



Gary's story

"You realise that confidence takes a long time to build but is so very easy to lose," Gary muses as he reflects on the twists and turns his life has taken over the last couple of years.

Having spent 30 years in IT, a series of redundancies meant that Gary's self-esteem took a big blow and he found it hard to find another job: "I was signed on at the Job Centre who did their best with the resources available but I felt that they could not give me the support I needed," he explains.

Gary's situation worsened after he was made homeless when his landlord ended the tenancy to sell the property: "I lost my way and I honestly did not know where to go. I was in no-man's land - no home, no job, no prospects," he says.

But a referral to Surrey Care Trust's mentoring programme was a turning point for Gary. Gary was matched with volunteer mentor, Rob and they began to meet weekly. The meetings didn't always go smoothly at first: "Rob didn't understand why, given all my previous experience, I couldn't get a job. Then I showed Rob my pile of rejection letters and he began to understand. He would encourage me to try new things and I would resist, but then he would basically give me a kick up the backside and tell me to get on with it. We both learned a lot from each other."

Gradually Gary began to respond to Rob, but he was still struggling emotionally. "Rob could see that I was depressed, even when I couldn't see it for myself. I went to the doctor and was prescribed medication and therapy. This helped to lift my mood and I began to feel more positive; I stopped automatically dismissing Rob's suggestions and realised that he was just giving me options and some breathing space to make choices."

Slowly the pieces fell into place; encouraged by Rob, Gary joined a local 50+ group where he found out about a job opportunity. With support from his mentor, Gary successfully applied. Then Rob suggested that Gary should be more proactive about contacting the local council for a home and, after a while, he was offered a two bed flat in Redhill.

"The mentoring process was like winning the lottery. I thought I could solve my problems myself, but I ended up drifting aimlessly along. With Rob's help, I've found a new direction."

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