

**Me kōrero**

# Let's Talk



Summer 2021

**Monica  
breaks the  
cycle of  
violence**

Support  
children to  
live free from  
violence this  
Christmas

**Learn  
how Seuga  
is changing  
lives**





“I see a lot of trauma in my role, but the loneliness is probably what hits me the most, because you just want to give them a big hug, tell them, ‘You didn’t deserve this.’”

## Walking alongside people at the most pivotal moment of their lives

**Since the start of the pandemic, Aviva has had to operate a near-constant waitlist to manage increased demand. Although the waitlist is meant for people who are “low to medium risk,” it can also include people who don’t have a protection order. Even for those who are low risk, the longer they stay on the waitlist the more at risk they may become.**

Chelsea is the Crisis Intervention Support Worker supporting these people.

“The people I’m working with are people whose immediate safety is at risk, and they come to me because getting out of abusive relationships is hard. It can be dangerous, and it can be very lonely. They might be too scared or not ready to involve the

police yet, or they may need to get into a place of safety before they’re able to contact them. It’s about intervening at that time and getting people to safety before something terrible happens.”

Chelsea provides immediate practical support to people, often completely in secret.

“I’m helping this one woman and her husband is oblivious that she and her daughter are leaving him next week. She’s got a confidential house set up. She’s got separate bank accounts. She’s got everything ready.” (This woman has since left her husband and is in a safe place).

Chelsea also supports people who want to stay in their homes.

“Just having secure locks makes a big difference. Parents are finally able to provide a safe home for their children, and their children are getting more relaxed and seem happier.

“One client I installed an alarm for because I had serious concerns. The next day her partner broke in and she believes he was there to kill her. She said, ‘You saved my life by having that alarm in there.’”

The latest lockdown saw a lot of people reaching out.

“It was the wakeup call that this isn’t how they wanted to live,” explains Chelsea. Many ended up coming to her.

“It was trickier, you had to be smarter about when you could see someone. Like the carpark for 10 minutes when the user of violence has gone on a walk. That’s the time we’ve got, that’s the time we use. I installed an alarm across a deck, just slid it over to her and talked to her from my car while she set it up.”

It’s not just practical support Chelsea provides. Sometimes her role is just to be a listening ear.

“Sometimes I can just throw my notes out the window. They just need to chat with someone who is not family or friends judging them,

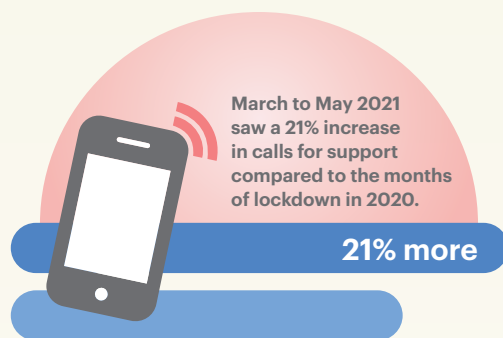
someone who knows the nuances of family harm.”

She describes a session she had with one client:

“When she came in, honestly, she just cried for an hour and a half. I praised her the whole time. I ended up sitting on the ground on my knees next to her, just holding her hand as she cried, because that’s what she needed that day.

“I see a lot of trauma in my role, but the loneliness is probably what hits me the most, because you just want to give them a big hug, tell them, ‘You didn’t deserve this.’ There is no one else out there for them. You’re the first one to say, ‘I’ll be there for you. I’ll be your cheerleader. I’ll be on your team.’”

To those unsure about reaching out, Chelsea says, “Trust your gut.



By the time people are at the stage in the relationship where they’re coming to me, they don’t trust their gut anymore. It’s been eroded out of them. But if something about your relationship isn’t sitting right with you, give us a phone call, come have a kōrero. Don’t keep it a secret. There is a way out.”

## We’re collecting Christmas gifts!



**You can ensure that a family living with violence has presents to open on Christmas morning.**

**Drop-off a gift at The Loft, Level 1, Eastgate Shopping Centre by Friday 10th December.**

- New children’s books, games, and toys
- New clothes
- Sports equipment
- Presents for older teens
- Presents for Mum, Dad, or other parental figures
- Petrol and grocery vouchers
- Warehouse and mall vouchers
- Entertainment passes for families
- Cell phone top-ups
- Wrapping paper and gift tags

**Gifts must be unwrapped. We cannot accept alcohol, or toy weapons such as nerf guns or water pistols.**

Or make a contribution at [www.aviva.org.nz](http://www.aviva.org.nz) to directly support the people needing Aviva family and sexually violence services.





“It’s really thanks to Aviva I was able to break the cycle. They were the ones that instilled the voice in my head that I’m good enough.”

source: pixabay

## Monica breaks the cycle of violence

**“What brought me to Aviva was I’d hit rock bottom like never before. I was scared for my life, always, and I begged my mum to take me home. She said that I had to sort my s\*\*\* out, I had to get on top of my anger. And that’s what brought me here.”**

Monica’s\* first encounters with violence were when she was a young girl, witnessing her mum being abused by her boyfriend, and experiencing physical violence from her dad. By the time Monica was in

her early 20’s, she was homeless and in her own violent relationship.

“Because I’d experienced violence when I was a child, my defence mechanism towards males was to fight. [...] For the first three to six months of our relationship, I beat him up. But when I realised what I was doing was wrong, the roles reversed; [he started beating me]. We were stuck in that negative cycle and not knowing how to get out of it.”

What kept Monica in those cycles with her partner was empathy.

“I knew my partner was only behaving the way he was because he had his own pain. We’re always the victim of a victim, and I think that was what stopped me for a long time from doing something about what was happening to me. [...] One day I realised, ‘I’m not responsible for you.’”

Monica decided to join Aviva’s ReachOut programme for people using (or at risk of using) violence. It was this that gave her the self-esteem to put an end, not only to

her own use of violence, but to it happening to her.

“If I hadn’t come here, if I’d decided I wasn’t coming, then I wouldn’t be sitting here. It’s really thanks to Aviva I was able to break the cycle. They were the ones that instilled the voice in my head that I’m good enough. They instilled my self-worth back into me to the point where it was like, ‘Why am I letting this happen to me again? This is enough.’”

“When you get into a violent relationship, you’re afraid, and you stay in a stuck position. [...] I blamed myself, I felt so guilty. But I’ve come to learn that ending it was the right thing to do. You don’t have it all figured out straight away, if the decision you’re making is going to be alright or not, but time tells. [...] I didn’t expect to be starting a course, having a roof over my head, and feeling stable by now. I didn’t expect any of that. You make decisions in the darkness, not knowing where they’re going to

lead but if you make the right ones, they end up leading you to the light. And the right one isn’t staying with a partner who is going to keep diminishing your self-worth.”

“What I’d say to [others in this position] is, ‘You can’t fix it, not if the other person won’t change with you.’ I tried to get my partner to come here with me and he self-sabotaged. [...] He beat me up the morning we were meant to come in here together. He wasn’t ready. But I was, so I did what I had to do to help him, but in the end, it helped me more, because I’m free. [...] I only just realised how much space in my brain was focused on another person. I wasn’t looking after me. And now that I’ve been focusing on me – look how far I’ve got.”

“People just need to start getting help [...] because trauma gets passed down and it grows. And that’s what my mum said to me – that the reason she broke the cycle was because she saw how it was affecting us and she

“My main goal is that when I have kids, that trauma is no longer there, so that there’s no violence.”

didn’t want that anymore. And I said to her, ‘But you’d already passed it down. You stopped it when you did, but I still have trauma.’ That’s why my main goal is that when I have kids, that trauma is no longer there, so that there’s no violence. And I’ll teach my kids how to express their emotions properly, so they don’t use other means.”

*Six months after contacting Aviva, Monica is embarking on studies to become a social worker.*



source: pixabay

## Become a regular giver

**Support Aviva all year around on your schedule. Setting up an automatic payment lets you put aside a set amount that works for you to help someone in your community to overcome the harms of family or sexual violence.**

You can become a regular giver on a weekly or monthly basis using our secure donation page [donate.aviva.org.nz](https://donate.aviva.org.nz) or by setting up an automatic payment using the bank details below.

**Account Name:** Aviva

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*Please include your name as reference.*

**Contact [community@aviva.org.nz](mailto:community@aviva.org.nz) for more information and to set up receiving.**



source: istock photo

“The knowledge and wisdom shared in the SEUGA programme have helped me to understand my accountability to life, the importance of family, and guide me spiritually so I can be strong mentally, emotionally and physically.”  
TALA\*, SEUGA PARTICIPANT

# Seuga is changing lives

**Thanks to funding from the Tindall Foundation, Aviva recently introduced a new service for Pasifika men.**

Seuga is a 10-week education programme aimed at restoring the wellbeing of Pasifika men who have used or experienced violence, or have other issues linked to violence.

Seuga covers culture, family and the pillars of the fonofale model, with discussions on cultural differences, family violence, alcohol and drugs, faith and other topics that bring insight into Pasifika men’s behavioural problems and help develop their wellbeing.

Each session ends with a talanoa (therapy) session to have a safe conversation regarding anything that arises.

Seuga was developed by a Pasifika team utilising their knowledge and insights.

Seuga is open to Pasifika men, aged 18 and over, in Christchurch and the surrounding areas. It operates every Saturday at Phillipstown Community Hub and is delivered bilingually in English and Samoan.

Go to [www.aviva.org.nz](http://www.aviva.org.nz) to learn more.

## Community recognition



**Aviva has been selected as a finalist for Westpac Champion Business Awards 2021.**

We have been recognised for our handling and adaption to the Covid pandemic over the past 18 months, particularly around introducing our Crisis Intervention Service to better manage the high demand following lockdown and our continued innovation through unprecedented times, such as the introduction of the Seuga programme for Pasifika men.

“We are so grateful for the recognition of the work our staff have put in, and for recognition of the new systems we’ve put in place to adapt to growing concerns for our communities.”  
GWENDA, AVIVA GENERAL MANAGER - OPERATIONS





source: canva

One of the key themes of the feedback, was the need for holistic, accepting support, appropriate to the individual.

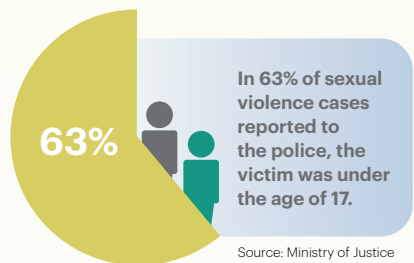
# What do young people need to overcome sexual violence?

**According to the Ministry of Justice, 16–24-year-olds are four times more likely to experience sexual assault. Yet, across Aotearoa, the availability of youth focused sexual harm services remains limited. Why is this?**

Thanks to funding from The Vodafone Foundation, Aviva’s SASSC Team<sup>1</sup> recently worked on a project which explored the support available for young people following sexual harm. As well as commissioning a literature review, the project interviewed youth participants to better understand their experiences.

The research identified several service limitations – workforce capacity, lack of funding, and inconsistent response.

As one participant explained, “I’m reluctant to access mental health support for sexual harm. There’s a lot of work to be done in the crisis system, because they are so understaffed.”



This is something we often see – people reluctant to reach out, taking the burden of a lack of resources upon themselves.

“Social services, health, and justice systems can be challenging for young people to navigate and at times can lead to additional stress,” says SASSC Senior Clinician and Project Coordinator, Sofia.

When young people do seek support, there are limited services which meet their needs – they might be put into “children’s services,” services designed for people much older or worse yet, be turned away

completely because of their age. Another thing the research found was that support offered was often not appropriate. Younger people might lack flexibility in their schedules to access support at the times or locations offered. And in terms of communication styles, phone calls simply don’t work for everyone.

“Young people often want access to instant online professional support delivered in a discrete online environment. And that is rarely available,” says Sofia.

One of the key themes of the feedback, was the need for holistic, accepting support, appropriate to the individual.

“When survivors open up, I would hope they accept them exactly as they are, as well as acknowledge they have been harmed,” says one participant.

Others highlighted the need for diverse workforces, which would make it easier for rainbow, Maori, Pasifika, and male youth to open up.

So, what would a *youth focus* look like? The research identified two parts – what we do before and after the crisis incident. Prior to the incident, consent and sexual harm education is key. After the immediate crisis, services can provide information, advice, advocacy, crisis counselling, and accompaniment. It is essential the system is easily accessed and navigated by youth and well-integrated with other services they might need.

As Sofia says: “Collaborative, wrap-around sexual harm support from both government and non-government sector agencies with a youth focus is required.”

Full findings from the research will be released in the new year.

<sup>1</sup> Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) is run in partnership with START and offers 24/7 crisis support to individuals and their whānau following the disclosure of a recent or historic sexual harm incident.



source: pixabay

# Thank You

**We are so grateful to all the supporters below who make Aviva's work possible.**

## Funders

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# Aviva exists because we care

**Aviva is a Canterbury-based, specialist family and sexual violence agency dedicated to making New Zealand Aotearoa violence-free. We offer an extensive range of integrated, specialist services to support individuals and whānau to not only become safe, but begin a journey toward a fulfilling, violence-free life.**

Help Us  
Break the  
Cycle

By donating to Aviva, you are helping pave the way to a violence-free future for thousands of tamariki and whānau across Canterbury.

Go to [aviva.org.nz](http://aviva.org.nz) or contact [community@aviva.org.nz](mailto:community@aviva.org.nz) to make a contribution.

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Keep up to date on our services, campaigns, and opportunities.

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Rangiora Lions Club  
Rolleston Lions Club  
Thursdays in Black

\*Not their real names.