



A Christies Carer's story – Tracey Tyson

I had left the UK nearly 30 years ago and moved to Germany to work for M&S who I had worked for previously in the UK. From there, when all the European M&S stores closed, I moved to a franchise store in Cyprus and then in 2001, I moved to Spain where I started a new career in Real Estate. I had many happy years there selling property and I spent some time in southern Italy too until the financial crisis virtually stopped all foreign property purchases.

After this happened, I was enjoying some free time in Spain in the sunshine when I saw when I saw an advert for Christie's Care in the local expat newspaper. I ignored it for some time, having had absolutely zero experience in caring for anyone but I kept the advert.

About a month later I began to think more about it. I thought about the experiences I had had helping people buy their dream homes in the Mediterranean sun and my role in helping to set up the first M&S store in Germany. It made me think, maybe I could help someone personally too. I didn't think I would ever pass the interview but I did and nearly 10 years later, I'm still here.

The impact of making this decision has been life-changing. Becoming a carer has made me a far more caring person, I've learnt a lot about myself and achieved things I never would have thought possible.

I've also loved learning about certain medical conditions and medications. The flexibility of working when I choose has allowed me to travel even more. No other job I know can give you this freedom so I would say to anyone thinking of going into a care profession, don't hesitate..... do it.

When I first started, I worked with clients with a range of different problems from Dementia, Parkinson's disease, Cerebral Palsy, and MS before going on to meet my first client with learning disabilities. This was it for me, I found it to be so different to the jobs I had had previously, it was challenging for sure but very rewarding in so many ways. There are so often times you have to 'step into their world' for a while as they are unable to step out of their own and this makes their day. I feel such a tremendous feeling of achievement for them and it is so rewarding to see them smile and laugh. Going to the day-centres and seeing how these clients interact with each other helps me too, teaching me to communicate in other ways with my client. Something I always remember and use a lot, is the phrase 'team work, make the dream work'! Seeing what a difference music can make for example, is lovely for me to see and join in with. Even trying to learn Makaton sign language has been great. What other jobs can give you this?

On the practical side, the training that Christie's Care provides is second to none. It really does equip you with the top-notch skills you need for the job and of course, you learn a lot for yourself along the way. It is great to be working for an award-winning company and I've taken advantage of the additional training opportunities too. I completed a 4-day learning disabilities training course which was so valuable. All the training I have received has not been at any

financial cost to myself, including a Diploma Level 3 in Health and Social Care. That is how much Christies Care invests in its carers.

It's almost 10 years since I took the decision to apply to the Christies Care job ad and in that time, I've had the pleasure of working for a great company that goes the extra mile not only for its clients, but for carers too.

Any problem, question or request for advice is always answered professionally and promptly. I have found the training team, booking coordinators, carer well-being team, recruitment and management teams to all be very hands-on. As a company, they are exceptional at what they do and I have met some great carers, now friends, along the way too.

During my time with Christies, I have come into a lot of contact with pop-in support workers and I hear a lot of comments from them too about how much they like working with clients that are supported by the Christie's Care team which is always great to hear. This last 12 months, I have also been helping with recruiting too, supporting and advising those with the same doubts I had, to come and join our team.

Of course, there can be lots of challenges but the carer support team is always there to offer advice and guidance. They are contactable 24/7 and do an amazing job. You don't even have to have a problem they are there if you just want a chat. The days can be long and you may become tired but there is always some 'down time' where you can chill and recharge your batteries and the joys and rewards you receive in seeing that lovely smile, or hearing that, 'thank you so much,' makes it all worthwhile. There is a carers portal too where carers can chat to other carers when they need to which is a great idea if they want to let off steam or just have a conversation about anything different from work.

So many people think that experience is needed and that is most certainly not the case. All that is needed is that you genuinely do care for others and really want to make a difference in someone's life. And it's not always difficult. It could be just a hand to hold, listening as well as talking which is sometimes more important. Taking your client out, putting their nail varnish on. Often a client just wants to do the things that we do daily and take for granted. There is so much pleasure in knowing your help has made a difference to their day. A good carer is someone who wants to do this every day, always putting their client first.

I would recommend to anyone considering becoming a carer, look no further, Christies Care is waiting for you. There is no other company I would consider working for.