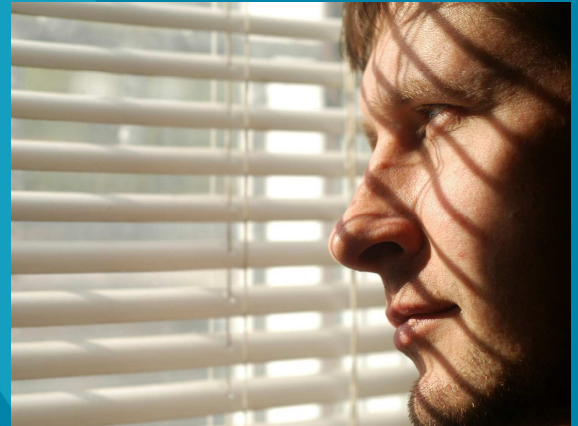


Andrew's story

Andrew moved all over the country for work – building fiberglass prototypes. After his divorce, instead of going home after each project, he would go onto the next job. It meant he didn't have a base. So, when Andrew had to give up work because of ill-health, he had nowhere to call home.



I'd always moved around for work. I was a fiberglass engineer building prototypes of things like cars and boats. I had a really good reputation. I'd go all over the country working on different projects.

While the project was on, I'd live in B&Bs. Then, after each project, I'd go home to my wife and two children. After I got divorced, instead of going home after each job, I'd go onto the next project in the next place. Typical of me, I threw myself into my work. Not having a base wasn't an issue – I was doing a job I loved and getting paid really well for it.

Then I started getting really tired because I'm bi-polar. Being bi-polar is the best and worst of me. It's what makes me so good at my job – I work really hard; put my all into it. But then I implode and suffer bouts of depression.

I came to Dorset to build boat prototypes. But my bi-polar disorder was making me unwell. I had to slow down and eventually, I had to stop work. When the money ran out, I couldn't afford the rent, and I had nowhere to live. I knew I also needed to see a doctor – something I'd avoided since I was given horrible medication in the past.

I went to St Pauls to see the doctor. He seemed to have a great understanding of my problems and took me on as patient. I arranged somewhere I could stay temporarily. But I didn't settle (another symptom of being bi-polar) and before long I was off. When I came back – and with the support of fantastic staff at BCHA and other agencies – I got a room at St Pauls and started seeing the doctor again. I also spent a lot of time trying to sort out my situation. I had to deal with lots of bureaucracy which BCHA and other agencies helped with.

BCHA helps people to help themselves. I'm a really proud person. It took a lot to admit I needed help. The hardest thing was asking for help. The second hardest was accepting it.

Earlier this year I moved into a flat. It had nothing in it when I moved in so I bought furniture using a BCHA fund. When I was working I always had money to pay for things. Now I find I can't budget because I haven't had to do it before. I've never been materialistic – but I miss the things I took for granted. I don't want to be languishing on benefits – I hate it. My next goal is to get myself well and get back to work. I'd like to give something back so I'm considering working at St Pauls. Or maybe I'll get back to the job I loved. For now, though, I know I'm still not well so I have to take everything a day at a time.

