

# Turnaround

The Iosis Newsletter – April 2022

**iosis**  
transforming  
family life for good



## Merivale – helping young mums transform their families' lives

**Merivale is a residential parenting programme for mothers with a background of trauma, addiction or family violence, and who are struggling with parenting.**

It provides a life-changing experience for young mothers like Jess (see page three), but only if they are ready to make a fresh start. The mothers must commit to staying for at least six to nine months, experience a very different way of living, learn new skills, and in many cases, overcome huge personal challenges. It's certainly not easy, so before we accept a mother, we assess whether she is ready to undertake this intensive programme, and whether she feels it's the right place for her.

The application process involves Iosis, Oranga Tamariki (OT) and the mother. As well as undergoing a series of interviews conducted by our practitioners, the mum visits Merivale and spends time with staff and residents.

"The candidate has the opportunity to look around and chat to the other mums, so they can get a good feel for what life will be like there," says Tracey-Leigh Peters, Iosis CEO. "It also allows us to see how they respond to the place they may be living in for the next six months or longer." If Iosis decides that a mum would be a good fit, OT is sent a formal letter of acceptance for the mum.

"Most of these young women lack life and parenting skills. They really benefit from a residential experience where they get day-to-day support while learning new skills and behaviours to parent more effectively, as long as they are ready to make these changes," she explains.

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# A message from our CEO

The first few months of 2022 have created challenges for Iosias as we deal with the impact of the Omicron outbreak. As you can imagine, this has placed huge demand on our services. At the same time, our resources have been stretched, with some staff members isolating.



Tunumafono Tracey-Leigh Peters

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our amazing team, who have been working incredibly hard during this difficult time. Every day, they go above and beyond to help the families in our care, and I thank them for their commitment, strength and aroha.

Speaking of commitment, in this special issue of *Turnaround*, we look back at the history of Merivale, our residential programme for young mothers – and look forward to a positive future for this vital programme.

Established in 1989, Merivale has now helped young mums learn life and parenting skills for over 30 years. And, as Jess's story on page three reminds us, it really does turn their lives around – and their children's lives too. So I would like to thank all of our generous supporters who help make this possible.

Finally, please join me in praying for all of the families dealing with the challenges and heartbreak of COVID at the moment. It's in times like these that our services are most needed – and I know our wonderful team will do their best to continue to transform family life. Kia kaha, go well and stay safe.

**Tunumafono Tracey-Leigh Peters - CEO**

## Merivale – helping young mums transform their families' lives

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"Assessing the mum and evaluating the fit between their needs and the Merivale programme is one of the most important parts of the process. Not all mothers need a residential programme, or they may decide it's not right for them. It's a huge commitment, so they really need to be motivated to change.

"When a mum arrives, there is a process of settling in," says Tracey. "Then the real work begins – helping these young mothers become better parents, and teaching them that they can break the cycle of violence or dependency and give their children a better life." 🌀

## Prayer needs

**Please join us in praying for all families affected by Omicron, especially those of our clients and staff. Please also pray for the young mums at Merivale as they continue their journey to become better parents, and for the children under the care of our SWiS team in local schools.**

## Thank you, Sunema - we'll miss you

Recently, we farewelled Sunema (Sonny) Ah-Hing, who has worked at Merivale for over 10 years, joining us as a support worker and leaving as Merivale's manager. "Sonny made a wonderful contribution during her long years of service at Merivale," says Iosis CEO, Tracey-Leigh Peters.

"She touched the lives of so many mothers and changed their lives for the better. She will be missed by the team and the mothers."

Farewell, Sonny.



## Jessica's story ... from despair to hope

**When her baby died tragically and her older child was taken into care, Jessica was in a dark place. Determined her daughter would experience a better life, she turned to Merivale for help.**

Before coming to Merivale, Jessica had been in a violent relationship and regularly used alcohol and drugs. "I got triggered too quickly," she says. "I had no boundaries of stopping myself, plus I was grieving as well."

However, there was hope. Jessica had heard of Merivale, which offers intensive support to mums who have experienced violence and addiction. Young mothers find healing for themselves and learn new behaviours and parenting skills that will transform their family life.

"Coming to Merivale was when I started learning," says Jessica. "It was hard, but it was all worth it. I'm just so grateful that I made it in those gates."

After nine months at Merivale, Jessica is now confident in her ability to raise her daughter safely. "I am more alert with my daughter. She trusts me. Before she didn't like playing with me, but now it is so much better. I love exploring with her, comforting

her, delighting in her and securing her safe space," says Jessica.

"I thank Merivale for being part of my and my daughter's journey. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." ☺

"Coming to Merivale was when I started learning," says Jess.



\*Stock image to protect identities.



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# A journey of change for Merivale

**Merivale is a very special place that creates real transformation for young mothers and their children. Since it was established in 1989, Merivale itself has transformed several times.**

At first, the Baptist City Mission operated it as emergency accommodation for women and children fleeing situations of family violence. In 2003 Merivale moved to Mangere and was later amalgamated with Baptist City Mission and Baptist Family Services to form Iosis, as part of our vision to create an agency for families facing complex challenges.

Today, Iosis continues to run the residential programme for mothers who are struggling with parenting due to issues with violence, drugs or alcohol. Looking to the future, Merivale is soon to

transform again to better meet the needs of the mums in our care.

To this end, we're moving away from a therapeutic community model towards a more individualised therapeutic programme. In keeping with this, we'll also change from communal cooking and mums will share a unit and cooking with another mum to better mimic family life.

What won't change is that Merivale will remain a friendly, safe community for mums and their children, and continue to help these young women to transform family life. ☺

**“Learning things like I am my child’s ‘safe haven’ made a big impact on how I look at parenting. Three years later, I still remember and use what I learnt at Merivale.”**

*Rawinia,  
Merivale graduate*



## Ngā mihi nui – thank you

Our heartfelt thanks to the Tindall Foundation, who generously provided \$15,000 to fund our Māori Development Leader, Teina Mita, in his recent appointment to develop a Māori framework for Iosis that better serves families in our community.

