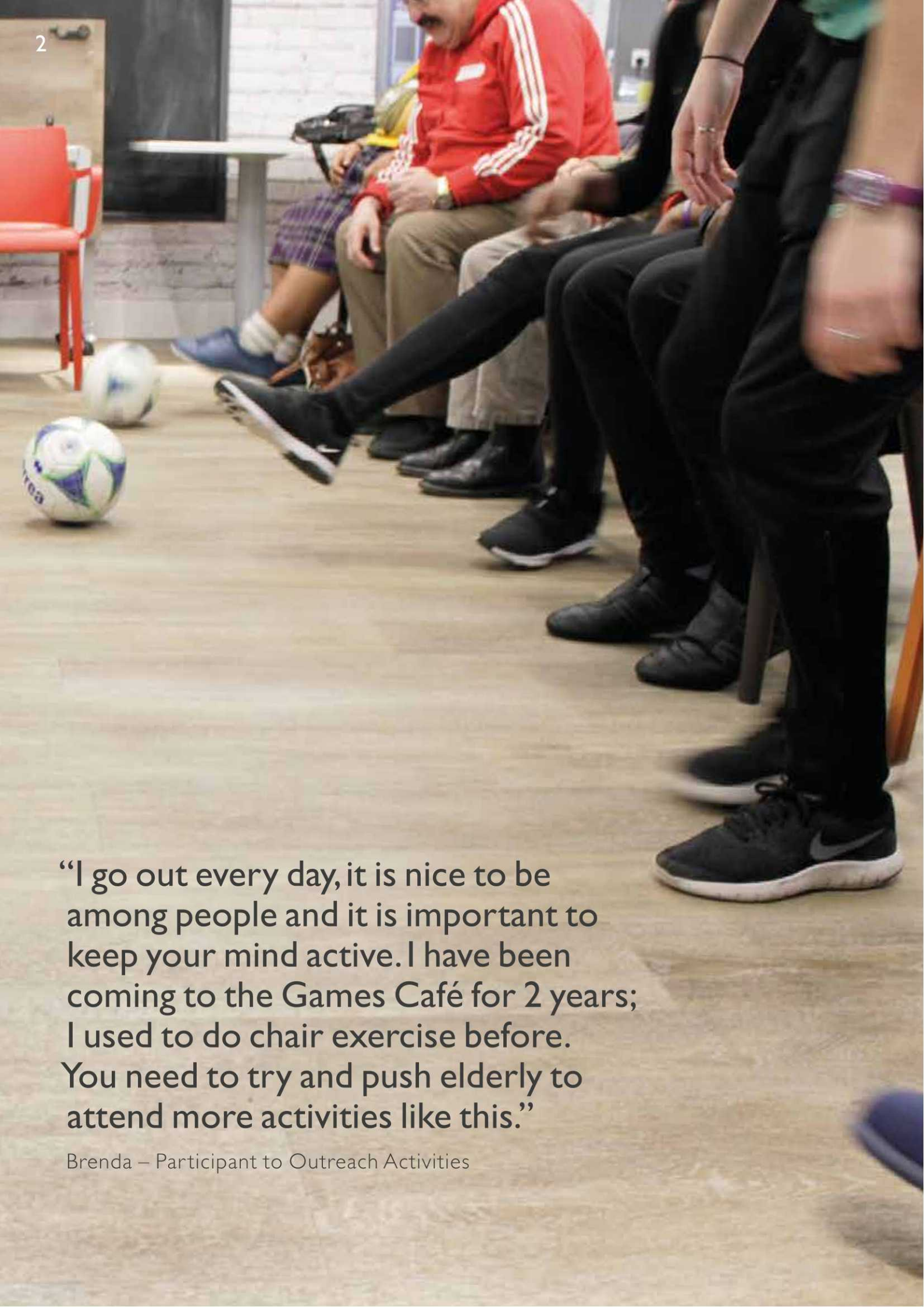


# BETTER LIVES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

AN EVALUATION OF  
OCTAVIA'S OUTREACH, ACTIVITIES  
AND BEFRIENDING PROGRAMME





“I go out every day, it is nice to be among people and it is important to keep your mind active. I have been coming to the Games Café for 2 years; I used to do chair exercise before. You need to try and push elderly to attend more activities like this.”

Brenda – Participant to Outreach Activities



The UK population is living longer than ever before – a positive result of improvements in modern science and in many ways a hugely positive and encouraging prospect for society. Yet, living into older age brings new challenges and pressures – for the individual but also on the healthcare system, on family life and on communities.

A report by the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing indicates that nearly one in seven people is projected to be aged over 75 by 2040, foreseeing an increase in total public spending to £79 billion between 2019 and 2065, and approximately £2.5 billion to be spent by the NHS every year to cope with the health effects of poor housing on older people.

Alongside ageing, loneliness represents a growing challenge in the UK, with over 9 million people – almost a fifth of the population – sharing that they are always or often lonely. Within London, the issue is surprisingly acute, and can be linked to those on lower incomes. Our own research showed that 44% of

social renters were found to lack companionship sometimes or often, compared with 22% of home owners and almost one quarter of Londoners felt lonely often or some of the time overall.

There is a wealth of evidence on the harm that loneliness can do to a person's health and well-being: it is an emotionally damaging, low-level mental health issue that eats away confidence, self-esteem and physical health. While we know loneliness is not age-specific, issues that are commonly linked with living longer – e.g. diminished mobility and/or physical health, reduced social circles and more limited interactions with relatives and close ones – can often be exacerbated in older people.

Which is where local community organisations can, and are, making a difference – uniquely placed as we are to take positive steps to help address some of the root causes of loneliness and to offer opportunities for older people to live out their longer lives to a higher quality.

## INTRODUCTION

Inspired by our founder, the social reformer Octavia Hill, Octavia is a not-for-profit organisation providing thousands of people with affordable homes, support and care in inner London. We focus on people as individuals, connecting and supporting them with opportunities to live happier lives.

With over 150 years of history, we have close links with people living in Westminster and The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where the majority of our work is concentrated. In the last few years, our outreach, befriending and social activities programme for older people has grown, and yet we know there is greater local need for more.

The three services essentially offer qualified staff who can connect people, to local help, activities or support. They overcome common barriers that frequently prevent older people from living a full and happy life, providing encouragement and practical assistance on a one to one basis.

**We want to reach 5000 people by 2022, through all of our projects aimed at reducing loneliness and isolation, promoting better physical and mental health.**

The following are examples of what our outreach and befriending services include:

- participation in social activities: connecting with over 100 initiatives taking place each week
- transport to events and appointments: making it easy to attend social activities and medical visits
- stay active and socialising: helping with staying active and meeting with old and new friends
- practical help at home: identifying and connecting to local handymen as needed
- advice on housing and benefits: helping to get professional advice on housing issues and make sure that people claim the benefits they are entitled to
- access to health services: offering support with making and attending medical appointments, and with understanding the available healthcare options
- regular companionship: volunteer befrienders offer good company and enjoyable conversations during weekly visits.

<sup>1</sup> Future of Ageing Report - [https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/files/Future\\_of\\_Ageing\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/files/Future_of_Ageing_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ipsos for Octavia – “Social Isolation in London” - [https://www.octavia.org.uk/assets/0001/2046/Social\\_Isolation\\_in\\_London.pdf](https://www.octavia.org.uk/assets/0001/2046/Social_Isolation_in_London.pdf)





## QUICK FACTS AND FIGURES FROM 2017-2018:

- The outreach and befriending service supported 442 older or isolated adults who were experiencing loneliness and social isolation.
- Close to 3000 hours of befriending were provided (over twice the target set with funders).
- The Outreach services scored 96% of satisfaction rate in our annual survey.
- Average cost per week per service user of one contact for Outreach/Befriending is £11.



## EVIDENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

We want to grow our Care and Community initiatives and already have some strong evidence of their positive impact. For example, using social value metrics developed by the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) and the London School of Economics, our Outreach, Befriending and Activities service provides a Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio equal to 1:5. This means that for every £1 spent in providing the service, an equivalent £5 is achieved in terms of social value.

As we also want to further strengthen the evidence base of our work, we have engaged with NPC (leading charity and philanthropy consultants) to:

- **Set out a theory of change for the service and develop a comprehensive metrics system to measure impact (phase 1);**
- **Provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of the current outreach, befriending and activities offer (phase 2).**

This document presents the findings of phase 1, which included the consultation of all stakeholder groups (people who use the service, staff, volunteers and funders) and relevant documents, the setup of the outreach, befriending, and activities service theory of change, and recommendations on the metrics to measure the success of the service.

### The theory of change

The 'theory of change' model shows how activities are logically linked to achieving specific objectives. In regards to Octavia's outreach, befriending and activities, the model is used to:

- **Set out the steps to achieve the service goals (i.e. to combat social isolation and loneliness and promote physical and mental health amongst older and vulnerable people);**
- **Understand how the service user's experience ('catalysts for change') and the interim effects ('interim outcomes') contribute to the long-term 'key outcomes' that lead on to achieving the service goals.**

**“Mary phones to arrange hospital appointments as I am unable to read and write. I bring my letters to Mary; she will read for me and I can tell her if I have a problem. The service has changed my life for the better as I am now meeting people socially.”**

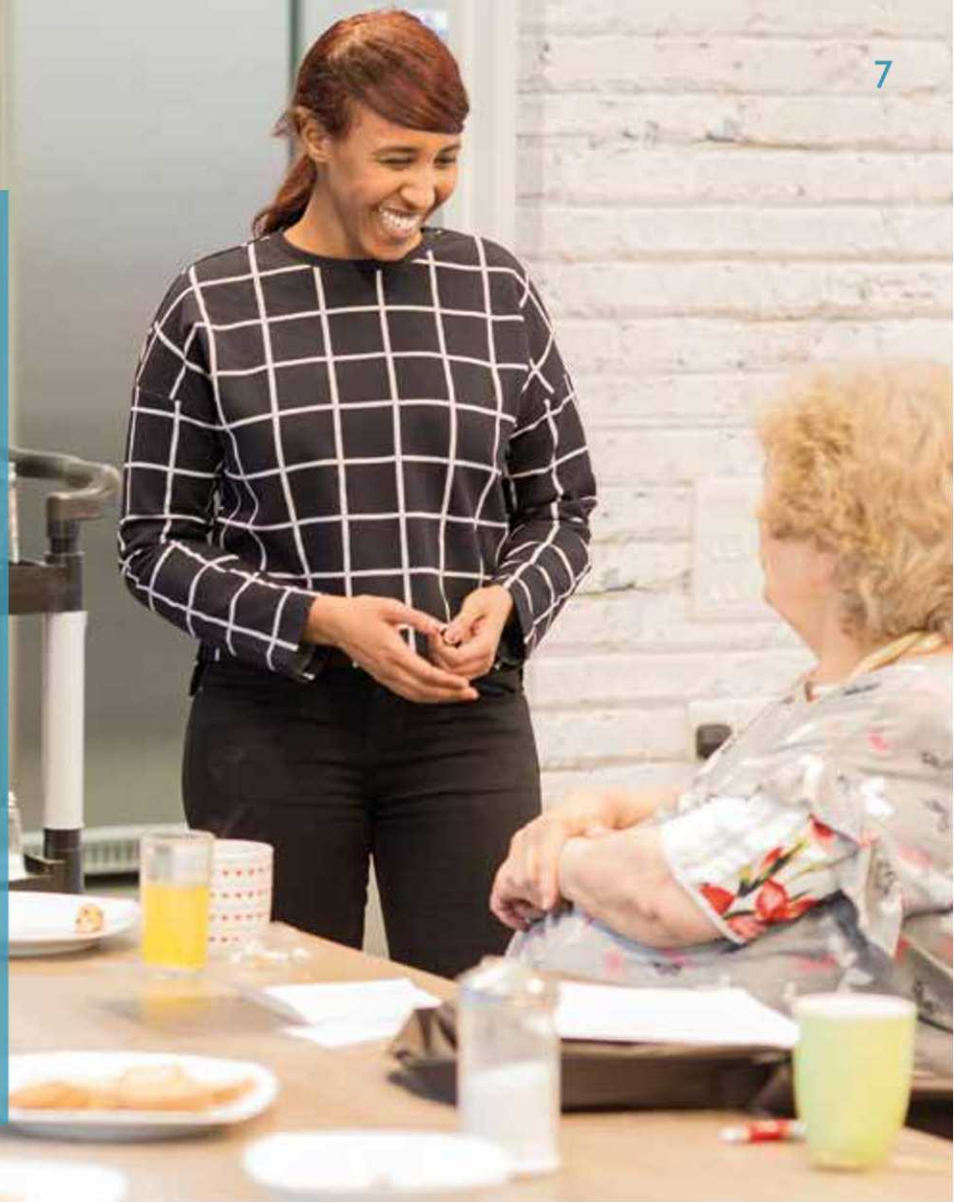
Freda – Participant to the Outreach Programme



## MR K

Previously a composer and a wine journalist, 90-year-old Mr K now lives on his own in a privately rented property and with nobody to rely upon. A fracture of his hip in the past means he now needs a walking frame indoors and an attendant-propelled wheelchair outdoors. He finds it difficult to even move within his home and is unable to go out on his own.

As a result, Mr K felt isolated and lost his confidence to meet new people. Octavia set him up with weekly visits from a volunteer befriender, with whom he enjoys conversations and listening to his large collection of CDs, reconnecting him with his passion for music.



By mapping out user journeys of individuals who use one of the services, they identified that Octavia are astute to the difficulties people can encounter in their daily lives. Some of the real-life issues the services address include:

- **Physical health, mobility as well as mental health issues can make it difficult for service users to leave home and take part in activities.**
- **For some older and vulnerable people, it is hard to find opportunities for social contact. Limited neighbour interaction contributes to a feeling of disconnect.**
- **Many people experience difficulties linking up to appropriate services and activities, due to barriers to access (e.g. transport, cost) and service gaps. Shrinking services and higher thresholds to access care, especially mental health support, signify a growing challenge.**
- **Low confidence, fear that services won't be accessible or appropriate, and stigma can make people reluctant to seek help (older men especially).**
- **Technology can be a barrier, as many everyday services and communications move online, but can also be an opportunity when accessible and appropriate (e.g. to contact family living far away).**



## SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT SCENARIO

Octavia's outreach, befriending and activities contribute to key social, emotional, and health outcomes, supporting its goals of combatting social isolation and loneliness and promoting physical and mental health among older and vulnerable people.

Based on collected feedback, the current situation can be depicted through the following diagram, applying a high-level theory of change:

The theory of change highlights four key social and emotional outcomes as well as four key health outcomes.

### Key "social and emotional" outcomes:

- ★ People report more confidence and motivation to do activities
- ★ People report increased self-esteem
- ★ People report feeling less lonely
- ★ People are more socially connected

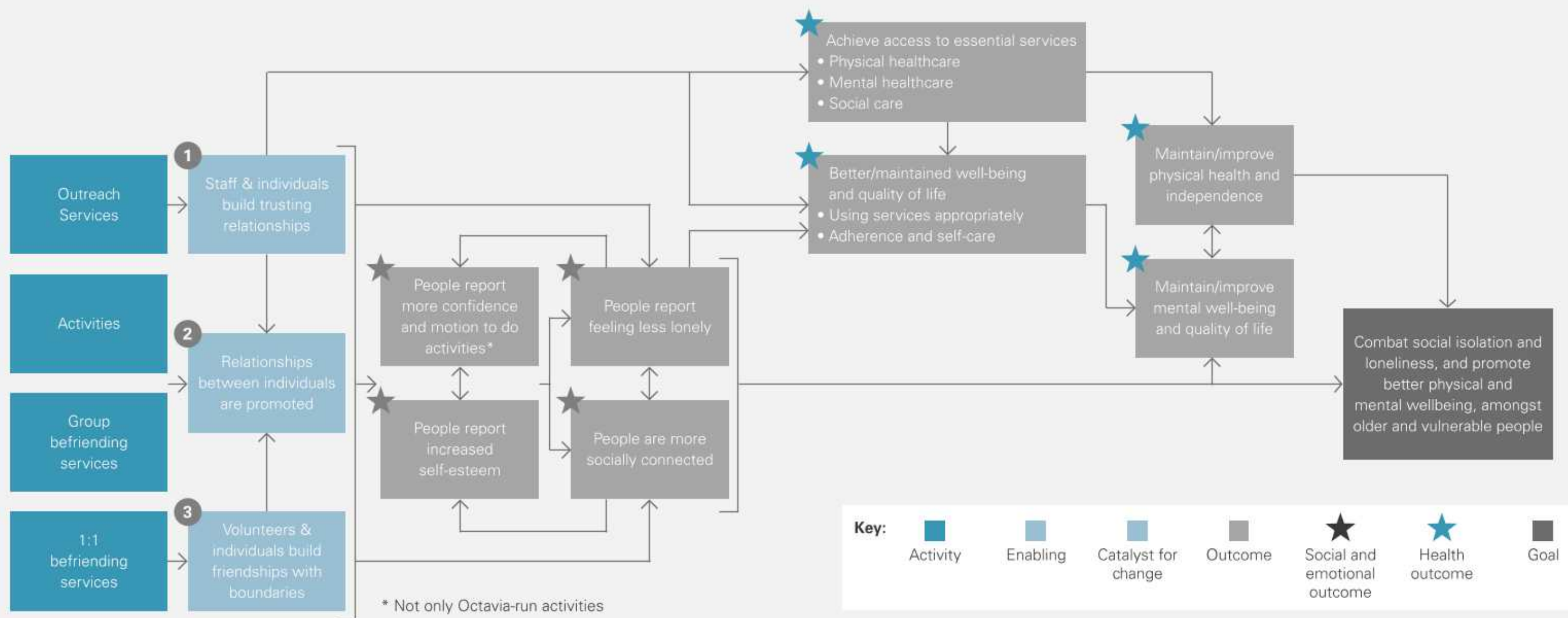
### Key health outcomes:

- ★ People achieve access to essential services
- ★ People have better/maintained well-being and quality of life
- ★ People maintain/improve physical health and independence
- ★ People maintain/improve mental well-being and quality of life.

For some users, maintaining physical or mental well-being or slowing the rate of decline, especially where illnesses are chronic, terminal or enduring, may be the objective.

An important factor relates to how people experience Octavia's outreach, befriending and activities service, and what qualities are important for them to achieve the outcomes they set out. Three key relationships can be identified as the driving catalysts for change:

- 1 Staff and individuals (service users and volunteers) build trusting relationships
- 2 Relationships between individuals are promoted
- 3 Volunteers and individuals build friendships with boundaries.







## MRS R

Mrs R is 89 and has several health issues, including dementia, which impacted her confidence and induced her to a fairly sedentary life, as she feared not being able to find her way back home. Her children live mostly outside of London, so they are not able to visit her regularly.

Octavia's Outreach and Befriending teams have supported Mrs R with a more active and healthier lifestyle, introducing her to activities in her community as well as arranging weekly befriender visits to improve her mobility, give her some regular social time and accompany her to gym classes near her home.

Meeting with other people has been a motivating experience and has helped Mrs R's mental wellbeing. She now walks within the neighbourhood by herself and safely finds her way back home.



## REACHING MORE PEOPLE

Our aim is to triple the number of people we help through our outreach, befriending and activities service by 2021, to help meet the growing need for support services focused on reducing isolation and loneliness amongst older and vulnerable people.

Initially, our ambition is to do more to meet the local need in Westminster and The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea but overtime, our plan is to expand into other local areas where we have established presence and resources. In many areas, we are already utilising our physical buildings and care schemes to offer new services for the local communities.

The findings from this research project will be used to refine the model we use, providing more robust evidence of how key outcomes and goals are achieved or may be improved. The new measurement framework will be implemented as of June 2019, with a full evaluation report expected to be available in early 2020.

**“I have been coming to the group for several years now, since it started...at first I was apprehensive and didn't know what to expect. But it was chilled and welcoming...and it makes such a difference for my week. The group has become like a family.”**

Participant to the Befriending programme



**Octavia**

Emily House  
202-208 Kensal Road  
London W10 5BN

**T** 020 8354 5500

**E** [info@octavia.org.uk](mailto:info@octavia.org.uk)

**www.octavia.org.uk**

