

commonweal  **housing**
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

ANNUAL REVIEW

2008 - 2009



Chair's Message



Fiona Mactaggart MP

It's with satisfaction that I present my Review of Commonweal's work for the period of June 2008 to June 2009. During the year we have continued our quest to provide "housing solutions to social injustice" in our particular niche of working intensively on small-scale projects to establish them as role models.

Creating role models involves striving for perfection and doing that in the fields of social injustice, where chaos is often the dominant characteristic, is a tough and sometimes thankless task. Despite this, we've made good progress, as usual, thanks to setting ourselves annual goals that enable us to push forward our projects. In 2008 / 2009 we set five goals.

Goal #1

To identify those points of greatest need amongst people suffering the consequences of social injustices so that people in our projects are sensitively understood and the services that are provided for them are fine-tuned to help them recover from the social injustice.

Pursuit of this goal has involved us in diverse directions such as in-depth interviews with magistrates to understand their perspective of homelessness amongst young offenders and focus groups with house-hunting wheelchair users.

Interaction with our independent project evaluators has given us a 360° view of what needs to be done to improve our operations. This process has proved particularly useful because it has not only told us what we should be doing, but also what we should stop doing, what other agencies should be doing and also what we should expect users of our services to do to make the most of the opportunities we offer. Our evaluators are now beginning to compare our solutions with ones of similar intent provided by others so we can further improve so as to remain "ahead of the game".

The field of social injustice is ever changing and I don't pretend that we have found all the answers, but this Goal has helped us to develop systems that enable us to fast track to where we should allocate our scarce capital. As well as helping us to decide what to do, it also made it easier to decide what we should not attempt. For example, projects that are proposed to us which, albeit a very worthy service to the public, either do not get to the point of greatest need or do not make major evolutionary progress in improving the human condition.

Chair's Message (cont)

Goal #2 Optimising Value For Money

It's all very well for us aiming to produce role model projects, but if these can't be created within the real world of scarce capital, the project will never be sustainable in the long term so it is important to prove that our projects represent good value for money so that others will be attracted to replicating them.

In the year under review, we started some interesting work on examining the capital and revenue cost of each service user in both our existing projects and those being considered. This is helping us to improve the productivity of our projects. As an example, we have discovered that by improving the planning of service users moving into our homes so that voids are reduced, a very significant increase can be achieved in productivity of capital employed. I am looking forward to seeing this area of our work develop further.

Goal #3 Developing Systems So That Our Projects Can Truly Act As Role Models That Others Will Want To Replicate

In the year under review, it was our first chance to thoroughly explore the potential of this goal through our Partnership in Re-Unite with Housing for Women. As a result of this Partnership and the energetic contribution from Housing for Women, we were able to establish a complete Systems Manual for the Re-Unite Project so that any organisation that wants to replicate our projects can have a "how to do it manual" off the shelf. As will be read later in this review, this work has proved very timely.

Goal #4 Successfully Establish The Re-Unite Project As An Ongoing Operation And Prepare It For Replication

In this year, we had the pleasure of seeing mothers and their children complete their time in the Re-Unite Project and move on to independent living in promising circumstances. The places in our properties were quickly filled by other mothers who wanted to follow in their footsteps.

Goal #5 Develop Another Project For Launch In 2008

We were not successful in meeting this goal to a large extent because we turned out to be victims of our Goal #1. In working with our Partners, St. Mungo's, it was deemed essential to get everything right to help our vulnerable service users and for that reason there was some slippage in the project with details not being finalised until February 2009, agreements signed in March 2009 and the acquisition of houses starting in the same month. Fortunately, we are now making up ground with the first two clients preparing themselves to join our project in July.

Considering the foregoing, I think the year has been a good one for Commonweal, which has been made possible by the enthusiasm of my Trustees, the work of our Executives and our Project Partners, Housing for Women, Women in Prison, the Department of

Criminology, Cambridge University, St. Mungo's and Medaille Trust. I am also very grateful to people and organisations who generously gave their time so that we could investigate and understand the needs of people suffering social injustices and so improve our ideas on how to resolve them. Also, the contribution of service users to our success must be recognised. Our commitment to measuring satisfaction and success has meant that every service user has participated in interviews, offered comments and even allowed their children to participate in the evaluation process so that we could learn how to serve them better. They have been most tolerant and, through their generosity of time, have served future service users well.

For the year ahead, we set ourselves only three goals; fewer than last year, but they are of such importance that I think they will continue to drive our charity forward. These are:

Goal #1

To commence the replication of the Re-Unite Project

Goal #2

Thoroughly establish The Chrysalis Project with St. Mungo's

Goal #3

To expand the management of Commonweal to facilitate its next stage in growth.

I am optimistic that our plans are well set to achieve these goals and I look forward to reporting to you next year on how well we have done in achieving them.

Finally, I remind you that Commonweal contributes housing, systems and project management resources to its role model projects but always needs specialist partners to serve the needs of those people who are suffering the consequences of injustice. We search constantly for specialist partners who can help us with the service delivery element of the projects and I very much hope that if, when reading this, you feel you can arrange contact with specialist service partners who could help us develop projects that resolve social injustice, you will tell them to contact Commonweal.



Current Projects

- The year saw the Re-Unite Project, started in the autumn of 2007, getting into full swing thanks to the enthusiastic co-operation of our Partners, Housing for Women and service providers, Women in Prison.
- The original concept of Re-Unite was that it would take mothers, on release from prison who would otherwise be homeless if not granted a home in Re-Unite, providing these women could definitely be reunited with their children within six weeks of their release from prison. To this end, the project worked extremely well with strong evidence that the objectives of the project were being met and mostly exceeded. Examples of objectives being exceeded were;
 - Mothers and their children being able to complete their dependency on the project in less than the forecasted time of two years and so move on to independent living earlier than planned.
 - Mothers in the project forming self-help groups that added momentum and attention to detail in satisfying the needs of the mothers and their children.
 - Initiatives by Women in Prison to raise additional funds so that outings and other experiences essential to the education and well being of children could be included in the project.
 - Some mothers becoming actively involved in helping others to avoid a lifestyle that leads to prison. They did this by giving talks to youngsters who might be at risk and also in two cases, committing themselves to further education to develop their skills in counselling.



Homes for the Re-Unite Mother & Children's Programme have secure play areas

Current Projects (cont)

Re-Unite (cont)

- Half way through this year under review, the Partners decided that it was right, and they were able, to introduce a more challenging strand to Re-Unite which would involved mothers who, for various reasons, would not be allowed to be reunited with their children on release from prison but with additional support, these women could work to have full custody of some or all of their children in the future. Naturally, the overriding priority of this project is to ensure that such action would be in the best interests of the children. As a result of this decision, Re-Unite was split into two strands; "Re-Unite Mother & Children's Programme" to follow the goals of the original concept and "Re-Unite Mothers' Programme" which would work with those mothers who it was thought could be ready to have custody of some or all of their children within twelve months.



All Commonweal Homes have comprehensive security upgrades to accommodate the mother's needs for personal safety.

Current Projects (cont)

Re-Unite (cont)

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



The kitchen in a flat we provided for Re-Unite Mothers' Programme

Current Projects (cont)

Re-Unite (cont)

- Commonwealth's objective is that when projects have become operationally robust and are proving their effectiveness, replicating the project should commence. That potential was recognised in the autumn of 2008 and so Housing for Women and Commonwealth commenced producing a complete "How to Do It Manual" so that all the documentation and systems could be made available to other organisations who might want to replicate Re-Unite. Although achieving this involved considerable work, this document was produced by the end of the year, an achievement that turned out to be extremely well timed.
- In the autumn of 2008, partners in Re-Unite received an approach from another charity that wanted to replicate Re-Unite in another part of England that would serve women's prisons that the location of the houses in the current Re-Unite Project do not easily serve. As well as providing this very convenient match, the proposed project would also allow comparison of homeless women in rural areas with the plight of similar women in London and would allow further learning about their needs. As the year drew to an end, negotiations were at an advanced stage with this charity, which had raised most of the funding necessary for the project. The Re-Unite Procedures Manual will be a great help in rapidly establishing this new strand for the project. It is hoped that this new strand can commence operating by the end of 2009.



Re-Unite

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Housing for Women



Current Projects (cont)

- Throughout the year under review, Commonwealth worked with St. Mungo's to develop a Resettlement Programme for former female sex workers. The Project is planned to be in two strands.
- The first strand will help the resettlement of those women who, for one reason or another, have become sex workers and have sought help from St. Mungo's to move from this lifestyle. This help is provided by St. Mungo's in hostel-based programmes. After successfully completing these programmes, the women need to test their ability to live independently, albeit still with considerable support. This is the role of The Chrysalis Project.
- The second strand will comprise of women who have been trafficked and forced into sexual exploitation. Although the work of the women has been the same, the resettlement needs are very different and Commonwealth is grateful to St. Mungo's for their experience in developing the resettlement programmes necessary to give these women the best possible chance of recovery and resettlement.
- The year under review ended with documentation between St. Mungo's and Commonwealth signed and operational funding in place. Having made a £1.5m capital commitment to the project, Commonwealth has commenced the acquisition of one-bedroom flats for occupation by the first service users in July 2009. St. Mungo's have commenced induction programmes to prepare women for moving into these flats.



A partnership between



Our Finances

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the year ended 31 December 2008

	2008 £	2007 £
Incoming resources		
Voluntary income	300,000	310,000
Rental income	34,656	11,562
Total incoming resources	334,656	321,562
Resources expended		
Delivering housing solutions	223,923	184,450
Understanding housing needs	1,905	9,190
Governance costs	5,072	7,506
Total resources expended	230,900	201,146
Net incoming resources for the year	103,756	120,416
Fund balances at 1 January	136,724	16,308
Fund balances at 31 December	240,480	136,724

BALANCE SHEET As at 31 December 2008

	2008 £	2007 £
Current assets		
Debtors	228,199	134,830
Cash at bank	27,446	54,768
Total current assets	255,645	189,598
Current liabilities		
Creditors: amounts due within one year	(15,165)	(52,874)
Net assets	240,480	136,724
Income funds		
Unrestricted funds	240,480	136,724
Total Charity funds	240,480	136,724

Our Finances (cont)

Trustees' Report and Accounts

The summarised accounts on the previous page have been extracted from the audited financial statements of Commonweal Housing Limited for the year ended 31 December 2008 which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 29 June 2009. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information the full annual financial statements, including the unqualified report of the Auditors, should be consulted.

A copy of the full audited financial statements has been submitted to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission and can be obtained from the Charity's registered office at:

Grove End Gardens
33 Grove End Road
London
NW8 9LN.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees

G S Medazoumian FCA
29 June 2009

Report of the Auditors to the Trustees of Commonweal Housing Limited

We have examined the summarised accounts set out on the previous page.

Respective Responsibilities of the Trustees and the Auditors

You are responsible as Trustees for the preparation of the summarised accounts. We have agreed to report to you our opinion on the summarised accounts' consistency with the full financial statements, on which we reported to you on 15th July 2009.

Basis of opinion

We have carried out the procedures we consider necessary to ascertain whether the summarised accounts are consistent with the full financial statements from which they have been prepared.

Opinion

In our opinion, the summarised accounts are consistent with the full financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2008.

H. W. Fisher & Company
Registered Auditor
Acre House, 11-15 William Road,
London NW1 3ER
15th July 2009

Legal And Administrative Details

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

Company registration number:	5319765
Charity registration number:	1113331
Principal address:	Grove End Gardens 33 Grove End Road London NW8 9LN
Registered office:	Grove End Gardens 33 Grove End Road London NW8 9LN
Directors and Trustees:	Fiona Mactaggart MP (Chair) Sir John Mactaggart Bt. Gary Medazoumian FCA Mrs Jane Slowey CBE
Secretary:	Gary Medazoumian FCA
Bankers:	Barclays Bank plc 7 th Floor, 180 Oxford Street London BX3 2BB
Solicitors:	Bates Wells & Braithwaite 2-6 Cannon Street London EC4M 6YH Kidd Rapinet 14 & 15 Craven Street London WC2N 5AD
Auditors:	H.W. Fisher & Company Acre House 11/15 William Road London NW1 3ER