

# THE advocate

## Manaaki: A New Life at 25

Manaaki\* came to Aviva for support in September 2017. The 25 year-old described himself at the time as “a raging alcoholic, drinking until I blanked out. I just had lots of anger. The last strike was when I hit out at my partner – I never, ever thought I’d be capable of that. It was a side of me I didn’t like.”

Manaaki Googled support and after calling Aviva’s 0800 line he was connected with our Youth Services team (this generally supports young people aged 13 – 25). “I came in that day and Mike began helping me” says Manaaki. “He assured me that I was going to be alright. I had felt completely alone, and it was good to have some hope.”

Manaaki had a “savage” childhood. “My father was an alcoholic and he was abusive.” Manaaki’s earliest memory is his father threatening his mother with a machete. “We watched her get beaten a lot – a few times a week; then it was our turn. There was lots of physical and sexual abuse, and Mum suffered a lot of mental illness.”

Money was so tight that the family would go months without power, eating just the bare minimum. “We all ended

**“My whole vibe has changed from the inside out... even my walk has changed. Life is peaceful; I’m the happiest I’ve ever been in my entire life.”**

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Image courtesy of Shutterstock

up in CYF (now Oranga Tamariki) care. I stayed in CYF foster care for two years. Any money I got from doing chores, I’d give to my parents to help them.

“Eventually I ran away and was a street kid for many years, eating out of bins. It was better than going home.

“On the streets I picked up a lot of bad traits, like ‘blacking out’ and being immune to violence. There was nothing in my heart to have any mercy on anyone. I’d make money by being a pimp, looking after the girls on the street, as well as robbing. It was normal

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# Adam's Journey of Change

Adam\* and his wife Bella\* had been having problems for quite some time. One of the main causes for discord was that when they disagreed, Adam would verbally abuse Bella. Things got to a point where Bella insisted Adam address his anger issues once and for all.

"Our 'discussions' often turned feral" says Adam. "I felt she was totally unreasonable and so then I'd say horrible things to her. This had been going on for a while and she felt I needed to change. We had been at a counsellor's office and had seen the pamphlet for ReachOut; I just rang the number.

"I started working with Gina (ReachOut Family Support Worker), and we have been working together for about 10 weeks now. She was easy to talk to, and not judgemental at all. I felt much better – much calmer. The big change has been in my thinking – I can recognise when I'm starting to get amped up. I now choose not to get rattled. I try walking away – that works well.

"I realised that getting angry isn't helping me. Even though we may still disagree, I know my own truth in my own head, so I don't let the disagreement upset me. We're all entitled to our own opinions, and I can respect that. The last time we argued I held it all together – I felt quite



Image courtesy of iStock

empowered and calm instead of seething, like before. The hardest thing is being consistent, but I'm doing this for myself – I'm really trying to be different."

Adam continues to see Gina for support to embed that consistency of change. "She is really quite good. (Her support) has really helped me."

\*Not their real names

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...continued from overleaf

for me, but it was getting worse. I was assaulting family, friends – anyone.

"As for my partner, I'm not even sure how I got to be in a relationship. I guess I was just lucky. She opened my eyes by coming into my life, and she built this heart I can care about. I wanted to make her happy, to protect her. So when I hit her, I knew I couldn't live like that anymore."

Support from the Youth team has helped Manaaki change his life completely. "The thing I learnt most was thinking about my situation – what triggers me and how to avoid/manage those. I used to have a million questions in my head about another person, and I'd answer those questions myself, then attack based on what I thought. I learnt a lot of techniques about stopping and thinking first."

"The work with Mike taught me a lot about how what happened in the past has affected me, and how I thought

what I was used to seeing was normal. He showed me the difference between healthy/unhealthy behaviours in the way I treat people. That was important in my relationship with my partner, because now I realise that I need to explain how I feel rather than just get angry. It has also helped my relationship with friends, colleagues – everyone has benefitted from it."

Manaaki is now working in a job he'd previously had. "They knew me before and they see a big difference in me. If I was still the same person I wouldn't have gotten my job back." He also invited his Youth Worker Mike to visit his local marae to celebrate Manaaki's course graduation.

As part of his one-on-one sessions, Manaaki was introduced to an Aviva Peer Support Specialist who told her 'story' and how this led her into working for Aviva and helping others. Manaaki found this inspiring and he then took

the opportunity to undertake the peer support community-based child wellbeing training Aviva piloted late in 2017. "That opened hidden doors and hurts I hadn't realised I still held" he says. "But it was good – it opened my eyes to what had happened to me as a child. My partner has children and in starting this journey I had to think about the life I was showing them. So I've been applying the tools from this course to my parenting – we're a happier family at home now, and the kids see their mother happier.

"Life is great now. I don't have to look over my shoulder, and because I stopped drinking after coming to Aviva, I wake up with no regrets. My whole vibe has changed, from the inside out. Since I started with Aviva I feel even my walk has changed. Life is peaceful; I'm the happiest I've ever been in my entire life."

\*Not his real name

## Aviva's Annual Appeal is 18 and 19 May.

Register at <https://goo.gl/4qKPsy>



## The Future Can't Wait

Around the corner, down the street or next door to you there is someone living with violence or fear. It's a lonely place to be.

Family violence is shockingly prevalent in our communities. You may believe that the circle of people you interact with is immune, but given that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of partner violence and child abuse in the developed world (one in three women and one in seven children will experience violence from an adult in their home)<sup>1</sup>, that's probably not the case.

At Aviva, we believe that New Zealand can be violence-free. If we all choose not to ignore or condone family or sexual violence, and if we ensure that the right support is there – freely, accessibly and empathetically – to overcome its effects, we can achieve that future.

As you read this newsletter you'll hear about and from many people who are creating violence-free futures for themselves, and those closest to them. The futures of our children are especially at risk because children who experience or even witness violence are more likely to experience violent relationships as adults.

A safe future is too important to wait for, but so often that future does wait – for the courage to speak or for things to become unbearable and then, when



Ava and Grace on collecting duty in 2017

people do reach out, they often wait for their name to rise to the top of a waitlist for support. A lack of resources means that we must prioritise people based on their situation and risk, and some may wait three-six weeks for the in-depth support they need. That is not OK.

But as a community of caring people who want the best for ourselves and others, we can support people to create violence-free futures. That's why we need your help. On May 18 and 19 Aviva is holding our annual appeal. It involves a street appeal and postal appeal; perhaps you could join us in collecting,

or donate online (<https://appeal.avivafamilies.org.nz/>).

We also ask people to think of other ways to raise funds for the services that so many of our neighbours, colleagues, friends or family may need to use. Perhaps you could take up a collection at work, run a raffle, or arrange a quiz... anything you do is a huge help to people waiting to live without violence.

Together, we can ensure our most vulnerable children and their families get the support they need, when they need it. Together, we can work toward creating a violence-free Aotearoa. Transforming lives and changing futures is too important to wait; you can help ensure it doesn't have to.

**In 2016 Police investigated 118,910 family violence incidents – one every 5 minutes. 76% of family violence incidents are NOT reported to Police.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics/>

# SASSC Spreads South

Like family violence, sexual violence is often not talked about openly, but it is also a dark fact of our society, and its effects can be devastating and long-lasting.

The need to deal more effectively with the trauma caused by sexual assault led the Government to invest significantly in this area in 2016, and actively ensure that adequate support services were available throughout the country, including rural areas. As part of this plan, in late 2017 Aviva and partner START were successful in winning a tender to provide the Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) to the Selwyn District, in addition to Christchurch city and North Canterbury.

Aviva and START began operating SASSC in mid-2014 and demand has risen dramatically. In its first year of operation (2014-15), SASSC supported 138 clients; in the last financial year, that number had risen by 169% to 371, with extra support from only .6 of an additional staff member.

SASSC is a vital service because it provides confidential and professional specialist support to women and men following either recent or historic sexual violence or abuse. Whilst paid staff provide this crucial service 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday, it is a dedicated team of trained volunteers that deliver the service during evenings and weekends. Between them the SASSC team provide advocacy and support for a client or their family during medical or legal processes; emergency face-to-face sessions for counselling, referrals, assistance in making informed decisions, and arranging access to resources; and specialist social work support until longer-term services become available (waiting times can range between six weeks and several months).

SASSC will provide local support for Selwyn through an integrated team



Image courtesy of Shutterstock

**Since 2014 SASSC demand has increased 170%.**

approach, which will be hosted, managed and delivered by Aviva and located at The Loft. A part-time presence in Selwyn will enable face-to-face appointments. Aviva will be seeking to work in collaboration with other local agencies in the provision of SASSC to build local information and referral networks.

Whilst Christchurch-based SASSC – which requires Selwyn residents to travel to Christchurch – currently supports a small number of clients in that region, it

is believed that demand is significantly under-represented there and that an on-the-ground presence will see this increase. This is especially likely as Selwyn is experiencing some of the most rapid population growth in New Zealand. Christchurch, Selwyn and Waimakariri are tipped to grow by about 150,000 people in the next 30 years, reaching 650,000 by 2048<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Selwyn is home to Burnham Military Camp and Lincoln University, both of which have a high and growing population of 18-24 year-olds. This age group is a recognised high risk group that already makes up a third of SASSC clients.

If you or someone you know based in Christchurch, Selwyn or North Canterbury is interested in becoming a SASSC volunteer, please contact [sasscadmin@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:sasscadmin@avivafamilies.org.nz)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.star.kiwi/2018/03/massive-housing-demand-looms-region-sprawls/>

## Sharing the Christmas Spirit

Once again, we were incredibly overwhelmed with generosity at Christmas time (and before, and after!) So many presents came in for the children, young people and adults we work with, we were quite overwhelmed. Your generosity really made Christmas special for so many families who might otherwise have not been able to share that joy with the people they love. We are the lucky ones who get to see the happy faces, which is a special gift in itself; thank you.



Some of the hundreds of Christmas gifts donated at Aviva for local families.

# Supporting Men to Make the Biggest Step

ReachOut Family Support Worker Gina Truckell has worked with Aviva since August 2017, supporting men causing, or at risk of causing, family violence harm to change their behaviours, and their lives.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Gina first came to New Zealand several years ago to travel, and then studied psychology and biology. Gina and her family returned for good in 2014, deciding to make New Zealand their permanent home. Following the arrival of a new baby, the move back into the work place had to be exactly the right one for Gina. Gina brought with her not just her university knowledge, but over 23 years of experience in the justice sector and a huge passion for working within the community to improve people's lives.

"I really wanted a job that mattered" Gina says, "and one where I could use all I had learned to help people." Joining Aviva to work with men who had used violence was the role Gina had been looking for. Initially Gina worked with high risk users of violence as an Aviva Independent Perpetrator Specialist, part of the Integrated Safety Response pilot. Since December Gina has transitioned to Aviva's ReachOut service, which supports any man – not just those at highest risk of causing family violence harm – to address their violent behaviours or anger issues. Men who have experienced violence can also be supported by Aviva.

Men generally self-refer to ReachOut, or are referred by another agency. Unlike most services for men using violence, ReachOut is voluntary for participants and individually tailored. It teaches men strategies to build safer and more positive relationships with their partners, children, family members, colleagues and themselves.

## "When someone asks for help, it's the biggest step they can make."

Employing women into ReachOut in 2017 was a new direction for the service, but it has been one that has been welcomed by the men receiving support. "To them, my gender doesn't matter; what matters is whether you can help. In some respects as a woman I can challenge more, or offer a different viewpoint. The feedback I've had has been that they have gotten something



Gina explains the Anger Pyramid to a client.

from our work together, that they have made important changes that others have also noticed. That's important validation."

Gina loves working with men to help them achieve goals that will improve their own lives, and those of the people closest to them. "They are engaging with me because they want to make the change – they are not being forced – so they don't come with anger. The dynamic is different than if they were being made to come (by Family Court order, for example). Most importantly, we're all human beings. We all have similarities and differences, and a genuine, empathetic viewpoint will make a connection."

The biggest challenge, Gina says, comes after the first appointment, when the desire to change can dissipate. "I have to be very proactive in connecting with them. Many men also have other issues going on – mental health, alcohol or drug use, even having the money for petrol or the bus to travel here. Although they're ready, it may be difficult to make the change. There are blocks for them that we need to help remove."

The work is full of great moments for Gina, sometimes in ways that seem quite simple. "It can be as easy as

stating something that might seem obvious, and challenging their perception – that helps them realise that there are other ways to do things. For instance, one client was not enjoying his job, and that stress was taking its toll within his relationship. Normally he would show his frustration at work as anger, get the sack and have to find another job. I suggested that he look for another job. The realisation that he could take control hadn't occurred to him – so he applied elsewhere and got a new job. He was chuffed. He even stepped up at home, changing nappies for the first time and taking sick leave to look after the kids. It was a huge difference for him and his partner, seeing that change."

Something Gina wants everyone to understand is that family violence is extremely complex, and "it's important to realise and understand that the majority of men using violence have been victims of childhood abuse. They have had that behaviour role modelled – its normality to them. We have to remember that it's the behaviour we're not happy with, not the person. When someone asks for help, it's the biggest step they can make. People can make change – it's not easy and it's often a long process, but change can be made."

# Thank you for Caring!

As always we are very grateful to all of the individuals, families, community groups, businesses, funders, and Trusts who have supported the children, young people and adults we work with throughout the whole year. That generosity is particularly obvious at Christmas, but your support throughout the year is essential and extremely valued. You are part of a community who are supporting others towards safer, happier lives.



Easter treats from The Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust.

As always, we can't name everyone who has helped in recent months but please know that your support is crucial in enabling families and communities to become stronger and safer. We'd like to acknowledge some of the supporters who have contributed time, money or goods to support our families:

- AMI Play it Forward
- Avon Cosmetics
- Bryndwr Baptist Church
- Chargeurs Wool (NZ)
- City Harvest
- Cryptopia
- Harcourts Gold Papanui
- Inland Revenue Department
- King's Church
- Kiwi Rail
- Marian College
- The Monthly Co/Necesse
- Rangi Ruru Girls High School
- Rotary Club of Garden City

- Scenic Circle Hotels
- Tower Insurance

We'd also like to thank the following funders for their particularly generous support:

- ACE Aotearoa
- B. A. Lewis Charitable Trust
- Blogg Charitable Trust
- Christchurch Casinos Charitable Trust
- Christchurch Earthquake Recovery Trust
- Mainland Foundation
- Maurice Carter Charitable Trust
- New Zealand Community Trust
- Pub Charity Inc
- Rata Foundation
- Southern Trust
- The Tindall Foundation
- The Trusts Community Foundation
- The Todd Foundation
- The Wayne Francis Charitable Trust

What did dinosaurs use  
to make their hotdogs?



Jurassic Pork!

## “Life Finds a Way”

That would be a great way to describe overcoming family violence, but actually Jurassic Park beat us to it! ‘Life Finds a Way’ is the tag line of the latest instalment, Fallen Kingdom, which is being released in New Zealand on 21 June, and Aviva are holding a screening on 5 July as a fundraiser.

Fallen Kingdom takes place on the island of Isla Nublar, where the dinosaurs which were previously contained within a theme park now roam freely. However, an impending volcanic eruption threatens them once again with extinction. Can they be saved? (and should they be saved?)

Needless to say, the special effects are amazing and incredibly life-like (we assume, not knowing what dinosaurs really looked like!) The evening will start at 6pm with time to mingle, a silent/live auction, and the screening will follow. This movie hasn't been classified yet but earlier incarnations have been PG13. For ticket information email [community@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:community@avivafamilies.org.nz).

### Receive the Advocate by Email

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Aviva Families and Reach-Out/Canterbury have Facebook pages. Check us out and ‘Like’ us to keep up to date on what each service area is doing and to share your thoughts with us.



**Address:** PO Box 24 161, Christchurch 8642  
**Phone:** 0800 AVIVA NOW (0800 28482 669) or 378 3847  
**Email:** [enquiries@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@avivafamilies.org.nz)

**Rangiora Office**  
**Fax:** (03) 313 1082

[www.avivafamilies.org.nz](http://www.avivafamilies.org.nz)