

SIGNED
Charity No. 1113331
Company No. 5319765

COMMONWEAL HOUSING LIMITED
(a company limited by guarantee)

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2008

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Commonweal Housing Limited

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 December 2008

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For the year ended 31 December 2008

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Commonweal Housing Limited is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The directors of the charity are its Trustees for the purposes of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the Board of Trustees.

Company registration number: 5319765

Charity registration number: 1113331

Principal address: Grove End Gardens
33 Grove End Road
London NW8 9LN

Registered office: Grove End Gardens
33 Grove End Road
London NW8 9LN

Directors and Trustees: Fiona Mactaggart MP (Chair)
Sir John Mactaggart Bt.
Gary Medazoumian FCA
Mrs Jane Slowey

Secretary: Gary Medazoumian FCA

Bankers: Barclays Bank plc
7th Floor,
180 Oxford Street
London BX3 2BB

Solicitors: Bates Wells & Braithwaite
2-6 Cannon Street
London EC4M 6YH

Kidd Rapinet
14 & 15 Craven Street
London WC2N 5AD

Auditors: H.W. Fisher & Company
Acre House
11/15 William Road
London NW1 3ER

Commonweal Housing Limited

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees, who are directors of the Charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 1985, present their report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2008. The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' issued in March 2005 in preparing the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Charity.

The legal and administrative information set out on page 2 forms part of this report.

Structure, governance and management

The Charity is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated on 22 December 2004 and registered as a charity on 20 March 2006. It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association which were last amended on 26 January 2006.

The directors of the Charity are its Trustees for the purposes of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is the administrative and governing body and meets five times a year, ensuring and monitoring that the Charity is performing well, is solvent, and complies with all its obligations. The Board of Trustees currently consists of four Trustees and the quorum is two Trustees.

The present members of the Board of Trustees is set out on page 2.

The Trustees are appointed by the Board and all Trustees have signed a declaration about their eligibility for the post of Trustee.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association provide for one third of the Trustees to retire at each Annual General Meeting. At its next Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees will recommend that, in view of the length of service of the current board, this provision will not operate.

A Trustee's term of office may be ended by resignation or by retirement by rotation, or by removal, if necessary, by the Board in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Risk management

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the Charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to those risks.

Objectives and activities

The Charity's objects are to relieve specialist housing needs in London and the advancement of education and training in particular (but without limitation) in relation to housing need. In performing all of its activities, the Charity continues to deliver services for the public benefit.

The Charity's principal activities continue to include:

1. The provision of homes for innovative prototype schemes designed to improve the characteristics of housing supply;
2. Undertaking research that enables the specialist housing needs of people to be better understood and thus solved more effectively.

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Achievements and performance

The Charity employs a business plan updated annually to drive it towards five strategic targets each of which explores how the provision of housing can be a catalyst in resolving social injustices. Twelve Criteria, as well as rigorous risk assessment, linked with operational and financial viability must be satisfied before a project is regarded to be totally capable of meeting Commonweal's strategic objectives. The focus on operational viability means that the Charity seeks partners with extraordinary expertise in resolving a particular social injustice to ensure the best possible resolutions to social injustice are provided. This approach means that the Charity is not interested in speed of progress, but rather quality and effectiveness of progress.

As an example of the concentration on quality and effective progress is that one of the 12-Criteria employed by Commonweal stipulates that any project should act as a role model solution to social injustices to such an extent that when Commonweal has adequate proof, these role models could and, indeed, should, be adopted by others to help relieve social injustice. To ensure that role model status is achieved for projects, rigorous internal evaluation, inter-partner evaluation and independent third party evaluation takes place. For internal evaluation, a scorecard evaluation process was developed that examined 10 Critical Success Factors of projects. This process commenced in March 2008. Having been established, it is intended that this process will be used every year to develop the learning about what makes projects successful, where risks to success occur and, in future years, allow comparisons between projects on a like with like basis.

Thanks to the excellent relationship with the charity "Housing for Women" which is the lead Partner in the Re-Unite Project, it has been possible to develop inter-partner evaluations. This helps both sides to learn and improve, thereby capitalising on the strengths of each other.

The employment of The University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology, in October 2007, started to pay dividends in the year under review when two half-yearly evaluation reports were submitted by the Institute and provoked ideas on how efficiencies and quality of service to participants in the Re-Unite Project could be improved. This active exchange of ideas has also added to the knowledge base of the Institute.

Delivery of Services

During the past year, the Charity achieved its operational objectives through delivering the following projects:

Re-Unite

- The year saw the Re-Unite Project, started in the autumn of 2007, getting into full swing thanks to the enthusiastic cooperation of our two Partners, Housing for Women (a registered Housing Association) and Women in Prison (a registered Charity).
- The original concept of Re-Unite was that it would take mothers, on release from prison, who would otherwise be homeless if not granted a home in Re-Unite, providing these women could definitely be reunited with their children within six weeks of their release from prison. To this end, the project worked extremely well with strong evidence that the objectives of the project were being met and, in a number of cases, exceeded. Examples of objectives being exceeded were;
 - Mothers and their children being able to complete their dependency on the project in less than the forecasted time of two years and move on to independent living.

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- The active involvement of mothers in the project forming self-help groups that added momentum and attention to detail in satisfying the needs of the mothers and their children.
 - Initiatives by Women in Prison to raise additional funds so that outings and other essential experiences to the education and well being of children could be included in the project.
 - Some mothers actively becoming involved in wanting to help others to avoid a lifestyle that leads to prison. They did this by giving talks to youngsters who might be at risk and also in two cases, committing themselves to further education to develop their skills in counselling.
- Half way through this year, under review, the Partners decided that it was right, and they were able, to introduce a more challenging strand to Re-Unite which would involve mothers who, for various reasons, would not be allowed to be reunited with their children on release from prison and where the project would give additional support to these women so that they could get the necessary permissions to enable them to work to have full custody of some or all of their children. Naturally, the overriding priority of this project is to ensure that such action would be in the best interests of the children. As a result of this decision, Re-Unite was split into two strands; "Re-Unite Mother & Children's Programme" to follow the goals of the original concept and "Re-Unite Mothers' Programme" which would work with those mothers who it was thought could be ready to have custody of some or all of their children within twelve months.

Re-Unite "Mothers' Programme" meant that the mothers, whilst in the programme would live alone and therefore Commonweal added the provision of two one-bedroom flats in south London so that the concept could be tested. The Partners in the Project always acknowledged that this would be a high risk project and therefore were not surprised, although very disappointed, that one of the early participants was unable to maintain the level of commitment necessary to pursue the project to the point of regaining custody of her child. However, this disappointment was more than offset by the second participant managing to overcome very sizeable personal difficulties in order to qualify for regaining the custody of her child. We are proud that the achievements of this mother and the benefits of the Re-Unite Project were acknowledged by the Court when custody of her child was granted to the mother. Thanks to careful planning, the mother in question has now been able to move on to one of the Re-Unite homes and become an active participant in the "Mother and Children's Programme".

Commonweal's objective is that when projects have become operationally robust and are proving their effectiveness, the facilitation of replicating the project should commence. That potential was recognised in the autumn of 2008 and so Housing for Women and Commonweal commenced the process of producing a complete "How to Do It Manual" so that all the documentation and systems could be made available to other organisations who might want to replicate Re-Unite in order to satisfy the desperate plight of homeless mothers on their release from prison. Although achieving this involved considerable work, this document was produced by the end of the year, an achievement that turned out to be extremely well timed.

In the autumn of 2008 partners in Re-Unite received an approach from another charity that wanted to replicate Re-Unite in another part of England that would serve women's prisons that the location of the houses in the Re-Unite Project do not easily serve. As well as providing this very convenient match, the project would also allow comparison of homeless women in rural areas with the plight of similar women in London and would allow further learning about the needs of homeless mothers. As the year drew to an end, negotiations were at an advanced stage with this charity, which had already raised some of the funding necessary for the project. The Re-Unite Procedures Manual will be a great help in rapidly establishing this new strand for the project. It is hoped that this new strand can commence operating by the end of 2009.

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The Chrysalis Project

- Throughout the year under review, Commonweal worked with St. Mungo's to develop a Resettlement Programme for former female sex workers. The Project is planned to be in two strands.
- The first strand will help the resettlement of those who, for one reason or another have adopted sex working and have sought help from St. Mungo's to move from this lifestyle. This help is provided by St. Mungo's in hostel-based programmes. After successfully completing these programmes, the women need to test their ability to live independently, albeit still with considerable support. This is the role of The Chrysalis Project.
- The second strand will comprise of women who have been trafficked and forced into sexual exploitation. Although the work of the women has been the same, the resettlement needs are very different and Commonweal is grateful to St. Mungo's for their experience in developing the resettlement programmes necessary to give these women the best possible chance of recovery and resettlement.
- The year under review ended with documentation between St. Mungo's and Commonweal finalised, positive hopes of funding being obtained and the ambition of making the project operational in the first half of 2009.

"Buying A House From A Wheelchair

Since 2007, Commonweal had been interested in the extraordinary difficulties that wheelchair users experienced when buying a home, which had resulted in a tentative ambition to create a small project to demonstrate the best way to accommodate the needs of wheelchair users. As usual for Commonweal, understanding the exact needs of people suffering an injustice are the pre-cursor to any activity and in the summer of 2008 a small research project was conducted amongst wheelchair users who had bought a home or were in the process of buying a home. This project revealed a whole host of extraordinary problems that wheelchair users have to endure and showed that there was considerable scope for improvement amongst many of the links in the chain that lead to actually moving in to a home of your own. Unfortunately, at the time that this learning could be drawn to a conclusion, the downturn in the housing market became so severe that it was not the time to launch the demonstration project that had been planned. However, the learning from the project is being retained in the hope that it can be used to stimulate more sensitive and helpful facilities for wheelchair users when the housing market returns to normality.

Plans for the future

2008 was the year when Commonweal achieved the procedures, knowledge and experience to create and mobilise projects and, sometimes working with partners, achieve the ambitious outcomes that were defined at the outset. This led to the decision that the Charity can expand the breadth and depth of its operations, particularly through new management structures. To this end, it is planned that in 2009, plans will be made to expand the management structure of Commonweal so that new targets can be set.

Operational focus will be on the establishment of The Chrysalis Project and replication and further development of Re-Unite.

Reserves

The present level of funding and reserves are adequate to support the running of the Charity and cover its existing projects and research commitments in the short to medium term.

