

Rising to the challenge

Andrea Williamson, service leader

When Andrea Williamson says her past few years with Pathways have been busy and interesting, she means it.

Andrea left Waitemata District Health Board's Mason Clinic to join Pathways' team of registered health professionals in 1998. But it was ten years later when things really got exciting for her! Since 2008 she's had her hands full in the development, launch and running of two innovative new services - Tupu Ake and intensive community living services.

Pathways' intensive community living service is a community-based support service for people who have previously been in hospital. The service provides long-term support for people as they settle back into the community. "We work with people to find homes and rebuild their lives. And we have a lot of success – people really respond to this sort of support," says Andrea.

But it's Tupu Ake where Andrea feels her biggest sense of pride. At Tupu Ake people are supported by registered nurses and peer support specialists who have been trained to use their own experiences of mental illness to support others.

"Through Tupu Ake I've witnessed changes I never thought I would see. Seeing how a short stay in this community-based alternative to hospital admission can reduce the stress, and realising what makes that achievable is the peer support, has been a wonderful thing to be part of. It really works."

"The connection and understanding that forms between the staff and the people using the service is what turns people around. What the peer workforce has achieved so far has been phenomenal and I'm looking forward to seeing it grow even more."

Andrea loves her job and working for Pathways. "Every step I've taken has stretched me, and it's those challenges that have kept me here for 12 years. It's been busy, yes, but the time has certainly flown by."

Outside of work, family life is also important to Andrea. She has an adult daughter and lives with her "sprightly" 82 year old mother, who migrated from England nearly five years ago. Andrea also has two cats "that my daughter found when she was younger and, as children do, left them with the parents when she left home!"