

# Octavia Community Investment Impact Report 23-24



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# Introduction

I'm delighted to share **Octavia's 2023-2024 Communities Impact Report**. This report highlights how well Octavia Housing - in partnership with Octavia Foundation and our Better Lives Community Fund partners - delivered our community services over the previous 12 months. It shows the ways we've worked with our residents and their neighbours to empower communities across west London, particularly in Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea, and the impact of our work. Our mission, in the third year of our Communities Strategy, continues to be **tackling inequality by empowering people to live well and connect**.

Our main areas of focus are assisting local people through the **cost of living crisis, facilitating connections with lonely older people and enabling young people** from underrepresented groups to **access the creative industries**.

I would like to thank all of our residents, volunteers, partners and funders for your dedication and support over the past year.

Across the 3 years of the strategy, we have supported **thousands of residents and their neighbours** to live well and connect. Without you, we wouldn't be able to continue empowering communities.

Thank you.



**Elizabeth Shipsey**  
Head of Communities,  
Fundraising and Resilience

# 2021-2024 Achievements

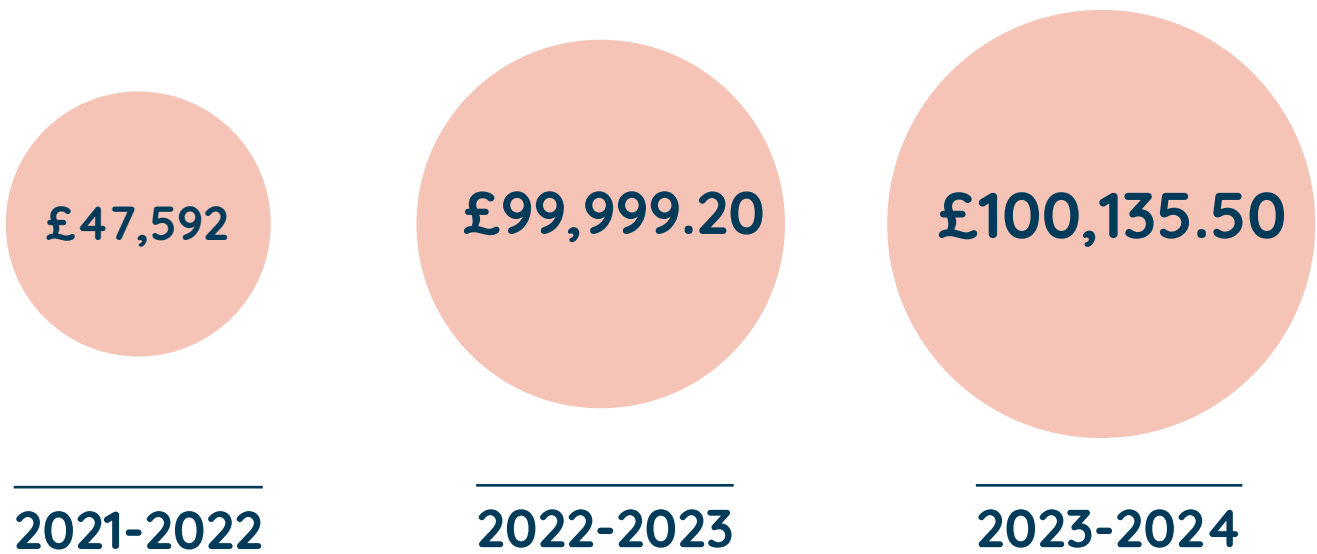
## People supported\*



\*Note that some of the people we support occasionally access more than one of our services

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## Better Lives Community Fund



# Youth Programme

15 years ago we had the vision of providing a safe and accessible space for young people to make friends and be creative. This developed into our now our **award-winning** youth hub, Base at the Reed, near Ladbroke Grove which opened in 2017; giving young people access to creative opportunities and activities throughout the week, enabling them to **have fun, make friends and develop skills** in a creative, non-judgmental space. Our activities focus on music production, photography and filmmaking. Our attendees share a hot meal at every session, which helps low-income families save on their food shop. Base@theReed welcomes a variety of young people to our girls' group, our juniors' night and our SEND

group - Access Digi-Base. In addition, this year we have **delivered 11 weeks of school holiday activities** and **2 residential trips** outside of London.

Our weekly **Access Digi-Base** sessions are dedicated, tailored activities for **SEND young people** aged 13-25 with mild to moderate disabilities who are at risk of social isolation or face communication challenges which makes it difficult to participate in activities independently. The projects are centred around **personal and social development** through interactive storytelling projects, encouraging self-expression in a **safe and supportive environment**.



**78%** of our young people are from Global Majority backgrounds



**Hosted 2 showcase events** to highlight the work and achievements of the young people



**938 hours** of youth work across **254** unique sessions



**18 young people** supported into further education or employment



**479** individual young people supported aged 10-25



**34** partner led youth work sessions using our space, skills, support and equipment

# Base Productions™

**Base Productions™** is our award-winning youth-led production company, working with **14–25-year-olds** from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds; providing training, support and opportunities to help bridge the gap to a potential future in the film and media industry, with the mission to **improve representation** of black and global majority, working class and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) people within the creative industries.

We do this through outreach and partnership working with other local organisations, allowing us to reach those most at risk.

We deliver this pioneering work through a core offer of **2 short film projects, 1 music video project** and a range of detached work with local schools and organisations throughout the year. Our commercial arm takes on **paid commissions** to create video content from recognised clients, with our young filmmakers paid and mentored to create work for these briefs. Additionally, we support the need for young creatives to have access to space and resources for their own personal projects, so we offer a free rental scheme for young people to use our equipment and space to help them build their portfolio.

**Produced content for 18 commissions. Clients include Axa Insurance, UD Music, and Adidas**



**Produced 8 short films & music videos, themed around Women's rights and Men's Mental health – in partnership with Movember and Avenues Youth**

**Selected at 6 films festivals, 1 win for Best Low Budget Film. 2 films selected for the inclusive BAFTA qualifying Festival Oska Bright**

**3 of our films/music videos reached over 1000 views within the first week of distribution**

**Supported 17 young people on 33 personal, independent paid projects, portfolio building work and college/school projects**

**479 young people supported in 23-24, 270 of these via Base Productions. 80% from underrepresented groups.**

# Confidence, Creativity, and Bright Futures with Base Productions™

JB, who struggles with his mental health and anxiety, has been a regular attendee at Base since 2019. During the pandemic, his mental health declined, and he completely disengaged from all activities. He became socially isolated from his friends and lost momentum transitioning from college into the next stages of education.



Once we re-introduced face-to-face work at Base, there was a clear drop in JB's confidence; he struggled to socialise and progress his own development and had enhanced anxiety about travelling - only being able to go to places he was used to - one of those places being Base. Through **Base Productions™**, JB had his first ever paid opportunity in film, taking on one of our first commissions. He was beginning to believe in his own ability and his capacity to make this something he could potentially do; along with his growth in his social skills, feeling more connected again and building good friendships with others in the group. Having seen JB's growing self-esteem, we asked him if he wanted to take the lead on the next film project. He was apprehensive but was supported and encouraged by not only the staff but the other young people; giving him the energy and belief to take on the role of director, taking responsibility for leading a group and stepping out of his comfort zone.

Despite anxiety at the start, he overcame so many challenges during filming and grew his resilience, showing an ability to push through his anxiety. This was an indicator that he could be ready to go back into education; he expressed a strong desire to do this but was worried about travel and settling in. We supported his application to Ravensbourne, one of the leading universities for film in the country and not to our surprise, he was accepted. His experience with us, working on films and commissions, meant he was able to overcome the long-term barrier of travelling, preparing him for the travel to university.

He has since started at Ravensbourne and is truly excelling, building his own community of friends, and being accepted on to the BA course for next year. JB comes to say hello when he has time off, and he's always greeted with a hero's welcome at Base. He was able to attend the screening of his film at the Childhood Poverty Summit, an event he has been to before but had refused to go up on stage to speak to an audience due to anxiety; however, as the director and with a newfound confidence and self-esteem - despite rushing from university and arriving with no prep - he went on stage and spoke movingly about the importance of tackling mental health in young men.

**We have seen JB transition from an anxious and isolated young man to confident and independent leader in the past year.**

# Older People's Programme

Our older people's programme has committed to **tackling loneliness and isolation** in older people for over a decade. We provide **essential support** to vulnerable individuals through projects that **build connections** for older people, through outreach contact, one to one befriending matches or group activities and events.

We are grateful to RBKC and Westminster local authorities for their funding and support towards our Outreach and Befriending projects. In 2020 we identified the **Social Return on Investment** for our older people's services was 1:6. This means for **every £1 spent, an equivalent of £6** is achieved in terms of social value to wider society, totalling **over £1.8 million.\*\***

**Outreach** provide a personalised service, identifying needs and sourcing appropriate support for those referred to us, which is crucial in **keeping individuals independent, happy, and healthy**. This is enhanced by our team knowing individuals well and recognising deterioration quickly,

ensuring we are working with the most isolated and those who are the hardest to reach. Our **volunteer befrienders** - who provide companionship and connection to older people weekly for at least 6 months - are often the first to notice changes. Both services support at an early stage, **reducing future demand for overstretched statutory services**. This unique approach enables us to work with partners through referrals and signposting, supporting more people.

In response to demand, we developed **Group Befriending** which facilitates social spaces in the community where individuals can build networks independently, making friends organically. We have run **2 weekly groups** since 2016 which **promote positive identity, confidence, and independence**. We also run activities across our care schemes including yoga, lunch clubs, music sessions and events such as Christmas parties which are made possible by our kind corporate volunteers/supporters.

**302** Referrals across Westminster and RBKC

**£1.8 million** in social value

**49** new befriending matches

Outreach supported  
**476**  
older individuals

We reached  
**1199**  
older people in total

**93%**  
of older people we supported live with a disability

“ My befriending service means the world to me as it means, I am not alone in the world. It’s amazing to have a true friend - she gives me incentive to live my life the best way i am able. She gives me hope for the future ”

Older service user



## Befriending, making a real difference

Mr G is an Octavia resident in his 60’s who had a serious brain injury after an accident which meant he had to learn to walk, talk and live again. Mr G previously worked as the head of operations within the airline industry but has been left with serious memory problems which means he cannot remember things including people and appointments. This has devastated his life as he is no longer able to keep his friends and unable to start new relationships due to his memory. Due to negative experiences where people have tried to defraud Mr G through his vulnerabilities and memory issues, he finds himself completely isolated. Mr G’s life has changed from having financial security, a job, and a social network to having to move into social housing and not speak to anyone. His chronic illness means that he often feels disconnected and does not know what is true or not. The change in circumstances has been life changing.

The team worked hard to match Mr G; we worked closely with his sister who lives outside of London to explain the services and act as a point of reference if Mr G forgot who the volunteer was or what the service was. When the introductory meeting was held notes were taken of what was agreed

and what befriending is so Mr G could remember the service and how it works. The volunteer has experience of working with people who are vulnerabilities and has a can-do attitude. Initially the match was over the telephone so Mr G could feel comfortable with having a befriender and regular contact; slowly this then developed into face to face as both got on so well. The volunteer has developed a system of a central diary that stays with Mr G where the volunteer writes in the next meeting and calls before to confirm. They also briefly note their conversations each week so the relationship can be developed. The volunteer helped Mr G with sourcing a grant for his broken fridge and linking him to organisations that can fix his laptop. Both Mr G and the volunteer have Caribbean heritage which is particularly nice for Mr G as he gets to share his identity with someone who has an insight into the culture.

This match highlights the adaptability and flexibility of the service and volunteers to best meet the bespoke needs of individuals within the remit of befriending. It also shows the breadth of needs that the service supports.

# Financial Resilience

The **Financial Resilience service empowers** people struggling financially to find stability now and in to the future. This includes support with budgeting, benefits, access to essential services and grants for food, energy and other support. We provide both short and long-term assistance to those living on low incomes and, where we are unable to help directly through our own programmes, we have many trusted partners who we can involve, ensuring people **receive the support they need**, when they need it.

Our **Employment and training team** provide personal advice and guidance supporting people into work, volunteering and training: building self-esteem and confidence in taking the next steps in their professional lives and **sharing the tools to build a brighter future**.



Supported **219 residents**, more than **600 times**, with benefits and money advice, energy and food



Financial outcomes for residents of **£606,581**



**93 Tenants** received a household/educational grant, totalling **over £38,000**



**132 people** engaged with our Employability and Training service



**35** individuals supported into work including **10** Octavia tenants & **25** of their neighbours





## Resilience from our Financial Resilience Team

JM was referred to our services for help with rent arrears and to claim benefit to cover housing costs in 2021. After the tragic losses of two very significant family members, JM's mental health deteriorated, and we were unable to complete our work with him as contact was lost after the first appointment. JM's Income Account Manager continued to work with him and an application for benefit was successfully made. They did their best to prevent eviction and liaised with JM's grandmother to ensure contact with him was maintained.

JM was referred again in January 2024 due to the level of rent arrears as Octavia had made an application for eviction. JM came to our head office to discuss this and being conscious of JM's anxiety issues, the Financial Resilience Advisor kept him engaged with supplies of Octavia's 'posh' coffees and joked that it was the alternative to holding him captive to enable me to complete the application. JM relaxed for most of the appointment, providing hints and tips to resolve connectivity issues that continued throughout the duration of his appointment.

We completed DHP and Eviction Prevention applications in the hope of clearing the arrears and ultimately, stop eviction action.

The DHP application was refused but a request for a revision of that decision was very quickly dealt with by RBKC council who agreed a very large pay out and liaised with the Eviction Prevention Team to ensure that between the two, a large enough payment would be made to improve JM's housing circumstances.

The final leg of the journey was difficult as, with only a day away from the eviction hearing, we were unable to provide a personal budget and pushed for written confirmation from Octavia, that the eviction would not proceed as the awards of funding were guaranteed. On leave at the time, we observed the emails between Octavia and K & C teams, stepped in and with the help of his grandmother, obtained a mobile number for him and successfully completed the personal budget with JM.

Our team was instrumental in ensuring that RBKC wrapped up the information required to enable the releasing of the Eviction Prevention funds. Our Financial Resilience Advisor has continued to remain a point of contact for JM, he has, since the award was made, continued to communicate his concerns regarding his benefits, entitlement and rent account.

# Volunteering

Our **volunteers are essential** to the work we do within the community and support all our projects to make our vital services possible. Volunteering provides an opportunity for people to **build confidence and develop skills** along with feeling more connected and giving back to their local community. We recognise the **great contribution** made by volunteers and we offer training and support that is right for each role.

Our incredible **589** volunteers equate to an economic value of **£82,680 per year** according to the social value as measured by Office of National Statistics.



**147 volunteers befriended isolated older people in the community**

**245 volunteers supported our Retail Team fundraising money for good causes, providing 19,757 volunteer hours in their community**



**30% of all volunteers were aged 24 or under & 9% were from the LGBTQIA+ community**

**187 corporate volunteers supported activities in our care schemes, raising over £7k which was reinvested into activities for community benefit**

**10 volunteers joined our office last year, with 2 successfully securing permanent jobs with Octavia**



**We won the RBKC Award for highest number of volunteers in a Housing Association in the borough**

“

Can I say a BIG thank you for the warm welcome I had today. I felt very welcome and so happy to be there today. I am looking forward to next week and learning more new things.

I appreciated the volunteer team having lunch with me also, I felt very special. I am able to see how great the team works. And with that I know I am in good hands. I have some great ideas and can't wait to support the team with that.

”

## Better Lives Community Fund

We are incredibly proud that 2023-2024 was another successful year of grants for organisations who work with disadvantaged young people in central and west London. Our Better Lives grants have enabled us to expand the reach of our work, letting us support more young people than ever and a chance to see all the incredible work that's taking place in our community through other charities and non-profit organisations.

**Our Impact through grant beneficiaries:**

**Grants to 15 organisations totalling to £100,135.50**

**Supported over 1,400 young people through the better lives grants of the total 4,458 people reached**

**Of those 1,400 young people, over 200 were Octavia tenants**





“

I feel proud of myself for coming to the project and pushing myself by trying to speak English and sharing my artwork with people. I have never done art before but during my time here I have continued to learn and have fun. I have definitely seen a change within myself, I feel more confident within myself and self-esteem but also with travelling, meeting new people and trying new things.

”

Young person, Elements Project

## Income Generation

Octavia's community services are supported by funds raised across the year including: 2 RBKC and Westminster local authority contracts and fundraising by the Octavia Foundation. Income via these sources secured in 2023/24 totals **£384,935**. Over the 3 years of the Better Lives strategy, **over £1.1m** has been generated in income via multiple sources, incorporating the activities of Octavia Foundation



# Thank you!

We want to say a massive thank you to everyone; our partners, supporters, funders and volunteers for the incredible support you have given us this year.



## Getting involved



If you've been inspired by our work and would like to support us further, please visit our **Just Giving** page through the **QR code**.

Or contact our fundraising team at **fundraising@octaviafoundation.org.uk**

## \*Key Source References:

Social Value Bank: <https://www.hact.org.uk/value-calculator>

ONS Valuation of Volunteering Time: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO): Valuing Volunteer Contributions

Better-lives-for-older-people.pdf

HACT SROI calculator, Octavia, 2020,  
<https://www.hact.org.uk/value-calculator>

