



A Christies Carer's story – Cristy North

Cristy North is an adventure-loving South African with a passion for conservation and the rehabilitation of wild animals. Cristy has travelled far and wide and was looking for a career that would help her to fund her travels and give her the freedom and flexibility to continue to plan long trips. Her next adventure is a journey to Bolivia to work with a conservation charity where she may spend six months before she returns to the UK to work as a Christies Carer once more.

Here, Cristy shares her experience of what it felt like being fresh out of training and taking on her first clients.

Cristy was initially apprehensive about becoming a carer. Her mother also works as a carer so she was familiar with Christies Care and some aspects of the role but she admits that nothing had quite prepared her for experiencing the job first-hand.

Cristy began the application process with an initial telephone interview with Demi on our recruitment team before being booked on to our 11-day residential training programme.

Arriving at our Saxmundham HQ to complete her induction training, Cristy was initially nervous about what to expect although she found the experience very enjoyable.

Carers who complete the training are expected to work hard during their induction programme which includes some written work to cement the practical guidance. Cristy found her group to be supportive and encouraging of one another. She says of Kerry, the lead trainer on the programme; "She was born to do her job, I can't sing her praises highly enough, she made our training so enjoyable and fun. The programme was well organised and although our days were busy and long, it was a very worthwhile experience, the skills we learned will be with us forever.'

With her training complete, Cristy embarked on a week's placement with her first client.

"I remember the outgoing carer left dinner for the client in the fridge, I felt like that was a blessing because I was so overwhelmed when I arrived! When the carer left and it was just myself and the client, I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility, inexperience and anxiety. I almost cried every night for the first 3 days but as I became familiar with the routine, I started to feel a lot better. By the end of the week, I felt settled in and much more capable and confident.'

My second client was a couple. I was initially meant to spend 5 weeks with them but my placement was extended to 10 weeks so we were together for a long time. This really helped to ease me into the job because they were a lovely couple and they had a wonderfully supportive family who helped me to feel settled and welcome.

After 10 weeks though, I was really longing for some time off because even though the days weren't too demanding, being on stand-by for 10 weeks can be stressful and one of the clients sometimes needed me in the night so I was equipped with a sensor pager in my room which meant I was always

alert to their needs. I was really sad to leave these clients as I had grown very fond of them but I enjoyed having a break to sleep and relax!

As someone who was previously totally inexperienced at caring, I was definitely out of my comfort zone but I was really keen for the challenge and I'm so glad I've taken the steps to get into this industry.

Becoming a carer has been a great opportunity to earn a good income while providing a caring service, which is the fulfilling part for me. I also love the convenience of this job, where you dictate your weeks on and off, and that really suits my lifestyle at the moment.

I would definitely recommend becoming a carer to other people considering a career change. It can be daunting but seeing the difference you make to other people makes it all worthwhile. The appreciation some families have expressed with photos and texts thanking me for my help has given me encouragement when I've needed it and I've shared my experience with other carers to motivate and support them too".