Research Report

New Growth for Emmaus

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Disclaimer

This report represents the views of individuals and agencies interviewed by University of York researchers. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of any Emmaus Community or Emmaus UK or any other organisation. Responsibility for any errors lies with the authors.

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Summary

About the research

- Emmaus represents a unique response to homelessness in the UK. Emmaus offers homeless people places as 'Companions' in mutually supportive Communities that provide accommodation and support, but which also expect Companions to work as volunteers. The volunteer work of Companions supports both the operation of each Community and the social businesses that fund each Community.
- Emmaus also promotes 'Solidarity' among Companions. Solidarity encourages Companions to do extra volunteer work to support those in greater need than themselves. Through volunteer work and Solidarity Emmaus Communities are designed to give formerly homeless people the chance to live and work productively alongside others, to learn to live as part of a community, to gather relevant work experience and qualifications and to regain and boost their self-esteem.
- Emmaus Communities are having to adapt to a changing situation. Homelessness is beginning to increase across the UK and many of the housing support services that were in place to prevent homelessness and resettle formerly homeless people are being subjected to very significant funding cuts. Single homelessness also continues to change. Alongside the growing presence of women and younger people, there are more recent economic migrants.
- This research was commissioned to explore the roles that Emmaus might take in a situation where the nature of homelessness was changing and many homelessness services were being cut. In particular, the research was designed to explore whether there were any barriers to Emmaus Communities for any groups of homeless people and whether Emmaus could undertake any new roles in tackling homelessness.
- The research employed a literature review, interviews with homeless people who had not had any experience of Emmaus Communities and interviews with Emmaus Companions and staff. The interviews involved asking people what attracted them about Emmaus Communities, whether Emmaus suited some groups of homeless people more than others and explored what living in an Emmaus Community gave homeless people who became Companions. Fieldwork took place in Emmaus Communities in Brighton, Cambridge, Gloucester, Greenwich and Preston.

Awareness of Emmaus Communities among homeless people

- There was widespread awareness of Emmaus among homeless people who had never been to a Community. However, most homeless people did not have a *clear*

understanding of what Emmaus Communities were and what they could offer. Many homeless people had false or distorted images of what Emmaus Communities were.

- There was a widespread belief among homeless people that Emmaus Communities were religious organisations that sought to "convert" homeless people to Christianity. This belief was incorrect. The Emmaus Communities in the UK are not religious organisations. Some homeless people were reluctant to approach Emmaus Communities on the basis of a misapprehension that they were 'Christian' environments.
- A few homeless people thought that Emmaus Communities had a zero tolerance policy towards drugs and alcohol and would instantly 'evict' anyone caught using either. This impression was also incorrect. Emmaus Communities did allow drinking off site and would not necessarily ask someone caught drinking or using drugs to leave. If someone was asked to leave by a Community it was not equivalent to an 'eviction', they could still approach a Community again and be considered for readmission as a Companion.
- The concept of a 'Community' was something that a few homeless people found difficult to understand. Some were attracted to the idea of participating and volunteering in a Community that supported itself. Others found the idea quite alien and assumed it meant living in an environment that was constantly shared with other people and which had strict rules. In fact, Emmaus Communities had relatively few rules and offered all their Companions their own rooms or small self-contained studio flats.
- The volunteer work offered by Emmaus Communities was attractive to many homeless people. Some homeless people thought the structure and activity offered by Emmaus would counteract boredom and a lack of purpose. The potential to gather work experience, training and qualifications, which might help secure paid work on leaving an Emmaus Community, were also regarded positively by many homeless people.

Living as a Companion

- Formerly homeless people, who had become Companions, had quite often known little about Emmaus until they moved to a Community. Often their knowledge of Emmaus had been restricted and/or at least partially inaccurate up until the point where they received an assessment, looked around a Community and moved in.
- Companions reported that the comprehensiveness of the support services, the quality of the accommodation and the environment, the presence of other people who had shared the experience of homelessness and who were prepared to talk and listen, the chance to gain work experience and the general ethos of Emmaus were all attractive. Many had been pleasantly surprised by what they found in the Communities and the opportunities offered by Emmaus.
- The doubts about joining Emmaus that Companions had had before becoming part of a Community were often similar to those reported by homeless people. Sometimes

Companions had had a mistaken belief that Emmaus was 'religious' before they moved into a Community and this had made a few hesitant. Similarly, a few Companions had been surprised they were allowed to drink alcohol off site, which removed some misapprehensions about Communities being zero-tolerance environments.

- Many of the Companions talked to for this research reported a positive view of their life in a Community. Established Companions who had been resident for some time were the most likely to be positive about their Community. This group in particular talked about how Emmaus had built up their self-esteem and how it facilitated the restoration of self-confidence in other Companions. Most felt supported by the staff and by their fellow Companions, describing their Communities as warm and sometimes as 'family' like environments.
- Difficulties could exist for some Companions in Emmaus Communities. Some reported that some younger people did not always find it easy to adjust to the structure and requirements of volunteer work within an Emmaus Community. In some cases the rate at which people arrived and left a Community was high, meaning that Companions felt that the shape and nature of their Community was in flux and making them feel less settled. For a minority of Companions living in a group was more a source of tension than support and they found life in a Community difficult. Boredom and loneliness were not widely reported, but several respondents reported that they did not particularly like the preponderance of male Companions and wanted more female Companions.

Supporting a range of people

- From the perspective of staff there were some limitations in which groups Communities could work with. Three groups were regarded as more difficult to engage with. The first was those people who refused to engage with the Emmaus ethos and who could not adapt to the volunteer work that was at the core of Community life. The second group was chronically homeless people. Emmaus Communities could and did work with individuals with high needs, such as severe depression and/or undergoing recovery from heroin addiction. However, chronically homeless people presented with chaotic, challenging and difficult behaviours coupled with very high support needs and required intensive support. Chronically homeless people could be viewed as disruptive and as unable to make much of a contribution to the volunteer work that sustained Communities. The third group with whom it could be difficult to work were the minority of homeless people who had disabilities or long term limiting illnesses that prohibited their doing volunteer work of any kind.
- Any difficulties for Emmaus Communities in engaging with groups like chronically homeless people needs to be viewed in the wider context of a rapidly changing understanding of the nature of homelessness. Extensive international and UK research evidence strongly suggests that chronically homeless people are only a small minority of

people who become homeless. While the majority of single homeless and other homeless people do have at least some support needs, these are much less acute than those of chronically homeless people. This meant that, in practice, Emmaus Communities could potentially work with the great majority of single homeless people and that only a very low proportion of single homeless people might not be well suited to being a Companion, because their support needs were too high.

- No specific barriers existed to women joining Emmaus Communities. Relatively low numbers were thought to reflect more extensive provision of services for women who became homeless with their children or who were homeless because they were at risk of gender based violence. Women were thought to be less present among Emmaus Companions because they were only a minority of the single homeless population.
- This research was not a rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of Emmaus Communities in tackling homelessness. However, Companions and staff interviewed for this research were generally positive about their Communities and what they were able to deliver. The Communities were not entirely perfect and did not suit all homeless people and were not appropriate for some others, but there was evidence of positive outcomes among many Companions.

New growth for Emmaus

- The research showed that there is a strong case for Emmaus keeping to its existing path. What Emmaus delivers is in line with current thinking at policy level in the UK. 'More than a roof' approaches that emphasise reengagement in economic and social life through work and work related activity are increasingly seen as the most potentially effective way to respond to homelessness. This approach towards homelessness reflects key aspects of what Emmaus Communities seek to do.
- There was also evidence from the interviews with homeless people that there is scope to expand recruitment into Emmaus Communities. All the Communities included in this research had waiting lists, but they were concerned that they might not be reaching everyone who might benefit from living and volunteering in a Community. There was strong evidence for a need to improve dissemination about what Emmaus is and what it offers, which would address some of the misapprehensions around religion and alcohol use that deter some homeless people from approaching Communities.
- It is quite difficult to envisage how specific versions of Emmaus Communities focused on particular groups, such as homeless women or young people, could function effectively. There may be insufficient need to make such Communities viable and the existing social business models for Emmaus Communities, which are generally effective, might be less workable for specific groups of homeless people. In addition, staff reported that they thought that the social mix in Communities, for example exposing

young people to older more experienced people, was actually a key strength of the Emmaus model.

- There are arguments for Emmaus to contemplate developing new forms of services by drawing on its own resources. Emmaus Communities might not be able to take on all groups of homeless people as Companions, but they could nevertheless actively support the groups among homeless people for whom life in a Community is not a desirable or viable option. This could be achieved in cooperation with other service providers and/or through direct provision of services. This would promote the Emmaus 'Solidarity' ethos and might to some extent counteract the widespread cuts to other homelessness services that are occurring at the time of writing.

1 Introduction

About the research

A changing context

Emmaus Communities are designed to enable homeless people to move away from situations of social and economic exclusion by providing a supportive, communal environment offering both a home and productive work. People who live in an Emmaus Community (referred to as Companions) are expected to contribute fairly to the Community in which they live with the intention that this will enable them to regain dignity and self-esteem. This can take two forms, either working in the businesses or social enterprises operated by Emmaus Communities and/or in working to facilitate the operation of a Community, for example by undertaking the catering for the other Companions.

Emmaus promotes what is termed 'Solidarity' which encourages Companions to make an additional effort to work in the wider community to support those in greater need than themselves. Emmaus Companions provide support to other people in need, both locally and internationally.

The Companions continue to claim Housing Benefit but they sign off all other benefits while working in a Community. In return for the work Companions do to support the Community, they receive a weekly cash allowance and are not charged for their meals or accommodation.

The Emmaus model is intended to emphasise the rebuilding and development of self-esteem and dignity, getting people back into the routine of productive work. The Emmaus approach is also intended to help people who have become distanced from society by creating a community where they live alongside, cooperate and form relationships with others in a supportive environment. The Emmaus model is holistic, designed to address worklessness, social isolation and societal alienation. In practice, this very often means that Emmaus Communities work with homeless people and people who are at heightened risk of homelessness.

Emmaus Communities are not designed to work with households containing children, though they can opt to accommodate Companions who are couples. However, most Communities are designed around an assumption that they will be mainly working with lone adults.

The nature of homelessness among lone adults has changed over time. While there are some groups who appear to have been at heightened risk of homelessness for decades, new 'groups' of homeless people have appeared. In the last two decades, the nature of

street homelessness, referred to in this report as people sleeping rough, has undergone change. What was, in the 1970s, a group of lone, White British men in early and late middle age often characterised by support needs, sustained worklessness and problematic drinking[1], had changed two decades later. Lone men still predominated among people sleeping rough in the 1990s, but there were more women and more young people while, in the 2000s, migrant groups, including undocumented migrants and some economic migrants from Eastern Europe began to appear among rough sleepers[2].

The nature of homelessness service provision has also changed over time. Services began to expand in the 1970s and by the mid-2000s were far more extensive and diverse than had once been the case. Local authorities were required to have a homelessness strategy that was interlinked with a strategy for housing support services funded under the former 'Supporting People' programme. This meant that services that had hitherto lacked homeless service provision developed new services and there was widespread development of specialist homelessness services. This situation changed with the advent of the 2008 financial crisis and extensive reductions in public expenditure. The homelessness service sector is currently facing severe cutbacks in many areas and some services have closed or are in the process or closing or restricting their operations[3].

There are also indications of an increase in levels of homelessness. In June 2011, Broadway reported an 11 per cent rise in people sleeping rough in London[4]. The statistical returns on the operation of the statutorily homelessness system in England showed 11,820 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty during April to June 2011, 17 per cent higher than the same quarter of 2010[5].

Emmaus Communities in the UK were not designed to work with a specific group of lone homeless or potentially homeless people and are in fact not designed to function solely as a homelessness service. However, in practice, the people who have become Companions most frequently have tended to be lone White British men, quite often aged over 25 who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and who quite often have some form of support

[1] MacGregor Wood, S. (1976) 'Camberwell Reception Centre: a consideration of the need for health and social services of homeless, single men' *Journal of Social Policy,* 5, 4, pp. 389-99

[2] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010*, London: Crisis.

[3] Homeless Link (2011) *Survey of Needs and Provision 2011* London: Homeless Link.

[4] http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN.html

[5] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/homelessnessq22011

need[6]. As is discussed later in the report, there are various reasons why this pattern may have arisen (see Chapter 4).

Key questions

The Emmaus Federation[7] commissioned the research discussed in this report because three operational questions had arisen as a result of the changes that were occurring in the nature of homelessness:

- What role could Emmaus Communities play in a context in which the nature of homelessness was changing and could there be ways in which Communities could be made more accessible, attractive and beneficial to groups of homeless and potentially homeless people who currently did *not* tend to live in Emmaus Communities?
- In a context where homelessness service provision was decreasing and the numbers of homeless people were rising, what new roles might Emmaus Communities adopt to help tackle homelessness?
- Do any 'barriers' to entering Emmaus Communities exist for some groups of homeless people and, if so, what are those 'barriers'?

This research was commissioned to explore these questions. Emmaus has an ethos that defines the Movement and how Emmaus Communities work. A challenge for the research centred on exploring whether a correct balance could be found, one that allowed for possible adaptation to reflect new realities of homelessness but which did not compromise the ethos of the Movement.

Methods

The methodology for this piece of work had three main stages. The first stage was a Rapid Evidence Review (structured literature review) that was designed to set the findings of the later stages in context, looking at Emmaus Communities in contrast to other approaches that are designed to provide a holistic response to lone homelessness. The second stage involved talking to a range of lone homeless people who were not in Emmaus Communities. The aim of the second stage was to assess the level of understanding of Emmaus among lone homeless people, explore the extent to which they might be attracted

[6] Clarke, A. (2010) 'Work as a route out of homelessness: a case study of Emmaus Communities' *People, Place and Policy Online* 4, 3, pp. 89-102; Boswell, C. (2010) 'Routes out of Poverty and Isolation for Older Homeless People: Possible Models from Poland and the UK' *European Journal of Homelessness* 4, pp.203-216

[7] The 21 Emmaus Communities in the UK are all separate charities and distinct legal entities. Nineteen of the Emmaus Communities are affiliates of the Emmaus UK Federation, which has a central office providing guidance and support to existing Communities and to Groups seeking to develop new Emmaus Communities.

to living as a Companion and then determine if there were any barriers to their joining a Community. The third element of the research involved talking to staff and Companions within five Emmaus Communities, exploring the processes by which people heard about Emmaus and made the decision to become a Companion. This stage of the research also explored whether life in an Emmaus Community might present challenges as well as opportunities for some people. Potential challenges and opportunities existed both for Companions and also for the Communities themselves. This allowed exploration of the questions around whether or not life as a Companion suited some people more than others.

It had originally been intended to structure the research around five fieldwork visits to five Emmaus Communities, with the two researchers working as a team to cover the interviews with homeless people external to the Emmaus Community and the interviews with staff and Companions within the Community. The proposed structure of the fieldwork was as follows for each of the five areas.

- Three in-depth interviews with homeless people external to the Emmaus Community exploring their awareness of Emmaus and their receptivity to what an Emmaus Community could offer (in return for a small non-cash incentive). It was intended that two of these three homeless people would be invited on a site visit to the local Emmaus Community with a researcher, with a small additional incentive being offered to those who cooperated. The idea was that their views of Emmaus before and after actually seeing a Community would be contrasted.
- Interviews with two recently arrived (within the last three months) Companions and two more 'established' Companions (in residence for a minimum of six months), exploring what drew them to the Community, their experiences and their views on living there. The inclusion of more established and more recent Companions was intended to allow exploration of whether some groups of people were attracted to a more sustained membership of an Emmaus Community and to look at factors that might have been important in people moving on from a Community.
- A focus group and/or semi structured interviews with staff members in each Emmaus Community, to contextualise what the Companions said and explore staff perceptions on how their Community functioned and whether there was scope for change around issues such as working with a larger group of Companions or engaging with a wider range of lone homeless people than was currently the case.

Participation in the research was anonymous. Nothing reported in these pages identifies the area in which a research respondent was located and only non-specific indications of their role are given. The Emmaus Communities that participated in the research were as follows:

- Brighton

- Cambridge
- Gloucestershire
- Greenwich
- Preston

When fieldwork was conducted it was found that the Emmaus Community in Greenwich was not located near services in which significant numbers of homeless people could be found. In Preston, securing cooperation from local homelessness services was not possible. This meant that interviews with homeless people who were external to the Emmaus Communities were concentrated in large services for homeless people operating in Brighton, Cambridge and Gloucester. As quite a high number of referrals came from outside the local authorities and indeed regions in which the Emmaus Communities were located, this should not have had any significant impact on the validity of the research. All the participating Communities took local people on as Companions, but would all also consider applications from elsewhere. In addition, Communities also occasionally offered places as Companions to recent international migrants who had become homeless or were at risk of homelessness, though the numbers involved were very small.

One element of the planned fieldwork proved not to be workable. Homeless people who were external to Emmaus Communities were generally not prepared to accompany a researcher to the Emmaus Community for a brief visit. The reason for this seemed to be linked to the characteristics of the homeless people being interviewed, some of whom had high support needs. While most homeless people were happy to talk about Emmaus for 20 or 30 minutes in one interview, the prospect of perhaps 90 minutes with a researcher (an interview, a visit to an Emmaus project and another short interview) was often not something they felt able to engage with. On the basis that responses would be variable at best, it was decided that the element of the fieldwork involving visits to Emmaus Communities with homeless people was not practical. The total number of interviews with homeless people external to Emmaus Communities was increased to compensate for not undertaking the visits, rising from three to five in each area (from 15 to 25). The topic guide used during the interviews with current Companions was also extended so as to capture perceptions held before and after becoming a Companion. A semi-structured approach was used for interviews.

The University follows the Social Policy Association Guidelines on research ethics which are designed to ensure that no distress should result from participation in the research process. This ensures that no one is asked to participate in research unless the researcher is clear that the individual knows what they are being asked to do, knows that they do not have to answer any questions they do not want to and that they can cease to participate at any point. The research was checked and cleared through the CHP ethics process, which uses two external expert reviewers.

The results of this work are not necessarily representative of all Emmaus Communities in the UK. The research team visited five of the 21 Communities operational in the summer of 2011 for the purposes of the fieldwork. The Communities selected operated in very different circumstances, were of differing sizes and while all shared the core furniture business model, they were also active in a range of other businesses ranging from cafes, through to gardening. However, while a good range of Communities were represented, the circumstances of other Communities may have differed. One other caveat to note is that the Communities visited for the research were at least partially based in buildings that been converted; there were no entirely 'new build' Communities that had been purpose built. This meant that the size of the Communities varied, that some had both the accommodation and their business or businesses on site while others did not and that the range of facilities and other details (such as whether or not rooms were en-suite) varied.

Almost all of the planned fieldwork was conducted, with staff interviews and focus groups taking place in all five Communities, two 'recent' and two 'established' Companions being interviewed in each Community. However, even with the kind support of three agencies that agreed to help with the fieldwork, it only proved possible to conduct 19 interviews or the planned 25 interviews with homeless people within the timeframe and resources allowed for the research. Enough potential participants were available but sometimes for reasons linked to their support needs and sometimes simply because they were not inclined to take part in the research, it was not possible to recruit everyone who the researcher approached.

The research was conducted between July and October 2011.

The structure of this report

The next chapter of this report is a brief overview of the Emmaus ethos. This is provided to ensure that readers who may be unfamiliar with all the specifics of how Emmaus operates are able to interpret the results. Chapter Two also has a more general function in spelling out what definitions the researchers used. When in later chapters the report discusses specific aspects of Emmaus it is the definitions in this chapter that it is referring to. Chapter Three looks at awareness and understanding of Emmaus among homeless people, drawing on the interviews with homeless people and from informal discussions with staff and volunteers working in external agencies. This chapter is concerned with how well Emmaus is understood and whether perceptions or misperceptions of what Emmaus is either encourage or discourage different groups of homeless people to seek to join a Community as a Companion.

Chapter Four looks at the process of becoming a Companion from the perspective of people who have experienced it. It explores how people heard about Emmaus, their expectations and how living as a Companion contrasted with those expectations. The

extent to which living as a Companion might suit some people more than others is also explored. Chapter Four concludes with a discussion, drawing both on the fieldwork with staff and with Companions about how Emmaus Communities balance the different roles with one another. The final chapter looks at potential for new growth for Emmaus, drawing together the findings discussed in the earlier stages of the report, discussing both potential limits to growth and also the various ways in which growth might happen.

2 About Emmaus

Introduction

This short chapter is designed to provide an overview of the Emmaus ethos and to describe broadly the operation of an Emmaus Community. The purpose of the chapter is twofold. First, it is intended to help guide readers of this report who may not be entirely familiar with Emmaus. Second, the chapter provides what might best be described as a list of 'definitions' used by the researchers. When in the later stages of the report specific concepts, such as Solidarity and Community, are discussed, the report is always making reference to these concepts in terms of how they are defined in this chapter.

The origins of Emmaus

Emmaus was founded by the French Resistance hero, politician and Catholic Priest Abbé Pierre (1912-2007) who began working to establish what became Emmaus in 1949. Supported by the French Government, Emmaus grew into an international movement over a relatively short period of time. The first General Assembly of Emmaus International was held in Bern in 1969, adopting the Universal Manifesto of the Emmaus Movement. Emmaus also adopted the UN Declaration of Human Rights, making it a non-discriminatory movement. Since its foundation, Emmaus has grown into an international movement operating in many countries. Emmaus France and the Foundation Abbé Pierre are integral to French policy responses to homelessness and both are active at the wider European level.

Emmaus centred on developing small communities in which homeless people and vulnerable people at risk of homelessness could become Companions. A Companion is a member of an Emmaus Community. Being a Companion confers both responsibility and access to necessary formal and informal support. Some people who become Companions work as volunteers in a business or businesses with the goal of making a Community financially self-sufficient while others take on work for the Community itself such as cooking or cleaning. Companions are expected to take an active part in Community life and volunteer their labour to the best of their ability. Each Community is intended to be a nurturing, supportive and empowering place in which vulnerable and homeless people cooperate with each other and work together.

Solidarity is a key concept for Emmaus. Solidarity is intended to promote contributions to the wider community by Emmaus Companions. Companions work to support those who are less fortunate than themselves, both in the local area in which their Community is situated, but also at a wider level. Emmaus is active in supporting projects in areas affected by natural disasters and conflict and in projects in economically less developed nations. Companions from the European Union travel to Africa and other countries as part of this commitment to Solidarity.

Emmaus Communities in the UK

The first Emmaus Community in the UK opened in Cambridge in 1991. Each Community is an independent Charity and legal entity, so some aspects of their operation vary, but the basic approach adopted was derived from the French Communities. The core business of Cambridge and most of the subsequent Emmaus Communities was second-hand furniture recycling and sale, with Cambridge and other Communities also including the restoration and sale of second-hand electrical domestic appliances in their business, along with books, clothing and other domestic items. UK Communities tend to have between 20-40 Companions, with the larger Communities being the minority. At the time of writing, 21 Communities offering some 502 Companion rooms were operating in the UK, with another 13 new Communities at various stages of development[8].

The research found that there was quite a widespread assumption among people with no direct experience of Emmaus that the Communities in the UK were 'Christian' organisations. Emmaus Communities are in fact *not* religious and Emmaus UK, the Federation of Emmaus Communities in the UK, is a secular organisation.

Companions have their own rooms. The facilities vary, but most Communities offer en-suite accommodation and provide or allow someone to have a television, computer and/or stereo in their room. Alongside accommodation, Companions have their food, toiletries and utilities provided. Cleaning and cooking are a part of Companions' responsibilities, though many Communities tend to have one or two Companions who concentrate on providing food for the others. Communities have communal areas that vary in their size and extent. Many Communities possess television rooms, lounges, a suite of computers with Internet access available for Companions' use and kitchen facilities that enable Companions who might miss shared mealtimes, for reasons such as work responsibilities, to cook for themselves. This research focused on Emmaus Communities that had been developed out of existing buildings such as schools, residential care homes and a former convent, though there are examples of purpose-built Communities.

[8] http://www.emmaus.org.uk/

Companions sign off welfare benefits, with the exception of Housing Benefit, at the point at which they join an Emmaus Community. In exchange for a five day, 40 hour week of volunteer work the Companions typically receive an allowance of between £35 and £40 a week. This is not a 'wage' because the Companions are volunteering. The allowance is in addition to Companions having most of their day-to-day living costs being met by their Community, as Companions are not charged for their accommodation, their meals, utility bills or toiletries and can be supplied with clothing from donations.

Direct comparison with a salary for equivalent paid work is difficult as Companions are volunteering. Nevertheless some respondents did draw comparisons between the allowance the Companions were given for volunteering and the disposable income of someone on the Minimum Wage for a 40 hour week. The Minimum wage for a worker aged over 21 was £6.08[9], giving someone working for 40 hours £243.20, a gross annual salary of £12,646.44. From this an individual would have to meet their housing costs, pay for food and utilities bills and, for earned income above £7,475, also pay Income Tax. Disposable income after meeting all the costs of living would, at Minimum Wage, perhaps be no more - and potentially rather less - than the Companions received as an allowance for their volunteer work.

The volunteer work undertaken by Companions ranges from the support of the Community in a domestic sense, such as cooking for other Companions, through to a range of work for the social business or businesses that the Community runs to support itself. As Communities typically have a second-hand furniture business with warehousing and one or more shops, roles can include driving, deliveries and picking up donations, testing donated electrical goods for safety, restoring furniture, warehouse work, sales on the shop floor and also management roles centred on logistics or supervising a sales team. Other work can include cooking and serving in Cafés within those Communities that have a Café open to the public or landscape gardening in those Communities that offer a parks and gardening service. Emmaus Communities offer opportunities for training relevant to the work that the Community does and can also facilitate Companions securing basic qualifications in maths and English if they require them.

Communities tend to have only a few rules. There is no tolerance of illegal drug use on site, but if a Companion is caught using illegal drugs a Community would often respond by attempting to provide support in the first instance, although repeated problems would be likely to result in a Companion being asked to leave the Community for a defined period of time. Alcohol consumption is banned on site, Companions generally being allowed to drink offsite, but also being expected to return to their own rooms rather than remaining in communal spaces on their return to the Community. Mistreatment of other Companions

[9] As at 1st October 2011.

will also result in sanctions and can potentially lead to someone being asked to leave a Community if the problem is severe or enduring. The Emmaus model is designed to allow Companions second, third and further chances to re-enter a Community if they have been asked to leave[10]. Companions are expected not to claim any welfare benefit other than Housing Benefit and also expected not to take on external paid work in addition to their work supporting the Community.

The range of support needs that Emmaus Communities can work with is quite extensive. Some Companions are on treatments for problematic drug use including Methadone and others have mental health problems. Companions can also have experienced difficult and traumatic events. Emmaus Communities are not always able to engage with people with the very highest support needs.

Companions are encouraged to take part in Solidarity work in their local community, supporting good causes centred on those less fortunate than themselves and also given the opportunity to become involved in Solidarity projects taking place in other countries. Emmaus can facilitate travel between Communities to undertake Solidarity work, which means there can be opportunities for UK Companions to travel to Communities in France and elsewhere.

Communities tend to hold meetings involving the Companions and staff. Participation in Community life at this level tends to be expected, though the emphasis is on attempting to allow everyone to have a voice in how the Community is operating.

Companions are not expected to move on from a Community at any given point. There is the option to remain in an Emmaus Community for years if a Companion chooses to do so, though support is provided with securing qualifications, work outside the Community and accessing accommodation. Communities may furnish the housing secured by Companions outside of the Community by drawing on the donations of furniture they receive.

Emmaus in context

Emmaus is in many respects a unique form of support for homeless people. It has a holistic approach, centred on addressing worklessness, an absence of meaningful activity, social isolation and societal alienation as well as providing accommodation, food and support. The requirement that Companions in Emmaus Communities work to support those Communities and participate within Community life is also something that is distinct from many other supports for homeless people. While the use of social enterprise to support the activities of homelessness services is not unknown outside Emmaus, the core role of work

[10] This research did not explore this aspect of Emmaus Communities operation.

and social enterprise and emphasis on self-financing within Emmaus Communities is distinct. As each Emmaus Community is a distinct Charity and legal entity in the UK, Emmaus is also unlike some other forms of support for homeless people in that each Community, while following the Emmaus ethos, may have some features that are unique.

Other forms of support for homeless people tend to differ from Emmaus in that they follow a 'homelessness service' model. Homeless people are the recipients of the support and care these services offer or facilitate, the clients of professional and volunteer service providers. Unlike Emmaus Companions, homeless people receiving homelessness services do not have a central role in actively contributing to both the funding and the delivery of the support that they receive. Homelessness services are not static and things have changed since the initial emphasis on providing food and shelter to lone homeless people, at first by creating services that actively sought to resettle and sustain homeless people in housing through outreach and floating support services and more recently through an increasing emphasis on tackling worklessness[11]. However, despite the shifts in direction that have occurred in the last two decades, homeless people largely receive homelessness support services rather than directly participate in the delivery and funding of their own support in the way that Emmaus Companions do.

Services providing work related activity for homeless people

Services designed to assist with access to paid work for homeless people tend to adopt one of two basic approaches. The first approach is to generate what is sometimes termed 'meaningful' or 'work related' activity which is designed to create structure and the experience of working alongside others as a means to prepare people who have never worked, or who have not worked for a long time, for paid work. Sometimes these projects are arts-based; sometimes they involve physical activities such as sport or volunteer work in the community[12]. Activity might be combined with education and training; the services may facilitate access for service users to education and training from another service provider, such as a local college. In some senses these services come close to what Emmaus does, but there are significant differences; while homeless people using these services are required to be active, they are often not undertaking volunteer work in the sense that an Emmaus Companion does. Instead these other services offer something that resembles paid work as a kind of training to facilitate access to paid work from an employer. Alongside working with homeless people these sorts of 'meaningful activity' services are also

[11] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis

[12] Randall, G. and Brown, S. (1999) *Ending exclusion: employment and training schemes for homeless young people* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2005) *Daytime Homelessness* London: Crisis

provided for people at heightened risk of homelessness and sustained worklessness, including people with a history of offending and problematic drug use[13].

The second approach, used by services seeking to tackle sustained worklessness among homeless people, is the use of work placements and formal and informal apprenticeships. These services introduce homeless people to paid work through temporary placement with an employer. Where possible, these services will encourage the development of these placements into sustainable paid work. There are also services that function as employment brokering services, with an emphasis on recruiting employers and persuading them to offer jobs to formerly homeless people. Brokering services emphasise the provision of reassurance to employers, that they are not taking a risk by employing a specific individual and may combine this with some element of support provided to either the formerly homeless person and/or the employer[14].

There are also other experimental models in use. For example the Transitional Spaces Project (TSP) offered a series of 'financial rewards' to homeless people as they progressed towards financial independence, living independently in the private rented sector and paid work. Participants received a cash payment from the TSP each time they made a step towards paid work, with the intention that the payments would both encourage and facilitate securing a job[15].

Evidence on the effectiveness of employment related services for homeless people is mixed. There is little evidence that the various homelessness services centred on facilitating employment generate *sustained* paid work for formerly homeless people, although there is some evidence that these services can secure access to paid work for homeless people, this was often in a context in which general levels of employment were relatively high. In a situation like that at present, where employment opportunities are decreasing in terms of the total level of paid work available in the labour market and the quality of that paid work (i.e. less full time, relatively well paid jobs, more lower paid, part-time work and short-term contracts), it may be more difficult for these service models to achieve good results[16].

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[13] Kemp, P. and Neale, J. (2005) 'Employability and problem drug users', *Critical Social Policy* 25, 1, pp. 28-46; Pleace, N. and Minton, J. (2009) *Delivering better housing and employment outcomes for offenders on probation* London: DWP

[14] Off the Streets and Into Work and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2007) *European Research Study into Homelessness and Employment* London: OSW

[15] Carter, M. (2010) *Working Towards A Home: Finding independence through work and private renting* London: OSW.

[16] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis

There are also limitations in what these various service models can achieve. An individual with support needs or a disability who might find it difficult to secure paid work if they were not homeless, might be doubly disadvantaged in seeking work in the open labour market[17]. Service models for providing economic activity for homeless and formerly homeless people with high support needs and limiting illnesses and disabilities exist. These include what is sometimes termed 'sheltered' employment, i.e. employment specifically designed for groups of homeless people - often those with the highest needs widely referred to as 'chronically homeless' people in the USA – which can be reliant on a subsidy to function[18]. These services can be intended as preparation for securing paid work in the labour market, differing from the various kinds of 'meaningful activity' service described above because they do involve actual 'work' for which service users are paid. Such service models can however be expensive to operate.

Emmaus Communities differ from homeless services providing work related activity and paid work in several key respects. In addition to the focus on community living, mutual support and Solidarity, each Community is *reliant* on the volunteer work by its Companions to allow its social enterprises to sustain themselves and on the volunteer contributions of the Companions in key roles within the Community, such as taking on a role as a chef and catering for everyone. Emmaus also delivers actual work experience which can vary as Companions move between roles in the Community and offers volunteer work on an open ended basis. Finally, of course, Emmaus is not reliant on subsidy, with Communities drawing on the volunteer work by their Companions in order to function.

Mainstream homelessness services for lone adults

Large dormitory hostels replaced former workhouses in many cities, removing the requirement that residents work in return for their subsistence and instead relying on welfare benefits claimed by each individual to meet their management costs[19]. These hostels sometimes employed former workhouse buildings. Closure of large dormitory style accommodation for lone homeless adults began in the 1980s, driven by evidence that residents simply often stayed put or were unable to move on, sometimes for decades. The

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[17] Off the Streets and Into Work and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2006) *Employment success factors for homeless people with health conditions* London: OSW.

[18] Munoz, J.P. *et al* (2005) 'Project Employ: Engineering hope and breaking down barriers to homelessness' *Work*, 25, pp. 241–252. Rosenheck, R.A. and Mares, A.S. (2007) 'Implementation of Supported Employment for Homeless Veterans With Psychiatric or Addiction Disorders: Two-Year Outcomes' *Psychiatric Services* 58, 3; Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (2010) *What Works! Job Strategies for Homeless People* [Supporting Documentation] Washington DC: HUD.

[19] Higginbotham, P. (2008) *The Workhouse Cookbook* Gloucester: The History Press.

closure of these large hostels is now nearing the process of completion, with some of the last examples recently being shut down in Glasgow[20]. Smaller towns and cities that did not have large emergency dormitory provision for homeless people were often dependent on nightshelters, sometimes supported by the local authority, sometimes reliant entirely on local charities.

What initially replaced the dormitory and night-shelter system was a combination of smaller, more specialised hostels that were specifically designed to encourage move-on into independent accommodation for homeless people with higher support needs and, in what would become a very significant trend, floating resettlement services[21]. These services differed from what they replaced in that they created an expectation for homeless people using them to become independent. Residence in one of these hostels was designed to be a process of training in independence that ended in independent housing.

The new floating resettlement services placed homeless people with support needs directly into what, in the 1980s and early 1990s, were social rented homes and then provided those formerly homeless people with a visiting worker who encouraged them towards independent living, gradually reducing the level of support they provided over time. More recently, these services have changed into tenancy support services, which use floating support workers both to resettle formerly homeless people with support needs and, increasingly, to prevent homelessness among vulnerable people at risk of homelessness. Over time, the balance of homelessness service provision has shifted away from fixed site hostels and towards the provision of tenancy support services, to arrive at a situation in which the services using mobile workers are becoming predominant[22]. These mobile worker services, often known as 'floating support' services, are designed to both prevent homelessness from occurring from those at risk of it and to sustainably resettle and reintegrate people who have become homeless. As well as being used with groups like people sleeping rough and lone homeless adults, they are widely used by social landlords when working with lone homeless people who have been accepted as statutorily homeless under the homelessness legislation because they are a vulnerable person.

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[20] Fitzpatrick. S, Bretherton. J, Jones, A., Pleace, N and Quilgars, D. (2010) *The Glasgow Hostel Closure and Re-provisioning Programme: Final Report on the findings from a Longitudinal Evaluation*, Glasgow City Council / Centre for Housing Policy: York.

[21] Dant, T and Deacon, A (1989) *Hostels to Homes? The Rehousing of Single Homeless People*, Aldershot: Avebury; Pleace, N. (1995) *Housing Vulnerable Single Homeless People* University of York: York.

[22] Centre for Housing Research (2010) *Supporting People Client Records and Outcomes: Annual Report 2009-2010* St Andrews: University of St Andrews.

This part of the homelessness sector expanded and diversified under recent successive Labour governments. Services designed for specific subgroups of homeless people, such as young people, cultural and ethnic minorities and former offenders multiplied, funded and encouraged through the Supporting People programme which had unified formerly diverse funding streams for housing support services. As noted in Chapter One, these services are currently contracting in size and scope, following the abolition of a discrete Supporting People funding stream.

Over the last 20 years, the homelessness sector has begun to take on a more holistic view of homelessness. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, homelessness began to be reclassified as a state of what was referred to at the time as 'social exclusion' rather than just a situation of housing exclusion and service provision began to reflect this[23]. The phrase 'more than a roof' initially coined to describe innovative approaches to tackling rough sleeping in the UK, was representative of an ever growing recognition that homelessness could mean social isolation, alienation, sustained worklessness and poor health, issues that could, at best, only be partially tackled through the provision of adequate and affordable housing[24]. Current service models therefore often attempt to address the following sets of needs:

- Economic exclusion and sustained worklessness.
- Low educational attainment, including needs around basic literacy and numeracy.
- Access to the NHS.
- Welfare Rights, i.e. access to all benefits for which the person is eligible.
- Financial management and debt management.
- Social isolation.
- Problematic drug and alcohol use (where present)
- Housing needs and related needs, including furniture, white goods and the skills needed to run a home.

Attitudes towards homeless people have also undergone some changes. A succession of studies in the USA and a smaller amount of research in Europe began to suggest that, for homeless people who had problematic drug and alcohol use, services that used strict rules and regulation were often proving ineffective. Homeless people abandoned these services, or when the service was supposed to slowly progress them to independent living through a series of steps (sometimes known as a staircase model), could become stuck at particular

[23] Pleace, N. (2000) 'The New Consensus, the Old Consensus and the Provision of Services for People Sleeping Rough', *Housing Studies* 15, 4.

[24] Communities and Local Government (2003) *More Than a Roof: a report into tackling homelessness* London: CLG.

'steps'. New 'Housing First' and housing-led services, using floating support and ordinary housing, which placed as much emphasis on the rights as on the responsibilities of homeless people, began to be introduced in various countries. These new services gave homeless people more control over their lives and appear to be much more effective at delivering sustainable housing for 'chronically' homeless people with high support needs[25].

Emmaus Communities are very different from mainstream homelessness services. A Community is designed to be participative, supportive and simultaneously self reliant. This means people living as Companions are intended to have a different relationship to Emmaus than to a homelessness service provider, because their volunteer work funds the Community and the services it provides. In a real sense, living as a Companion means actively looking after oneself and others through participating in volunteer work. An Emmaus Community relies on Companions even as it supports those Companions. This is a crucial difference from other services, because it changes the dynamic found in a mainstream homelessness service. Instead of ultimately being a 'service user' or 'client', Companions draw on mutually provided support that they are themselves active in delivering. The Emmaus emphasis on community and inclusion and participation within a Community remains distinct.

A Community is not self contained – indeed the emphasis on Solidarity connects Communities to the wider world and Emmaus Communities will connect with external services when Companions need them – but a very great deal of what a Companion needs should theoretically be received directly from the Community of which they are a part. Over time, the support an Emmaus Community offers could potentially help address issues such as low self-esteem, social isolation, alienation and an absence of work experience, allowing Companions to move on from a Community. Companions may also set their own pace, staying in a Community for weeks, months or years before opting to move on.

Mainstream homelessness services do not work this way. An emphasis is placed on immediate or near-immediate reintegration of homeless and potentially homeless people in society. Most services do this by brokering, attempting to form connections between what a homeless person needs and existing external services, and then bringing that homeless person to a point where they can manage their own needs. Another way to look at this is that these services try to 'set up' homeless people, arranging access to housing in the social rented or private rented sector, making sure that the housing is adequately furnished and of decent standard, providing advice and support in how to manage the housing and connecting the homeless person up with any services they need. This is sometimes called making somehow housing ready'. Homeless people using these services

[25] Tsemberis S., 'Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Promoting Recovery and Reducing Costs', in Gould Ellen I. and O'Flaherty B. (eds), *How to House the Homeless*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2010.

are placed into the 'community' with what are intended to be sufficient opportunities and resources and then, ultimately, left to cope by themselves.

Most services work to at least a broad timetable, setting limits around the amount of time someone should spend in a hostel or for which they should receive a floating support service. The requirement placed on many mainstream homelessness services to provide a rapid and sustainable solution to individual homelessness can sometimes mean that support is withdrawn too quickly, or not enough allowance is made for specific individual needs. Mainstream services are also highly influenced by the context in which they operate. It is one thing to reintegrate a homeless or potentially homeless person into a local area that is socially cohesive, in which adequate and affordable housing is available and where there is suitable paid work. It becomes more difficult to attempt this when social cohesion is poor, housing is not adequate and paid work is not widely available[26].

Emmaus Communities are intended to offer what is essentially a unique solution to lone adult homelessness. The remainder of this report is concerned with exploring how far the Emmaus approach might be extended to working with groups of people who are less likely than lone men to become Companions and whether consideration should be given to changing the scope of support provided by Emmaus Communities.

[26] Pleace, N. (2008) Effective Services for Substance Misuse and Homelessness in Scotland: Evidence from an international review Edinburgh: Scottish Government; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2003) *Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Homeless Households*, London : ODPM, Homelessness Directorate.

3 Awareness of Emmaus among homeless people

Introduction

This chapter explores the level of knowledge among homeless people about Emmaus. The attitudes of homeless people who had no direct experience of living in an Emmaus Community towards the possibility of becoming a Companion are also examined. The chapter then considers the implications of the findings for the operation of Emmaus Communities.

Knowledge of Emmaus Communities among homeless people

Awareness of Emmaus Communities

Total ignorance of Emmaus was unusual among the homeless people interviewed for this research. Some caution may be advisable in interpreting this finding as fieldwork took place in homelessness services that were within three or four miles of the local Emmaus Community. Each homelessness service visited also made at least occasional referrals to the local Emmaus Community and in one instance to several Emmaus Communities in different parts of the UK.

However, the fieldwork did suggest that a *clear* understanding of Emmaus was not widespread. The majority of respondents had partial, vague and sometimes inaccurate images of Emmaus.

> *I know that they are a group that live in communities that try to be self sufficient. Doing up second hand furniture, that sort of stuff. It's religious based, partly I think, not hundred percent sure.* Homeless Person.

> *A Christian charity that was set up to help homeless people with issues, first and foremost housing but also with a working background, so you can go and work in one of their coffee shops, charity shops. It was set up, the idea, it was set up because there were too many on the streets who surveys suggested would be able to give up the drink if they had an occupation, so Emmaus was set up as a background to that.* Homeless Person.

> *They help you house you, house yourself, you live with them a certain time and then you go through another step I suppose to be re-housed, but you can still stay and do voluntary work with the organisation and then move on to get into work.* Homeless Person.

Though the numbers involved were small, the homeless people who did have a clearer understanding of Emmaus tended to be those who had been told about it by a worker or someone who had been a Companion. In one instance a homeless person had experienced a very brief stay as a Companion in a Community.

> *I know it's a Christian charity on the outskirts of Brighton, they got a furniture shop... homeless people can move in there and have residence and work in the furniture shop as part of living there, so they can get back into working and making money and living somewhere.* Homeless Person.

These findings suggested that information dissemination about Emmaus Communities could have been stronger in the local areas in which they operated. In some senses, a limited awareness of what Emmaus might also function as a barrier to potential Companions approaching a Community. If the image that homeless people have of Emmaus was negative, then it might deter potential Companions from seeking to join a Community. This point is considered in more detail in the Recommendations to this report.

Attractive aspects of Emmaus Communities

The homeless people were always asked what they knew about Emmaus as the first stage of the interview. When people were unaware or had an unclear picture of what Emmaus was, the researcher then gave a brief, neutral, explanation of the operation of a Community and asked the homeless person whether or not they would consider moving into a Community. The fieldwork with homeless people showed that the structure and purpose and the support offered by Emmaus Communities were potentially attractive to homeless people.

Structure and purpose

A number of homeless people were attracted by what they saw as the structure and activity offered by Emmaus. A day organised around volunteer work, giving them something to do and a purpose to each day was viewed positively, as was the chance to be doing something that gave them current work experience. This was seen as counteracting the boredom and lack of purpose in their current lives and in a few cases as providing alternatives to drug and alcohol use as a way of coping with having nothing to do. A few homeless people who viewed these aspects of life in the Community as potentially positive asked the researcher for details of how to apply for a place in a Community.

As fieldwork took place in homelessness services with existing referral mechanisms to Emmaus, the researcher was able to explain how they could start the process of seeking a place as a Companion.

...because at the moment I'm drinking quite a lot, and I'd like to have somewhere where I couldn't do that. If I only had £40 a week and was occupied all the time...I'd probably ask them to keep money and give to me only if I had a valid reason...I'd like the idea of the structure to break certain habits in my life, some sort of routine, get off benefits. Homeless Person.

The one homeless person who had experienced a very brief stay at an Emmaus summarised what they saw as the difference between Emmaus and the mainstream homelessness services that they had experienced.

So if you compare it to the shelter, getting chucked out in the morning, the support network sort of stops and then it starts again at seven at night, then you're chucked out in the morning. But it's so completely different up there, you've got the work thing, it's like a two way arrangement. The stability was excellent, and the sense of community as well, I mean I've lived in a lot of shared houses and hostels, but I've never had that kind of sense of community, people cooking for each other, helping each other out...

The prospect of work

The nature of the work on offer, arrangements surrounding benefits and allowance levels were described to homeless people. It was explained that day to day living costs, including accommodation costs; food and toiletries were all met by the Community. The chance to participate in volunteer work in the specific form offered by Emmaus Communities, was viewed positively by many of the homeless people who were talked to. Some homeless people placed particular emphasis on being able to demonstrate recent work experience to a potential employer.

...they're giving you a wage, they are giving you the experience...to take away, to future employment. Homeless Person.

It's the people that want to work, want to try to establish themselves again, that I think these sort of communities, Emmaus, try to help. From what I've heard through people...people say it's a stepping stone, to help you get to whatever you want to do, some people go there for years, others are only there for a month, it's a stepping stone. I'm thinking it's the first step on the ladder. Homeless Person.

*I want to get into a situation where I'm getting back into the system on the working front...At the end of the day I need to be in an environment where they are pushing you, help you, even if you've got a gap...*Homeless Person

Community life

The idea of community life and Solidarity within an Emmaus Community was something that a few homeless people found difficult to understand. The differences between an Emmaus Community and what they were used to in terms of how mainstream services operated, were sufficient to mean that it was hard to relate the operation of an Emmaus Community to their lived experience. While a few homeless people thought the idea of a community that supported itself and which also reached out to help the wider society of which it was a part was attractive, many found the concept quite difficult and rather 'alien'. In particular, when "Community" was talked about, it was assumed by many homeless people that this meant an Emmaus Community was surveillant, i.e. a place in which their behaviour would be highly monitored and controlled. This point is returned to in more detail the discussion of barriers to approaching Emmaus in the next section of the Chapter.

This finding suggested that the concepts of Community and Solidarity might be the areas in which the explanation of what Emmaus is needs to be concentrated. There may be cultural factors that are significant here, related to the relative individualism of UK society compared to some of mainland Europe, though this is not something the research was able to explore in detail.

Barriers to approaching Emmaus Communities

Fieldwork with homeless people indicated three main sets of barriers to homeless people approaching Emmaus Communities. These centred on misperceptions of how Emmaus Communities operated, attitudes towards communal living and attitudes to work.

Misperceptions as a barrier

The fieldwork identified two misperceptions of Emmaus Communities among some homeless people. The first misperception was that Emmaus Communities were Christian organisations when this was not in fact the case. The second misperception was that Emmaus Communities all had a zero tolerance towards drug and alcohol use, i.e. any single use of drugs or alcohol would result in immediate eviction.

The language used by some homeless people in relation to what they believed was an emphasis on religious conversion in Emmaus Communities was sometimes extreme. The authors judge it worthwhile to repeat the terms used here in order to convey the level of misunderstanding that was present. Terms such as 'Cult', 'Bible thumpers', 'Evangelical' and 'Fundamentalist' were used. Those who mentioned the misperception that Emmaus would try to 'convert' them to Christianity if they moved into a Community did not want to consider moving to Emmaus because of that misperception.

> *The only thing I'm a little concerned about is that I'm not really religious, I'm not a religious person and a lot of this is run through religion and other things, that would be the only thing that would slightly concern me, because I don't want someone thinking they can try and teach me the ways of whatever...I don't want people preaching to me about things.* Homeless Person.

One deterrent to moving to an Emmaus Community for some homeless people was therefore based on a false idea of what an Emmaus Community was. Some homeless people thought of Emmaus in the UK as some sort of Evangelical Christian movement, whereas it was in fact entirely composed of secular Communities.

A few homeless people mentioned having heard that Emmaus was actively promoting Christianity but then went on to say that this was actually inaccurate. Most of this group had either seen information on Emmaus Communities or talked to people who had spent time as Companions and learned that Emmaus was not actually religious.

A few homeless people believed that any evidence of drug or alcohol use would lead to instant "eviction" from an Emmaus Community. This was again an incorrect picture and did not reflect what the practice was within Communities.

As noted in Chapter 2, while Emmaus Communities do not allow illegal drug use, they do allow Companions to drink off site on the basis that when they return to the Community they go to their rooms. In practice, a Companion caught using drugs or drinking on site would often be given a warning and offered support, rather than instantly being asked to leave[27] (see Chapter 4). In addition, while a Companion might be asked to leave a Community because of drug or alcohol use on site, this was not equivalent to an 'eviction', there was always the possibility that they would be allowed to return.

The misperception that Emmaus Communities had zero tolerance of drug and alcohol use acted as a deterrent to approaching an Emmaus Community in two ways. First, the few homeless people who thought that there was "zero tolerance" were apprehensive that one slip or mistake would mean instant "eviction" and that there would be no second chance. Second, homeless people who were drinking alcohol presumed that they would not be allowed any alcohol consumption whatsoever, including drinking off site. Both these images of how Emmaus communities responded to drugs and alcohol were incorrect. The homeless people interviewed for the research may have been used to homelessness services that operated with zero-tolerance policies and may have simply assumed Emmaus

[27] Repeated drug and alcohol use and/or supplying other Companions with drugs or alcohol would however lead to a Companion being evicted.

worked on the same basis, but it is not possible to be certain if this was where the false image of Emmaus Communities as 'zero tolerance' environments came from.

> *I was never offered the opportunity to go to Emmaus. But if I was offered the opportunity I probably wouldn't have gone. What suits some people does not suit other people. And I would not have gone purely because I did not think I was ready to stop drinking and they've got a philosophy of zero tolerance, which is fair enough. All I wanted was a roof over my head, and I didn't want to stop and I wasn't going to stop.* Homeless Person.

Drugs and alcohol

A very small number of homeless people spoke openly about problematic drinking and illegal drug use and said that they would not be able to stop. This acted as a barrier to Emmaus Communities for this group, who would only attend low threshold and 'wet' services that allowed them to drink alcohol continuously if they wished to do so. No homelessness service based on a fixed site would tolerate use of illegal drugs on its premises, but homeless people who had problematic drug use could leave the sites of these services to take drugs. One respondent who had stayed in an Emmaus Community briefly as a Companion and had, eventually, been evicted for sustained heroin use regarded the challenges they faced in overcoming their addiction as a significant barrier to re-joining a Community.

Concerns about living in a Community

Two aspects of living communally were disincentives to joining Emmaus for some homeless people. The first was that a Community was seen as an environment in which too many expectations and formal and informal rules would be placed on an individual. A few homeless people talked about a feeling that becoming a Companion would mean accepting a level of control over their lives that they did not want to have. It was not necessarily the case that these homeless people thought Emmaus Communities would be highly regulated places in which to live, instead it was a resistance to living in any environment in which specific expectations would be placed on them.

> *...yeah I don't know whether it would be my thing. I mean the whole kind of twenty odd people working together, I'd probably struggle with a bit. I think I'm more freer than that in all fairness. The whole structure of it and that. I mean I can see the good, I can see both sides of it, but I'd probably resist, want to go my own way.* Homeless Person.

> *I like to have control...I don't think a controlled environment would suit me much. I find it too intense probably...I need to find work and go into a house*

share, probably. Emmaus sounds a good idea, but don't I think for me, I'd find it too controlling. Homeless Person.

The idea of living and working in a Community, even in a context where their own rooms were available to them, did not appeal to some homeless people. Here the issues could range from not feeling comfortable in groups of people through to a concern that it would be difficult to live alongside people with whom one did not get along and hard to get away from arguments. There were also some concerns about what was seen as the potential for bullying to occur in a communal living situation, even in a situation where a community was subject to rules and regulations about mistreatment of other people.

It's easy to fall out with people if you live with them though, that's one of the problems with community living...sometimes it can go on for days, disagreements, and it just ruins everything. Homeless Person.

In reality, I kind of think, although everybody is supposed to respect each other, it's so easy to kind of pick up on what people actually feel. And it does not have to be spoken, and people get away with a lot that way. On the surface it sounds ideal, but I know it does not work that way, and I know the stress would be too much for me...it can be subtle it can be so subtle, it would not be anything you would be able to complain about. Homeless Person.

Again, some of these concerns were not based on knowing what living in a Community was actually like, they were instead based on presumptions about human nature, about how a Community would operate and on personal experience. In other cases, concerns centred on homeless people's dislike of having expectations placed upon them or a disinclination towards sharing their home with others.

Other potential barriers

Few other barriers to approaching Emmaus were mentioned by the homeless people who took part in the research. For a small number of individuals there were concerns that their limiting illnesses or disabilities would mean that they could only do a limited amount of work in a Community and they wondered whether they would be able to make a sufficient contribution to be considered as a potential Companion.

I don't know about now, because I have a chronic illness, it all depends on what sort of work you're supposed to do. Homeless Person.

Signing off all benefits other than Housing Benefit did not appear to be a deterrent to joining a Community for most of the homeless people. However, as levels of knowledge of Emmaus were low, i.e. they were unaware that joining a Community meant no longer claiming benefits, most of the homeless people had listened to a brief explanation of how

Emmaus operated at the point they were asked about signing off benefits. The homeless people therefore knew that £40 or so they received for a week's volunteer work was in addition to their being provided with accommodation for which all costs were met and with food. Only a very few homeless people had any concerns about signing off most benefits and those were people who received relatively higher payments because they had a long term limiting illness or disability.

4 Living as a Companion

Introduction

This chapter looks at the experience of being a Companion and the day to day life in Emmaus Communities. The focus is on understanding what factors are important to someone living successfully as a Companion and whether there are important lessons for understanding the new directions in which Emmaus might grow. The chapter begins with briefly exploring the routes by which Companions moved into their Community, discusses their views on what was significant to bear in mind when living as a Companion and then looks at questions surrounding the balance between support and social enterprise that are inherent to the Emmaus approach.

The research adopted the approach of talking to established Companions who had been part of Communities for some time and those who had been Companions for three months or less. The intention was to explore whether some people were more likely to want and need more sustained stays in a Community as a Companion and why some people sometimes found it difficult to remain in a Community for long periods or were simply ready to move on after a fairly short period of time.

Pathways to Emmaus

Learning about Emmaus

The Companions often reported that they had little or no knowledge about Emmaus prior to approaching or being referred to a Community. The process of becoming a Companion could be dependent on luck and chance and the referral routes were often not very formal. Word of mouth was important. Many Companions had heard about Emmaus because someone they met had told them about it and, liking what they heard, the Companion had sought more information. Sometimes the source of the original information was another homeless person, sometimes it was a passerby who knew about Emmaus because they were a customer of the local Emmaus shop.

> *I hadn't actually heard about Emmaus. I was sleeping rough over a park, about six, seven months, but there was a local woman who walked her dog pretty much every day. Always said Hello. One day she stopped and chatted to me properly and recommended Emmaus and I've not looked back since. I still see her when she comes into the shop.* Companion.

> *I was sleeping rough in Hyde Park and a Police officer referred me to a daycentre and the daycentre made the referral to Emmaus.* Companion.

I heard about it 'cos I've got a mate who lives here. Companion.

I first found out about Emmaus because I was a customer of theirs, used to have a look around the shop, found out what they were about. Companion.

The other main route by which Companions had heard about Emmaus was through mainstream services that had referral arrangements with one or more Emmaus Communities. When Companions had come through this route, the transition from the homelessness service to Emmaus had quite often been a very rapid one. Several Companions talked about being referred to Emmaus by a mainstream homelessness service, being interviewed by someone from the local Community (or over the telephone when the Community was some distance away) and moving in a day or two after they first heard about Emmaus. Referrals from Probation and/or support services for people leaving prison were also a fairly common route through which Companions had been referred to Emmaus.

Self referral to an Emmaus Community appeared to be unusual, but it was not unheard of. A few Companions had actively looked for assistance when they became homeless, had found out about Emmaus for themselves and approached a Community for help.

I found myself homeless, I found it on the Internet, thinking where am I going to sleep tonight, and then I found it on the Internet. Sent an email to [community leader] *and it went from there.* Companion.

The attractions of Emmaus

As noted above, there were some Companions who had been very quickly accepted by a Community within a day or two of first hearing about Emmaus. This group had relatively little time to think, as although the requirements and advantages of living in a Community had been explained to them as a part of their Communities assessment processes, they had moved in more or less straight away.

For those Companions for whom the process of moving into a Community had taken slightly longer a number of factors had been attractive. In no particular order, the most frequently mentioned attractors were:

- The comprehensiveness of support and services offered.
- Quality of the accommodation and environment.
- A situation in which there was shared understanding from people who had similar experiences.
- The chance to do volunteer work.
- The Emmaus ethos.

For some Companions the range of support and facilities on offer in their Community were extensive. There were few aspects of their lives and needs, from their perspective, that the Community did not support. What was included in the 'package' that Emmaus offered included accommodation, food, social activity, support from onsite staffing, private rooms, amenities and volunteer work. Compared to many mainstream services for homeless people, the Emmaus Communities were quite often perceived as offering a lot more activity, support and facilities.

> *Yeah there's a load of positive aspects. Clean, tidy, you don't have to pay bills, virtually everything is free, you have no responsibilities in that respect...you meet nice people.* Companion.

> *The whole fact of being able to work and have your own money and having somewhere to stay, all in the same place.* Companion.

> *It's like they are paying me rent, me gas, me council tax and they take it out for me and then give what is left…which I thought was pretty good.* Companion.

Shared understanding and an environment that was not judgemental was important to why some Companions had wanted to move into a Community. Some felt that Emmaus would not regard them in a negative way, something that was important because they could view the wider environment (and some homelessness services) as having an unfriendly or even hostile attitude towards homeless people.

> *The fact that there was staff to support you, the other Companions, people in the same boat as yourself, they've all been there and done that. The fact that it was not a hostel, I've been in hostels and I don't like it. It's a bit different it did not seem like a homeless hostel.* Companion.

The opportunity to do volunteer work was also something that had attracted several Companions to Emmaus. The work was attractive for several reasons, including a need for structured activity – any structured activity – during the day, a wish to build up work experience that might lead to paid employment and, in a few cases, the sense of being in a Community to which one was contributing.

> *To read through both the referral criteria and then the conditions of living here, the rules and regulations, I thought 'Blimey, this is pretty much you know what a working community should be. You get your bit of pocket money, you do your five days a week, you have your own room.'* Companion.

> *I thought, it sounds a good idea, because I mean* [local homeless hostel]*…it's not the same structure as it is here. Here, you don't just get your benefits and*

then bum about all day, going in the library, drinking, smoking, here you've got a structured routine…they find something for you do every day. Companion.

That I'd be working and it would be keeping my mind occupied basically. Companion.

I thought it would be a good idea for myself because it would give me a bit of structure which is something that I need. Companion.

I didn't want to just go to a nightshelter and sign on, get benefits, get a bottle of drink and get into drugs because it's too easy out there, so I thought of Emmaus, I knew about them. Companion.

The Emmaus ethos was attractive to Companions when they had been thinking about moving into Emmaus on two levels. First, when the ethos and operation of an Emmaus Community had first been explained to Companions, the prospect of living in a Community sometimes became more attractive because it became apparent to them that this was a secular environment. Second, some Companions had been attracted to Emmaus because it appealed to their own core beliefs. A Companion might therefore have been attracted to Emmaus because they held socialist or social democratic political views or because they perceived in Emmaus something that they thought reflected their own (generally Christian) religious beliefs. This did not mean the Emmaus Communities saw themselves as 'Christian' or indeed as 'Socialist', as they were intended to be both secular and apolitical in operation, but the Communities sometimes attracted *people* who had particular political and religious standpoints.

I've always been quite political and I thought it was more like a...society, rather than an institution or a charity as such. The ideas about working as a community, for the community, providing not just for ourselves but the outside community. Companion.

For other Companions, the secular nature of the Communities was attractive. This secularism was sometimes a surprise to Companions who valued being in an all-inclusive environment.

When I first heard about Emmaus I thought it was a Bible bashing place, but it turned out it wasn't. Companion.

You contribute to Solidarity and the well-being of others. But at the same your core beliefs and values are not impinged upon in any way. So this appealed to me immediately. Companion.

It did grab me. I made my mind up there and then that I wanted to join. Companion.

Rather than like a housing association where you're just a tenant in a room, you're supposed to mean something to them. Companion.

For a few Companions there had been little thought about what aspects of Emmaus may or may not have appealed to them prior to moving in. These individuals spoke frankly about being in a desperate situation and taking a referral to Emmaus because almost anything was likely to be better than what they were currently experiencing.

The situation I was in, anything was an improvement. I moved in on a Tuesday and nothing better than to see my own room, my own bed...it's brilliant, I like the place, I'll do anything they'd like me to do here. Companion.

There was no expectation that an Emmaus Community could tolerate illegal drug use and all the Companions had accepted that joining a Community meant that they could not use illegal drugs on site. The capacity of Emmaus Communities to support someone with drug rehabilitation, for example allowing Companions to be on a Methadone script, was important to a small number of Companions.

Doubts about joining Emmaus

The doubts that Companions reported about Emmaus before they moved in were often very similar to those expressed by some of the homeless people interviewed for this research. It is again important to note that considerable numbers of the Companions interviewed for this research had little or no information about Emmaus before they were referred to or approached a Community and that many entered Communities very quickly, giving them relatively little time to think before they were into the process of moving in.

A few Companions expressed what for them had been a concern that Emmaus was a highly religious organisation with a mission to convert people to Christianity. In all instances this concern was dispelled once they had more information about what Emmaus was.

Someone said to me it might be a religious thing, obviously the name was from the Bible, that was a bit of a turn-off, but then I spoke to them on the phone and realised it wasn't like that. Companion.

Concerns about strict rules governing alcohol consumption were an issue for a few Companions before moving in. These Companions wanted to be able to drink alcohol and go to a pub. The rule that allowed Companions to drink off site on the basis that they immediately went to their rooms when they returned to the Community was viewed positively by this group.

I was surprised by the leniency because you can go for a pint, as long as you don't bring alcohol into the house and when you get home you go straight to your room...I thought I'd be breathalysed and so on, there'd be a strict no tolerance to alcohol or drugs. So to find you could go to the pub on a Saturday night, I was surprised at the leniency there. It seems to work quite well. Companion.

A few Companions said they had had concerns about living communally. Here the concerns had again reflected those reported by some homeless people, i.e. that there would be the potential for disputes from which it was difficult to get away, that there would be restricted privacy and that there was the potential for bullying to occur in a group setting. Companions appeared to have been generally less apprehensive about living communally than was the case among the homeless people interviewed for this research (Chapter 3). One factor that may have been important in some cases was a reported familiarity with communal living, with a few Companions reporting histories that included being in the Army, prison and other communal settings.

Concerns about loss of benefits and having a restricted income were a cause of hesitancy among a small number of Companions. In practice however, Companions reported that they had quickly realised that many of their living costs were borne by the Community. Alongside the accommodation, the availability of food tended to be reported as a reason why they had thought it would be possible to manage on the allowance for their work for the Emmaus Community.

One other concern for some Companions had been a worry that an Emmaus Community would contain a high number of people presenting with the characteristics of chronically homeless people, i.e. problematic drug and alcohol use, severe mental illness and sometimes challenging and chaotic behaviour[28]. These concerns had tended to cease once they actually moved into a Community.

I was pleasantly surprised…this place was an eye-opener to me when I came in, I didn't expect anything like this, I thought it would be anti-social people…but it's nothing like that really it seems a very close knit community. Everyone gets on with everybody, everybody fits in, there's a system and a routine and it all runs like clockwork and it's a really nice place. Companion.

[28] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis; Kuhn, R. and Culhane, D.P. (1998) Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 2, pp. 207-232.

Life as a Companion

Benefits

> *It's lovely to see how people evolve over the weeks, you know. Some of them aren't interested in the work side of it, but that's one in fifty, I mean to see the others, their self esteem grow as they get more responsibility with different jobs...it gets people back on the level, ready to move on.* Companion.

Established Companions who had been part of a Community for at least several months tended to have generally very positive attitudes towards their Community and what it could offer. These Companions saw Emmaus as bolstering self confidence, developing social skills and the capacity to work with others and returning people, who had sometimes been socially marginalised and alienated, to a situation in which they could trust and form relationships with others. Considerable emphasis was placed on Emmaus as an environment that had positively transformed both the lives of the Companions who had been in the Community for some time and also as positively changing the lives of those around them.

> *It improves people's lives who come here. I've seen people come here who have been a mess when they arrive and who have got back on their feet and become stable again.* Companion.

The established Companions were people who had become convinced of the validity and effectiveness of the Emmaus approach and who had often become advocates of the Emmaus approach. It was not uncommon for established Companions to suggest that Emmaus should be more widely publicised or to recommend that the Emmaus model be expanded and extended.

> *I was out, almost for three months, sleeping rough, I mean my Mum and Dad had to come out and find me and was staying with them, but this place* [Emmaus] *has sorted me out well and truly. I used to be addicted on drugs, I got banned from football, I got quite a few charges against my name, got a suspended sentence...but this place has settled me down completely, I'm happy here, been a lesson to me this.* Companion.

Mutual support within the Community was seen as important by many established Companions and also by some more recently arrived Companions. The use of the word 'family' to describe the environment was quite common among this group of Companions. A sense of toleration, being cared about and supported was quite widely reported. Alongside being part of a Community, some established Companions also appreciated living in a situation in which they could exercise choice and control, i.e. the Community was there

and they were happy to contribute, but the Community did not place too many demands on them.

> *It feels like a family to me now. Feel like part of a big unit. We work together to make the community run, because if we didn't work together the community would not be here would it?* Companion.

> *If I want to sit down and have a laugh with some of the boys, they are there, but if you want some me time, you can just say 'see you tomorrow lads' and go for a walk or go to your room, you have your own personal space. It's the best of both worlds because we do a lot of activities together. Great camaraderie here.* Companion.

> *And it's also, in a way I suppose, it could turn out to be a stepping stone, now I'll try get back on my feet and get my life back in order, back on track, you know, now I've got a base to work from, a place that I can call home, because it does feel like a home, it feels like an extended family.* Companion.

> *Nothing put me off. People that was here before me, they made you at home they make you feel welcome, all happy, a happy atmosphere to be in.* Companion.

The sense of 'family' and Community was linked by some established Companions to the core idea of 'Solidarity' that underpinned the original development of the Emmaus Movement (see Chapter 2). Established Companions were quite often directly involved in Solidarity work within the surrounding area, supporting local charities through fund raising and also making direct contributions through volunteering. In one area, Companions had raised significant funding for a local hospital and were also providing direct support to homeless people using a local night-shelter. A number of the established Companions had taken part in international Solidarity work or were planning to do so.

> *I find that what the Movement* [Emmaus] *does has some meaning, has some relevance, I can see it serves a purpose, a social function as opposed to some of the work I had in the past.* Companion.

The quality of life within Emmaus Communities was generally praised, by both established Companions and those who had arrived more recently. The quality of the food was, almost without exception, regarded very positively and the accommodation that Companions had was also usually described as good.

> *My standard of living is actually quite good here…you know the lifestyle that I lead. There are plenty of positives.* Companion.

For some Companions the work was viewed very positively. The chance to work across several aspects of the core and other social enterprises/businesses in which their Community was involved was also seen as adding to experience that could be used to secure a job when they left a Community. Established Companions were, understandably, more likely to be in positions of relative trust and responsibility and many reported a sense of pride and achievement in being given this kind of role.

> *Being trusted with keys and bits of things like that, I mean being in charge of food…you do have quite a bit of responsibility… cooking for 40 people. Before I got here I had trouble cooking for myself.* Companion.

The opportunities to train and acquire new skills, ranging from PAT testing of donated electrical items through to catering, driving and furniture restoration, as well as the chance to engage with literacy and numeracy courses if they were needed, were almost always viewed positively. Alongside gathering direct work experience, both established and more recently arrived Companions tended to view the training as increasing their chances of securing work outside the Community.

Moving on from the Communities was something that established and other Companions tended to report was facilitated by their Community. One Community possessed a small number of move-on rental properties that allowed Companions to move out over two stages. Communities offered to furnish flats, drawing on their furniture stores, when Companions moved on. Established Companions generally valued the fact that they did not feel pressurised to move on from Emmaus until they were ready.

In a very small number of cases, Companions reported that they did not want to leave their Emmaus Community or to move only to other Communities, not to exit from the Emmaus Movement. These Companions also expressed a wish to eventually become a staff member in their Community or another Community. Several of the Communities visited for this research had staff members who had originally been Companions.

Negative aspects

Companions reported some negatives that could arise as a part of Community life. These issues were not reported by a majority of Companions and those individuals who saw life in a Community in more negative than positive terms were the exception.

There were concerns that sometimes Emmaus Communities took in people who were not well suited to living as a Companion. Sometimes difficulties in living and working alongside others in a Community were associated by Companions with younger men. In particular, some established Companions viewed young men as more likely to be disinclined to work, less likely to treat others with respect, to break the rules within a Community and be

dismissive of the Emmaus ethos. There could be concerns that the presence of a group of such 'young men' could cause disruption and undermine the cohesion of a Community.

> *I very often find that the younger ones are just not on our wavelength. I feel there's a generation gap, it's to do with work ethos.* Companion.

> *Some people just don't have the respect, you can learn that here, but some people don't have the respect…they just don't care. It's not the right environment for people like that, it's for people who want a new start in life, it's like a stepping stone to a better life.* Companion.

Established Companions could also sometimes find it difficult to deal with the number of people who were Companions for relatively short periods of time. Some Communities had a relatively small core of established Companions with the bulk of the Community being replaced by new Companions every few months. From their perspective, this could generate a sense of constant change that a few established Companions did not like, because aspects of the Community, the operation of Solidarity, had to be fairly continuously refreshed, or even rebuilt, to some degree.

For some Companions there could be a sense of inequity related to the relative level of responsibility that they had. Again, this could be an issue for some of the more established Companions who had often acquired positions of relative responsibility compared to those around them. In addition, both established and more recently arrived Companions could occasionally feel there was inequity in the amount of work they were asked to do compared to some of the others. In most cases, the Communities gave a flat rate allowance to all Companions and, while Companions were working as volunteers, what was seen by some Companions as an absence of financial recompense for harder work or more responsibility was occasionally raised as an issue. A few Companions also thought that there should be more intervention by staff when someone was not contributing as much to their work as they were capable of doing.

> *I suppose I was very idealistic.* [Staff] *can be too indulgent with the group, people use illness as an excuse, but I don't know that it's always real illness...people for want of a better word, freeload, there are those who carry more weight, you do get animosity, resentment.* Companion.

From the perspective of a few of the more recently arrived Companions, established Companions who had been present in the Community for some time could sometimes seem distant. There was occasionally a sense of being 'looked down on' by more established Companions, though this was not very widely reported. A few Companions, including some established Companions, reported finding the Community alien and hard to adjust to at first.

When I first came it was a bit of a culture shock and as I say I've been here three and a half years. Companion.

Most of the Companions reported at least some tensions arising from living and working together in a group. For many, this was simply natural, a function of what people behaved like when they were in close proximity to one another for long periods of time. The creation and maintenance of cliques within Communities was widely reported, though again this was often regarded as something that would naturally occur when a group of human beings spent time together. In many cases, the behaviour of others was no more than an occasional irritant and not something that was a major concern. These Companions generally presented their situation as getting on better with some people than others and avoiding the individuals they were less compatible with.

*There's a couple of *****. But if I weren't here and was somewhere else there would still be *****. There always are. And anyway you just cope. There are no real negatives.* Companion.

For a *minority* of Companions living in a group was a source of tension. These Companions were usually individuals who felt separated out from the main body of people living in a Community. These Companions reported disputes, insults and animosity in their Communities that, even if they were not the target of any bullying, gave them a sense of unease and made them feel isolated. From the perspective of a few Companions, a collective attempt to try to respect the rules and treat others with respect meant that some tensions were not vocalised or resolved, i.e. in a few instances Companions did not enter into a shouting match or fight, but instead kept feelings of hostility or resentment under the surface. This could create an atmosphere of tension.

To put it bluntly sometimes it's like kids in a playground…they chit chat, back stab and bitch…Everybody keeps this mutual harmony but there's a lot of stuff in the back of their heads that they want to say but daren't. Companion.

People. In general, that's the thing, because I've got a lot of experience, I know what people are like, they get cliquey, they can get greedy, they can get spiteful, they can be aggressive and violent, selfish, self-indulgent. Companion.

Perspectives on the same Community could vary widely. What was a 'family' for one Companion and a supportive and friendly environment for several others might be a difficult, cliquey and unpleasant environment for another. One factor to bear in mind when considering these findings was that Emmaus could be working with people who had experienced or were being treated for mental health problems. Both the rare perceptions of Communities as 'hostile' places, and perhaps, the occasional belief that a Community and all its members were flawless in their behaviour and pursuit of Solidarity might have

been influenced to some degree by Companions' past experiences and current mental well-being.

Boredom and loneliness were not widely reported by Companions, but some drew attention to the relative absence of women from their Communities. These Companions tended to talk about the lack of female company, both in the sense of the Community being a less interesting place when it was just composed of men and in a few instances regarded the presence of women as a 'civilising' influence that generally improved standards of behaviour among men.

> *I was surprised how few females were in here…I was asking around some of the Companions who have been here longer than me, how come there's more male than females, it's sort of one sided…they said that females are classed as more vulnerable than males…I think it's nice to have a female's opinions and views, interaction, it's all males here now, it's all lads' talk, it's all male orientated…Males all tend to say the same thing, do the same thing.* Companion.

> *Here, I've seen females come and it's very good if you can have mixed because it changes the diversity of the Community…it's nice.* Companion.

Only a very small number of women Companions were interviewed for this research. Those who took part tended to remark on the gender imbalance in their Communities and to say that it had initially been disconcerting, but that they had adapted to living with a large group of men.

Communities from the staff perspective

Strengths of Emmaus Communities

The perceptions of staff were not widely divergent from those of Companions. The staff saw the same positives and gains from being part of a Community as many Companions. The staff also reported some perceptions of where problems could exist in a Community that were again shared with some Companions.

Like many Companions and particularly established Companions, the staff often saw Emmaus as offering places of positive change for those who joined the Communities. Staff often reported that one of the most rewarding aspects of working for Emmaus was watching the progress that could be made by Companions.

> *The part of the job that I enjoy the most is probably the connection with the Companions and to see them evolve, to see how they come here and how they change in such a short period of time.* Staff Member.

To see somebody's journey, from being potentially morose, angry, guarded and then over time learning to trust in humans again...and to contribute, and to get debt-free and to rekindle relationships. Staff Member.

The big satisfaction for me is to watch people come in, absolutely unable to do anything for themselves, whether through mental health, drug addiction, alcohol addiction and then six months down the line, seeing that person taking driving lessons, passing their driving test, getting qualifications, learning to cook, cooking a meal for 40 people, you know just seeing people better their lives. Staff Member.

After a couple of months you see a major difference. People are more confident and they can sort out their problems and they are not scared to ask for some help. They know they can rely on us and that they can ask for help. Staff Member.

Staff were also likely to talk about how the Emmaus ethos had both attracted them to working in a Community and was also a rewarding aspect of their work. The focus on community, on Solidarity and on productive, structured and mutually supportive living was important to these staff members.

I think really it was the unique ethos, having worked for day centres, night shelters, direct access shelters and in social work, it tended to be quite targeted orientated...you were expected to move on. The fact that with Emmaus it could be a stepping stone, you could be there a few weeks, a few months or even make a lifestyle choice and stay several years, that was very attractive. Also the fact that there was a purpose, in that they had to contribute to the best of their ability and work in the social enterprise and think gave back structure, gave back normality in terms of working skills. And having worked in daycentres and hostels where people were still signing on for JSA[29]*, they got into a cycle of boredom really, and would just repeat the same destructive patterns, whereas I saw Emmaus as a unique model, because of the work, the philosophy and the solidarity and the fact that we work with those who suffer most. And also the holistic approach that we had to people's rehabilitation.* Staff Member.

The other thing that drew me to Emmaus was that people weren't going to be sitting about all day, on benefits, getting into all kinds of things. The fact the Companions actually get up, go to work, and are actually doing something productive as well. Also the whole Solidarity side, the fact that the Companions

[29] Job Seekers Allowance.

actually go out and help the less fortunate, you know our guys are volunteering at the night-shelter, at the daycentre, we do various fundraising things as well. So it's not all about them, whereas a lot of the people I've worked with in the past it's all about them and what can they get, with Emmaus it's a lot more focused on what Companions can give other people. Staff Member.

The holistic nature of what was offered by Emmaus, something that was mentioned by Companions as an incentive to becoming a Companion, was also viewed positively by staff. They saw Emmaus as offering something both unique in ethos and which was also comprehensive.

It's a one stop solution. You've got multiple needs if you're street homeless and we can take care of all of those needs almost instantly when someone walks in the door. Staff Member.

The suitability of Emmaus for different groups of homeless people

Acceptance of the Emmaus ethos

The staff tended to report that some people took more readily and easily to the role of a Companion than others and that, in some cases, people found it difficult to adjust to the ethos of Community life. The Communities all employed an assessment process, a key element of which was to explain the operation of the Community and the expected role of a Companion within that Community. Alongside ensuring that people knew what they were taking on, it was in each Community's interest to not offer places to people who were unwilling to adopt the Emmaus ethos.

A difficulty for Communities could be when the assessment process had to be relatively rapid, for example because someone was on the street at the point they sought help, or when assessments had to be conducted by telephone. All the Communities took people from outside their immediate area and several took people from some distance away, necessitating the use of telephone assessments. When assessment had to be rapid because someone needed help straight away or was conducted at a distance there was little opportunity for either the new Companion or the Community to assess how well things were likely to work. By contrast, when someone local was seeking a place as a Companion and did not require immediate accommodation, that person could opt or be asked to volunteer at Emmaus, allowing both the person and the Community to see how well things were likely to work.

The staff reported some concerns about the management of young people in Communities. While staff members generally thought that young people could be brought into the Community, two issues were reported. First, young people could be harder work for the Community and for staff to bring on board as they were sometimes seen as more likely, at

least initially, to reject and dispute the Emmaus ethos. Various explanations were advanced for this, including young people being abusive and disrespectful of others, i.e. 'acting up', because they were inherently insecure and some young people simply being unused to any sort of structure in their lives and entirely unfamiliar with working life. The issues with 'young people' were however seen largely in terms of teenagers and those in their early twenties: someone who was twenty-five was less likely to be viewed as potentially problematic.

> *A lot of the older guys that we get are much more up for the ethos, the Solidarity, a lot of the younger ones just come because they need somewhere to live. And when you talk to them about how it all came about, 1949, Solidarity, they sort of glaze over a bit, I think a lot of young people just fall into Emmaus just because they are homeless.* Staff Member.

> *I think those who used to work before, who know what is required in the workplace, and can commit themselves. We have noticed that from certain agencies we have very good Companions coming in, because they refer to us the right kind of people. But I am not sure whether this is a good place for very young Companions, because I think they need something different, here there is not much 'fun', if you know what I mean, not much playing, it's a serious environment, because they are not very mature they don't necessarily appreciate the place that much.* Staff Member.

Second, young people were seen as potentially problematic if they were present in large numbers. If there were several young people together at once, particularly if they were all young men, there was the potential for them to set off and exacerbate poor behaviour in one another. From the perspective of some staff, a Community could handle a certain number of young people, but as they at least initially took more resources to manage, both in terms of the time needed from staff and the time needed from more established Companions, a Community could not take on too many at once. Again, what was meant by 'young people' tended to only mean teenagers and those in their early twenties. Several staff members thought that exposure to older, more mature Companions could help bring about positive changes in young people.

> *It's about balance. I mean if you've got a Community of complete youngsters it can be, well, quite dangerous. So what we try to do here is have a balance between older people and younger guys, experienced and new Companions as well, experienced Companions to offer advice, show things to the new guys.* Staff Member.

Some people were also thought to find the more communal aspects of living and working in a Community more of a strain than others. Staff sometimes described this group in terms of

people who were 'loners' and less happy working with others. This was less of an issue from the perspective of staff than the issues that could arise with the management of young people, as 'loners' could often be found a role that suited them.

> *We have some Companions who are not always happy working with others. So we try to find them things to do, at least a few times a week, that they are happy about doing and they can be in charge of their work. So we have one Companion who might be very happy doing all the gardening, but they might be less happy in the shop where they have to interact with others. It depends on personality.* Staff Member.

There could also simply be a lack of fit between life in a Community and what some individuals wanted or were comfortable with. Some individuals did not present a Community with any management problems but were just not comfortable with life in the Community and left of their own accord.

> *Quite often after a period of say two months, you have Companions who decide 'no, this is not the place for me'...fair enough we don't force anyone to stay, we are trying to create a community.* Staff Member.

> *We've got a lad that's with us at the moment and it just does not suit him living in a shared house, he can't handle having to interact with all these people, he doesn't want to do shop work, he wants to be a support worker. Then we've got other guys who've come and it really suits them, you know, they love the work and they love being part of Emmaus and are proud to bear the logo. And you get Companions who are really up for the Solidarity, you get others that don't want to do it, just want to do their work and go home.* Staff Member.

Chronic homelessness

Chronic homelessness describes those homeless people who have high support needs, characteristics and behaviours that are associated with repeated contact with services that have failed to resolve their homelessness. This group includes people presenting with both severe mental illness and problematic alcohol and/or drug use, chaotic and challenging behaviour and quite often with some history of anti-social and criminal behaviour. Robust evidence on this group of homeless people is largely confined to the USA, but there is some research indicating it is also present in the UK and in France[30]. The research base strongly

[30] Poulin, S.R. *et al* (2010) 'Service Use and Costs for Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness in Philadelphia: A Population-Based Study' Psychiatric Services 61,11, pp.1093-1098; Fitzpatrick, S. et al (2011) 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections' *Social Policy and Society*, 10, pp. 501-512; Brousse, C. (2009) 'Becoming and remaining homeless: a breakdown of social ties or difficulties

indicates that only a *small number* of the total population of homeless people at any one point in time are actually within the chronically homeless group[31].

The staff reported that it was difficult for Communities to incorporate chronically homeless people because of the issues that could arise in managing them. It was entirely possible and practical for an Emmaus Community to engage with someone who was a recovering drug addict and all the Communities visited for this research were currently, or had at some point, supported people on Methadone scripts to manage heroin addiction. Similarly, the Communities incorporated people who had been involved in problematic drinking and also had Companions who were recovering from mental health problems and severe mental illness. High support needs in themselves were not necessarily an issue for an Emmaus Community, but it was difficult to have chronically homeless Companions who were characterised by behaviours that meant a range of services had failed to engage with them successfully. Emmaus Communities could not, from the staff perspective, manage individuals who represented serious risks to themselves or those around them, who would be so disruptive that a point was reached where they jeopardised the functionality of the Community or who would, in the end, simply not cooperate or participate.

> *It might be a bit destabilising. We can't take on people that might disrupt others. We're very wary about taking people with challenging mental health needs. We don't want to make a rod for our own back.* Staff Member.

> *It's a shame really because I know there are people out there with needs that I know we can't meet. We have to realistically say to ourselves that we won't be able to either.* Staff Member.

> *Yeah definitely, we have to be realistic inasmuch as we are not a direct access shelter or a hostel, we cannot potentially manage very chaotic behaviours...we'd probably struggle with violent behaviours. We've found that when people are at the point of coming into Emmaus they've done all that, they've done the street scene, they've done the hostel and the daycentre, they've actually got to a point in their lives where they see this as a last chance saloon really, and so we also have to be realistic about the skill set we have as a staff team.* Staff Member.

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accessing housing?' in F2009/06 *Economie et Statistique: Special Issue on the Homeless* (English Version) INSEE: Paris, pp. 43-78.

[31] Pleace *et al* (2008) *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds* London: CLG; Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis.

As was sometimes thought to be the case with some young people, there could from the perspective of some members of staff be a 'tipping point' at which the Community started to struggle with managing the number of Companions with high support needs. It might be possible to include one or two chronically homeless people within a Community, but if numbers went beyond a certain point, things could become more difficult to manage.

> *The two most serious periods of instability that I can remember here in the last ten years have been when we've had a core of heavy disruptive drinkers and it can colour the whole Community.* Staff Member.

Women

For most members of staff there was nothing inherent in the operation of an Emmaus Community that made it less attractive or suitable for female Companions. The reason for low numbers of women relative to men was thought by some to be closely linked to the relative levels of service provision and the focus of the statutory homelessness system, particularly for women who had children with them[32]. From this perspective, Emmaus worked with relatively few women because women at risk of homelessness were picked up by other services and systems and did not tend to experience sleeping rough or stays in emergency accommodation at the same rate as lone homeless men.

> *There are better services for women. They have access to statutory system if have children and there are also DV[33] services for women at risk of violence. Men will go to bottom of the pile if they have no dependents. Women just don't get referred at the same rate. Most of our referrals of women are from prison, bail hostels and outreach services for people sleeping rough.* Staff Member.

Staff generally thought that increasing representation of women among Companions would be beneficial. As was the case with some Companions who were interviewed, women were generally thought to be a stabilising influence in a Community, although it was also acknowledged there could be tensions when one or more male Companions sought to establish a relationship with a female Companion.

> *I actively try and get women on the waiting list…I think there's a lot more that could be done but women don't apply unfortunately. I wish they would because*

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[32] Pleace *et al* (2008) *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds* London: CLG

[33] Domestic Violence, see: Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Meeting the Needs of Households at Risk of Domestic Violence in England: The Role of Accommodation and Housing Related Support Services* London: CLG.

they would certainly have a humanising effect on the Community… If a woman applied now I wouldn't even mention the fact that there's a waiting list, she'll be next it's as simple as that. I just think it's nice to have that mix quite frankly.
Staff Member.

Balancing the roles of Emmaus Communities

Staff reported that Communities had to reconcile their role as supportive communities with the effective operation of the social enterprises and businesses on which each Community depended. This set some limits to the range of people who become Companions from the perspective of staff. It was difficult for a Community to have someone as a Companion who was unable to do any of the work on offer. The Communities could cope with a wide range of capabilities because they had different kinds of work on offer. Younger and stronger Companions could drive the vans, collect furniture and make deliveries, work in the café when the Community possessed one and/or be responsible for feeding the other Companions. Less physically strong Companions could work on the shop floor and those with limited mobility might be given roles like PAT testing of donated electrical items. However, it could be difficult for a Community to afford to physically adapt their accommodation and workplaces for some groups of disabled people, such as wheelchair users or someone with severe learning difficulties.

More generally, the needs of the businesses or social enterprises, while they did not in any sense dominate the assessment process, could set the context in which assessments were undertaken. A Community could sometimes find itself really needing one or more people with shop floor experience, drivers with a clean licence or people with another set of skills such as catering experience.

It's a very difficult balance between being financially buoyant so you can have the revenue stream to pay for the house, but then also ensuring that your focus does not become so heavily commercial that you forget the welfare side of what we're trying to achieve. And so it's delicate interplay. You sometimes get to the point where you'd like a driver, or you'd like somebody with a trade background, but also you do not want to engineer it so you are looking at the skill set and what the Companion is capable of, rather than giving someone an opportunity.
Staff Member.

If someone was not able to work, we would probably not accept that person, because it would mean we would have less hands to help us and we are trying to be self sufficient. We have to run the shop, we need Companions to help us. But there are two situations, we could have a potential Companion who is disabled, or we could have an existing Companion who becomes disabled. In the latter case we would try to help them and accommodate them in the

Community...we would try to give them just light duties, there is always something to do, you don't have to work very hard, you have to work to the best of your ability. Staff Member.

5 New Growth for Emmaus

Introduction

This final chapter discusses the possible future directions of growth for Emmaus in the UK, drawing on the research results presented in the preceding chapters. The chapter begins by discussing the successes of Emmaus and the case for continuing to follow the existing Emmaus model. The following section looks at the possible modifications that might be contemplated that would add services and activities to the existing Emmaus Community model while retaining it as the core activity of Emmaus. The final section looks at the extent to which Emmaus might move into new forms of activity.

The case for keeping on the existing path

Emmaus has a particular ethos and approach to tackling homelessness through the use of self supporting Communities that promote Solidarity. This research has had a specific focus on looking at whether the existing scope and operations of these Communities might be modified or changed to enable Emmaus to diversify what it provides and enables; it was not a robust evaluation of how well existing Communities work. The research did not incorporate the longitudinal evaluation that would be necessary to determine the *rate* at which the Communities were successful nor how *sustained* the exits from homelessness were, particularly in relation to what happened to former Companions after they left a Community. Against this, the research found obvious contentment among many Companions, the belief among staff that their Communities were effective and anecdotal evidence of successful and sustained exits from homelessness resulting from becoming an Emmaus Companion.

Every existing Community that the research team visited was in a position where it was running a waiting list. Demand for places as a Companion in a Community was high. This finding needs to be treated with some degree of caution, as Emmaus Communities were operating in a situation in which mainstream homelessness services were already beginning to contract as funding cuts took effect upon them. Some of the homeless people seeking to become Companions may have just been seeking *any* help they could get, rather than being specifically interested in Emmaus. Nevertheless, demand to become an Emmaus Companion was high: homeless people needed and wanted the support that Emmaus could offer.

The fieldwork showed that promoting greater awareness of what exactly Emmaus could offer could attract *more* homeless people to seek to become Companions. While some homeless people did not want to become Companions and some of those who did become Companions found it did not suit them, there was evidence of a substantial group of homeless people who were actively interested in living in a Community that offered them

support, structured activity and work. The prospect of being in a living situation in which there were people who had had the same experiences and in which they would be treated with respect and tolerance also appealed to some homeless people. Once they became Companions, some formerly homeless people became fully engaged with the Emmaus ethos to the extent that they felt a loyalty to Emmaus and wanted to remain part of it, for example in expressing a wish to become members of staff.

All the Emmaus Communities in the UK are all secular and so too is the Emmaus UK Federation. However, the research found quite a widespread impression among homeless people without any direct experience of Emmaus that the Communities were very religious places that tried to 'convert' people to Christianity. While this was not correct, the false impression of Emmaus as being 'Christian' was actually acting as a deterrent to some homeless people approaching Emmaus Communities. A greater emphasis on ensuring people know that Emmaus is secular might attract those homeless people who do not want to approach or use services that actively promote Christianity.

A second 'myth' about the nature of Emmaus Communities existed among some homeless people without direct experience of Emmaus. This was that "eviction" would result from a "zero tolerance" drug and alcohol policy. As noted, Emmaus Communities could ask people to leave, but did not tend to "evict" anyone, sometimes allowing former Companions who had been asked to leave multiple chances to rejoin a Community. An incident of drug and alcohol use might bring an offer of support rather than an immediate requirement that someone leave a Community. Making this clear while being careful not to suggest that Emmaus is entirely tolerant of drug and alcohol use will require quite careful explanation, but again, it may attract more potential Companions who might benefit from the support Emmaus can offer.

Although the Communities do draw on Housing Benefit as a funding stream, they are heavily reliant on their businesses and social enterprises to support themselves. This gives Emmaus the potential to expand in a context where mainstream homelessness services, often highly dependent on contracts and grants from local authorities, national and central government are constricting. Emmaus can to some extent 'step in' to address the gaps that may be left as the mainstream homelessness service sector continues to decrease, a process that looks set to continue for years[34].

[34] In March 2011, based on returns from 500 homelessness services, Homeless Link reported that one quarter of services said they would be able to support fewer homeless people in 2011/12 and that there would be a reduction in emergency accommodation and hostel beds of 16%. While some local authorities had only cut expenditure on homelessness services marginally, in a few extreme cases cuts of up to 45% had been made. Source: Homeless Link

http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/Homeless_Link_Counting_the_Cost_of_Cuts_final.pdf

Emmaus has another quality that is important in the current context. This is the emphasis on *economic* as well as social reintegration among Companions. In providing access to volunteer work, work experience and training, Emmaus Communities are in line with current policy developments in the UK. Under the previous Labour administrations there was an increasing emphasis on tackling homelessness through tackling exclusion from the labour market. Solutions to homelessness that did not include work and work related activities were increasingly viewed as undesirable because there was limited benefit to homeless people or to wider society. A formerly homeless person living in social rented or private rented sector accommodation, who is isolated, has nothing to do and depends on benefit was not viewed as in an ideal living situation[35]. The focus on work and work related activity as a solution to homelessness has become even stronger under the current Coalition Government. The policy context is now one in which modification of the entire welfare benefit system is planned to improve sustainable access to work. A core part of what Emmaus does is broadly in line with current homelessness policy objectives in England, because it provides work experience, qualifications and training[36].

In summary, Emmaus Communities offer a model for which there is some evidence of effectiveness, for which there seems to be both an existing demand and quite possibly a *wider* potential demand. Emmaus also has the potential to expand in a context in which other forms of support for homeless people are often being significantly reduced and its objectives, in relation to work and work related activity, are broadly in line with current policy objectives.

Retaining the current focus and expanding the number of Communities using the existing operational model could then be a logical direction for Emmaus. Drawing on the research evidence presented in this report, retaining the current approach would have some implications:

- It will need to be acknowledged that there are some homeless people for whom Emmaus will not be a realistic option. This includes chronically homeless people who are characterised by repeated service engagement failures, severe mental illness and problematic drug and alcohol use and people who are unable to undertake any of the range of work offered by a Community. There may sometimes need to be careful consideration of the number of young people that any single Community should have as Companions. These issues should *not* however be regarded as necessarily being an

[35] Pleace, N and Bretherton, J. (2006) *Sharing and matching local and national data on adults of working age facing multiple barriers to employment* London : DWP

[36] Wilson, W. (2011) *Homelessness in England - Commons Library Standard Note SN01164* http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01164

operational problem or limitation for Emmaus Communities: there is growing research evidence from around the World and within the UK that chronically homeless people are a *small* group within a much larger homeless population[37]. Most homeless people, including most lone adults, will *not* have support needs, sets of behaviours and characteristics that prohibit their living successfully as a Companion.

- Emmaus will suit some individuals more than others. Improvement of information dissemination across the Emmaus Movement is necessary if the existing model is to be retained. The fieldwork suggests that better information dissemination would attract more homeless people with an interest in volunteer work and the Emmaus ethos, potentially increasing access to Emmaus to people who could gain from being a Companion. Equally, improvement of information dissemination might also effectively deter some people who would not wish to become a Companion.
- It will need to be acknowledged that changing the gender balance of Companions may be quite difficult. This research suggests that there are relatively low numbers of women in Emmaus Communities because there are relatively low numbers of women in the lone adult homeless population. Other research has long suggested this pattern and the explanation is thought to be more extensive provision of mainstream services for women with children and women who have become homeless due to domestic violence[38]. It may not be a question of making Emmaus 'attractive' to women who are homeless to address the issue of gender balance. However, mainstream service provision for homeless women and children and for women at risk of service provision is very likely to be subject to extensive funding cuts: this may mean that more women join the lone adult homeless population and seek help from Emmaus.
- Some Communities are operating in very different economic contexts. For example the Community in Preston was operating in a context where the population living around it was disproportionately poor, whereas the population living around the Cambridge Emmaus was relatively affluent. The local authority of Preston District is the 41st *most* deprived authority in the England; by contrast Cambridge ranked 188th on the same list[39]. Cambridge's furniture shop had a generally much more affluent customer base, a greater footfall of customers and received relatively good quality donations compared to Preston. The business model, scale and operation of future Communities may need to allow for the economic context in the area in which they are situated.

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[37] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis.

[38] As above footnote.

[39] The least deprived authority in England (ranked 326th) is Hart District, the most deprived is the London Borough of Hackney (ranked 1st), source: Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) *The English Indices of Deprivation 2010* London: DCLG.

Adding services

There is the potential to retain the core of the existing Emmaus model and add additional services. Staff identified move-on services that allowed Companions to manage the transition from the Community into independent housing as the main way in which the range of support provided by their Community could be improved. In Preston a small number of houses had been bequeathed to the Community and an arrangement was in place where letting some of these houses at full market rents helped subsidise a number of move-on places for former Companions. In some cases, staff envisaged the provision of housing on a temporary or permanent basis, in others it was thought that housing might receive some element of floating support from the Community, to ensure that former Companions had access to help if they needed it. Staff raised questions about how the provision of move-on accommodation and any floating support services to facilitate resettlement would be funded.

The researchers discussed another possibility with staff, which was to increase the range or extent of support offered by Communities. Two models were suggested to staff:

- A 'stepped' model where someone with higher support needs was brought to a point where they were ready to become a Companion over time. It was possible to imagine this being used to bring people with higher support needs into the Community as Companions.
- Provision of additional support workers that enabled a Community to work with people with a wider range of needs than was currently the case.

Some staff took the view that these discussions of these possible extensions of the support provided by Emmaus Communities were founded on a misconception of the Communities. In relation to a 'stepped' model, staff reported that there was the scope to bring at least some people into the Community in stages. Local homeless people could volunteer at a Community first, getting familiar with what being a Companion was and getting themselves ready for joining the Community. Those who were not able to volunteer first, because of their circumstances, i.e. they were living rough or because they had been referred from some distance away, were also not 'rushed' into being a Companion. Allowances were made and support was provided to enable people to get used to being a Companion.

In terms of increasing the provision of on-site support more generally, staff took the view that Emmaus Communities were already working with groups that included people with severe mental illness, who were recovering from heroin addiction and who had other support needs. If someone was 'chronically homeless', chaotic and difficult to manage, there were the concerns that it could be disruptive to a Community to attempt to include that individual. More generally, staff questioned how additional support services would be funded without increasing the income stream for their Community.

New directions

Communities for specific groups

One possible option for Emmaus would be to develop Communities for specific groups. This might include:

- Communities for chronically homeless people
- Communities for women
- Communities for young people
- Communities for specific cultural and ethnic groups

These Communities would not be able to operate in quite the same way as an existing Emmaus Community. A Community for chronically homeless people would need to be resource intensive and might have to undertake a different core activity in terms of the social enterprise or business that supported it and it might be that such a Community would need to be cross subsidised in order to function. There is strong evidence from the New York Pathways Housing First programme that with the right combination of floating support and independent living chronically homeless people can live stable lives in settled housing and end what can be decades of homelessness. However, there is little evidence that even the most successful of interventions with chronically homeless people are able to engage the people using their services in structured activity, volunteering or work[40]. European service models that have successfully stabilised chronically homeless people in small communal living arrangements, such as the Danish 'Skaeve Huse' approach, have not sought to offer volunteer work or other structured activity or secure paid work for the people using them[41].

The extent to which the Emmaus model could be 'stretched' to work successfully with chronically homeless people may be questionable. As is discussed below, however, this does not necessarily mean Emmaus cannot increase its work with chronically homeless people.

Similarly, while there is the potential to develop Emmaus Communities for women some thought would need to be given to what these Communities would be seeking to achieve. Experience of violence and abuse are widespread among women who become homeless

[40] Tsemberis, S. (2010) *Housing First: The Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction* Hazelden: Minnesota

[41] Meert, H. (2005) *Preventing and Tackling Homelessness: Synthesis Report of the Peer Review of Social Inclusion Policies Meeting Denmark 2005* Brussels: European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

and a Community would have to take this into account both in terms of the range of support it provided and the activities that it undertook[42]. A supportive community that was just for homeless women would need to offer services related to domestic violence which would change the nature of what Emmaus was, for example there would be a need for the site to be physically secure and for its address not to be public if it were to engage with women who were homeless due to a risk of domestic violence. This is not entirely inconceivable, for example a Community could be structured around a web-based social enterprise model, but careful thought would be required to consider how such a Community might fit alongside mainstream service provision for homeless women.

A Community focused on young people would again need a distinct range of support services and though to a lesser extent than would be necessary when working with a chronically homeless population, would probably need to offer more intensive services than existing Emmaus Communities. The management of groups of young people, particularly groups of young men, would sometimes present specific challenges. Staff in the Emmaus Communities were also sometimes of the view that the exposure to older and more established Companions was a key factor in determining success in working with young people.

Finally there is the issue of whether Emmaus might consider Communities for specific cultural and ethnic groups. The role of Emmaus in helping homeless people from cultural and ethnic minorities was not something that this research was able to explore in any detail because the Communities only contained a very small number of Companions who were not White British and either Christian or of no specific religion. This was not necessarily indicative of any sort of limitation or failure in existing Emmaus Communities. While the rate at which some cultural and ethnic minorities experience homelessness is sometimes higher, the absolute numbers involved remain quite small, reflecting the low proportion of the UK population who are not of White European origin[43]. Two issues would need to be considered before starting a Community for a specific cultural group. First, whether there would be sufficient need for a Community for a specific group and second, how a focus on a particular cultural group would fit within the emphasis on a secular approach within Emmaus in the UK.

Something that is an issue related to ethnic and cultural difference is the provision of services to homeless people who have limited rights to benefits and services in the UK

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[42] Jones, A. (1999) *Out of Sight, out of Mind: The experiences of homeless women* London: Crisis; Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Meeting the Needs of Households at Risk of Domestic Violence in England: The Role of Accommodation and Housing Related Support Services* London: DCLG.

[43] Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010* London: Crisis.

because of their migration status. In particular, undocumented migrants might become homeless and be unable to access any form of State funded support (i.e. defined as having no recourse to public funds). The Emmaus Communities involved in this research could and had occasionally taken undocumented migrants as Companions, although the numbers involved were very small. The wider questions here are ultimately rather complex, balancing the extent to which the UK can be expected to deal with the needs of people who are not its citizens against a situation in which some migrants can end up sleeping rough and ineligible for most forms of assistance. Emmaus Communities cannot claim Housing Benefit for groups like undocumented migrants and this makes it more difficult to provide these groups with support.

Working in different ways

Radical changes are occurring in social and welfare policy under the current government. One of the potentially most significant is the shift towards volunteer and charity responses to social and economic need in British society. Emmaus Communities already make a contribution to the wellbeing of wider society through their Solidarity work, both within and outside the UK. There may be scope to expand some of this activity by extending the range and nature of the social enterprises and businesses that Emmaus is involved in to fund new forms of activity.

One possibility is to look towards the use of cross-subsidy within Emmaus or even contract agreements with local authorities to provide additional support for homeless people. A Community with a budget surplus, or which entered into agreements with other agencies, might for example provide or assist in providing a night-shelter facility in an area or support the provision of a floating support service. Alongside providing financial support, Companions might also be involved in volunteering to support these services or their role as a Companion might even centre on the support of others. Emmaus could contemplate using its own self-generated resources to move into new areas of support or it could work with others towards this end. It may be that the future for Emmaus does not necessarily lie on one path but several, as there are good reasons to continue using the existing model for Communities as well as considering how Emmaus might move in new directions.

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