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## ANNUAL REVIEW

2007 - 2008

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## *Chair's Message*



**Fiona Mactaggart MP**

This report covers the first full year that I have had the privilege of serving as chair of Commonweal. Our year started with the usual procedure at Commonweal, which is a review of our progress, the learning that we need to take from that and the setting of new goals based on that learning.

Our overall strategy continues to be to work with partners to help homeless people who also need specialist support. We developed a new slogan which is designed to encapsulate what we aim to achieve by this strategy: "Housing Solutions to Social Injustice". This slogan has helped us within Commonweal and the Partners we work with now and hope to work with in the future, to focus more intensely on what Commonweal brings to a partnership and is already paying dividends.

This slogan made a real contribution to achieving the first 5 new goals we set ourselves at the beginning of the year to enable us to better deliver our strategy. These goals were;

- To understand where the greatest needs exist and to refine our definition of those people we should help.
- To develop our external communications so that people would better understand what we do and so want to work with us as partners.
- To develop our systems further so that our projects truly act as role models that others will want to replicate.
- To successfully launch the Re-Unite project in partnership with Housing for Women and Women in Prison.
- To continue to develop another project for launch in 2008.

Developing our communications started with the production of a new web site launched in early 2008. The technology embedded in that web site will result in more frequent communications with those people with whom we want to maintain contact and develop relationships.

Systems have been successfully developed to what we believe are role model standards and this is now enabling us to create and launch projects quickly, efficiently and with minimum origination work. This latter point is particularly important given the very small executive team that we have at Commonweal. We remain committed to thorough independent assessment of each project, usually by an academic partner, so that we can really test how well our approach works.

## ***Chair's Message (cont)***

The Re-Unite Project was successfully launched in October at an event attended by Baroness Jean Corston, whose report on vulnerable women in the criminal justice system highlighted the plight of homeless women leaving prison.

This launch provided an opportunity to communicate how our work contributes to tackling wider social policy problems. Now, after only eight months of operation, the success of the Re-Unite Project in helping mothers, who would otherwise be homeless, resettle with their children is producing impressive results and is reported on more fully later in this Review.

We are developing another project, as planned, and this is also covered in a later section. While success in developing particular types of project can lead to new opportunities in a similar field, Commonweal wants to apply its approach across a broad range of social injustice issues.

In developing role model projects, Commonweal contributes housing, systems and project management resources but always needs specialist partners to deal with the service delivery to those people who are experiencing injustice. To achieve this, we are constantly searching for specialist partners who can help us with the service delivery element of the projects and I very much hope that if anyone reading this has any ideas about which specialist service partners could help us develop projects, you will not hesitate to introduce those ideas to me.

In conclusion, I think the year under review has been successful in growing Commonweal from its very small beginnings and I would like to thank and recognise that that success is largely do to my fellow Trustees, the Executives of Commonweal and our Key Partners in our projects, namely, Rainer, Housing for Women, Women in Prison, the Department of Criminology, Cambridge University, Habinteg Housing, St. Mungo's and Medaille Trust.

## ***Completed Projects***



RESET was a partnership led by Rainer and was funded by the EU under the EQUAL funding mechanism.

Unlike most Commonweal projects, RESET had a lifespan of only two years during which time the aim was to show that certain interventions linked with systems, could reduce the disturbingly high rate of recidivism amongst homeless youngsters on their release from Young Offender Institutions. Two Strands were tested with one being centred on Manchester where homeless youngsters were provided with a range of support services to help them establish themselves as successful, independent, productive, law-abiding citizens but without the provision of accommodation. The second Strand, the strand in which Commonweal participated, aimed to do all work included in the Manchester Strand but provide the addition of housing in order to explore if predictable and quality secure housing also being used to prevent homelessness could improve the chances of young people not reverting to crime.

As well as providing one-bedroom flats in the Boroughs of Lewisham, Greenwich and Newham for the project, Commonweal contributed to the fixtures, fittings and furnishings of the flats and paid for a Project Co-ordinator to manage all the services required by the young people who participated in this strand of the project. Amongst these services provided were help with mental and physical health, independent living skills and obtaining employment.

Being a short-term demonstration project, it is not possible to quote robust statistical analysis of the performance of the project, but nonetheless, encouraging observations can be made.

The first observation is that based on the statistics for re-offending amongst homeless people released from Young Offenders Institutions, half of the participants should have at least been charged by the Police of committing an offence which resulted in them, if found guilty, being returned to a Young Offenders Institution. In fact, none of the participants were charged.

Focus Groups and interviews with participants gave feedback that participants considered RESET had been very helpful for them.

## ***Completed Projects (cont)***

Procedures and specifications were produced for the project and released into the public domain so that those interested in developing the objectives of RESET could easily take up the role model systems and documentation and get on with the delivery of service to former young offenders.

On completion of the project, the properties, when vacated, showed the absolute minimum levels of wear and tear that could be expected from any occupier. Our young tenants demonstrated that they took good care of a decent home and shattered any prejudices that people might have about how irresponsible such young people can be.



**The kitchen of a flat provided by  
Commonweal for RESET**

## *Current Projects*



Re-Unite is a Partnership between Commonweal, Housing for Women (the Lead Partner in the project) and Women in Prison with the objectives of demonstrating how a combination of housing provision and support services can rectify the injustices suffered by homeless mothers on their release from prison. The project takes particular inspiration from the findings of the Corston Review published in the spring of 2007.

Commonweal is particularly proud of the Re-Unite project, not only for the services and opportunities it provides to homeless mothers on their release from prison, but also is an example of creativity and energy amongst the Partners to get results, fast.

The ability of the Partners to make things happen quickly can be demonstrated by the following time line. Initial discussions about a possible concept commenced between Commonweal and Housing for Women as the germ of an idea in the autumn of 2006 and yet by April 2007, the full workings of the project had been agreed, Women in Prison had joined the Team recruited as the Service Partner and quickly raised the operating finance. Specifications and details of the complete project were signed and formalised in April 2007. With formalisation having been completed, Women in Prison used their admirable networks in the prison estate to identify possible participants. Commonweal procured suitably specified homes that were tailor-made for care and well-being of young children. Housing for Women furthered the details of the management and worked with Commonweal to organise the evaluation process for the long-term project. The high level of activity meant that the first mother and her children were able to move in to a Re-Unite home in September 2007 and other mothers with their children followed at a frequency of about one every month.

The success in mobilising a project, whilst something to be proud of, is, of course, a small part of the overall story with the actual benefit to the service users being what really matters. Appointing an independent third party evaluator in the form of the Institute of Criminology at University of Cambridge is the means by which this impartial evaluation is obtained and in April 2008 Dr. Loraine Gelsthorpe of the Institute of Criminology, presented her evaluation of the first six months of operations.

## ***Current Projects (cont)***

The findings with regard to the benefit to mothers and children were extremely encouraging, but Dr. Gelsthorpe was also asked to comment on much broader aspects of the Re-Unite project including how others could replicate it, when the concept has been fully proven.

In this aspect of the project, useful learning emerged when Dr. Gelsthorpe pointed out that in the first six months of operation the costs of service and ratio of service providers to service users was too high for others to be able to replicate the project, especially if funded from Central Government. Whilst some of these costs and ratios were the result of the characteristics of initial start-ups, the comments were accepted and one of the goals over the coming year will be to ensure that the costs and specification of services are inline with what others can reasonably be expected to provide in the realities of the third sector.

Coincidentally and, almost at the same time, both Women in Prison as service providers and the Department of Criminology as evaluators, started questioning whether accepting only women who were immediately re-united with their children on their release from prison, exerted enough stress on the systems of Re-Unite to prove the robustness of those systems and so it was decided to "raise the bar". This new challenge was accepted by dividing the project into two strands with the initial project being called the "Mother & Children's Programme" and a new strand being introduced and called the "Mothers' Programme".

The Mothers' Programme takes mothers who would otherwise be homeless on their release from prison and accommodates them in one-bedroom flats provided by Commonweal. Women in Prison extend their services to these mothers to enable them to regain the custody of their children and re-establish a family life. The Mothers' Programme started functioning in April 2008 and already a date has been set when the first mother hopes to regain the custody of her children. When custody of the children is obtained, a mother and her children are moved into the family housing that is part of the Re-Unite estate.

It is planned that the proof of concept for Re-Unite will be established in the second half of 2009 after which others will be encouraged to replicate the project and although this is a high risk project that can be subjected to set backs, it is currently envisaged that it will be possible to achieve this goal, on time.



**All Commonweal homes in the 'Mother & Children' Strand have adequate play areas**

## ***Current Projects (cont)***

**HABINTEG**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD



*"Buying A House From A  
Wheelchair"*

As part of Commonweal's policy of exploring circumstances where people may suffer injustices connected with housing, since in the late summer of 2007, Commonweal has been working with Habinteg, the Registered Social Landlord that specialises in providing housing for people with disabilities.

The work with Habinteg pursued a range of enquiries but the decision was made eventually to focus on one fairly straightforward line of enquiry and pursue this in detail. The situation was chosen because of significant public interest in the topic and, particularly a number of conferences held that explored the circumstances of wheelchair users.

The basis for the enquiry is to test if the current regulations in London with regard to town planning and building regulations that have been modified to ensure the production of "wheelchair friendly homes" has solved all the problems of wheelchair users or if there is still more to be done. Commonweal and Habinteg jointly developed a hypothesis that whilst the interior of new homes is now well specified, other improvements are needed in the supply chain, particularly with regard to the marketing and funding of houses for people who are dependent on wheelchairs.

An initial research programme has been created, based on focus groups and the first stage of this programme is already under way and will be completed by July 2008.



## ***Projects In Development***

### **The Resettlement of Trafficked Women & Female Former Sex Workers**

For three years, Commonweal has been exploring the practicalities of developing a resettlement project for liberated trafficked women and former sex workers who are homeless. The need for such a demonstration project has been heightened by the effectiveness of the Pentameter II initiative launched by the Police.

For a long time, practical difficulties and the establishing of suitable partnerships prevented progress in this direction, but at the end of 2007, practical and enthusiastic relationships were established with St. Mungo's and Medaille Trust so that real progress could be made with regard to delivering a worthwhile project and by the end of the year under review, draft specifications and documentation, together with letters of intent had been exchanged between the three partners with a goal being set to obtain funding for the project and launch its operations in the first half of 2009.

### **Our Continuing Search For Partners**

Commonweal has the resources to:

- Quickly deliver well-specified homes in the right locations for a project where they are needed to demonstrate 'Solutions to Social Injustice'.
- Evaluate examples of social injustice and get to the heart of what medium and long-term actions are necessary to resolve those injustices.
- Invest human resources and intellectual capital to create role model projects.

However, experts in understanding social injustices or providing the services to resolve them will recognise that we always need specialist partners;

- to understand the circumstances of potential service users
- to provide the requisite services
- to evaluate projects
- to provide important insights into social injustices

Such partners must be able to offer long-term commitment.

If you or your organisation could have a role with us as a partner, please contact us. We love having informal discussions about developing ideas.

Commonweal Housing  
The Carriage House  
Knowle  
Wadhurst Road  
Frant  
TN3 9EJ

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## Our Finances

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the year ended 31 December 2007

	2007 £	2006 £
<b>Incoming resources</b>		
Voluntary income	310,000	230,000
Rental income	11,562	2,070
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>321,562</b>	<b>232,070</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>		
Delivering housing solutions	184,450	166,264
Understanding housing needs	9,190	34,210
Governance costs	7,506	15,288
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>201,146</b>	<b>215,762</b>
<b>Net incoming resources for the year</b>	<b>120,416</b>	<b>16,308</b>
Fund balances at 1 January 2007	16,308	-
<b>Fund balances at 31 December 2007</b>	<b>136,724</b>	<b>16,308</b>

### BALANCE SHEET As at 31 December 2007

	2007 £	2006 £
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	134,830	17,933
Cash at bank	54,768	1,900
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>189,598</b>	<b>19,833</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Creditors: amounts due within one year	(52,874)	(3,525)
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>136,724</b>	<b>16,308</b>
<b>Income funds</b>		
Unrestricted funds	136,724	16,308
<b>Total Charity funds</b>	<b>136,724</b>	<b>16,308</b>

## **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 2007 which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 17 March 2008. 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  
Trustee  
3 July 2008

## **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 2 June 2008.

### **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 2007.

H. W. Fisher & Company  
Registered Auditor  
Acre House, 11-15 William Road,  
London NW1 3ER  
3 July 2008

## ***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
Secretary:	Gary Medazoumian FCA
Bankers:	Barclays Bank plc 7th 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