

'Hugely positive' response to app for people with addictions

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A one-year trial of a smartphone app to support people recovering from alcohol or drug addictions at Waikato DHB is proving successful and is likely to be extended.

The Recovery in Hand app connects service users to their clinical team, recovery community, peers and other resources 24/7.

Mental health and addictions services interim director Vicki Aitken says there is a good evidence base for digital and e-support for people with addictions and the DHB was "really keen and excited about having a mobile app that would support usual treatment".

"For people going through alcohol and drug recovery, one of the significant issues is not feeling connected and part of wider support," she says.

Sixty-five people are using the app as part of a year-long trial that started last November.

They can get notifications, set goals and input information about how they are feeling and doing, which is made available to service staff to view.

The app provides resources and information, a chat space, GPS detection to alert them if they enter a high risk location and a beacon button for emergency support.

Aitken says the programme has gone

well and she is looking to extend it beyond the initial year-long pilot and offer it to users living outside of Hamilton to those in South Waikato and Thames.

Potential issues, such as the digital literacy of service staff and uptake among service users, had not created significant problems and service users are "hugely positive about it", she explains.

The service localised and rebranded the app, called Addiction Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System (ACHESS) in the United States, involving DHB staff and users in the process.

Aitken says anecdotal feedback is that Recovery in Hand is improving patient care and outcomes and the service is looking to build its outcome measurement tool into the app as well as integrating it with the clinical records system.

The trial is a collaboration between the DHB, e-mental health and addictions consulting company HealthTRx and CHES Mobile Health.