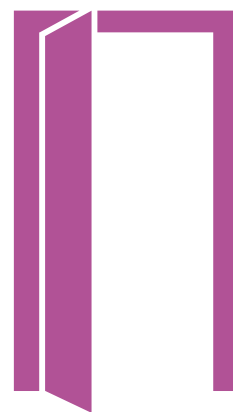
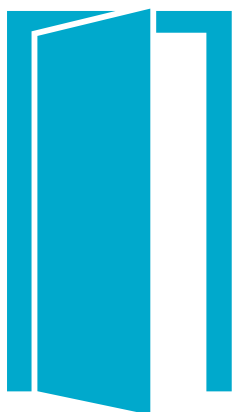
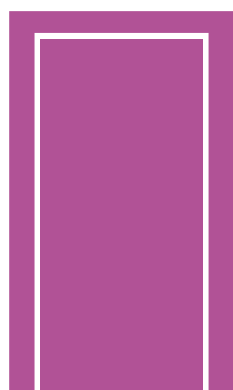




ANNUAL
REVIEW
2021/22



OPENING DOORS

UNLOCKING THE DOORS OF CHANGE

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FOREWORD



Jack Mactaggart, Chair



Ashley Horsey, CEO

These past two years have been defined by lockdowns, social distancing, and shutters. In short: closed doors. This year, as the world has begun to reopen, we want to celebrate the doors that we, and our incredible partners, have opened.

For many, the Covid-19 pandemic meant closing their doors. To their homes, to their offices, their businesses, and indeed the entire country. And while that was true of Commonweal's staff and Trustees, our door has always remained open.

In the face of challenging circumstances, we were resolute in our want to support partners and their project beneficiaries, ensuring that the housing and support they needed would continue.

This past year has been different. It will perhaps be best remembered for the doors we all have opened. For Commonweal, new projects are on the way, and many others in the pipeline. Our return to the office has been a welcome one: to see the faces of colleagues and Trustees, new and old, once again in a room together, collaborating, discussing, probing; so that we can continue in our mission to deliver housing solutions to social injustice.

In the past year, we have reopened our Call for New Ideas twice, receiving an incredible flow of original, imaginative, and inspiring ideas, seeking, as ever, to discover new ways in which the right housing at the right time can play a part in addressing the social injustices far too many face in this country.

As a result, we've funded incredible, new, and imaginative feasibility studies, including projects seeking to: support the housing and resettlement of African and Caribbean heritage (ACH) prison leavers; deliver accommodation and specialist support for women fleeing domestic violence; and scope out ways in which accommodation and training can help children in the care system, as well as many more. These are very much the ideas that we hoped to generate when we set out our priority themes of violence against women and girls (VAWG), the criminal justice system, and injustices that emerge at the points of transition in people's lives.

One of these studies has already progressed to the project development stage too. Working with Northern Irish church East Belfast Mission, Commonweal is supporting the Hosford Community Homes project that will provide affordable rental accommodation and tenancy support services within the community of East Belfast.

We will continue to welcome new ideas and partnerships in the future because it is the ethos of our organisation. We are always open to new projects but also to research themes and ideas. This is a function we are looking to develop for Commonweal, so that we are not just investigating, testing and sharing the *solutions* to injustices, but the *causes* of them.

Partnerships shape our work and our thinking, but it is not just front-line partners we need. Social investors hold the key to the doors we can open. Many of our projects are underpinned by a core group of investors who believe that social change is possible, and can be delivered through housing solutions. We hope that this year's Annual Review demonstrates the value that Commonweal and our partners can deliver not just



to the beneficiaries of our projects, or even society at whole, but to investors, who can generate social returns as well as financial ones, impacting the lives of tens, hundreds or even thousands of people.

This has always been where Commonweal has positioned itself: an organisation that will open doors to those that need it, whether that is an organisation that needs our support, investors looking to deliver change, or most crucially, to the undervalued, overlooked issues and individuals on the margins of society.

Perhaps nowhere has this been more prevalent to us this last year than in an area of housing that too often exploits the marginalised and vulnerable, and has been overlooked for more than two decades: the exempt accommodation sector.

As an independent, honest broker, without vested interest in the sector, but with a genuine interest in the need for reform, we wanted to call out those who seek to exploit and profiteer from the under-regulation that mars the well-intentioned and good-performing, to cajole those with the power to reform into action, and to shine a light on the sector, so as to build genuine awareness of the issues at hand.

In September 2021, we launched our hugely successful webinar series *Experts on Exempt*. Since then, we have met with a wide range of stakeholders; sat in on the All-Party Parliamentary Group into Ending Homelessness; wrote a joint open letter to the Government with the Local Government Association – signed by more than 80 other organisations and individuals; successfully called for a Select Committee inquiry; and gave written and oral evidence to the Committee. It has been a breath-taking few months but none of this would have been made possible without the incredible work of the individuals and organisations fighting for this much-needed change.

We'd like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to Cllr Sharon Thompson and all others working in this area in councils across the country, Thea Raisbeck and colleagues at Spring Housing Association, Crisis and the Local Government Association. We remain grateful to the journalists who have kept the issue to the fore locally and nationally – notably our friends at Inside Housing and especially, Jane Haynes and Birmingham Live.

We are grateful too for the focus a number of parliamentarians including Shabana Mahmood MP, Jess Philips MP, Preet Gill MP, Kerry McCarthy MP and many more who have continued to give voice to this issue. We also recognise the engagement of the Government, who have rightly listened to the concerns of the sector and begun the process to finally bring about reform.

Outside of exempt accommodation, we must of course pay tribute to our project partners, networks, investors, friends and colleagues, whose tireless work and incredible imagination bring to life new ideas and solutions that can set forth the pathway to change. Our role in this however, would not be made possible without the ongoing generosity of our principle benefactor, Grove End Housing to whom we give our huge thanks and continued appreciation for backing this cause for so many years.

Finally, of course we pay tribute to all our brilliant staff and Trustees, whose vision, insight and energy has pushed us ever-closer in our mission to be the 'go-to' organisation for innovative and deliverable housing-based solutions to social injustice.

When we work together, we are proving that change is possible and that social injustices, however many barriers there may be, can be solved. As we look back on another year in this organisation's history throughout this Annual Review, we want to ask you to also look forward: on ways in which we can collaborate, partner, and invest in a future that delivers real, long-lasting change for the people that need it most. Our door, as always, is open.



Steve Douglas, CBE

Commonweal Housing was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of St Mungo's CEO and former Commonweal Chair Steve Douglas, in May 2022. Steve was a leading figure in the housing industry with a career spanning more than 25 years. He sat on the Commonweal Board of Trustees for nine years, including a year as our Chair where he played a key part in our development on our mission as an action-learning charity.

“Steve Douglas was an immensely likeable and talented man, who taught me much about dignity and perseverance in all my engagements with him. He was a truly transformational influence on Commonweal.”

Sir John Mactaggart Bt. Founder and Patron of Commonweal Housing

THE DOORS WE'VE OPENED

With the world slowly re-emerging, we want to celebrate the doors we and our partners have opened, and why it matters so much.



We've run five active projects this year

“My support worker recently applied for a holiday grant and I was awarded £350. This grant allowed me to travel to another country where I met with my other sister who I hadn't seen for over 10 years. I cannot say thank you enough to the Amari Project.”

A woman on the Amari project with Solace Women's Aid on the impact it has had on her life



Rhea

26 survivors of domestic violence and their children were accommodated and supported in the Rhea project in collaboration with Solace Women's Aid.



Amari

The Amari project, also with Solace Women's Aid, accommodated and supported 29 women who have escaped sexual exploitation.



No Recourse to Public Funds

Housed 46 destitute migrants with their children, through the NRPF project with Praxis.

“Alongside my move into the Peer Landlord property, which is provided by Commonweal, Thames Reach staff helped me gain employment at Tesco by advising on my CV, informing me about suitable job vacancies and paying towards the cost of photo ID. Only now that I am in secure accommodation and employed can I make plans for my future, which include getting a full driving licence and training to be a paramedic.”

A tenant accessing the Peer Landlord project delivered with our partner, Thames Reach



Freedom2Work

Through Freedom2Work with Rentstart, 75 of the 96 individuals who used the service have moved into full-time or part-time employment.



Young carers

Helped 30 young carers find their feet.



Feasibility studies

We've supported seven feasibility studies through our 2021 Call for New Ideas.

... and agreed one new project as a result so far, with more in the pipeline.



Awards

Won two leading awards and nominated for three others.

“The first time I really received any help was when I joined the young carers project. I received help and support from the staff and also the other carers. Because of this I became very close with some of the other carers and we became the best of friends; we are always there to help each other in any way we can.”

Tenant of the Move On Up project with Quakers Social Action and Carers Trust

Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary

Last year, we gave three University of Birmingham undergraduate students £2,500 each for dissertation research in housing-related fields, plus bursary awards for four students for 2022/23.

Patrons

Welcomed one new Honorary Patron, Baroness Jean Corston.

Ukraine

Gave £20k to Depaul International for on-the-ground efforts plus £5k to Stop the Traffik for research into human trafficking in Ukraine.

Policy

Wrote a joint open letter with Local Government Association to the Government on behalf of 81 organisations and individuals.

Exempt accommodation

Had more than 350 viewers of our Experts on Exempt webinar series.

CALL FOR NEW IDEAS 2021



Property-based action-learning is at the heart of what we do. Following a host of successful partnership projects tackling a range of social injustices, we wanted to again open the doors to new ideas, to new housing and to new solutions, for the people who need them most.

Following the success of our inaugural Call for New Ideas – the partnership programme that Commonweal founded in 2020 with the hope of encouraging organisations big and small to put forward innovative housing-based solutions to social injustice – we reopened the process in 2021.

In particular, we welcomed applications around our three priority themes:

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

We received a huge volume of compelling, thought-provoking and original ideas, seven of which we committed to support and fund the feasibility study to test the suitability of the model. We have already progressed to the project stage with one partner, Northern Irish Church, East Belfast Mission.

The other feasibility studies we are funding are:

- Gateway, a Haringey-based NHS Trust pilot scheme
- Refuge, the UK's largest provider of refuges for survivors of domestic abuse
- Youth employment charity, Adab Trust
- Hackney community interest company, SWIM Enterprises
- Hertfordshire social enterprise, Rocknplace
- Homelessness organisation, C4WS.

Gateway

We are funding and supporting the feasibility study for Gateway, a project launched by the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust. Gateway is a specialist service that aims to divert young people away from the criminal justice system through a combination of: treatment of unmet mental health needs, increased accessibility of services, increased access to education and employment support, and improved overall stability.

The feasibility study aims to develop an innovative and effective way of supporting young people aged 18-25 to change their lives through the delivery of a rapid and novel model of housing provision. This model will be co-produced with young people enabling them to design for themselves the services that can best meet their needs.

Refuge

Continuing our existing projects around VAWG, we are working with leading domestic abuse charity Refuge, who is investigating best practice for a dispersed refuge model with Commonweal's support. Women escaping domestic violence with multiple or complex needs often find their access to mainstream refuge services restricted. The single-occupancy housing and network of support provided by dispersed refuge models offer women both the support available in a communal refuge and support catering to their specific needs.

SWIM Enterprises

Commonweal is supporting SWIM Enterprises to assess the feasibility of housing and resettlement support for African and Caribbean heritage (ACH) prison leavers. The proposed project would support prison leavers immediately upon release through the provision of stable housing, psychosocial interventions, and help into education, training, and employment (ETE), and volunteering.

“In the absence of relatable Black peers with lived experience to guide them, many re-connect with self-destructive behaviours and criminal associates, which lead to their return to custody.”

Peter Merrifield, Chief Executive at SWIM Enterprises

Adab Trust

With Commonweal's support, the Adab Trust is assessing the practicability of 11- or 16-week residential training schemes, implemented within existing local authority arrangements for accommodation provision. After assessment of the cohort's requirements, it will develop a specialised housing intervention model, co-produced with young people and specialist housing organisations.

“We welcome the opportunity to be partnering with such a forward-thinking organisation as Commonweal.”

Dermot O'Brien, founder of the Adab Trust

Rocknplace

We are also supporting Rocknplace to assess the feasibility of providing housing and support for young BAME people who have interacted with youth care services or the criminal justice system. The proposed project aims to prevent recidivism, enhance employability, and improve quality of life. Rocknplace's founders have worked with young adults in this field for a number of years and have established links with related charities and housing providers.

“The Call for New Ideas chimes with our mission: to support the most marginalised, socially deprived young adults in society. Rocknplace homes will offer a new way of living, with purpose.”

Sue Whiterod, Co-founder of Rocknplace

C4WS

Commonweal also funded a feasibility study for C4WS, a network of 12 churches launched in 2005 which offers vulnerable people 28-day shelter between November and March, as well as a variety of services that support their journey back to independent living.

As a result of the feasibility study, C4WS will be working with housing providers separately on its new social lettings project 'Launchpad', which addresses insufficient funding, housing and support for people who have experienced homelessness by providing safe and supported accommodation.

i If you are interested in learning more about how Commonweal Housing can help support your organisation, project or research, please contact: info@commonweal.org.uk



Servery Available 11:30 - 2:00pm

EAST BELFAST MISSION

Of the initial seven feasibility studies we have funded, one has been progressed to project development stage: Hosford Community Homes (HCH), in partnership with East Belfast Mission.

The organisation

East Belfast Mission is a charity with a wide variety of services which work towards the regeneration of the deprived area of East Belfast, offering services which aim to alleviate the difficulties faced by its community through projects such as Hosford Homelessness Services, an employability project which helps people back to work, social enterprise projects, community groups and community counselling, and a psychotherapy service.

The injustice

This project seeks to address systematic injustice at points of transition in the lives of people who become homeless. The project tackles housing exclusion for people who cannot access either social housing (as they do not have high enough points) or private rented accommodation (as they cannot afford it as well as other barriers).

The project

The Hosford Community Homes project is a social justice project that will provide affordable rental accommodation and tenancy support services within the community of East Belfast, as a route into housing for people in transition who cannot access social housing or private rented accommodation. Sat within East Belfast Mission's ongoing services, the project seeks to

address the chronic lack of suitable long-term housing solutions for its existing service users.

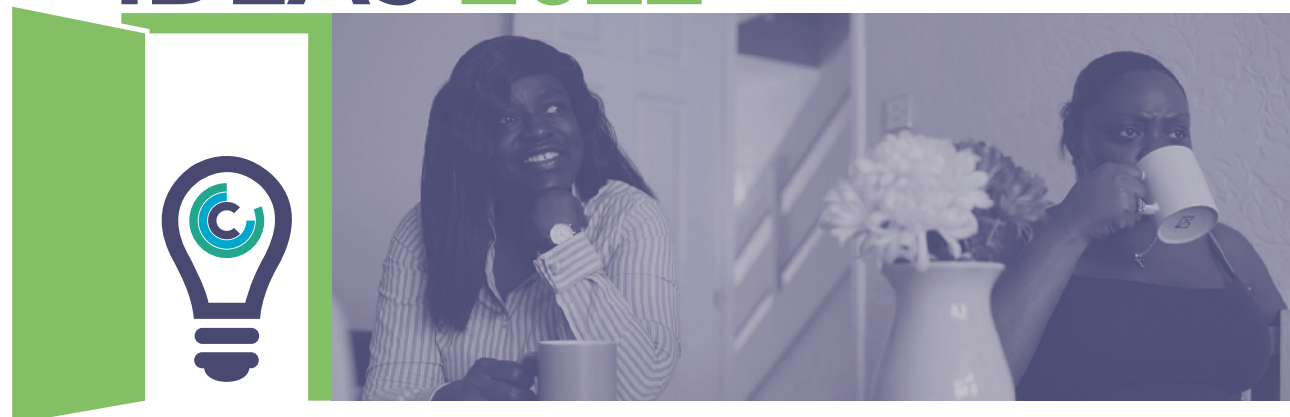
The target group will be people who have lower needs as this excludes them from accessing social housing due to a lack of points. They are also excluded from private rental accommodation due to affordability, the lack of a guarantor, and prejudice from landlords.

The accommodation will be offered to those who are ready to take the next step and leave the Hosford hostel, or for those affected by homelessness for whom moving into a hostel environment would be detrimental to their lives and progress towards independence.

“Delivering homeless services in Belfast for over 20 years, we have frontline experience of housing injustice and the suffering that it creates. The Call for New Ideas has given us the resources to research and develop an innovative housing solution to tackle these injustices. Throughout this process the support from Commonweal, and the current Commonweal project partners, has been invaluable. We now hope to deliver this project, test its effectiveness, and to share any learning so that other organisations can replicate any successes and play a part in tackling social injustice.”

Aidan Byrne, Homelessness Service Manager at East Belfast Mission

CALL FOR NEW IDEAS 2022



In 2022, we reopened Call for New Ideas for the third year running.

Between February and May, we again invited not-for-profit organisations working with marginalised groups to submit imaginative and original ideas for housing solutions to social injustices.

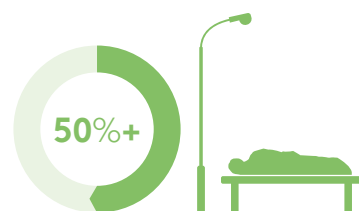
We continued to encourage applications around our themes of priority focus, and placed greater impetus on searching for ideas from black and minority ethnic-led or focused organisations.

We welcomed a positive number of applications during our first stage of the 2022 Call for New Ideas, with processing of the feasibility studies ongoing. We look forward to sharing updates with you soon!

Research

Looking forward, Commonweal intends to develop on its existing research work and commission up-to two new, focussed pieces of research.

As an action-learning charity, we will always strive to investigate, test and share housing solutions to social injustice. But understanding why social injustices occur is the foundation of how to solve them.



More than half of prison leavers were **released into homelessness** in the first year of the pandemic.

Therefore, for the second half of this year and into 2023, we are looking to work with organisations across the spectrum to investigate social injustices, particularly where housing is a part of the injustice, or can be a part of the solution, to better inform our future project initiatives.



The number of households **made homeless by domestic abuse** has **risen by more than a third** since the start of the pandemic, forcing some women to choose between homelessness or staying with an abusive partner.



Through Rhea we opened our doors to those who often face closed ones: women survivors of domestic abuse with an older male child.

Project overview

Rhea offers good quality, temporary housing and tailored support for women fleeing domestic violence and their children. Commonweal provides eight houses to Solace Women's Aid (SWA), who work closely with Southwark Council to get referrals as soon as possible, helping to get these vulnerable families housed away from their abusers.

The injustice

Many women fleeing domestic abuse find refuges can be inaccessible and unsuitable. In some cases, they cannot stay as they have an older male child with them or the support they need is simply not available. The choice is too often between staying in an abusive relationship or becoming homeless.

The key

Through Rhea, SWA provides low-levels of tailored support that works with each woman on the project as an individual. Rhea is designed to allow women fleeing abuse to recover, while at the same time prevents them from becoming homeless, working individually with them to move into independence.

Close working between Solace and Southwark Housing is the key to improving the timeliness and appropriateness of referrals in, and move on from, the service. Moving into independence through move-on accommodation is one of the biggest challenges facing women survivors of domestic abuse. The project is innovative in that it combines three areas of progressive practice.

1. It provides a bespoke, home-based support to survivors, which distinguishes it from other projects.
2. The emphasis on close working links with Southwark Housing seeks to maximise opportunities for timely move-on to long-term secure accommodation appropriate to need.
3. The project also meets a gap in pre-existing provision in Southwark, in terms of its target group. It does this by providing supported independent accommodation to survivors of domestic abuse who have children, including older male children who may not be accepted in other forms of domestic abuse residential provision.

Doors we've unlocked

- We provided eight properties and evaluation support to SWA
- Demonstrated improved referral pathways, smoother transitions, and better outcomes for survivors of domestic abuse
- Provided 26 survivors of domestic violence and their children with housing and support.



MOVE ON UP

Commonweal strives to help and support those at the margins, the too-often forgotten. And that's exactly the case with young carers.

🏠 Project overview

Move On Up is a housing and support project for young adult carers which is being delivered by Quaker Social Action (QSA) in partnership with Commonweal Housing. Run across four properties in East London, Move On Up provides shared housing for young adult carers aged between 18-24 years. The model focuses on providing accommodation as well as up to 24 months' individual support depending on their individual wellbeing needs. Move On Up is all about choice. The project aims to give young carers the support they need to make an informed decision about their future.

🔒 The injustice

Young adult carers are at a higher risk of becoming homeless or being in insecure living arrangements, yet previous research has found that no other housing project specifically for this group exists. Young adult carers are at greater risk of high tension and break down in family relationships, and many will not have the financial resources or the social relationships with peers needed to make a positive move out of the family home.

Young adult carers' needs have become increasingly recognised in policy and by service providers in recent years. Yet despite this, the links between caring and housing instability amongst young people has, until now, been overlooked in research and policy.

🔑 The key

By providing young adult carers with their own space away from the family home, alongside tailored and holistic support from a dedicated worker, the project aims to enable:

- The best outcomes for the young people in terms of increasing the future options available to them, measured by increased wellbeing, education and employment options
- Improved relationships between young people and their family members
- Successful transitions into the private rental sector/independent living.

A key strength of Move On Up is the flexible and tailored nature of its support offer, which aims to enable participants to gain the skills and knowledge required to achieve positive outcomes and make successful transitions into independent living.

Move On Up is now a well-established project which is addressing a gap in support for young adult carers. In the current climate of extreme housing need, Move On Up stands out as an innovative project, focused on a group whose needs have typically been overlooked.

🚪 The doors we've unlocked

- We provided four properties to this key and overlooked client group
- This has supported 30 young carers to find their feet and take the next steps in their lives
- We have a current occupancy of 11 out of 12 with 8 out of 11 currently engaged in employment, education and training (EET)
- These individuals continue to be happy with the quality of the properties and staff's work.



FREEDOM2WORK



Housing, employment and financial security are irrevocably interlinked. Each relies upon and dictate the others. Breaking the cycle of homelessness depends on examining all three.

🏠 Project overview

Freedom2Work is an award-winning project based in Elmbridge, Surrey in partnership between Commonweal Housing and Rentstart. The project combines supported shared housing, advice and training on household management, jobhunting, CV writing and budgeting, and a matched savings scheme, to help clients overcome the barriers they face to employment.

🔒 The injustice

In a year that continued to feel the unending impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis, housing, employment and personal finances have never faced such threats. Needless to say, homelessness is projected to rise.

What's more, while homeless, unemployed individuals may want to work, they are held back from doing so due to several barriers in their way. Unstable temporary housing and no permanent address, fluctuating benefits paid in arrears as well as a lack of access to training and advice on how to re-enter the job market can all prevent someone finding work and subsequently accommodation.

🔑 The key

Freedom2Work places emphasis on aspiration, rather than intervention – providing service users with the confidence, independence, and empowerment they need to rebuild their own lives.

The project has been designed to address the many, overlapping needs of those experiencing housing and employment insecurity, in order to close the 'revolving door' of chronic homelessness and worklessness for good.

1. Clients are offered good quality housing, acting as a secure base from which they can begin to take independent steps towards positive change in their lives.
2. Through bespoke employment support, such as CV advice, job hunting assistance, and interview preparation, the project has been able to equip individuals with the necessary skills to enable them to smoothly transition back into a stable working environment.
3. Tenants are encouraged to save a small sum from their welfare payments as a growing credit on their rent account, with the target set at £40 per month. Once the tenants have secured work, the savings are matched by project funds – so for every £1 saved, the clients get £2 back.

Scaled up to a national level, and adapted to suit the needs of clients in wider communities, the Freedom2Work model has the potential to be revolutionary in terms of cost savings to the public purse, holistic support for clients, and the long-term benefits of engaging in the project, both for clients and the communities in which they live.



“I'm a lot happier now that I'm more independent. I feel like [now] I can get to where I want to be in life.”

Isaac Thorne, former client of Freedom2Work

🚪 Doors we've opened

- Commonweal provided funding and support to Rentstart to investigate and develop an innovative, person-led response to anyone facing homelessness
- Since 2017, the project has helped 96 homeless and vulnerably housed clients achieve greater financial freedom and independence, by helping them save a total of £9,775 over the course of the project before match-funding
- The project has saved more than £2m a year in public funds due to associated public sector costs in housing and supporting these individuals
- 78 percent of individuals who used F2W found full-time or part-time employment
- 46 percent of individuals who used F2W now live independently in the private rented sector
- If F2W was rolled out nationally, it could theoretically:
 - Save £601m a year to public purse
 - Support roughly 53,000 rough sleepers into employment
 - 31,000 homeless people or those at risk of homelessness transition into private rented housing
- Commonweal and Rentstart have been actively working in partnership to promote the learning from the project and advocate for replication.
- The project has been presented to other charities and sector working groups as evidence of how employment and the PRS can be harnessed as a route out of homelessness.

EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION

Harnessing our independent voice to open doors, broker conversations and reignite the pathway to reform.

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 – Commonweal 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.

Our efforts have always been unpinned by our *modus operandi*: we are independent, we are not a vested interest and we see our selves 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.

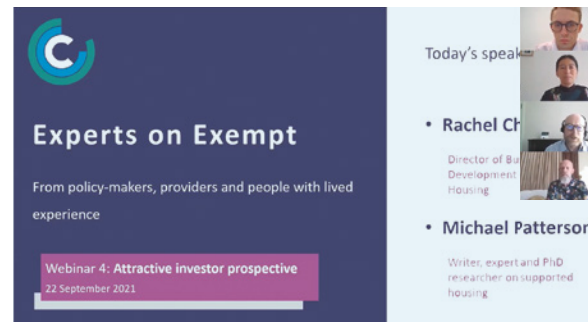
Exempt from Responsibility?

The *Exempt from Responsibility?* research report we commissioned in 2019 first defined and detailed exempt accommodation. So too did it reveal ‘accountability deficits’ that have marred the sector and enabled providers of exempt accommodation to exploit loopholes in the system and generate vast sums of profit, leaving some of the country’s most vulnerable people without the care and support that is conditional upon accessing exempt rates of Housing Benefit.



Crisis

153,701 households in Great Britain were housed in **exempt accommodation** as of May 2021. **62% increase** from 2016 to 2021.



Experts on Exempt: from policy-makers, providers and people with lived experience

In this webinar series, we investigated the ongoing issues at hand, why saving the sector is so important, and how we can deliver collective reform that ends the exploitation of people and profit. We heard from some of the industry’s most influential experts, housing providers, those with lived experience, and leading policy-makers including from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

APPG and Select Committee

Commonweal was invited to be a part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness session into exempt accommodation.

Following the APPG, Commonweal and Crisis, among others, called on the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee to launch an inquiry into exempt accommodation and in December 2021, Clive Betts, Chair of the LUHC Committee announced a formal inquiry.

Commonweal provided written evidence, which we had collated from the wide-ranging research and conversations we had undertaken.

Following this, we were delighted to be invited to give oral evidence to the Committee, focusing on the quality of exempt accommodation and support for residents, regulation, and reform.



Recommendations

- ✓ Fund and develop local authority exempt accommodation strategies
- ✓ Create a local authority accreditation system
- ✓ Revise the definition of ‘more than minimal care, support and supervision’



“The pilots have demonstrated if local councils are encouraged and most importantly given the funding to play a proactive gatekeeping role, then positive change can occur.”

Ashley Horsey, CEO, Commonweal Housing

Joint open letter to the Government

With political progress slow, we believed intervention was necessary. Alongside Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman at the Local Government Association, we wrote a joint open letter to the Secretaries of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department for Work and Pensions, calling on both departments to work together to enact urgent reform into the sector.

The letter was signed by more than 80 organisations and individual across local government, housing and not-for-profit sectors,

including Crisis, National Housing Federation, St Mungo’s, and Spring Housing Association. Homelessness Minister Eddie Hughes responded stating the Government’s commitment “to working in partnership with stakeholders to make sure that we get this right.”



“The leading housing organisations Commonweal Housing, the National Housing Federation, Crisis, Women’s Aid and Housing Justice have all expressed serious concern on this issue, and they are quite right to do so because the people they serve are the most vulnerable people in our community and society. These people are being abused – physically and mentally tortured – in the places they have been put, putting a huge burden on them. People who initially sought refuge because of the abuse they suffered have been further abused, as have those who are under strain because of their own condition.”

Khalid Mahmood MP, Member of Parliament for Birmingham, Perry Barr

Government’s Policy Advisory Panel

As a result of our commitment to bringing about reform and our determination to be an independent, honest broker, Commonweal was invited to join the Government’s Policy Advisory Panel into exempt accommodation, working alongside other stakeholders and the Minister to bring about solutions to the injustices surrounding the sector.



🏠 Project overview

Through 10 flats provided by Commonweal, and tailored support provided by Solace, Amari offers 12-18 months of accommodation and support to women experiencing sexual exploitation and violence, enabling them to recover from their trauma and become independent at the same time. The project is open to single women or those with a child under two, over the age of 18, who have been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking.

🔒 The injustice

After emergency accommodation there is a lack of housing and support available to women who are fleeing sexual exploitation. Transitional accommodation is rare and many of these spaces don't offer the support needed for a woman who has been trafficked to gain independent living skills. Support is vital, especially so women can maintain links to education, employment or training. Without the provision of second stage housing for victims of sexual exploitation, there is a risk that many of these women will fall into homelessness or return to the lives they left behind.

🔑 The key

Housing is the key to the project, as it provides stability and security for the women involved. SWA are able to pilot the Amari project from 10 houses that Commonweal provides, giving them space to work with each woman individually.

Amari offers short-term accommodation and support to aid recovery and independence. They also receive at least three months' resettlement support, which means that they have a better chance of holding a lease in the private rented sector. The project allows vulnerable women to live in safe, secure accommodation and to gain the life skills and support they need to both recover from trauma and become independent.

🚪 The doors we've unlocked

- We provide 10 bespoke properties for a wide-range of women have been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking
- This has enabled 29 women to begin their journey of recovery and unlock their freedom
- Drastic improvements to the self-reported wellbeing of each woman, across health, peace of living, relationships, financial security and more.



THE KEYS WE HAVE PASSED ON



The hope for all of the projects we support is for adoption and replication: to pass on the keys to partners or other organisations and local authorities who can build upon our learning and implement the project, or some aspects of it, adopting and adapting as their local needs require. The following pages highlight some of the projects where others have taken on the keys.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

Social investment, local government and the third sector can protect destitute migrants threatened by No Recourse to Public Funds, through housing and immigration support.

Project overview

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) housing project was a partnership between Commonweal Housing and Praxis Community Projects to seek solutions to the problems of destitute migrants with uncertain immigration status. The project sought to address a small part of this humanitarian crisis, through an innovative new cross-subsidy model of shared accommodation, which aims to meet several critical housing needs simultaneously.

This year marked the ending of the initial pilot project with properties handed back to us enabling the successful repaying of the social investment secured to kick start this initiative seven years previously.

The injustice

Migrants in Britain often face untold hardships. While the recent Nationality and Borders Bill has caught attention for its severe changes to the immigration system, the financial pressures placed on those with uncertain immigration status has long endured. The no recourse to public funds condition prevents individuals subject to immigration control from accessing a range of public support, including Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and income-based jobseekers' allowance.

The key

Social investment was key to unlocking the doors to these destitute migrants. In 2015, we secured £2.3 million from a range of funders to purchase seven properties, which were leased to Praxis. Praxis provides day-to-day housing management and maintenance, specialist immigration advice and other required support to service users. Praxis offers these properties to local authorities, who use them to house destitute migrant families who they have a duty to accommodate under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

This way, local authorities can house families in good-quality, supported accommodation instead of B&Bs and hostels. Income received from these properties enables Praxis to provide a number of free bed spaces to destitute migrants with NRPF, protecting them from homelessness.

The doors we opened

- The project delivered 18 bedspaces for families and at least two bedspaces for single women.
- An overwhelming number of cases dealt with by Praxis, and finished by the time they left the project, received positive decisions.
- 59 families housed over the duration of the project. Of these, 50 (85%) of move ons reported as successful; seven (or 12%) as neutral; only two (or 3%) as negative.
- 23 single women with NRPF were housed predominantly through cross subsidised bedspaces. Of these, 18 (78%) of move ons were positive; two (9%) neutral; three (13%) were negative.

RE-UNITE



Re-Unite has been Commonweal's flagship project over the course of our first ten years as an action-learning charity.

Project overview

Re-Unite was founded by Commonweal Housing, Women in Prison and Housing for Women in response to the problems faced by women trying to rebuild a stable family life when released from prison. The Re-Unite project is a combined housing and support initiative, designed to help women leaving prison in gaining access to their children.

The injustice

Women exiting prison can't get custody of their children because they don't have a family house, and are unable to access family housing because they don't have custody of their children. Not only does this mean that ex-offenders are placed at increased risk of homelessness and re-offending, but it also keeps mothers away from their children and prevents them from reuniting as a family.

The key

Re-Unite provided in-prison support to identify potential women at an early stage, and offered advice and support on the nature and requirements of finding housing and the reunification process. Two services were offered:

- The Mothers' Programme that provided small flats or studios and support for women leaving prison with more challenging problems, to allow them to become eligible for the return of their children to their care.
- The Mothers' and Children's Programme, which provided family housing on the point of release for women leaving prison to reunite them immediately with their children. Family support was provided to enable the successful reunion of the mother and children and development of the family. The families were also helped to access specialist support, such as counselling, mentoring, substance misuse and mental health services.

The doors we opened

- Following work done by our partners in the Re-Unite Network, the scope of the Re-Unite project was subsequently expanded to include a renewed focus on the impacts of maternal imprisonment on children
- Over 100 mothers were supported by the Re-Unite project and approximately 200 children
- Around 1 in 5 of the children previously in local authority care whilst mother was in prison
- Re-conviction rate of less than 10% of the women supported through the project.



This year, we won two leading awards and were nominated for another three.

Commonweal and Rentstart took home the industry-leading UK Housing Awards in the category of Homelessness Partnership of the Year. The award, which recognises impactful and innovative homelessness initiatives with the potential for replication, was given to the Freedom2Work project.

In It Together, the 2021 annual review from Commonweal Housing, won a Gold Award at the International Annual Report Design Awards. Special mention and recognition should go to Ian Cuthbert at Fovea Creative, for the superb design and quality of the review. Ian is also the designer of this year's annual review, so we will very much be hoping to make it two from two!

The Rhea project, run with partners Solace Women's Aid, was nominated for Homeless Link's 'Home Safe' award.

Freedom2Work, was also nominated for a further two awards including The People First category at the Homeless Link awards, and The RESI Awards' Social Impact Initiative.

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: Sir John Mactaggart Bt. and Baroness Jean Corston

Company Secretary: Gary Medazoumian FCA

We would like to congratulate and welcome Baroness Jean Corston as our new Honorary Patron. The life Labour peer was awarded the role in recognition of her pioneering career promoting social justice, most notably the needs of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Commonweal Housing has devised its first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy. We understand that issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are bound up with what we do and that addressing them actively and comprehensively is not only morally right but will strengthen us as an organisation. Delivering our diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy is an ongoing priority for Commonweal Housing.

The full strategy, approved by the Board of Trustees, will be published on the Commonweal Housing website in due course. Our core commitments are:

- To question our understanding of social injustices and the solutions we identify against principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- To ensure that diverse voices and experiences contribute to the solutions we identify, and that those solutions are equitable and inclusive
- To ensure that these issues influence and inform the conduct of Commonweal Housing, both externally and internally
- To ensure that Commonweal does not only implement a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy as set out below, but that we remain accountable to it, and share resultant learnings and progress.

Directors/Board of Trustees

Jack Mactaggart (Chair)
Gary Medazoumian FCA
Prof. Jonathan Portes
Rt. Hon Fiona Mactaggart
Russ Edwards
Sarah Jackson OBE
Becky Rice
Sneha Patel
Jeremy Swain
Amarjit Bains
Sheldon Shillingford

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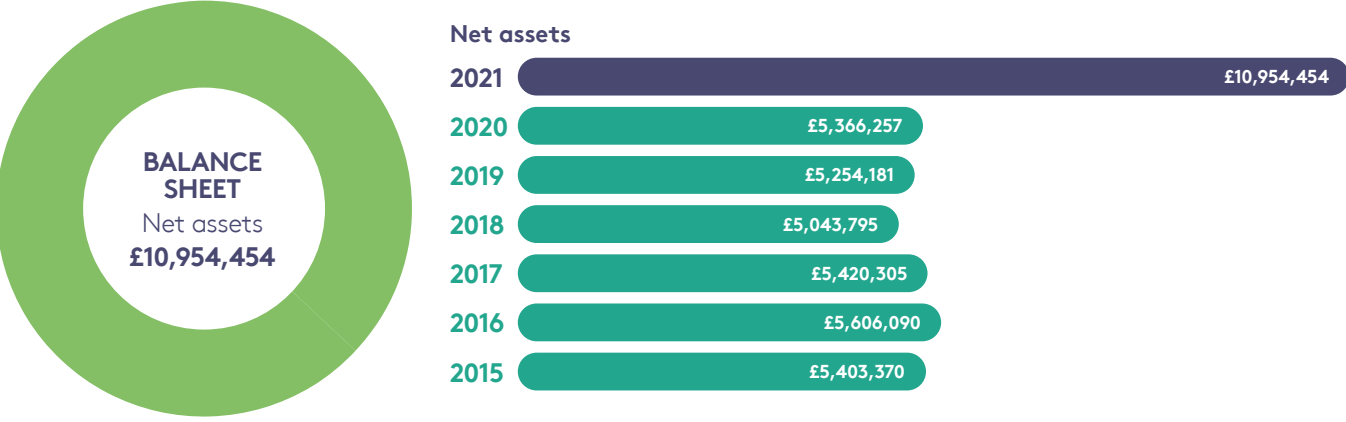
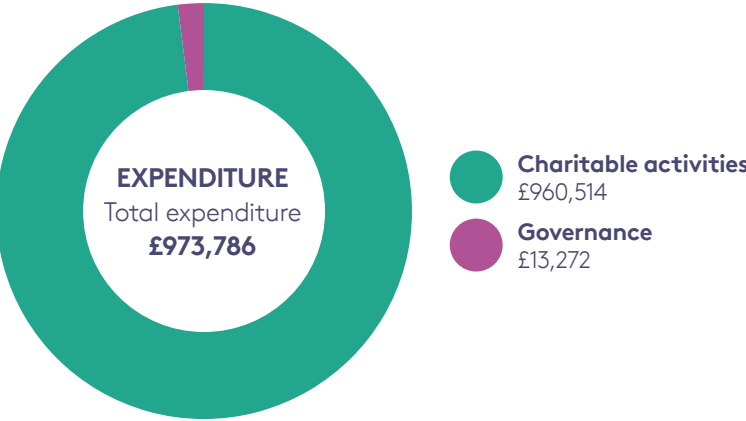
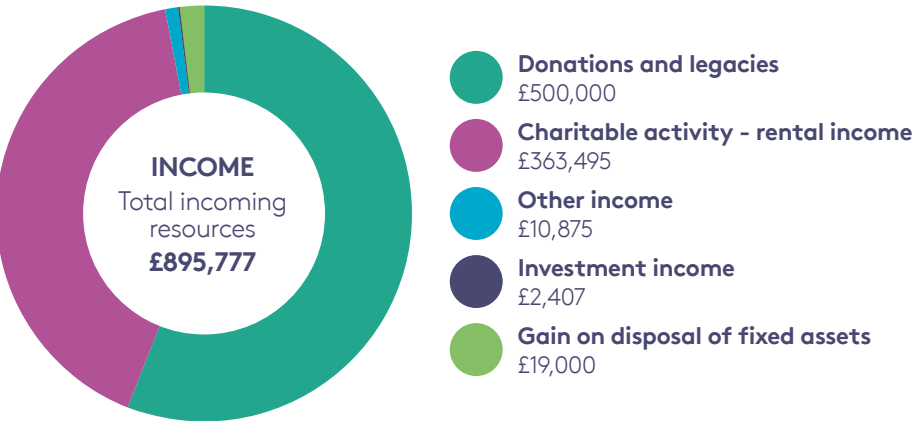
Registered address

2 Babmaes Street, London SW1 6HD

Company registration number: 5319765
Charity registration number: 1113331

FINANCIAL REPORTS 2021/22

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.



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. In previous years the property revaluation and the fair value adjustments were made to properties acquired with finance from social investors. 2021 is 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 2021 audited accounts here:
www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/about-us/our-accounts



**We investigate,
test and share
housing solutions
to social injustice**

Commonweal Housing

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