

## Collaboration the key in Northland

A cross agency project to reduce drink driving in Northland was developed following connections made at an ALAC funded Emergency Medicine Conference.

Together Police, Northland DHB Public Health, and Mental Health and Addiction along with the ALAC and Ministry of Health funded Alcohol Drug Helpline (ADHL) have recorded a huge increase in the percentage of people seeking help with alcohol abuse issues.

Northland District Road Policing Manager, Murray Hodgson, says the agencies involved, began working together in May 2011, in the hope that a collaborative approach could both reduce the area's high number of drink-driving incidents and offer support to those who appeared to have alcohol abuse issues.

"The way it works is anyone arrested for drink-driving in Northland is asked if they would like support from the Helpline, and if they say yes a referral is made," Inspector Hodgson said.

In the first year 31% of those arrested by the Traffic Alcohol Group had been referred on, and between January and June this year the overall number of Northland referrals had increased by 92% compared with the previous year.

Inspector Hodgson said a move by Police to extend the referral offer outside drink driving to other alcohol related crime in Northland had resulted in an additional 176 referrals to the Helpline between August and April 2012.

Clients referred to the Helpline were offered a range of support options and strategies, around their alcohol use, including harm minimisation and avoiding relapses. Those requiring more intensive treatment were referred on to Mental Health and Addiction services within Northland.

Northland Public Health Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator Mandi Cross, said the commitment to collaboration between the agencies involved in the project had been the key to its success, while a further positive outcome had been the number of people contacting

the ADHL of their own volition after hearing about the service through Police.