



Call for New Ideas



Information Sheet

About Commonwealth Housing

Commonweal Housing is an independent social justice charity working to investigate, pilot and champion housing-based solutions to social injustice. By using our charitable resources, we provide partner organisations the opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and justice through our Property-based Pilot Projects.

In effect, we work across three workstreams:

- **Feasibility Studies:** we offer partner organisations funding to research the viability of a new housing and support model that could solve a social injustice, with the intention that it leads to a Property-based Pilot Project
- **Property-based Pilot Projects:** we work with social investors to buy property to bring the Feasibility Study to life by leasing these properties to partner organisations to deliver the project for its service users over the course of c.7 years. We work alongside partners throughout the lifecycle of a Pilot Project
- **Research and Evaluation:** where we fund and commission new research into an overlooked or underreported area of social policy; OR fund and commission an evaluation into a Commonwealth, or occasionally external, project

To streamline our work and resources, Commonwealth focuses its projects into three broad thematic policy areas. These are:

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

For more on our themes, visit: <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/themes>

About Call for New Ideas

In 2020, Commonwealth launched its first Call for New Ideas – an original funding mechanism created by us. Its purpose: to enable organisations to design and deliver new and imaginative housing solutions to social injustice, supported by Commonwealth.

We ask not-for-profit organisations to come up with new housing and support models that seek to address a specific social injustice, and we fund the best ideas.

Up-to four applicants will receive between £5-10,000 grant funding to either internally or externally research their model in greater detail, assessing whether it would be viable to launch as a Property-based Pilot Project. This part is crucial, as we only want to work with organisations looking to develop their idea into a multi-year housing project in partnership with Commonwealth.





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To help guide our thinking for Call for New Ideas: Young People, we commissioned Homeless Link to undertake horizon scanning research to better understand the key drivers of youth homelessness. The full report can be found [here](#).

In respect of the learnings from this research, we are **only** looking for models focused on supporting a cohort of young people aged at least 18 who have:

- Had experience of the care system
- Had experience with mental health problems or are neurodivergent
- Had difficult experiences in the education system, particularly those who faced serial exclusion

NB: with regards to mental health, we are unable to support proposals that require intensive clinical support.

About the Process

The current Call is open for four weeks from **27 March 2024 – 19 April 2024**, during which organisations are invited to propose an idea for a housing and support model that seeks to address a social injustice within the above parameters. Below is a guide of how this works.

Step 1 - Your ideas

You, as a lone organisation or in partnership with another(s), hypothesise a way in which housing and support can help solve a social injustice.

Step 2 – Submission

You submit your proposed idea using our Application Form and emailing it to Apply@Commonweal.org.uk. The Call closes at 5pm, 19 April.

Step 3 – Review

Our Selection Panel consisting of Commonweal staff, Trustees and experts across the youth homelessness and investment sectors review your applications. We will then select up-to four applicants to progress into the Feasibility Study phase.

Step 4 – Feasibility Study

Commonweal will contact successful applicants and discuss the terms of the funding with you in more detail, ensuring that both parties are content with the agreed next steps for you to undertake and deliver your Feasibility Study. This is a piece of research that you will undertake or commission that assesses the viability of the model financially, operationally, and in terms of likelihood of addressing the social injustice.



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Feasibility Studies often take several months of research before completion. If your model does not prove feasible, that is fine, you do not need to return the money, but your model won't progress to pilot project stage.

Step 5 – Property-based Pilot Project

If the model proves feasible, we will explore ways for us to work together based on the findings of the study and the viability of our involvement in the project. This will be done in unison with social investors with the intention for Commonwealth to acquire property and deliver the project in partnership with you over a course of up to 10 years.

The property-acquisition element is crucial however: all applications require a property-acquisition element to be considered, as this is how we enable you to run your project.

What are we looking for?

Imaginative ideas

- We want new housing models that seek to address a social injustice, so that we can test them with you
- The idea should be imaginative – this could be i. the client group; ii. the model; iii. the support element; iv. the location; or a mix of any of the above.
- We are after ideas for models at this stage, the inner workings of the project will be determined later, through the Feasibility Study and with our support
- The model must be aimed at young people over the age of 18 who have had experience of least one of:
 - The care system
 - Mental health problems or are neurodivergent
 - Difficult experiences in the education system, particularly those who faced serial exclusion

A solid business case:

- All applications must outline the housing and support elements of the model. The application is the first step leading to a full Property-based Pilot Project, so it must detail how this pilot could work should it progress to that stage.
- It must contain details of property-acquisition. Property acquisition is managed by Commonwealth, but your application needs to detail the proposed location, number of properties required and how these properties will help support your proposed client group.
- This is important because Commonwealth operates by purchasing property and leasing it to our partners at reduced rates, so there must be a financially prudent business case for us to invest in.



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A committed, qualified and enthusiastic partner organisation:

- Partners must be a not-for-profit, but this can include local or combined authorities
- Prospective organisations do not need to be experts in housing or have experience in delivering projects involving housing before, but you will need the capacity to deliver the project if it progresses to that stage. You do need to indicate how you think the project would work in practical terms, including the housing management element of a project, which our partners manage.
- Commonwealth funds and commissions evaluation of all of our projects, and therefore we want partners who are committed to evaluating the project, share the learning and, where possible, seek replication.
- We especially welcome applications from BAME-led and BAME-focused organisations.
- This is **your** project, so we want partners who are as enthusiastic about their housing solution as we are.

What we are NOT looking for?

- Models that already exist. We want these ideas to be new and original, so please do research around the issue and model that you're proposing before applying. If something similar exists but what you're proposing has a different element to it, that is fine, but please make us aware of this and we can discuss with you further.
- Projects that already exist. The Call for New Ideas is for new projects only, and therefore we are not offering additional funding for existing projects.

What will we offer to qualifying applicants in return?

Funding:

- As part of the Feasibility Study, we can offer up-to four applicants between £5-10,000 grant funding to undertake the research to test the viability of their model.
- This can be used to fund internal or external capacity and expertise to deliver the Feasibility Study.
- We do not have an unlimited budget, and therefore will have an eye on value for money projects.

Our start-to-finish support:

We offer support, advice and expertise from start-to-finish. This includes:

- Answering any initial questions and running through your idea pre-application
- Support with the Feasibility Study process
- Managing property-acquisition and setting up your project with you
- Ongoing operational support and strategic input
- Commissioning of expert evaluation



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- Our network of engaged partners in the housing sector, researchers for Feasibility Studies or project evaluations, social investors, existing or past project partners, third sector organisations, local and national policy-makers, and media.
- Communication, policy and replication support from our experienced policy and communications team.

How can you apply?

The deadline for submitting your application is 5pm Friday 19th April 2024.

Organisations interested in putting forward an idea should download and complete the Application Form found on our [website](#) and return it by email to apply@commonweal.org.uk.

We are happy to discuss the process with you throughout the application window. If you would like to ask any questions or set up a meeting, please email apply@commonweal.org.uk.

What happens next?

Throughout April and May, Commonweal staff, Trustees and two supporting youth homelessness experts will review the applications. We will be in contact with all applicants in May to let them know if they have been successful.

From here, we will work with successful applicants to support them to undertake the Feasibility Study research and with hope, we will be working together on a new housing solution to a social injustice in the coming months.

Resources

Useful supporting materials can be found on our website www.CommonwealHousing.org.uk

- For more on [How We Work](#), including details of the Commonweal model, property acquisition and social investment
- For more on [Feasibility Studies](#), including previous examples
- For more on [Property-based Pilot Projects](#)
- For more on [Homeless Link's research](#) that guided our Call for New Ideas: Young People
- Our Call for New Ideas [success stories](#) from previous applicants