

Spotlight on Cameron Campbell, franchise owner of Christies Care West Suffolk

Christies Care Franchising is bringing outstanding hourly at-home care to the elderly and vulnerable across the UK. Local branches are owned and operated by franchisees – enthusiastic, driven individuals with a passion for the care sector.

One of the brand's earliest franchisees, and its youngest, 22-year-old Cameron Campbell describes how he came to choose a franchise with Christies Care as his route to business ownership.

The average age of a franchisee in the UK continues to hover around the 40 mark. What led you to become a franchise owner at 22 years old?

From a young age, I'd had my sights set on having my own business.

At 16 I was working in recruitment for the health and social care sector, and by 18 I had helped two entrepreneurs set up a specialist recruitment agency in this field. That added fuel to my own ambition.

I then worked for the best part of three years for Christies Care, who provide live-in home care, on their recruitment team, working my way up the ranks.

Though I was very happy, I'm a dad to two young children and I wanted more for my partner and kids.

It was Amrit Dhaliwal, MD of Christies Care Franchising - who provide hourly at-home care - that suggested I could take on a franchise.

This was in February this year, 2020. By the start of May I was owner of Christies Care West Suffolk and we were trading!

Did you know much about franchising before that conversation with Amrit?

I'll be honest, like most people I knew very little about franchising. To me, franchises were the likes of McDonald's.

But Amrit explained the concept very clearly and talked me through the Christies Care franchise model. I had the opportunity to speak to a franchisee, Sarah Whitman, who was already on board and operating, and could see the business in action.

The financial side of things was explained and illustrated to me – I could see that the numbers stacked up and it could be a financially rewarding opportunity.

I felt a lot of affinity with Amrit, who'd been a successful franchisee himself with another brand. I could tell he understood what I wanted and why. That further added to my confidence in the franchising model.

You got up and running very quickly from that first conversation. How did Christies Care Franchising support you?

I should probably start by saying, that the support I received has contributed to the fact that within just three months I was operating a profitable business! I have also taken on a second franchise with the brand.

There is a fantastic team on the franchise side of the business, including Simon Mills, a franchise consultant with decades of experience.

There was full training given, and guidance on getting the required Quality Care Commission (CQC) registration, but the support went beyond the formal steps.

I'd never run a business before. I understood and was willing to put in the hard work needed to run a care agency, but there were processes and systems behind the scenes – that help make things happen – that were new to me. I got loads of support to learn about and understand them.

Someone has always been at the end of the phone to help me. I can always call to pick someone's brains on a matter or to work with them on finding a solution for something. They're very responsive, I have to say.

The coaching element was critical in those early days, too - you get fortnightly coaching sessions with Simon. They create accountability, which is especially important when you haven't worked for yourself before. They help keep you on track, help you see things differently and become more self-sufficient. The coaching sessions have been crucial to my personal development.

As a franchisee, what makes Christies Care Franchising stand out for you?

The fact that the recruitment of carers is done for you! That really is their USP. Everything from the advertising through to staff compliance is taken care of.

I have also found that the reputation of Christies Care goes a long way towards the success of my business. Doors to local authorities and other referral providers are wide open because of the quality of care associated with the brand.

There is also the opportunity to pick up leads from the live-in care side of the business – the hourly care we offer can complement the live-in care, and that internal lead funnel is pretty unique.

I also think Christies Care Franchising offers something rare to young people wanting to own and run a business. Amrit is a champion of young entrepreneurs – he recognises that our energy and drive help propel us towards success. On a practical level, he and Christies Care are able to open doors to sources of finance for younger people, too.

And though I don't have years and years of experience, I am still listened to. I've been able to incorporate some of the techniques I learned from fast-paced work environments to do things differently, to operate a bit faster. I'm allowed to bounce ideas off people and to try new things, which I think is important.

Finally, how do you see the future for you and your business?

I love the care sector. I am helping people to continue to live at home independently and to have a better quality of life. I am making sure my team deliver this, doing what is wanted and needed to the highest standards possible. There is a definite 'feel good' in my day.

Running two branches, I can see no reason not to add a further branch at some stage and to grow the business that way. Christies Care is my future, and will provide for the future of my family, too.

Christies Care has an incredible heritage of awards for their live-in care. We are an extension of that brand, so I'd love to achieve such formal recognition for my team and business for the hourly care we provide – watch this space!

Spotlight on Sarah Wickham, franchise owner of Christies Care Coastal

Sarah had her first taste of domiciliary care 24 years ago. Asked to step into a management role with a nursing and care provider, the passion and variety of the care sector sparked an instant love for it.

Moving from a head office role to managing branches, Sarah was then head-hunted by another care provider. Sarah's unwavering dedication to high quality and responsive care, combined with her talent for business development, led her to win Branch of the Year for 13 consecutive years with this company.

A major change within that firm prompted Sarah to leave, and she is now the proud owner of Christies Care Coastal in Suffolk. Here she tells us a bit more about her journey to becoming a franchisee.

What led you to make the move from employee to business owner with a franchise?

I love and adore care. I still feel the same passion for the sector that I did all those years ago when I started.

No day is ever the same and you never know who will be at the end of the phone or how you'll be able to help them. I get such a buzz from working out what we can do to make someone's life better, and then setting up and ensuring delivery of the care they need.

It was a difficult decision to leave my employer, but a takeover of the brand changed the company's culture and ethos. I no longer felt able to deliver the standard of care I was committed to, or to run with any autonomy the successful branch I had developed.

I'd spent so many years building up businesses for other people, I knew it was time to do it for myself.

As it happens, I am quite local to the Christies Care head office in Saxmundham and I knew Freddy Gatherne Hardy, their Managing Director. I of course also knew the Christies Care name and reputation.

Freddy and I ended up having a chat and he explained Christies Care's plans to provide hourly at-home care through branches, which would be franchises. Freddy wondered if I'd be interested in taking on a franchise.

Initially I was unsure, but as I investigated more, visited their offices, and learned more about Christies Care, I was blown away by their standards of training and the calibre of the whole team.

I had a choice: I could go it alone or I could buy a franchise.

I decided that though I did want my own business, I still wanted to be part of a team. I knew that I didn't know everything but people within the business would have the answer.

Another key factor was Christies Care's rating by the CQC of 'Outstanding.' In the domiciliary care field, it's almost unheard of to achieve that standard. Their commitment to quality care fitted with my own standards and beliefs.

What's it been like setting up as a franchisee and running your branch?

Once, I'd gone over everything with my husband and we agreed I should pursue the franchise, we started taking care of the legal and financial technicalities – this started around December 2019.

I was Christies Care's first franchisee and I got masses of support with everything from how to source finance to fund the investment, to navigating the CQC registration process.

Due to the pandemic and lockdown, the registration process took a while, but within a week of having my certificate in April I had my first customer!

I already had staff on board in anticipation of the work coming in and there was a real buzz among everyone about being part of something new.

That first client was a booking for five hours per week but by week nine we were delivering 171 hours of care to different clients.

What kind of support and training have you had from Christies Care?

While we waited for my CQC registration, Amrit Dhaliwal, MD of Christies Care Franchising, and Carla van Wyk, their Operations Manager, took me through all the business processes and systems I would need to use.

They also took care of recruiting staff for me, getting my branch fitted out with branding, running adverts, getting business cards. They were all over it and nothing - nothing - was too much trouble!

I knew about care but invoicing and payroll were all new to me and they made sure I felt confident with all of it.

They are so committed to your progression and success as a franchisee that they willingly give as much of their time as needed.

How have you found running your own business but being under the umbrella of the franchisor?

Amrit believes that the relationship between the franchisor and franchisee should run very much both ways. I can testify to that as very much being the case at Christies Care.

I've got more than 20 years' experience in care which means I have plenty of ideas and opinions on how things should be done!

Amrit and Carla listen and take on board what I suggest and make sure we apply everything that supports better service and an efficient business.

Finally, what are your thoughts on running a franchise business in the care sector?

First of all, I think we have to acknowledge the care staff. The training, qualifications and commitment that care staff must acquire before they even put on their uniforms is incredible.

Carers never know what will face them when they go through the door to see a client, but they deal with it responsibly, professionally and with compassion.

We carry a great responsibility to people in our local community who need our help, but there comes with that a great sense of pride. It's a very rewarding business.

The franchise package itself gives you everything you need to run the business well. We all have strengths and skills, we all have weaker areas. Being part of a franchise means you can get support where you need it – you're not on your own. You can pick up the phone to someone and your life as a business owner is made so much easier.

It's been so easy and straight forward to get my own business up and running with this model – I just wish I'd done it years ago!