

Spotlight on Disability

Words: Geoff Crockett Photos: Contributed

'I guess ... knowing that you're making a difference and impacting lives.'

That simple answer from IFYS Regional Coordinator, Simone Inglis, captures the essence of "why" working in the disability services sector is so rewarding for the staff who take the plunge.

For Simone, she came to the disability sector after studying nursing and spending several years working across a range of environments as an endorsed enrolled nurse (EEN).

After a short stint at Endeavour, working with disabled people in need of support, Simone moved across to IFYS and for the past three years she has been building a team of nearly 40 staff who spend every day making a difference in the lives of their clients.

Simone said it was only through her nursing and the exposure to the challenges faced by those who were dealt the hand of disability, either at birth or via accident later in life, that she realised how many young people were ending up in nursing homes because there were simply no better alternatives available - particularly in areas such as regional communities.

'It was just so sad to see,' Simone said.

Through IFYS's range of services, Supports by Design (www.supportsbydesign.com.au) and No Limits (www.nolimits.org.au), Simone and her team, many of whom have been working with the organisation for 10 years or more, are now able to offer innovative and tailored solutions to their clients.

While Simone is the first to admit that working in disability services offers a unique set of challenges, with clients who sometimes really do not know why they were behaving a certain way, or who were unable to tell you what was wrong, or how to help - she said the rewards of success stuck with you forever.

'I remember we had clients who really wanted to travel to Africa. It was their dream. It took us more than two years of planning, but we got them there. We found a Support Travel Company who helped with the trip,' Simone said.

'It's about baby steps. Assisting them to learn the skills to be more independent and to help them achieve.'

'We can support anyone with physical or mental needs.'

One of the biggest challenges for those working in the disability sector is finding accommodation for clients who are capable of living outside of nursing home environments with the right supports in place.

Simone said IFYS have a number of 24 hour, 7-day-a-week

arrangements, and a range of community access clients. IFYS recently purchased houses in Rockhampton and were looking to buy more as finding rental accommodation for clients was proving increasingly difficult.

'We do have a lot of leased houses though, where people are renting their own property and we support them full time.'

For Simone, the collegiate nature of the work she does is another plus.

'It's a team effort. We work with local allied health providers, psychologists and Government Departments, and we all know who to go to when we need help,' she said.

For her own staff, Simone said the focus was on constant training and support, ensuring they had the very latest knowledge available to them, and that they were recognised and rewarded for the challenging work they do every day.

Asked what she'd say to anyone looking to become involved in the disability sector, Simone was emphatic in her answer - 'Do it!'

She said there were career opportunities available for those who wanted them, with the very real benefit of knowing you were making someone else's life better by taking on a caring career.

'We have many long-term staff who've been here 10 years. Some have actually followed their clients from previous jobs.'

And there's still plenty of time for a life outside of work.

For Simone, that time is spent perfecting her shot either on the gun range or clay target shooting with a pistol, rifle and shotgun; riding motorbikes or paddleboarding.



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Simone Inglis