

# Transferable skills

## Stella Cooling, Support Worker Christchurch

Stella is a people person with an avid interest in human behaviour and psychology. She really enjoys making a positive difference in people's lives. For Stella working at Pathways feeds both her interests and gives her a chance to do something good for people.

Growing up in the United Kingdom, Stella left school to work in a bank before getting into early child care and education. She was later a private nanny and a qualified nursery teacher at a busy pre-school in the heart of London.

Stella found being a pre-school teacher tiring but immensely fun and rewarding too. "Swinging, going down the slide and running around the park chasing birds were all in a day's work! Watching young children grasp concepts such as reading and writing was really satisfying." The children's innocence, trust and faith in human nature helped to keep Stella grounded.

As a nanny, Stella worked for some great families and a few "not so great" families. She says the experience broadened her horizons and helped her put her own life in perspective. It helped her clarify what was important to her and what wasn't.

In 2005, Stella was seeking new experiences, new challenges and new learning so she packed up her life and moved across the globe to New Zealand.

Arriving in Christchurch Stella saw an ad for Pathways community support workers. She was thankful Pathways recognised her potential and despite her limited knowledge of mental health was prepared to give her an opportunity. Now Stella has been working in Pathways' respite services for just over three years. She loves it. "It suits my personality and there have been lots of cross over skills that I learnt as a teacher which help enormously."

Stella says working in respite can be "full on" and changes by the minute. "People come into our service often as a measure to avoid hospitalisation. They can be quite unwell but in just a couple of days we see a remarkable difference. It can be so rewarding."

Stella believes the best thing about her job is its unpredictability! "Each day is totally different with new people and new challenges. It's about making a positive difference in the lives of the people we meet."