

New help for eating disorders

By Susan Pepperell

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Emma Searle is on the road to recovery: after six years, the 20-year-old is beginning to win control over her eating disorder.

At her worst she was wheelchair-bound and her parents twice took her to Australia for treatment.

But the breakthrough came at the end of last year when she was accepted into an Auckland residential programme called Thrive, run by the Recovery Solutions Group Trust.

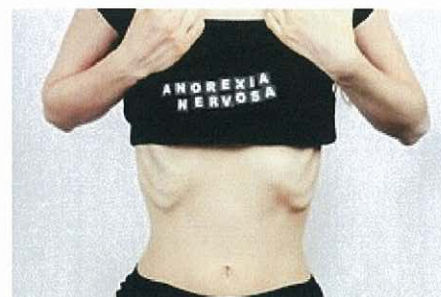


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Since entering Thrive, Emma has done so well she now comes home for some meals – and her mother says they are optimistic she will be home full-time in about four months.

Tomorrow, the Trust is launching a new programme called Flourish, which aims to help people with eating disorders access help as quickly as possible.

Emma's mother, Andrea Searle, said her daughter's battle might not have been as prolonged if the service had been available six years ago.

Flourish will provide help for parents concerned by their child's eating habits as well as offering assessments and targeted treatment programmes.

Trust psychiatrist Darryl Prince said it was a programme that treated the early symptoms.

"If people get in early the recovery rate is much higher – if it is diagnosed in the first six months the chance of recovery is that much greater," he said. "The need is huge. It's been estimated that there are about 60,000 people annually likely to suffer an eating disorder in New Zealand."

Prince said parents often became concerned about a child's eating habits but tended to convince themselves that their child was "going through a phase".

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