

**Helping partnerships through housing**  
**Tackling injustice through innovation**  
**Delivering change through collaboration**

Strategic plan 2017 -2020



# Commonweal at a glance

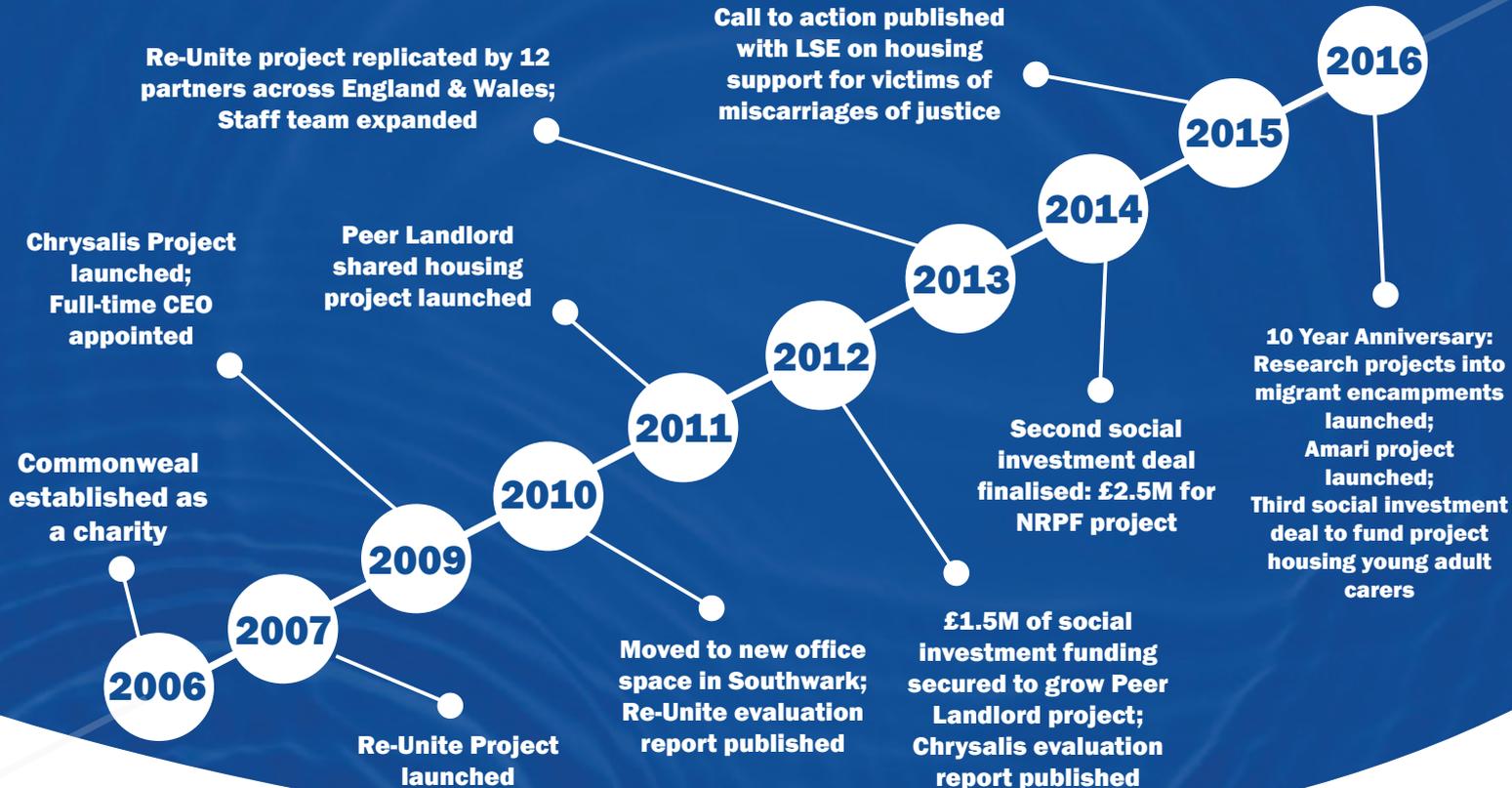
## **Commonweal Housing harnesses social investment to deliver innovative housing solutions to social injustice.**

Together with our expert partners, we deliver forward-thinking housing projects tailored to client groups with particular needs. With ten years of expertise in developing and delivering new models of social housing and support, we have shown that housing can be a key vehicle for delivering social change.

We give each of our projects the space to mature and develop. We evaluate what works, and share the learning with fellow practitioners. Finally, we aim to deliver policy and practice change based on the lessons learned from project implementation.

- 10 projects between 2006 - 2016
  - £10m worth of housing stock deployed
  - Worked together with 9 different partner organisations across a decade of delivery
- 
- 39 units of housing across 8 London boroughs
  - Approx £200,000 of direct revenue support to partner organisations across the country, supporting replication of proven models
  - 7 detailed project evaluation reports
- 
- 11 different local authorities areas have replicated our Re-Unite project
  - Commonweal has worked with 6 different social investors in recent years raising £6m of social investment funding.

# Our Journey



# This strategic plan

**Learning from what we have achieved and how we have achieved it over our first 10 years, this strategic plan aims to outline our ambitions and vision for the next three years.**

It includes not just our goals and aspirations, but concrete targets and action plans. It sets out our organisational vision of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

We know from past experience the vital importance of flexibility. As an action-learning organisation, we plan to be reflective, reactive, and adaptive, ready and able to change course if necessary.

We aim to be recognised as a positive and productive partner; one who adds value to all we do – an organisation that our peers trust, respect, and want to work with.

# Vision

**We believe in the power of housing  
to address injustice and deliver social change.**

Challenging social injustice requires innovation and iteration. We give new projects time, support, expertise and insulation from risk so they can grow.

As our projects mature, we want to learn what works well - and what does not - and share this knowledge with other practitioners. Therefore, we require in-depth reflection and review by project partners and independent evaluators.

When our projects are ready, we aim to replicate them so that they (or the lessons learnt from them) can be delivered by other providers. Through replication, we aim to build momentum towards widespread policy change.

**Leadership through learning;  
delivering real change through collaboration;  
tackling injustice through innovation.**

# Values

To help tackle social injustice, staff and partners will embody our ethos over the next 3 years

## Willing to learn

Accept that learning takes time, and can mean making mistakes

## Housing solutions to social injustice

## Innovative

Seek new ways to address existing problems  
Develop new models of housing provision to address social injustice  
Continue to lead on social investment in the sector

## Collaboration

Work together with delivery partners, social investors and evaluators to achieve our mission  
Share knowledge across sectors to bring about change in policy and practice

## Passionate about injustice

Ensure that tackling social injustice remains at the heart of each of our projects  
Our desire to see positive change remains the driver for everything we do

# 2020 Goals

## Tackling injustice through innovation

By 2020, we aim to be delivering at least one new project a year identifying and exploring new solutions to social injustice.

We will seek to further develop appropriate shared housing options for young people moving toward independence, in areas such as care leavers and young adult carers. Other areas of potential innovation include housing support to older members of LGBT communities, and safe temporary housing for the occupants of migrant encampments.

Over the period to 2020 we aim to explore options around new housing design and construction, especially around shared housing models.

## Leadership through learning

Over the next three years, Commonweal will provide leadership in the housing and homelessness sector by sharing the knowledge and learning we gather from our projects. Specifically, we will publish independent evaluations into the *Freedom2Work* project, the initial evaluation of Phase 2 of the *Peer Landlord* project, and initial evaluations of the *Amari* and *Move on Up* projects. In 2017 we expect to publish an initial piece of research on the issue of migrant tent encampments in London.

We will also produce an overview of the lessons learned from the three separate shared housing projects we have operated in recent years. This report will evaluate the challenges and opportunities of shared housing as a solution for the housing needs of other client groups, and as a resource for projects considering change.

## Policy and practice change

By 2020 we will have stepped up our policy campaigning activities to effect greater change in the sector.

We will publish a final report on the Re-Unite project, investigating especially the impacts on the children of women in prison, and campaign for greater awareness of child impacts at sentencing.

We will lobby at the local and national level for better support services for women who are exiting prostitution, and continue to press the case for the centrality of safe, stable housing in a woman's journey out of prostitution.

We will engage with partners and professional bodies to influence practice on shared housing, and the inclusion of financial literacy in Private Rented Access schemes.

We will support the work of partner organisations to end migrant destitution at a national level, and work with local authorities to improve the provision of housing to migrants with undetermined immigration status.

## Change through collaboration

We know we cannot combat social injustice alone. Instead, we must harness the skills and knowledge of a range of partners to achieve meaningful change. Over the next three years we will continue our Learning Partnership with the Institute of Voluntary Action Research, in order to ensure we effectively capture and deploy the lessons of our projects.

We will seek to further develop the use of social investment funding in the social housing sector, exploring new partnerships with social investors to tackle injustice.

In addition, we will expand our collaboration with architects, designers and house builders over the three year period.

# The Commonweal Approach: Strategic Learning, Engagement, and Replication for Change

Learning organisations create space, culture and time for reflection / Engaged evaluation supports adaptation

## Pre-pilot Phase

## Pilot Phase

## Moving into Replication

## Replication & Ending

### 01.

#### Who knows what? Identifying a social injustice

Be alert to areas of interest for Commonweal; identify social injustices and opportunities for intervention; explore what role Commonweal could play

##### In practice this might include:

- Commissioning a feasibility study
- Identifying prospective partners & building initial relationships
- Seeking input and experience of experts and relevant stakeholders

**Commonweal staff undertake initial due diligence and research to learn more about the issue.**  
(Partners, Commonweal Advisory Panel & Board)

### 02.

#### What if? Clarifying a housing solution to social injustice

Advance a specific hypothesis and working principles to be tested; design, refine, and implement pilot project

##### In practice this might include:

- Developing pilot project in collaboration with project partners & advisory panel
- Commissioning an evaluation that would help test hypothesis and capture learning
- Due diligence of delivery partners
- Testing the extent of the housing and support need

**Field expert evaluates pilot.**  
(Partners, Commonweal Advisory Panel & Board)

### 03.

#### So what? Learning from the pilot

Using experience of pilot project and result of evaluation, translate the hypothesis into a focused description of the social injustice that the project can address. Refine the set of tested principles, and produce comprehensive summary of project findings.

##### In practice this might include:

- Work with partners and advisory group to identify key learning, messages, and relevant audiences
- Reach a view with trustees on whether pilot has demonstrated success, and if so whether it is for Commonweal to continue with it

**Field expert and process expert makes sense of evaluation findings**

### 04.

#### Now what? Moving into replication

Determine what we want to achieve:

- Building the evidence base
- Advocating for change in legislation, policy, and/or best practice in the sector
- Organisations (including partners) adopt the principles, methodology and learning from the pilot

##### In practice this might include:

- Working with network of providers to share and implement lessons of pilot project
- Parliamentary and policy work, possibly in partnership
- Dissemination of findings, through written reports and face-to-face engagement and advocacy

**Field expert and process expert develop replication plan.**

### 05.

#### So what's next? Learning from replication

Assess the replication phase, and determine whether advocacy / replication goals have been achieved

##### In practice this might include:

- Internal evaluation of extent and impact of post-pilot replication
- Work with advisory group to identify options for ending or continuing the project
- Reach a view with trustees about ending (is there an 'ask?') or continuing

**Procure expert support to specify next steps.**  
(Partners, Commonweal Advisory Panel & Board)

Start at any point

# Opportunities



# Challenges



# Project Action Plan

Project & Hypothesis	Injustice	Strategic Aim	Actions	Timeline
<p><b>Re-Unite</b></p> <p><i>Can dedicated housing and support for mothers involved in the criminal justice system reduce re-offending and improve outcomes for the service user?</i></p>	<p>Mothers without access to suitable housing after leaving prison are unable to regain care and custody of their children because they don't have access to housing but are unable to get access to suitable housing because they do not have access to their children</p>	<p>Embed focus on housing and reuniting mothers with children within the practice of those supporting women exiting prison.</p> <p>Latterly call for Child Impact Assessment and Reports to be undertaken and considered by courts before sentencing women to ensure the needs of the children are also taken in to consideration.</p>	<p>IVAR preparing think piece on the lessons from conversations with practitioners in the network</p> <p>Externally commission a report to learn assess the state of play of women in the criminal justice system 10 years after the Corsten report, with a significant focus on</p> <p>Look at developing a impact on the child training programme for practitioners.</p>	<p>All housing stock will have been handed back by January 2017</p> <p>Q3 2017: Final 10 year end of project report published</p>
<p><b>Miscarriages of Justice</b></p> <p><i>Test a housing pathway for victims of a miscarriage of justice.</i></p>	<p>Those wrongly convicted of a crime and then released on appeal receive no state support and can end up in a difficult housing situation</p>	<p>Lobby social housing providers to highlight the issue and adapt their housing allocations policies accordingly.</p> <p>Encourage Local Authorities to consider victims of MoJ as vulnerable in terms of homelessness application / assessment</p>	<p>Review passage of the homelessness private member's bill passage to see if any of the MOJ lessons can be fed in to the bill when government consults on key parts.</p> <p>Closely follow joint enterprise case reviews for spike in cases.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

# Project Action Plan

Project & Hypothesis	Injustice	Strategic Aim	Actions	Timeline
<p><b>Amari</b></p> <p><i>Develop a model of post-crisis housing that aids and supports a woman's journey in exiting prostitution and / or sexual exploitation</i></p>	<p>Women attempting to exit prostitution lack the housing support needed to successfully sustain an exit after their initial time in a hostel ends.</p>	<p>Encouraging housing providers to make properties available for this client group supported by expert agencies.</p> <p>Complete the pilot stage of the Amari project and move to full implementation, enabling growth of the portfolio.</p> <p>Build an evidence base for demonstrating why housing pathways should be embedded within exiting strategies in LA VAWG strategies</p>	<p>Beyond the hostel: publish a specific resource that makes clear the need for post-crisis housing for women seeking to exit prostitution.</p> <p>Continue to exert influence over Home Affairs Select Committee, including investigating potential to invite members / chair to projects.</p> <p>Commission independent external evaluation of Amari 2017-2019.</p>	<p>Property rollout complete by June 2017.</p> <p>Ongoing: Continue to engage with VAWG policy, making the case for housing pathways becoming embedded within VAWG strategies.</p>
<p><b>Freedom 2 Work</b></p> <p><i>Develop a housing model that encourages better saving among people on low incomes and on welfare and provides a launch pad into move-on accommodation</i></p>	<p>The transition from welfare to work can see people becoming worse off, which effects willingness / ability to stay sustain employment.</p>	<p>Develop a replicable model that can be adopted by other Rent Start and Private Rented Access Schemes.</p> <p>Test key assumptions of the project: can the barriers to rejoining the job market be overcome through targeted practical, financial, and emotional support?</p>	<p>Feed into government discussions / policy re. financial literacy / encouraging saving</p> <p>Support independent evaluator in monitoring service delivery</p> <p>Work with more than 60 service users</p>	<p>Q2 2018: Initial Evaluation report</p> <p>2020: Investment concluded, final report due</p>
<p><b>Peer Landlord</b> Phase 2</p> <p><i>Develop and replicate a viable shared housing model where tenants act as support for each other and management costs for the provider are limited</i></p>	<p>Lack of affordable housing options for single people with some support needs but not in the highest need category.</p>	<p>Develop a demonstrable 'mediated shared housing model' that can be scaled and replicated. Particular focus on cost in the context of the client group – does the model deliver a net positive result?</p> <p>Explore avenues for replication of Peer Landlord model, either in London again or, perhaps ideally, in different areas with different delivery partners – utilising social investment funding.</p>	<p>Work with other housing providers and social investors to explore the roll out of Peer Landlord mediated shared housing model, and scope for a particular focus on for young people leaving care in areas outside of London.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive analysis and evaluation structure to deepen understanding and provide a best possible platform for replication and/or learning for other parties.</p>	<p>Q1 2017: Report on first 12 months of Phase 2</p> <p>Explore case study with Homeless Link in Q1-2 2017</p>

# Project Action Plan

Project & Hypothesis	Injustice	Strategic Aim	Actions	Timeline
<p><b>NRPF Project</b></p> <p><i>Can LHA housing to vulnerable families under Section 17 of the Children's Act be used to cross-subsidise housing and support to destitute migrants with no recourse to public funds?</i></p>	<p>Migrants to the UK with undetermined immigration status face significant risk of destitution.</p>	<p>Develop a positive model for delivering S.17 accommodation by specialist agencies providing positive benefits to both councils and individual families.</p> <p>Build a viable social investment proposition, capable of attracting new funds to acquire property stock across the country, that could help provide additional and sustainable free NRPF housing.</p> <p>Tap into wider campaigns around refugee and asylum rights, for example around the right to work.</p>	<p>Establish a consistent analysis of cost for local authorities and budget expectations re. S17 clients via FOI requests.</p> <p>Engage with key actors, eg: Refugee Council and Homeless Link, regarding these big policy issues, and explore collaboration.</p> <p>Move some of the focus towards the development of a social investment property fund with Commonwealth as a key player but JRF and NACOM also significant. The Action Foundation could be the first example of this with Commonwealth playing a role both as a direct investor and as a conduit for third party investment.</p>	<p>Q2 2017: Conduct interim evaluation</p> <p>Q3 2018: Publish final evaluation</p>
<p><b>Move on Up</b></p> <p><i>What are the housing options that would enable Young Adult Carers (18+) to develop an independent life, either maintaining the caring relationship or away from the previous family home? Via a peer supportive, affordable, shared housing model.</i></p>	<p>Lack of options for independence can greatly limit life chances, but young adult carers are unlikely to ever receive priority for social housing support, as they are already "housed"</p>	<p>Successfully launch project</p> <p>Raise the needs profile of the client group</p> <p>Secure greater awareness of housing needs and options – specific inclusion of housing options as part of the Care Act provisions for Young Adult Carers</p>	<p>Complete purchase, refurbishment and leasing of full portfolio to QSA by Q2 2017.</p> <p>Work together with Learning &amp; Work Institute as evaluators of the project, QSA and the Carers Trust who will have a service level agreement with QSA.</p>	<p>Q1 2017: Project launch</p> <p>Q2 2017: Property acquisition complete</p> <p>Q2 2018: First interim evaluation</p> <p>2019: Final evaluation report</p>
<p><b>Starter for Ten</b></p> <p><i>Feasibility study in to a viable housing model for an underrecognised client group.</i></p>	<p>EU economic migrants encamped in outer London boroughs are living in squalid and un-sanitised conditions.</p>	<p>Develop new model of transitory accommodation that is safe, sanitary, planned and affordable, thereby avoiding the need for tent encampments and 'beds in sheds'.</p>	<p>Engage Gensler Architects to run internal design competition to produce prototype models of modular temporary accommodation</p> <p>Feasibility study by Thames Reach into full-scale project</p>	<p>Q1 Gensler competition winners announced</p> <p>Q2 2017 Publish findings of feasibility study</p>

# Corporate Action Plan

Challenge Area	Description of Aim	Actions
Corporate / Commonweal Housing <b>Overall Organisation Goal</b>	Secure tangible evidence of replication and use of lessons learnt from pilot projects in shaping policy and practice, including encouraging next stage progression from the outcomes of Commonweal supported feasibility studies.	2017: Commission no less than 2 new small scale research / feasibility studies undertaking early stage identification and understanding of new or under-researched areas of social injustice.
<b>Core assumption:</b> that housing-based action learning can deliver tangible change for people, partners, practice and policy that helps tackle a range of social injustices	Increase recognition of Commonweal by key policy makers and sector leaders as an organisation of value, helping to shape the agenda and as credible partners.	2017/2018: Renewal of Learning Partnership arrangements with IVAR to ensure we are a demonstrably learning organisation and that we are capturing the evidence and the information needed to judge the success of otherwise in achieving this strategic aim.
<b>Project Partners:</b> Ensure Commonweal shares learning across projects and partnerships	Re-inforce action learning ethos and provide a place to share and learn from experience.	Ongoing: Hold annual stakeholder summit facilitated by IVAR.
<b>Ensuring Commonweal is fit for purpose:</b> Governance	Ensure the charity's leadership and governance includes all key areas of skill and experience, and / or that the charity has in place clear plans for accessing any missing skills as and when required.	Engage independent governance consultants to undertake survey and interviews with Trustees and key staff alongside a self-assessment exercise for Trustees, to be completed no later than October 2017 for discussion at the November 2017 Away Day.
<b>Ensuring Commonweal is fit for purpose:</b> Staffing	Enhance the internal financial management and technical oversight of the organisation, to support both the Hon Treasurer and CEO in ensuring day to day strategic (and operational) oversight of organisational finances.  Increase the technical and overall capacity within the charity for consideration of and maximising opportunity from future funding options especially around social finance initiatives.	Recruit Finance Coordinator and to end the outsourcing arrangements by end Q1 2017 / sign-off of 2016 statutory accounts.  Review staff structure regularly as opportunities arise and activities change
<b>Ensuring Commonweal is fit for Purpose:</b> Advisory Panel	Recognising limitations of small staff team, proactively engage with the expert advisory panel to help shape early strategic thinking.  Utilise expertise of Advisory Panel to help Commonweal staff and board members to identify and assess the merits and / or challenges of potential new projects.	Bring together advisory panel members at least twice a year for meetings or project review sessions, and regularly review membership.

# Governance and Structure

## Board of Trustees



**Honorary President**  
Sir John Mactaggart BT



**Chair:** Rt Hon Fiona  
Mactaggart MP



Jane Slowey C.B.E



Laurence Newman



Steve Douglas



Gary Medazoumian



Jack Mactaggart

# Governance and Structure



# Financial Strategy

## ***In making the proposals set out in this 3 Year Business Strategy, the following assumptions have been made:***

- That Grove End Housing (GEHL), a not for profit property company formed in 1967 as an Industrial and Provident Society, will continue for the duration of this strategy to be the principle funder for the activities of Commonwealth Housing.
- That GEHL will continue to provide the revenue support that is necessary to enable the charity to meet its core operational and revenue costs.
- That GEHL's committed revenue support to the charity provides the capacity and opportunity for Commonwealth to leverage other sources of capital funding from social investment and similar options.
- That Commonwealth Housing will continue to seek major new capital funding for new project development / property acquisition from social investors. To this end, the Trustees will consider options for restructuring our current offer to new investors to seek to maximize the capacity of the Charity whilst fairly sharing risks and rewards with investment partners.
- Commonwealth Housing will seek to identify new core income streams, where viable and appropriate, which may include, over the terms of this plan, options such as (but not necessarily specifically or exclusively):
  1. Capital investment for property purchases via third party philanthropic and other investment funds and / or investors
  2. Market renting of residential property not allocated to specific charitable projects (up to Charity Commission income limits);
  3. Revenue return on invested project capital via rental income, where this can be accommodated in project business plans;
  4. Return on intellectual capital invested in role model projects, possibly via replication by franchise or license, but also including potential consultancy activity where fees may be charged by Commonwealth Housing, focused upon the learning and unique business operations of the organization.

# Selection criteria for future projects

## Provision of bespoke housing for property-based 5-10 year pilot projects, including:

- Social investment to support others to provide bespoke housing
- Revenue support enabling innovative use of existing housing stock for 5-10 year projects
- Direct commissioning and revenue support of shorter term research and feasibility studies

## Where Commonweal are directly providing the bespoke housing, the pilot project should:

- Ideally be located where the Charity feels it has the resources, knowledge and capacity to engage actively with the delivery partner e.g. London, South-East England, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds etc. Commonweal will seek to replicate projects nationwide where needs exist and where suitable partners can be found.
- Seek to better understand an issue that may (if the research or feasibility is proven) lead to a larger action learning project. In any case, the research and findings themselves must add value to the wider knowledge and awareness of the issue

## General Principles for project selection:

- The project must seek to understand or address a housing need that is not currently being met, or endeavour to solve a need more successfully than is being achieved by current solutions
- The project must be operated in a spirit of openness to offer learning and help for those who seek to replicate the prototype on a larger scale.
- The project must be supported by a partner who can demonstrate a clear understanding of the details of the housing need being experienced by people with that need.
- The prototype project, when proven, should either be suitable for replication on a larger scale by other organizations, or deliver learning that can shape future policy or service delivery.
- The medium- to long-term performance of the project must be assessed according to criteria set by third party experts, who will measure and report on performance at pre-determined frequencies.
- Project partners must be able to demonstrate organisational sustainability beyond the lifetime of any funding partnership

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