

## Mobile help for addictions

By: REBECCA GARDINER | Tuesday, 13 September 2011

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**SUPPORTIVE:** *Fiona Power, left, and Frankie Favero, of the Challenge Trust, which has launched a mobile community alcohol and other drug service.*

Times photo Rebecca Gardiner.

### • *Howick and Pakuranga Times*

THE high uptake of a new community alcohol and other drug treatment service has sent a clear message to regional health authorities.

In its first two weeks, the Phoenix Centre, funded by Counties Manukau District Health Board (CMDHB), received more than 20 referrals.

According to a report in the CMDHB's August meeting agenda, the uptake highlights "a previously unmet need" in the community.

The centre launched on June 20 and serves members of the greater Counties Manukau community aged 18–65.

It's a mobile service run through the Challenge Trust, a Botany-based organisation that helps people affected by issues such as mental illness, physical disability and addiction across Auckland.

Fiona Power, service co-ordinator for the centre in Papakura, says it suits people whose lives have been greatly affected by drug or alcohol use, and who would prefer not to take part in treatment at a residential facility.

"We'll come to them if they don't want to come to us," says Ms Power. "That gives us a major point of difference. We are an assertive community outreach service."

Jo Chiplin, senior programme manager for mental health and addictions funding and planning at CMDHB, says: "We were aware of the need for a more intensive and mobile service for people with significant alcohol and other drug issues, as no such service has been available for this community historically.

"It's for this reason the new service was prioritised by CMDHB and the high level of uptake would indicate this type of service was much needed. It's our intention to evaluate the service once it has been running for a while."

The Phoenix Centre focuses on helping people make sustainable changes, including reducing the amount of alcohol or drugs they consume with the goal of eventually giving up the substances altogether.

Treatment involves sessions with counsellors and social workers, as well as peer support specialists who have personal experience of addiction. "We see them within a week to do an initial assessment," says Ms Power. "Then we can see people up to five times a week. It's the idea of a phoenix rising from the ashes."

Potential clients can refer themselves to the programme, or referrals can come from concerned family members, friends and loved ones. "The message is simple," says Frankie Favero, Challenge Trust's marketing manager.

"Speak up for yourself and for the ones you love."

Feedback from clients has been positive and referrals are coming from across Counties Manukau.

"People are coming through with severe alcohol and drug issues," says Ms Power.

"Auckland as a geographic region has a huge issue with drug and alcohol dependency. It's just showing how high the need is."

For more information on the Phoenix Centre, log onto [www.challenge.co.nz/trust](http://www.challenge.co.nz/trust), email [phoenix@challenge.co.nz](mailto:phoenix@challenge.co.nz), or phone (09) 296-0983.