

Welcome to Emmaus St Albans

Whether it be through providing a safe place to live, meaningful occupation during the day, or personalized support plans, Emmaus St Albans has invested greatly in providing the best second chance possible for formerly homeless individuals.

Through this leaflet, we hope to provide you with the information needed to decide if Emmaus St Albans is the best choice for you.

Could you be the next Emmaus St Albans Companion?

In our Community we have the capacity to support 34 formerly homeless individuals whom we call Companions. Two of these Companions occupy solidarity spaces which mean that they have no access to public funds.

All Companions live in our 'Community' which is located in Hill End Lane. Each Companion has their own room and their own front door key. We really want Companions to think of this as their home and therefore there is also space for social activities, a communal dining room, a big garden and activities booked each month.

In return, Companions are expected to give back in return 40 hours of volunteering time for the second hand furniture social enterprise. Companions volunteer in our 5 shops on our vans, collecting, delivering, and renovating donated furniture. Companions also cook the meals, clean the home and maintain the Community building.



Not only does Emmaus provide occupation through the day, it aims to provide accommodation that feels like home and a support network that feels like a family

Companion Story

I have had minor mental health problems most of my life and I am a chronic alcoholic and have been for many years. At the moment I am controlling my alcohol use.

Early last year I was rushed to hospital with serious heart problems, at the same time I was aware my mental health was getting worse. I was told then if I carried on as I was I would kill myself. My drinking only increased. As I was spending most of my housing benefit on drink so I soon became homeless. On the streets you need to be drunk, stoned or both to survive. I was with an outreach and day centre in Luton called Noah who somehow straightened me out enough so that I was able to come here to Emmaus St Albans.

I came here on the 26th March 2014 and from that day have started to get my life back. I have been able to get back into a daily routine. I have a fantastic room and feel I am now part of a family.

I have been able to work here which is something I thought I would never do again. I even drive now and when I tell people I used to know, they really can't believe it. I have a great Support Worker who even manages to put up with my occasional tantrums. I get counselling once a week. I've started to go fishing again which I've not done since I was in my early twenties. I've taken up art classes which I have never tried before. I help out with night duty once a week and deliver food to a homeless charity in Luton and in time I would like to do more for homeless charities.

But the biggest thing is after all these years, I suddenly have a future.

Companion Story

I have suffered with depression for my whole life. For me, it is like a physical force. I'm going along fine, and then suddenly it is too late. Wham! I am flat on my back. I don't see it coming. I am drained, I am knocked for six.

It all started when I decided to go into hospitality, which suited me at the time. I took to the lifestyle well, within a year the bar I was managing was bringing in over a million pounds a year. I was rewarded and promoted, but with those promotions came an expectation that I would live the crazy lifestyle of long hours, using drugs to keep going.

Ultimately, I lost motivation and the crash came again. It was a relief really, and I went back to live with my grandmother and started looking after her.

I got through that period of time and took a bar job, just something casual. Then my grandma died. It was a huge shock, especially since I was the one that found her. It was at that point I started planning my exit strategy. I stole money from work so that I would get fired, and my friends would hate me. I travelled to a town far from where I lived and I shut myself in a hotel room. I tried to kill myself.

I came around and handed myself in to the police, and they took me to hospital, where they kept me in for a week, under observation. I was miles away from home when they let me out, and miles away from my possessions, which were still at the police station. I slept in a carpark for a week while I tried to persuade someone, anyone, to lend me some money so that I could travel back to the police station to collect my belongings.

It was at that point I remembered Emmaus. I had learnt about it in school and I decided that it was where I wanted to be. I wanted the opportunity to lose myself among others who would not judge me, and I wanted to give back too.

I enjoyed bar work because I felt that somehow I contributed to other people's happiness - maybe a birthday celebration, an anniversary, or sometimes just a kind word on a bad day. I feel like I can do the same at Emmaus, and see the results of my actions go further. I'm taking each day at a time, but for the time being I am still here, and that's thanks to Emmaus.



Referral Process

As Companions are expected to volunteer, work as a team and respect others, people who refer to Emmaus are interviewed carefully to see if Emmaus would be able to support their individual needs.

Stage 1

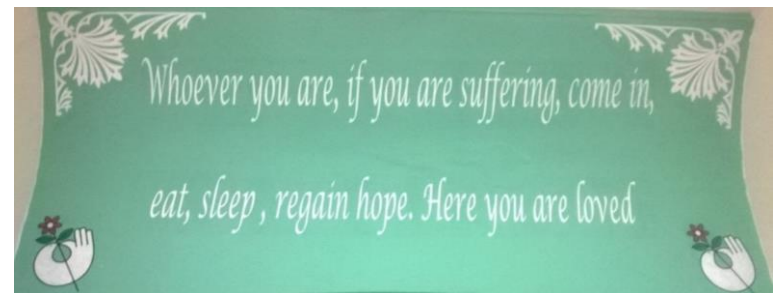
Referral form-please complete the form in as much detail as possible

Stage 2

If suitable we will invite you in for an interview so we can get to know you better and you can meet us

Stage 3

After the interview our team will decide if Emmaus can support you and we will inform you of our decision as soon as possible



Solidarity

Helping others in greater need than ourselves is a very important part of the Emmaus ethos. We encourage staff, volunteers and companions to take an active part in volunteering with other charities and help in projects to help people in need.

WWW.EMMAUS.ORG.UK/ST_ALBANS

Emmaus International

Established in 1971, Emmaus International is now made up of more than 300 groups, in 36 countries, across four regions:



Africa
Asia
Europe
and the
Americas.
All are
unified
by their

commitment to “serve first those who suffer most”

Companion's Future

During 2013/2014, 18 Companions left our Community when they felt like they were ready to begin the next chapter of their journeys:

- **Private rented accommodation**
- **Other Emmaus Communities**
- **Council supported properties through rent assure schemes**
- **Full time employment**

Our Community also offers Companions the opportunity to train under the current staff as **Trainees**. This will provide the individual the opportunity to apply for Community staff positions within Emmaus in the near future.

We also have a Move-On option that provides a different scheme of support to individuals who find full time employment. We work with them for three months helping them find affordable accommodation and encouraging them to save.



**"LIVING HERE GIVES ME THE
SUPPORT I NEED & THE
OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OTHER
PEOPLE"**

Companion Story

Emmaus has had a huge impact on my life, as it's given me the opportunity to really be myself for what feels like the first time ever. It's a been a really big step, as I came here after suffering a nervous breakdown.

I'd been bottling up a secret for a long time, and it finally became too much to handle. I am gay, you see. No big deal you might say, but being gay, and hiding it, led to a lot of troubles in my life: eating disorders; an unhappy marriage, financial problems, you name it. Eventually it all became too much. My breakdown was the turning point. It gave me the courage to talk about my sexuality and make changes in my life, including moving to Emmaus. I can't describe how good it feels to be settled. For the first time in my life, I am completely me.

I've always been artistic and now I can really use those skills at Emmaus. I am upcycling furniture, revamping and decorating anything from spice racks to wardrobes and I have completely transformed my own room. I've hung paintings and chosen special bits of furniture.

I love living at Emmaus, as I'm close to my family. Living here gives me the support I need at the moment, but I also have the opportunity to help other people. It means that I'm not dwelling on my own troubles, but thinking positively about a way forward.

Companion Training & Development

During their stay with Emmaus, Companions work closely with their designated Support Worker to identify training needed to reach their goals. Companions settle into the Community during their first month, and during their one month review they set their short and long term goals. Their Support Worker uses different tools and techniques to support the Companion to achieve the goals they wish to achieve.



Some of the many training & development opportunities:

Oakland's College courses (Carpentry & Joinery, Animal Care Land based Studies, GCSE Maths, English, & Double Award Science, Level 3 Diploma Electrical Installations), Portable Appliance Testing Electrical Course, Driving Theory Test, Passport, Driving License, Birth Certificate, Change of Name, British Naturalization applications, apprenticeship at local car garage, charitable events (Push It For The Peace (5 mile obstacle course for Peace Hospice), St Albans Half Marathon, Macmillan Coffee Morning, World Water Day, Push It River Runner (2 mile up river obstacle course for Peach Hospice), St Albans Abbey sleep out, Christmas Rucksack Project), Emmaus National Assembly 2013, Open University - BA Hons English Literature & Language, Hertfordshire University - NVQ Level 3 Social Care, Creative writing classes, Drama workshop, Ayengar Yoga weekly classes, Introduction to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, counselling, upholstery, Foundation First Aid, professional sign writing, classic furniture restoration, AA meetings

The Rules

Companions can stay at Emmaus St Albans for as long as they need to as long as a few rules are followed:



Emmaus St Albans
Companion Handbook
October 2014



Whoever you are, if you are suffering, come in, eat, sleep, regain hope. Here you are loved.

- No drugs or alcohol on site
- Take an active part in the Community
- No violence/aggression/bullying
- Sign off all benefits (except housing benefit)
- No illegal activity
- Volunteer 40 hours/week for social enterprise
- No form of income/employment
- Take an active part in your development!

Activities & Entertainment

Each month Companions are encouraged to organize activities that promote team work and allows them to enjoy their new life together. Activities over the past year included:

Themed parties for halloween, Easter, Eid, Christmas, Sailing trip with Pioneer Sailing Trust, museums tour, lambing day at Oaklands College, trips to London, play at Radlett theatre, football tournaments, fast car track day, camping weekends, UB40 concert, bowling, BBQ's, Duxford air show, Christmas meal out

