**D's story:**

**About me**

I am D, in my 50’s, with a long history of stress and depression, exacerbated over many years of caring for a wife suffering chronic dysthymia. [I am] currently not-working due to overwhelming stress and exhaustion. Support networks amounts to my GP, a handful of good friends and some family, and for the last 8 months or so [the organisation] by way of courses and several individual mentoring sessions.

I have undergone various counselling sessions over the years, including intensive CBT. Currently my state of mind fluctuates considerably and frequently. At the point of accessing my first course with [the funded project] many of my hobbies and pastimes had become “run-down”. I was struggling to find the motivation to engage with them and becoming more and more inclined to stay at home and rather hide away, well aware this was not the “normal me” and quite unhealthy. Even so I was not finding the necessary spark to break out of that cycle.

***My GSP experience***

I have always spent a lot of time outdoors, be that gardening, running, walking - and always find it calming and therapeutic. When I feel stressed, I need space and tend to feel “cooped up” indoors. In seeking help from [the funded project] it was outdoor activities that I was primarily looking for, for this reason. [name of the activity] is a weekly session assisting with the maintenance of [the organisation’s] grounds. To date we have spent two session tidying up in preparation for an Autumn Fair (grass cutting, hedge trimming and tidying, path cleaning etc) and last week we planted winter flowers to brighten up the appearance.

It has started as a small group but appears to be growing. It has a real mix of age, gender and

character. I have reached the point whereby I feel able to actively look to welcome others into the

group.

***How GSP has helped me***

I feel a little more of my old self-confidence returning. It’s a great sociable time with its mid-way

break for tea and biscuits, although equally there is space for losing oneself in what one is doing. For

me there is nothing more satisfying than a job well done, and looking round after a small group of

people have worked hard for a couple of hours and seeing such progress is heartening and satisfying.

Arriving for the Autumn Fair and looking round at cleared undergrowth, cut grass etc and thinking

“we did that, it didn’t look like that a few days ago” is a great boost. What can beat standing back to look at a planter of new plants cheerful in the afternoon sunshine?

I will continue with this for as long as it runs, and probably seek something similar if possible after

that. There is great pleasure, as well as a sense of peace and calm, simply from working productively

outdoors. It’s a nice opportunity to simply escape from other issues and concerns for a couple of

hours. Beyond that, for me, I derive great satisfaction from feeling I am giving a little bit back to the

organisation.