



# Commonweal Annual Impact Review 2017/18

**commonweal**  **housing**  
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

# Contents

<b>Chair's Opening Comments</b>	3
<b>Chief Executive's Opening Comments</b>	4
<b>Targets for 2018/19 and performance in 2017/18</b>	5
<b>Our 2017 impact in numbers</b>	6
<b>Our unique approach</b>	8
<b>Inspiring new thinking to uncover the unknown</b>	10
Wheelchair Accessible Housing	10
Couples First: Rough Sleeping Couples	11
LivShare: Affordable Housing for Single People on Low Incomes	12
Non-Resident Parents: Housing Options Research – Update	13
<b>Investigating Solutions</b>	14
The Commonweal Pods	14
<b>Facilitating innovation through partnerships</b>	16
Move On Up: Providing Housing Options for Young Adult Carers	16
Rhea: Housing Options for Women Fleeing Domestic Violence	18
Amari: Stage 2 Accommodation for Women Fleeing Sexual Exploitation and Exiting Prostitution	20
<b>Enabling and championing change</b>	22
NRPF: Housing those with No Recourse to Public Funds	22
Freedom2Work: Piloting a Rent Credit Scheme	24
<b>Informing policy and transforming practice through replication</b>	26
Peer Landlord: Supportive Shared Housing for Individuals with Lower General Needs	26
Interview from Jeremy Swain, Former CEO, Thames Reach	28
<b>Policy and Thinking</b>	29
<b>Financial Review</b>	30



**The Rt Hon. Fiona Mactaggart**  
Chair, Commonweal Housing Ltd.

## Governance and Acknowledgements

### Chair's Opening Comments

From the mid 70s until 2015 housing was not high on the public agenda. In surveys of public attitudes it rarely featured as a concern, typically polling 10 per cent or less and struggling to compete for attention. But it has reached national prominence again, so much that three quarters of the public recognize that Britain has a housing crisis.

Commonweal knows that even where there are efforts to increase housing supply, individuals who face particular challenges in their lives are overlooked. The needs of people who find it hardest to get a suitable home, or who face significant injustice which a stable home could help them to overcome, are not catered for.

Commonweal exists to show how this failure can be remedied. We work with partner organisations to focus on a particular need. Our aim is to learn, then demonstrate and replicate how best to meet the needs of those overlooked people.

In an era of austerity it is hard for policy makers and charities to be innovative. The needs of the people are greater than ever and cash is tight. In this year's annual impact review we focus on how, as an action learning charity, we exist to help partners to use their expertise and imagination to find new ways to overcome the problems people face. Our partnership with them does not simply include providing housing but ensuring that the projects are independently evaluated so we can understand what works and how it works. Once this has been established, we then take on the responsibility of finding new partners to replicate what we have learnt, to provide homes and support for people facing the same challenges.

Sometimes we discover that a project which was designed to tackle one challenge has new applications. Our peer landlord project, which has provided supportive housing enabling people who have been homeless to sustain employment is being adapted to provide stable homes for care leavers. As the Re-Unite programme showed by exposing the damaging impact of maternal imprisonment on children, our projects can uncover new social injustices beyond those we set out to solve.

Commonweal remains future focused and up for a challenge. Following the research we sponsored last year on migrant workers in tent encampments we funded a design competition to develop "pods" to provide security and privacy for people who live like this. This year's report details further research we have funded over the course of 2017/18.

In 2017 we lost our wonderful trustee Jane Slowey, who died of breast cancer in October. Her knowledge of the voluntary sector and foresight helped us to sustain that focus on the future and we miss her greatly. She told me in her last year that Commonweal was the most rewarding of all the boards she had served on. This year we will organize, in her memory, a partnership with Birmingham University to involve students in thinking about new ways housing can help to tackle social injustice.



**Ashley Horsey**  
Chief Executive  
Commonweal Housing Ltd.

## Chief Executive's Opening Comments

*"We simply would not have been able to try this without you. You've given us the space to get things wrong but also the rigor and structure to help us learn if that does happen."*

This is something I hear so often from our project partners. As an independently funded charity, not reliant upon government or public sector grants, Commonweal has the ability and the ambition to embrace topics and issues that some may feel are too difficult or risky to address.

Giving fantastic people and fantastic organisations the space and the means to try out something they believe will make a difference to the lives of the individuals and beneficiaries they support is what Commonweal exists to do.

Back in 2015 at the start of our 3 year learning partnership with IVAR (the Institute of Voluntary Action Research) they undertook an initial stakeholder review helping to capture what people thought about Commonweal. They noted:

*"Commonweal Housing is held in high regard for investing in need in the form of housing solutions for social justice; for embedding a culture of learning across the organisation, through commissioned evaluation and corporate activities and for being an excellent broker of relationships and a partner in its own right, generous, flexible and thorough."*

Generous, flexible and thorough! How brilliant is that!

At Commonweal we try and practice what we preach about continually learning: from how we work with partners; how projects are delivered and where we can best add value. This has led to us setting up a funding stream to commission short pieces of research and early stage feasibility studies. These reports are valuable in their own right and are published to aid general understanding of an issue. But we also recognize their importance in deciding whether an idea may be worth developing into a full-scale action learning project with Commonweal acquiring properties to enable a partner to fully test their new idea.

Over the last year we have learnt about how we can improve engagement with our independent evaluators. We have drawn on their knowledge to review the pilot projects and to additionally help guide the delivery partners. We recognize that they share our ambition to ensure the learning from the projects we facilitate has an impact, encouraging others to think in new ways about solutions to social injustices.

I have been delighted that we have over recent years attracted a fantastic group of social investors – charities, foundations and investment funds – that recognise the need to support new ideas and new thinking. We are grateful to them for their financial backing (more than £5.5M to date) that has enabled us to deliver more properties and more projects. I am even more delighted that they remain actively engaged with us, our partners and evaluators, keen to capture the learning throughout the journey of our pilot projects. It is great that they, along with our fantastic founding and principal social investor, Grove End Housing (to whom we remain eternally grateful) want to come on our journey *'doing the trying and testing not the tried and tested'*.

Thank you to all those engaged in supporting Commonweal in whatever way.

## 2017 Performance How we did against last year's targets

### ▶ Complete a positive exit from the Re-Unite project.

We produced a well-received ten-year review of the Re-Unite project which included a range of recommendations reflecting the aims of key stakeholders.

In 2017 we met with the Ministry of Justice Minister Dr Philip Lee MP reinforcing the messages of the report, encouraging his department to include the key recommendations in his department's expected Female Offenders Strategy. At the time of writing this review, the strategy had been further delayed by government, but having received sector wide approval, there are hopeful signs that the government will adopt the lessons from Re-Unite.

### ▶ Secure a target of £3m of new capital funding to deliver a new action learning project to commence in 2018/19

Over the last year social investment and capital funding discussions have focused on buying out our original investment in the Peer Landlord project. Commonweal have begun progressing new options which seek to address areas of injustice and an unmet housing need for those with longer term, complex mental health issues – specifically those transitioning from children to adult mental health services.

### ▶ Further raise the profile of Commonweal and housing solutions to social injustice amongst parliamentarians and other influential policy makers

Last year Commonweal spoke at 7 national conferences including 24Housing's Diversity in Housing Conference, sharing learning from our projects. Our projects appeared in five media publications including the Guardian and Inside Housing and on a range of guest blogs. Our work was additionally highlighted as best practice in parliamentary debates.

### ▶ Develop a viable short term housing alternative to rough sleeping and tent encampments that can be deployed within existing empty buildings.

We have continued to develop the 'pod' solution – two prototype pods have been field tested and we will continue to display the pods at conferences and exhibitions in 2018, gathering vital feedback.

## TARGETS FOR 2018

### ▶ Secure the replication of the supportive shared housing Peer Landlord approach and achieve a good exit to the original social investment

### ▶ Commission and promote the learning from at least three new short term research and feasibility studies

### ▶ Commence delivery of a new property acquisition action learning project

### ▶ Establish a Jane Slowey memorial bursary in partnership with the University of Birmingham, encouraging and enabling young students and academics to explore and research areas of housing inequality and social injustice

### ▶ Promote the LivShare concept of modular new build shared housing

# Commonweal's Year in Numbers

# 11

PROJECT PARTNERS  
SUPPORTED



# 41

WE HAVE  
LEASED  
PROPERTIES  
TO OUR PROJECT PARTNERS

# 4

NEW  
RESEARCH  
STUDIES



# 3

NEW EVALUATIONS  
COMMISSIONED



# 116

ADULTS  
SUPPORTED  
THROUGH OUR  
PROJECTS

# OVER 50

CHILDREN  
HOUSED THROUGH  
OUR PROJECTS



# 1

NEW  
TRUSTEE



# 27

PARLIAMENTARY  
QUESTIONS TABLED  
ON OUR PROJECTS

# OUR PROJECTS HAVE BEEN SHORTLISTED FOR 2 AWARDS



# Our unique approach

Whether it's through commissioning research or the creation of rigorously evaluated prototype solutions, we recognise the role of housing in addressing social injustice.

At Commonweal we pride ourselves on building challenging and supportive partnerships. We work alongside expert partners to trial and test new housing solutions; we ask searching questions whilst encouraging our partners to think beyond existing solutions in search of new untested approaches.

### Change through housing

For many, current housing and support options simply don't address the complications of their lives. By piloting new, hopefully replicable ideas we seek to help people overcome the housing injustices they face.

### Change through partnership

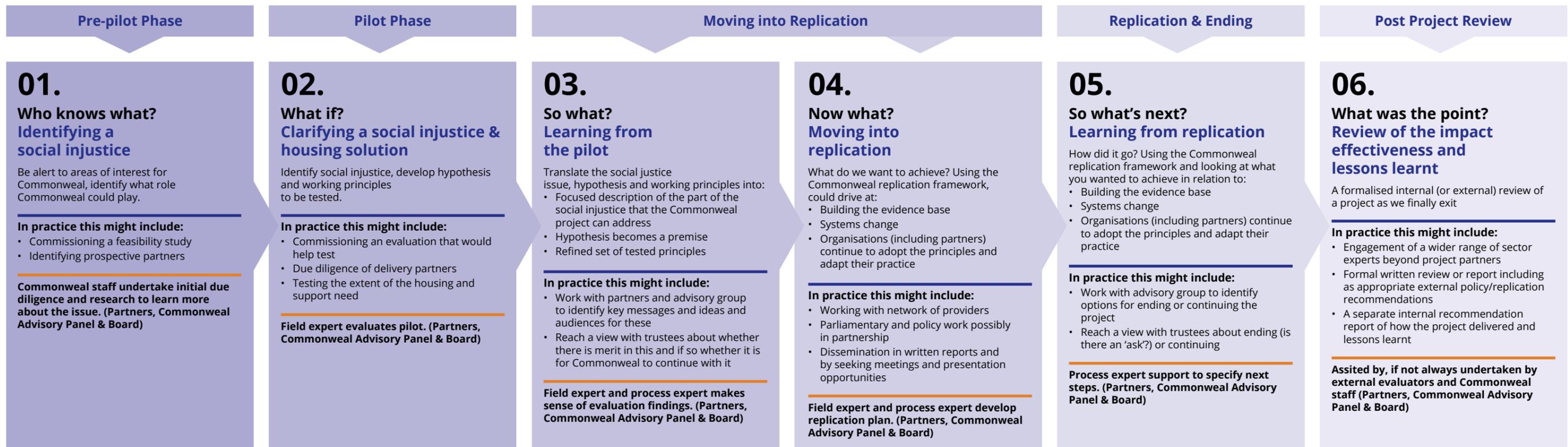
We recognise that sometimes partnerships are simply better than working alone. Using our charitable resources we provide experts and partner organisations with the opportunity to trial and test pilot projects providing solutions to social injustices.

### Change through evaluation and learning

We see that injustice exists partly because current solutions and housing support mechanisms don't always work. Seeking out new ideas and being open to potential, untested solutions, we aim to be brave and challenging. This means being open to, but always learning from, unsuccessful outcomes as well as successful ones.

### Change through replication and action

For us, simply providing homes to pilot new projects isn't enough. We define and evaluate the services to create prototype role model solutions. Through the replication of what works and the lessons from what doesn't, we seek to leave a lasting legacy that continues beyond our involvement.



# Inspiring new thinking to uncover the unknown

Commonweal has this year continued to develop our work identifying new areas of social injustice where we believe safe, secure and accessible housing can form part of a solution.

In 2017/18 we worked with a number of new partners to seek out innovative ideas and examine previously unexplored areas of social injustice. Providing both financial and operational support we have enabled our partners to deliver a range of new feasibility studies and research reports.



## Wheelchair Accessible Housing



### The injustice:

Across the UK there is a clear housing-led inequality between disabled and non-disabled people. A lack of investment means there are very few wheelchair accessible homes available for private rent. Many wheelchair users are therefore dependent on being able to buy their own home or accessing a rationed supply of adapted social housing.

### Our offer

We have provided the social innovation partnership Community Sponsors Homes (CSH) with a grant to support essential qualitative and quantitative research into the demand for wheelchair accessible housing in London.

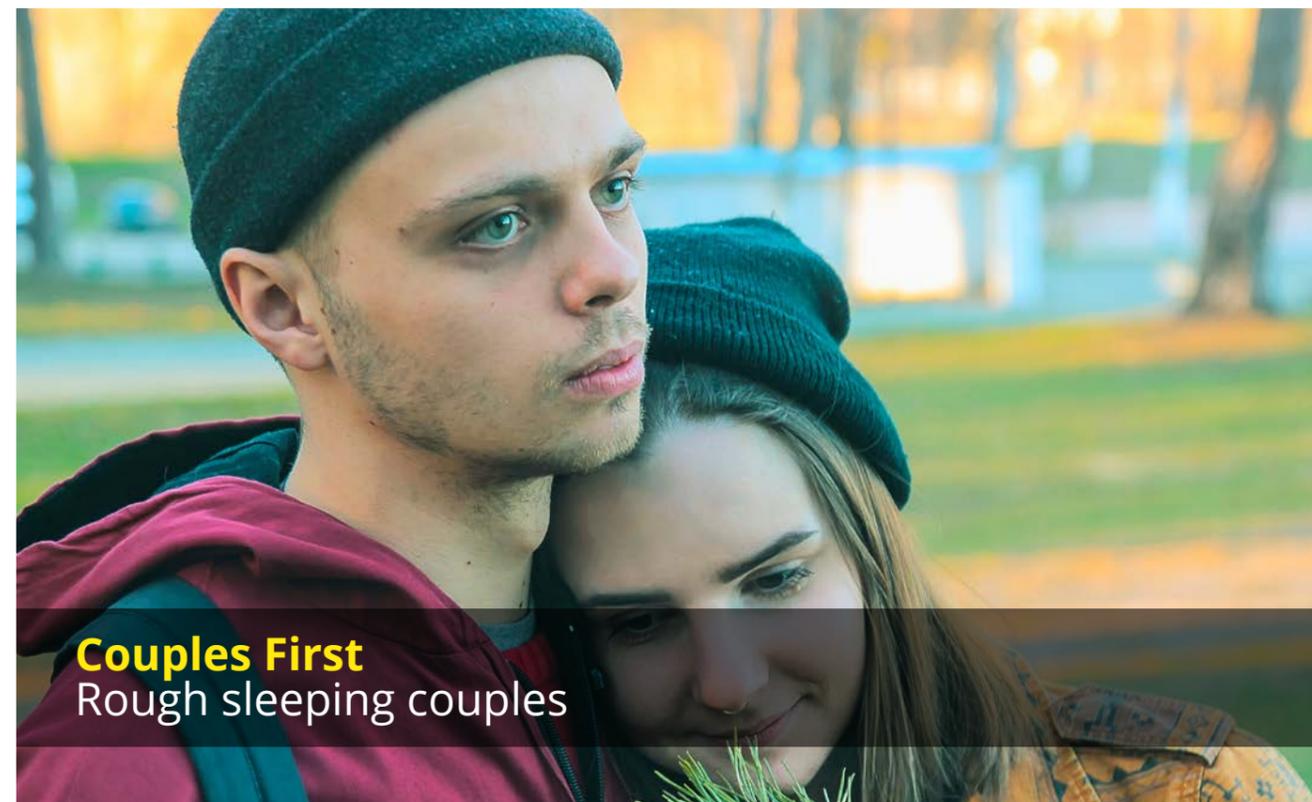
The research will pull together disparate information on the demand and supply side for wheelchair accessible homes with the aim of developing a 'heat map' across London to aid their property acquisition programme.

### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'Commonweal's focus on innovation and testing new approaches specifically in housing occupies a very unique space. Their support has provided a level of credibility to the research, which we have found to be a fundamental building block to creating solid research.'* **Eleanor Bowden, CEO, Community Sponsors Homes**

### KEY FACTS:

- There are currently 1.2 million wheelchair users in the UK today (NHS)
- Wheelchair users are unable to visit over half of UK homes built before 1919 (English Housing Survey)
- Without a suitable home, many of these individuals and their families face emotional, financial and physical distress.



## Couples First Rough sleeping couples

### The injustice

There are many different types of homeless 'couple'. At present, we don't know enough about the nature of the relationships between homeless couples. Some may have come together on the streets, whilst others may have arrived on the streets together. There is, therefore, very little information for services to draw on in order to develop adequate responses that meet the needs of homeless couples. Additionally, very little work has been developed around couples experience of accessing appropriate services, support and accommodation.

### Our offer:

Brighton Women's Centre approached Commonweal to fund a new feasibility study exploring the nature of couples living on the streets in Sussex. The first research of its kind to focus exclusively on this specific injustice, by supporting this research we hope to encourage new thinking, challenging existing injustice around rough sleeping couples.

- **Less than 10% of services in England provided accommodation for couples (same-sex/heterosexual) (2013 SNAP survey).**
- **Only 1% of those accessing services were classified as a couple.**

### THE RESEARCH:

Using funding from Commonweal, Brighton Women's Centre commissioned Homeless Link to conduct the research.

The research explores how couples arrived on the streets, the nature of their attachment, couples experience of accessing appropriate services, support and accommodation.

### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'We wanted to work with Commonweal on this idea because of their strong track record in the field of action learning research. Working with Commonweal has added real value to the project through the support and expertise of colleagues at Commonweal, their national platform and longstanding credibility in addressing social injustice'* **Lisa Dando, Director, Brighton Women's Centre**

## LivShare

Affordable housing for single people on low incomes



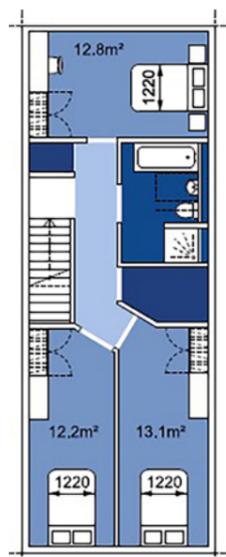
### What is LivShare?

LivShare is a new, flexible, low rent housing concept based on purpose built shared houses. It is designed to offer the best of communal living whilst at the same time creating high quality, safe private bedrooms.

The model, which uses new modular build technologies, seeks to provide a solution to the significant housing need of single young people with lower incomes who struggle to access decent private accommodation. The design has been led by Andy Redfearn who previously created the Y:Cube housing solution for the YMCA.

### Our offer

Over the past year Commonweal has provided funding to support the feasibility research into LivShare. This has led to the publication of a new report exploring the need for the model and how LivShare responds to this need. The report will seek to raise awareness of the need for a new form of modular, shared accommodation.



### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'Commonweal's research and funding focus on promoting creative ways to provide accommodation for people in housing need is unique. Their ability to support, fund and critique new innovations in housing and support models is so important to providers as they look to develop new models. Their wealth of experience and knowledge of the sector, coupled with their enthusiasm and support for designing the delivery and operational LivShare model has been very valuable to me'* **Andy Redfearn, Designer, LivShare**

## Non-Resident Parents

Housing options research - Update



Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research

In last year's annual review we reported on new Commonweal funded research exploring how shared housing solutions meet the requirements of non-resident parents.

Produced by the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research the report exposed that shared housing is far from ideal for most non-resident parents. Being unable to afford self-contained housing has a big impact on their ability to parent children. This is further exacerbated by a benefits system which fails to recognise the complex challenges faced by many non-resident parents meaning the children of non-resident parents often live in much poorer households.

The report calls for properties to be made as child-friendly as possible and for housing providers to support non-resident parents in shared housing to take an active role in parenting.

### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'As an action learning charity, Commonweal were highly supportive throughout the research process – they shared their knowledge of the housing sector, and provided specific insights into different forms of affordable shared housing'* **Kathryn Muir, Cambridge Centre for Housing Planning and Research**

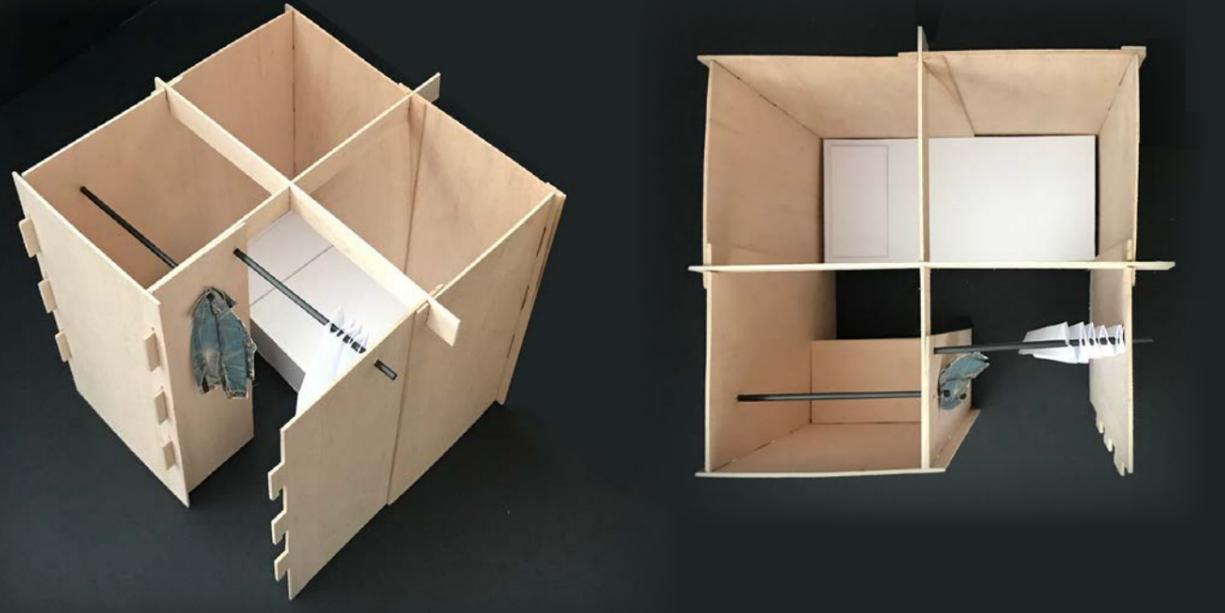
### KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH:

At the centre of the research are a series of recommendations for further action. These include the recommendation that:

- The housing and benefits system should better recognise the reality of shared care arrangements between separated parents, including the need for the child to be accommodated by each of their parents .
- Local authorities consider prioritising the use of DHP to support non-resident parents who are struggling to afford the rent on a one bedroom home.
- Offering longer tenancies to improve security for the parents and child and reduce turnover of other occupants.

# Investigating Solutions

## The Commonweal Pods



Over the past year Commonweal has been working with architects Reed Watts to develop a transitional short term accommodation option which can be deployed multiple times. The result: the **Commonweal Pod**.

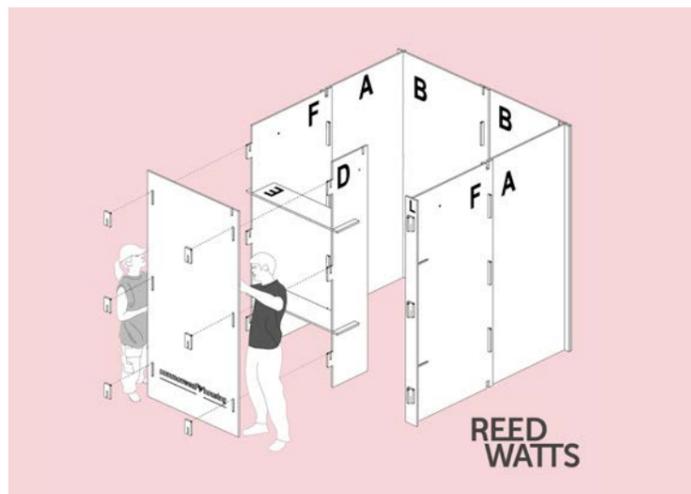
Presenting a practical and affordable option, each pod is made from fireproofed plywood sheets and measures approximately 2x2m. They have been designed specifically to provide short-term, transitional accommodation solution which could be deployed in a range of scenarios including church halls, disused warehouses and night shelters.



### How the idea came about:

Commonweal funded research by Thames Reach revealed that more than 1,500 Romanian immigrants were sleeping rough in makeshift tent encampments in London alone. Many of these encampment dwellers are working. They don't have significant support needs but rather are choosing to sleep in tented encampments to minimize their housing costs.

Emerging from this research was a need for a basic form of temporary accommodation that could be provided at a rate accessible to clients.



### Commonweal formula in action

Despite the clear need for the form of temporary accommodation solution provided by the pods, such an option currently doesn't exist. Building on our ambition to develop and test brave new solutions to overcome social injustices, we have been working closely with Reed Watts. Sharing our expertise on the need for such a solution, we have supported Reed Watts to explore creative ideas, refining the design to ensure it provides the most practical and cost effective option.

Building on feedback and evaluation of prototype models, two full-scale pods were built and trailed in March 2018. The pods have additionally been shortlisted for a Homeless Link innovation award.

### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'Commonweal's design brief presented a worthwhile opportunity to explore creative solutions to one of the many problems associated with homelessness. We have found the dialogue and development of the design with Commonweal extremely rewarding. The support provided by Commonweal has provided us with the opportunity to really test the proposals. Commonweal's passion for the cause, commitment to learning and professionalism makes them unique above other project partners.'* Jim Reed, Partner, Reed Watts Architects



### CASE STUDY

Mark is a 48-year-old male with a history of mental illness. Prior to staying in the pods Mark had been sleeping rough. As winter drew on Mark feared for his own health as he faced the prospect of another month of sleeping outside with little more than an old, very thin sleeping bag to keep him warm.

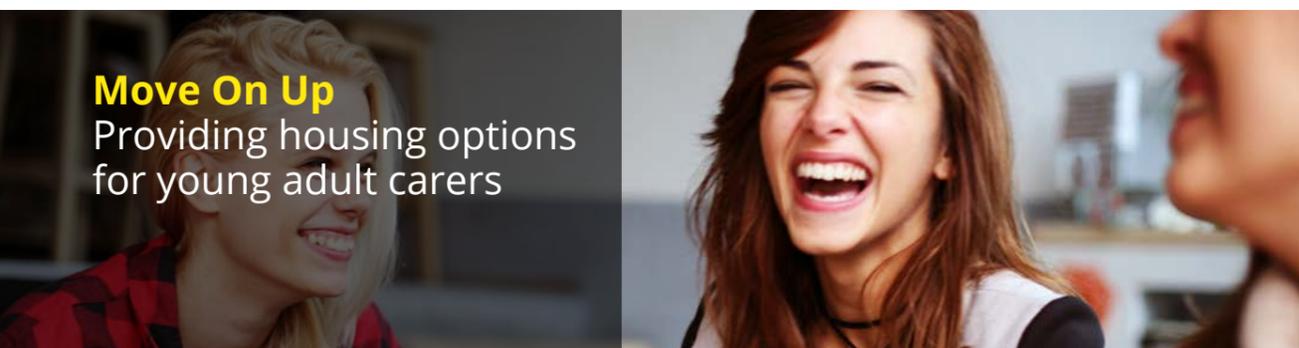
Staying in the pods provided Mark with the freedom to interact with the other hostel guests whilst providing him with his own space. The pods provided him with a sense of security, safely surrounded by his own belongings. Mark further noted that the feeling of having somewhere to return to at the end of the day additionally brought a sense of normality to his life. Mark told Commonweal that this reminder, coupled with the privacy of the pod, had an aspirational impact on him, reinvigorating his sense of worth, whilst providing him with an additional drive to work towards finding more permanent accommodation.



# Facilitating innovation through partnership

At Commonweal we pride ourselves on the passion and enthusiasm we bring to our projects. We remain the only organisation focused on developing and testing ways in which housing can be used to help overcome a social injustice. Independently funded, we use our resources to provide experts with the opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and combat social injustice.

We don't simply sit back and let our project partners do all the hard work though. Our role is to encourage them to be brave, providing them with the resources and support they need to take risks, be ambitious and bold in the pilots they develop.



**Move On Up**  
Providing housing options for young adult carers

## Project overview:

Move On Up provides a shared housing pathway for young adult carers aged between 18-25 years. Run in partnership with Quaker Social Action, Commonweal has, using social investment, provided over £2million of funding used to secure four shared properties for the project.

## Aims

Move On Up seeks to enable participants to deal with some of the common challenges and changes that they are experiencing as young adult carers.

By providing them with accommodation away from their caring responsibilities, alongside support to progress with their employment, education and training goals, the project aims to help young carers develop and thrive.

## Identifying a need

The Carers Trust estimate there are 240,000 young carers aged between 18-24. 12% undertake over 50 hours caring per week, and 25% undertake over 20 hours per week. Young adult carers are an overlooked group when it comes to housing. Many struggle to access practical housing support with many services currently only funded to work with young carers up to the age of 18.

## The Commonweal Approach

Over the past year Commonweal has secured the accommodation QSA need to test their model and establish the project. We have encouraged them to evaluate both the successes and key learning since the project went live in 2017. We have commissioned the Learning and Work Institute to conduct an independent evaluation of the project as it continues to develop. Providing them with the freedom, financial security and confidence to think differently about current services, Commonweal has worked with QSA to facilitate an environment that enables them to innovate as the project develops.

## Benefits for residents

- Provides high quality and affordable rented shared accommodation.
- Provides a tenancy and life skills support and training focused on building resilience and skills both before and during their tenancy.
- Manage successful transitions into independent living with adequate "move on" support.
- A tailored offer developed in partnership with young adult carers to meet their individual circumstances and aspirations.
- Provides up to 24 months of one to one support working with the Move On Up Project Manager to work toward achievements of aspirations in key areas – employment and education, financial awareness and security, relationships, community and social networks.

## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender of Occupants



### Age of Occupants



## KEY STATS

**4**

Commonweal properties leased to QSA

**12**

young adults moving into the project

**8**

currently have active carer responsibilities

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PROJECT PARTNER

### Judith Moran, Quaker Social Action

#### Why did you choose to work with Commonweal as opposed to similar organisations?

*I don't think there are similar organisations. I think what Commonweal does is really distinctive – I don't think our vision could have been realised with any other partner. What's more, I think the values of Commonweal are aligned with our own – a restless curiosity to try things out and learn things from those pilots, with the view of sharing that learning more widely. That's the QSA mission in a nutshell.*

#### What has commonweal brought to the project and its development?

*Commonweal introduced us to the world of social investment and navigated us through a process with them of showcasing Move On Up to potential investors – our original vision and budget grew fourfold as a result of this. We knew we wanted to set up a housing project but we were very apprehensive about the practicalities of purchasing a property. Working with Commonweal, we went with a different model and*

*this is a task that was taken from us completely and we didn't have to worry about this at all.*

#### In your opinion is there anything that makes Commonweal a unique or different kind of partner?

*The vision is a unique one, the expertise is distinctive and the emphasis on evaluation is exemplary.*

#### Would you recommend Commonweal to others?

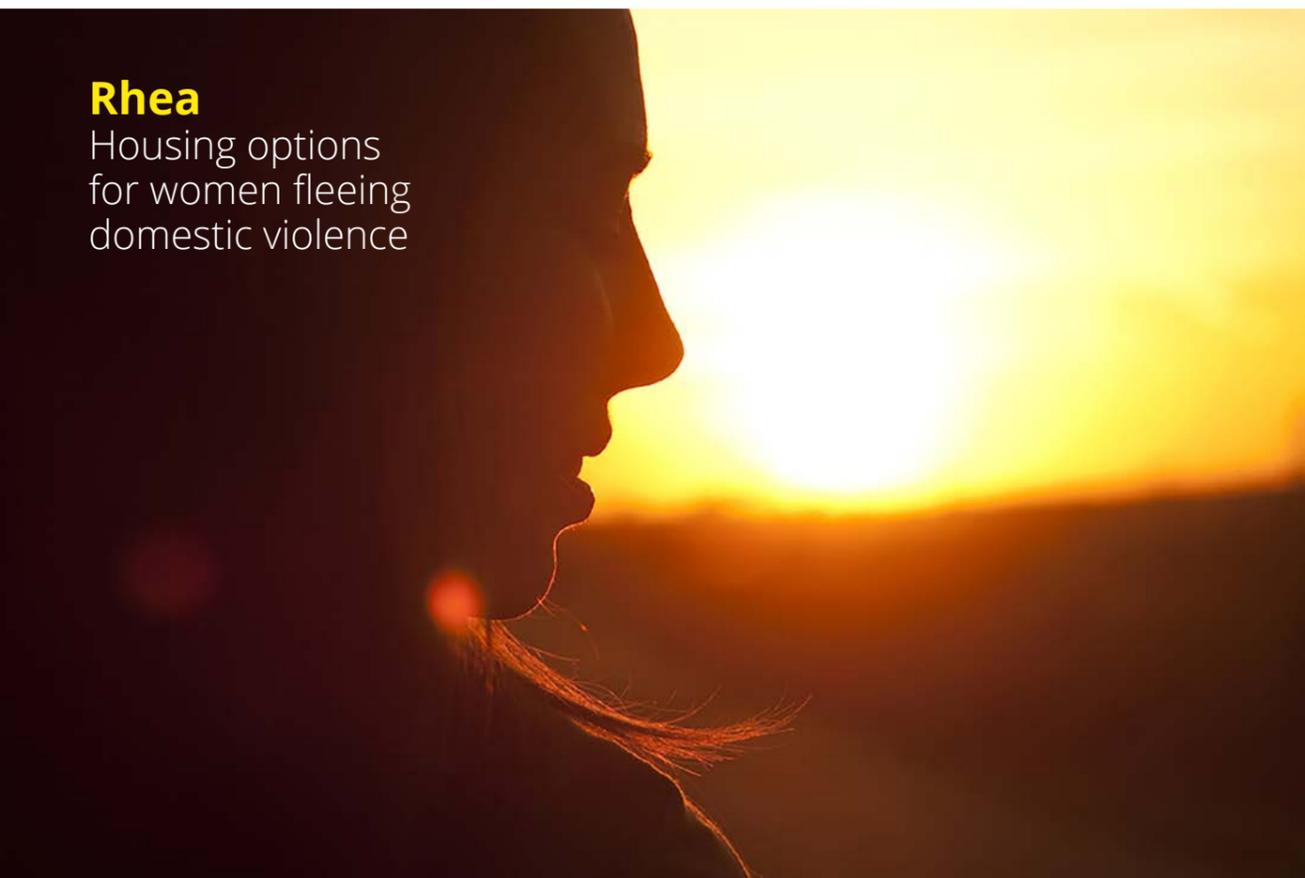
*I already have! Housing is such a basic need and such a pressing concern – it cries out for innovation and for new thinkers and actors in this space. Some of them may find perfect partnerships with Commonweal.*

#### And finally, if you had to describe Commonweal as a car, what would it be in one sentence and why?

*I think Commonweal is like a tow truck, there is a lot of power there, to pull other vehicles along onto an exciting new destination!*

## Rhea

Housing options for women fleeing domestic violence



### Project Overview

Rhea provides support and temporary accommodation to women and their children at risk of or made homeless after fleeing domestic violence. Providing housing and support, it has been designed to prepare them for independent living. The project is a partnership between Solace Women's Aid, Southwark Council and Commonweal Housing.

### The injustice

For many women fleeing domestic violence, access to refuge accommodation is either inappropriate or simply unavailable. Some may have older male children who aren't allowed in women's refuges, whilst others simply aren't able to access the support they need to build their independence.

### Approach

For this project Commonweal has provided eight houses and flats which are leased to Solace Women's Aid. Project partner Solace Women's Aid provide each woman on the project with a client led, tailored support plan to build their independence and move towards independent living. All of the women are Southwark Council referrals.

### Delivering change through partnership

Throughout 2017/18 Commonweal has worked closely with Solace Women's Aid, providing the right properties to develop the Rhea pilot. We have, through regular communication and support, facilitated an environment that encourages Solace Women's Aid to develop Rhea and reflect on the learning from the project. To support this process, Commonweal will seek to appoint an independent expert to evaluate the project in the second half of 2018.

Through the leasing of our properties and ongoing project management support, we will continue to give Solace Women's Aid the space and freedom to seek out new, untested supportive solutions, whilst ensuring they capture key learning, impacts and challenges.



### Case study:

#### Angela

Angela is a 36 years old and has a 14 month old daughter. They have been supported by the Rhea project since June 2017.

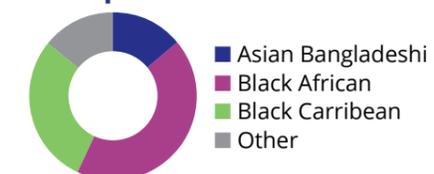
For several years Angela had been subject to both physical and emotional abuse at the hands of a violent ex-partner. Frightened by the abuse, Angela kept her situation a secret from her family and friends. Exacerbated by excessive alcohol consumption and substance misuse, Angela's ex-partner became increasingly violent towards her. Following the birth of her daughter, Angela took the brave decision to flee the family home.

Traumatized by her experience, when Angela was referred to Rhea by Southwark Council she feared for her future and the future of her daughter.

With the care and support of Solace Women's Aid, Angela has begun her road to recovery. Building on the balance of independent living and long-arm support provided through the Rhea project, Angela has enrolled on an Access to Nursing Course and hopes to become a qualified nurse. Alongside her daughter Angela has begun to address her past experience, moving closer to the independent, capable woman she deserves to be.

### KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

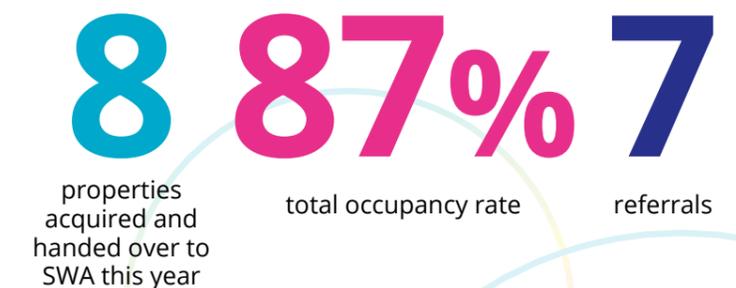
#### Ethnicity of Occupants

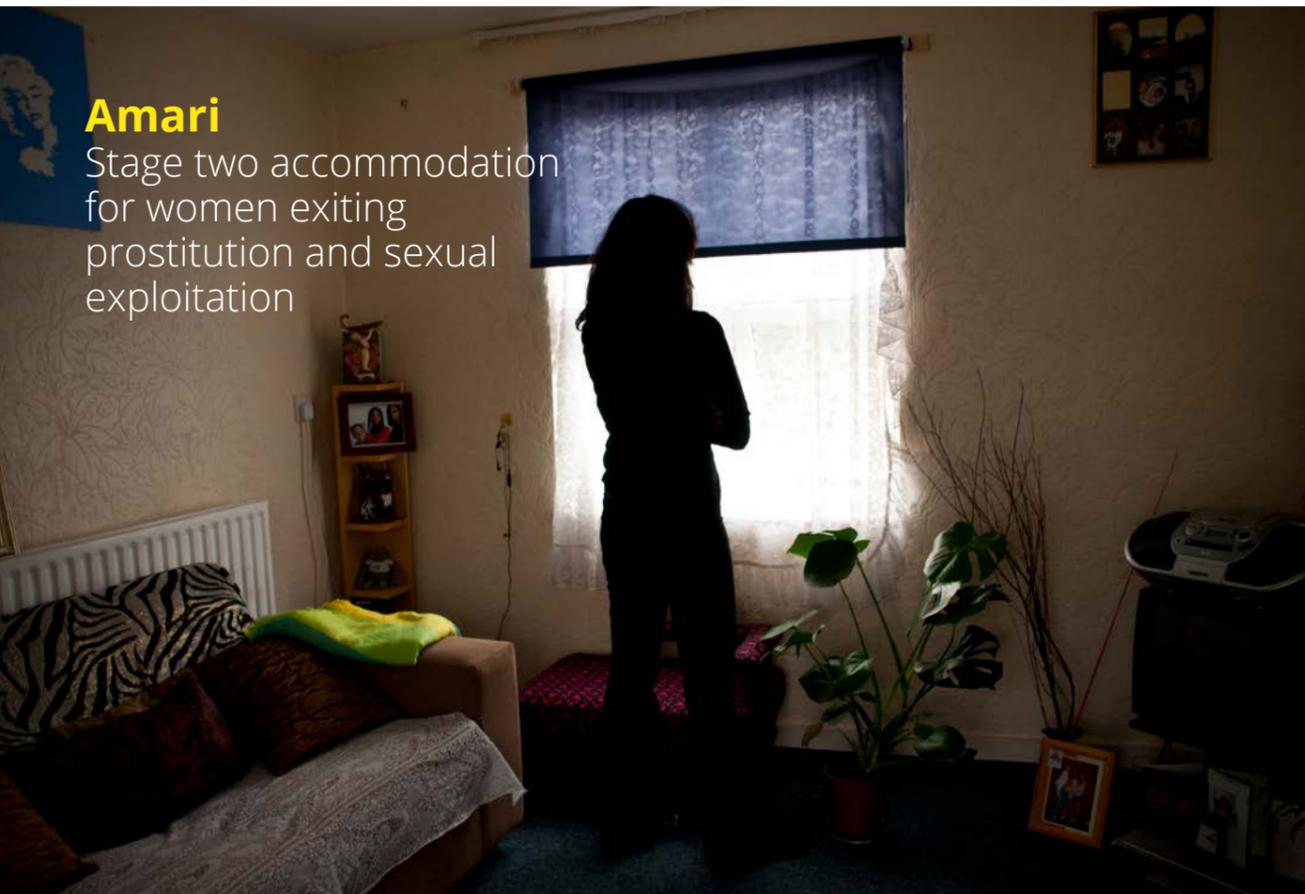


#### Age of Occupants



### KEY STATS





## Amari

Stage two accommodation for women exiting prostitution and sexual exploitation

### Project Overview

Amari is a pan-London second stage accommodation service for women who have been sexually exploited through trafficking or prostitution. It is a second partnership between Solace Women's Aid and Commonweal.

### Identifying a Need

Many women fleeing sexual exploitation and trafficking are denied access to transitional housing beyond emergency accommodation. Without continued support after leaving emergency accommodation they can find themselves alone, struggling to maintain their links with employment, education or training.

### Ambition to try something new

Commonweal believes that sexual exploitation and abuse represent a profound injustice – an injustice we recognise is made worse by a lack of stable, secure transitional accommodation.

Commonweal has provided housing to enable Solace Women's Aid to test and pilot a solution they feel combats this injustice. By trialing stage 2 accommodation we are looking to develop a solution that highlights the crucial role of housing in a staged model for exiting prostitution.

### Support to make bold decisions

Seeking to bring forward new thinking and encouraging our partners to work towards real change, we have supported Solace Women's Aid to explore new supportive solutions as Amari develops. As the pilot grows Commonweal will continue to challenge Solace Women's Aid and ourselves to understand the learning from Amari. We will work to ensure that the learning from the project is effectively shared, seeking to promote lasting change in policy and practice.

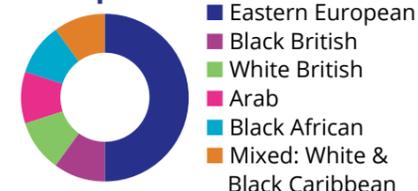
#### What Amari offers:

- 12-18 months stay in accommodation
- Emotional and practical support
- Preparation for independent living
- At least 3 months resettlement support to longer term accommodation

### KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on quarterly reports

#### Ethnicity of Occupants



#### Age of Occupants



#### Reason for Referral



### KEY STATS

**10**  
clients in total

**22.4**  
weeks average length of stay

**10**  
current one-bed  
Commonweal properties

### THE VOICE OF THE PROJECT PARTNER

Gill Heard, Project Manager, Solace Women's Aid

#### Why did you chose to work with Commonweal as opposed to similar organisations?

Commonweal seem to be quite innovative and unique in what they are able to offer. We developed a relationship with Commonweal and then were in a mutual position to work together to take on the Amari Project and then the Rhea Project as these projects fitted well for both Solace and Commonweal.

#### With special reference to Amari and Rhea, what has Commonweal brought to the projects?

The provision of high quality accommodation, at an affordable price, from Commonweal, in both the Amari and Rhea projects enables us to support some of the most marginalised women to be accommodated in a safe comfortable environment. The

projects help provide the space and resources to help women move forward in their journey to recovery. This project is proving to be a great model of supported accommodation and the service users within the project value the security that the self-contained accommodation provides. Our partnership with Commonweal and the provision of the Amari properties also enabled us to attract funds from London Councils for the floating support worker, thus making the project more sustainable.

#### In your opinion is there anything that makes Commonweal a unique or different kind of partner?

I am not aware of any similar projects. The provision of subsidised high quality self-contained accommodation is quite unique and the action learning

nature of the projects is also very different.

#### Would you recommend Commonweal to others? If so why?

Yes, definitely. Commonweal are a fantastic partner who are genuinely committed to finding innovative solutions, through partnerships, to alleviate homelessness for some of the most marginalised. They have a flexible approach and are always open to new ideas and learning opportunities and we are really appreciative of this great partnership.

#### If you had to describe Commonweal as a car, what would it be in one sentence and why?

I'd probably say a Volkswagen Golf – reliable and built to last!

# Enabling and Championing Change

Over the past year we have worked hard to evaluate successes and failures. We have encouraged our project partners to find new and improved ways to use the learning from independent evaluations to drive forward change. The ultimate aim? To make our partners think differently to review successes and learn from unsuccessful outcomes; to help them adapt based on new learning. Working with and supporting our project partners we seek to **enable and champion change**.



## Project Overview

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) project is a housing based initiative providing vital free accommodation to destitute migrants with no recourse to public funds. The project is a partnership between Commonweal and Praxis Community Projects.

## The injustice

Restrictions on public funds are a leading cause of migrant destitution in the UK. Public funds are routinely denied to those who do not have an immigration status. Because of their status, they are excluded from benefits, access to public housing, and the means of getting gainful employment.

## Developing a new approach

NRPF tests a cross-subsidized housing model providing support and accommodation to those with NRPF.

Praxis has provided seven Commonweal leased properties to local authorities, who in turn use them to house destitute migrant families. Using the local authority rental income Praxis are able to provide a smaller number of free bed spaces to destitute migrants.

## Commonweal approach

Our role goes far beyond simply providing accommodation for the NRPF project. Over the past year we have been working with Praxis to further refine the project, evaluating both the successes and failures. Providing Praxis with the space and freedom to innovate, we have encouraged them to reflect on the learning to date.

Through our continued partnership, we will draw on the ongoing evaluation of NRPF, helping Praxis look beyond conventional solutions as they further refine the NRPF model.



## KEYSTATS

**over 10,348 nights** of safe accommodation, mostly to vulnerable mothers and their children since NRPF was founded

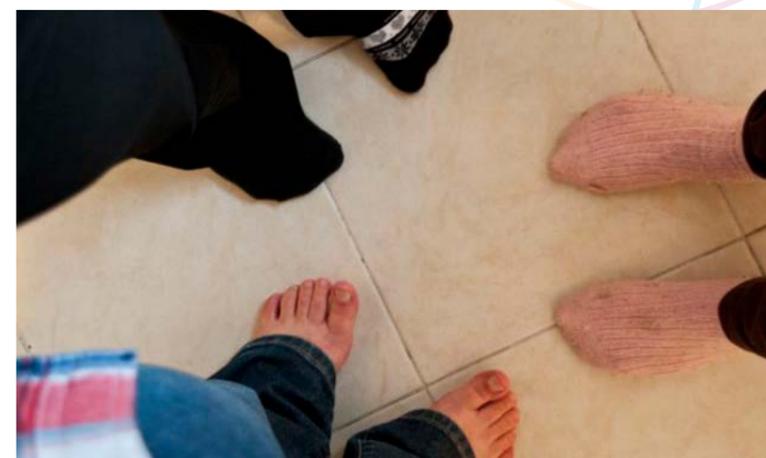
Project operating across **7 London Boroughs**

**3 independent evaluators**

## IN 2017/18

**107** tenants housed **47** adults supported **60** children supported

**51** current tenants **82%** average occupancy



## FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'Commonweal's approach has been truly collaborative. This allows us to be open about the challenges and develop solutions together. Our project with Commonweal is groundbreaking'* Sally Daghlian OBE, Chief Executive, Praxis Community Projects

## Freedom2Work Piloting a rent credit scheme



### Project Overview

Freedom2Work is a partnership between private rental access charity Elmbridge Rentstart (ERS) and Commonweal Housing designed to break cycles of homelessness.

It is exploring whether providing a match funded rent credit reward scheme, combined with tailored, holistic support and training, will enhance financial stability and encourage individuals to save, maintain their tenancy and enter stable employment.

### How it works:

Each tenant is provided with tailored support by ERS and encouraged to adopt a savings culture, putting away a proportion of their income every month. Using funding provided by Commonweal and ERS, the scheme pledges to match these savings.

When a client finds work, using the pot of money they have saved they are provided with a rent holiday to allow them to become established in working life. The money can also go towards a deposit for move on.



### FROM THE PROJECT PARTNER

*'Commonweal are unique as a partner as they are extremely approachable and accessible with a real partnership approach'* Helen Watson, CEO, Elmbridge Rentstart

### Partnership for change

Commonweal has encouraged ERS to develop Freedom2Work, helping them to establish which aspects of the project are having the greatest impact. Providing them with the support to develop and build on this impact, we have worked closely with ERS to ensure they build on the learning from the evaluation.

In partnership with ERS, Commonweal will continue to evaluate the main interventions of the project, how it impacts clients' lives and how the project's learning could be adopted by other organisations.

### The key ingredients of Freedom2Work are:

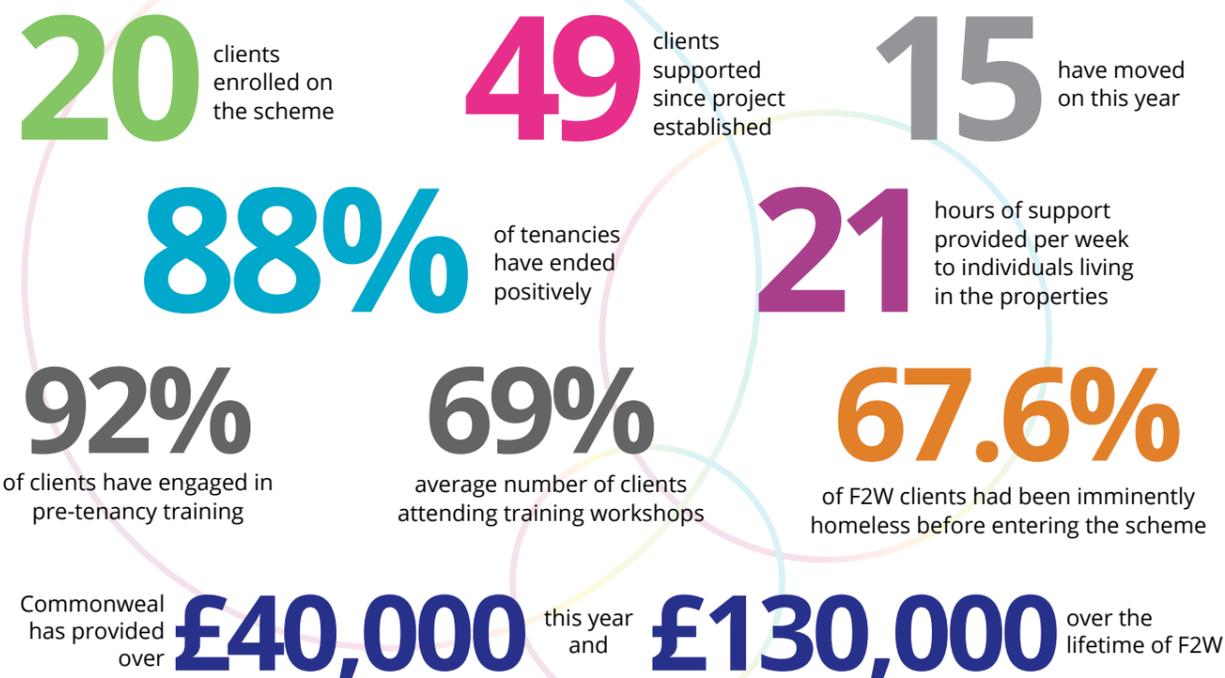
- Shared property
- Engagement from clients
- Back to work advice and workshops with local employers
- Building up rent credit scheme with match funding
- Intensive support for wellbeing and life skills focused on the client's needs and aspirations

### Key positives in 2017

- Freedom2Work developed new relationships with training providers such as the House of St Barnabas
- Developed a range of new links with local organisations including ETHOS, Voluntary Action Elmbridge, Enterprise Cube and Inspiring Enterprise Surrey increasing access to work experience, paid work, training and volunteering
- A range of clients were successfully supported to obtain grants for training courses



### KEY STATS



# Informing Policy and Transforming Practice Through Replication

Once our projects have been rigorously evaluated and tested, our ambition is that others will use what we have learnt to replicate Commonweal's pilot projects. The exciting thing for us as a charity is that through the hard work and imagination of our partners, our projects can succeed.

At Commonweal, we don't simply stop at replication. We have also been working hard this year to ensure that the learning from our projects has a wider influence beyond replication, working with our project partners to promote change where social injustice exists.

**Peer Landlord**  
Supportive shared housing for individuals with lower general needs



## Project Overview

Developed in partnership with Thames Reach and Catch22, Peer Landlord tests a model of shared housing that combines genuine affordability and stability for tenants. Crucially, it seeks to establish a supportive – not supported – housing environment for those with lower general needs who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

## The Injustice

Many people who are, or are at risk of homelessness are capable of independent living. Despite aiming to find sustainable employment, education or training, a lack of affordable accommodation means individuals find themselves sofa surfing or even rough sleeping. Many end up funneled into supported housing or hostels, which may offer intensive support they don't need or environments that aren't conducive to finding work and getting on with life.



## Creating a supportive environment

Peer Landlord is designed to cultivate a degree of peer response to other support needs within the house, providing a supportive safety net if needed. It provides a shared accommodation solution that sits in the gap between supported housing and the PRS.

think in new ways about housing options for those with low/no support needs, Commonweal has engaged with new partners with a view to replicating Peer Landlord.

Looking ahead to 2018, we will move our attention towards promoting the replication of Peer Landlord, sharing the model with those who have the resources and will to replicate the model.

## Transforming practice

Over the past year we have gained invaluable insight into what makes a shared housing project such as Peer Landlord work and what doesn't. We have commissioned a new report 'Making the Case' reviewing why shared, supportive accommodation is needed.

Through our 'Replication Learning Guide' report published in mid 2017 we have continued to share the learning from Peer Landlord. Encouraging others to

## A new report

To support the case for the replication of Peer Landlord, we asked independent experts Heather Petch and John Perry (CIH) to produce a new study exploring the need for Peer Landlord. 'Making the Case' provides an appraisal of the landscape confronting those on a low income with low support needs and reviews how Peer Landlord addresses their housing needs.

## KEY STATS

**13**  
properties

**44**  
bed spaces

**84%**  
occupancy rate, based on end of most recent quarter DIS

**17** tenants have moved on this year

**10** moves were non-negative

**30** months average tenancy length

## AN INTERVIEW WITH Jeremy Swain, Former CEO, Thames Reach

### Why did you choose to work with Commonweal as opposed to similar organisations?

Thames Reach will eagerly work with any organisation that shares our values and which is committed to helping people escape homelessness, social exclusion and poverty. Commonweal is an especially valued partner because of the flexibility of the approach it takes to addressing a problem. In practical terms it is the very personal relationship with the key individuals at Commonweal which creates the dynamism to take ideas forward and make them a reality. Commonweal is not the kind of funder which demands lots of data and information but gives little in return. Instead the team there get alongside us and are genuinely enthusiastic about the learning that arises from the initiatives they support, offering challenge but helping to find solutions.

### What has Commonweal brought to our partnership and the Peer Landlord/Tent Encampment Research projects?

With both Peer Landlord and the encampment research, Commonweal has shown that they are prepared for the long haul in bringing the initiatives to fruition and have been unstinting in their support. Commonweal place great value on proper evaluation and research which is a hallmark of both projects and in the case of the encampment research they have brought in additional partners from the world of design and construction. It's a form of infectious fervour which leads to a high level of engagement. This is especially valuable in the example of the encampment research and development of the accommodation pod as the project focuses on people

(central and eastern European rough sleepers) who often suffer public opprobrium. Commonweal chooses not follow routes that are free of controversy.

### In your opinion is there anything that makes Commonweal a unique or different kind of partner?

Yes, I think Commonweal are unique in that, after working with the charity over many years, there have been no battles over ownership of projects or tensions around which of us should get the limelight and credit. The whole relationship is unusually ego-free.

### Would you recommend us to others?

Of course this is a yes – for all the reasons noted above. However, if you want to wrap your arms around your project and keep Commonweal at a distance – look elsewhere.

### If you had to describe Commonweal as a car, what would it be in one sentence and why?

Commonweal is a fully loaded camper van which may not be the slickest motor on the road but anyone watching it going by will think, I don't know where that lot are heading but they sure seem to be having fun.



## Interested in working with Commonweal?

We are always looking to explore new ideas and solutions to social injustices brought to us for discussion.

Whether it be through grant funding for feasibility research, assistance developing a pilot housing and support project or simply sharing the learning from our projects, we exist to support the advancement of new solutions which help people overcome the housing injustices they face.

We work side by side with our partners, sheltering them from risk and providing them with the support they need to help people overcome the social injustices.

If you have an idea for a possible housing based solution to a social injustice that you think may work, Commonweal want to hear from you.

# Commonweal

## Policy and thinking

At Commonweal we have learnt that as well as developing models of how to use housing to tackle social injustices we need to influence policy makers to end injustice. Over the last year we have further developed our programme to influence policy, supporting our partners as experts in their field to raise the profile of the learning from our projects with carefully selected parliamentarians.

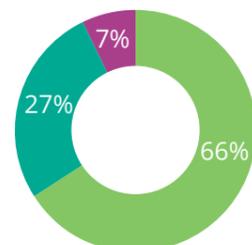
We have additionally supported wider sector experts to drive forward policy change, lending our support to a number of campaigns for change as a supportive partner with a vested interest in ending injustice.

### Highlights include:

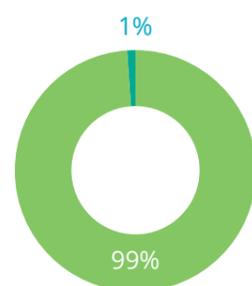
- ▶ Parliamentarians tabling 27 parliamentary questions on Commonweal projects
- ▶ Meeting with four parliamentarians, including a Minister
- ▶ One published response to a Select Committee consultation
- ▶ Seven appearances at national conferences and roundtables
- ▶ Five national news pieces featuring Commonweal projects

# Financial reports

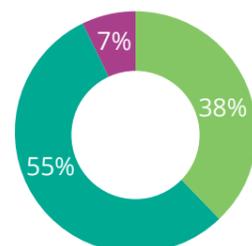
Income	£	%
Voluntary Income: Donations	598,450	66%
Rental Income	241,812	27%
Investors Refurbishment Contributions	61,938	7%
Investment Income	1,167	0%
<b>Total Incoming Resources 2017</b>	<b>903,367</b>	



Expenditure	£	%
Charitable Activities	1,023,669	99%
Governance	11,422	1%
<b>Total Expenditure 2017</b>	<b>1,035,091</b>	



Balance Sheet	£	%
Charged Assets	6,520,965	55%
Uncharged Assets	4,582,367	38%
Net Current Assets	805,749	7%
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>11,909,081</b>	



Total Assets Less Current Liabilities (2012- 2017)	£
2012	1,669,000
2013	6,575,000
2014	7,160,000
2015	8,774,770
2016	10,272,086
2017	11,909,081



Full details of Commonweal's financial statements are available at [www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/about/accounts-and-publications](http://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/about/accounts-and-publications)

## Governance

**Commonweal Housing Ltd** 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.

**Company registration number:** 5319765

**Charity registration number:** 1113331

**Principal address:** Unit 311, The Blackfriars Foundry, 156 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EN

**Registered office:** 2 Babmaes Street, London, SW1 6HD

### Honorary President

Sir John Mactaggart Bt.

### Company Secretary

Gary Medazoumian FCA

### Directors/Board of Trustees

Rt. Hon Fiona Mactaggart – Chair

Laurence Newman

Gary Medazoumian FCA

Steve Douglas

Russ Edwards

Professor Jonathan Portes

Jack Mactaggart

Sarah Jackson OBE – Appointed Feb 2018

**Bankers:** Barclays Bank PLC, 7th Floor, 180 Oxford Street, London

**Solicitors:** Bircham Dyson Bell, 50 Broadway, London, SW1H OBL  
Bates Wells and Braithwaite, 2-6 Cannon Street, London EC4M 6YH

**Auditors:** Haysmacintyre, 26 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4AG

## Acknowledgements

### Commonweal wishes to thank:

Our project partners Thames Reach, Catch 22, Praxis Community Projects, Solace Women's Aid, Elmbridge Rent Start, Quaker Social Action, Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), The Learning and Work Institute, A.P. Redfearn Consulting Ltd, Community Sponsors Homes, Housing Justice, University of Cambridge, De Montfort University and Brighton Women's Centre for their continued support and positive contribution.

Members of Commonweal Chief Executive's Advisory Panel: Keith Jenkins, Jeremy Swain, Hether Petch, Elizabeth Carson, Leila Barker, Alan Benson and Kathleen Kelly for their ongoing advice, insight and enthusiasm.

Commonweal is extremely grateful to the Kurt & Magda Stern Foundation and to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their generous grant funding supporting our project work, research and learning.

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We are grateful to the Institute for Voluntary Action Research, in particular Leila Baker and colleagues, for their ongoing support and advice, helping us to continue to build on our experience and development as an action learning charity.

A special thanks to the Directors of Grove End Housing Ltd for their generous and continued support, without which our work would not be possible.

Commonweal housing  
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

Combating Injustice

Tackling Inequality

Delivering Housing Solutions  
to Social Injustices

  
**commonweal housing**  
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

**Commonweal Housing Ltd**

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