

Transforming specialist practice: Enhancing quality of life through the Practice Leader role category

Glassmoon Services, a growing organisation founded in 2019, provides 24-hour supported living and complex outreach services for young adults and adults with autism and/or learning disabilities. Expanding from 20 to 125 colleagues in just three years, the organisation is committed to enhancing career opportunities in adult social care. This case study explores how Glassmoon Services adopted the Care Workforce Pathway's Practice Leader role category and its impact on career development, service quality, and staff retention.

As an Early Adopter, Mark Kite, Head of Learning at Glassmoon, assessed the Care Workforce Pathway's role category descriptions against the organisation's existing job structures. Through consultation with colleagues, he identified the potential to formalise and optimise the Practice Leader role category for their Quality of Life Lead, Steph Harris, a specialist in learning disabilities and challenging behaviours. Mark collaborated with key stakeholders, including the Managing Director and Steph, to define the role's scope and responsibilities in alignment with Glassmoon's care model. Steph had already been collecting data on incidents and training outcomes, which informed policy improvements and contributed to the organisation's 'Pathway of Life' service model.

To ensure the role was fully integrated, Steph's responsibilities were expanded to include coaching, mentoring, and training, making her the lead for best practice workshops, incident debriefs, and positive behaviour support. Recognising the value of specialist roles, Glassmoon also created three additional positions to support new services, all of which were filled internally through career development conversations. This structured approach to career progression also led to the enrolment of senior care workers in advanced training, such as a Level 3 Teaching Adults qualification, to prepare them for specialist roles in the future.

The integration of the Practice Leader role category at Glassmoon Services has delivered several key benefits. Staff have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities, leading to greater efficiency and improved job performance. The quality of training and on-the-job support has significantly improved, allowing care workers to handle challenging behaviours more effectively. The introduction of regular debrief sessions has encouraged reflective learning and informed service improvements. The role has also contributed to more personalised support plans, improving the quality of life for people drawing on care and support.

Beyond service delivery, the focus on career growth has had a notable impact on staff retention and motivation. By offering clear pathways for progression and recognising the value of specialist expertise, Glassmoon has created a workplace culture that prioritises learning and development. The organisation has expanded its team and gained industry recognition for its innovative approach to training, with staff members taking on ambassadorial roles and participating in regional networks.

Steph Harris' journey to the Practice Leader role category exemplifies the opportunities available within the social care sector. Starting as a nursery nurse, she transitioned to respite care and outreach services, where her interest in behavioural support developed. She later trained as a physical intervention instructor and designed life skills programs for young people. After an injury led her to reconsider her career, she moved into training, joining Regard Partnership to specialise in managing challenging behaviours. Her professional development continued with a Level 4 Teaching Adults qualification, positioning her to deliver training across multiple locations.

Steph's relationships with former colleagues played a crucial role in her transition to Glassmoon Services, where she was instrumental in establishing new services and ensuring staff well-being was prioritised alongside client care. In her role as Practice Leader, she now delivers training, supports new client transitions, maintains direct communication with senior leadership, and continues to expand her expertise with qualifications such as the Restraint Reduction Network certification. She also mentors junior colleagues, helping them develop skills in quality-of-life monitoring, debrief facilitation, and behavioural support. Her efforts have contributed to a positive workplace culture that encourages learning, collaboration, and professional growth.

Glassmoon Services' adoption of the Practice Leader role category has strengthened its workforce, improved service quality, and created meaningful career progression opportunities. By formalising the role and embedding it within the organisation's structure, Glassmoon has reinforced its commitment to high standards of care and professional development. Steph's story highlights the impact of skilled leadership and the value of investing in people, demonstrating how a strategic approach to career pathways can benefit both staff and the individuals they support.