

I first met David, a 90-year-old sheep farmer, when he came in to use our foodbank. It was immediately obvious to me that he was a broken man.



My name's Peter and I'm an advisor with CHAT, helping people get their lives back together when they're at rock bottom. I'd like to tell you about David.

As he began to trust me and open up, I learnt that his life had fallen apart after his wife died and he lost everything. The loss of both his beloved wife and his way of life eventually led to a breakdown. He had lost all confidence in himself and his future. He didn't know how he was going to manage and didn't think there was anyone to help him. No one should reach that stage in their later years. Frightened, alone and unsure where to go next; that was David's reality.

This was a man who had worked hard his whole life, and now in his 90s was facing homelessness. If it was my father in this situation, I couldn't bear to imagine him suffering like that.

David had been forced to give up his farm and spent years moving between B&Bs and supported housing until his money ran out and the council placed him in temporary accommodation.

Earlier this year, David found himself placed in yet another temporary accommodation. "I didn't know where to turn. I was living day by day, just trying to get through. I had to just grin and bear it," he said.

When it all became too much, he left with nowhere to go but the bus station.

He felt so low that he thought about ending his life. "I was fed up. I thought I couldn't carry on any longer," he said.

Thankfully, through a local church, David was connected with CHAT. When he first walked through our door, I could see the weight of the world was on his shoulders. He just needed someone to listen.

In May, David was offered a one-bedroom council bungalow. At first he was hesitant to move in, feeling overwhelmed and unsure about starting again.

Every year, my colleagues and I give over 3,000 advice sessions to people in situations like David's. In a country like ours, nobody should have to face homelessness – especially someone in their 90s. It's easy to think that these things only happen in cities, yet it is happening right here in Mid Devon. Behind the statistics are people like David - proud, hardworking, but suddenly invisible to the world around them.

With reassurance and practical help, from his family and myself he decided to take that step. I helped him view the property, set up the tenancy and bills, and apply for housing benefit and pension credit.

I am still meeting with David, helping him manage his finances, pay bills, and regain the confidence to live independently. He told me he's not ready to manage everything on his own yet and feels reassured when I check his bills, especially after some recent fraud.

When David first came to us, he was at breaking point. He'd lost his confidence and didn't know where to turn next. He faced a future without hope.

"Every morning, I thank God I'm still here and that I've got my home - it's even starting to feel quite homely," he said with a smile.

When I think about David's story, it reminds me what hope looks like in real life. The support I give isn't just about practical needs, it's about restoring confidence and dignity.

Every day, there's another David waiting for someone to care enough to help. If CHAT wasn't here to help David, where would he have turned to next? Who would have helped him? What would have happened if he had gone to the bus station? People like David are slipping through the cracks every day.

This Christmas, your support can help us bring that same hope to others across Mid Devon; to people who feel lost, forgotten, or unsure where to turn next.

Your gift will help provide advice, practical support and above all, hope and the reassurance that someone cares.

As a supporter of CHAT please give what you can. Thank you for helping us bring hope to the people who need it most and being part of our story, the team and I couldn't do what we do without you.

Peter Ellis, CHAT Advisor, and the CHAT team.

