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Krista Cartlidge

Executive Director

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Executive Director
Organisation: MYTime Young Carers
Location: Bournemouth, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

After completing a BSc in Geography at Loughborough University in 2006, I undertook a PGCE in Geography at the University of Leicester. I spent the next 13 years working in a variety of different schools across the UK, from rural Leicestershire, to inner city London and finally in Bournemouth on the south coast. During that time, I was the lead Geography Teacher for ARK schools providing continuing professional development for staff from schools across the UK in conjunction with the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). I then undertook an MSc in Green Economy at Bournemouth University alongside an Associate Assistant Principal role for the United Learning Academy Trust.

I was then offered the opportunity to lead MYTime Young Carers, a charity which provides support for young carers across the Dorset area. Young carers are children aged between 5 and 18 who provide care such as nursing, cooking, cleaning and emotional support for another member of their family who might be physically or mentally ill.

W: www.rgs.org/iamageographer

Young carers can experience issues of loneliness, high rates of absence from school, stress and poor physical and mental health. At MYTime Young Carers we are working hard to help address these issues and to help empower these often invisible children ensuring they can go on to lead happy and successful lives

What do you do as part of your role?

As Executive Director at MYTime it is my responsibility to lead the organisation and develop the charity's strategic direction. I work closely with the board of trustees and ensure the charity is compliant with all laws and regulations, which are issued by the Charity Commission. As Executive Director I am an ambassador for the charity and it is my job to help fight the corner for young carers. Our mission is to ensure that young carers have access to the same support and opportunities as other children; to ensure that happens I help to build positive relationships with all of our stakeholders from our volunteers, donors, local councils, supporters and most importantly with our young carers.

I spend a lot of time working alongside the wonderful team at MYTime, planning fundraising events, organising our young carer 'Making Memories' days out and developing our programmes which support young carers. I also do a lot of work with local schools and councils to review and develop the provision available for young carers, which helps to drive the changes needed to ensure that all young carers have access to the support they need to succeed. Currently OFSTED do not recognise young carers as a specific group of disadvantaged students, this is something we are working hard to change in the future.

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

The key characteristics needed for this role are the ability to build relationships with a wide

variety of different people; having a clear vision and the ability to communicate it; listening to other people who know more than you do; and an enduring belief that what you are doing will help make the world a better place for somebody else.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

My favourite part of the job is spending time with the young carers we support. They are an incredibly inspiring group of young people and I am always humbled by their kindness, selflessness and their strength of character. Just last week we took over 100 young carers from across the county on a high wire assault course, it was a brilliant day and it was great to watch them have the chance to be children again.

Young carer quote: *“Being a young carer sometimes makes me feel frustrated because everything is on me. I’m quick to get angry and I think that’s why. Days like today help me relax.”*

It is hearing things like this that make me realise just how valuable the work is that we are doing, and is why it is easy to get up and get to work in the morning.

How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?

Geography plays a key role in the work I do for the charity, it is particularly useful when applying for grants as it helps us as an organisation to understand the socio-economic needs of particular communities. It has also allowed us as an organisation to develop a clearer understanding of the challenges young carers might face depending on the area they live in. For example, our young carers in rural locations can find it much more difficult to engage with services provided by the local authority; we have been able to work with them to overcome these barriers.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

My advice to students who would like to work in the charity sector is to spend time finding your passion. I loved my career in teaching; it is where I developed my unshakeable belief that no child’s destiny should be defined by their start in life. This belief is at the core of everything we are

now doing as an organisation. To work in the charity sector you need empathy for other people and you need to be able to passionately communicate why your cause matters. Volunteering placements could play a really valuable role in finding your passion and could help you to develop the wide variety of skills you need to lead an organisation.

Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

I chose geography because I find the fragile and ever changing relationship between the natural environment and the human population fascinating. Being a geographer has taught me to constantly examine and reflect on my own imprint on the world.

As a geographer you will always ask questions about the world around you and if you are always asking questions life is never boring.

Geographers are on the front line leading the fight against climate change and the destruction of our natural habitats, which in my mind, other than young carers, is one of the worthiest causes there is.