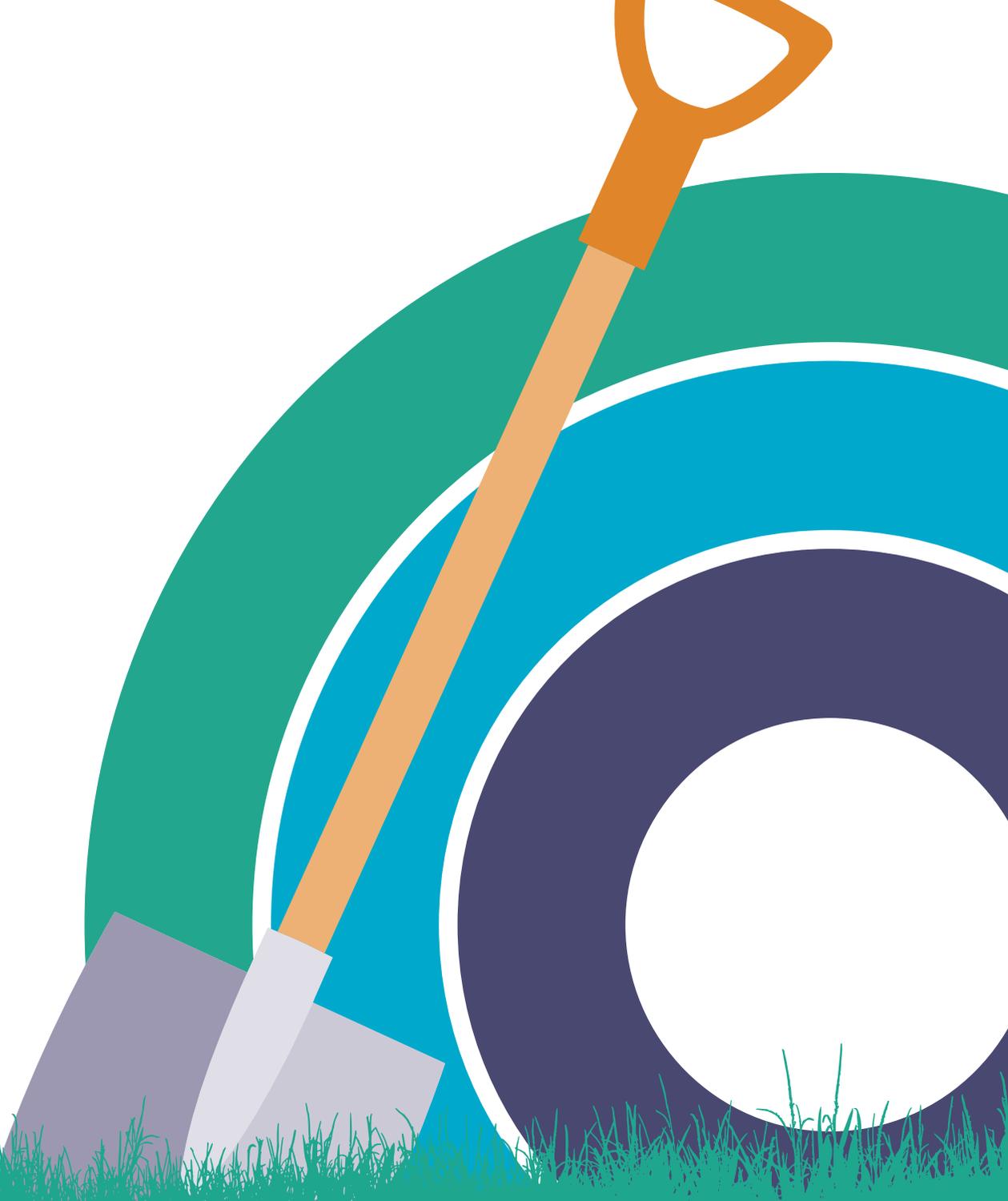




Digging Deeper

Annual Review 2023/24



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Foreword



Jack Mactaggart
Chair



Ashley Horsey
Chief Executive

Investigating, testing and sharing housing solutions to social injustice: it is our guiding mission as an action-learning charity. But this principle extends beyond mere provision.

We are a charity that, at our core, believes in exploring the roads less travelled, understanding the nuanced needs of those too often overlooked, and in digging deeper into the causes of social injustice, so that we, alongside our brilliant partners, have the tools to discover new and imaginative solutions.

These past two years have put us on fantastic footing to do so. Since the start of 2023, our work has been steered by our new themes:

- The criminal justice system
- Young people and difficult transitions into adulthood
- Migration, asylum and human trafficking.

While criminal justice has been an ongoing theme for several years, the latter two have meant breaking new ground. Doing so has involved us engaging with new people, new issues, new injustices, and of course, new ideas.

Following a year of initial engagement with sector experts, roundtable meetings, and digging around in a bid to build a better understanding of where the challenges lie, we took the next steps in our journey to finding solutions. We have commissioned three pieces of research – one for each of our themes independently – that sought to investigate the nature of the relationship between people facing injustice in each policy area and their intersections with housing insecurity and homelessness.

These reports, individually insightful in their own right, also offer us a guide. We have explored these reports and their findings to understand where the gaps in knowledge and provision lie, and therefore, where can we – as a charity that is not beholden to donations nor contracts – lay our shovel and start to break new ground.

Over the past year, we've done just that.

Our Call for New Ideas – the funding mechanism we created to help find new housing and support models – has been more direct. Three Calls, partitioned by theme, to give us a greater scope of the solutions that we could play a part in.

So far, we have launched Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice, and Call for New Ideas: Young People, which itself was further concentrated down to mental health

and neurodiversity, the care system, and poor educational experiences as a result of discussions between Commonweal and Homeless Link following its report.

It has been an immense pleasure for us both to see the fruit that these Calls have borne, and a greater pleasure to fund and enable the feasibility research that will test whether these imaginative ideas and their architects will progress on to property-based pilot projects in partnership with Commonweal.

From young women with experience of the care and criminal justice systems, to neurodiverse young people, these projects, we hope, will become a major part of our future work; not just in providing a roof over someone's head, raising the ceiling of what these projects can achieve.

We are determined to find and fund new and imaginative ideas. For the past decade, Commonweal has delightedly supported our partners projects. From Quaker Social Action's Move on Up housing young adult carers in their efforts for more opportunities or independence, to Solace Women's Aid's Amari which helped female survivors of sexual exploitation regain their autonomy and give them a chance for a happier, more stable life.

While these pilots reached their scheduled conclusions, we continue to advocate and disseminate the learnings, and champion our housing solutions.

But, so too have we searched and launched new ones. Marking our first project outside of England, You're Home was launched in September last year. In an attempt to address the growing groups of people locked out of social and private rented housing in Belfast, our partner East Belfast Mission has developed a locally unique model to provide longer term, stable and affordable housing to help break the cycle of homelessness and ease the transition into the private rental market.

We are all thrilled by the progress made thus far on You're Home and the groundwork being laid by our new partners and hopefully soon, our new projects.

Our projects and our partners are our lifeblood, and as ever, we pay great tribute to them. So too do our thanks go to our research partners, whose curious and comprehensive nature has helped guide our thinking and our work, for this year, and many future ones.

Our ceaseless gratitude to Grove End Housing, our principal benefactor, for its continued willingness to let us dig and equipping us with some of the tools to do so. To our staff, for all their fantastic work, direction, and will to deliver our mission. And finally, to our Trustees, new and old, whose oversight and laser focus on all of our matters is a constant benefit to the organisation.

But there is one person we give special thanks to. The Rt Honorable Fiona Mactaggart has been a part of the Commonweal quest for almost two decades. She proudly stood and steered Commonweal as Chair for 13 years, and while she leaves our Board in search of further social injustices to help solve, she has cemented her legacy and our future. Fiona remains an Honorary Patron here at Commonweal, but more importantly, a friend for life.

Our immense thanks to Fiona, and to all who have been a part of this past, most constructive year. We look forward to another, in which we will continue to dig deeper into injustices in our quest to unearth the gemstones we call housing solutions.

Digging Deeper



As an action-learning charity, we believe that the best learning comes from trying and testing. But we also believe in getting to the bottom of things. This year that has been more important than ever. To provide housing solutions to social injustice, we first wanted to understand the real nuts and bolts of the issues: what was happening, where was it happening, to whom was it happening, and crucially, why was it happening.



Our work streams



Feasibility studies

We offer organisations funding to devise and research potential housing and support models that they believe could solve a social injustice.



Property-based pilot projects

We work alongside expert partners to bring their housing models to life. We work to enable them to test their ideas through our property portfolio or through our property acquisition model. Key for us is the learning: we fund and commission independent evaluations of all the projects we support and share these with those that can help effect change.



Research

We fund and commission new research into overlooked or under-explored areas of social or housing policy to help scratch beneath the surface of an injustice.

Our themes

To streamline our work and resources, Commonwealth 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.

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

- Young people facing difficult transitions to adulthood
- Migration, asylum and human trafficking
- The criminal justice system.

Our research

We want to dig deeper into the key injustices facing people in this country, and so while we continue to fund exciting new pieces of research from experts across the sector, we have also commissioned a number of our own reports in an effort to expand our knowledge and focus our resources, while continuing to share key learnings with interested parties.

To give us a greater understanding of the scope of injustices and their links to housing insecurity and homelessness across our themes, Commonwealth commissioned three horizon scanning pieces of research. In April, we published the first. Homeless Link's Beth Coyne, Lauren Page-Hammick, and Sophie Price produced a comprehensive examination of how the risk of homelessness is increased for certain groups of young people due to their experiences, identities, and transitions through certain systems.

In July, we will publish the research by Malika Singh and Helen Berresford of criminal justice experts Nacro. The report paints a clear picture of the cycle of homelessness and reoffending, and the breakdowns that emerge between housing and justice policy and provision.

Finally, we have commissioned Professor Phil Brown, who specialises in housing and migration, to undertake a study into the links between homelessness and the asylum and trafficking systems, set for publication in Autumn.

The Foundations

Our projects are our foundations. Since we launched our first property-based pilot project in 2007, we have helped build nearly 20 new projects in partnership with frontline organisations. Alongside our partners, we've helped support hundreds of vulnerable people: from women leaving prison to individuals needing longer term, stable housing after homelessness.

Recent years have brought us a wave of new ideas, models and now projects. And we're excited to start building more.



You're Home

Launched last year alongside East Belfast Mission, You're Home has opened its doors to its new residents as they continue their journey from homelessness to independent living.

The project

Run in partnership with Northern Irish homeless charity East Belfast Mission (EBM), You're Home is an affordable rental accommodation project in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The project, situated across five self-contained properties, provides stable, independent housing at reduced rent to people with low-support needs recovering from homelessness. The project aims to offer a route into longer term housing for people ready to leave hostel accommodation but cannot access social housing or the private rented sector.

“ When I was given the opportunity to move into my own home, I couldn't believe it. Now I feel that my life is going to start again. I have hope and opportunity. I feel that I am someone in this country, able to do something with my life.”

You're Home tenant

The partner

After successfully applying via our Call for New Ideas 2021, Commonweal partnered with East Belfast Mission in our first project outside of England. East Belfast Mission offers a wide variety of services aimed at alleviating poverty, homelessness and wider difficulties faced by the community in deprived areas of the capital. For over 25 years, EBM has run 'Hosford', a dedicated service providing hostel accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness.

The £550,000 additional capital required to purchase the five properties was unlocked through investment from Grove End Housing and Peter Waddington, an individual social and impact investor.

The injustice

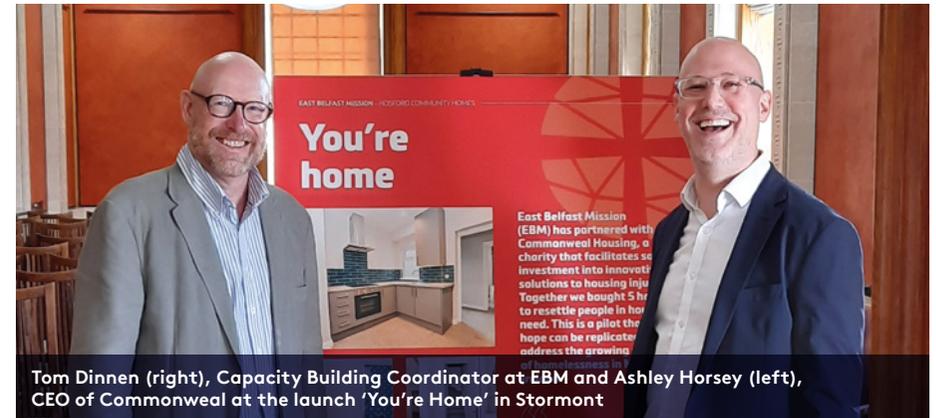
Amid rising local rental prices and the chronic lack of affordable housing across Belfast, individuals leaving homelessness and transitioning towards independent living can find themselves excluded from social housing, and the private rented sector.

Caught in a catch-22, those with low support needs are unable to access social housing as they miss the local points threshold; while rising rents, the lack of a guarantor, and prejudice from landlords for their prior homeless status can bar them from private rented accommodation.

The solution

By providing good quality, secure housing at a reduced rent to people with low support needs, You're Home offers a bridge between hostel services and independence.

It is a unique model in Belfast, but growing interest from across the sector shows how valuable it can be for those caught in the slipstreams of Belfast's housing market as they continue their journey to recovery.



The housing model operates alongside EBM's existing hostel service by offering a direct pathway for tenants ready to move on from their Hosford homeless hostel, which in turn frees up space for people in need of hostel support.

Each tenant is housed in a self-contained property, where support workers from Hosford provide floating practical and emotional support to help individuals develop their skills and maintain their independence. This also includes help with finding a job or budgeting.

2023/2024 updates

- You're Home was launched at Stormont, the Northern Ireland legislature in September 2023.
- Researchers at Queen's University Belfast are currently conducting the interim evaluation of You're Home's housing model. This piece aims to capture the project's impact on service users and examine how the financial model could be replicated on a larger scale to provide much-needed affordable homes for people exiting homelessness.

Under Construction

With a host of pilot projects successfully reaching their scheduled ending in the past few years, Commonweal has been on the search for new and imaginative housing solutions to social injustice. To help enable us to find frontline partners big and small, we launched our Call for New Ideas programme in 2020...

Call for New Ideas

Over the past four years, we've run our Call for New Ideas (CFNI) inviting frontline organisations across the UK to submit housing and support model ideas aimed at improving the lives of specific marginalised groups.

The best ideas – as decided by our expert selection panel – are funded. Successful applicants receive between £5,000-10,000 each to conduct a feasibility study to further investigate the viability of the proposed solution. The models that prove viable may progress into property-based pilot projects run in partnership between Commonweal and our partners for up to ten years.

...and since then, we've been getting to work on our next wave of projects.



To help better concentrate our resources, we set out to launch three separate Calls for each of our themes: Criminal Justice, Young People, and Migration, Asylum and Human Trafficking.

- **Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice** – August to September 2023
- **Call for New Ideas: Young People** (focusing on the care system, mental health, and school exclusions) – March to April 2024
- **Call for New Ideas: Migration, Asylum, and Trafficking** – to open Autumn 2024.

“If anyone has an idea to tackle a social injustice and needs support to develop, I strongly suggest that you consider the Call for New Ideas.”

Gaynor Brooke, Head of Services, Servol Community Services – a successful 2022 CFNI applicant





Servol Community Services

Call for New Ideas 2022

Who: Servol Community Services, a housing charity specialising in mental health.

Where: West Midlands.

What: The project, set to launch later in 2024, will look to support up to 20 male prison leavers with severe mental health illnesses and complex needs.

How: The wraparound support aims to help improve the mental health conditions of its tenants and reduce re-offending by helping offenders reintegrate into local communities, find meaningful employment or volunteering work experience, and secure stable accommodation.

Stage: In project development. **When:** Expected launch in 2024.

Depaul Northern Ireland

Call for New Ideas 2022

Who: Depaul Northern Ireland, a local arm of international homelessness charity Depaul.

Where: Belfast.

What: Housing First provision for women leaving prison who have complex psychosocial needs, such as addiction issues and mental health problems.

How: By providing specialist trauma-informed support and secure housing, the service intends to cater to the individual needs of women leaving prison to help them establish their new lives upon release and break the cycle of re-offending.

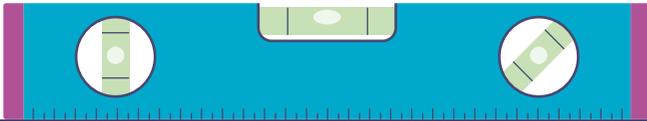
Stage: In project development. **When:** To be confirmed.

The Groundwork



Before any project gets underway, we fund and support organisations to undertake some investigation into the viability of a model, helping them to dig a little deeper into their ideas...

Photo by Joya Berrow, from LAYERS: Looking Inside Holloway Prison, by Daddyless Daughters & Power Play Productions.



Prosperity House

Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice (2023)

Who: Daddyless Daughters, a women-focused Community Interest Company.

Where: South-east London.

What: To address the care-to-custody pipeline, Daddyless Daughters is investigating the viability of a housing initiative supporting young women who are both care-experienced and have engaged with the criminal justice system.

How: If the feasibility study proves successful, the project will look to provide secure housing where young women can access personalised, trauma-informed support to help them adopt healthy lifestyles and behaviour patterns and reduce the risk of re-offending.

Status: Feasibility study stage.

“Uniquely, we envisage utilising the considerable talent pool of serving prisoners and prison leavers in every stage of the construction process so that prisoners are quite literally building for their futures.**”**

Mark Hodge, Group Chair,
Your Consultation Group



Your Consultation Group

Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice (2023)

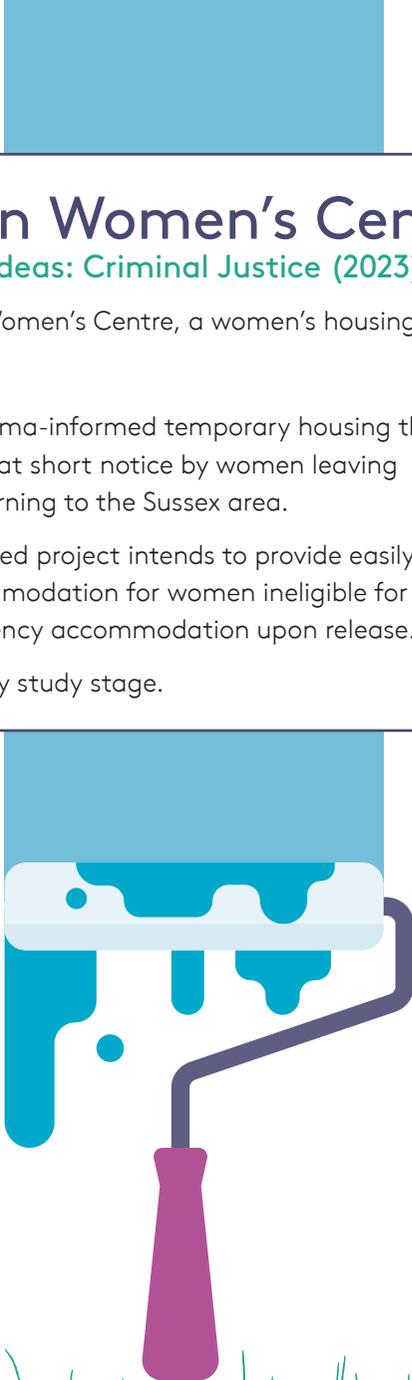
Who: Your Consultation Group (YCG), a social enterprise group of companies whose objectives are to reintegrate prisoners into society.

Where: Oxfordshire.

What: The project will look to work with prisoners and prison leavers who will help construct modular homes on brownfield and privately owned land.

How: The homes that the project beneficiaries help to build will be theirs to live in, up-skilling them while giving them secure tenancies to aid in their rehabilitation and help address the lack of suitable move-on accommodations for this cohort.

Status: Ended at Feasibility Study stage.
Commonweal not pursuing project.



Brighton Women's Centre

Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice (2023)

Who: Brighton Women's Centre, a women's housing centre.

Where: Sussex.

What: Safe, trauma-informed temporary housing that can be accessed at short notice by women leaving custody and returning to the Sussex area.

How: The proposed project intends to provide easily accessible accommodation for women ineligible for or unable to access emergency accommodation upon release.

Status: Feasibility study stage.



Solace Women's Aid and the Single Homeless Project

Call for New Ideas: Criminal Justice (2023)

Who: Solace Women's Aid, a leading domestic abuse charity; and the Single Homeless Project, a homeless charity.

Where: London.

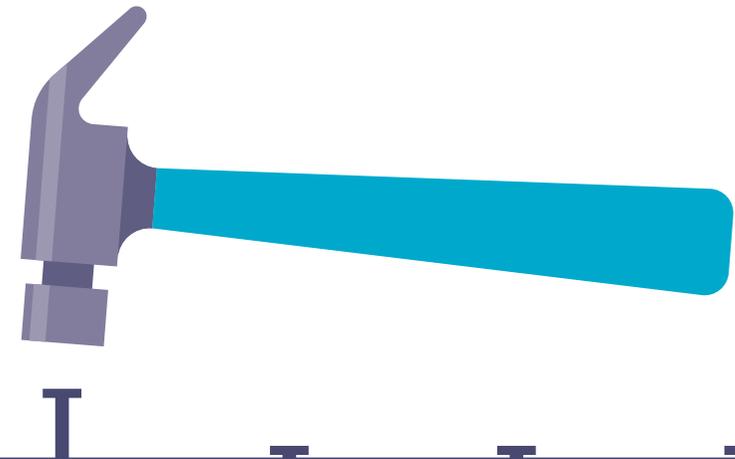
What: A Housing First model for rough sleeping couples where there is suspected or known domestic abuse taking place.

How: In cases where the survivor in the relationship wants to be housed alongside the perpetrator, and other housing options have been refused or unsuccessful, the model intends to provide concurrent, but separate, independent accommodation and personalised support to each individual in the couple to address the repeat offending of perpetrators.

Status: Feasibility study stage.

Call for New Ideas: Young People ran with an exclusive focus on housing models aimed at supporting young people over the age of 18 who have had:

- Experience of the care system
- Experience with mental health problems or are neurodivergent
- Difficult experiences in the education system, particularly those who faced serial exclusion.



Depaul UK

Call for New Ideas: Young People (2024)

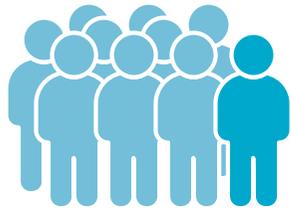
Who: Leading youth homeless charity, Depaul UK.

Where: London.

What: Shared, specialist supported accommodation for young people who are neurodivergent.

How: The proposed project aims to provide intensive training support to neurodiverse young people, offering structure, routine and skills development to prepare them for independent, shared living and reduce the future risk of homelessness.

Status: Feasibility study stage.



Nearly

1 in 10

young people leaving care are homeless in the two years after transition

Department for Education



1 in 52

young people presented as experiencing homelessness to their local authorities in 2022/23

Centrepoint

Break

Call for New Ideas: Young People (2024)

Who: Break, a charity supporting young people in care and leaving care.

Where: East Anglia.

What: A 'tenancy switch model' where care leavers would live in a property supported by Break support staff, and at the point when the young person would move-on, the tenancy for the property is transferred into the young person's name.

How: The model intends to address the lack of move-on options available for care leavers due to long social housing waiting lists by ensuring individuals can stay where they feel confident and comfortable.

Status: Feasibility study stage.

MAC UK

Call for New Ideas: Young People (2024)

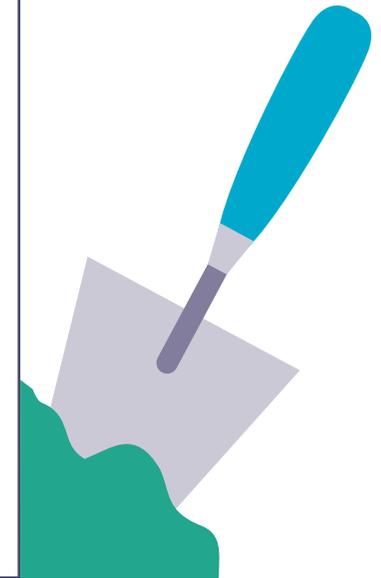
Who: MAC UK, a mental health charity working with 16-25 year olds vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and offending.

Where: Greater London.

What: A cooperative housing model for young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and have also experienced school exclusions, exploitation, abuse, the criminal justice system, or the care system.

How: As part of the model, young people be responsible for looking after the day to day needs of the property. By involving young people in the design and running of the house, the proposed project aims to empower individuals to identify and articulate their specific needs.

Status: Feasibility study stage.



...We're always looking to support frontline organisations to turn their ideas into reality – not just those that come through our Call for New Ideas.

The first step of this is often in funding the feasibility studies; at other times we'll support with the bricks and mortar; or we commission an evaluation and help promote the learning...



HAPANI

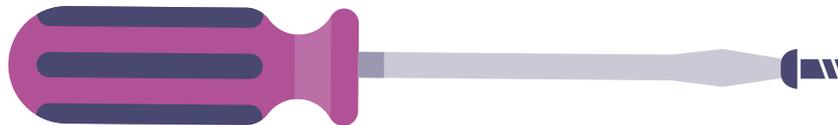
Who: Horn of Africa People's Aid Northern Ireland (HAPANI) is an inclusive, non-governmental organisation committed to supporting and empowering individuals from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan) that reside in Northern Ireland.

Where: Belfast.

What: The model aims to provide stable accommodation to refugees and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa who face challenges finding accommodation after their refugee status has been granted.

How: The proposed project is primarily targeted at housing individuals who are in employment but are excluded from the private rented sector due to inflated rental costs and face prejudices from the landlords and the community. Alongside accommodation, tenants would have access to an array of support services such as language assistance, employment guidance, mental health support, and community integration programs.

Status: HAPANI undertook the feasibility study of the project exclusive of Commonweal. But with the research showing the need is there and the model viable, we are partnering with HAPANI to develop the project, with Commonweal supporting with property acquisition before an intended launch this year.





24%

Rough sleeping in rural areas increased by 24% in 2022

English Rural

Who: English Rural, a specialist rural housing association.

Where: East Kent.

What: A Housing First model of housing and intensive support for individuals who are experiencing homelessness in rural areas.

How: The feasibility study aims to identify how existing Housing First projects can be adapted to address the specific challenges that rural communities face, including limited access to services. Upon completing the feasibility study, the intention is for English Rural to pilot a Housing First model for individuals living in dispersed communities in East Kent.

Status: Commonweal funded the feasibility study in 2023, but the project will be developed separate to our work, as was originally agreed.

Julian House

Who: Julian House, a homeless charity.

Where: Somerset.

What: A feasibility study testing the viability of independent modular housing as a route into settled housing for homeless single adults who are ready to move on from hostels and forms of supported accommodation.

How: The model intends to build high-quality self-contained modular homes and provide tailored one-to-one support to enable individuals to develop the independent living skills needed to navigate permanent housing in the future.

Status: Feasibility study stage.

Legacy Projects

“ I feel so powerful now, so much stronger. I think a lot of it is that I was really listened to for the first time in my life, it feels great.”

Rhea resident

Rhea

2017-2023

Project summary

In partnership with Solace Women's Aid (SWA), Rhea provided stable accommodation and tailored support for women and their children fleeing domestic violence.

Refuge services can be inaccessible and unsuitable for many women fleeing domestic violence. In some cases, they cannot stay as they have an older male child with them or have support needs that are not available in a mainstream refuge. To fill this gap, Rhea housed women and their children through a joined-up model between Southwark Council and SWA. Survivors were identified and referred via Southwark

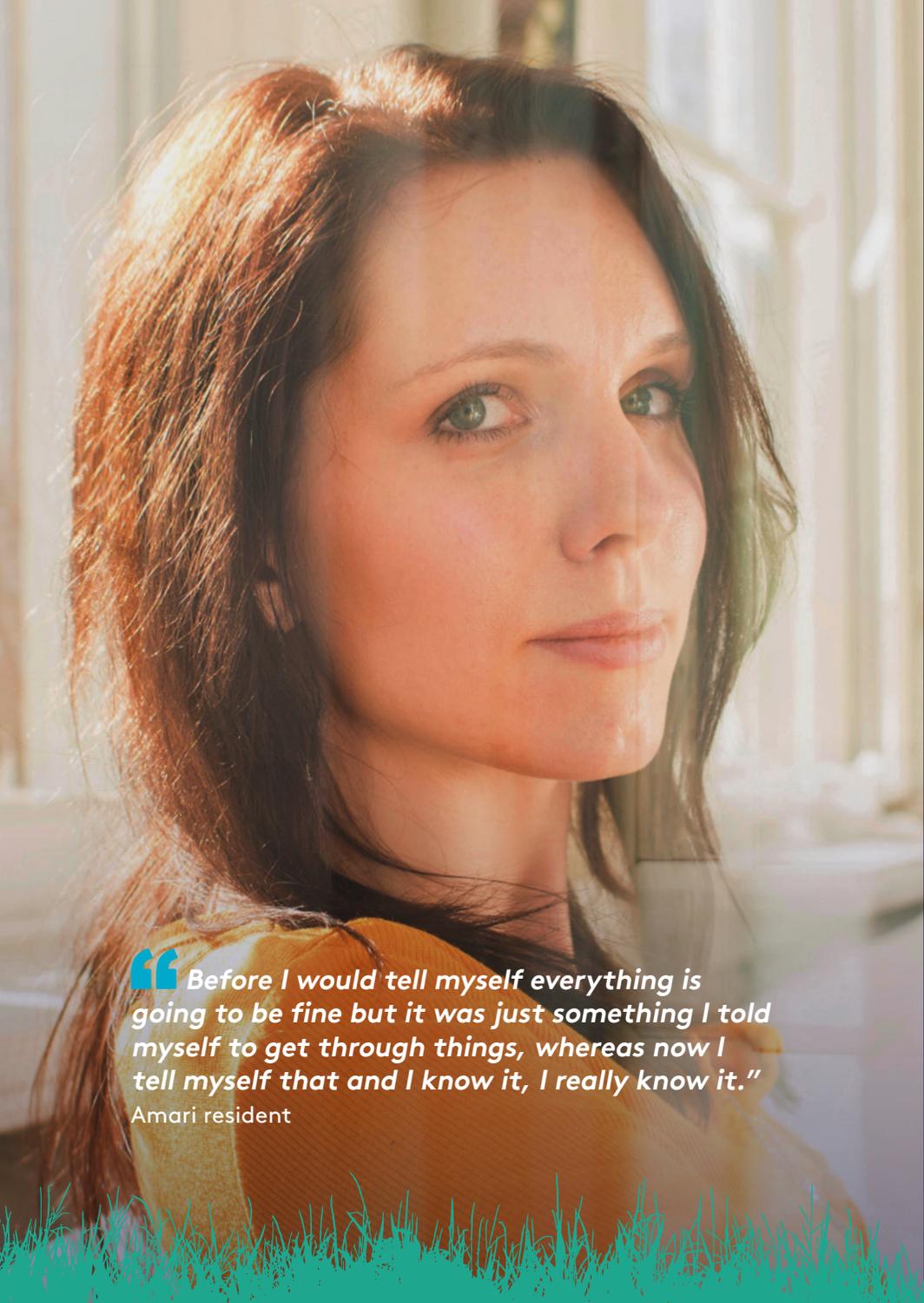
Council's housing team and then assessed by Solace support workers. SWA support staff then provided practical and wellbeing support for up to 12 months, aimed at helping them recover from trauma and gain the necessary skills to move on to independent living.

Project outcomes

Rhea 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. By providing stable housing, women on the project improved their financial situation and ability to maintain a job, both vital to ensuring survivors can regain their independence.

Project status:

Following a seven-year pilot period, the project reached the end of its lifecycle in 2023.



“ Before I would tell myself everything is going to be fine but it was just something I told myself to get through things, whereas now I tell myself that and I know it, I really know it.”

Amari resident

Amari

2016-2023

Project summary

Also in partnership with Solace Women’s Aid (SWA), the Amari project provided safe post-emergency accommodation for women experiencing sexual exploitation through prostitution or trafficking.

When exiting emergency accommodation, many women fleeing exploitation are denied access to safe and secure housing. Not only is transitional accommodation rare, but it also fails to provide the necessary environment to help victims of sexual exploitation gain independent living skills.

Across 10 properties, provided by Commonweal, Amari housed single women over 18 or those with children under two for up to 12-18 months. Staff at SWA provided wraparound support to enable women to gain life skills and recover from trauma. Upon leaving the project, SWA provided women with at least three months of resettlement support to maintain a lease in the private rented sector.

Project outcomes

- 37 women were housed and supported over the course of the Amari project.
- Women housed through the project self-reported improvements in their well-being, health, peace of living, relationships and financial security.

Project status

Alongside Rhea, the Amari project drew to a close in 2023.



Move on Up

2017-2023

Project summary

In partnership with Quaker Social Action (QSA), Move on Up provided shared housing and tailored support to young people aged 18-25 who provided unpaid care to a family member.

Young adult carers face a high risk of homelessness, which often goes under the radar. For many, caring for a parent from an early age can take a toll on their mental health and lead to breakdowns in family relationships, while young adult carers often lack the financial means or social networks to move out of their family homes.

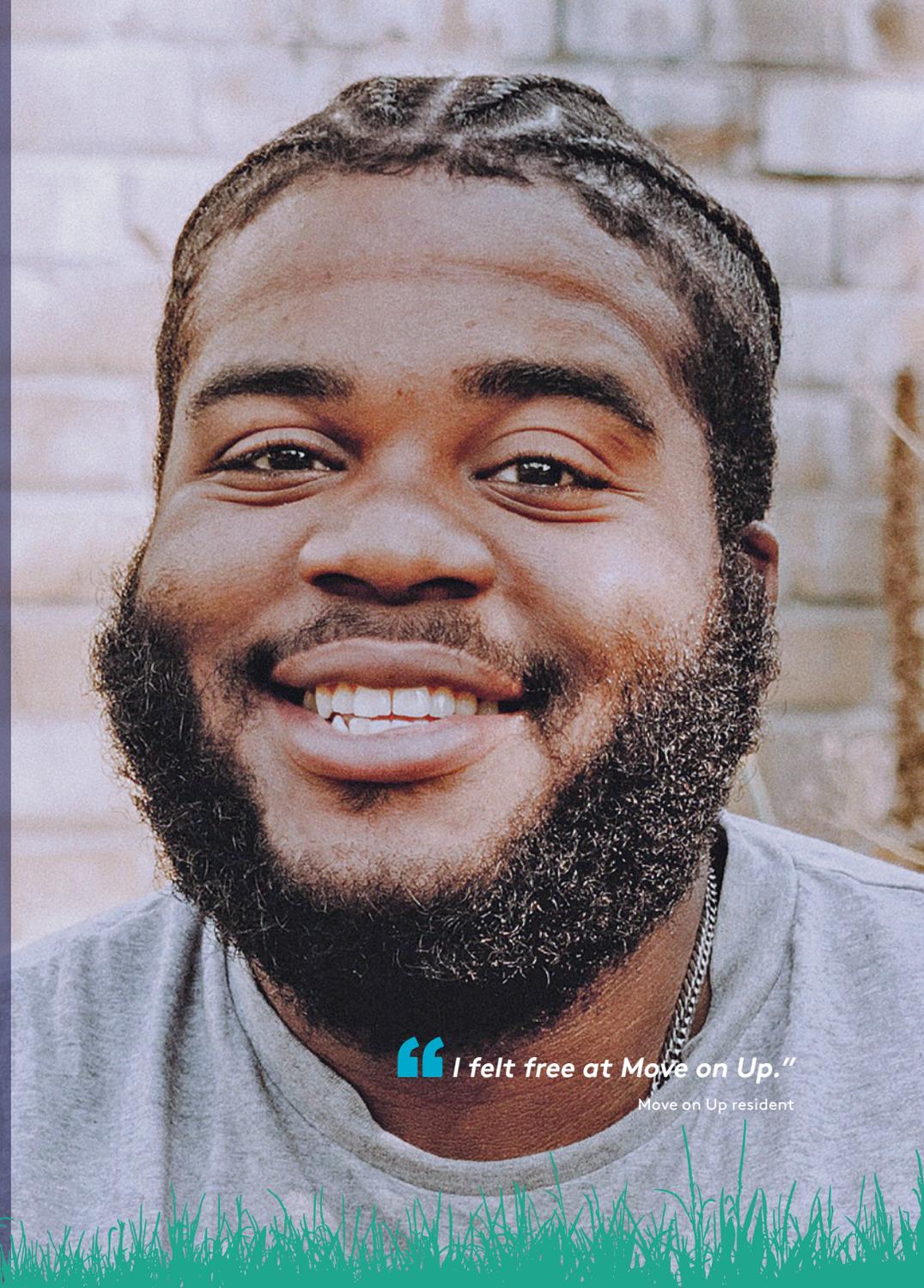
Running across four properties in east London, the first-of-its-kind project equipped young adult carers with a space away from the family home. To help them reach their goals and make informed decisions about their future, dedicated support workers at QSA provided empathic support to each young adult throughout their time with Move on Up.

Project outcomes

- 32 young adult carers were housed and supported over the project's six-year life cycle.
- Around two-thirds of tenants reported a more positive situation during their time with the project compared to when they initially joined. This includes improvements in their mental health and the ability to excel in education or access employment.

Project status

After six-years Move on Up concluded in June 2023.



“ I felt free at Move on Up.”

Move on Up resident



We Still Care

As Move on Up grew to a close in Summer 2023, Commonweal and QSA commissioned Nicola Aylward of Learning and Work Institute, an education and employment research institute, to investigate the housing options for young adult carers and the policy barriers that they face.

Findings

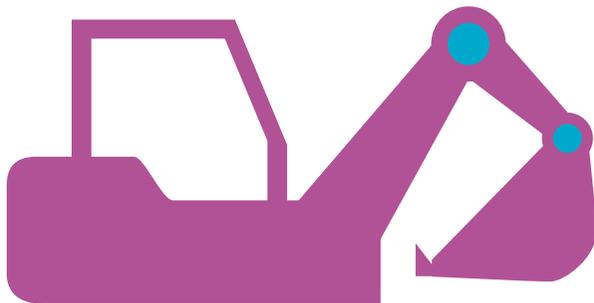
- Awareness of the housing support needs of young adult carers is currently low across policy and practice
- The risk of homelessness among young adult carers is often high and hidden
- Young adult carers are three times as likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) compared to other young people
- Care responsibilities can stifle independence, often at the cost of a young adult carers' mental and physical wellbeing.

Recommendations

- Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) should issue guidance to local authorities setting out a requirement to assess young adult carers' housing needs when conducting transition assessments
- Local authorities must ensure that transition assessments are routinely carried out and housing options should be included within all assessments
- DHSC should update the Carers Strategy and Action Plan to include specific references to housing for young adult carers.

2023/24 updates

- Nicola Aylward presented the findings of the report to the Young Carers and Young Adult Carers All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)
- We Still Care and Move on Up were referenced in the APPG's inquiry into the life opportunities for young carers and young adult carers
- Commonweal was invited to attend the Parliamentary launch of the report
- Commonweal is continuing to work with stakeholders to improve the housing options and visibility of young adult carers.



Research

While we focus much of our resources and attention on the solutions to social injustice, we also want to understand the causes to them too.

That's why we have a dedicated research arm of the organisation: to enable new, groundbreaking research into different areas of social policy and their intersections with housing and homelessness.

We want to dig deeper into the key injustices facing people in this country, and so while we continue to fund exciting new pieces of research from experts across the sector, we have also commissioned a number of our own reports in an effort to expand our knowledge and focus our resources, while continuing to share key learnings with interested parties.

To give us a greater understanding of the scope of injustices and their links to housing insecurity and homelessness across our thematic areas, **Commonweal** commissioned three horizon scanning pieces of research.

Each report will help us to identify overlooked groups and where the gaps in policy, provision, or knowledge is driving social injustice.

Difficult Transitions

Research conducted by national homelessness membership body Homeless Link sought to demonstrate how certain experiences put young people at particular risk of homelessness.

The research by Homeless Links' Beth Coyne, Lauren Page-Hammick and Sophie Price drew on existing literature as well as interviews with key stakeholders to evidence some of the significant drivers of youth homelessness.

Findings

The research highlighted how:

- A person's characteristics and identity can have significant and complex effects on their access to housing:
 - Most notable, these include: mental health, neurodiversity, race, and gender and sexuality.
- Contact with and experience of certain systems can often lead to worse life outcomes and homelessness:
 - Poor educational experiences, such as serial school exclusions, experience of the care system, and experience of the asylum system as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child were particularly detrimental to a young person's life opportunities.
- Breakdowns at the point of transition between state services and/or housing are often pinch points for hidden homelessness:

- Of particular concern were: the criminal justice system, the care system, the asylum system, and the transition between child mental health and adult mental health services.

Outcomes

In the months following the publication of the report, Commonweal worked closely with Homeless Link to help us steer the strategic direction on our work revolving around young people. This included the decision to concentrate our Call for New Ideas: Young People on the most urgent and overlooked drivers of youth homelessness. These were:

- Mental health and neurodivergence
- The care system
- Poor educational experiences, particularly serial school exclusions.

As part of the Call for New Ideas: Young People, Commonweal hosted a one-hour webinar investigating some of the major drivers in youth homelessness, what action the sector is taking to address the problem and what solutions could be delivered.

Hosted by Commonweal's Vice-Chair of the Board, Amarjit Bains, our panel included:

- Lauren Page-Hammick, a Homeless Link Associate
- Polly Stephens, Head of Policy, Research and Learning at New Horizons Youth Centre
- Harry Williams, Policy and Communications Manager at Commonweal.



Criminal Justice

We commissioned leading criminal justice charity Nacro to provide a summary on the intersection of homelessness and the criminal justice system (CJS). The aim of the research was to explore the impact of housing and homelessness on offending and recidivism and identify particular cohorts that require further attention.

Findings

The report highlighted:

- How homelessness can lead to increased criminalisation, and the increased likelihood of reoffending for people released from prison without secure housing
- The negative impact custodial sentences have on housing outcomes and long-term social wellbeing
- Some links between poor-quality housing and offending behaviour
- Challenges facing prison leavers including move-on pathways, substance misuse and shared accommodation, benefits traps and short- and long-term housing options
- Some groups were particularly vulnerable including women, young adults, older people, those with higher support needs, people from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds.



The Key Issue

Human Trafficking Foundation's (HTF) report 'The Key Issue', funded by Commonweal, explores the housing landscape for survivors of modern slavery and assesses whether an approach similar to one employed for domestic abuse survivors would be feasible.

In many instances of modern slavery, victims reside at the place of exploitation, or their accommodation is provided by, or known to, the trafficker. For this reason, escaping modern slavery often means risking homelessness or destitution and, as such, housing and modern slavery are inextricably linked. Despite it being known as a key issue and requirement for recovery, housing options for survivors of modern slavery is an area that is notably under recorded and researched.

Findings

- A lack of both access to, and the suitability of accommodation can be a driver for survivors to remain with, or return to, their perpetrator or risk homelessness, despite Article 12 of the European Convention on Action Against Trafficking enshrining the right to safe and appropriate accommodation for survivors of modern slavery.
- There is a lack of clarity over whose duty it is to house survivors of modern slavery.
- Without adequate, long-term housing options alongside access to services and wrap-around support, a survivor's recovery journey can be impeded as they are left in a transitional state between exploitation and regaining autonomy.

- Survivors are often unable to access safe housing under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) – the government framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery. The study highlights that only a little over one in 10 adult survivors are able to do so.

Recommendations

- The Government should enact its 2017 commitment to implement Places of Safety pre-NRM accommodation and ensure this is accessible to all survivors
- The Government should fund a Modern Slavery Lead role for each local authority
- A coalition of multi-agency organisations should seek funding to develop a toolkit for local authorities to showcase best practice housing responses to modern slavery that they can enact locally.

Outcomes



- Commonweal supported in the distribution of the report, sharing key learnings with interested stakeholders
- We helped launch the report at Human Trafficking Foundation's annual Anti-Slavery Day Awards
- We are continuing to support HTF in its ongoing work around developing the recommendations into actions, including roundtable discussions with key stakeholders across policy-makers and the housing and trafficking sectors.

Family Emergency Accommodation – Guidance

Research, funded by Commonweal and authored by architects Morris + Company, proposed specific standards for Emergency Accommodation for families with dependent children.

The report built upon years of collaborative interdisciplinary research into homelessness and housing to propose a qualitative standard for Emergency Accommodation for families.

Findings

- There is currently no specific regulatory framework that provides design guidance or space standards for emergency accommodation for families with infant children
- This has led to a disparity in the spaces used for emergency accommodation and the quality of the provision available for families in need
- The report demonstrates the lack of spatial and environmental standards definitively impacts the mental health, physical health, educational and economic prospects of children and families in emergency accommodation
- The use of umbrella terms such as ‘temporary housing’ and ‘temporary accommodation’ means that something as pressing as the need for purpose-built emergency accommodation (PBEA) is overlooked in local plans.

Recommendations

- Councils must highlight the need for emergency accommodation in their local plans to encourage the development of purpose-built stock
- New funding models need to be supported to enable local authorities to meet the needs of their community
- The spatial and design guidance for emergency accommodation, such as private space and proximity to outdoor play areas and schools, to be endorsed by local authorities and referred to in local plans to streamline delivery and improve standards.

Outcomes



- Following a well-attended launch of the report, Morris+Company is continuing to engage with local housing and planning officers to implement the recommendations and improve guidance around emergency accommodation
- Commonweal supported in the promotion of the report but is no longer actively involved in the engagement efforts.

Exploitation and its Links to Housing and Homelessness

Enabled by funding from Commonweal, STOP THE TRAFFIK studied the ways in which Romanian and Albanian nationals are being exploited in the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the City of Westminster, and how this exploitation is linked to their housing situations.

Albanian and Romanian nationals account for the second and third highest nationalities of persons who experienced modern slavery and human trafficking and homelessness, after British nationals.

Findings

- The Albanian and Romanian communities have reported severe challenges in accessing both emergency and short-long term accommodation and are therefore at high risk of homelessness and re-exploitation
- Hostile changes to the UK's immigration policy landscape have amplified vulnerabilities and made victims and survivors within these communities more likely to remain out of the system and fearful of authorities, ultimately bolstering the status and power of traffickers
- Female victims face re-traumatisation by being placed in accommodations that are majority male, food quality is poor which leads to health issues, and a no recourse to public funds status drives victims and survivors into criminal activity or illegal work.



Recommendations

- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities should extend the automatic grant of priority need status to include survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities should fund Modern Slavery Leads in each local council.
- Local authorities should produce more targeted and accessible information campaigns translated into Albanian and Romanian, both through digital and non-digital means, to target potential victims with information on what exploitation looks like, how to adopt preventative measures to keep themselves safe, and details for support organisations in London.

Move-on accommodation in the private rented sector

Research by Becky Rice due for publication in Summer 2024.

Much attention has been paid to the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on the rent prices, particularly in London. Far less has been given to the consequence of this for the most vulnerable in the country, like those leaving homelessness.



“Rental prices are currently rising at their fastest pace on record.”
Resolution Foundation, 2024

In conversation with our project partners, Commonweal was alerted to the difficulties they were having in placing clients into the private rented sector – the typical move-on destination for someone ready to progress from supported living.

With awareness that this could be a national issue, boiling over into crisis, Commonweal commissioned independent researcher Becky Rice to investigate the impacts rent rises were having on single homeless services move-on access from the third and public sector.



The report is due to be published in August, and the findings tell a clear story of a system under severe strain and in need of intervention, with fewer clients – ready to move into independent living – having the opportunity to progress with their lives and caught in a worklessness trap, while a mounting backlog of vulnerable and in-need individuals struggle to get absolutely necessary support.

Commonweal will be working with organisations across the sector to help shine a light on this issue, and we invite you to get involved by contacting Policy and Communications Manager, Harry Williams: harryw@commonweal.org.uk

Closer to Home

Amarjit Bains becomes Vice-Chair



We were delighted to appoint Amarjit Bains as Vice-Chair of the Board having been a Commonweal Trustee since February 2021.

Amarjit brings extensive expertise in delivering homelessness projects and will take an increased steer in shaping Commonweal's strategic direction as we continue our efforts to understand and test ways in which housing can play a part in solving a social injustice.

Amarjit is currently the Programme Director at Bridges Outcome – a not-for-profit social enterprise that designs services to improve life chances for vulnerable people – and has over a decade of experience in leadership roles, specialising in business strategy and operations.

Amarjit is the first Vice-Chair since Jack Mactaggart vacated the role in 2020.

“For the past three years, I have seen the unique role that Commonweal can play in bringing imaginative ideas to life and enabling frontline partners to trial and develop new models to support those on the margins. This is an important time for the charity as we continue to dig deeper into the criminal justice sector, the youth sector and the migration, asylum and trafficking sector, and I greatly look forward to providing any further guidance and insight I can.”

Amarjit Bains, Vice-Chair

“Amarjit is a real asset to Commonweal. She has been a vital cog during her three-year tenure, providing invaluable insights, strategic direction and due diligence across the many areas of our work. We are thrilled she accepted our offer to be our new Vice-Chair and look forward to continuing to work closely over the coming years as we continue on our mission to be the go-to organisation for housing solutions to social injustice.”

Jack Mactaggart, Chair





The Rt Hon. Fiona Mactaggart became an Honorary Patron of Commonweal after she stepped down from our Board of Trustees after an incredible 17-year stint.

Fiona leaves a lasting legacy at Commonweal, having shaped the vision and trajectory of the charity as Chair for 13 years from 2006 before leaving her post in 2019, while remaining an active member of the Board for a further four years.

A Member of Parliament for Slough from 1997 to 2017, Fiona has, and continues to be, a vociferous and ardent campaigner on social issues in Britain.

Under Fiona's stewardship, Commonweal has grown from the appointment of the first paid employee of the charity in 2010 to a diverse and growing multi-departmental team, helping to oversee the development of over a dozen property-based pilot projects that have tested housing solutions to a range of social injustices.

Most pertinently, Fiona was heavily involved in the development of Commonweal's flagship project, Re-Unite. The project, developed in partnership with charities Women in Prison and Housing for Women, was established in response to the problems faced by women trying to rebuild a stable family life when released from prison.

While we are incredibly grateful to Fiona for her inspirational time with Commonweal, her legacy is very much in place, with Commonweal continuing to deliver on its mission to help unearth

housing solutions to social injustice under the Chairmanship of Fiona's nephew Jack Mactaggart, while her niece, Aphra Mactaggart was recently appointed to the Board.

Fiona continues her fight for social justice after joining the Board of Trustees at Anawim, a women's centre and a partner on Commonweal project Re-Unite.

“I am proud to have been given the opportunity by Fiona as the charity's first paid employee 14 years ago to help shape Commonweal with her guidance and support. As Chair she was encouraging, supportive as well as challenging, impatient for change and inquisitive – the best sort of charity Chair.”

Ashley Horsey, Chief Executive

“Commonweal owes Fiona a great depth of gratitude for her enormous contribution to its success. It is no exaggeration to say that we would not exist today if it had not been for her efforts, and her time at Commonweal is yet another example of how she has made a lasting positive impact on the world.”

Jack Mactaggart, Chair

“I will miss Commonweal, which was always about imagining a different way of using housing to end a social injustice. I love its willingness to try things out and make mistakes, too often voluntary organisations can't afford to risk getting it a bit wrong. With Commonweal they can, it learns from mistakes to help its partners do better in the future. It will be a privilege to work with Commonweal and Birmingham University to continue the tradition of supporting students which we instituted after the death of Jane Slowey, who did so much for Commonweal and for Birmingham.”

Fiona Mactaggart, Honorary Patron

New Trustees



Gerald Kelly joined the Board in March 2024 with over 30 years of experience as a real estate solicitor, specialising in joint ventures and residential development projects using his legal expertise to advise developers, institutions, and private equity houses on the delivery of housing.

Since 2016, Gerald has been a Partner at Macfarlanes, a leading UK law firm, providing organisations with legal advice on the acquisition and delivery of new homes as well as other property types.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for me to apply my experience of over 30 years of property development and joint venture legal experience. Commonweal's ethos of using property to trial and test new ways housing can solve social injustice is so appealing, and I look forward to being part of the projects that emerge during my time on the Board.”

Gerald Kelly, Trustee



Aphra Mactaggart joined Commonweal's Board in June 2023 as the youngest Trustee, offering a fresh vision and understanding of the issues facing young people in the UK, with a special interest in issues that impact women and girls.

Aphra is a training midwife at Royal London Hospital. Her appointment to the Board further entrenches the philanthropic legacy of the Mactaggart family and their pivotal role in the creation and continued work of Commonweal.

“I am excited to join the Board of Commonweal with my family's longstanding involvement and my own passion for the causes Commonweal champions. I aim to infuse a fresh, younger perspective into the Board's work, ensuring a brighter future for those in need. With a special interest in issues that impact women and girls.”

Aphra Mactaggart, Trustee



Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary



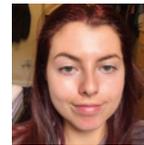
Now in its sixth year, Commonweal supported a further four University of Birmingham School of Social Policy students with grant funding as part of the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary.

In memory of our late Trustee Jane Slowey CBE, who studied at the University of Birmingham and was an active campaigner against social injustice, the Bursary supports up to four students investigating housing related issues and injustices with £2,500 each.

The 2023/24 recipients were: Alice Munson, Jessica Nsana, Ellie Ward and Olivia Glenny.

Students recently presented their research findings to Commonweal staff, Trustees and friends at the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary celebration event held at the University of Birmingham.

It follows a fantastic presentation last year, at Commonweal's Summer Reception, by Talia Knoble-Gershon.



Ellie Ward analysed the impact of the cost of living crisis in the UK on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) young adults aged between 18-25 living in the West Midlands region.



At the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary celebration event, University of Birmingham (left to right): Olivia Glenny, Alice Munson, Jessica Nsana.

Olivia Glenny analysed the psychological, cultural, and physical harms experienced by Grenfell Tower residents.

Alice Munson examined the experiences of Ukrainians living in the UK after the initial six-month period of the Homes for Ukraine scheme ended.

Jessica Nsana explored the extent to which living in rented housing has more of an adverse effect on young people from black and minority ethnic groups in comparison to their white counterparts.

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
The Rt. Hon. Baroness Jean Corston
The Rt. Hon. Fiona Mactaggart

Company Secretary

Gary Medazoumian FCA

Directors/Board of Trustees

Jack Mactaggart (Chair, appointed 2016)
Gary Medazoumian FCA (appointed 2004)
The Rt. Hon. Fiona Mactaggart (appointed 2006, resigned 2023)
Prof. Jonathan Portes (appointed 2017)
Russ Edwards (appointed 2017)
Amarjit Bains (Vice-Chair, appointed 2020)
Sheldon Shillingford (appointed 2020)
Dr Elanor Warwick (appointed 2022)
Aphra Mactaggart (appointed 2023)
Gerald Kelly (appointed 2024)

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC, 7th 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, 7th Floor Dashwood House, 69 Old Broad Street, London EC2M 1QS

Principal address

Office No. 521, Spaces, 35 New Broad Street, London, EC2M 1NH

Registered address

2 Babmaes Street, London SW1 6HD

Company registration number: 5319765

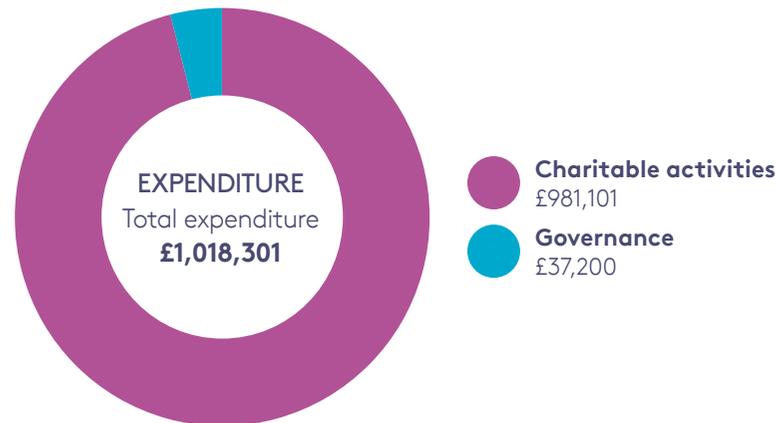
Charity registration number: 1113331

The Board has signed up to the Charity Governance Code and regularly assesses its governance and oversight structures in line with this recommended practice. The Board reviews the length of service of Trustees and has agreed that current and ongoing tenure of long standing members is of benefit to the charity.

Financial Reports

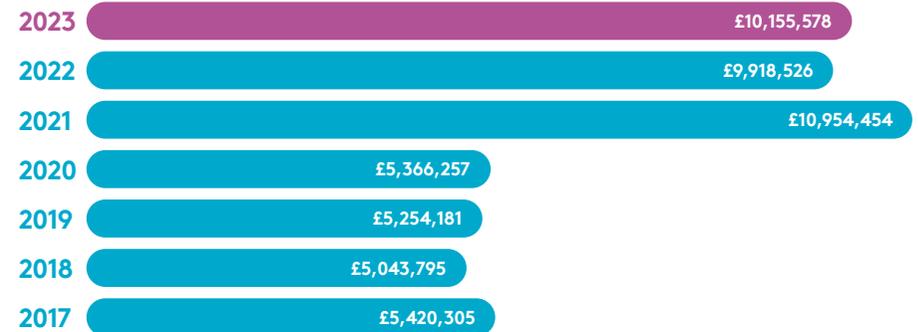
for year ending 31 December 2023

Draft figures and subject to final adjustment and audit



Balance sheet at 31 December 2023

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.

Acknowledgments and 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.



solace

STOP THE TRAFFIK



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

YCG GROUP



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