



Media Release

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Affinity Services offers mother and baby support in a caring environment

Help is at hand for new mums struggling with severe post-natal depression in Counties Manukau.

Funded by the Counties Manukau District Health Board, Affinity Services offers mother and baby support in a caring environment while maintaining close links with whanau, community support networks and district health board clinical services.

Launched in December last year, the programme is free and allows both mother and baby to stay in a respite home with 24 hour in-house support. Jo Chiplin, the district health board's mental health funder and planner, says the service is an asset to the Counties Manukau community. "It's the first of its type in the greater Auckland region," says Ms Chiplin. "It's been a long time coming."

Affinity Services provides support for women and their babies in a three-bedroom respite unit in Manurewa, or at home. A recent user of the service, who wishes to remain anonymous, says the staff at Affinity helped her get through a traumatic time. "It's like staying in someone's place for a rest," she says. "No one really wants to go to a place like that, but they make you feel comfortable. You don't feel like you're a patient in a mental ward."

Affinity staff are trained in the Professor Charles Rapp 'Strengths Model', which focuses on reaching each and every person's potential and is tailored to the needs of the individual. "We've tried to make it more homelike and less medicalised for women," says Ms Chiplin. "Up until now, there has been no place where both mums and babies could be together whilst the mum receives the support she needs. The separation of mothers and babies at such a vulnerable time can be traumatic for the mother and the wider whanau."

The service is designed to prevent the need for hospitalisation and give women the opportunity to recover in a supportive, homely environment. Affinity Services have staff members of several different nationalities, including south Asian, Maori and Pacific Island. Women who are already receiving mental health services from the district health board and are within 12 months of having their baby are eligible for the service. Referrals can be made through the Counties Manukau Maternal Mental Health Service.

For more information, phone (09) 267 5032 or see www.affinityservices.co.nz.