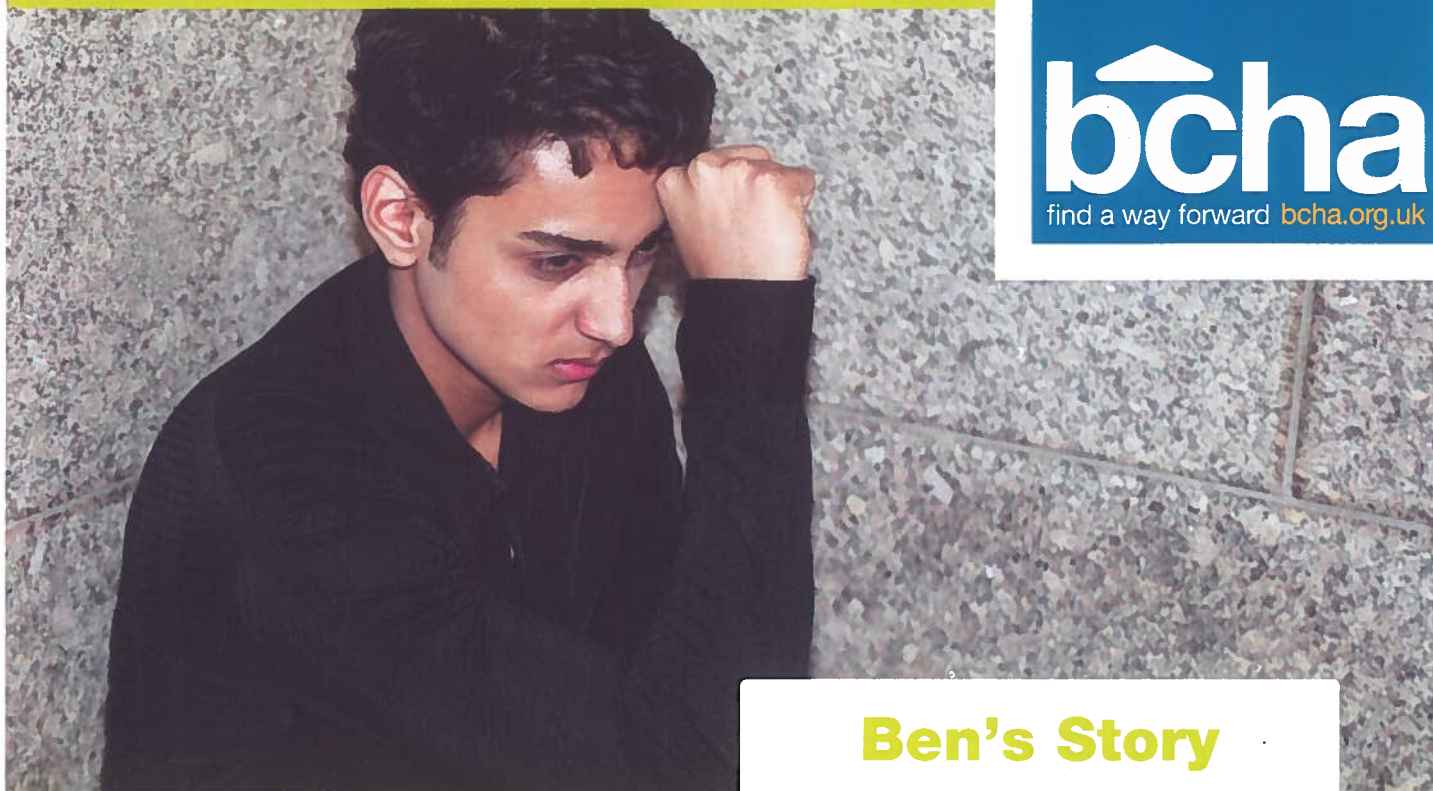


## Helping victims of **human trafficking**

**bcha**  
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### **Ben's Story**

**At the age of 13, Ben was groomed and trafficked from the Far East in to the UK by his perpetrator for sexual exploitation. Ben was held captive for around six years and during this time was locked in an attic, fed only one meal a day and persistently sexually abused.**

Ben managed to escape one day when the door to the attic was accidentally left unlocked. He was found collapsed from exhaustion in a telephone box by the ambulance services, and was taken to hospital for treatment, which is when the police became involved.

When Ben came to the Liberty Project having been referred by the Salvation Army Anti-Human Trafficking Team, he was frightened, compliant and very vulnerable – he had no will of his own. He had no idea of what his full name was, who he was, how old he was, or where he had come from. Ben hadn't learnt any life skills either – he had no idea about money and shopping or about domestic chores and had never cooked for himself.

Our first goal was to settle Ben in. Staff took it in turns to help him go to the shops, work out what food to buy and meals to cook. Staff showed him how to cook, how to use a washing machine, how to use a mobile phone, how to be safe in his own home and taught him that he was free to come and go from his home as he chose. He had to learn all the small everyday things that we take for granted.

Staff also worked hard to help Ben build up his confidence. He had very little when he arrived, and was frightened to

leave his flat. In fact, at first, due to his captivity, he only felt safe using one room of his flat. Staff were able to work with him to encourage him to start using other areas of his flat, and eventually he had the confidence to leave his flat and visit the shops in the local area on his own.

As a result of his years of abuse, Ben suffered terrible nightmares. We referred Ben to a counselling service who were able to work with us to support Ben with regular counselling sessions to deal with the post traumatic stress disorder he was suffering.

Unfortunately, it wasn't possible for Ben to return home to his mother, as he was not able to remember enough details to enable the Red Cross and The Salvation Army Family Finder Service to locate her. He therefore made the decision that he wanted to stay in the UK. We were able to support Ben to do this, helping him to visit the UK Border Agency and make an asylum appeal. Ben was successfully granted permission to stay in the UK for five years, at the end of which he will be able to apply for British Citizenship.

Ben is now thriving, having come a long way from when he first arrived at the Liberty Project. He now lives within supported accommodation and is much more confident, making friends and getting out a lot more. Ben has completed his counselling sessions and has secured an apprenticeship for four days a week, which he is enjoying and he is hoping it will lead to a permanent position at the company.