



## "IT CHANGED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE"

Chantelle Lesforis travelled to Ghana on a placement with Changing Worlds last year. Spending three months teaching at a local school and then three months working in an orphanage really opened the 20-year-old's eyes. "There are so many things the people there don't have," explains Chantelle. "I worked in the girls' section of the orphanage where there were 22 girls aged from three months to 16 years old. They didn't have nappies for the children, and there were all those kids and just two members of staff."

Her experiences in Africa had a real impact on Chantelle and, after she completes her degree in dance and performing arts, she intends to undertake a PGCE which will enable her to teach. After this, she hopes to go on a VSO programme which will see her spend two years abroad trying to turn around lives in impoverished communities. "It'll be a real challenge," she admits, "but my gap year made me determined to go away again and make a difference."

In fact, her time in Ghana has made a difference to many areas of Chantelle's life, from inspiring her to buy the Big Issue to seeing her volunteer at a local special school where she holds movement therapy workshops. "They're only small things but I want to make a difference in some way," she says. "I'm definitely a lot less selfish than I was."

She also works with Changing Worlds to inspire potential gappers to take part in the extraordinary challenges the not-for-profit company offers, and she's keen to encourage gappers to embrace their gap experience fully so that they get as much as possible from it. "At the end of it I didn't want to come home. I'd done six months but it wasn't enough - I felt like I could do so much more." With her future plans looking solid, Chantelle will certainly be able to do much more for those in need.

## "IT CHANGED THE COURSE OF MY CAREER"

When David Wright opened the letter telling him he was being turned down for yet another veterinary degree course, he faced the decision to either go through UCAS clearing or take time out to think about his options. He opted for a gap year, and it was the best decision he ever made. "I'm a real animal lover," he explains. "The most obvious choice was to go to Africa. I stumbled across African Conservation Experience [ACE], which seemed to fit the bill perfectly."

Before he knew it, David found himself working two jobs to save the cash he needed for his African adventure. "I spent the first month in South Africa and the second in Botswana," he says. "I did everything from camping in the Kruger National Park to microlighting, rafting and throwing myself off a cliff on the world's highest gorge swing." Then of course there were the animals: "In Botswana, I worked on a population mapping project in the Tuli Block, an area of unimaginable beauty and sheer wilderness."

David explains: "It's strange how you set off in life with one direction in mind and end up in a completely new and fascinating one," he admits. "I reapplied to university in 2006 and secured six unconditional offers to study zoology." He's just graduated with first class honours and has plans for a career in research. "My gap year allowed me to rethink and reorganise myself," he explains. "It truly altered my perception and understanding of the world and how I fit into it all."

**Changing Worlds**

01883 340 960

[www.changingworlds.co.uk](http://www.changingworlds.co.uk)

**African Conservation Experience**

0845 5200 888

[www.conservationafrica.net](http://www.conservationafrica.net)