-produce training with residents and colleagues
- Develop the “housing professional of the future” programme to incorporate engaging visual training content
- Develop a structured volunteering programme that strengthens community leadership, builds local capacity, and supports skills and employment pathways
- Build partnerships with colleges and institutions
- Create pathways for young people and under-represented groups
- Use BASE Productions as a platform to build young people’s skills and confidence and to deliver films that showcase the Octavia Foundation’s work and impact across communities
- Position the Foundation as a sector-wide centre of learning



4: Thought Leadership & Influence

Octavia Hill's legacy positions the Foundation as a convenor of influential voices, thought leaders and sector partners. Through strong relationships and evidence-based insight, we will strengthen influence at the national level and champion solutions to social inequality, housing access and community resilience.

From 2028 onwards, we will work with strategic partners to shape policy discussions, empower communities, and lead national conversations on homelessness prevention, housing access, poverty and social mobility.

Objectives

- Publish evidence-based insights linked to place-based work
- Develop campaigns responding to social inequality and local need
- Build internal capability for policy influence and horizon scanning
- Use resident voice consistently and authentically
- Use data, insight and practice to influence policy and raise standards

We will:

- Use insight, evidence, lived experience and storytelling to influence public debate, inform policy and influence externally
- Be politically aware, forward-looking and grounded in community insight
- Acknowledge internal challenges to build authenticity and trust
- Develop research and evidence that drive meaningful change
- Define the identity, skills and tone of our thought leadership role
- Work with partners to bring in funding, expertise and influence, acting as a trusted social policy voice

What Success Looks Like

Community Impact & Inclusion

- Increased community connection and reduced isolation
- Clear reductions in local issues (e.g., ASB) where we intervene
- More young people supported into employment and education
- Tailored, locality-based offers reflecting local need
- Greater resident awareness and trust in the Foundation
- Customers feeling listened to and represented
- More resident led activity and local leadership
- Improved wellbeing scores
- Higher satisfaction with support services

Reputation & Credibility

- More partners choosing to work with us, with increased commissions and collaborations
- A stronger local and national profile
- A workforce reflective of the communities we serve
- Strong governance and accountability in fundraising and delivery

Learning & Influence

- A respected presence at sector tables
- A stronger research and evidence base demonstrating effectiveness
- Scalable community programmes influencing policy
- Clear annual reviews and impact reporting linked to a Theory of Change
- Increased external funding
- Strong partnerships delivering measurable outcomes
- Research and insight shaping policy or practice
- Recognition as a trusted, credible leader in community impact

Internal Cohesion & Culture

- Teams have clarity on mission, values and behaviours
- Staff understand how the Foundation supports Abri Octavia's social landlord role
- A stable, well governed offer that retains authenticity and purpose
- A widely understood and shared vision

Conclusion

We recognise our operating environment is complex, and we must remain flexible and agile so we can adapt our strategy to respond to new challenges and opportunities. We will implement a governance structure that provides oversight, encourages scrutiny, and ensures we listen and respond to the views of our customers and stakeholders.

We believe we achieve more when we work together. Through this Octavia Foundation strategy, we will collaborate with customers, stakeholders and colleagues to fulfil our purpose: to create great communities and empower lives.

By the end of this five-year strategy, the Octavia Foundation will be:

- Clear, stable, authentic and values-led
- Rooted in communities, with a hyperlocal but impactful presence
- A centre of learning and professional development
- A convenor and influencer at local and national levels
- Financially strengthened through fundraising, retail and partnerships
- An organisation that builds trust, delivers impact, and honours Octavia Hill's legacy

