

SERVICE COORDINATOR PROFILE: MATTHEW SANSON, PACT OTAGO

What is your history with Pact?

I have worked for Pact for seven years. I started working as a mental health permi-flexi community support worker in 2015. In 2016 I became the service coordinator for one of Pact Otago's intellectual disability residential services. In 2020 I became the service coordinator of social networking centre, Naphtali.

What were you doing before coming to Pact?

Before I worked for Pact, I was a teacher for five years. I taught IT and literacy to adult learners, English to children in China, junior secondary English, physical education, science and te reo Māori in south Auckland and then finally worked as a primary school teacher in Invercargill. In a couple of my different roles, I was also lucky to work alongside a team of teachers running programs for gifted and talented children.

What attracted you to the organisation?

I left teaching to go travelling around South America with the idea of teaching there, though returned when a family member became ill. When I came back to New Zealand, I was ready for a change and I wanted to do something where my skillset was relevant. I was attracted to Pact because I had experience teaching children and teenagers with learning disabilities and mental health issues and had found it incredibly rewarding. Following some research, I could tell Pact would be a great place to carry on my career.

What is the best thing you do at work?

I get to do lots of great things at work, as my main job is to make sure everyone has something to look forward to every day. One of my favourite things though, is walking into Naphtali in the morning and being greeted like a celebrity by our happy clients! Our clients are like this with most staff (and taxi drivers), and I think it is quite a special thing to be greeted at your workplace like this every day.

What is the best thing about working for Pact?

The people are the best thing about working for Pact. The staff go to incredible lengths to support our clients, and our clients are truly good, funny, caring and creative people. I am really grateful that I get to work with them.

What have you learned since being with Pact?

I have learned to listen and be flexible with my thinking. I thought I was already pretty good at this from teaching but working at Pact has brought another level to my depth of thinking about how I do this, as it is fundamental to how we go about supporting people on their own terms.

What are you most proud of in your role?

One of the things I am most proud of is the programme we offer our clients at Naphtali. I can't actually take the credit for this as it is the product of service coordinators before me, and it is really the amazing team of vocational support workers we have at Naphtali that run it day to day. So, it is probably more accurate to say I am proud of the work my team does. They are endlessly creative and always manage to have four things on the go at any given time and grand plans for the future.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining us?

Take advantage of opportunities to use your talents and creativity when supporting people. There are so many ways to approach the work we do, and I know I feel most content in my work when I feel my whole skillset is being used to do the best job I can.

