



## **Bluebird Care Mid & West Cornwall**

**Why we work in care.....**

When you work in care people very often ask why you do it.

They might have preconceived ideas about what it involves or think that they wouldn't be able to do it because they are not the 'right type of person.'

In my experience, everyone comes into care for their own personal reasons but deep down it is because they are of a caring and compassionate nature and want to make a difference to people's lives.

We have collated some stories from our team members for you to read and to see some of the real reasons why people work in care.

I hope you enjoy them.

Caroline Sommerville

People often ask why I want to work in care;

Well there are many reasons.

Care work is all I know. I feel proud that I'm doing a job that makes a big difference to people's lives. Every person is unique and requires very different needs. No two days are ever alike.

I started my career at a very young age, both sets of grandparents brought me up as a child after my own parents had issues. I grew a great attachment to them and as a child, remember giving them many problems, I cannot ever remember showing thanks and appreciation. Growing up I started to trust the elderly. I found I could communicate with them and got satisfaction from helping them when I could. This was the start of my many years as a carer; you get to learn many different skills and I'm always learning how to do my job better and become a better carer.

There have been hard times, good times and very trying times. With many stories to tell and lots of memories that stay with me forever. I find the job very fulfilling and interesting finding the different ways to communicate with different people, not just elderly but people of all ages, different illnesses and different complex needs. A good career will have great rewards. A good carer will learn many good qualities; how to be caring, to have patience, empathy, compassion and many more. The best reward of all is the satisfaction of making a difference to someone's life and how proud you feel to be a carer. There are the hard times when you have to hold back emotion and have to hold back when you want to get involved. The happy times are feeling needed and trusted and to see the smiles and happiness you can give. There are also times when you fail and feel like an intruder, you get pushed away. It's not all smooth running, all you can do is your best at all times. There's no easy way to become a carer, it takes hard work and dedication, the more you learn the more challenges you can overcome. You don't always get gratitude and thanks but the good always outweighs the bad.

I get great pleasure in listening to people's life stories, getting to know the people you work with is very important to me. There are times when you have to go along with clients that have hallucinations, and you come away wondering what have I just done, with a big smile on my face. Other times finding out the hiding places for false teeth and hearing aids. You wouldn't believe some of the places they are found.

There are sad cases with end of life clients, which can be sometimes traumatic. Last of all, clients that hate you but you still have their duties to carry out. So you see it's all good fun and I love it. This is why I work in care.

Elaine Deakin - Care Worker

People often ask me why I wanted to work in care and I tell them the truth- that I fancied a complete career change. After being a chef for so long and stuck in the same place, I felt I needed a big change. I decided to apply for a job with Bluebird Care to start a new career- a new challenge and chapter in my life. I am pleased I did because I have met and worked alongside so many new people, made friends and shared many laughs with these people. As well as meeting the people that we as a team/company do our utmost to support in their day to day lives.

People are often quick to think that care work is looking after elderly people and they are so wrong. I have met young, middle-aged and older people who are all as nice as each other. I started supporting a middle-aged gentleman with a brain injury.

Honestly my first thoughts were 'oh, whatever have I let myself in for?' as I knew nothing about brain injuries, or care really. OK- I had done my basic training so I just hoped for the best. I turned up and introduced myself and started my day. Luckily my first day was double handed (or part of it was). Everything I did I questioned myself as to whether I was doing it right and if the customer was happy- which he was. First day over.

The physical moving and handling or the bowel movements didn't bother me, I was just concerned that I was doing everything properly. The first day had gone well but then my first solo day was completely different. I did all that I had been shown in training and had taken advice from other carers on how they work with this man and I did things the same way. Then it happened - my first fall with this man.

He fell and hit his head on the toilet and was stuck between the loo and the wall. Now I'm thinking 'Am I going to get the sack? Is he OK? How the hell am I going to get him up?' etc. Once up, there was blood pouring down his face from such a small wound. I cleaned him up, approached his wife and explained. Luckily it was only minor and she was happy with how I had dealt with the problem. I didn't get the sack and went back the second day. Since that first day- which I will never forget, I've still got my job and an amazing friendship with this man, who is so kind and funny. OK so he's a bit crude sometimes, but I was a chef and that was normal to me. Three years later, I'm still working for Bluebird Care with the same man, and I have been given two amazing awards.

When working in care we are not just carers- we are friends, physios, first aiders, speech therapists, physical trainers, cleaners, chauffeurs - you name it- we carers cover it. The hours are long- some 24-hour and some 15-hour days.

You wake up in the morning thinking 'just 5 more minutes' realising you've not had a lot of sleep. Check your rota and then the clock, saying 'yes, I've got time for a cuppa'. Dress and go. You hit the roads thinking 'where am I going? Can I sneak in breakfast?'. Drive past McDonald's thinking 'yum, I could eat that now', but no, time and traffic means you can't stop.

Now, depending on your rota, you could be out doing house to house visits or off to a day shift in a package. Whichever it is, you always start with a smile and 'good morning' and end with a smile and 'good night'. Thinking what's for dinner after a busy day, all you want to do is go home and chill.

Arran Gandy - Support Worker

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME WHY I WANT TO WORK IN CARE.... my reply is always the same... that I can't imagine doing any other job that would give me the satisfaction that care work does. I have been a caregiver for 27 years ....it's a vocation...and something I have committed myself to. Imagine being elderly or disabled or just lonely and maybe without family as is sometimes this is the case. To enter that person's home and give them the personal care they need showing them kindness and dignity and also being respectful that you are in their home. I never take anything for granted always asking permission if it's okay to use various things. For me this is of the utmost importance as I do mostly live-in care. Their needs may be a hot meal, sorting out appointments or general household tasks. Problems that are really troubling them and causing anxiety can be talked about and a solution found, or just the need of companionship- someone to chat and laugh with... eat a meal together etc. My position as live-in carer has taken me to some very unusual and beautiful locations. I never thought that I would be flying to the Scillies spending three weeks on Tresco .... caring for a very well-known lady and family, I was worried about the client and whether I could actually do it, but Carol reassured me and boosted my confidence. So off I went, by plane then a boat then a golf buggy .... bizarre. She was a hard task master, everything had to be just so. I pushed on and stood up for myself when her impatience got the better of her. It was part of her condition and to be expected. After a few days I could see something in her ..... a vulnerability. She was disfigured facially and had never had a lot of warmth shown to her, hidden away as a child because of how she looked. She was having trouble with the skin on her face one day, so I offered to massage it with cream. She doubted I would bear to touch her, as no-one else had. I asked her to lie back on her pillows and close her eyes and I massaged her face. When I stopped she surprisingly shed a tear, and thanked me. I had to do it every day after that! We settled into a companionable routine... I zipped round the island on the golf buggy - shopping, doing errands etc. I made new friends, went swimming every day etc and lucky me, we flew off the island by private helicopter! I was so excited. She was thrilled for me! Leaving her a few days later I was called into her room and got a hug and a kiss. This is a lady that didn't like her hand touched in an affectionate way. I learnt a lot about myself during that time and how to embrace challenges in care and have confidence in my abilities. I cared for a doctor and his wife, making the transition from their family home to a retirement home many miles away from Cornwall, but nearer to their family. I was with them on their last day as they locked the door and left, a sad moment but I reminded them that life would be a lot easier where they were going once they were settled in. I went to help care for them at the home of their son and daughter in law for a few days, until their belongings arrived at their destination. They had an Alpaca farm and I used to help feed them- it was a great experience. I was made to feel so welcome. The lady I was caring for had early dementia. We took walks around the area and had plenty of laughs in between the frustration of her condition. It gave her husband a little respite, it is very hard on the partner and easy to forget that they also need help. My present customer is a wonderful man. For two years I have been providing live- in care for him - a gentleman and a kind man with a wicked sense of humour... many, many laughs on our jaunts out around Helston. I love the variety in care work. Every day is different every customer is individual with their own needs and requirements we make a difference to them. It's a very worthwhile job choice... Carers make a difference, we really do!!

Gill Laidlaw – Live in Care Worker

People often ask me why I want to work in care and my reply is usually "I am a people person."

I do this job as much for my own spiritual being as well as the spiritual being of the person I am aiding and often this in turn includes the extended family.

I have found that to care for another human being gives me an inner pleasure and strength. I am innately a people person and seem at times burdened with the wider world and its endless strife. But on the scale of my capabilities I take great inner joy in giving freedom and experience to those who are unable or no longer able to seek these emotions for themselves for whatever reason. I have worked over my prime years with children in a residential children's home, as a playgroup leader and later aided people with Dementia, Parkinson's, Macular degeneration, Ataxia and varied other debilitating scenarios. I have endeavoured to give all these people as much support as they wanted or needed. I am one of the lucky ones who are able to do this.

Debbie AR Smith - Support Worker

## Care Work: Why I do it.....

About 7 years ago a lack of teaching vacancies in Cornwall and a recommendation from a friend who worked as a support worker led me to 'try something new'. I had no idea really what I was going into..... But I discovered that I absolutely loved it. I started out in supported living, moved to Outreach support and then to a residential home where I jumped right in and worked alongside some amazing young adults with LD to achieve some wonderful things. I set goals for myself alongside them and we both achieved together. They taught me as much as I taught them. I still miss the service users very much.

My next step was with Bluebird Care where I jumped into an entirely new role as a Coordinator. It was a big learning curve in a fast paced role. I spent many nights dreaming about the rota system and most of my spare time trying to think up great ways to cover work whilst keeping everyone happy. But there was and still is always one other part of my job which I enjoy the most- the customers.

I'd never done domiciliary care before - it was a whole new concept to me and I can honestly say I LOVE it. I love going in to a customer's home and enabling them to stay at home. I love when you have a breakthrough with a customer whether you are helping to rehabilitate them or whether they just remember your name and then there is my favourite part of all- their stories. I enjoy hearing their past careers- midwives, nurses, doctors, military, teachers, vets, their lives from when they were younger and how they met their husbands and wives. Some of my favourites include (and I know some of you have heard these stories too) how Mr C's beloved Buster the cat came to him, Mrs G and her childhood growing up in the countryside and most recently the story of how Mrs D met her husband. I absolutely love hearing these stories because they are the person's lasting legacy. They may have Alzheimer's but they had a long life before that. They may have acquired a brain injury through an accident but they grew up, fell in love, married and had children just like anyone else. They may have no mobility and are confined to their homes but they have had careers and achieved tremendous goals like we would and at the end of the day that's what they have that they can pass on and I am more than happy to listen. And one day I hope that if I ever need care I have a carer that will listen to my stories, as I have many to tell!

Now my Care journey has move to the next step as Recruitment and Development Coordinator. I hope that I can recruit carers young and old, experienced and new to care. I hope that I can inspire others to 'try something new' and find a career that they love just as much as I do. I hope to find people who can see past the challenges to the person that the customer was and still is and I hope they listen to and enjoy their stories just as much as I do

Lauren Duck - Recruitment & Development Coordinator



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