



## John

John says his life has been a 'bit of jumble' because of his mental health issues which means he's found it hard over the years to keep a job or lay his hat down in one place for very long, but he's finding he's able to keep on an even keel now thanks to the Surrey Care Trust's mentoring programme.

John was referred to the programme by the Salvation Army. He was matched with mentor Rob and they saw each other every couple of weeks to talk about any issues that John may be struggling to cope with. Rob suggested that John might benefit from the Trust's Gateway Community Allotment project.

The project, which is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, aims to help anyone at risk of isolation and the long-term unemployed to make positive changes by developing practical skills and to benefit from the therapeutic benefits of gardening.

As the project has been designed to accommodate people of all ages, abilities and interests, John has been to indulge his love of painting and design.

"I'm not really into gardening but I like painting and there's always something here for me to do like painting the garden furniture or the bird boxes. It's therapeutic and because I'm not doing it for me – I'm doing it for the project – it's given me more of a drive to do it and I feel a sense of satisfaction that I'm doing something nice for everyone here" John explains.

John feels that being on the allotment is really helping with his mental health so he visits as often as he can.

"Coming to the allotment has done a lot for me. It's nice to come down and do some painting, chat to everyone, be out in the fresh air...it's a about being part of it. That's really it."

John has continued to learn new skills and build on his confidence and self-esteem. Surrey Care Trust has supported him in reviewing/completing CV's, completing application forms and working on interview skills. This has finally led to John being offered a job, where he is ecstatic about the outcome and eternally grateful for all of the support. When speaking with John again following the exit on the project he provided an update and explained his thoughts on the project.

“There is no doubt that I will (and do) very much miss coming along to the Gateway allotment and working with you all, whether it was getting on with some of the tasks or simply talking to you and the others attending too. You all made me feel so welcome. And you all helped me more than you will realise during the times when I felt low, although I know I rarely showed it.

It has only been a couple of days but I am enjoying getting back to work. The people there are friendly, welcoming and helpful, so I'm settling in fine. There is a lot to learn with the new systems here and the challenge is an interesting one.

I hope one day that I will get the opportunity to come along to the Gateway to see you all again. And I hope that the Gateway goes from strength to strength, and helps more people. It truly is a wonderful project, and I feel pleased and proud to be a part of it.”

