

Stephen's story

A series of devastating incidents left Stephen homeless and unwell. A campaign of harassment forced him to flee his home in fear of his life. And he had post-traumatic stress after a lucky escape from a hotel fire. Thanks to BCHA, Stephen now feels safe and has hope for the future.



When my marriage fell apart, I moved into a place to be close to my daughter who stayed with me every weekend. Things were fine until some of the local community started threatening me because I was in a mixed-faith relationship with my new girlfriend. One day, I came back to my house and it had been completely destroyed – the windows were smashed and everything inside had been demolished. I had nothing – and I feared for my life. I had to escape.

I had nowhere to stay and I didn't have any money, so I slept rough: on the street, in doorways, on the beach. I had no idea where to go. One night I was in my sleeping bag in a doorway when someone from street services told me about St Pauls.

When I found BCHA, it was like a big pair of arms came around me and said 'you're safe now'.

After a while at St Pauls, I went to another BCHA hostel. I got more space but it wasn't long-term. During this time, I missed my dad's funeral. I had no money to get there and I didn't have the right clothes. I thought I'm homeless; I'm nobody. I just couldn't face everyone who'd be there.

BCHA don't criticise; they accept you for who you are. Everything has opened up since I found BCHA.

While I was at St Paul's, I saw the doctor about the terrible nightmares I'd been having. He referred me to a psychologist who said it was post-traumatic stress. Years before I'd been in a hotel fire in Belgium, which I escaped by jumping through a window. I'd never had help coming to terms with this but BCHA helped – they even paid for documents and articles to be translated. My support worker is great – if I need advice or just to talk, he's there.

Recently, I moved into a BCHA flat. I never thought I'd live in a place like this. I never thought it would happen for me. The feeling's electric! I'm still dreaming! I don't have a lot of stuff but I have time. Best of all, my daughter can come and stay with me, and I'll be proud.

When I was homeless, time stood still – now it goes quickly. I'm so happy I found BCHA. BCHA has been my saviour – but for them, I'd be dead.

