



News and updates  
from the Emmaus  
Bristol community

Winter 2020

David's story of  
moving into  
and on from  
Emmaus

From pavement  
to penthouse  
- plans to built  
homes on  
our roof

'Glad to be alive'  
Dapper Dave  
talks about  
finding hope  
and purpose  
at Emmaus

A day in the  
life of an  
Emmaus Bristol  
support worker

# You & emmaus

working together to end homelessness

# A **very** positive move

**A year ago, Companion David was putting up decorations in our Stokes Croft shop and, as one of the community's best cooks, planning the food for our Christmas party. This December he's a former Companion, living in a two-bedroomed house, working in the warehouse of a large distributor and loving every minute.**

David had felt ready to move on from his role as 'head chef' in our community house for some time, though it took him a few months to find work. He started work in October. It's an on-going temporary position, about 20 minutes walk from his new home, with a very good chance the role will become permanent.

On day one, David decided to *"say yes to everything that was asked"* of him by his employers – from picking and packing, managing internal branch transfers, booking in and labelling parts, to customer service duties. He comes home tired at the end of every day knowing that through his attitude he's *"getting respect from my co-workers"* and, importantly, he finds *"I'm becoming more resilient."*

*"Come the weekend – what a beautiful feeling!  
Job well done, and there's a sense of reward that  
you've got your own time"*

**Earlier this year Emmaus Bristol launched an initiative to find landlords willing to rent directly to us, so that Companions could move on to an affordable home.** David's landlord rents to us cheaper than market value,

enabling him to be another of our former companions to move on from homelessness – that's what Emmaus is all about.



*"When I get home from work I have a bit of alone time, then me and my housemate usually eat together and catch up, then we do our own thing."* He missed community living at first, but describes his new home and landlord as 'lovely' and is enjoying a new kind of life.

Please support us with a monthly donation: [www.justgiving.com/emmausbristol](http://www.justgiving.com/emmausbristol)

# On top of our world!

Exciting plans are afoot to create new, low-carbon, affordable rented homes on the roof of our building in Stokes Croft. By thinking creatively, we have found land hidden in plain sight and developed a proposal for 15 new eco-homes.

## Our aim is twofold:

- to provide affordable homes for Companions moving on from our supported housing to independent living in their own homes, while remaining connected to, and supported by, the Emmaus Bristol community.
- to safeguard others from falling into homelessness by renting at least 50% of homes at truly affordable prices – either local housing allowance rates or matching those of local housing associations (social rent).



The homes will be comfortable one and two bedroomed single storey and duplex apartments. The development's roof garden and sedum roofs will add green space to Bristol's inner city.

**The planning application has just been made – look out for further news!**



Over the next few issues of *You & Emmaus* we'll invite you to meet the staff, Companions and volunteers who make up the team.

# A day in the life of...

## Fran, Emmaus Bristol's support team manager

### Early morning

I cycle into work every morning. My commute is 16 miles each way – I find it really good for both my mental and physical health. When I get into work, I first have a coffee and say 'Hi' and chat to the Companions. I check with whoever's been on call overnight to see what issues I might need to deal with straight away.

### Mid-morning

I'm often in a support session with a Companion – we're using the boardroom as a Covid-compliant meeting space now. Or I could be checking in with a Companion who is unwell, or perhaps hasn't showed up to work. I also catch-up with our fantastic support team to learn about any support issues, and to

make sure they are OK too.

### Midday

Around mid-day I could be clearing some admin, or checking in on the Companions who work in the warehouse – Covid's been hard on people so I make time to ask people 'how are you today?'. We have virtual team meetings around this time – I sit in the boardroom and staff working from home dial in.

### Mid-afternoon

I sometimes visit tenants in Emmaus houses. Most were previously in temporary emergency accommodation, and have been referred to us by the Council – one family came to us via the national homelessness charity, Shelter. I'm there to help solve any issues from a dripping tap to

very stressful high-level personal issues such as benefits or immigration paperwork.

### Early evening

I cycle home and try to spend the evening relaxing. I'll spend some time doing pilates and I like to write. Or I might sit down in front of Netflix for a while. I usually go to bed quite early.

*“As a support worker you need to remember to do a lot of self-care – the pay-off is that the work is incredibly rewarding”*

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# Lockdown restrictions



## Restricted income

In 'normal times' our social enterprises keep us going: income from our shops, eBay sales and house clearances, was around £5,400 a week. During Lockdown 2, when just our eBay store and house clearance service could operate, **income dropped by roughly two-thirds to just £1,700 per week.**

With Bristol emerging into Tier 3 restrictions and, while shops are allowed to open, we are not confident of enough footfall to boost our income.

## During the second lockdown

We used our time during Lockdown 2 to set up the shops' Christmas displays to attract business, reorganise the warehouse, and more Companions were trained to boost our eBay online sales team. **There's an incredible range of quirky vintage and modern items in our eBay store. Take a look!**

Some members of our staff, volunteer and Companion team with health concerns needed to stay safe at home. New Companions, welcomed during lockdown, had to isolate in their rooms for 14 days, with fellow housemates bringing food to them – **it's this peer support that makes Emmaus so special.**



## Shop online

There are over 1,500 searchable items to browse. Collectible albums, costume jewellery, ceramics, clothing, art pieces, electrical devices, books... there's not much you can't find!

Find the shop on the eBay app by searching for **seller: emmausbristol**, or on your browser here: [www.ebay.co.uk/str/emmausbristol](http://www.ebay.co.uk/str/emmausbristol)

## COVER STORY:

# Light at the end of the tunnel

Dave's story: **“Living at Emmaus Bristol has given me a feeling of contentment and shown me that there is light at the end of the tunnel.”**

**For Dave, the millennium saw the start of a series of unfortunate events that led to a diagnosis of depression and, eventually, homelessness.** Both Dave's parents died within three years, his two children tragically lost their lives in separate road traffic accidents, and he and his wife divorced.

“I was put on medication. I couldn't see a future for myself and had to spend some time in a respite centre”. Dave left the Isle of Wight for Devon, and spent the next decade working in Ilfracombe and Torquay. Depression and low self-esteem made it difficult to keep a job for long. When he was served notice on his flat he did nothing about it – **“I didn't really care that much about myself at the time”** he says.

## Homelessness

After his eviction, Dave found himself homeless and living in a tent in the coastal town of Sidmouth. “It was a very hard time, especially at my age” he says. Dave was 62. Now known as ‘Dapper Dave’ by the Emmaus Team,

Dave always ensures he's well-groomed That was especially difficult whilst homeless but he made sure he shaved every morning and looked presentable. “Someone once commented they wouldn't have guessed that I was homeless”.

## Finding a way forward

A recommendation at Sidmouth tourist information centre led Dave to The Mustard Seed café, a friendly, helpful social enterprise. Every day the café gave Dave something hot to eat, a cup of coffee and let him charge his phone and laptop. There he met Ann who worked with an organisation called The Gateway Homelessness Action Group and knew of Emmaus. She helped him with his application to join the our community and, two weeks later, Dave was a member of the Emmaus Bristol team. **“It was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I knew that I couldn't have lasted much longer out in the cold.”**

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**“Not only has Emmaus Bristol given me a place to live, but I have no financial worries whilst I’m here. Everything Emmaus offers is a real safety net. I appreciate the companionship of all the other people living in the community too – when I need to be in company, all I have to do is go downstairs and there will be somebody to chat to. When I was living in a flat, I was all on my own, all the time.”**

### **A new start**

Dave already had a lot of experience of working in retail and took to work in our charity shops like a duck to water. He’s confident in his work and works well with our customers, knowing many by name. Improving his self-confidence and esteem through work helped Dave wean himself off anti-depressants within just four months of his arrival. “It was difficult right at the beginning and I still have the odd bad day. One of the support workers can tell when I’m feeling a bit down and she’ll pull me to one side and give me a little pep talk – she’s very good at that.”

Back in Torquay, Dave remembers answering ‘yes’ to a question his doctor had asked: have you ever thought about doing yourself harm? He reflects that

**“Things have now worked out for the better and I’m so glad I’m still alive. I really am thankful that I found Emmaus.**

If it wasn’t for Emmaus Bristol, I’d be six feet under by now”.

### **Onwards and upwards**

Dave has recently become a Companion Representative and enjoys helping others out in this role. He’s planning on refreshing his emergency first aid and fire awareness skills through Emmaus Bristol’s training opportunities, and ‘Dapper Dave’ is a popular and positive member of the Emmaus Bristol community.



**“I now have a reason to get up in the morning, the chance to help other people and give back to society”.**

The end of the year, especially this year, is a time of reflection. Although it remain a difficult time we hope, like us, you've found some positives. It's the kindness of people that matters, and we'd like to thank you for your support and kindness for Emmaus Companions.

## Built on a legacy of kindness

**On the outside wall of Backfields House – Emmaus Bristol's main building in Stokes Croft – is a plaque dedicated to Shirley Greenhalgh. Shirley was an early supporter of the charity who, in her will, bequeathed a generous donation to help Emmaus Bristol continue its work.**

Shirley's bequest helped to buy Backfields House giving Emmaus the security of owning its own 'home'. Others have also remembered Emmaus Bristol in their wills and their kindness has helped us provide on-going support for Companions and got us through some difficult times.

Legacy giving is a tricky subject to broach: few of us like to dwell on our own passing. But, we hope while you're reading this you might think for a moment about whether you'd like to continue your support for people who've faced homelessness after you pass. There's government guidance online (search for 'gifts to charity in will'), and solicitors are a good source of advice.

98% of our income is spent on our charitable aims. The income we earn from our social enterprises helps to sustain our charity day-to-day, but Emmaus Bristol also aims to expand its accommodation to welcome more homeless people into our community.

**Your legacy could have a real impact on the lives of homeless people in Bristol.**

**Support the lives of others beyond your lifetime**



**[www.emmausbristol.org.uk](http://www.emmausbristol.org.uk)**

Stokes Croft shop and office: Backfields House, Upper York Street, Bristol BS2 8QU

Bedminster shop: 72 Bedminster Parade, Bristol BS3 4HL

Emmaus Vintage: 332 Gloucester Rd, Bristol BS7 8TJ

Online shop: [www.ebay.co.uk/str/emmausbristol](http://www.ebay.co.uk/str/emmausbristol) or,  
on eBay mobile app, search for "seller: emmausbristol"

Emmaus Bristol is a charity registered in England and Wales: 1071538 and a registered limited company: 03579001

**working together to end homelessness**