

## From Fear to Freedom – Kim’s\* Journey

“I clearly remember Nov 8 2010 – the day where I knew to stay would mean another night of being hurt, and this time he might not stop. Things had gone from bad to worse. He could not hide the lies anymore – even the outside world was starting to see that he was not the person he had claimed to be. I blamed his addiction to alcohol but I have learnt that we often use people’s addictions as an excuse for their behaviour, and it is simply not OK.

“I had been in a violent, controlling relationship for several years. A few months after I left Jase\*m and he had being taken care of the children for the day, he threatened that I would never see them again. The Police were called and eventually when he turned violent in front of them he was arrested. I had my children safe, but had to keep them safe; I had to find the strength to face this situation. I realised that I had to be truthful about it - to myself and others around me.

“In the eight years we had been together Jase had destroyed me as a person – destroyed my relationship with my family; taken and lost the money that I had worked for all my life; and destroyed my credibility, because people didn’t believe that I did not know about the things he had being doing in business. What they didn’t know is that I was too busy just trying to survive. One of the reasons I stayed is that he had stripped me of who I was. I remember thinking, ‘how on earth did I get here?’ I had no idea how to escape.

“The day after the incident that eventuated in Jase’s arrest I was visited by the arresting officer; he suggested that I contact Christchurch Women’s Refuge (now called Aviva). From that day on my world changed. My Family Support Worker directed me to a lawyer and we arranged the parental care of my children and a Protection Order. To this day that Order was the best thing that I ever could have done. It has helped show him that he cannot get away with trying to harm me – there are laws in place and the Police are there to protect us.

“The workers at Aviva then directed me to WINZ; I was humiliated. I had worked since I was 16 and at 40, here I was with nothing; two children, no husband and absolutely nothing. But I had to try and stay positive; at least I was alive and I was getting some help.

“Because of my Protection Order I was eligible to do the education course at Aviva, but I was not keen! I went to the interview thinking ‘I don’t need to do this. I will be OK.’ But I realised that I owed it to myself and my children to work out how we’d come to be in this situation, so that we never returned. What I learnt was invaluable. I learnt how to recognise the traits of someone who is controlling, manipulative and even violent – and they can be wearing a suit just as easily as a hoodie. And I learnt how to deal with my ex-husband, who continues to show those traits. I got so much information from Aviva and it is so important to realise that just because you walk out their doors, it doesn’t mean they stop helping; they are always there.

“Three years ago I felt I had nothing at all and there was no way I could ever have a normal life again. But now I am working full-time in a job I love, my children are happy at school, I have an amazing, honest relationship with my family and, thanks to the support I got, we have a home that is safe. My family is safe.

“I have also used all the support available to help my children because, as children of a manipulative, controlling parent who is still in their lives, they will continue to experience this behaviour. I hope that by giving my children the tools they need for a happy adult life, I can make sure that the cycle is not repeated.”

(\*not their real names)