SERVICE MANAGER PROFILE: RACHEAL EMERSON PACT SOUTHLAND

What is your history with Pact?

I started working part time for Pact in 2016, doing the awake sleepover shifts in a then-new service for female clients with an intellectual disability.

Not long after starting, I started doing full-time awake sleepovers. I worked awake nights for about three years before I moved to a day shift.

I became a service coordinator in 2021. I am now Service Manager for Supported Independent Living (Invercargill and Gore), the Downtown on Don social networking centre (Invercargill) and our intellectual disability services in Tyne Street (Invercargill).

What were you doing before coming to Pact?

I worked at Pak'nSave here in Invercargill for eight years. I worked there while I was at school, in checkouts, and when I left school I worked in the butchery and seafood departments. I used to always get asked how to cook the fish we sold, but to this day I don't eat seafood.

What attracted you to Pact?

My sister was a support worker for another agency and believed I would make a perfect support worker. She spent a few weeks telling me what a support worker does and how it would suit me. When I finally made a decision to leave Pak'nSave, I applied for roles as a support worker, and I was lucky that Pact picked me.

What is the best thing you do at work?

Currently one of the best things I do is at Downtown, where we often have wee dance sessions. We put on the music, and staff and clients get up on our feet to do some awesome dance moves and occasionally some karaoke is involved. While it may not seem much, it brings a bit of joy to everyone involved. It is slowly getting some people out of their bubble. There is also lots of laughing and it is heartwarming to see the smiles that brighten up the room.

What is the best thing about working for Pact?

Meeting all the different people at different stages in their lives and helping them to find ways to achieve what they want to achieve. And I'll just add the management has been amazing over the years. I have felt very supported through study, changing services and in developing my skills.

What have you learned since being with Pact?

I have actually learnt a lot about myself since working with Pact, including good reflection techniques. My favourite thing I have learnt is that the social anxiety I thought I had in my younger years was just a sensory overload from too many different sounds – so I have become a bit of a social butterfly.

What are you most proud of in your role?

The social events I have planned that have helped foster friendships between those within Pact and at other service providers has been fantastic. I have watched friendships grow and friendships rekindle due to these events. And of course, the annual Halloween walkthrough – each year the clients participating in scaring have made a goal to make a certain person scream. I started the event because I enjoy Halloween and giving people a fright. Other staff and clients have found a small passion for this event as well.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining us?

Absolutely do it. It has been one of the best decisions in my life.