

Commonweal Annual Impact Review 2016/17



commonweal  **housing**
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

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

Chair's Comments

Commonweal operates across a wide policy horizon in our mission to tackle social injustice. Our focus however is tight: how can a housing based intervention have a positive impact? I am clear that while our focus is precise we need to remain aware of the context which is creating those injustices. We are ambitious and determined not to retreat in the face of adversity.

The shortage of affordable homes is now much more of a public issue than it was 11 years ago when Commonweal was formed. Despite this, we remain the only organisation which focuses totally on developing and testing ways in which housing can help to overcome a social injustice. An organisation of our size cannot deliver all the homes that are needed, but we can develop and test models exploring how to provide homes which help people to overcome some of the problems that confront them. Our ambition is that after we have tested proposals others will use what we have learnt to replicate our initiatives.

Commonweal is, thanks largely to the generous support of Grove End Housing, financially independent. This helps us to be brave in terms of the groups we support and the issues our projects address, to take risks and to do the trying and testing not just supporting the tried and tested.

Commonweal is willing to learn from unsuccessful outcomes as well as successful ones. Our partners welcome this unusual approach. This is a critical part of our ethos. We would not be a genuine action learning charity if we didn't accept that some projects will not deliver as expected or as planned. We know it is usually easier to learn from failure if it is properly analysed than from success. Failure happens only if we fail to learn and share our learning so that others can avoid making the same mistakes.

We give projects and partners the space and the freedom to sometimes get things wrong as a way of helping them and others get things right. The exciting thing for the Trustees is that through the hard work and imagination of our partners our projects succeed.

Following a degree of reflection in 2016 marking our 10th Anniversary the Commonweal Trustees are increasingly aware and confident that **part of the charity's success is not just what we do** – or rather what we enable

our expert project partners to do – **but it is just as much about how we do it.** We don't just provide homes, **we build challenging and supportive partnerships, we create relationships, we evaluate successes and failures and we ask questions.** We believe that this kind of support is as important as the financial or housing resources we make available to our partners. That is why this impact review focuses on the 'how' which we feel is so important and is regularly fed back to us as being valued by those we work with.

The relevance of Commonweal is however not just in how we do things but of course it does rely on what we do and who we work with. Throughout this latest Review we will highlight the important and exciting work of our projects and partners whilst demonstrating just what it is we bring to the table by the way we engage with them and provide them with the support needed to make bold decisions.

The challenge we face in the coming year is to find new and better ways to use the learning from projects to influence the policies which help to generate social injustice.

I am grateful for the wisdom and support of our excellent Trustees. Sadly in 2016 the Board said goodbye to two longstanding Trustees, Robert Nadler and my brother Sir John Mactaggart, who was the original driving force behind the establishment of Commonweal. I want to thank them both for their tremendous input over the years. They will be missed. However I am delighted that John has agreed to take on the role of Honorary President and will continue to be a great ambassador for Commonweal.

I am delighted to welcome to the Board three new Trustees Jack Mactaggart, Russ Edwards and Prof Jonathan Portes – they bring a range of skills, knowledge, expertise and new thinking to the Board to ensure the charity remains vibrant and vital. The future for Commonweal remains as exciting as ever.



Ashley Horsey
Chief Executive
Commonweal Housing Ltd.

CEO's Comments

A **housing based action learning charity** – that was the description Commonweal's Trustees defined a few years ago and feel passionate about. This sitting alongside our strapline of **housing solutions to social injustice** tells you all you need to know about Commonweal.

We are driven by a **desire to address injustice** where we see it. We seek to **do this using housing** as we recognise the fundamental importance of that basic human requirement as identified by Maslow's Hierarchy of Need. We recognise that injustices persist partly because current solutions don't work adequately and therefore **we need to identify and try out potential alternatives**. We recognise that **we do not know everything** therefore we **need to learn at all stages and help others to learn** what solutions might work.

For Commonweal learning is about things changing and things being done differently because of what has been learnt. That is what we aim to do – we want **our learning to have influence**.

We do not *'do'* our projects we facilitate and enable our expert partners to *'do'* the projects they wish to – projects they have convinced us might just work; projects that if they do work will make a significant impact on the lives of individuals and potentially lead to positive systemic change and new thinking. A key early marker when considering new issues is whether they generate the **Commonweal Nod**. The **'Commonweal Nod'** when people start going "oh yes... I hadn't really thought of that before, I can see that's a real issue – what a nonsense... there must be some solution to that".

What Commonweal does is try to provide experts with the space and opportunity to try and find what that solution *might* be. We've been doing a lot of nodding over the last year.

We hope we are passionate, enthusiastic strategic partners to those delivering our projects. These help shape the interaction and the way Commonweal approaches working with our projects and project partners – throughout this our latest Annual Impact Review we will demonstrate how we are shaping those interactions on the ground:

- **Innovating** – seeking out new ideas being open to the potential of new untested proposals
- **Insulating** partners and investors from risk that otherwise acts as an anchor and deadweight on action – using our financial strength and independence to give people the comfort and ability to do something new and different
- **Reflecting** – constantly asking why decisions were made or actions taken – giving partners space, time and a structure to lift their heads up from day to day delivery and operations to think strategically and to embed learning
- **Replicating** – reminding that our projects are designed to be test beds and incubators to enable models that work to be taken up by others, ensuring something happens with the learning
- **Encouraging** – we are passionate about our projects and recognise the expertise of our partners in trying to tackle injustice. We help to bring their work to a wider audience

Commonweal is in this fantastically fortunate position thanks in large part to the tremendous bedrock support of our principle benefactor, Grove End Housing.

We aim to be brave, provocative and challenging in the projects we support and the areas of injustice we are willing to talk about. We hope that is what we do, for if we are not able to do that then who will?

Mission & Values Statement

At the centre of our work as a housing based action learning charity is our vision to find **solutions to social injustices** through focused housing based projects. We therefore believe in **the power of housing to address social injustice.**

As a charity funded entirely through social investment and private benefactors, we are **free to make bold choices in housing.** Whilst this enables us to continue to grow as an organisation, our mission, vision and values remain unchanged and continue to reflect who we are and what we stand for.

Leadership

We strive to insulate our project partners from risk, whilst positioning ourselves as an organisation our **peers trust, respect and most importantly value**

Partnership

We work together with delivery partners, social investors and evaluators to achieve our mission, but also **help partners to grow as enablers of change**

Innovation

Challenging social injustice requires innovation and interaction – Through our unique strategic project framework we are able to learn from mistakes and evaluate key findings to develop carefully worked through housing solutions to social injustices

Action

Through **adoption, adaption and replication by others of what works** we aim to build wide spread policy and practice change

Learning

At the heart of our work is the understanding that mistakes can be made and **we accept that innovation takes time.** As an action learning charity we plan to be **reflective, reactive and adaptive** and are ready to change course if necessary

2016 Performance

How We Did Against Last Years' Targets

► 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.

Lessons and recommendations from the Commonweal supported Older LGBT research commissioned by Stonewall Housing is helping to shape the thinking behind new specialist housing provision for this group in Manchester and elsewhere.

The findings from the Starter for 10 Tent Encampment Research produced by Thames Reach has lead to Commonweal engaging with the wider design and architecture community to identify new and innovative short term housing solutions which we aim to take further in 2017/18.

► Successfully commence the new Elmbridge Rentstart Freedom2Work project and Quaker Social Action Young Adult Carers projects

Both these projects commenced in 2016/17 – the property acquisition process for QSA completed swiftly in summer 2017.

► Drive forward the key lessons learnt and delivery of the Peer Landlord Phase II business plan

Peer Landlord continues to be a recognised name as the interest in shared housing options continues to grow as housing demand continues to increase and affordability of housing continues to bite.

► Further raise our profile in the field of social investment, developing an agreed future funding strategy and investing some of our own capital for direct mission related social investment – expanding ways of delivering more action learning opportunities

Commonweal continues to be regularly asked to speak at conferences, seminars and workshops around social investment.

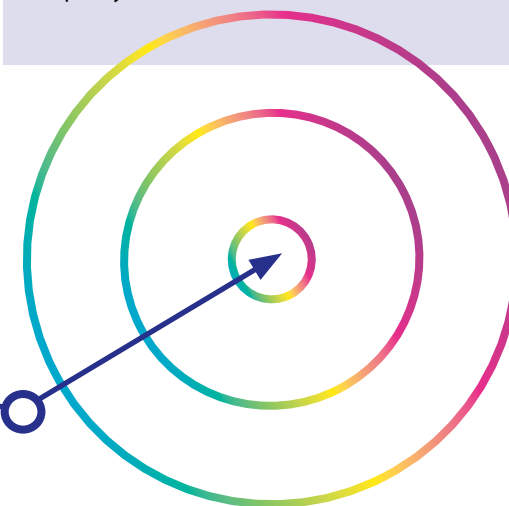
Commonweal made its first direct mission related repayable investment supporting Action Foundation in Newcastle to purchase a property to provide additional housing for those with no recourse to public funds and those with recent new refugee status.

► Successfully recycle the former Chrysalis housing units to the Amari project delivered by Solace Women's Aid.

All 7 former Chrysalis flats now fully utilised for the Amari project. The lessons learnt from that exercise also enabled Commonweal to successfully recycle the former Re-Unite south London properties handed back by Housing for Women HA over the last year. These are also now being used by Solace Women's Aid for a new Rhea Project developed in partnership with the London Borough of Southwark.

TARGETS FOR 2017/18

- Complete a positive exit from the Re-Unite project
- Develop a viable short term housing alternative to rough sleeping and tent encampments that can be deployed within existing empty buildings
- Secure a target of £3M of new capital funding to deliver a new action learning project to commence in 2018/19
- Further raise the profile of Commonweal and housing solutions to social injustice amongst Parliamentarians and other influential policy makers



Commonweal's Year In Numbers

70+
individuals supported
through our
programmes

Over **46**
children supported

Worked with
8
independent
expert
evaluators

 **3** new
research
proposals
funded

Over **£2** million
more social investment secured to support our
project partners to develop and build upon their work
developing housing solutions to social injustice

 **3**
new evaluations commissioned,
providing valuable insight and learning
for our project partners to help them
develop and grow


project partners supported to take
bold steps and brave decisions as
they grow their innovative housing
solutions to social injustice

Current number
of properties leased
by Commonwealth to enable
our project partners to test
innovative housing based projects
38

The Commonweal Evaluation and Replication Framework

To help us try and pull the abstract concept of an action learning charity in to practical delivery and some sort of process we have worked closely over the last two years with our very good friends at IVAR – the Institute of Voluntary Action Research – as our learning partners, helping us to reflect on our own work and to ensure we are practising what we preach and being an action learning charity.

IVAR have helped us to clarify 5 key stages in the work we do with our projects and supported us to produce Commonweal's Evaluation and Replication Framework:

- 1 **Identifying a Social Injustice** (a pre-pilot phase)
- 2 **Clarifying a housing solution** (a pilot phase)
- 3 **Learning from the pilot**
- 4 **Moving into replication**
- 5 **Learning from replication** (replication and ending)

Although we perhaps more often refer to the headline questions raised at each stage:

- 1 **Who knows what?** Identifying a Social Injustice
- 2 **What if?** Clarifying a housing solution
- 3 **So what?** Learning from the pilot
- 4 **Now what?** Moving into replication
- 5 **So what's next?** Learning from replication

This is the latest iteration and development upon our original Project Cycle.

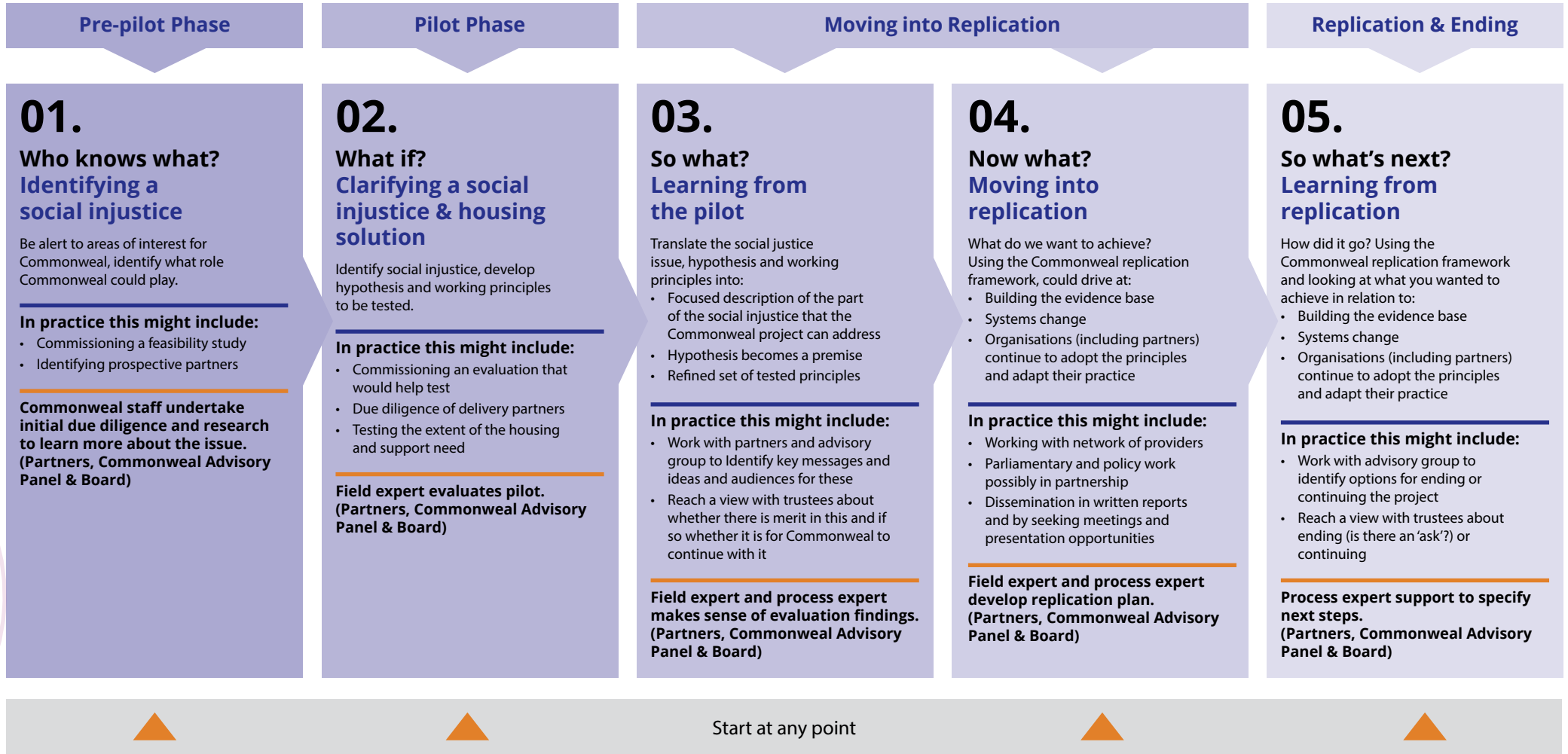


TIMEFRAME:

There are no rigid timescales for how long each phase of the framework or each movement around the project cycle should take. However Commonweal are clear that to maximise learning we need to be engaged for the medium term at least; therefore, other than specific short term feasibility studies, our core action learning projects will normally be 5-10 years in duration. We are there to give project partners time and space to genuinely innovate and test new ideas not force them in to delivering results within an artificially short timeframe.

Our unique package: strategic approach to learning

REPLICATION FOR EVIDENCE, CHANGE & JUSTICE



01.

Who knows what? Identifying a social injustice

Be alert to areas of interest for Commonweal, identify what role Commonweal could play.

In practice this might include:

- Commissioning a feasibility study
- Identifying prospective partners

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

Who knows what? Identifying a social injustice

Commonweal is constantly looking to test new housing solutions to previously unidentified issues. This year we funded a number of research and feasibility studies helping us to better understand and scope new areas of injustice. This increasing strand of our work grew out of the successful Starter for 10 competition run in 2016.

This research is at Stage One on the Commonweal strategic project framework at the pre-pilot stage. Over the next year we will continue to monitor the research to learn more about the issues they investigate, providing our partners with the support they need to develop their research, whilst also undertaking initial due diligence with a view to assessing their suitability for progression to stage 2.

Rough Sleeping Couples

In 2016 Re-Unite partners, Brighton Women's Centre (BWC) approached Commonweal to fund a feasibility study into a new area of social injustice facing couples living on the streets across Sussex. Without children (and therefore not eligible for local authority support) many of these couples lack focussed support and are often refused help by many single sex hostels or agencies.

Commonweal has funded a new feasibility study to explore the nature of couples living on the street. The BWC commissioned Homeless Link to undertake the study which will examine whether couples have come together for the protection of women and/or whether exploitation has played a part in bringing them together. It will also examine how couples previously living together have arrived on the streets and include an appraisal of current support available to these couples.

If it is found that no suitable housing provision exists, Commonweal, in partnership with BWC will review the learning from the study to assess whether or not a pilot project could be established.

Single Parent Research

The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR) is a University of Cambridge research centre leading academic research in the field of housing and planning.

Senior CCHPR researchers identified a group of individuals at risk of suffering a social injustice. The client group are separated parents who either through a court order or mutual agreement by both parents have some or equal custody of their child(ren). The non-resident parent is often disadvantaged.

Many are non-resident fathers who are likely to be single, younger and in the lowest social economic group. However, their needs are particularly badly met when it comes to shared housing provision. With many children staying with their non-resident parents on a regular basis, the current system may additionally present a situation where maintaining a relationship with both parents after separation becomes a privilege linked to income.

The proposed research aims to explore new solutions through shared housing options to meet the requirements of non-resident parents through:

- 1 Examining existing evidence of the need for shared housing solutions for non-resident parents.
- 2 Identifying possible housing solutions that Commonweal or other housing providers might wish to develop.
- 3 Identifying the key challenges in developing such housing, and suggest ways in which they might be tackled.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

Stage 1: C.2006/7

In 2007 the Corston Review was published highlighted the inadequate support structures available to vulnerable women in the criminal justice system.

In response to the publication of the report, Commonweal's new Chair, The Rt. Hon. Fiona Mactaggart, expressed a strong interest in exploring further the links between care responsibilities and recidivism for mothers leaving prison.

Tent Encampment Research

In last year's annual review Thames Reach's proposal to look at the growing phenomenon of tent encampments developing in outer boroughs of London was unveiled as the winner of our Starter for 10 competition. Commonweal felt there was a clear injustice not just for those living in such poor conditions but just as importantly for the local communities in north and east London losing access to public spaces.

Launched in May this year the report highlights clear distinctions between the lives of those living in these encampments and the popularised myth of the east European beggars and benefit scroungers perpetuated by some in the media. The report found that most encampment dwellers are working (whether legally or cash-in-hand) and are still closely connected to their homes and families in Romania – returning to see them every few months before coming back to the UK for more work.

Straddling stages one and two of our strategic project framework, Commonweal, satisfied this was an area of injustice in which we could make a difference, reviewed the learning from the research and sought out a new opportunity to move the project towards stage 2.

Next steps: Stage 2 – Design Competition

Emerging from the research was a need for a new basic form of temporary accommodation. This needed to be made available at a rate acceptable to the clients whilst additionally providing the space for services to support them with information and advice on future options. As part of this process, our open design competition was launched earlier this year. Judged by an independent panel



The tent encampment research developed from interviews with 21 Romanian people sleeping rough in four London boroughs. It focussed on those who have no recourse to public funds but are European Union Nationals exercising their treaty rights to live and work in the UK. They do not have significant support needs and are choosing to sleep in tented encampments to minimise their housing costs and because of their perceived failure of the London housing market to meet their needs.



of experts, the competition called upon the design world to identify alternative forms of transitional short-term accommodation that might offer viable alternatives to sleeping in tents or on the streets.

What if?

Commonweal is now working with the winning designers and potential delivery partners to clarify if a viable pilot scheme can be developed.

We are clear that this is not an alternative to medium or long-term homes. Rather it is a short-term alternative to rough sleeping from which people can be supported to identify better housing options that may be available to them

We hope to identify something that provides a stepping stone to working with partners to deliver a longer term solution.

The prize for Commonweal is that if such a solution can be found, the potential runs far beyond this one specific client group of east European migrant workers.

What are the project partner's thoughts?

To be candid, I thought that Commonweal would politely decline supporting this investigation as the issues facing this group are complex, feel intractable and fall within that pot called 'politically sensitive'. On reflection it was perhaps true to form that Commonweal was not daunted by the challenge of trying to find a solution but has wholeheartedly backed the research which produced some intriguing and disturbing findings and also some clear direction from the Romanian migrants themselves about the kind of temporary accommodation they would find acceptable with respect to affordability and design.

Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive, Thames Reach

Within the criminal justice system nearly two thirds of women entering prison leave behind dependent children. Many of these women struggle to be reunited with their children upon release because they

don't have access to the family house and are unable to access family housing because they don't have custody of their children.

02.

What if? Clarifying a social injustice & housing solution

Identify social injustice, develop hypothesis and working principles to be tested.

In practice this might include:

- Commissioning an evaluation that would help test
- Due diligence of delivery partners
- Testing the extent of the housing and support need

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

What if? Clarifying a social injustice & housing solution

Amari

Started in 2016, the Amari project is a new partnership between Commonweal Housing and Solace Women's Aid (SWA). The project is an adaptation and expansion of the lessons and key findings of the Chrysalis Project captured by Commonweal's rigorous ongoing evaluation programme.

With Chrysalis initially passing through to stage four on our strategic framework, back in 2015 Commonweal provided funding for a new feasibility study exploring opportunities for replication. Having identified a significant need for supported housing for victims of sexual exploitation across London, Commonweal began working with SWA on a new replication project. Following five years of successful operation, local authority funding cutbacks unfortunately meant that the independent housing stage of the Chrysalis project was discontinued in 2016.

Using the learning from the Chrysalis project, Commonweal and SWA have developed a London Councils funded staged model supporting sexual exploited women: the Amari project

So what's next? – A unique approach

Amari is now at stage 3 of our strategic project framework. We have adapted and built upon the approach and learning from Chrysalis to further develop the Amari project. Unlike other Commonweal projects entering the strategic framework at stage one, Amari is therefore unique in entering at stage 3.

The project is open to single women or those with a child under 2 who have been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking. Suitable candidates are selected on the basis of having successfully lived in 1st stage accommodation having exited from exploitation. They must be willing to engage with support programmes, training, education, and / or employment and look to explore subsequent long-term resettlement options.

For Amari's evaluation, Commonweal has commissioned an independent sector expert to closely monitor the progress of the project and support SWA with the collection of data and compliment the data they are already collecting for London Councils. Building on this, the evaluator will provide an interim, first stage analysis of the data to measure outcomes and establish a full on-going evaluation process of the expanded project, with particular regard to the pan-London focus of the project.

About Solace Women's Aid:

Solace Women's Aid (SWA) is an independent charity, working across London to provide a comprehensive range of services to women and children affected by all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), to help them cope, recover and move towards independence.



RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE Stage 1: Pilot Phase 2007-2010

Using accommodation bought by Commonweal, a pilot project was established for Re-Unite.

The first phase was set up with the aim of providing accommodation and support for mothers and children who would otherwise be homeless on the woman's release from prison.

100%

occupancy in 2nd stage accommodation.

9 flats provided by Commonweal

9 client's engaged with support services and legal services around prostitution, sexual exploitation, problematic substance use, mental health and NRPF services.



Amari, demonstrates the Commonweal approach in action and how we work to support our project partners develop innovative solutions to social injustice. It shows that, even in the face of funding or policy changes, by building on learning from previous experiences and through clear reflection, new solutions to social injustice can be found.

Rhea

Following the handing back of eight properties from the Re-Unite project, Commonweal embarked on a new project designed to support women with children who have experienced homelessness as a result of abuse. For many of these families, especially those including an older male child, access to traditional refuge accommodation is either inappropriate or simply unavailable. Rhea looks to address this by providing good quality, self-contained temporary accommodation, with support, to families fleeing domestic abuse helping women to rebuild their confidence as they move towards more permanent accommodation and independent living.

Rhea is now at stage 2 on our strategic project framework. The project is a partnership between Solace Women's Aid, Southwark Council and Commonweal Housing with all referrals to the project received through Southwark Housing Solutions.

Over the next year we will look to develop Rhea as the initial feedback from the first evaluation is delivered.

During this stage Re-Unite underwent an independent external evaluation conducted by Professor Gelsthorpe at the University of Cambridge feeding in and contributing to the development of Re-Unite as it moved towards replication.

Move On Up

Project is testing the following hypothesis:

Does a shared housing pathway for young adult carers aged between 18-24 years, alongside empathetic and specialist support, enable:

- The best outcomes for the young people in terms of increasing the future options available to them measured by increased personal sense of well-being, education and employment options
- Beneficial planned transition to new care relationships for those being cared for avoiding or minimising emergency or catastrophic breakdown in caring or family relationships
- Likely net positive (financial) benefit to the State in terms of increased education / employment options for YACs and reduced emergency care provision
- Better transition into the private rental sector / independent living

Commonweal's support for this piece of work is a further example of how we are expanding the range of projects and the support we provide to partners. Unlike other project partners (who are themselves experts in their chosen field of social injustice) QSA do not focus solely on young carers; nor are they experts in housing. Like Commonweal, they are passionate about solving social injustice and have an excellent track record of on the ground delivery of successful projects across a range of areas and injustices.



First steps towards independence

Unlike other Commonweal projects where positive outcomes are seen as a linear forward transition, Move On Up recognises that some young adult carers may wish to return to their home. A positive outcome from the project may therefore be that young people return to their home, but that their support needs are better met and they are doing this from a position of choice. For others this will be their first step towards independent living away from the family home.

The first properties were handed over to QSA in August 2017. For this project Commonweal has engaged the Learning and Work Institute (L&WI) to work as the evaluator – L&WI have been at the forefront of campaigns to highlight the education and employment needs of young adult carers. Commonweal expects the first interim evaluation report of the pilot scheme in early 2018.



Move On Up is a partnership between Quaker Social Action (QSA) and Commonweal Housing. The project launched in 2016 and aims to develop a shared housing pathway for young adult carers. Individuals are provided with up to 24 months of one to one support relating to their wellbeing needs. Commonweal has provided over £2million of new social investment funding to acquire the flats in east London for the project.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

Stage 1: Pilot Phase 2007-2010 contd.

Following a positive evaluation the original Re-unite partnership between Housing for women (who initially took responsibility for managing the properties and providing the housing based support) and Women in prison

(who initially dealt with referrals for the scheme) ended. Housing for Women then brought all management and support services provided through the project under one roof.

Young Adult Carers – key stats:

£5.5bn

is the cost of unpaid care provided by young adult carers per year
(Learning and Work Institute)

Many services are only funded to work with young carers up to the age of 18.

79%

of young carers said they were worried about moving on as they felt there was no support for them
(Carers Trust)

Based on Census figures there are estimated to be at least

376,000

young adult carers in the UK aged 16-25.
(Carers Trust)

56%

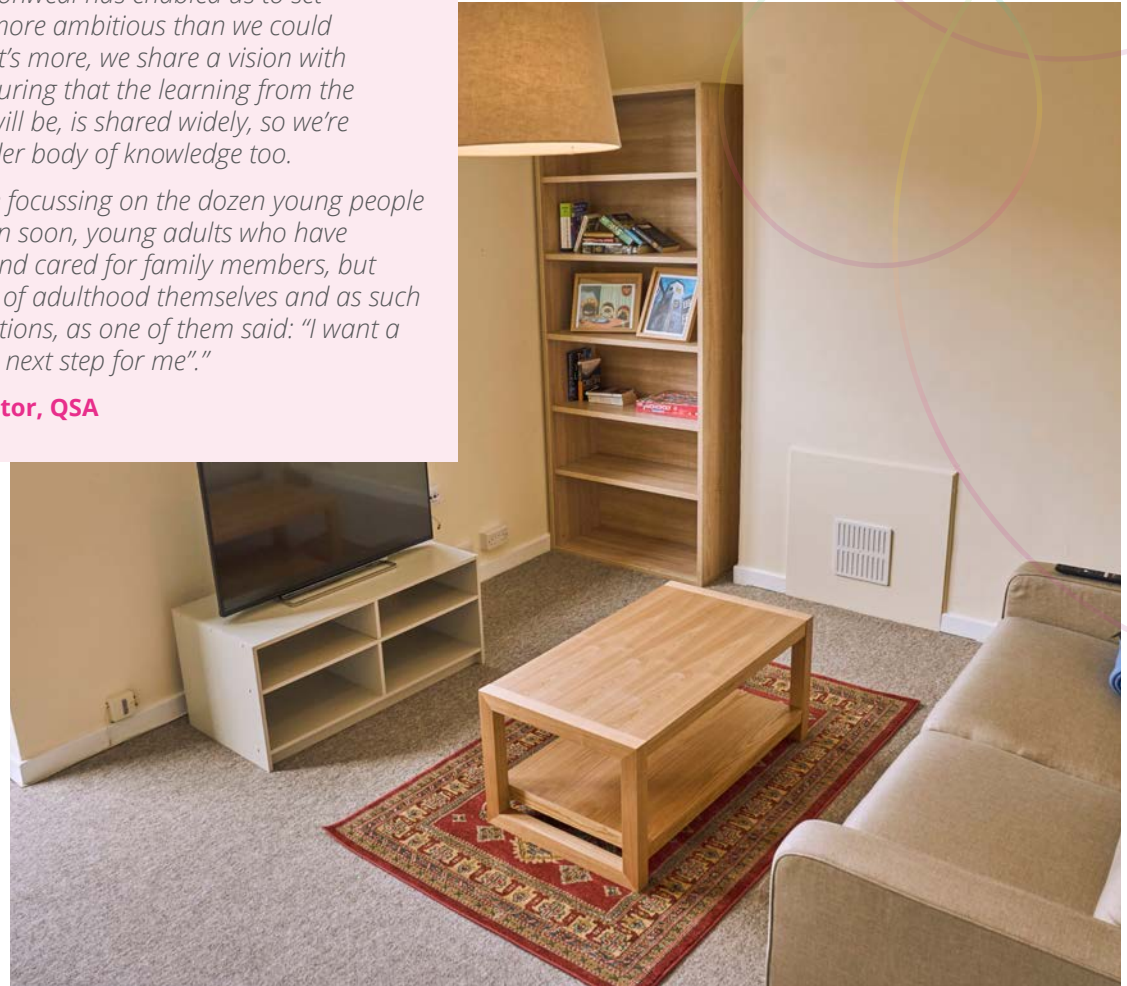
of young adult carers in college or university were struggling because of their caring role.
(Carers Trust)

What the project partners say:

Working with Commonweal has enabled us to set up a project that is more ambitious than we could have imagined. What's more, we share a vision with Commonweal of ensuring that the learning from the project, whatever it will be, is shared widely, so we're contributing to a wider body of knowledge too.

But right now we are focussing on the dozen young people who will be moving in soon, young adults who have proudly supported and cared for family members, but who are on the cusp of adulthood themselves and as such have their own ambitions, as one of them said: "I want a life. This feels like the next step for me"."

Judith Moran, Director, QSA



This led to Housing for Women developing a range of new services including prison in-reach services.

03.

So what? Learning from the pilot

Translate the social justice issue, hypothesis and working principles into:

- Focused description of the part of the social injustice that the Commonweal project can address
- Hypothesis becomes a premise
- Refined set of tested principles

In practice this might include:

- Work with partners and advisory group to identify key messages and ideas and audiences for these
- Reach a view with trustees about whether there is merit in this and if so whether it is for Commonweal to continue with it

Field expert and process expert makes sense of evaluation findings. (Partners, Commonweal Advisory Panel & Board)

So what? Learning from the pilot

No Recourse to Public Funds

The No Recourse to Public Funds project is a partnership between Commonweal Housing and Praxis Community Projects supporting destitute migrants.



Providing cross subsidy housing, the project tests whether units of free housing can be effectively funded to house destitute migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The means to an end is by providing good quality housing with support to migrant families for whom local authorities have a duty to provide accommodation under Section 17 of the Children’s Act.

Funded through social investment Commonweal has initially purchased seven properties for the NRPF project which are currently leased to Praxis who in turn offer them to local authorities to house destitute migrant families whom they have a duty to accommodate. This ensures that these families are housed in good-quality, supported accommodation instead of B&B hotels.

Evaluation and learning

Like all Commonweal projects, No Recourse to Public Funds is subject to a detailed on-going appraisal. An interim evaluation report was produced in July 2016 outlining a series of recommendations by Praxis, Commonweal and the investors. A second report is scheduled to be published in 2018.

In particular, the evaluations have challenged the project to maintain its initial emphasis on providing accommodation for people with NRPF: those who have no options with social services or who are seeking to make a fresh application for asylum and to regularise their immigration status. Similarly, the initial reports have also focussed on the need to build up the longer term resilience of residents improving move on among residents.

“The great thing about working with Commonweal is that they share our determination and passion for social justice”

Sally Daghlian OBE, CEO, Praxis Community Projects

What is NRPF?

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) refers to people who are subject to immigration control and have no entitlement to welfare benefits or public housing¹.

While clients remain NRPF, there are limited housing options available due to their lack of entitlement to Housing Benefit, local authority homelessness assistance and social housing.

¹ 4 Section 115 Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

What’s Next?

The project is now straddling stages 2 and 3 on our strategic project framework. It has adapted based on learning reported in the interim evaluation reports. As the project moves to stage three, both Commonweal and Praxis will continue to review the key lessons learnt, using these to refine the NRPF project further.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

Stage 3: 2010-2011

At this stage, Commonweal and Housing for Women began actively promoting the concept of Re-Unite, seeking traction primarily (but not exclusively) amongst Women’s centres who had grown rapidly following bespoke funding post the Corston Review.

Referrals coming from London boroughs of Croydon and Redbridge



This compares to last year when...

15 families and **4 single women**

had been accommodated, referred by four local authorities.

An additional **14 households** - 11 families and three single women - have moved on

No Recourse to Public Funds

CASE STUDY

Marcella is from Albania and has been in the UK for three years, having married her British partner and been granted a spouse visa (which has a no recourse to public funds condition). Marcella has a one year old son. Increasingly her husband became violent, but Marcella did not seek help until one night when her husband assaulted her and threw her out, remaining inside with their son. At this point she contacted the police who attended and were able to provide assistance.

As she had no recourse to public funds, she was unable to access mainstream provision for victims of domestic violence, so social services had to assume responsibility and initially accommodated her in a bed and breakfast. A charity for women who have experienced domestic violence referred her to Praxis, with the agreement of the relevant local authority to provide payment, and they accommodated her and her son.

Marcella has now been granted the Destitution Domestic Violence concession and is being supported to make applications for the relevant benefits. She will shortly be moving on to mainstream housing options.

During this period there was also a change in policy from Commonweal who agreed to provide some small grant funding to facilitate new replication partners looking to establish their services. This funding was tied to performance.

Freedom2Work:

Established in 2016, Freedom2Work is a partnership between Commonweal and Elmbridge Rentstart (ERS). The project seeks to develop a model of housing that will break the social injustice which sees far too many locked within the revolving door of homelessness.

Through the project clients aged 18-60 rent a room in a shared house or a self-contained studio flat while they begin their support programme and start looking for a job. Intensive support is provided over an initial six month period providing advice and training on household management, job-hunting, CV writing, budgeting, and other needs as identified.

Central to the project is establishing a saving culture by tenants. Through a match funded savings reward scheme clients can build up a pot of money which can be used to cover gaps in welfare payments, pay off debt, or even the deposit on a new flat in the private rented sector.

Project Hypothesis:

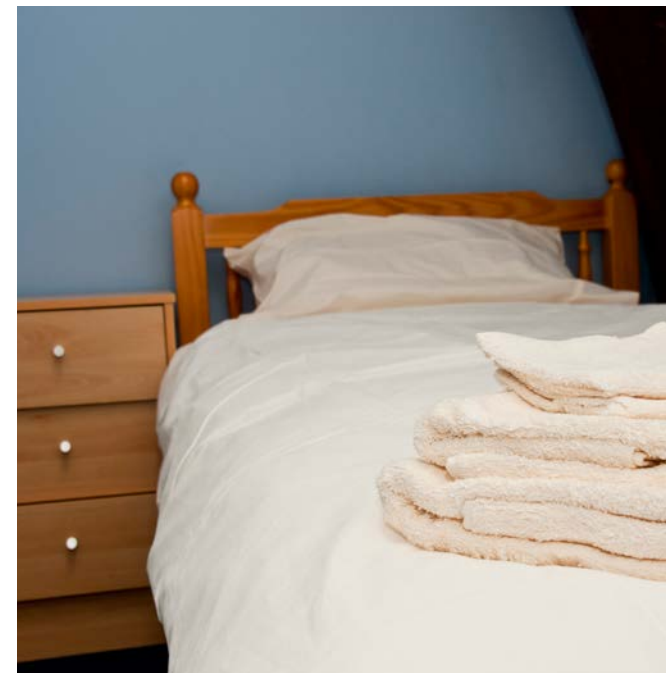
Will a combination of secure housing, flexible tailored support and a culture of saving work together to provide a protected path back to the world of work, whilst developing resilience?

The aim, through this pilot, is to test the Freedom2Work hypothesis, exploring a credible solution to the injustice identified during stage one of the strategic project framework.



"If it wasn't for this place I'd be living in my car, if I still had a car. I've managed to hold onto my tools, so definitely - it's helped me."

Freedom2Work occupant



So what? Stage 2-3

The project currently straddles stages 2 and 3 of our strategic project framework.

The first interim evaluation of the Freedom2Work project was conducted in July 2017.

The first interim evaluation findings noted the positive value that many of the F2W clients received from the project, whilst highlighting the benefits of our partnership with ERS, providing them with the space and opportunity to develop Freedom2Work, incubating them from risk.

The interim evaluation additionally challenged the Freedom2Work programme to further clarify the questions around whether clients were 'saving' or 'building a rent deposit' with some tenants preferring to save the money for items other than a rent deposit.

It also called for greater scrutiny over the key elements and precise definitions of the main interventions of the project. In addition to this, the scalability of the model was highlighted with the evaluators noting that 22 property units represented the optimum cohort for the proper delivery of integral F2W interventions.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

Stage 3: 2010-2011 contd.

At this stage Commonweal also employed a specific Business Development manager to promote the Re-Unite approach and to coordinate the growing network.

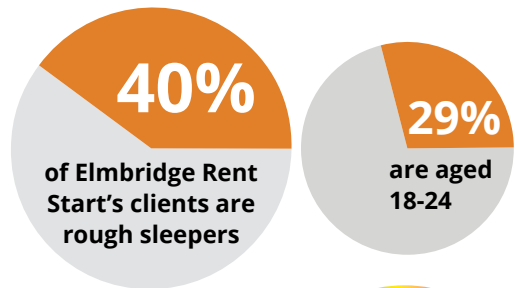
A second stage evaluation was also commissioned to mark two years from the original evaluation by Professor Gelsthorpe.

Stage 3

The next stage of the project will be moving to replication. As the project progresses and gathers further actionable learning, we will work closely with ERS to review this learning, using it to influence the future shape of the project. With the evaluators, we will review its ability to build tenants resilience as they return to work, whilst assessing how to improve the rental deposit scheme. As the project moves towards stage 4 and 5 on the replication framework, we will continue to demonstrate a clear evidence base for the benefits of the F2W model to bring to the attention of other key stakeholders.

"They say everything happens for a reason – doing a [house] share, it was meant to be, because I made a good friend"

Freedom2Work occupant



What the project partners say:

It's been an extremely valuable experience for Elbridge Rentstart to work with such a forward thinking funder as Commonwealth Housing; they have already enabled us to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of many homeless people in Surrey through practical support, mentoring and training.

Due to the fact that Commonwealth Housing give time and knowledge in addition to funding means that we have been able to develop as a charity in addition to providing new and innovative support to our clients.

Helen Watson, Chief Executive, Elbridge Rent Start



04.

Now what? Moving into replication

What do we want to achieve? Using the Commonweal replication framework, could drive at:

- Building the evidence base
- Systems change
- Organisations (including partners) continue to adopt the principles and adapt their practice

In practice this might include:

- Working with network of providers
- Parliamentary and policy work possibly in partnership
- Dissemination in written reports and by seeking meetings and presentation opportunities

Field expert and process expert develop replication plan. (Partners, Commonweal Advisory Panel & Board)

Now what? Moving into replication

Peer Landlord

In late 2012 Commonweal began work on the Peer Landlord project. As one of Commonweal's flagship projects, this year has seen Peer Landlord develop further towards replication, the ultimate goal for each of our projects, progressing towards stage four of our strategic project framework.

Peer Landlord tests a model of shared housing which combines genuine affordability and promotes stability for tenants. Crucially, it seeks to establish a supportive – not supported – housing environment.

The landlord is selected from an existing tenant who volunteers to take responsibility for basic housing management, acting as the link between the household and the property manager. Additionally they will also provide informal peer support to his or her housemates. The project is designed to explore whether shared housing could become a positive viable longer-term accommodation option for vulnerable people, instead of individual flats which may be lonely, isolated and in the current housing market, increasingly expensive.

The project seeks to address an injustice which sees many that are capable of independent living, perhaps with a little extra support and financial leeway held back by unstable and often

The Peer Landlord pilot project is delivered by two separate project partners: **Catch 22**, who predominantly work with younger people, often from vulnerable backgrounds, and **Thames Reach** who focus on the formerly homeless, and those recently at risk of homelessness.

Peer Landlord



chaotic housing conditions. Despite aiming to find sustainable employment or education, many are forced into hostels, sofa surfing, a series of unaffordable failed PRS tenancies, supported housing or even rough sleeping.

Peer Landlord looks to plug this gap, offering a good quality, affordable and supportive shared housing option.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

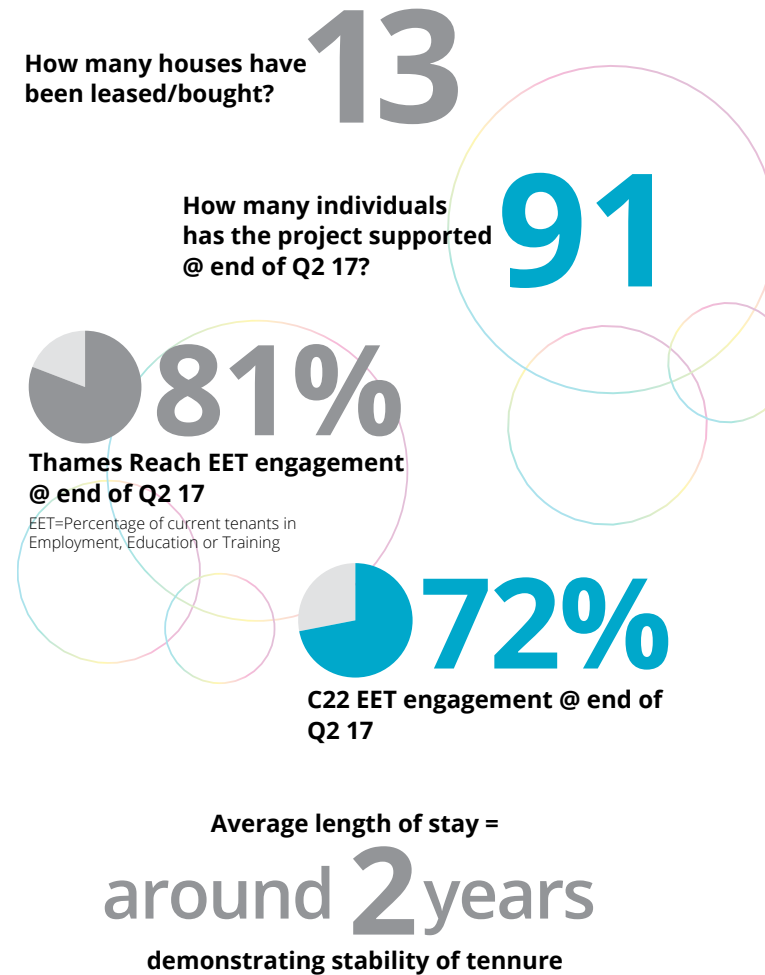
Stage 4: 2012-2014

The Re-Unite model was replicated by women's centres and housing associations across the country as Re-Unite saw a growth in take up by new replication partners. This peaked at 12 schemes across England and Wales and included access to every women's prison in England.

At this stage on the Re-Unite journey the impacts of the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda together with ongoing austerity meant that funding for gender specific services was restricted. This meant that a number of Re-Unite



Peer Landlord by Numbers/Facts:



So where does this work fit within the overall Commonweal project framework?

With the pilot scheme complete Peer Landlord is now straddling stages three and four of the strategic project framework. It continues to adapt based on the learning gathered from evaluations and the lived experience of tenants, Catch 22 and Thames Reach. We are exploring whether or not supportive shared housing can be a positive, viable, long term option for lower needs individuals who are or are at risk of being homeless – we think it can.

Supporting new housing models

Developing our role as a thought leader and looking to build on our learning from Peer Landlord Commonweal is currently exploring ways in which we can support potential new build shared housing models as well as encouraging the Peer Landlord supportive shared housing approach for landlords of existing property.

Social Investment

Peer Landlord was the first project supported by Commonweal that used social investment funding to provide the capital to complete the initial property portfolio. Our social investors Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Bridges Ventures and Trust for London were attracted by the degree of innovation in the proposed model, and the intention of that model to be scalable and so expand its level of social impact. Our social investment partners remain closely engaged with ongoing strategic discussions about how best to achieve replication, adoption and adaptation of the model by others.

replication partners were, notwithstanding a small element of set up funding from Commonweal, unable to continue their engagement in the project replication.

As the project moved towards stage 5 on the strategic project framework, a number of larger women's centres continue to provide a targeted housing and support service providing a re-unite service.

05.

So what's next? Learning from replication

How did it go? Using the Commonweal replication framework and looking at what you wanted to achieve in relation to:

- Building the evidence base
- Systems change
- Organisations (including partners) continue to adopt the principles and adapt their practice

In practice this might include:

- 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

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

So what's next? Learning from Replication

Re-Unite

Re-Unite was founded by Commonweal Housing, Women in Prison and Housing for Women in response to the problems faced by women trying to rebuild a stable family life when released from prison. The hand back of the projects housing stock from Housing for Women was completed in 2017, bringing Commonweal's formal engagement with the Re-Unite project to a close.



Re-Unite tackled a clear social injustice: having lost their accommodation as a result of offending, many women are labelled as intentionally homeless and are therefore not entitled to social housing. Additionally, if a mother leaving prison does not have custody of her children when applying for support, she is eligible for nothing larger than a room in a shared house or at best a one-bedroom property. However, when living in a one-bedroom property, she is denied custody of her children. Re-Unite exposed this nonsensical catch 22 situation.

The project offered a combination of in prison support, access to housing and family support to female offenders to facilitate the successful reunion of mothers with their children upon release from prison.

The Commonweal formula in action:

As the first project to go through the full Commonweal strategic project cycle of testing an approach, refining it and then

replicating it, Re-Unite perfectly demonstrates the unique Commonweal formula in action.

By developing a strong evidence base to learn from and improving projects, a solution can be found to social injustice.

Ten Year Review

We marked ten years of Re-Unite with a major new report **Re-Unite: Ten Year Review** detailing the impact, implications, and policy lessons of the Re-Unite project, published in July 2017.

Government policy and funding changes over the last ten years have been difficult. Most of the women's centres adopting, adapting and delivering Re-Unite have lost significant funding with many facing closure. While these centres remain convinced by Re-Unite's efficacy, Government failure to support them means too many women and children are not being helped. Our report highlights how this problem can be fixed. Commonweal recognises we need to do more to embed our learning and solutions in to public policy - this is a priority for the coming year.

What have we learnt?

Over the last decade Re-Unite has helped to shape Commonweal Housing as a charity. It has helped us to refine our action learning model and taught us a great deal about how to be an effective partner to front line organisations. It has taught us how to adapt processes, activities and funding on our journey to find housing solutions to social injustices.

RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

Stage 5: 2014-2017

As part of the final stage of the Re-Unite scheme Commonweal outsourced the coordination of the Re-Unite network to a partnership of Anawim and Women's Breakout. This purpose of this was to seek to embed the knowledge

and understanding of the Re-Unite approach across those primarily focused on supporting women in the Criminal Justice System.

Re- unite highlighted for us a number of key lessons which it will be important to carry forward to help us improve our work in the future:

- Commonwealth must anticipate and be prepared for shifts in government policy and practice if and when we embark on future multiyear projects.
- That a degree of flexibility needs to be considered when deciding the length of each project to take into account potential changes in policy and circumstances over time.
- A strong pilot programme only proves to demonstrate that the initial core idea behind the project is sound; Re- Unite shows more support may be needed to ensure that the initial pilot project is able to thrive when replicated.
- It is vital to remainflexible, keeping our ability to adopt and adapt at the heart of our work, without becoming too flexible.



The recommendations in the 10 year review will help minimise this social injustice if accepted and adopted by Government.

The goals of Re- Unite

- That families can be reunited and supported in suitable, stable family housing
- That mothers can live a less chaotic , healthier lives and desist from offending
- That children and young people can access sufficient support
- That children are kept out of the care system (where appropriate)

As an action learning organisation, it is vital that we take away learning from our projects so that we can look to continually improve delivery. Commonwealth has worked hard to record and reflect upon how the Re- Unite project has evolved in tandem with our partners and expert evaluators.

As we move forward on other projects, Commonwealth has learnt to be clearer at the outset , producing significantly more written guidance, allowing project partners greater freedom whilst ensuring they stay true to the projects hypothesis.

Commonwealth knows that we don't have all the answers and despite running for ten years, Re- Unite has by no means eradicated the nonsensical catch 22 situation many mothers find themselves in when leaving prison.

Housing for Women decided to seek early hand back of the original properties used for Re- Unite, focusing on the development of Re- Unite more as a floating support service rather than being tied to a specific project address.

During this stage, Commonwealth commissioned IVAR to review how the replication process for Re- Unite was delivered, identifying lessons for future projects.

Chrysalis – Leaning in Action

The Commonwealth third phase (self contained, independent accommodation) of the Chrysalis project ran from 2009-2016 reaching the fifth stage on our strategic project framework. The scheme, delivered in partnership with St Mungo's and funded by Lambeth Council, provided pioneer housing, resettlement and support to women exiting prostitution. At the heart of the third phase of the project was the desire to demonstrate that secure accommodation after crisis can prevent relapse.



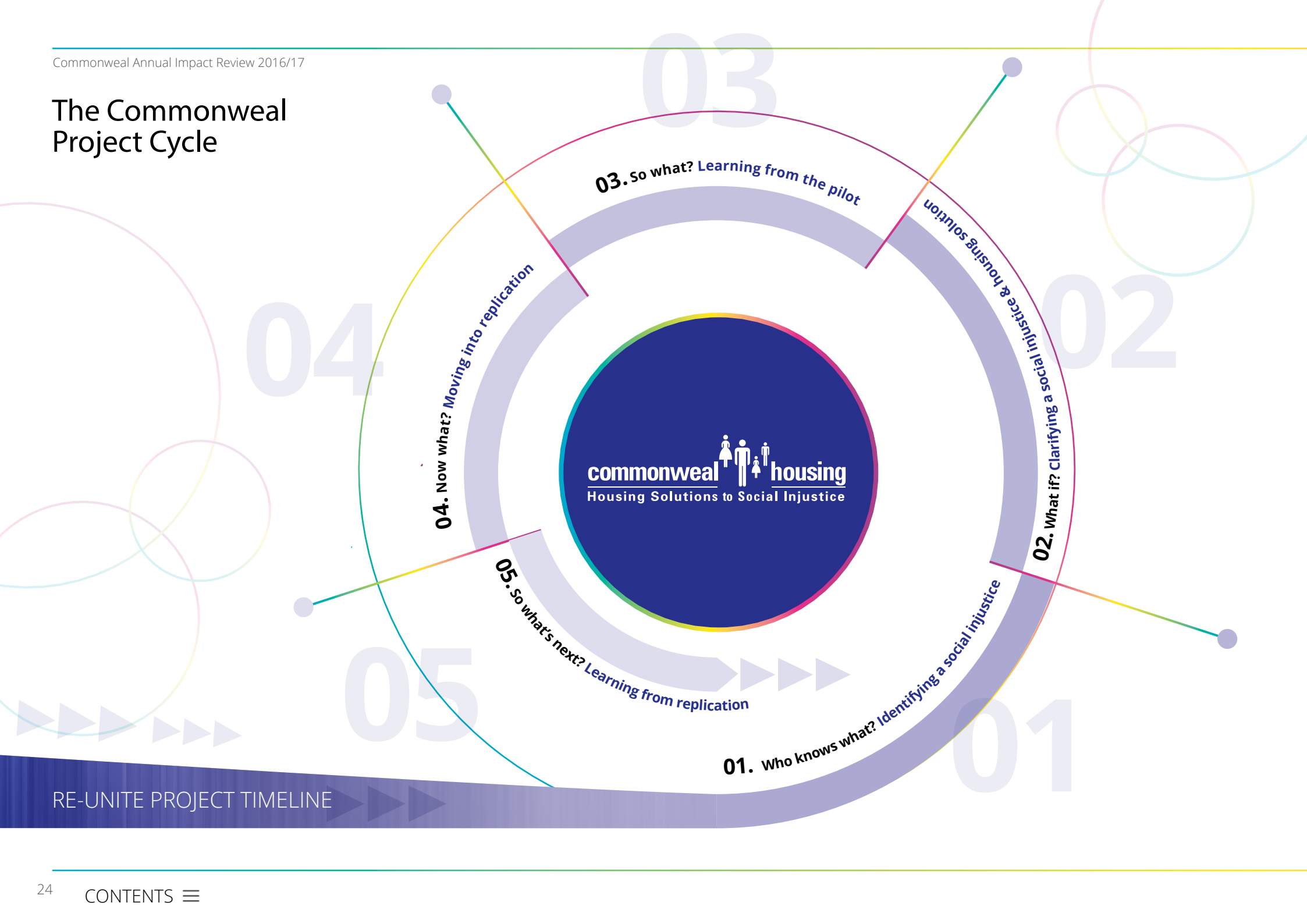
In summer 2016 funding cutbacks from Lambeth Council led to the discontinuation of Stage 3 of the project ending our involvement in Chrysalis.

Whilst the news initially came as a setback, as an action learning charity we sought to ensure that the maximum impact was achieved from the pilot project. We therefore commissioned an independent evaluation to assess and appraise the Chrysalis project, capturing data and learning on how the policy and practitioner landscape had evolved in the period since the first project evaluation in 2012.

These lessons and the key findings from the Chrysalis project were used to design the 'spiritual successor' to Chrysalis: the Amari project.

Ending our formal engagement in 2017, Commonwealth published a final 10 year review of Re- Unite.

The Commonweal Project Cycle

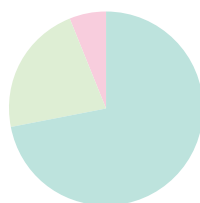


RE-UNITE PROJECT TIMELINE

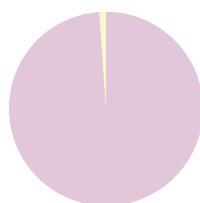
Financial Review

Year ended 31st December 2016

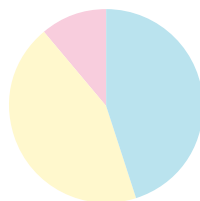
Income	£	%
Voluntary Income	642,703	72
Rental Income	195,085	22
Other: Investor refurbishment contributions	49,487	6
Total Incoming Resources 2016	887,275	



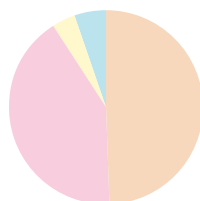
Expenditure	£	%
Charitable activities	816,609	99
Governance	8,003	1
Total Expenditure 2016	824,612	



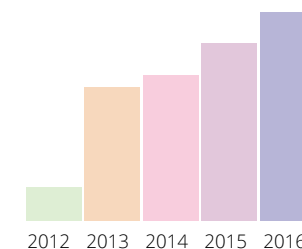
Balance Sheet	£	%
Uncharged Assets	4,604,696	45
Charged Assets	4,553,000	44
Net Current Assets	1,114,390	11
Total Assets	10,272,086	



Long Term Liabilities and Funds	£	%
Designated Funds	5,069,259	49
Social Investment	4,223,436	41
Deferred Income	442,560	4
General Funds	536,831	5
Total	10,272,086	



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



Full details of Commonweal's financial statements are available at 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 - appointed December 2016

Directors/Board of Trustees

Rt. Hon Fiona Mactaggart – Chair

Gary Medazoumian FCA

Jack Mactaggart – appointed June 2016

Jane Slowey C.B.E

Professor Jonathan Portes – appointed March 2017

Sir John Mactaggart – resigned December 2016

Laurence Newman

Robert Nadler – resigned December 2016

Russ Edwards – appointed March 2017

Steve Douglas

Company Secretary

Gary Medazoumian FCA

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC, 7th Floor, 180 Oxford Street, London

Solicitors

Bircham Dyson Bell, 50 Broadway, London, SW1H 0BL

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 Housing for Women, Anawin, Women's Breakout, 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), University of Cambridge and Brighton Women's Centre for their continued support and positive contribution.

Member of Commonweal Chief Executive's Advisory Panel: Keith Jenkins, Alan Benson, Jeremy Swain, Hether Petch, Elizabeth Carson 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.

Commonweal is also grateful to our social investment partners for their confidence in our work; Bridges Ventures, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Trust for London, City Bridge Trust, Big Society Capital, Cheyne Capital and Quaker Homeless Action.

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


To Sir John Mactaggart and Robert Nadler who stood down this year as long serving Trustees for Commonweal, we would also like to express our gratitude for their dedication, counsel and support.


Last but by no means least, Commonweal remain grateful to Grove End Housing Ltd for its generous and continued support.




Commonweal Housing Ltd

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