ADVENTURE
SPECIALTIES TRUST

EST. 1984

KŌWHAI GROVE

AN **OUTDOOR THERAPY** DAY PROGRAMME
FOR **ACC SENSITIVE CLAIMS SERVICE** CLIENTS
IN TĀMAKI MAKAURAU **AUCKLAND**



Updated: 18 August 2026



KŌWHAI / The kōwhai is a native New Zealand tree known for its vibrant yellow flowers in spring. It is often associated with strength, hope, beauty, and healing. The tree thrives in New Zealand's diverse climates, much like how individuals, despite facing hardships and trauma, can find ways to heal and flourish with a range of supports.

KŌWHAI GROVE / In the context of this group, a grove symbolizes a safe space where participants can grow, heal and find strength together, just as trees grow stronger when rooted within a supportive community.

[Drawing sourced from Museum of New Zealand / Te Papa Tongarewa]

KŌWHAI GROVE

Are you longing for a sense of calm and connection? Would you like to gently rediscover your strengths, at your own pace, in a supportive, natural setting? Do you want to feel more present, more alive, and more in tune with yourself and the world around you?

Kōwhai Grove is a trauma-responsive outdoor therapy programme for ACC's Sensitive Claims Service clients. It is run by Adventure Specialties Trust, in partnership with CARE Waitākere, a wrap-around social service provider in West Auckland.

At its heart, Kōwhai Grove is about spending meaningful time in nature — exploring, walking, sitting, creating, or simply being — with space for gentle reflection and supportive group conversations. The focus is on slowing down, reconnecting with yourself and the natural world, and nurturing your wellbeing. If this sounds good to you, consider joining our Kōwhai Grove programme.

What do our previous participants have to say?

"I am now more confident about going out and connecting with nature when my body and spirit need it."
"I feel hopeful that my mental health will heal the more I nurture it."
"This programme helped me prove to myself I'm still capable, despite not being as fit and active as I used to be."
"I now have a lot more self-love and love for the outdoors, sobriety and doing new recovery adventures. I feel blessed and grateful."
"This programme has made it easier for me to connect to my Taha Wairua, many activities we did helped that a lot."
"I feel 10/10 connected to nature. I feel calm and relaxed after being in the outdoors."
"I've seen the good in what nature does to my mind. It just clears it, I feel like I can breathe properly."



OUR APPROACH

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

Kōwhai Grove is a small Outdoor Therapy group (up to ten participants who are the same gender as you) designed to support emotional wellbeing, reconnection, and healing, through time in nature.

Grounded in trauma-informed and nature-based therapeutic approaches, this eight-week programme offers gentle, restorative experiences outdoors. Each week, we visit a different natural location around Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, engaging in simple practices such as mindful walking, nature connection activities, creative expression, or quiet reflection. Some weeks might include also include options such as immersing yourself (or just your feet!) in water for a swim, getting your hands in the soil through gardening, exploring with orienteering, or simply noticing the textures, smells, and sounds of the environment around you — all ways of coming back to your body and the present moment.

Research shows that spending time in natural environments can reduce stress, support nervous system regulation and improve mood, especially when paired with gentle movement and supportive human connection.

Each session begins and ends with a facilitated group circle. Conversations will explore weekly themes related to self-awareness, self-compassion, connection, and growth — always at your own pace, and always with choice and care at the centre.

We provide a shared morning tea and all materials needed.

Transport is optional — you can meet us at the activity location or meet us at Care Waitakere in Henderson and then travel with us in an Adventure Specialties Trust van.

No outdoor experience is needed — just a willingness to be present, as you are.

KAUPAPA / PURPOSE

- To support individuals on a gentle journey of restoring wellbeing after trauma
- To nurture a sense of hope and possibility around living a more connected and fulfilling life
- To explore simple, nature-based ways of easing the impacts of anxiety, low mood, and trauma that come with PTSD
- To experience calm, grounding time in nature through gentle activities in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
- To reflect on themes of life, healing, and wellbeing in an open, safe, and supportive group setting
- To foster meaningful connection with others in a way that feels respectful and at your own pace
- To experience the proven benefits of spending time outdoors — including reduced stress, improved mood, better sleep, and greater emotional regulation — through gentle movement and connection with the natural world.

SOLUTION-FOCUSED FACILITATION

Our conversations and facilitated discussion in this programme are guided by the model of 'Solution-Focused Brief Therapy'. Contrary to what the name suggests this is not about the facilitators offering solutions. It is more about a model of thinking that is more forward-focused. We focus on where you want to go and the skills and strengths you have to get you there. We don't go delving into people's deep personal past or analysing problems. We focus on movement towards your goals, whatever they might be.

GROUP VS INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

This service is designed as a group programme, however there will also be some individual support. You will meet individually with one of our facilitators prior to starting the programme to get to know each other, we can understand your hopes and goals for the programme, and you can ask any questions you have about the programme. We aim to work collaboratively with your Lead Provider, so that together we can ensure that this programme is helpful for you.

WE EACH KNOW OURSELVES BEST

It is important for us to acknowledge that any person knows themselves, their situations and their challenges the best. We honour that and facilitate conversations rather than telling people what to do. We do not presume to be experts or have the answers to any problems. We are not there to assess, diagnose or prescribe solutions. We are simply here to facilitate an experience where you can connect with nature, connect with yourself and others, reflect on your life and experiences with the goal of moving towards your own goals.



CHOICE-BASED PARTICIPATION

Gentle exploration is part of the Kōwhai Grove Outdoor Therapy group — not to test your limits, but to support healing, self-awareness, and reconnection with your body. Each place we go and each activity we do may bring up something different for different people. We honour choice, consent, and pacing. You're always encouraged to listen to your body and emotions, and to participate in the way that feels right for you. For some, this may mean walking a little further, or trying something unfamiliar. For others, it may mean sitting quietly, observing nature, or simply showing up. What matters most is that you feel safe, seen, and empowered to make your own choices. We'll always do our best to offer flexible options, and clearly communicate when some choices may not be possible due to safety or logistics.

A FOCUS ON NATURE CONNECTION

This programme is an opportunity to take more time in the day to connect with nature rather than just move through it. We look for opportunities to experience joy, awe, wonder, and curiosity about our world and our place in it.

On a daily basis we will go to a different environment and do an activity there. We may also do some activities specifically to connect with nature – maybe a mindfulness walk, or doing some art pieces or sculptures with nature, or any other ways of connecting in a relationship with nature.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

First and foremost, it is a priority that that this group is a safe and supportive environment for all people.

Obviously in outdoor activities the physical safety is important! We have qualified instructors and a safety management system that is audited and registered with Worksafe NZ, and we need people to follow our safety rules.

'Safe' also means emotional safety. This means we take time to build a culture where sharing is ok and encouraged by others. Where respect is really important and intentionally built upon on the group.

It also means the safety to be yourself no matter which culture, gender, sexuality, profession, age or personality you have. We put significant time and energy into building a group environment with healthy dynamics and healthy relationships.



WHO IS THIS FOR?



REQUIREMENTS

Our Kōwhai Group is open to people who are clients in ACC's Sensitive Claims Service (SCS). You must be in regular counselling/therapy with an SCS Lead Provider, with a Support to Wellbeing Plan in place. Your Lead Provider will have helped you to establish goals for therapy, and you are looking for a safe supportive environment to practice and develop these skills.

To participate in this group, you will need to have a basic level of physical mobility (e.g. moving safely on uneven ground). You will need to be able to attend independently, without a caregiver or support person. You will also need to feel comfortable managing your own needs throughout the day.

You need to be willing and able to commit to attend all eight sessions (with exception to illness and exceptional circumstances). Group conversations are an important part of this course, so you need to be willing to contribute to this aspect of the programme. All participants will need to complete an enrolment form that includes giving medical info and consent. It is important to us that you have a state of physical and mental health that allows for safe participation in this programme. This will allow our facilitators to choose appropriate activities for the group and support individuals accordingly.

RESTRICTIONS

While we are able to accommodate many physical constraints, we are unable to accept participants with severe medical conditions or injuries that pose a risk for engaging in outdoor adventure activities. Additionally, we cannot accept individuals with a history of perpetrating sexual abuse, those currently experiencing psychosis, or those who are unable to understand and follow basic safety instructions due to intellectual ability or psychological state. We are also unable to accept individuals who are actively suicidal, experience strong and frequent suicidal ideation, or pose a potential risk to others.

DATES AND TIMES

DATES

Kōwhai Grove happens once a week over eight weeks during the school term.
Please see the Kōwhai Grove (Auckland) webpage for the specific dates for each term:
www.adventurespecialties.co.nz/kowhai-grove-auckland

WHAT TO EXPECT EACH DAY

Each week will follow a familiar rhythm, designed to create a sense of safety, flow, and connection — even though the location and activities will vary.

9:30am

Meet CARE Waitakere in Henderson, West Auckland (see the website for details). We will travel together to the activity location in an Adventure Specialties Trust van (or you can drive there yourself, if you prefer to take your own vehicle)

10am

We will begin by meeting at the day's location, where we'll gather in a group circle to check in and settle. Together, we will discuss the plan for the day and explore a theme or thought to guide our time in nature. From there, we will move into the day's activity — whether that's walking, creating, exploring, or simply being present outdoors. There will be time for shared morning tea, reflective conversations, and opportunities to connect with nature in ways that feel meaningful to you.

We will close each day by coming back together as a group, creating space to reflect, share (if you choose), and gently transition out of the experience.

12.30pm

Optional transport back to CARE Waitakere (estimated arrival back at 1pm). You will also receive a letter each week via email from the facilitators as a reminder of what we did that day and the conversations that were had.

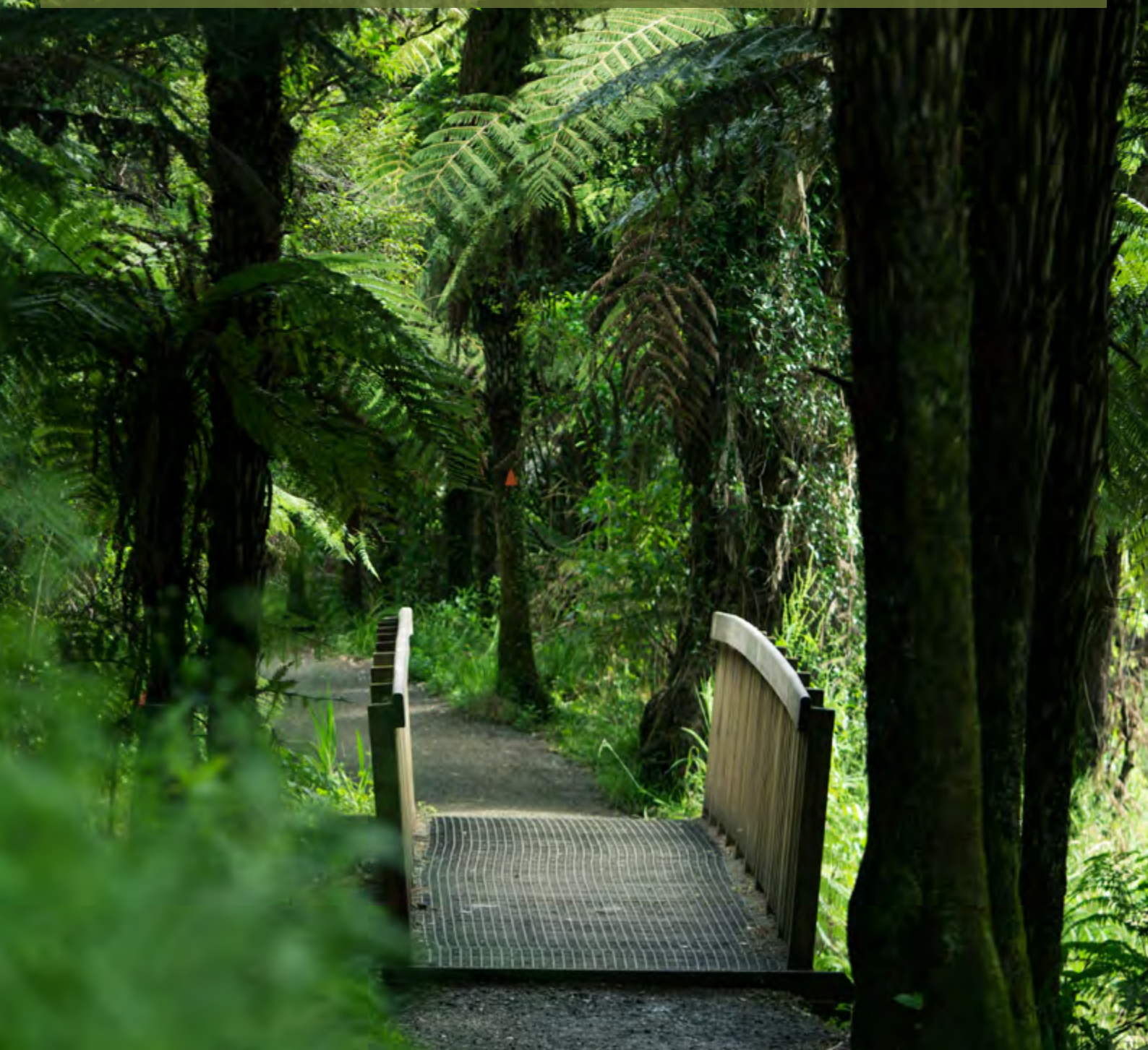
OUR FACILITATORS

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Our Adventure Therapy Clinicians are qualified Mental Health Professionals (either Social Workers, Psychologists, Psychotherapists, or Counsellors) and are registered with ACC to work within the Sensitive Claims Service. They get to know you before your programme, learn what support you might need while you're with us, and look after your mental and emotional wellbeing on programme. Check the Kōwhai Grove (Auckland) webpage to find out who will be on your programme.

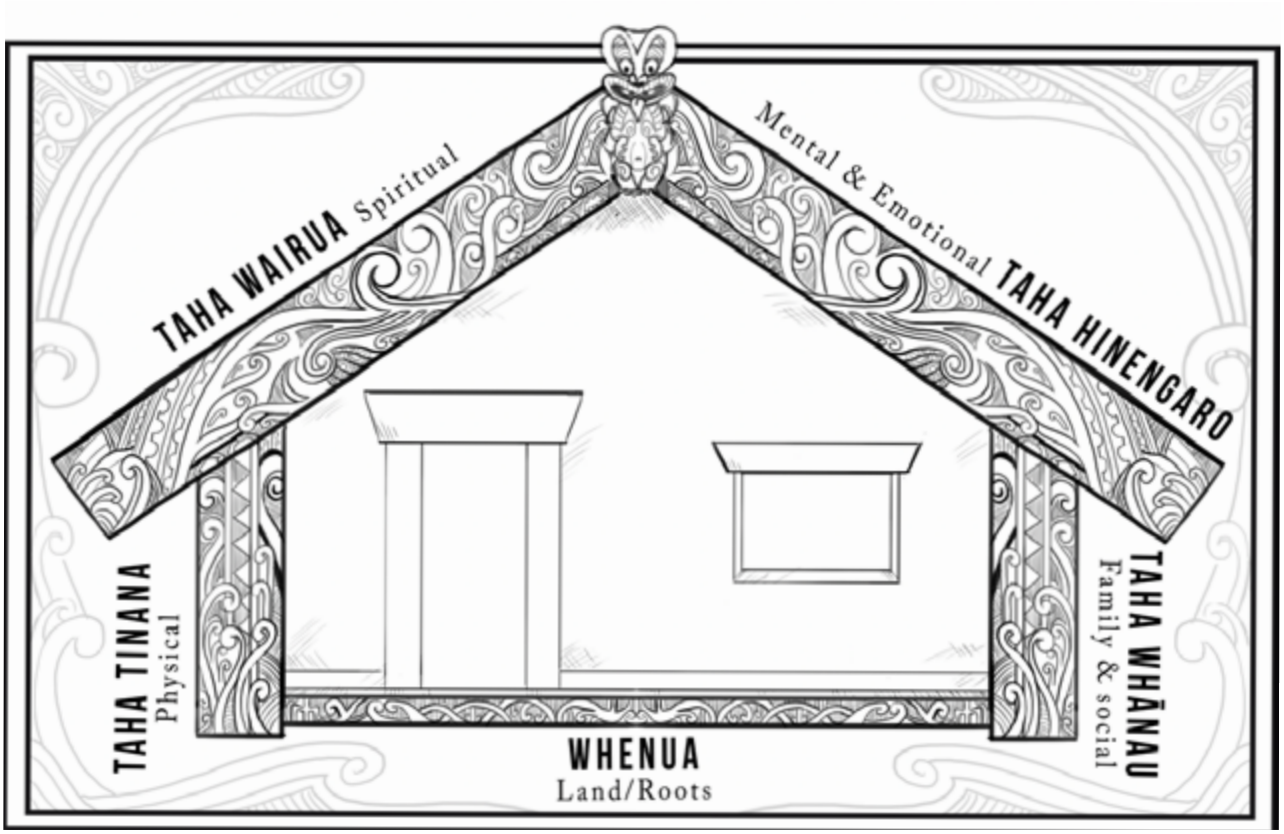
OUTDOOR INSTRUCTOR

We have a team of qualified and highly experienced Outdoor Instructors, one of whom will join you on this Kōwhai Grove programme. While our Mental Health Professional is looking after your mental and emotional well being, our Outdoor Instructor will look after your physical wellbeing and safety. All our instructors are trained and deployed to meet rigorous safety standards, which are externally audited by Adventure Mark and approved by WorkSafe New Zealand (read more about Safety and Compliance).



PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

At Adventure Specialties Trust, all our programmes focus on wellbeing. We use the Māori model of holistic health: *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, the house with four walls. Each of the four walls (described below) is an important part of hauora (health and wellbeing). The house is supported by the strong foundation of *Te Whenua*, our connection to the land and the natural environment.



TAHA TINANA / physical wellbeing

Outdoor activities enhance our physical wellbeing, our *Taha Tinana*. It's about being aware of our body and meeting its basic needs. It allows us to feel energetic, motivated, and physically capable of pursuing activities that bring joy, connection, and satisfaction to our days.

TAHA WAIRUA / spiritual wellbeing

Being in nature fosters our awareness and sense of spiritual wellbeing, our *Taha Wairua*. It is about the unseen essence as a person that is connected to our sense of self, identity, and connection to our beliefs, culture, values, and purpose. It provides a foundation of meaning and direction.

TAHA WHĀNAU / family and social wellbeing

Adventure activities build up our social wellbeing, our *Taha Whānau* through fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and confidence in our relationships with others. This includes the link to our ancestors, our ties with the past, present and future. It includes experiencing that people can be kind, trustworthy, and safe, as well as the ability to resolve differences and work collaboratively with others.

TAHA HINENGARO / mental and emotional wellbeing

Being outdoors in nature supports our mental and emotional wellbeing, our *Taha Hinengaro*. It's about our thoughts, feelings and emotions being in balance. This allows us to feel hopeful and positive about the future, with the capacity to navigate life's challenges and emotions. We go through life nurturing a sense of self-compassion, self-care and self-worth.

TE WHENUA / connection to the land and nature

Connection to *Te Whenua*, the land and the natural world, is about feeling deeply connected to nature and drawing on that connection to support our wellbeing. It includes experiencing awe and wonder in *te taiao* (the natural environment) and fostering a sense of responsibility to care for and protect the environment.

ABOUT ADVENTURE SPECIALTIES TRUST

Adventure Specialties Trust is at the forefront of developing adventure therapy services in New Zealand. We have been delivering outdoor education for over 40 years, providing a huge range of challenging activities on New Zealand's rocks, rivers, mountains, caves, sea and coast. But our real point of difference is in how we deliver those programmes. We facilitate every experience so that every participant has the opportunity to develop holistically.

OUR VISION

Lives Inspired by Adventure!

OUR MISSION

To respond to community needs by providing purposeful adventure, in order to facilitate therapeutic outcomes and positive growth.

OUR VALUES

We are guided by our Christian faith, which places the love of God at the centre of all that we do.
This is expressed by the following values:

WE ARE HOPEFUL. Change is possible for everyone. We are optimistic, we are confident and we use a holistic, strengths-based approach which supports hauora, "the winds of wellness."

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER. We practice mahi tahi. We encourage each other and our participants. We grow community partnerships and collaborate to achieve shared goals.

WE ARE ADVENTUROUS. Outdoor adventure will transform lives. We use healthy adventure and a connection with te taio, the natural world, to nurture growth and learning.

WE ARE INCLUSIVE. Everyone is welcome. We honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We practice equity, respect and manaakitanga.

WE ARE SAFE. We embrace physical, emotional, social and cultural safety. We continually invest in our team and resources to ensure that everything we do is high quality.



DO YOU THINK KŌWHAI GROVE MIGHT BE A GOOD FIT?

FOR ACC SCS CLIENTS

If you'd like to know more about the course, you can check out our website:
www.adventurespecialties.co.nz/kowhai-grove-auckland

Or get in touch with Anneke (our Clinical Lead)
anneke@adventurespecialties.co.nz
027 397 3057

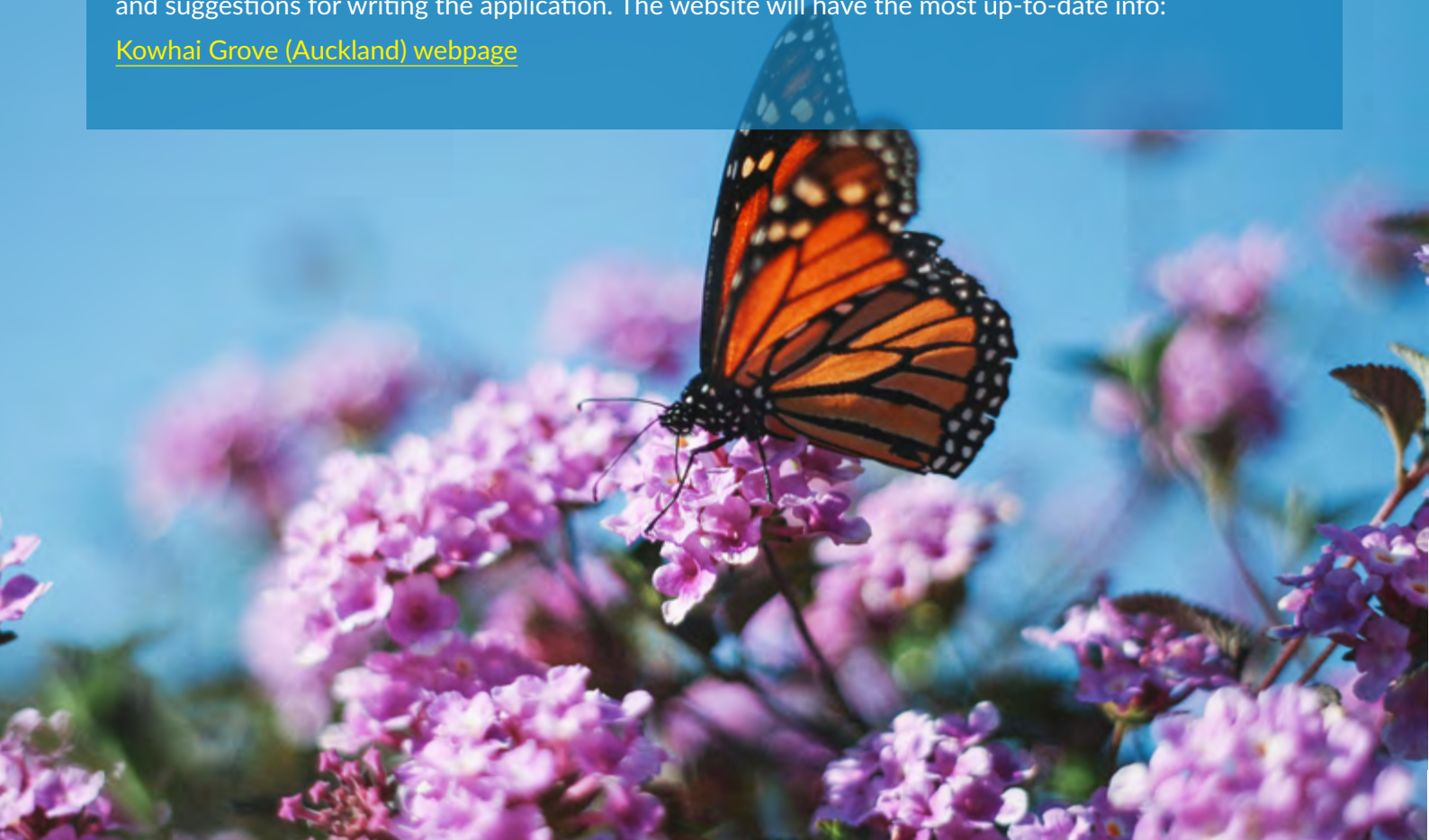
If you're keen to come on board, your next step is to let your Lead Provider know. They will help you to work out whether this would be a helpful part of your wellbeing plan. If so, they can contact us, then apply to ACC to get approval. Once it's been approved, you and your Lead Provider will fill in our Enrolment/Medical/Consent form together.

Then you will meet up with our Auckland clinician (see the website for their name and details), either in person or via video call, to talk more about the programme. We can answer any of your questions about the day-to-day logisitics of the programme. We can also discuss what you hope to gain from the programme and also ensure that we know how to support you while you are with us. This will include discussing any information provided on the Enrolment/Medical/Consent form. We look forward to hearing from you!

FOR ACC LEAD PROVIDERS

Please see the information on our website, about the process for referring your clients to Kōwhai Grove. There is info about the enrolment process, including details for applying for a purchase order from ACC and suggestions for writing the application. The website will have the most up-to-date info:

Kowhai Grove (Auckland) webpage





























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