

Commonweal, n.

Common well-being; esp. the general good, welfare, or prosperity of a community or country as a whole...for the common good



Contents

- Our Year** 3
- Forewords** 4
- The Commonweal Story** 6
- You're Home** 8
- Criminal Justice** 10
 - Alternative to Custody Housing Pilots
 - The Community Transition Service
 - The Phoenix Project
 - Post-Custody Housing: Events and Activity
 - Re-Unite (2007-2017)
- At-risk Youth** 16
 - Young People, Supported Housing, Unemployment
 - Unregistered Children's Homes
- Stories that define us** 20
- Migration Asylum and Trafficking** 22
 - Retreat Housing
 - Call for New Ideas: Migration, Asylum and Trafficking
 - The Slavery and Trafficking Survivors Care Standards
- Violence Against Women and Girls** 26
 - Rhea (2017 – 2023)
 - Amari (2017 – 2023)
 - Reflection from Commonweal's Deputy CEO, Amy Doyle...
- Evaluations** 30
- The University of Birmingham** 32
- Board Update** 33
- London Housing Panel** 33
- Governance** 34
- Financial Reports** 35

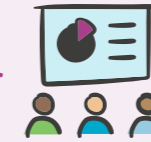
Our Year



Commonweal awarded the Charity Times Award.

September 2025

Pg8



Evaluation of the You're Home project, presented to the Communities Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

November 2025

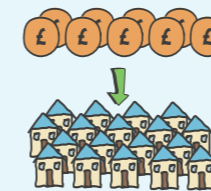
Pg11

Preparatory work to bring to life new alternative to custody housing pilots for women.

April 2026



Pg12



Social investment successfully secured to purchase seven homes in Belfast to house women leaving prison.

March 2026

Pg12



The Phoenix Project, supporting male ex-offenders with serious mental illness, launched in West Bromwich.

November 2025

Pg17



A study examining the affordability and employment challenges faced by young people in supported housing, published by Spring Housing.

March 2026

Pg18



Report investigating the growing use of unregistered children's homes, commissioned by Commonweal and written by Public First.

April 2026

Pg23



Properties acquired for the Retreat Housing project supporting refugees in Belfast.

January 2026

Pg32



Four University of Birmingham students supported by the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary

May 2025



Forewords

2025-2026

It has been a productive period for the charity, with the launch of several innovative housing pilots and the publication of original research. These achievements are significant, but they sit alongside the growing urgency of housing need across the United Kingdom, reminding us how much more there is to do.

For two decades, Commonweal has worked alongside organisations supporting people at the sharpest end of the housing crisis. Whether it is young people leaving care, women fleeing domestic abuse, or individuals transitioning from custody, access to safe, stable housing remains too often inconsistent and difficult to secure. These challenges strengthen our resolve to work in partnership with some of the most committed providers in the country. Together, we are increasingly convinced that housing must remain central to addressing wider socio-economic inequalities.

This year, it has been a privilege to see new collaborations take shape and begin to deliver impact. We are preparing to launch pilots focused on supporting young women to avoid entering or returning to custody, including one model designed as an alternative to recall. In Belfast, we have welcomed residents into a partnership with HAPANI, working to prevent refugee homelessness in a context of acute local pressure.

In the West Midlands, we are piloting a support model with Servol for men leaving custody with mental health needs and experiences of substance abuse. East Belfast Mission has also built on learning from its initial partnership with Commonweal to secure significant funding from Stormont, enabling an expansion of 18 additional homes and extending its reach to more households.

Our work continues to evolve in new directions, including a partnership with OffWest End Plays and Playwrights to provide affordable housing for young, working-class writers in London, and collaborating with partners to explore housing models to support neurodiverse young women at risk of domestic abuse.

Alongside our housing programmes, we have published research designed to inform practice and shape the wider system. This includes work with Spring Housing on youth unemployment in supported accommodation, with Advance on probation disengagement among young women leaving custody, and with Public First on the rise of illegal children's homes. We have also contributed to the Human Trafficking Foundation's new survivor care standards and are supporting the evaluation of a housing model for young people at risk of serious violence.

Taken together, this has been a year of meaningful progress, strong partnerships, and important learning. It has been an honour to chair Commonweal's Board during this time. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated team, to my fellow trustees for their guidance, to our partners for their expertise and shared commitment, and to Grove End Housing, whose support continues to make this work possible.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on deepening our partnerships, scaling what works, and continuing to develop practical solutions to some of the most pressing housing challenges in the UK. I hope this report, reflecting on both the past year and the past twenty years, proves insightful and inspiring.



Amarjit Bains,
Chair

Commonweal turns 20

Over the course of Commonweal's first twenty years, we have aimed for the gaps in housing provision, and sought to help those underserved by the housing sector at large. This approach follows from our founding premise – that a developed society cannot, and will not, cure social ills without decent housing provision for those in need, regardless of the availability and quality of other public services.

In that time, the housing sector has changed in many ways but stayed frustratingly similar in others. It is bittersweet to see Commonweal supporting research and roundtables into issues we began working on years ago. I in every 8 prisoners still sleep rough on their first night after release. I in 10 care leavers are sleeping rough within two years of ageing out. The supported housing sector remains a lottery in terms of quality and availability; whilst refugee homelessness remains a housing pressure for many local authorities.

These challenges are structural, but neither insurmountable nor static, and I am exceptionally proud to look back at Commonweal's efforts to reduce housing insecurity for some of the most vulnerable and overlooked groups across the country. There are several moments and projects that stand out, beginning, perhaps, with Re-Unite (a collaboration with Women in Prison and Housing for Women), the pioneering support model that supported mothers coming out of prison with secure accommodation for themselves and their children, who had been taken into care. The replication of the model in women's centres across the UK was a welcome step, and the issue remains a priority for us, as explained later in this report.

Other notable projects include our innovative supportive shared housing model, Peer Landlord (with Thames Reach and Catch-22), for single homeless people – changing the narrative from supported to supportive housing, and the socially-financed You're Home project, our first outside of England, with our partners at East Belfast Mission. A key achievement has been the development of Commonweal's successful social investment model – leveraging the core

support of our benefactor (Grove End Housing) to secure nearly 10 million pounds to date of additional capital funding to acquire properties for new pilot projects. Our first deal was fully redeemed in 2019, and we are now onto our sixth social investment programme, greatly expanding the capacity of our partners.

All of Commonweal's projects, studies, and reports cannot be summarised here, but I would also mention the Jane Slowey Bursary (named for our greatly-missed former CWH trustee) at the University of Birmingham as a particular source of pride. The bursary has supported four students every year as they research housing-related matters, and filled the team with confidence that young people remain determined to advance the cause of housing justice.

In pursuit of *housing solutions for social injustice*, I have had the privilege of meeting and working with countless partners, colleagues and friends who share this vision. I want to express my sincere thanks to all of Commonweal's partners throughout the last two decades, without whom we'd have very little to be proud of. I would also like to thank the Mactaggart family and Grove End Housing, our founders and principal benefactors. Without them, there would be no Commonweal. I hope you enjoy this review of our work and progress.



Ashley Horsey,
CEO

The Commonweal Story

The Mactaggart family legacy

Commonweal was established by the esteemed philanthropist Sir John Mactaggart Bt, whose vision was to use small, innovative pilot projects to address social injustices through housing.

Sir John developed Commonweal alongside his sister, the Rt. Hon Fiona Mactaggart, a former Labour minister and dedicated social justice campaigner who shaped the trajectory of Commonweal as Chair for 13 years until 2019.

We are incredibly proud to be an offshoot of the Mactaggart philanthropic legacy, which remains an integral part of Commonweal. Jack Mactaggart (son of Commonweal's founder, Sir John) has been a committed and enthusiastic Board member since 2016, including a recent five-year spell as Chair.



The Mactaggart family has strong historical ties to housing and tackling social injustices.

Throughout the early 1900s, Sir John Auld Mactaggart (1867-1956), the great-grandfather of Commonweal's founder, was a visionary in building and delivering affordable housing across Scotland, London, and the United States.



How we work?

From Sir John's original vision, Commonweal has grown into an established charity providing frontline organisations across the UK with the resources to provide the housing stock to test housing models supporting at-risk groups.

We operate across the following areas:



Feasibility studies:

We offer frontline organisations funding to assess the feasibility of their housing and support models, to establish financial viability and their capacity to deliver.



Property-based pilot projects:

If proven feasible, Commonweal works with partners to bring their housing solutions to life, typically over a seven-year pilot. We do this in multiple ways: by providing existing Commonweal-owned property or purchasing new stock, or by leveraging our engaged network of social investors to facilitate funding for property acquisition.



Evaluation:

Capturing project learnings is a key part of the Commonweal model. Each project undergoes an independent evaluation, helping to inform best practice across the sector and influence policy where possible. Crucially, we are equally interested in understanding what elements of a project didn't work as much as what did.



Research:

We fund and commission expert organisations to conduct new research into overlooked or underexplored areas of housing and social policy, aiming to dig deeper into the key injustices facing society.



You're Home: Project Learnings

You're Home, a partnership between Commonweal and East Belfast Mission, is a community-led housing initiative providing independent housing for people moving on from homelessness.

This year, we published an independent final evaluation of the pilot, produced by Dr Andrew Grounds and Prof Brendan Murtagh at Queen's University Belfast. The evaluation found evidence that socially financed housing interventions, like the pilot, can build the capacity of frontline community organisations to help reduce homelessness, resulting in positive social and economic impacts.

EBM presented the evaluation findings to the Communities Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, where members expressed support for replicating the project model elsewhere.

Since 2023, You're Home has operated across five properties purchased through £570,886 of social investment sourced by Commonweal. In an exciting development, EBM has successfully secured a £2 million FTC (Financial Transactions Capital) investment from the Government to deliver 18 additional You're Home units in Belfast.

Project overview

You're Home provides reduced-rent accommodation to people with low support needs recovering from homelessness. Tenants can also access wrap-around support services related to mental health, employment, and independent living skills.

The project serves as a pathway for tenants to transition from EBM's 'Hosford Hostel' into self-contained independent housing, while freeing up hostel bed spaces for those in need.

You're Home adopts a flexible tenancy model that enables individuals to stay in their homes for as long as required to achieve a successful move-on.

The project utilises a blended finance approach that leverages social investment sourced by Commonweal, supplemented by housing allowance top-ups to bridge the gap between benefit rates and actual rental costs, ensuring long-term viability.

You're Home was shortlisted for the Working in Partnership award at the All-Ireland Housing Awards 2026.



In the five years to 2025, the Welcome Organisation in Belfast recorded a

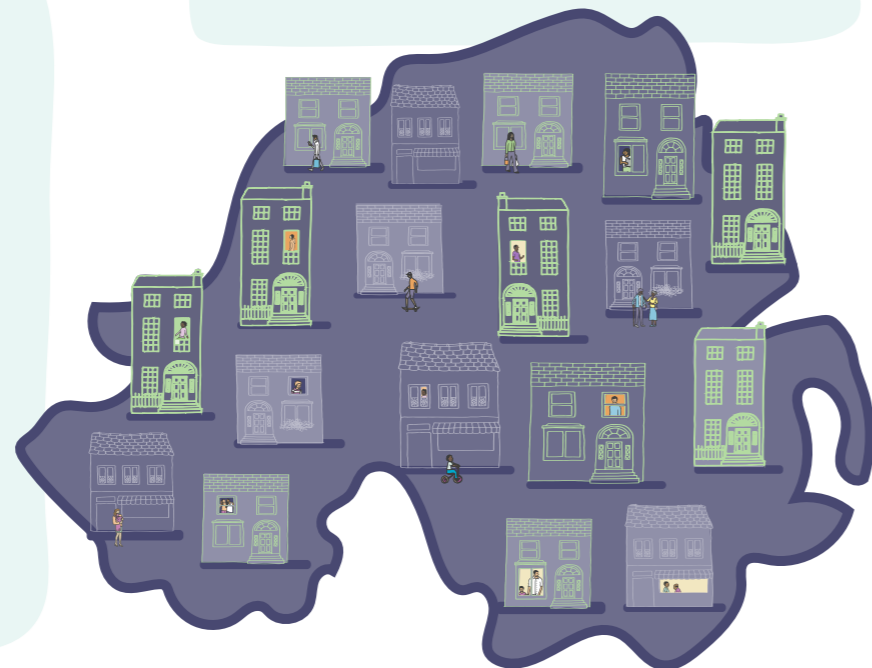
380%

increase in female rough sleeping and a

260%

rise in male rough sleeping.

(Welcome Organisation, 2025)

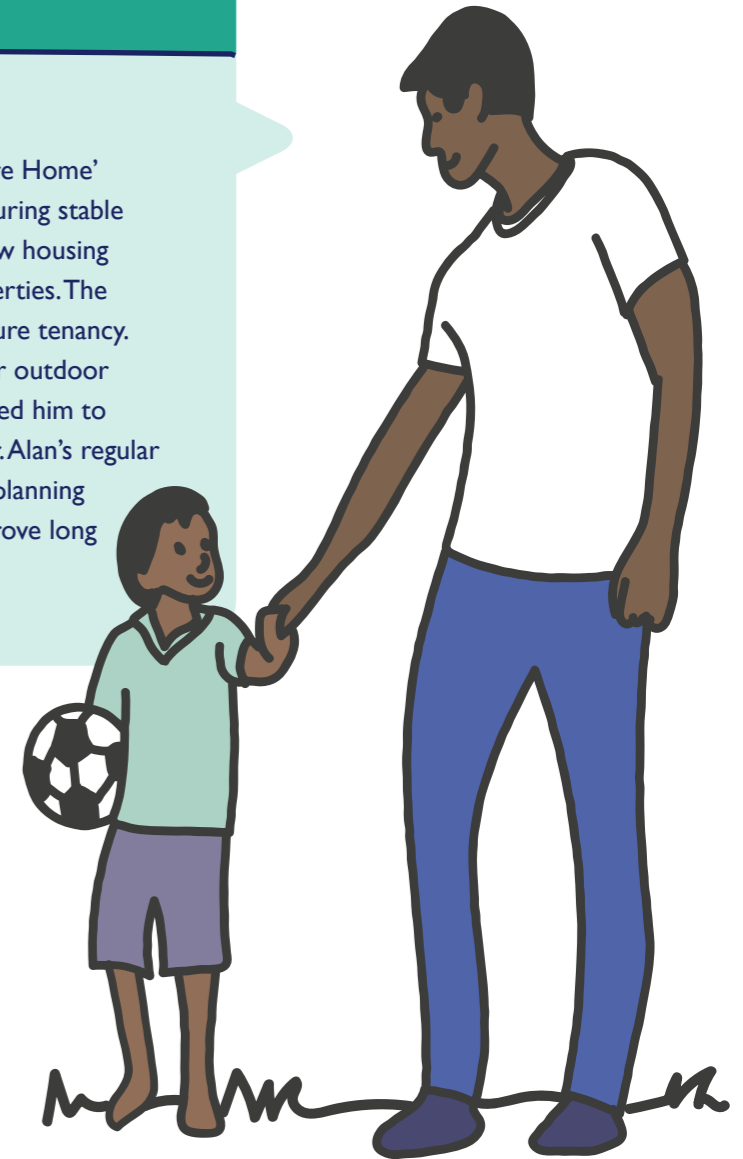


Case study:

Alan's* story

Transitioning from EBM's Hosford House Hostel to a 'You're Home' property, single father Alan faced significant barriers to securing stable accommodation. With previous criminal convictions and low housing points, he also struggled to afford local private rental properties. The 'You're Home' property has provided more than just a secure tenancy. The quiet neighbourhood environment has proved ideal for outdoor activities with his son, whilst the housing stability has enabled him to pursue long-term professional goals and advance his career. Alan's regular salary has enhanced his self-sufficiency, enabling better life planning and access to greater levels of disposable income that improve long term security for both him and his son.

**Names have been changed*



What has worked?



Cost savings

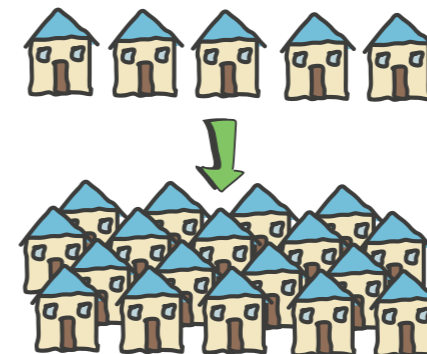
The project's cost-benefit analysis forecasts a £2.39 return for every £1 invested, generating financial returns for investors, public sector savings including reduced healthcare or social services costs, and tenant wellbeing value.



Replication

You're Home serves as a practical example, enabling EBM to successfully secure a £2 million FTC investment loan from the Northern Ireland Assembly to purchase 18 properties over the next two years to scale You're Home.

The tangible success of the pilot has also attracted further funding opportunities, with EBM unlocking additional funds (£553,800) to develop its community-led housing provision.



Social finance innovation

The investment model offers an evidence base to support similar loan or patient capital interventions. To encourage wider replication, Commonweal is working alongside EBM to share learnings and raise the profile of social finance – a relatively new approach in the Northern Ireland homelessness sector.



Positive tenant outcomes

The You're Home model facilitated genuine transitions from hostel accommodation to community-based independent living. Tenants reported positive progress across wellbeing, education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as improved family relationships.

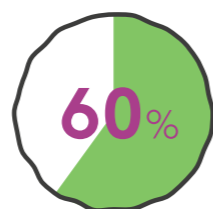
Criminal Justice

There are strong correlations between housing insecurity (including homelessness) and offending or reoffending rates. A significant number of prisoners (1 in 10) are sleeping rough from their day of release. After the intense structure of prison, homelessness can destroy any chance of positive re-entry into society – whether that means reconnecting with family, starting or continuing recovery, or gaining employment.

Working to improve outcomes in the criminal justice system is one of Commonweal's foundational missions, and throughout the last year, this work has taken the form of new housing schemes for ex-offenders and new research into rising recall rates.

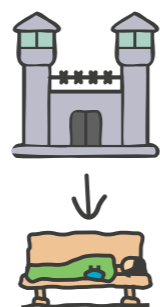
In new housing pilots, described across the following pages, Commonweal is supporting various groups of vulnerable ex-offenders (including young women, and men and women with severe mental ill-health) with stable and secure housing and on-site support.

Commonweal has also commissioned research with Advance, investigating the reasons young women disengage with probation services, and the damaging role short-term, insecure, or dangerous housing can play in disengagement and eventual recall to prison. Advance presented some of their findings at one of Commonweal's post-custody housing forums, which gather practitioners and probation staff together to discuss housing challenges and share solutions or successful models.



60% of women released after a short-term recall left homeless

at HMP Foston Hall (a women's prison in Derbyshire), according to a 2025 inspection. (HM Inspectorate of Prisons)



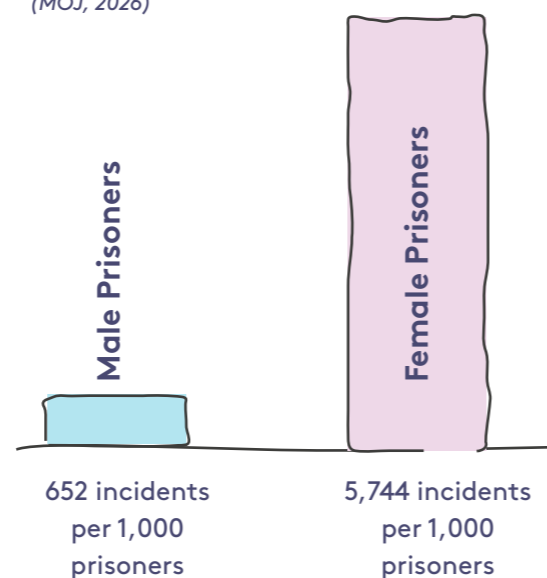
Over 1,000 people every month leave prison directly into homelessness.

(Nacro, 2025)

The rate of self-harm in the female estate is now nearly **9x higher**

than in the male estate.

(MOJ, 2026)



Alternative to Custody Housing Pilots

Women make up a relatively small component of the UK's prison population – at any given time, between 3,500-4,000 women are in custody in the UK, compared to about 87,900 men.

This imbalance has led to women falling through gaps within the UK's custodial and probation framework, which is (perhaps unsurprisingly, if inexcusably) framed with men in mind.

Commonweal is preparing to deliver a two-part pilot seeking to:

Reduce recall rates for young women after custody

Improve provision and life outcomes for women who have committed offences



Current Challenges: Prison Recalls, Homelessness, Domestic Abuse

Women are being recalled to prison at a concerning rate:

'There were 3,546 women in prison on 17 March 2025. In the year to September 2024 there were 2,603 recalls of women to custody, of which only 17% involved women facing further charges.' (Prison Reform Trust)

Those statistics mean the number of annual recalls of women has grown by over 53% since 2018, despite the fact only a small proportion face any further charges, as mentioned above.

Housing insecurity plays a regrettably prominent role in many cases. Women in need of a stable arrangement to reintegrate into the community too often lack one. There is evidence that recall is driven far more by this insecurity – and the resultant technical breaches (missing probation appointments, a lack of engagement with services) – than further criminal behaviour.

Housing Solutions

To counter high recall rates and post-custodial homelessness for women, Commonweal is working with Advance and Women in Prison to bring to life their supported housing models. The pilots focus on the critical transition period post-release. This is a high-risk point for women, especially younger women, who often experience homelessness, unstable relationships, or trauma-related relapse.

The pilot is expected to be based in two clusters: Advance intends to utilise three Commonweal-owned properties in Newham to support young women at risk of recall, and Women in Prison (WIP) seeks to utilise five/six Commonweal-owned properties in Lambeth to support women who come into contact with CJS due to domestic abuse and who are facing homelessness/rough sleeping.

Women in Prison's pilot focuses on women who are arrested due to domestic abuse, and who are facing homelessness or unsafe housing circumstances. They will be offered safe and supported accommodation alongside a specialist domestic abuse intervention. The project aims to provide women with a secure space to stabilise and access domestic abuse and wraparound support tailored to their needs. By combining housing with holistic domestic abuse and CJS-aware support, the model aims to reduce re-victimisation, prevent re-offending, and improve long-term outcomes.

Advance is looking to pilot a supported accommodation model for young women under 25 years old who are on probation, and at risk of recall, to reduce recall and reoffending while increasing engagement with support services and improve long-term life outcomes by providing a stable foundation from which they can navigate reintegration to their community.

The core question we are seeking to answer is: *Can the provision of gender-specific supported accommodation, as an alternative to a decision to recall when this feels inevitable, reduce the likelihood of reincarceration or reoffending for young women aged 18 to 24 years old (inclusive), and improve their engagement with services, wellbeing, and independence?*

Commonweal is proud to be working with sector experts to support women on a path to housing security and a better life. A lot of the residents in this pilot will not have had access to such housing security and support provision before, and the team look forward to the full commencement of the project in the weeks ahead.

Currently, these projects are in development, with both Advance and WIP exploring fundraising opportunities to cover the costs of running their intended services.

The Community Transition Service

Partner organisation: Depaul Northern Ireland, a local arm of homeless charity Depaul.

Project overview

Through the provision of stable housing and tailored support, Depaul will deliver a trauma-informed Housing First service designed for women leaving prison in Belfast who have complex psychosocial needs, such as addiction issues and ill-mental health.

The project aims to address the unique vulnerabilities of women leaving prison to help them rebuild their lives upon release, and break cycles of re-offending. Women will have access to trauma-informed support to assist with mental health challenges and family reunification.

As part of the model, Depaul will liaise with prison and probation staff to identify women at risk of homelessness post-release, fostering a successful transition into the community. Women are expected to reside in the property for a period of 6-12 months with access to follow-up community support measures.

In response to the lack of women-only homelessness

accommodation in Northern Ireland, the project seeks to provide a suitable alternative to female ex-offenders being placed in mixed-gender hostels or unsafe environments that are inconducive to their recovery.

53% of women in prison experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse before the age of 16, compared to 27% of men.



(Prison Reform Trust, 2019)

Update

- In 2025, Commonweal secured £1.1m of social investment from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to acquire seven two-bed properties around Belfast for this project to support 14 women.
- Commonweal has purchased the first portfolio of homes, with women moving in since May, and all properties are envisaged to be acquired by late summer 2026.

The Phoenix Project

Partner organisation: Servol Community Services - a charity providing housing and specialist mental health care in London and across the West Midlands.

Project overview

The Phoenix Project offers shared specialist supported accommodation for male ex-offenders with complex mental health needs, including co-occurring substance use disorders.

The project aims to bridge the gap between prison and the community, helping individuals reintegrate into society, and reduce the risk of a mental health relapse that often leads to reoffending.

Servol's dedicated support staff provide 24/7 on-site assistance, focused on person-centred recovery and crisis management, as well as help accessing education and employment opportunities and navigating legal and administrative issues.

Individuals will typically reside in the property for up to 24 months, or until they are ready for independent living, with continued outreach support available during their transition.

Around **1 in 7** prisoners across England had an identified mental health condition, as of 29 February 2024.

(Quality and Outcomes Framework's Classifications, NHS)

Update

- Commonweal purchased the project's 14-bed property in West Bromwich in June 2025, and following renovations, the project launched in November 2025.
- Full occupancy is expected by late summer, following initial referral problems Servol encountered. This identified a wider issue: a lack of joined-up referral pathways for those leaving prison to access housing options - an issue Commonweal is keen to explore further.
- We have commissioned researchers at the consultancy Just Ideas to capture learnings from the project's innovative approach to supporting ex-offenders with complex mental health needs. The interim project evaluation is scheduled for publication later this year.

Case study:

Jack's* story

Reflecting on his first month, Jack values the fresh start that the Phoenix Project has given him, and the opportunity to build a positive future. During his short time with the project, he has developed good independent living skills (cooking and cleaning) and enjoys socialising with staff and other residents in communal areas. Jack also appreciates support from staff, engaging in discussions about his mental health and effective management. He regularly attends his probation appointments, including three-way meetings with staff from the Phoenix Project, demonstrating good engagement with his licence conditions and multi-agency support. Jack wants to live a crime-free life and is committed to making positive changes.

*Names have been changed



The Phoenix Project, St Andrews Court, West Bromwich

Post-Custody Housing: Events and Activity

Commonweal has been closely engaged with the criminal justice sector over the last year, promoting stable housing after release from custody as a key factor in the reduction of re-offending and recall to prison. We have hosted numerous events and forums to encourage practitioners to share best practice, whether that be related to the housing models currently available, the referral system, or on engagement with probation services.

Brighton Women's Centre

In December 2025, Brighton Women's Centre (BWC) published a Commonweal-funded feasibility study outlining a trauma-informed, women-only accommodation model for women leaving prison. The report was launched at an event chaired by Councillor Bella Sankey, Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council, and was attended by stakeholders engaged in supporting women in the criminal justice system.

Post-custody housing for women has become a serious challenge. A lack of available stock, and a lack of existing women-only stock, means support services are on the back foot immediately, and women in desperate need of stability do not get it. An alarming number of women are released into rough sleeping or housing insecurity – as the report references, 'just under half (47%) of women left prison with settled accommodation in the year to March 2024'.

The system, as the report makes clear, has several in-built challenges to overcome. Referrals, particularly after short sentences, regularly arrive late, meaning that local authorities or providers have very little time to source appropriate housing options. There is often high turnover amongst probation teams, meaning too few prisoners get the chance to build a trusting relationship with their officer. Offers of accommodation too far away from family or friends often get rejected (often without the women realising she may be treated as intentionally homeless and have support withdrawn), which can mean eventual breaches of probation and recall.



The report highlights the urgent need for safe, transitional housing for women exiting prison into homelessness, advocating for the delivery of this service as a local housing solution for those leaving custody and returning to Sussex. It also details what makes these models work – immediate coordinated, multi-agency support with partnership working - 'making sure everyone is linked up' in the words of one interviewed caseworker, 'we all have her release date in our diaries...' in the words of another.

BWC envisages utilising 4 to 5 self-contained (or semi-equipped) units (sourced from local partners) in a property with communal space and secure staff presence. Under the model, women would receive tailored, trauma-informed support that is co-produced with BWC caseworkers, designed to address needs such as housing, domestic abuse and sexual violence.



Project Spotlight:

Re-Unite (2007-2017)

Commonweal has long been dedicated to finding the right housing models to address gaps in services for women involved in the criminal justice system. Our flagship project, Re-Unite, provided safe family housing for mothers released from prison, in partnership with Housing for Women and Women in Prison.

Over its ten-year span, the project supported 100 mothers and approximately 200 children, resulting in transformative impacts on the lives of the families and the women involved.

Project overview

Re-Unite provided in-prison support to identify potential women before release, offering advice and support on the nature and requirements of finding housing and the reunification process.

The project offered two services: small flats or studios, allowing mothers to become eligible for the return of their children, and family housing for mothers to live with their children immediately post-release.

Through both programmes, women were supported to enable successful reunions with their children and to rebuild and strengthen family dynamics. Families were also helped to access specialist support, such as counselling, mentoring, substance misuse and mental health services.



"The prison service discharged me from the hospital in North London with a newborn baby, four large duffle bags and £45 I think it was and I had to get back to South London. If it wasn't for my support worker I don't know what I would have done."

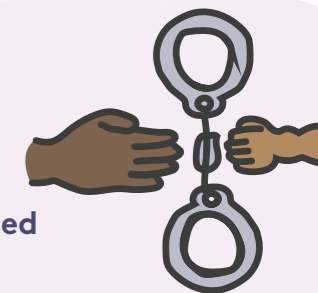
– Re-Unite service user

It is estimated that in 2020, more than

17,500

children were separated from their mother by imprisonment.

(Prison Reform Trust, 2025)



Key outcomes

- The reconviction rate of women supported by Re-Unite was 10%, compared to a national average of 20-25%.
- Around 1 in 5 of the children had previously been in the care of their local authority whilst their mother was in prison.
- Re-Unite, originally piloted across 11 Commonweal-owned properties in South London, grew into a network of 12 women's centres and housing associations, working with mothers in every women's prison in England in 2014.

We are proud of Re-Unite's achievements, and as one of Commonweal's early housing pilots, it taught us invaluable lessons at strategic and operational levels and was instrumental in shaping Commonweal into the action-learning charity we are today.



At-risk Youth

Commonweal exists because we believe poor, insecure, or dangerous housing outcomes can cause and compound social issues. More optimistically, on the other hand, safe and decent housing improves social outcomes and gives vulnerable households a basis for improving their lives.

This is certainly true for children who have grown up in supported settings or faced housing insecurity in youth. Growing up in care leaves children at much higher risk of future homelessness, criminality, and unemployment. One of Commonweal's strategic themes – *Difficult transitions to adulthood* – aims to minimise these risks, for care leavers and other groups of vulnerable young people.

Commonweal's projects and research reflect this emphasis on safer transitions into adulthood, and work this year has focused on learning more about where existing provision is lacking. Our research with Advance focuses on 18–25-year-olds in the criminal justice system who are disengaging from support and probation services, and our research into unregistered children's homes by Public First investigated the rapid proliferation of their use.

Elsewhere, we are continuing to support young working-class writers with affordable accommodation in London, and are sponsoring the evaluation into an innovative housing and support model helping young people at high risk of violence in Harringay.



(Homeless Link, 2024)

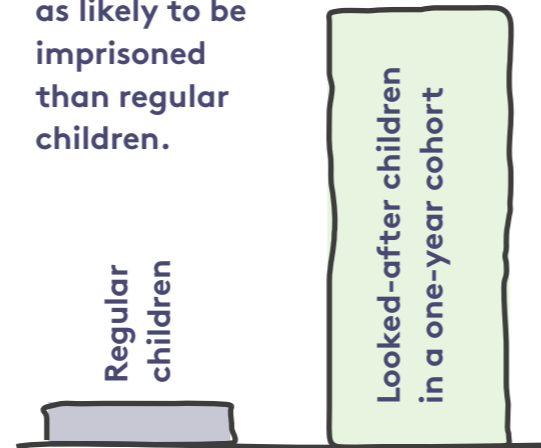


(Department for Education, 2025)

The ONS reported in 2022 that looked-after children in a one-year cohort were

more than 10x

as likely to be imprisoned than regular children.



Young People, Supported Housing, Unemployment

In March 2026, Spring Housing and Commonweal co-published a report entitled *The Benefits of Youth?* that examines the affordability and employment challenges faced by young people in supported housing, and proposes practical solutions.

The report, authored by Spring's Thea Raisbeck, tracked the progress of young people in commissioned supported housing, who took part in a pilot delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the West Midlands Combined Authority.

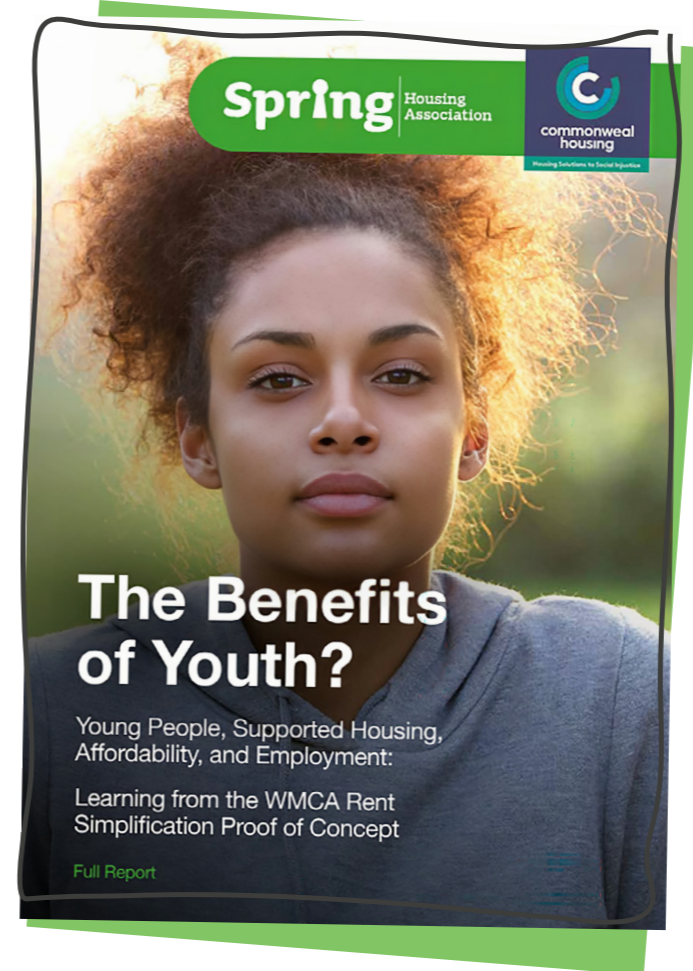
When young, supported housing residents enter employment or increase their hours, they encounter what is referred to as the 'benefits trap' or 'employment trap'. In this situation, individuals' benefit entitlements are tapered, making it difficult to afford high supported housing rents on lower incomes. As a result, residents can be discouraged from working due to the fear of falling into rent arrears and the risk of eviction.

The complexity of the benefits system also creates uncertainty about entitlements and procedures, fostering a culture of fear and mistrust amongst young people. Additionally, issues and complexities in Housing Benefit administration are often viewed as a burden by some supported housing providers, contributing to disincentives for providers to discourage entering work.

The compounding issues of the complex in-work benefit system, practitioner misunderstanding, and 'baked-in' disincentives for both residents and providers affect supported housing residents regardless of age, despite recent budgetary commitments to reduce an unfair benefit 'cliff edge' and alter the taper rate. As such, the solutions outlined in this report aim to better connect housing and employment for all supported housing residents.

The report recommends:

- The Government should ensure that the National Supported Housing Standards within the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act (SHROA) reflect and respond to the challenges faced by supported housing residents when gaining and maintaining employment.
- Local authorities' homelessness strategies should align with their supported housing strategies and seek to commission, or support the development of, accommodation that genuinely meets the local needs of those experiencing homelessness.
- Supported housing providers should ensure all staff are sufficiently trained on the interaction between employment, supported housing, and Housing Benefit, and provide clear communication to residents about their right to seek employment.



This scheme aimed to test financial support and simplification of the in-work benefits system, in recognition of the employment and housing barriers posed by high supported housing rents and the complex interplay between Housing Benefit and Universal Credit systems.

Unregistered Children's Homes

In April 2026, Commonweal Housing published a report, written by researchers at Public First, investigating the growing use of unregistered children's homes in the UK, and the drivers for their increased use. It was covered widely in the media across platforms, including *The Guardian* and BBC R4.



We commissioned the research after hearing concerns about decommissioned supported housing facilities being put to use as unregistered residential children's care homes.

The use of illegal Children's Homes has grown enormously, and is poorly understood:

- Cases of unregistered children's homes (UCH) rose by more than 370% between 2020/21 and 2024/25.
- Some individual placements are costing up to £40,000 per week.
- Senior practitioners describe unregistered placements moving from something they might see "once every six months" to something that crosses their desk "at least once a week". These cases tend to involve extremely vulnerable children with complex needs.

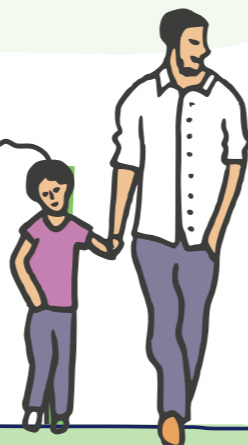
Growth in their use has correlated with three long-term trends:

- Rising complexity - children more likely to be involved with gangs, county lines, serious violence, exploitation, or experience severe mental health crises. Many have been through the criminal justice and health sectors, or experienced breakdowns at home or in foster placements.
- Shortage of specialist, secure, supported placements for those who pose/face serious risks.
- Poor market incentives; providers fear taking high-risk children will destabilise existing homes and damage Ofsted ratings. Many would rather leave beds empty than accept a teenager linked to gangs, repeatedly going missing, or presenting extreme behaviour.

Nearly fivefold increase in children in unregulated social care settings in England

Exclusive: Vulnerable children being placed in caravans and Airbnbs when Ofsted-inspected homes cannot be found

- **'It's soul-destroying': the struggle to house vulnerable children**



The Guardian covered the report's findings.

When homes give 28 days' notice, or when children must leave a paediatric ward at short notice, councils may resort to organisations or placements operating outside the law. Even if they provide good-quality care, they are invisible to national regulators.

These arrangements are usually described as short term - something to get through the weekend or the next few weeks - but many last far longer: on average around six months, but some can last years. Costs of £20,000 per week per child are not unusual. Sometimes it may be twice this.

The Children's Commissioner estimated in December 2024 that the annual cost of unregistered placements to English local authorities was

£440 million per year.

(Children's Commissioner)



Key Recommendations

- Improve national data collection on unregistered placements, using shared datasets between Ofsted and local authorities
- Separate the registration of providers from the registration of physical locations
- Enable Ofsted to recognise relevant CQC-registered placements to avoid duplicative regulation
- Amend Regulation 44 processes to remove perverse incentives that discourage placements from accepting high-needs children
- Strengthen the role of Regional Care Cooperatives in commissioning high-cost, low-frequency placements
- Issue national guidance to local authorities encouraging them to assess the advantages and disadvantages of sequential sourcing where children have complex needs or urgent timelines
- Explore partnerships with Housing Associations to increase safe, emergency accommodation capacity



Stories that define us

Commonweal has had the privilege of collaborating with a range of exceptional partners across the UK. From frontline organisations eager to develop their housing solutions to social investors willing to finance the testing of new ways housing can solve an injustice, we are pleased with the work we have achieved together.

What our partners said...

Project partner:



"QSA simply could not have achieved this [Move On Up] without Commonweal's partnership [...] Commonweal's extensive experience in acquisition and social investment was invaluable, and we are grateful for the strategic guidance and support they provided us with."

Judith Moran, CEO of Quaker Social Action, on the creation of Move On Up (2017-2023), the first-of-its-kind housing project designed for young adult carers.



"We could see a strong fit between what we wanted to achieve and Commonweal's drive to test and deliver new solutions in the homelessness sector."

Helen Watson, CEO of Rentstart, partner in the Freedom 2 Work project (2016-2021), helping homeless individuals overcome employment barriers.



Research partner:



"Thanks to the knowledge gained through both iterations of Building Safe Choices [Commonweal-funded research], Tonic secured a loan from the Greater London Authority's Community Housing Fund to purchase apartments in an extra care scheme. Then we opened 'Bankhouse', the UK's first LGBT+ retirement community [...] The dream a decade ago of having an LGBT+ retirement community is now a reality, and Commonweal Housing played no small part on the road to achieving that dream."

Bob Green, OBE Head of Operations at Tonic Housing, highlights Commonweal's role in funding research to support Tonic's work.



Social investor partner:



"The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has partnered with Commonweal on four projects supporting vulnerable people across the UK. Commonweal's model provides a vital bridge between charities delivering frontline support services and social investors, enabling collaboration and helping generate evidence for long-term change."

Tom Colborne, Social Investment Manager at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, who most recently invested £1.1m to facilitate the acquisition of seven homes in Belfast for Depaul Northern Ireland's upcoming project supporting ex-offenders.



Migration Asylum and Trafficking

While the experiences of migrants, asylum seekers, and victims of human trafficking are varied and nuanced, the prospect of insecure housing is too often a common reality for each group.

For newly recognised refugees, the relief of being granted permission to stay in the UK is quickly overshadowed by the challenges of establishing a new life. Individuals find themselves evicted from asylum accommodation into homelessness or insecure living arrangements, such as hostels or sofa surfing.

This year, Commonweal commenced the Retreat Housing project, in partnership with Northern Ireland charity HAPANI, providing safe housing and integration support for newly recognised refugees residing in Belfast.

For many of the families and individuals supported by this project, it is their first experience of having a safe, stable place to call home. Many have endured prolonged housing instability, including long durations in overcrowded temporary accommodation or frequent relocations - sometimes 90 miles away - disrupting work and children's education.

Commonweal seeks to address homelessness and housing insecurity in the UK regardless of status or origin.

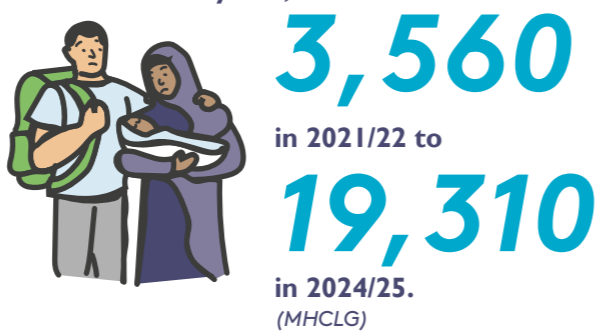
Successful integration hinges on access to work and education, along with building community networks - elements that safe, stable housing lays the foundation for.



As the Human Trafficking Foundation have stated, housing and modern slavery are closely tied. Upon escaping, victims of human trafficking often find themselves at risk of homelessness, as their housing is often tied to their exploitation.

Commonweal was proud to support the Human Trafficking Foundation in the updating of their Survivor Care Standards, which attempt to ensure that survivors of forced labour or sex trafficking are supported with stable housing and services, allowing them to move on, return home, and avoid re-trafficking.

The number of refugee households experiencing homelessness increased fivefold in the last four years, from



Less than **half** of newly recognised refugees were able to secure housing, even with the 56-day temporary extension to the asylum move-on period.
(Refugee Council, 2026)



In 2024, the National Referral Mechanism received 19,125 referrals, including both UK and non-UK nationals, a



Retreat Housing

Partner organisation: HAPANI – Horn of Africa People's Aid Northern Ireland, a non-governmental organisation supporting individuals from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan) who reside in Northern Ireland.

Project overview

Retreat Housing provides affordable, stable housing and integration support for newly granted refugees from the Horn of Africa, who face barriers accessing housing after receiving their settled status.

The model's approach aims to help newcomers successfully integrate into the local community, enhancing refugees' wellbeing and promoting social cohesion and inclusivity.

Tenants benefit from a variety of support services, including language training, guidance accessing education and employment and mental health care, as well as help maintaining tenancies and navigating benefits.

The project operates across three multi-bedroom properties in Belfast, supporting both families and single adults separately, who can reside in the homes as needed to achieve a successful move-on to more permanent, longer-term housing.

2,608 asylum seekers received asylum support in Northern Ireland in December 2025.



(Home Office, 2025)

Update

Commonweal acquired the first two properties for this pilot at the end of 2025, and the final home was purchased in January 2026.

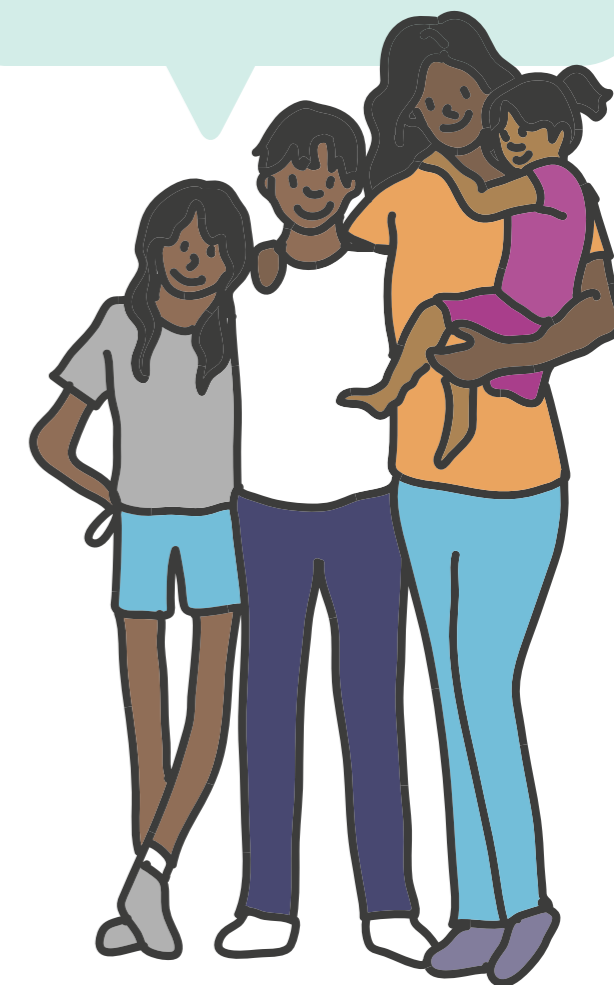
An independent evaluation of the project is currently underway by Dr Tony Macaulay of Macaulay Associates, a consultancy firm specialising in community development and cohesion in Northern Ireland. The evaluation aims to assess how similar community-led housing initiatives can support refugee reintegration and promote social cohesion in Northern Ireland and beyond. We anticipate sharing interim project learnings in early 2027.

Case study:

Yasmin's* story

Yasmin and her children (2 older children and 1 younger) moved into Retreat Housing after experiencing over three years of housing instability. They faced frequent relocations, resulting in daily long-distance travel for the children's schooling. Yasmin stated: "You just get a call...you are moving in the next two hours. It was very stressful, extremely stressful." Previous hotel and hostel accommodation was also severely overcrowded for the family dynamic. Upon moving into the Retreat property, Yasmin feels relaxed and more optimistic about the future, stating, "We are much more settled now... this is our house." Yasmin and her children now have individual bedrooms, providing space for privacy and studying: "They can read... they have privacy... they are happy."

*Names have been changed





Call for New Ideas: Migration, Asylum and Trafficking

This Call for New Ideas round, in late 2024, saw Commonweal partner with several frontline organisations eager to test their creative housing models to support migrants, asylum seekers, and trafficking survivors.

Handcrafted

A charity that empowers socially excluded individuals to gain skills and find housing.

Handcrafted assessed the viability of a “live-nearby” supported accommodation model for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) aged 16–17. Through this model, young people live independently with support workers nearby for emergencies and practical assistance, encouraging age-appropriate independence.

To prevent the cliff edge end to support UASCs encounter when turning 18, young people would remain in the property beyond their 18th birthday to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood.

Commonweal is continuing to support Handcrafted in bringing this project to fruition.

As of 31 March 2024, there were

7,380

unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care in England.

(Department for Education, 2024)



Commonweal also provided feasibility study funding for the following organisations to investigate their ideas in greater detail. While these models will not translate into a property-based project with us, we continue to support these organisations as they pursue alternative opportunities.

Micro Rainbow

The UK’s leading not-for-profit supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people fleeing persecution.

Micro Rainbow explored a safe shared accommodation housing model to support newly recognised LGBTQI refugees with extra support needs and LGBTQI individuals seeking asylum with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

39% of LGBTQI newly granted refugees had experienced a period of homelessness.

(According to a survey of 98 LGBTQI refugees conducted by Micro Rainbow in 2024)



Accommodation Concern

Northamptonshire-based anti-poverty and homelessness prevention charity.

Accommodation Concern explored how a cross-subsidy housing model utilising housing benefit subsidies to assist refugees with No Recourse to Public Funds could operate. Unfortunately, their feasibility findings indicated that, due to regulations, subsidy rules, and the wider political climate, this concept could not be delivered safely or sustainably.



“The process offered the rare opportunity to step back, examine our practice, and think creatively about how to respond to unmet needs. We are grateful to Commonweal for funding and supporting this work. The opportunity encouraged experimentation, reflection, and honesty - qualities that are often difficult to prioritise in frontline environments.”

- John Perry, Managing Director at Accommodation Concern

Human Trafficking Foundation

The Slavery and Trafficking Survivors Care Standards

Commonweal was pleased to fund the Human Trafficking Foundation’s work updating the Slavery and Trafficking Survivors Care Standards – an important framework for ensuring consistent and high-quality care for trafficking survivors.

In collaboration with over 150 individuals with lived and learnt experience, the revised Standards reflect changes in the modern slavery landscape since the last update.

The 2018 Care Standards primarily focused on the support provided in government safehouses following a survivor’s positive reasonable grounds decision via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

However, as identified in previous Commonweal-funded research produced by the Human Trafficking Foundation, survivors face difficulties in accessing NRM safe houses. As of September 2023, only 13% of adult survivors (1,000) were in government safe houses, while 87% (6,837) received outreach support.

WSUP Woolwich Service Users Project

A grassroots charity based in South East London.

WSUP aims to run a supported housing model, Pivot House, designed for survivors of modern slavery and newly granted refugees at risk of exploitation. As a solution to the gap in services for those at risk of exploitation, the model combines safe housing and the role of Independent Modern Slavery Advocates (IMSA) to provide trauma-informed support and independent advocacy.



“What became clear is that independent advocacy and housing must work together. IMSAs are most effective when people are safely housed and able to engage, reflect and make informed choices. Housing provides stability, and advocacy provides agency. By embedding IMSA roles into WSUP’s day-to-day operations, it will lay the groundwork for the Pivot House model to grow.”

- Darek Karwacki, CEO of Woolwich Service Users Project

As such, the revised Standards expand care for survivors across various accommodation settings, including asylum accommodation and emergency housing. The 2025 Standards also feature a chapter on employment, a Children’s Annex, and are applicable across the UK.



Violence Against Women and Girls

Survivors of gender-based violence often face a difficult choice: living with abuse or becoming homeless. Many survivors of domestic abuse or sexual exploitation must find a place to escape to, but a shortage of suitable and affordable housing options often makes this out of reach.

A recent survey by Women's Aid found that almost two-thirds of domestic abuse referrals were rejected due to a shortage of spaces during the financial year 2024/25.

For survivors with additional support needs and those with older children, accessing mainstream refuge services is even more difficult, with many unsuitable for their specific requirements.

Recognising these challenges, Commonweal has collaborated with leading women's charities to research and pilot housing models to improve outcomes for survivors, as described across these pages.

Commonweal is seeking to commence a new VAWG project, utilising Commonweal-owned properties in South East London. At this stage, we are working with potential partners to develop a housing pilot to support neurodiverse survivors of domestic abuse.

1 in 4

women in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.

(Refuge)

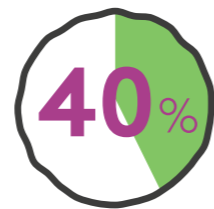
Domestic abuse causes at least 2



women's deaths by suicide weekly, overtaking domestic homicides in England, and is likely significantly under-reported.

(Woman's Trust, 2025)

Domestic abuse is a driving cause of women's homelessness, with



of homeless women citing domestic abuse as a contributing factor in 2023.

(Refuge)



solace

Project Spotlight:

Rhea (2017 – 2023)

Commonweal collaborated with Solace Women's Aid, London's largest domestic abuse and sexual violence charity, to deliver two London-based housing pilots supporting women recovering from domestic abuse and other forms of violence. The Rhea and Amari projects both operated between 2017 and 2023.

Rhea combined safe housing and home-based support for survivors of domestic abuse who find mainstream refuge spaces inaccessible and unsuitable due to having older male children or specific support needs. The project operated across eight Commonweal-owned properties leased to Solace at subsidised rents.

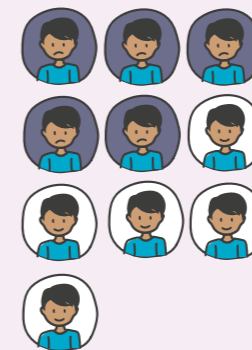
Crucial to the project was the joined-up partnership between Solace and Southwark Council, which resulted in improved referral pathways, smoother transitions, and better outcomes for survivors.

Survivors were identified and referred via Southwark Council's housing team, then assessed by Solace support workers. Following this, women and their children moved into one of the eight Commonweal-owned properties, where they received one-to-one support from Solace.

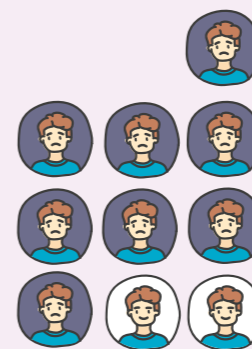
Key outcomes

- Over two-thirds of service users felt safer and more confident because of the support the Rhea model made possible.
- Self-contained housing, unlike typical refuge environments, offered stability and pathways for long-term move-on, helping to break the cycle of abuse.
- The stability provided by housing also helped improve women's financial situation and ability to maintain a job, enabling survivors to regain their independence.

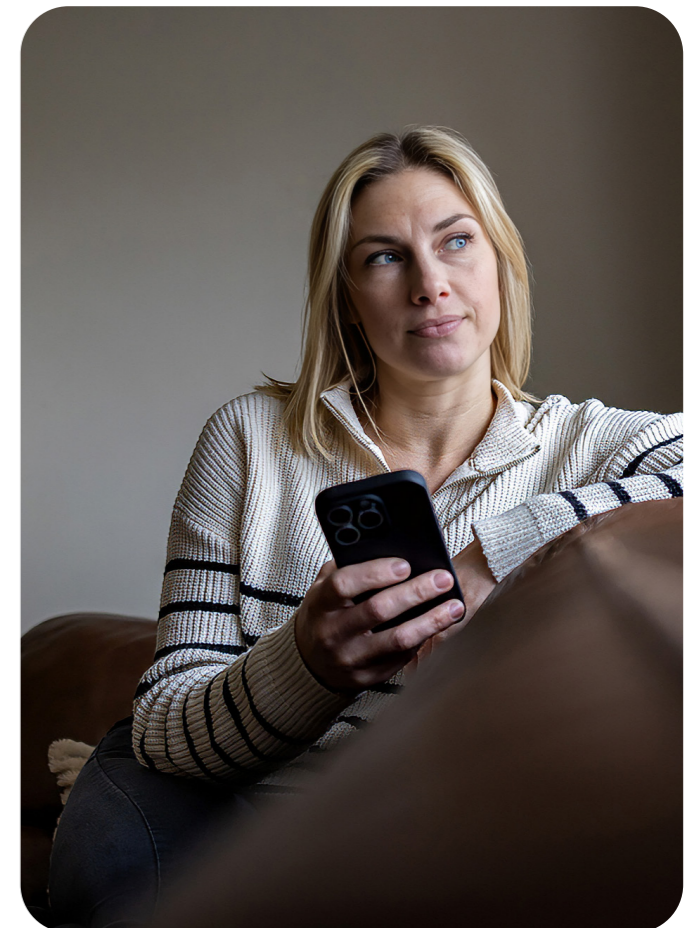
Only **49.4%** of shelters can accommodate boys aged 16 and under...



and this drops to **19.4%** of shelters for those 17 and older.



(Women's Aid, 2020)



Project Spotlight:

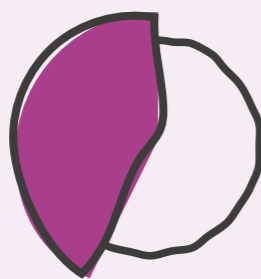
Amari (2017 – 2023)

Amari provided women who had been sexually exploited through prostitution or trafficking with transitional housing and wrap-around practical and emotional support from Solace staff.

Run across 10 Commonweal-owned properties, Amari provided the second stage of a multi-stage approach designed to help survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation transition to independent living post-emergency accommodation.

The project provided vulnerable women with a secure, safe space to gain life skills and support to recover from their trauma and become independent at the same time. As part of the model, women also received at least three months' of resettlement support and guidance maintaining their tenancies to help improve their chances of securing a lease in the private rented sector.

In 2024,
39%
of the 19,125 cases referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in the UK involved sexual exploitation.
(Home Office)



Key outcomes:

- Stable housing alongside tailored support helped vulnerable women recover from their trauma and rebuild their lives, leading to improved health, wellbeing, relationships, and finances.
- The Amari project addressed a gap in specialist provision for women escaping exploitation, helping to break cycles of homelessness that this cohort face and alleviate pressure on local authorities.



Reflection from Commonweal's Deputy CEO, Amy Doyle...

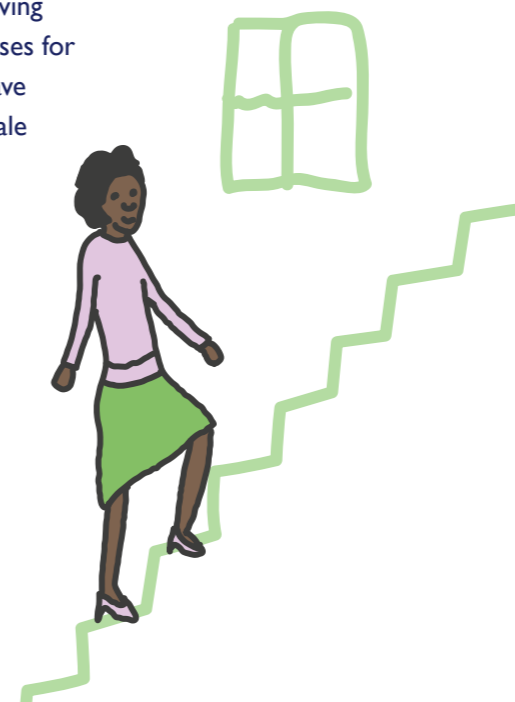
"Around one in eight women experienced sexual assault, domestic abuse, or stalking in the last year. Data also shows that violence against women and girls (VAWG) account for around 20% of all reported offences, with police forces across England and Wales recording an average of 3,000 VAWG-related offences daily.

Behind these figures are women rebuilding their lives after experiencing violence and coercive control, often within their own homes. Since Commonweal's early days, we have been committed to addressing the injustices faced by women, working in partnership with specialist organisations to develop and deliver housing solutions for women who have experienced violence and exploitation.

During my time at Commonweal, I've had the privilege of working closely with Solace to deliver the Rhea project for women experiencing domestic abuse and the Amari project for women escaping sexual exploitation.

Independent evaluations of both pilots demonstrate what can be achieved when safe, stable housing is paired with the right support. The testimonies featured on this page - from women supported through Rhea and Amari - illustrate the life-changing impact of secure housing at the right time in a woman's recovery journey.

Beyond the positive impact on the women directly involved, as an action-learning charity, Commonweal applies the lessons from these pilots to wider work aimed at improving housing responses for women who have experienced male violence."



"I feel so powerful now, so much stronger. I think a lot of it is that I was really listened to for the first time in my life, it feels great."

– Rhea resident

"Coming into my own flat it has given me such a boost, yeah there are problems but things have really changed. All the things I've been doing, they've all helped me make peace with the past."

– Amari resident

"Before I would tell myself everything is going to be fine but it was just something that I told myself to get through things, whereas now I tell myself that and I know it, I really know it."

– Amari resident

"I didn't want to be in a refuge and anyway I couldn't because of my son's age. So Rhea really saved us actually. I don't know how we would have got out together if not, and I wouldn't have left him there."

– Rhea resident

Evaluations

Commonweal exists to support expert organisations in investigating new ways housing can address the challenges faced by the underrepresented and marginalised groups they support.

Young people at risk of serious violence

Commonweal-funded research by Gateway and Project Future evaluates the effectiveness of psychologically informed, supported housing provision for young people involved in or at risk of serious youth violence, including gang affiliation and offending.

Gateway and Project Future, who provide community-based psychological services in Harringay, have seen first-hand how this group struggle to access suitable housing, leading to cycles of homelessness, repeated trauma, and continued offending.

Despite presenting to their local authorities and within health and social care services multiple times,

65%

of young people had received no housing support before working with Gateway and Project Future.

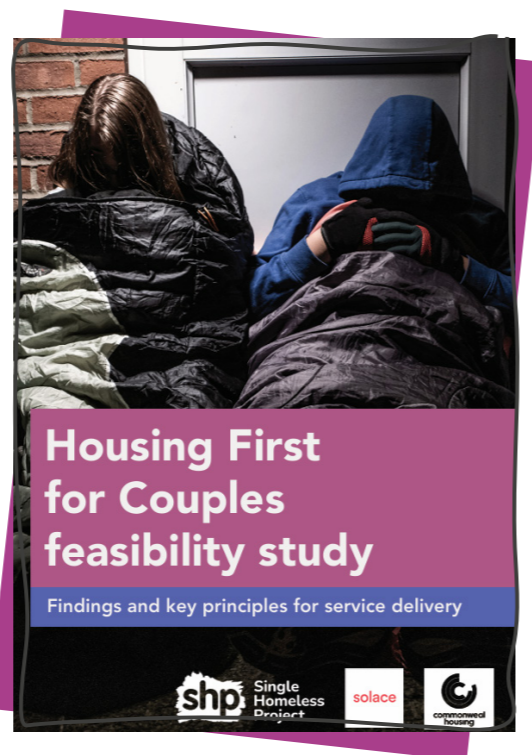


The learnings from this study aim to inform systemic changes in housing and service delivery to improve outcomes for young people impacted by violence.

This research will be published later this summer.

Rough sleeping couples

Last year, Solace and Single Homeless Project (SHP) published a Commonweal-funded feasibility study outlining a Housing First service for rough sleepers where domestic abuse is suspected or known to occur.



Under this model, survivors and perpetrators can access separate, but concurrent, housing and wrap-around support. The approach follows key principles for safe and effective delivery, emphasising survivors' autonomy and addressing the unmet needs of perpetrators.

In March 2024,

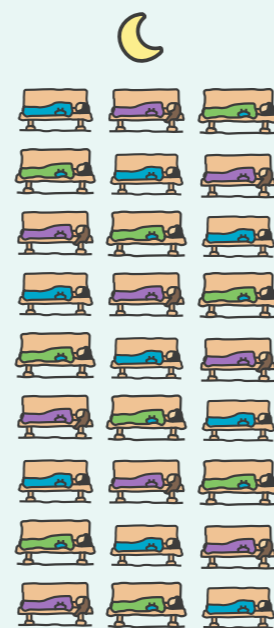
167

couples were recorded sleeping rough in 19 London boroughs surveyed, with domestic abuse known or suspected in up to

73%

of cases.

(FOI data)



Since April 2025, Solace and SHP have been delivering this Housing First service for couples in Camden, funded by the Homes for England Single Homeless Accommodation Programme. Commonweal is pleased to have contributed funding towards the evaluation of this project, with the findings from the first year expected in the summer.

Young working-class writers

Commonweal supported Off West End Plays & Playwrights (OWEPP), a charity supporting artists and playwrights, to explore an affordable housing model for underprivileged writers in London.

Working-class writers from low-income backgrounds are being priced out of the capital as average room rents increased

37% over five years, reaching nearly **£1,000 per month by November 2025.**

(SpareRoom)



The feasibility study outlined a model that would utilise existing non-residential venues, mainly theatre spaces, to provide writers with a space to meet and work socially, while living in affordable rented rooms nearby. By removing the burden of high rents, the initiative seeks to level the playing field for disadvantaged working-class writers to pursue careers in theatre, TV and film.

Outcomes:

OWEPP is actively looking for funding to secure a multi-bedroom property in London to provide affordable rooms for underprivileged writers. In the meantime, OWEPP has partnered with the Omnibus Theatre Clapham to utilise access to their building (when closed to the public 2 days a week) as a daytime space for writers to socialise and access opportunities in London.

Additionally, OWEPP is working to establish a network of Omnihosts to offer spare rooms for writers at an affordable rent, for a period of 12 months or longer.

Dispersed accommodation model

In 2023, Commonweal supported Refuge's feasibility study exploring best practice for delivering a dispersed safe accommodation model for survivors of domestic abuse who find traditional refuge settings unsuitable or inaccessible. This includes survivors with disabilities, multiple disadvantages, large families or pets, and transgender survivors.

Following this, Refuge received funding from Warwickshire Council to pilot a dispersed service across a portfolio of self-contained homes. Commonweal is pleased to have funded the evaluation of this two-year pilot, capturing survivor outcomes and lessons to inform the delivery of similar future projects. The findings will be published by Refuge later this year.



The University of Birmingham

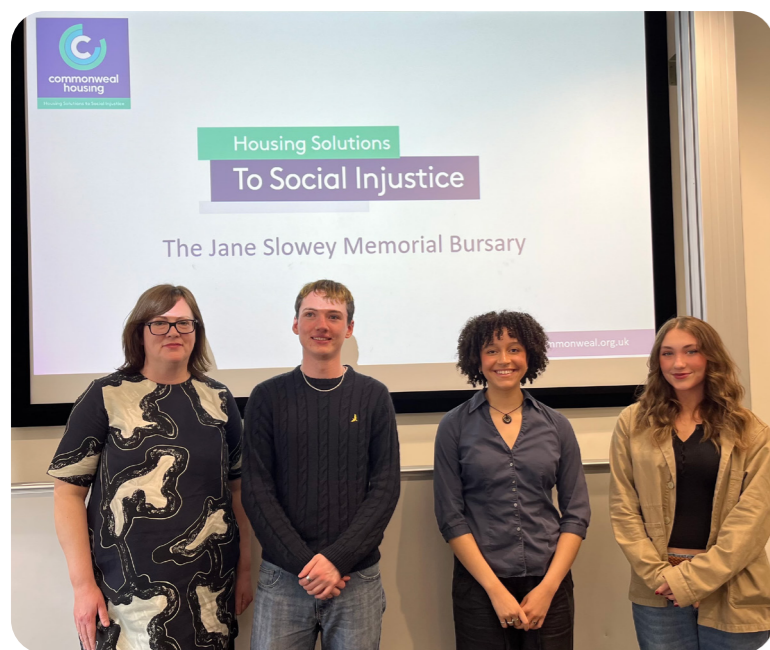
Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary

Since 2018, Commonweal has proudly supported over 25 University of Birmingham Social Policy students through the Jane Slowey Memorial Bursary, providing grant funding and mentoring.

In memory of our late Trustee Jane Slowey CBE, who studied at the University of Birmingham and was an active campaigner against social injustice, the bursary annually supports up to four students investigating housing-related issues with £2,500 each.



The 2025/26 recipients presented their insightful research findings to Commonweal staff, Trustees and friends at a celebration event held at the University of Birmingham.



Samantha Robathan explored the increase in homelessness among young care leavers and whether protection through the Equality Act 2010 could lead to better outcomes.

Caragh Williams analysed the policies shaping the estate regeneration in Woodberry Down, Hackney, and assessed their effectiveness in achieving the delivered social objectives.

Georgia Solomon compared the impact of media portrayals of asylum seekers and social tenants by analysing BBC news reports.

Ryan Peddie evaluated the impact of marketisation on public support for housing associations by conducting game theory experiments.

2026 Master's Bursary

To celebrate Commonweal's long-term relationship with the University of Birmingham, we have established a 2026/27 Master's Bursary in honour of our 20th anniversary.

One Master's student will be awarded a £10,000 grant to conduct research into an underexplored social and housing injustice affecting young people or women involved in the criminal justice system - aligning with Commonweal's focus and efforts over the last two decades.

We look forward to supporting the bursary recipient with this important work and will share more details on our website soon.

Board Update

Commonweal was delighted to welcome Nezahat Cihan and Colette Shields as Trustees in December 2025, both bringing fresh perspectives and expertise to Commonweal's Board.



Nezahat Cihan

As the CEO of the London Legal Support Trust, Nezahat oversees the trust's grant-making processes and organisational development

programmes for the free legal advice sector. She also served as a longstanding board member of the Cripplegate Foundation, a grant-giving trust based in Islington.



"I am thrilled to have been appointed as a trustee of Commonweal Housing, an excellent organisation that offers housing-based solutions to broader social issues. This work is especially crucial in today's climate, where we encounter numerous challenges and have limited solutions."

- Nezahat Cihan



Colette Shield

Colette specialises in assisting organisations to engage vulnerable communities and improve service delivery. Her career began in local government consulting, where she

used data and policy insight to help councils redesign services and deliver housing regeneration programmes.



"Commonweal's action learning model reflects values I care deeply about. Real change happens when we combine lived experience with data-driven insight and the thoughtful use of technology to design better services. I am excited to help strengthen the evidence and narratives that influence fairer, more inclusive systems."

- Colette Shields

London Housing Panel



Over the year, Commonweal provided the Secretariat to the Mayor's London Housing Panel. The body is made up of 15 groups and organisations across the Capital's voluntary and community sector, with an independent Chair that wants the diverse voices of different housing experiences in London to influence relevant policies.

Commonweal has worked alongside members to engage with the Greater London Authority and the Mayor to shape affordable housing delivery, improve standards within (and reduce the use of) Temporary Accommodation, and ensure community concerns are heard in City Hall.

Governance

Commonweal Housing 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.

Honorary Patrons

Sir John Mactaggart Bt

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Jean Corston

The Rt. Hon. Fiona Mactaggart

Company Secretary

Gary Medazoumian FCA

Directors/Board of Trustees

Amarjit Bains

(Chair from 11.12.2024, appointed 2020)

Russ Edwards

(Vice-Chair from 12.03.2025, appointed 2017)

Gary Medazoumian FCA

(appointed 2004)

Jack Mactaggart

(appointed 2016)

Prof. Jonathan Portes

(appointed 2017)

Sheldon Shillingford

(appointed 2020)

Dr Elanor Warwick

(appointed 2022)

Aphra Mactaggart

(appointed 2023, resigned 22.10.25)

Gerald Kelly

(appointed 2024)

Nezahat Cihan

(appointed 11.12.25)

Colette Shields

(appointed 11.12.25)

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC, 7th Floor, 180 Oxford Street, London W1D 1EA

Solicitors

Broadfield LLP, 1 Bartholomew Close, London EC1A 7BL

Auditors

Price Bailey LLP, 8th floor Dashwood House, 69 Old Broad Street, London, EC2M 1QS

The Board has signed up to the Charity Governance Code and regularly assesses its governance and oversight structures in line with this recommended practice. The Board reviews the length of service of Trustees and has agreed that the current and ongoing tenure of long-standing members is of benefit to the charity.

Principal address

Unit 581-584, 3rd Floor, Salisbury House, 29 Finsbury Circus, London, EC2M 5SQ

Registered address

2 Babmaes Street, London SW1 6HD

Company registration number: 5319765

Charity registration number: 1113331

Financial Reports

For year ending 31 December 2025

Total incoming resources £950,530*



*Total income is shown before a loss on disposal of fixed assets of £92,622. Net income for the year is £857,908.

Total expenditure £1,159,239



Balance Sheet at end of 31 December 2025

Net assets

2019 £5,254,181

2020 £5,366,257

2021 £10,954,454

2022 £9,918,526

2023 £10,155,578

2024 £10,391,094

2025 £10,030,107

The Trustees of Commonweal reviewed the property revaluation and depreciation policy and agreed all fixed assets of the same class, (i.e. properties) to be revalued each year. 2021 was the first year where the new property revaluation policy applied in the accounts for all properties, hence the figures reflect these changes and the property market at present.

The Trustees also reviewed the policy on the treatment of depreciation on properties and agreed not to depreciate properties.

For further details you can find our audited accounts [here](#). Or by scanning the QR code





Unit 581-584, 3rd Floor, Salisbury House, 29 Finsbury Circus, London, EC2M 5SQ



info@commonweal.org.uk



07503168120



www.commonwealhousing.org.uk



**Thank you to
our funders**

GROVE END
HOUSING

