

## Ali Bayan

Ali's 29. He was born and grew up in Lebanon, and his family is still there. He studied at university and had a series of good jobs, and worked in Dubai too, but Lebanon was always home. But, his political views put him at great risk. In 2006, he was walking on the street with a friend, when he was shot in the leg. He came to the UK and **claimed asylum**.

At first he worked but budgets were cut and he lost his job. He could no longer pay his rent. He did not meet the Council's criteria for housing, and had no money for the deposits required to rent privately.

**Ali had nowhere to go.** Nowhere to live, nowhere to sleep, nowhere to wash or keep his clothes. He took a 24 hour bus at night so he had some shelter, and tried to sleep in parks during the day. He rarely managed more than a couple of hours. He threw away most of his clothes and possessions so he only had one small bag with him. It was so hard to wash and keep clothes clean, and his job centre allowance mainly went trying to do this. He was often hungry and would ask diners in MacDonal'd's to share food with him. **With no home, he could not apply for jobs.** Even thinking about a future was beyond him and he could only think each day where he would sleep and how he would eat and wash.

One day he had £3 left in his bank account that day. He bought Panadol and cans of Red Bull and took them all. He came round in Ealing Hospital.

This time the Council referred him to West London YMCA. **A bed felt so good** after sleeping rough.

The first couple of weeks he stayed in his room, just coming out for meals and meetings with his support worker. He needed that time to adjust and to come to terms with what had happened to him. Then he went to the training room, and started using the computers. He started to get to know other residents and got involved with some of the activities on offer.

Ali says, "**The YMCA is like an electricity transformer. It takes negative power and turns it into positive.**"

He found his support worker a tower of strength, always there to listen and help him get on his feet. Ali says that staying at the YMCA, "You regain yourself". Once he had somewhere safe to live, he could start thinking about a future. He started volunteering and using his time in a positive way. Now he plans to **run the London Marathon** to raise funds for his YMCA.