



Keeping families together

Crime was the only way Stevie knew how to survive. But back in prison, and pregnant, she hit rock-bottom. Without help to change, Stevie knew her baby would be removed from her care. That's when she turned to Iosis's Merivale Whanau Development Centre.

Read how your support helps mums to heal and to build bonds with their children.

Soon after her daughter's birth, Stevie was released from jail. Child, Youth and Family wanted her to complete a residential parenting programme.

Stevie was confident she could handle whatever it took to keep her child. However, she found it difficult adjusting to the structure and boundaries of Merivale's therapeutic community.

These are designed to teach a new way of life, but for someone fresh out of prison it seemed like losing personal freedom all over again.

Several times in her first two months at Merivale, she almost gave up.

"I always looked down at myself and said, 'I need to give the baby back because I'm not ready,'" says Stevie.

Alongside many people working with Stevie, her midwife encouraged her to stay.

"She'd tell me, every time she came to see me, 'Your baby is the most beautiful human being, Stevie. How could you just want to leave?'"

"It used to wake me up. I used to think, 'You're so right. Why am I thinking of leaving my baby? What is out there that is worth more than my baby?'"

In her time at Merivale, two things impacted the most on Stevie. One was counselling and the other was learning about parent/child attachment.

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CEO's message

We normally feature at least one client story in each of our newsletters. However, as a special celebration of Mother's Day this year, we want to bring you a few more from our Merivale Whanau Development Centre, even if for space reasons they are just glimpses of these mothers' experiences.

One of these mums, who graduated in April, said this of Merivale and the people who support its work:

“Without this place, I wouldn't have my son with me right now. So I would like to thank all those people who are helping give donations and supporting this place. I am glad they are doing it.”

So are we. Thank you from all the Iosis whanau – our clients, their families, and our staff.

Tunumafono Tracey-Leigh Peters
CEO

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Finding healing for past hurts, and learning how to show empathy to her daughter, has transformed Stevie's life and consequently her child's future.

“I never imagined myself coming out of my past to this new, totally different person. Now life for me is the best.”

To other mums just beginning their journey at Merivale, Stevie has some words of encouragement: “If you really love your children, you will do this. Make them your strength. We can do this. We've got this. We are doing it for our children.”

When you donate to Iosis, you support parents like Stevie to receive counselling and parenting know-how that will transform their family life for good, both now and for future generations. ☺

Continuing care

Most women who enter Merivale will graduate successfully after six months of counselling and intensive parenting and self-development programmes.

However, some mums and their children need extra assistance to transition back into the community.

Iosis offers a 'Continuing Care' package of support for these families, which can include temporary accommodation.

A 'house mother' lives on site with them. She is on hand to support the mums as they put into practice all they have learnt at Merivale. ☺





Chavornne's story

Chavornne has five children, four of whom live with whanau. She came to Merivale when her youngest was two weeks old. One of her greatest lessons during her time at Merivale was about parent/child attachment.

"This is the first time I have brought up any of my kids by myself for this long. Just watching him grow, and seeing all the new things he's learning, has been a real buzz for me.

"With my other kids I wouldn't really play with them at a baby's age because I used to think they don't know what's happening.

"At first it felt real weird talking to a baby because I still thought, 'He doesn't know what I am talking about.'

"But I really see how much when I do talk to him, he just looks at me and smiles all the time. I can feel the connection with me and him.

"I didn't realise how much playing with them helps them develop when they are babies." ☺



Jade's story

Jade was in the grip of severe ante-natal depression, secluding herself from the world and feeling like a failure as a parent. It was a Maternal Mental Health social worker who suggested she go to Merivale.

"My time here has been such a learning curve, not just about me, but about others, how I am to others, how others are to me, how to communicate positively.

"I thought I was a great person. I was honest and open, but I wasn't open and honest with myself about the reality of my life, and where I had come from.

"My journey doesn't stop here. It's going to keep going until the day I die... but I know that I have tools and experience now, and I have walked it." ☺



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Prayer needs

- Term 2 of the Family Learning Centre programmes commences early May. Please pray the new groups of parents will settle in well so they can benefit fully from what they learn.
- Please pray for our management and Board as plans are made for our next financial year, which commences 1 July 2016. There are many unknowns, including what shape Government contracts will be in the future. This makes budgeting a difficult exercise!
- Please continue to pray for more foster caregivers for long-term placements.

Meet our staff Helena, Merivale supervisor



I am in my last year of a three-year Bachelor of Social Work degree. Prior to working at Merivale, I spent 12 years in the disability field.

As one of Merivale's supervisors, I look after the mums and make sure they are following the structure of the programme. It's being a mum to the mums, and caring for the babies and toddlers as well.

Some nights there may be nothing much happening, but every shift is different. Moods fluctuate and sometimes the mums can present challenging behaviours. But it is how we deal with, or de-escalate, those behaviours. If they share with us what is troubling them, then we can find ways of working around that with the mum.

When the graduating mums walk out through Merivale's gates with huge smiles on their faces, knowing they have successfully completed the programme, that's my joy. It's seeing what they've accomplished for themselves, and we have just been able to witness that. ☺



I want to help transform family life for good.

Four ways **you** can help:

1. **Donate online** by Mastercard or Visa. www.iosis.org.nz
2. **Deposit into our bank account**
Account name: Iosis Limited Account number: 02-0192-0285062-00
and email us at supporters@iosis.org.nz so we know the details for your receipt.
3. **Send a cheque to Iosis**, PO Box 98840, Manukau City, Auckland 2241.
Include your name and address details for your receipt.
4. **Become an Iosis Partner** by making a regular contribution by automatic payment.
Contact your bank to arrange this. Our bank account details are above. Please use your surname as a reference and contact us on Ph 09 269 0050
or email supporters@iosis.org.nz to advise us when the AP has been set up.

All receipts will be sent as annual tax certificates at the end of the financial year unless otherwise requested.