



A former stonemason, Daniel is still finding his green fingers as a participant in Surrey Care Trust's Gateway Horticultural Project in Redhill.

The project, which is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the Big Lottery Fund, aims to engage with those furthest from the labour market and make changes within their families' lives through developing practical skills and mentoring support.

Daniel was referred to the project by the Surrey Family Service team, who are currently working with his daughter, as an opportunity for Daniel to improve his difficult relationship with her and for her to establish herself as a young independent woman. "I felt misunderstood at home; that my words and gestures are misinterpreted and that makes me feel angry, frustrated and depressed" explains Daniel.

Daniel is registered disabled after a heart by-pass and misses his previous work as a stonemason which he felt gave him a purpose in life. But now he feels that going to the allotment is providing a new, more positive focus for him.

"I make a rod for my own back sometimes at home and I end up stewing away in resentment. At the allotment I feel that I'm doing something constructive rather than destructive. It's good to get out of the house for a bit and away from situations that I can't control. There's a good bunch of lads here that I can chat to and working together with Mike also helps us to get to know each other better."

Daniel also meets Mike once a week at a café for a mentoring session where he can vent his frustrations, talk things through and get some practical advice from Mike.

Mike says: "I try and get Daniel to see things from his daughter's perspective and identify areas where he could reasonably compromise. The goal is to help Daniel develop a better relationship with his daughter and help her with the issues she's facing at school so she will stay in education, which will ultimately improve things at home for everyone."

Daniel adds: "Mike really understands what planet I am on. He's helped me to realise that things at home aren't going to change overnight, that it will take some time. In the meantime I am learning new skills on the allotment and I am feeling much more positive about the future."

Daniel is now training to become a volunteer mentor.