



COMMONWEAL  
HOUSING'S

# NEW HORIZONS



ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23

# COMMONWEAL HOUSING'S NEW HORIZONS ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23



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# FOREWORD



Jack Mactaggart  
Chair



Ashley Horsey  
CEO

**For the most vulnerable in society, for those on the peripheries, for those burdened by injustice, a new start is hard to come by. For Commonwealth, providing this new start is rooted in our values and our mission as an organisation. To house and support, alongside our fantastic project partners, those that are too often overlooked by mainstream services is what guides us, and sometimes sets us apart.**

Be it young adult carers looking for an independent life or female survivors of sexual exploitation, our projects open new horizons to these people and in turn offer new hope.

For us, this past year has been defined by new horizons. We've welcomed fantastic new staff members across our projects, communications, administration and finance departments. And they've been joined by a new Trustee, Elanor Warwick, who offers us fresh eyes and expertise in all matters housing. Our geographical reach is expanding too, with projects in the pipeline in new cities and countries, as we explore injustices and their impacts on people from across the UK. We've also found a new place to call home, with our Liverpool Street office breathing new and more dynamic life into our work.

It isn't just the environment and people that has changed and grown, but the work itself. For the past three years, Commonwealth has set about focusing its workstreams into three thematic areas of injustice. These themes – guided by emerging injustices – streamline the way we work, and the areas of policy in which we focus. Following successful projects and campaigning work in the violence against women and girls (VAWG) sector and positive work related to injustices emerging at the point of transitions in people's lives, we embarked on our own journey to new horizons.

Maintaining our focus on the criminal justice system – feeling that we had not yet explored the sector to its fullest – our 2023-2025 Business Strategy sets our sights on two new themes:

- Young adults and those facing difficult transitions to adulthood
- Migration and Trafficking – incorporating areas of work around asylum, migration, modern-day slavery as well as human trafficking.

2023 marks the fourth iteration of our partnership programme, Call for New Ideas. Last year's Call for New Ideas proved as fruitful as ever, with fantastic new and innovative ideas flowing from the sector. As a result, we agreed to fund five feasibility studies, once again reinforcing the strategic value the Call for New Ideas has in generating imaginative pilot projects and enabling Commonwealth to utilise its resources to support organisations big and small working on the frontline across the country.

We're also delighted to have commenced work on a project from our 2021 Call for New Ideas. Having bought five properties in Northern Ireland, You're Home, with Belfast-based church East Belfast Mission, provides temporary accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness and acts as a route into housing for people in transition who are excluded from both the private and socially rented sectors.

These partnerships, and the imaginative projects at their core, are the cornerstone of Commonweal and our mission. We seek to support those that others may miss, we focus our resources in new places and with new organisations, and we seek to tackle issues that are cutting deep into the social fabric of the country through action and learning.

But while our projects aim to, and often successfully do, mitigate the injustices people face and demonstrate the value of good quality and secure housing as a route out of the challenges in people's lives, we are also determined to dig deeper, and to understand the cause and the nature of injustices, not just the solutions.

This past year we have expanded the remit of our research function, funding ground-breaking reports including an evaluation of a housing scheme in Bristol, research into temporary accommodation used to house single-parent families, research on trafficking trends emerging from the war in Ukraine, an evaluation of the merits of the Homes for the Ukraine scheme, and a look into the injustices facing young adult carers.

We have been delighted by the progress made in the exempt accommodation sector too. With the passing of the much-anticipated Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill through the Commons in March and passing through the Lords at the time of writing, our work in this muddled and murky sector is for the most part done, but we will continue to use our independent voice, without vested interest, to ensure that positive, long-lasting change happens and work with stakeholders across the board to deliver it.

Our campaigning work around exempt accommodation is not the only element of our work that we have tied the ribbon on this past year. As we shift away from the VAWG sector, so to do we conclude projects Rhea and Amari alongside VAWG specialist charity Solace Women's Aid.

We have also handed the keys over on our project Move On Up, supporting young adult carers with Quaker Social Action. At a time when young people are facing an ever more challenging housing environment, supporting those with caring responsibilities and giving them the visibility they need and deserve is crucial.

It has been a year of incredible activity from Commonweal Housing. Defined by our ever-present will to dig deeper, to scratch beneath the surface and unearth those hidden gems we call housing-solutions.

We pay tribute to our fantastic project partners, new and old, for their unending energy and inquisitive nature, to those who have supported and conducted the hard-hitting research we have been involved with, to our friends and colleagues, to our social investors and of course to our brilliant, dedicated staff and Trustees. Special thanks must also go to our principle benefactor Grove End Housing, without whom, we could not do the vital and wonderful things we do.

As we embark on yet more new journeys and new horizons together, let us first look back at what has been yet another special year in our history.



# SOME OF OUR NEW HORIZONS

We look back at some of the major moments of the past year, as well as the new horizons we're set to journey to in the coming years.



NEW OFFICE



NEW STAFF



NEW TRUSTEE



NEW PROJECTS



NEW THEMES



CALL FOR NEW IDEAS



NEW FEASIBILITY STUDIES



NEW JANE SLOWEY MEMORIAL BURSARY RECIPIENTS

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# NEW THEMES

**Our themes define our work. They dictate our focus, our projects and our solutions.**

To streamline our work and resources, Commonweal focuses its projects into three broad thematic policy areas. These include policy areas where injustices have emerged but may sometimes be overlooked or where housing as part of the solution requires greater exploration. For the past three years, our strategic themes have been: violence against women and girls (VAWG), the criminal justice system, and injustices that occur at the point of transition in people's lives.

In 2023, we announced our themes to run until at least 2025. These are:

- Injustices faced by young adults and those facing difficult transitions to adulthood
- Migration, asylum and human trafficking
- The criminal justice system.



## Young adults and those facing difficult transitions to adulthood



**129,000** 16-24 year olds were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK last year

Centrepoint 2021/22

Young adults and those facing difficult transitions into adulthood are acutely impacted by rising inflation and the cost of living crisis. Housing insecurity and inaccessibility have become pervasive symptoms of the current economic climate. Inability to afford necessities, a looming debt crisis, and deteriorating mental wellbeing are just some of the injustices facing the youth of today.

## Migration, asylum and human trafficking



**Almost 200,000** people, including as many as **45,000** children, are projected to be detained or left destitute under the first three years of implementation of the Illegal Migration Bill

Refugee Council Impact Assessment for the Illegal Migration Bill

Recent years have played witness to a worsening erosion of migrants' rights in Britain. Alarmed and alerted by the injustices they face, and energised by the No Recourse to Public Funds project we ran with Praxis, we have dedicated further attention and resources to the injustices facing migrants and victims of human trafficking.

## The criminal justice system



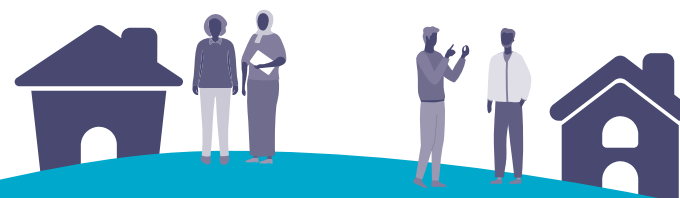
More than **1 in 4** prisoners are from minority ethnic backgrounds, despite making up only 14% of the population across England and Wales

Prison Reform Trust

While the criminal justice system has been a focus of our work for several years, we believe that the housing element of the criminal justice system requires greater attention and it therefore remains a key theme for us. Within the criminal justice sector, burgeoning injustices around the over-representation of ethnic minorities and issues surrounding youth justice give us further credence to continue to concentrate on this critical policy area.

## Continued projects

Following the announcement of new policy themes, we will continue to support existing projects relating to VAWG and transitions, use prior and future learnings from projects to help deliver housing-based solutions to social injustices, and continue to work alongside the sector to influence positive policy change.



# YOU'RE HOME



**Clients at East Belfast Mission's Hosford Health and Wellbeing Hub celebrated Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival by doing miniature gardens and woodwork.**

**As part of our 2021 Call for New Ideas cohort, we are delighted to have commenced the pilot project with Northern Irish charity East Belfast Mission, entering a new country and a new horizon for Commonweal.**

## The organisation

East Belfast Mission offers a wide variety of services aimed at alleviating the difficulties faced by deprived areas within the community of east Belfast. For over 25 years, the charity has also run 'Hosford', a dedicated service providing hostel accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness.

## The injustice

Often people with low-level support needs who are ready to move on from hostel accommodation and transition towards independent living are met with housing exclusion. They are unable to access social housing due to not having enough perceived need to be granted accommodation by their local council. Additionally, rising rents, the lack of a guarantor and prejudice from landlords for formerly being homeless prevents them from accessing private rented accommodation.

## The solution

The new project will provide affordable rental accommodation and tenancy support services for individuals within the east Belfast community to help address the chronic lack of affordable, long-term housing options for individuals ready to move on from hostel accommodation.

The project aims to provide a pathway for individuals ready to take the next step and leave the Hosford hostel, but the lack of suitable move-on options leaves them with no choice but to stay in the hostel for an extended period. The accommodation will also be offered to those affected by homelessness for whom moving into a hostel environment would be detrimental to their lives and progress towards independence.

Tenants will be housed in a self-contained property, and support workers from Hosford will provide floating practical and emotional support and guidance to help individuals develop their skills and maintain their independence.

Young people, refugees, survivors of domestic abuse, people with mental health challenges and single women and men are among the groups of people that will be supported through the project.

## 2022-23 updates

- Through social investment, we secured funding to purchase five properties across east Belfast
- The project will shortly open its doors to the community, with tenants set to move into the properties from the Summer onwards
- This is an exciting time for Commonweal as it marks the first time we will run a property-based pilot project outside of England.



# A BASE TO SUCCESS



Despite presenting to their local authorities and within health and social care services multiple times **65%** of young people had received no housing support before working with Gateway and Project Future.

Alongside our new project with East Belfast Mission, we have another Call for New Ideas 2021 feasibility study progressing to the project developed stage: A Base to Success, in partnership with Gateway and in conjunction with Project Future.

## The organisations

Gateway is a specialist enhanced liaison and diversion (L&D) service launched by the Barnet, Enfield, and Haringey NHS Trust, which provides psychologically informed, multi-level wellbeing interventions for young people presenting within the court and police custody in the local community.

Project Future is part of a partnership between Mind in Haringey, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Mental Health Trust, and Haringey Council, providing specialist wellbeing support for young people involved in, or at risk of, community violence.

## The injustice

Although losing accommodation due to 'threats of violence' is listed as a category of 'priority need' within the Homelessness Guidance, the majority of young people fleeing youth or community violence are initially rejected by local authorities as 'not priority need' for housing.

The lack of safe, appropriate housing leaves these young adults facing the continuous threat of serious violence within the community and unable to move forward with their lives and escape homelessness and the criminal justice system.

## The solution

'A Base to Success' aims to pilot trauma-supported housing for young men aged 22-30 affected by serious youth violence. The model has been co-developed with young adults experiencing gang affiliation and homelessness to help best support the group's needs.

Each young person will be offered a self-contained studio flat in a safe area on the edges of London, away from community violence but close enough to maintain their protective social networks. Specialist youth workers at Gateway and Project Future will provide tailored trauma-informed and youth-led support to help individuals slowly build their stability and psychological wellbeing.

The model focuses on the concept of 'safety first', which involves initially placing traumatised young people into an environment where they feel truly safe, and from here, enabling them to engage in wraparound wellbeing support at their own pace.

## 2022-23 updates

- Following a successful feasibility study, we are looking to unlock social investment to acquire properties to turn the 'A Base to Success' housing model into a property-based pilot project
- We are hopeful of achieving positive progress during 2023.

# CALL FOR NEW IDEAS 2021

**Rewinding the clock back to 2021, we are continuing to work with this Call for New Ideas cohort as we look to instigate new property-based pilot projects.**

As part of Call for New Ideas 2021, we are continuing to work alongside three organisations seeking to bring their models to life, they are:

- Domestic violence charity, Refuge
- Adab Trust, a youth employment charity
- Hackney community interest company, SWIM Enterprises.

## Refuge

Refuge's model seeks to provide safe, self-contained dispersed accommodation, with a similar level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge, for survivors of domestic abuse unable to stay in traditional refuge accommodation. This includes survivors with disabilities, from the LGBT+ community, and large families or families with older male children.

## Adab Trust

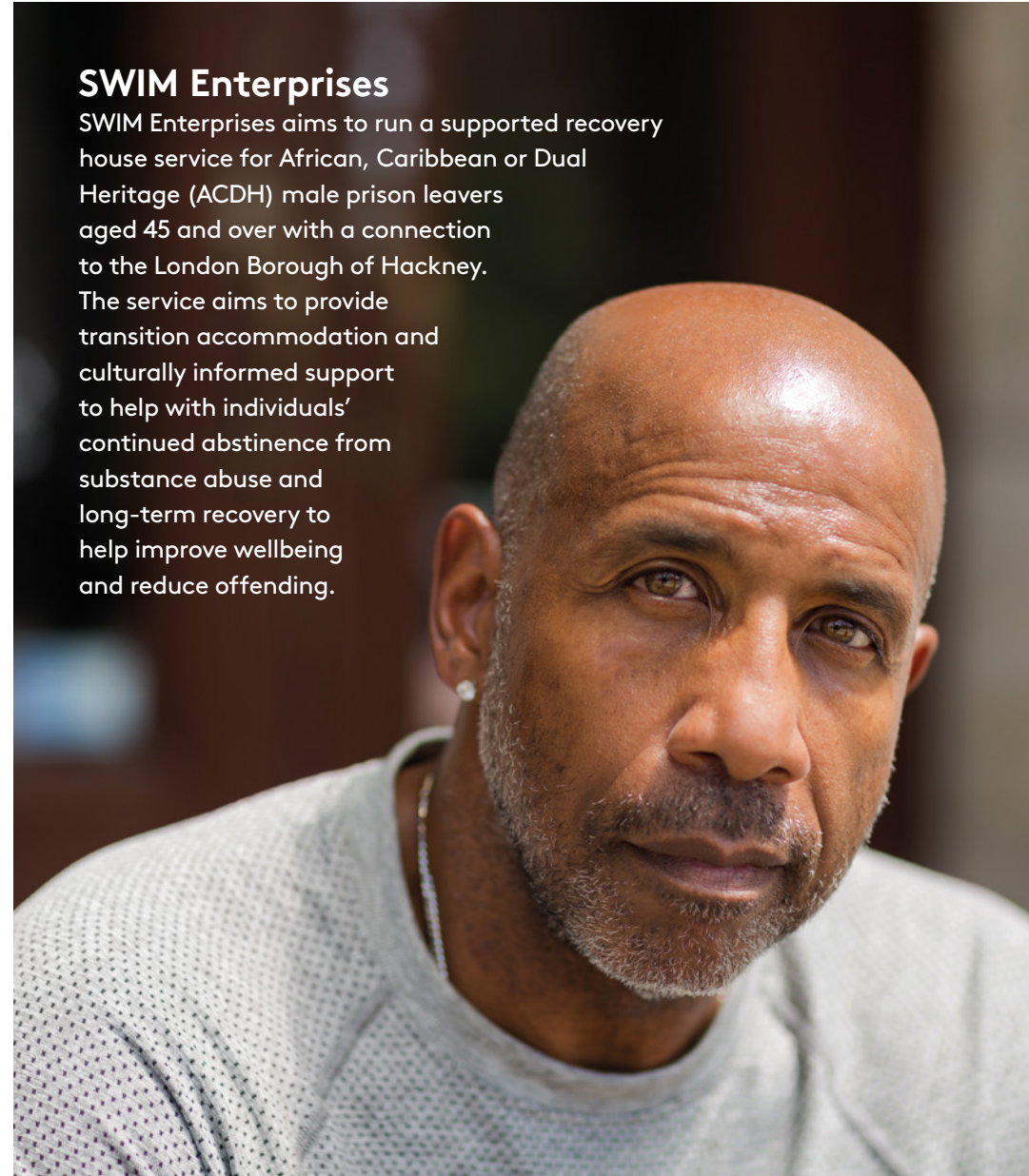
Adab Trust assessed the viability of a community-residential hybrid programme, implemented within existing local authority arrangements for provision, and is aiming to connect with hard to reach looked after children.

**“Our relationship with Commonweal went far beyond the bricks and mortar. In addition to working together through the feasibility of the proposal, they provided enormous support in several ways, which helped us through the various challenges we faced.”**

Sean O'Connell, Chief Executive Officer at Adab Trust

## SWIM Enterprises

SWIM Enterprises aims to run a supported recovery house service for African, Caribbean or Dual Heritage (ACDH) male prison leavers aged 45 and over with a connection to the London Borough of Hackney. The service aims to provide transition accommodation and culturally informed support to help with individuals' continued abstinence from substance abuse and long-term recovery to help improve wellbeing and reduce offending.



# CALL FOR NEW IDEAS 2022



**This year marked the third year we opened Call for New Ideas – Commonwealth’s flagship partnership programme – which invites frontline organisations to apply for funding to test new ideas to provide much-needed housing and support for marginalised groups.**

After receiving a sizeable volume of compelling and imaginative ideas, we funded and supported five short-term feasibility studies evaluating the suitability of different housing and support models.

As Commonwealth transitions towards new core policy themes, this was the last year we welcomed applications focusing on our previous three priority areas:

- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Systemic injustices that occur at points of transition in people’s lives
- The criminal justice system.

The short-term feasibility studies aim to determine whether the proposed model could operate as practical property-based pilot projects, with the potential for Commonwealth to provide housing and funding.

Photo: © Depaul

This year we partnered with:

- Northern Ireland homeless charity, Simon Community Northern Ireland
- Servol Community Services, a mental health charity based in the West Midlands
- Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority
- Leading homelessness charity, Depaul Northern Ireland
- Women’s and children’s charity, Trevi based in Plymouth.



## Simon Community, Northern Ireland

With funding and support from Commonweal, Simon Community Northern Ireland evaluated how a women-only and trauma-informed hostel and additional on-site 'move on' flats can support homeless single women with complex needs. To help support women on their pathway towards independent living, the model also includes affordable rental homes for women dispersed across Belfast.

**“With thanks to this funding from Commonweal, we will look to provide spaces for women to come to terms with their situation while receiving the support needed to make positive steps for their futures.”**

Karen McAlister, Head of Research & Development at Simon Community Northern Ireland

## Depaul Northern Ireland

Depaul Northern Ireland is testing the viability of step-down accommodation alongside specialist support for women leaving prison. This model intends to provide women prison leavers with much-needed, settled housing and specialist support to help them establish their new life upon release and break the cycle of re-offending.

**“Through the feasibility study, we aim to identify the key support that women with a criminal record need in the community and this will help us to design a service around these unique needs.”**

Deirdre Canavan, Senior Services Manager at Depaul Northern Ireland

## Servol Community Services

We also funded mental health charity Servol Community Services to explore housing in collaboration with criminal justice services. Through the provision of safe housing upon release, low-medium risk prison leavers with diagnosed mental health conditions would receive support to help improve their mental health and reduce re-offending.

**“We believe an effective resettlement strategy is likely to lead to greater engagement with the resettlement plan as well as greater compliance if it is developed in consultation with the offender.”**

Gaynor Brooke, Head of Services at Servol Community Services

## Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority

Focusing on VAWG and criminal justice, the Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority is investigating a Housing First approach for female victims of domestic violence who have committed a minor offence. By providing accommodation and intensive support to help aid behaviour change, the model seeks to offer an alternative to custody for victims of domestic abuse, as well as reduce costly and harmful custodial sentences.

## Trevi

Commonweal also supported the feasibility study for women's and children's charity Trevi, which investigated an alternative funding model for a women-centered and women-only hostel for women with complex and multiple needs. To help address the lack of women-only hostels in the South West region, the hostel aims to provide women escaping VAWG with a safe and nurturing space to move forward in their lives away from a prominently male-ordinated hostel environment.

As a result of the feasibility study, Trevi is acquiring independent financial support to buy a property for an on-site hostel next to existing services they already operate.



# JANE SLOWEY MEMORIAL BURSARY



**2021/22 was the fourth year we awarded the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary to three students from the University of Birmingham's School of Social Policy, focusing their final-year dissertation on housing issues and social injustice.**

In memory of our late Trustee Jane Slowey CBE, who studied at the University of Birmingham and was an active campaigner against social injustices, the Bursary supports aspiring students keen to follow in Jane's footsteps in tackling issues facing society.

Michelle Anderson, Seerut Ladhar and Ofure Osebor each received £2,500 grant money to support their final year dissertation research, as well as informal mentoring support and advice from Commonweal.

Last Summer, students presented their findings to Commonweal staff, Trustees and friends at our annual event celebrating the work of the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary recipients.

Following our four-year partnership with the University of Birmingham, we have extended the Bursary for a further ten years. The latest recipients, Grace Hill, Aminata Kamara, Talia Knoble-Gershon and Abbie Dyke will share their findings at the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary event this Summer.



**Michelle Anderson**

Michelle's dissertation explored how lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic can help address UK homelessness.

**“It was an honour to present to such accredited alumni and their questions following my presentation really sparked some interesting ideas and discussion on the issue of homelessness in the UK.”**



**Seerut Ladhar**

Seerut analysed the impact Covid-19 had on the mental health of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students at the University of Birmingham.

**“The Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary has provided immense support and financial ease to my final year dissertation as I was able to input more time and energy into a piece of research that was incredibly close to my heart.”**

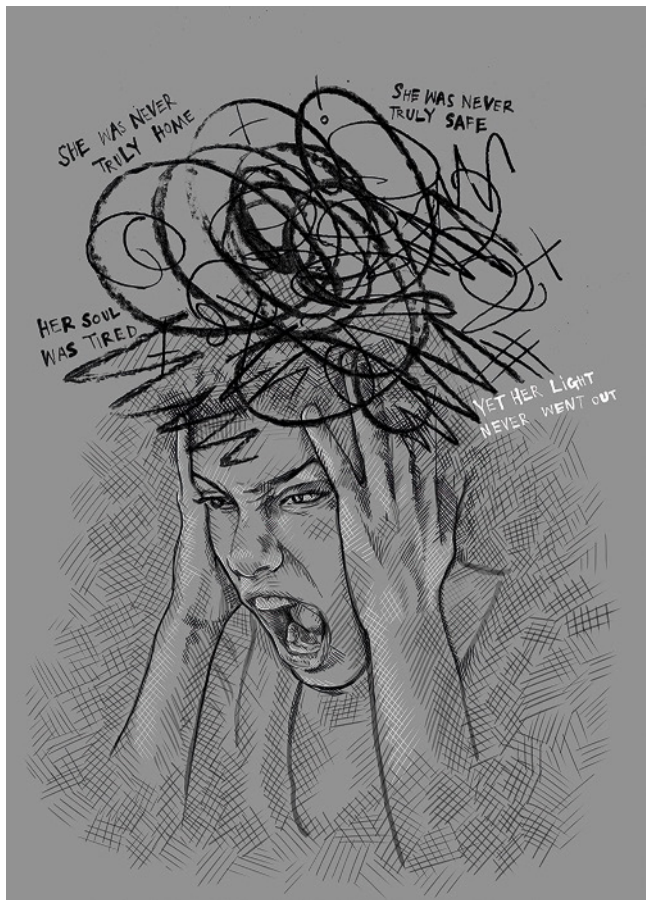


**Ofure Osebor**

Ofure's study examined the multiple social exclusions sex workers face leading to them becoming homeless.

**“The Bursary allowed me to fully immerse myself in my research and really enjoy the process through the financial support and mentorship.”**





'The True Cost of Living 2022'  
 Artwork and associated poem created by Jayda Smith  
 Jackson – artist, poet and Haringey council employee

# The true cost of living 2022

Jayda Smith – artist, poet and Haringey council employee

They say ignorance is bliss  
 As she lay her head she thought she had a home  
 Her eyes deceived her  
 You see she was never truly home  
 You see a home is safe  
 Her home was never safe  
 You see a home is yours  
 Her home was never hers  
 But ignorance is bliss

One day, what she called home was gone  
 This she could not ignore  
 For so long she had wanted a home  
 But now she did not even have a place to lay her head  
 Eventually she saw  
 She saw that a home is not a place  
 A home is a space you can be yourself  
 A home is a space you feel safe  
 A home is a space you feel comfort in  
 But where she had laid her head was not that  
 That is when she realised  
 She had always been homeless

The storm that came next she could not prepare for  
 Her soul was tired, yet her light never went out

"God gives his hardest battles to his strongest soldiers"  
 For that she remembered the light deep within her  
 For what came next was not easy  
 For a fight to be seen it is deafening  
 For a fight to be heard it is silencing  
 For a fight to be safe it is scary  
 For a fight to be human it is inhumane  
 For a safe place to lay my head I fought

What did it cost?  
 It cost more than these words can say



# RESEARCH

After expanding our research remit in 2022, Commonweal has funded six pieces of key research in the past year. From Bristol to Ukraine, we wanted to understand the causes of a range of injustices as well as their solutions.



*Homes for Ukraine: learnings to inform and shape future hosting schemes*

A report on the Government's hosting scheme, developed in response to protecting those fleeing the war in Ukraine, examined how this could be used as a basis for similar schemes for a wider range of nationalities.



*Hope Rise: Post Occupancy Evaluation - Year 1 (2020/21)*

A report, funded by Commonweal Housing, demonstrated the impact a pilot project that delivered 11 zero-carbon modular homes in Bristol has had on young adults at risk of homelessness.



# UKRAINE: OUR RESPONSE

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Commonweal sought to distribute resources to provide on-the-ground support to organisations, as well as to fund or commission research into emerging injustices as a result of the war. We believed there was a need to understand this story; to help shine a light on the paths refugees were taking, and the patterns of exploitation that might follow them.

## STOP THE TRAFFIK

In response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Commonweal commissioned research by modern slavery prevention organisation STOP THE TRAFFIK into the emerging migration and trafficking risks facing refugees fleeing Ukraine.

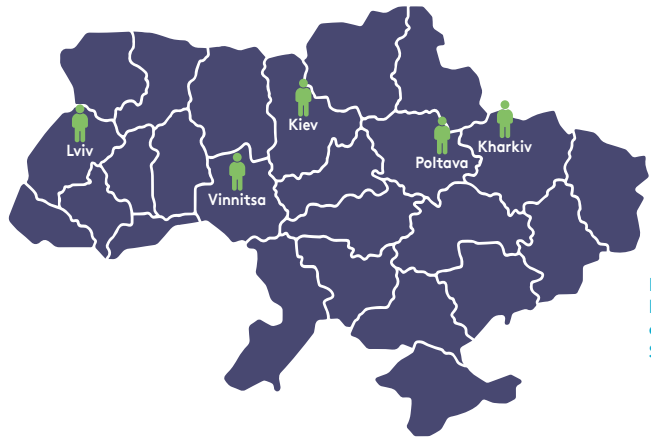
STOP THE TRAFFIK conducted on-the-ground interviews across Europe with experts and academics. Following this, STOP THE TRAFFIK produced pamphlets offering relevant UK businesses and NGOs key insights and recommendations to help prevent trafficking or mitigate its impact.

### The research found:

- Women and girls, the LGBTQ+ community, unaccompanied minors and the elderly are among the demographics at risk of exploitation
- Cases of Ukrainian refugees being forced into domestic servitude - accommodation offered in exchange for performing a job or service for the host, like cleaning and cooking
- Traffickers using social media sites such as Facebook, TikTok and Viber to target Ukraine refugees searching for accommodation or jobs
- Female-dominated job sectors, such as the cleaning and care industries, are more susceptible to exploitation
- Ukrainians have a low level of awareness and a lack of education about the issue of human trafficking and modern slavery.

### Recommendations:

- STOP THE TRAFFIK encourage NGOs working with Ukrainians to help build awareness of the different types of trafficking and warn them about the risks of domestic servitude and finding work and accommodation online.
- For businesses invested in or operating within supply chains linked to female-dominated jobs, STOP THE TRAFFIK advises them to conduct proper risk assessments to ensure robust anti-slavery measures are in place.
- To help raise awareness of what measures NGOs and businesses can take to help protect against trafficking risks, we hosted an online workshop and Q&A session. The well-attended event was chaired by Commonweal Trustee Professor Jonathan Portes, an expert on trafficking and labour markets, alongside expert panellists from STOP THE TRAFFIK.



Regions of Ukraine with a high number of internally displaced people, as shown in STOP THE TRAFFIK’s research

# HOMES FOR UKRAINE

**Commonweal recently funded research by the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab and national hosting charity Hope at Home, exploring hosts motivations and experiences hosting via Homes for Ukraine (HfU) and how these learnings can shape future hosting schemes.**

Following interviews and surveys of hosts signed up for Homes for Ukraine, the report identifies crucial recommendations for the Government, local authorities, hosting and third-sector organisations, and hosts to consider.

## The research uncovered:

- Hosts were generally favourable to the HfU scheme throughout the process, praising the ease of registration, welcoming the £350 monthly Government payment, and appreciating the Government's involvement in the delivery of the scheme
- They were motivated by on-going and extensive media coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Hosts criticised a lack of checks on properties, the bureaucratic process, and a lack of affordable and appropriate move-on accommodation
- Some hosts expressed anxiety about hosting other population groups and felt they wouldn't consider housing other nationalities. Although, three-quarters of hosts would consider hosting again.

## The report calls for:

- The hosting sector to apply practical learnings from the HfU scheme



- The Government to change its narrative and policy around migration and provide safe and legal routes of entry into the UK for all population groups
- The third sector to continue to challenge the narrative around the anti-migrant rhetoric
- Any future such hosting scheme(s) to have collaboration from a range of stakeholders, build on the successes of HfU and apply to all population groups.

Following the report launch, on behalf of Rights Lab and Hope at Home, Bridget Young, Director at NACCOM – The No Accommodation Network – chaired a short webinar sharing key learnings and recommendations from the report.

## Depaul International

In addition to these learning and social injustice research pieces, Commonweal Trustees agreed an exceptional grant to Depaul International to support the humanitarian work of their sister organisation Depaul Ukraine – seeking to address issues on the ground for individuals remaining in Ukraine.

# HOPE RISE

Testing new and imaginative housing solutions seeking to combat social injustice is at the heart of Commonwealth's ethos.

To this end, we funded the post-occupancy evaluation report for Hope Rise – a two-year pilot project delivering 11 zero-carbon modular homes above an operational car park for young adults at risk of homelessness.

Hope Rise was launched in collaboration with Bristol City Council, Bristol Housing Festival, and turnkey modular housing company ZED PODS Ltd, who constructed the unique homes in less than six months.

By utilising air rights above an operational car park while retaining 100% of the existing parking space, the project housed nine adults aged between 20 and 35 who were homeless or at risk of homelessness, including three care leavers and two refugees.

Community Builders from the YMCA Bristol lived alongside residents to provide emotional and practical support and foster community spirit. As a result of this support, the number of residents in education, employment or training increased.

**“This place has done such a good job of making me feel you have support around you. The people here are so nice, you feel like you are being welcomed with open arms every time they see you.”**

Hope Rise resident



**103,000** homes could be built above existing car parking spaces in England

Knight Frank estate agents

The homes cost one-third of local market rate and are fitted with renewable technologies to keep energy usage low, making them a truly affordable option for vulnerable young adults.

As the lack of social housing and sky rocketing rent across the private rented sector continues to place young adults at risk of homelessness, Hope Rise demonstrates utilising air rights above existing assets could unlock thousands of much-needed affordable homes across the country.

Off the back of this multi-award-winning development of 11 homes, ZED PODS secured a pipeline of around 1200 homes, the majority of which will be for affordable and social housing for those at risk of homelessness, households on the housing register, and keyworkers.

# NEW RESEARCH ON THE HORIZON

We've got three new research projects in the pipeline, set to be released over the course of the coming year.

## Single Parent Emergency Housing

Commonweal recently funded research undertaken by London-based architects Morris+Company and developers Common Projects investigating the injustice facing single-parent families with children in need of emergency accommodation.

Due to the high number of people in need of temporary housing, families are often placed in non-fit-for-purpose buildings lacking sufficient space, access to natural life, thermal comfort or safety, which leads to worsening mental health and wellbeing.

Given the lack of suitable temporary housing for families with young children, this research aims to develop a set of condition guidelines for buildings used to house single-parent families.



**96,060** households, including 121,680 dependent children (aged 0-15), were living in temporary accommodation across England at the end of September 2021

## Human trafficking

In light of our new theme 'Migration, Asylum and Trafficking' we funded research by the Human Trafficking Foundation, which will explore how a Whole Housing Approach, currently set up to house survivors of domestic abuse, can be replicated for victims of modern slavery.

By reviewing and understanding the strengths and challenges of the Whole Housing Approach for those experiencing domestic abuse, the research seeks to examine what would be required to adapt the approach for victims of modern slavery.

## Exempt accommodation

Continuing our efforts surrounding exempt accommodation, we have commissioned research by Spring Housing investigating the issues of supported exempt accommodation residents being unable, or discouraged from, entering or retaining employment due to the inflexibility of the current revenue funding model. Previously Spring Housing worked on our 2019 research report 'Exempt from Responsibility?', which looked into the rapidly expanding exempt accommodation sector.

This new research aims to provide evidence that can help to positively alter the culture and focus of supported housing, away from a focus on 'needs', 'risk' and short-term surface level 'outcomes' and towards a more aspirational environment that fosters social mobility and integration.

# THE SUN SETS ON SOME OF OUR PROJECTS

While we're delighted by the exciting new chapters we are embarking on, we want to look back at some of the projects and work that Commonwealth has delivered in recent years as they come to a conclusion.

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# MOVE ON UP

For young adult carers, accessible housing and tailored support can be the vital ingredients to fulfil their aspirations and ensure they can lead happy, independent lives.

## Project overview

In partnership with Quaker Social Action (QSA) and Commonweal, the Move On Up project provided shared housing to young adult carers aged between 18-25 years. The unique project was established in 2017 to address a gap in support for young adult carers facing housing needs.



**4 in 10** carers aged 16 to 29 reported a rise in their cost of living, according to The Office for National Statistics (2022)



## The injustice

Due to their caring responsibility, young adult carers are at greater risk of high tension and breakdown in family relationships, and many lack the financial means or social networks to move out of the family home. This therefore places young adult carers at a high risk of becoming homeless or being in insecure living arrangements.

Young adult carers often feel obliged to prioritise financial contributions to their family, leaving little money left for themselves. Amidst the cost of living crisis, intensified economic pressure is likely to heighten family tension placing more young people at risk of homelessness.

## The solution

Move On Up combines independent accommodation and up to 24 months' empathetic, specialist support from a dedicated support worker at QSA for young adult carers who provide informal, unpaid care to a family member.

Choice is at the heart of Move On Up. Through the project, young people are equipped with their own space, away from their family home, alongside the support they need to make informed decisions about their future and progress towards their goals.

**“I've learned that I don't have to feel down and stressed every time my mum feels down and stressed. With my own space, I can recover enough to still be a help to her when she needs me.”**

Move On Up resident

The final evaluation of Move On Up, carried out by the Learning and Work Institute in 2019, found the project increased residents learning, education and employment opportunities. Support and a respite from their caring role also helped improve residents' mental wellbeing and relationships with family members.

## 2022-23 updates

- Following the scheduled end of Move On Up, Commonwealth commissioned Nicola Aylward at the Learning and Work Institute to conduct a report highlighting the challenges young adult carers face.
- Although the needs of young adult carers have recently become recognised in social care policy, there continues to be a significant lack of specific housing provision for this vulnerable cohort. As such, we hope this report will raise awareness of the housing needs of young adult carers across the carers, housing and public service sector.
- This is a critical juncture in the efforts to increase visibility of young adult carers and push for improved housing options. The report *'We Still Care'* was recently published during Carers Week 2023.



# AMARI

**Working with Solace Women's Aid (SWA), the Amari project provided safe, secure post emergency accommodation and tailored support for women who had been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking.**

## The injustice

Many women fleeing sexual exploitation and trafficking are denied housing and support after emergency accommodation. While transitional accommodation is rare, it also offers little or no support to help victims of exploitation to gain independent living skills. Without continued safe housing and vital support, women can find themselves alone, struggling to maintain their links with employment, education or training, and subsequently at risk of homelessness or returning to the lives they left behind.

## The solution

Through 10 properties provided by Commonweal, Amari offered 12-18 months of accommodation and wraparound support from Solace staff. The project supported single women or those with a child under two, over the age of 18, who have been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking.

Within the project, women also receive at least three months' resettlement support and support in maintaining a tenancy, which aims to help give them a better chance of holding a lease in the private rented sector.

The project provided vulnerable women with a secure, safe space to gain life skills and support to recover from their trauma and become



independent at the same time. Throughout the project's lifespan, women self-reported improvements in their wellbeing across health, peace of living, relationships, financial security and more.

## 2022-23 updates

- Following a seven-year pilot period, the Amari project has approached the end of its lifecycle. Throughout the year, alongside SWA, we have carried out a staggered exit plan, with all properties in the process of being handed back to Commonweal.
- Over the course of the project, 37 women have been supported in their journey of recovery and independence.



# RHEA

Since 2017, Rhea has provided good-quality, temporary housing and tailored support for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. The project piloted an innovative joined-up approach between Southwark Council, Solace Women's Aid (SWA) and Commonweal.

## The injustice

For many women fleeing domestic violence, access to refuge accommodation can be inaccessible or unsuitable. Some women may have older male children who aren't allowed in women's refuges, while for others, their needs cannot always be supported by a mainstream refuge. The lack of suitable housing options means, too often, the choice is between staying in an abusive relationship or becoming homeless.

This past year the cost of living crisis has further exacerbated the struggles survivors face. Two-thirds of frontline workers surveyed by domestic violence charity Refuge found survivors are questioning leaving their abuser due to fears of poverty and facing homelessness. This is something no one should have to consider.

## The solution

By drawing on the resources and capabilities of partners, the housing model combined three areas of progressive practice. Survivors were identified and referred via Southwark Council's housing team, then assessed by Solace support workers. Following this, women and their children moved into one of the eight properties Commonweal provided to SWA at a subsidised rent, where they received one-to-one support from SWA.



Women received individual practical and wellbeing support for up to 12 months from a dedicated support worker to help them recover from trauma and equip them with tools to move onto independent living. Rhea was designed to prevent women escaping abuse from becoming homeless while supporting them on a journey towards independence.

The evaluation found the project helped women feel empowered and more confident, improved their mental and physical health, as well as their ability to 'hope and dream' for the future. The stability provided by housing also helped improve women's financial situation and ability to maintain a job, which is vital to ensuring survivors can begin to regain their independence.

## 2022-23 updates

- Along with the Amari project, this year marked the ending of the initial seven-year pilot project for Rhea. Commonweal and SWA have worked closely on a well-managed exit plan.
- We will continue to advocate for the replication of Rhea and Amari as a vital way to support women on their journey to recovery.

# NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

In partnership with Commonweal and Praxis Community Project, the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) project provided destitute migrants with uncertain immigration status, safe housing and specialist immigration advice. Between 2015 and 2022, the project supported 60 women and 93 children with NRPF tied to their immigration status.

## The injustice

The NRPF condition is one of the leading causes of destitution in the UK. The harmful policy makes individuals subjected to immigration control ineligible for an array of public support. This includes Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and income-based jobseekers' allowance. With such harsh restrictions, only likely to worsen if continued hostile policies like the Illegal Migration Bill become law, thousands of vulnerable people forced to flee their home country and seek refuge face destitution and homelessness.

## The solution

Through an innovative cross-subsidy model of shared accommodation, the project was able to support several housing needs simultaneously. Praxis offered properties to local authorities, who used them to house destitute migrant families whom they have a duty to accommodate under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The income received from these properties then enabled Praxis to offer a number of free bed spaces to support single women not entitled to housing from the local authorities.



**1 in 4** people barred from accessing public funds are parents who live with their children

Citizens Advice

By helping individuals to understand their immigration case, with tailored immigration support from Praxis staff, families in the project averaged a year to get a decision on their immigration status, compared to the 522 days for those elsewhere.

## 2022-23 updates

- In light of our project with Praxis coming to the end of its pilot, we commissioned an article by Sue Lukes, a researcher at Migration Work, highlighting the devastating impact the NRPF policy has on vulnerable people and how the housing sector can help abolish the harmful policy.
- We hope this piece will encourage the sector to engage with and support migrants restricted by NRPF and kickstart a sector-wide coalition in tackling the policy.

**“By housing and engaging with migrants subjected to this abuse, housing providers can support them, work with them, amplify their voices, and stand for their right to dignity and participation. It’s time to come together and build those pathways out of destitution.”**

Sue Lukes, in her article: ‘A United Sector must fight the hardwired immigration injustice’

# EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION

## Finally, some hope on the horizon for reforming the exempt accommodation sector.



Since commissioning *Exempt from Responsibility?* – the ground-breaking 2019 report by Thea Raisbeck, Spring Housing Association and the University of Birmingham that sought to investigate the emerging injustices surrounding the murky and unregulated exempt accommodation sector – Commonwealth has played an active role in highlighting these injustices and collaborating with, or at times, cajoling stakeholders across the sector to bring much-needed reform to the sector.

Our efforts have always been unpinned by the fact that we are independent, we are not a vested interest and we see ourselves as honest brokers, willing and able to shine a light on the injustices, and to call into action those that can and must play a part in change.



Ashley Horsey, CEO, Commonwealth Housing, giving evidence at the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee inquiry into exempt accommodation

From webinars to open letters to Secretaries of State, Select Committees to Government Advisory Panels, we have done our utmost over the past few years to ensure that this issue has been on the map and that the right reforms are in the works.

This past year, we have followed the developments of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill with eagle eyes and have been delighted by its passage through Parliament thus far. We have worked closely with stakeholders across the board and will continue to do so into next year as we collectively hash out the finer details of the new rules and regulations on exempt accommodation.



Ashley Horsey, CEO, Commonwealth Housing, alongside Councillor Sharon Thompson from Birmingham City Council, speaking at the Westminster Insights Supported Housing Conference



# COMMONWEAL HOUSING'S BOARD



Baroness Jean Corston  
Honorary Patron

We are pleased to have welcomed Baroness Jean Corston as an Honorary Patron.

In 2007, Baroness Corston authored a landmark review of vulnerable women within the UK's criminal justice system. The Corston Report helped reduce the number of women in prison through community support measures and is still used today as a blueprint to improve the criminal justice system.

Baroness Corston also supported the development of our flagship Re-Unite project, which helped women leaving prison at risk of homelessness and reoffending to regain custody of their children and rebuild their lives.

**“The severe lack of appropriate housing and support for vulnerable women exiting the criminal justice system has made the work of Commonweal Housing and the learnings from Re-Unite ever-more valuable. I am proud to be offered this honorary role and look forward to supporting the charity as it grows and changes the lives of vulnerable people.”**

Baroness Jean Corston, Patron



Dr Elanor Warwick  
New trustee

Dr Elanor Warwick recently joined Commonweal Housing's Board of Trustees.

Dr Warwick is an experienced researcher focusing on the importance of homes as the location where economic and social inequity plays out, and that having a secure home is the first critical step for individuals moving forward into better lives.

Dr Warwick is the Head of Strategy Policy, Evidence and Research at Clarion Housing Group, England's largest housing association. She undertakes relevant housing research and policy and guidance on a range of housing issues.

**“I'm delighted to join Commonweal as I've long admired their activities, particularly the way that the lessons gathered from their work is shared to ensure that many more people can benefit from the projects supported.”**

Dr Elanor Warwick, Trustee

# GOVERNANCE

**Commonweal Housing is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its memorandum and articles of association, the Directors of the charity and its Trustees for the purpose of charity law.**

## Honorary Patrons

Baroness Jean Corston  
Sir John Mactaggart Bt.

## Company Secretary

Gary Medazoumian FCA

## Directors/Board of Trustees

Jack Mactaggart (Chair)  
Gary Medazoumian FCA  
Prof. Jonathan Portes  
Rt. Hon Fiona Mactaggart  
Russ Edwards  
Amarjit Bains  
Sheldon Shillingford  
Dr Elanor Warwick

## Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 180 Oxford Street, London W1D 1EA  
Charity Bank Limited, Fosse House, 182 High Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1BE  
CAF Bank Ltd (Charities Aid Foundation), 25 Kings Hill,  
West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

## Solicitors

BDB Pitmans LLP, 1 Bartholomew Close, London EC1A 7BL

## Auditors

Price Bailey, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Dashwood House, 69 Old Broad Street, London EC2M 1QS

## Principal address

Office No. 122, Spaces, 35 New Broad Street, London, EC2M 1NH

## Registered address

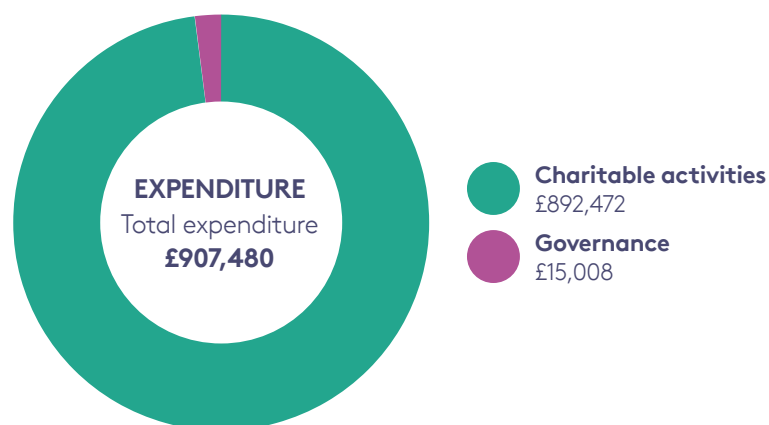
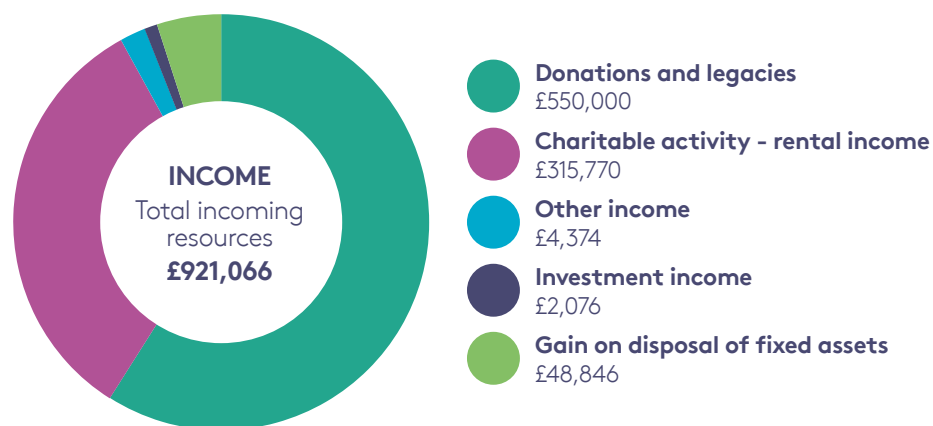
2 Babmaes Street, London SW1 6HD

Company registration number: 5319765  
Charity registration number: 1113331

# FINANCIAL REPORTS

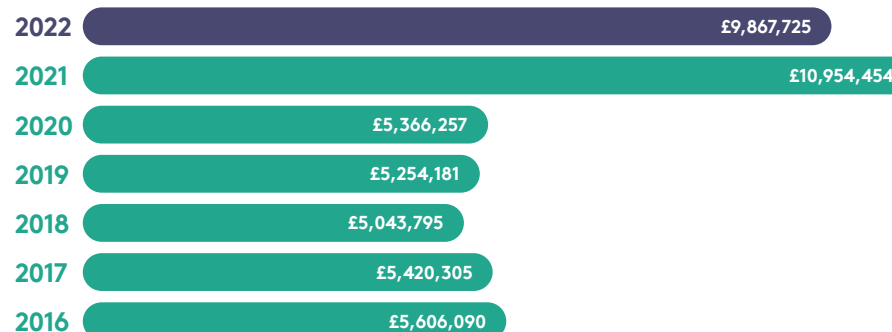
## for year ending 31 December 2022

Draft figures and subject to final adjustment and audit



### BALANCE SHEET at 31 december 2022

#### Net assets



The Trustees of Commonweal reviewed the property revaluation and depreciation policy and agreed all fixed assets of the same class, (i.e. properties) to be revalued using at least two comparative desktop valuations each year. The Board also agreed every five years the entire property portfolio would need to be revalued using professional RICS valuations. Commencing in 2022 the property revaluation and the fair value adjustments were made to properties acquired with finance from social investors. 2021 was the first year where the new property revaluation policy applied in the accounts for all properties, hence the figures reflect these changes and the property market at present. The Trustees also reviewed the policy on the treatment of depreciation on properties and agreed not to depreciate properties.

For further details you can find our audited accounts here:  
[www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/about-us/our-accounts](http://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/about-us/our-accounts)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & THANKS

Thank you to all our partners, funders and friends who have made it possible for us to continue supporting those facing social injustice, by developing innovative housing solutions together.





We investigate, test and champion housing solutions to social injustice



**Commonweal Housing**

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