

# MARIANNE – PARENT OF YOUTH AT RISK

Although a range of services are designed for youths like Jimi - the “end-user” - they are all mediated through Marianne, who has both her own needs and preferences for her son. Marianne’s comments about her son’s experience illustrate the complexity of her own needs and preferences as she navigates government services on behalf of her son.

## STATE SERVICES

Ministry of Justice

Child, Youth and Family

New Zealand Police

School Counsellors

“...they’re coming to talk to me because I’m responsible for this child”

### 1. Psychological

Marianne experienced a lot of guilt over Jimi’s misdemeanours, “...to see my son having a total lack of respect for elderly people just is mind-blowing to me... I’m sure I brought up my children to have respect for their elders... to be polite, to have manners, certainly not to go stealing somebody’s property. It’s incomprehensible... I was brought up to have respect for authority and the Police being the law authority you certainly don’t want to be on the wrong side of them... from my perspective is that oh my goodness, the Police are coming to talk to me. I know it’s what my son’s done but they’re coming to talk to me because I’m responsible for this child, and that was quite scary for me... I don’t know – where did I not teach them that?”

It did not help matters that the schools did not deliver on their promises on a number of things, such as keeping her updated on his progress, despite repeated appeals: “I was just very frustrated by the fact that I could see him giving up...”

Marianne joined a parent support group, which was a tremendous help psychologically, “...Jimi actually did state to the psychologist, ‘things used to be pretty hard with mum, she used to yell a lot... but from about the last year it’s actually been a lot better’, and then the psychologist turned to me and said ‘why do you think that’s so’, and I said ‘because for the last year I’ve belonged to Tough Love and it’s just all about setting down stands and bottom lines and not giving into it’... And it’s helped Jimi because he’s got a clearer boundary. So in the home he’s actually feeling a lot more secure because this is the rules, I’m not going to back down. It has helped me realise what my boundaries are and what my children’s responsibilities are, because prior to that I would have been absolutely horrified going through the justice system...”

### 2. Informational

The Police (Youth Aid and Community Constables) and Child, Youth and Family social workers kept Marianne well-informed about due processes when Jimi was confined at the station and at the Child, Youth and Family’s home. The school counsellor gave her a brochure on the Youth Alive programme, but she wished she had better access to information about other such programmes for Jimi, “I would have liked to have had more knowledge about various other programmes out there because I do know there used to be some kind of like... a mentoring type of programme... how do you get into that?”

### 3. Custodial

The one kind of assistance that Marianne really needed but could not obtain was a programme of an ongoing, not ad-hoc nature for Jimi: “‘I feel that all the advice... the system, CYF and the justice system have kept me well informed as to what is going to happen or what could happen...but they haven’t sort of told me what they could do in future... I don’t believe that that is part of their thing to do... I haven’t had [prior to Youth Horizons Trust] anybody come to my home and say ‘hey, how about we try and work something out and see if we can get this boy on line’.”

### 4. Circumstantial

In between running a business, taking care of her other children, going through a separation and moving house, Marianne already had a lot in the background to juggle with. It didn’t help matters that one Youth Justice Coordinator she met repeatedly muddled up the scheduling and proceedings of family group conferences: “I felt confident with Jimi’s counsellor being there that they would be able to set a plan in motion... and that did happen. [But] I was annoyed about the fact that in the written decisions of the court it showed that mum was too busy to come, and that was not essentially true. Mum was not given enough time to arrange my schedule so I could come... And that’s a matter of record, that I couldn’t really be bothered... He did not send me a copy of those decisions because I hadn’t come, which I found it unusual because I was his mother.”

Jimi transferred among a number of schools. Marianne expected a lot more from schools than agencies whose roles she thought were justifiably limited to maintaining social order, “I felt that they put a lot back onto me. ‘You need to come into a meeting straight away because...’ And so I’d take time off work, go into a meeting in which case we’d just sit there and the dean and the teacher would say ‘Jimi you’ve been naughty, are you going to behave yourself?’. ‘Oh yes Miss’. ‘Okay, off you go’. And I’m thinking why am I here? Why have I gone and lost money, lost revenue because I’ve had to take time off to go and sit... in this dean’s office, when I’m not involved with this. This is between the school and my son. Surely they don’t have to ring me every time he talks in class or whatever.”

## NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

SENZ Training and Employment Centre

Tough Love Parent Support Network

Youth Alive

Air Training Corps Cadet Forces

Club Rugby

Youth Horizons