

Doing Better by Our Rangatahi

Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) Youth Service Co-design Project



Report prepared for Aviva by Billy Matheson, Director EXP Ltd
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Executive Summary

SASSC (Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury) is a service run by Aviva in partnership with START. The service provides support to individuals and their family/whānau to navigate the aftermath of sexual harm. The SASSC Service was started in 2014 to support the growing numbers of individuals and their family/whānau who were disclosing both historic and recent sexual harm and address the need for a 24/7 crisis support service. SASSC as a service is contracted to deliver this support to individuals who are 18 years and above. However, over the years the service has received referrals to support youth aged 13-17 years from various sources. It was identified that this age group did not have specific support service that is developmentally flexible to cater to their individual needs. The result has been Aviva recognizing that resources specifically catering to this age group are limited in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

This report is a result of discussions from a series of training and fact-finding workshops with SASSC staff, and a number of workshops and interviews conducted by SASSC staff for the youth participants. The report comments on the present and past experiences of youth engaged in sexual harm support services and is aspirational in nature in terms of what a future service specifically catering to youth could look like.

For the purpose of this report, the age group considered is 13-25 years old and they will be referred to as “young people” and “youth”.

A number of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand are profoundly impacted by sexual harm and family violence. According to the Ministry of Justice, in 63 percent of cases of sexual violence reported to the police the victim was a child or young person aged 17 years or younger. 1 in 6 New Zealanders experience sexual harm before the age of 18.

As professionals and by adhering to best practice standards, ethical guidelines, and funding mandates from government agencies like Oranga Tamariki, services are contractually obligated to notify when individuals under-18 disclose sexual harm. The majority of young people, especially under 18 years old, who experience sexual harm do not report their experiences to the Police or other government agencies. This can make it very difficult for them to access any professional support, leading to possible further harm and trauma, and a more acute crisis when the young person finally comes into contact with social, justice, and health systems.

For those young people who choose to report the sexual harm, they can face a complex system of agencies and service providers who are often under-resourced and can be constrained by contracting arrangements. Dealing with the aftermath of sexual harm can be challenging enough without having to navigate the system requirements.

The SASSC service frequently receives up to 10 referrals per day for crisis support. Of these, on an average 1-2 referrals are to support young people under the age of 18. Based on the data gathered over the past 6 years from youth referrals received, the team has gained a possible understanding of supports needed and the unique challenges that young people and their family/whānau face in navigating the aftermath of sexual harm and the complexity of navigating various agencies involved in providing care, support, and justice.

In responding to this need, the SASSC service works to support young people and their family/whānau to navigate the potential impacts of the sexual harm. In addition, the SASSC service refers them to the relevant services available for youth realizing that this may create pressure on the already over-stretched systems.

This report seeks to share some of the practice insights gained by the SASSC Service and to present these in a way that supports empathy, understanding, and a commitment to do better by our Rangatahi.

The report's findings are summarized below:

1. Further work needs to be done to educate and empower youth to understand sexual harm and consent.
2. Professionals delivering the service for youth need more resources and training to cater to the individual developmental needs of the youth and their family/whānau.
3. For those young people who do experience sexual harm, supports need to be multifaceted and should address both emotional and practical needs of the young people for the likes of crisis counselling and emergency housing.
4. Young people who experience sexual harm often want access to instant online professional support delivered in a discrete online environment. In recent times the demand for these services is increasing. The community at large would benefit from additional services with a youth focus providing online and discrete support around sexual harm and meet their needs.
5. Young people who experience sexual harm can be found in every level of the society and gender and ethnicity, and require individualized care, support, and advice to enable long term healing and recovery. Services already working towards supporting the youth after their experience of sexual harm are limited in their resources and need additional funding sources to provide social work support. Additional funding and resources are urgently needed to increase the capacity of ACC counselling.

6. Our social services, health, and justice systems can be challenging for young people to navigate and at times can lead to additional stress. Collaborative and wrap-around support from both government and non-government sector agencies with a youth focus is required that works in a timely and comprehensive fashion.

This report highlights the opportunity to develop a service which is youth focused and caters to the youth's diverse developmental needs and also supports their family/whānau in a wrap-around and holistic manner.

Introduction

“Depending on their age, young people in Christchurch who experience sexual assault are currently referred either into a system designed for children, or a system designed for adults. There is no specific, targeted response that meets the unique needs of young people as they transition from childhood into adolescence, and from adolescence into young adulthood and become increasingly self-determining in their choices and decisions about service access and engagement. We are concerned that, as a result, young people may not seek out or engage in services, may become only partially engaged – physically and/or emotionally, and/or may disengage prematurely.”

– Aviva Youth Co-design Project proposal

EXP Ltd was contacted in 2020 about supporting a co-design process for Aviva to help it better understand and respond to the needs of young people who have experienced sexual assault and family violence. Aviva had developed two strategic questions to help it respond to this challenging situation:

1. What does good practice look like in supporting young people?
2. What gaps exist in service provision for this age group in Ōtautahi / Christchurch?

To answer these questions Aviva has commissioned two pieces of work: an academic research project including a literature review and primary research to establish what constitutes international best practice, and a co-design project to engage Aviva staff and clients to capture and better understand the scope of a possible service that could be developed which specifically caters to the flexible needs of the youth.

EXP has been asked to develop a proposal for the co-design aspect of this project. The goal of the project is to highlight the limited-service provisions for young people that caters to their diverse and flexible developmental needs.

The Youth Service Co-design Project took place between January and May 2021. It involved a series of training and fact-finding workshops with SASSC staff, and a number of workshops and interviews conducted by SASSC staff for the youth participants. The outcome of these workshops is this report.

The first part of the report describes the possible services involved at each stage that Aviva has observed over the last six years in the form of a 'service blueprint'. This provides a timeline of SASSC's clients' experience and shows the complexity of the journey that the youth and their family/whānau will possibly have to navigate after disclosing sexual harm experienced by the youth.

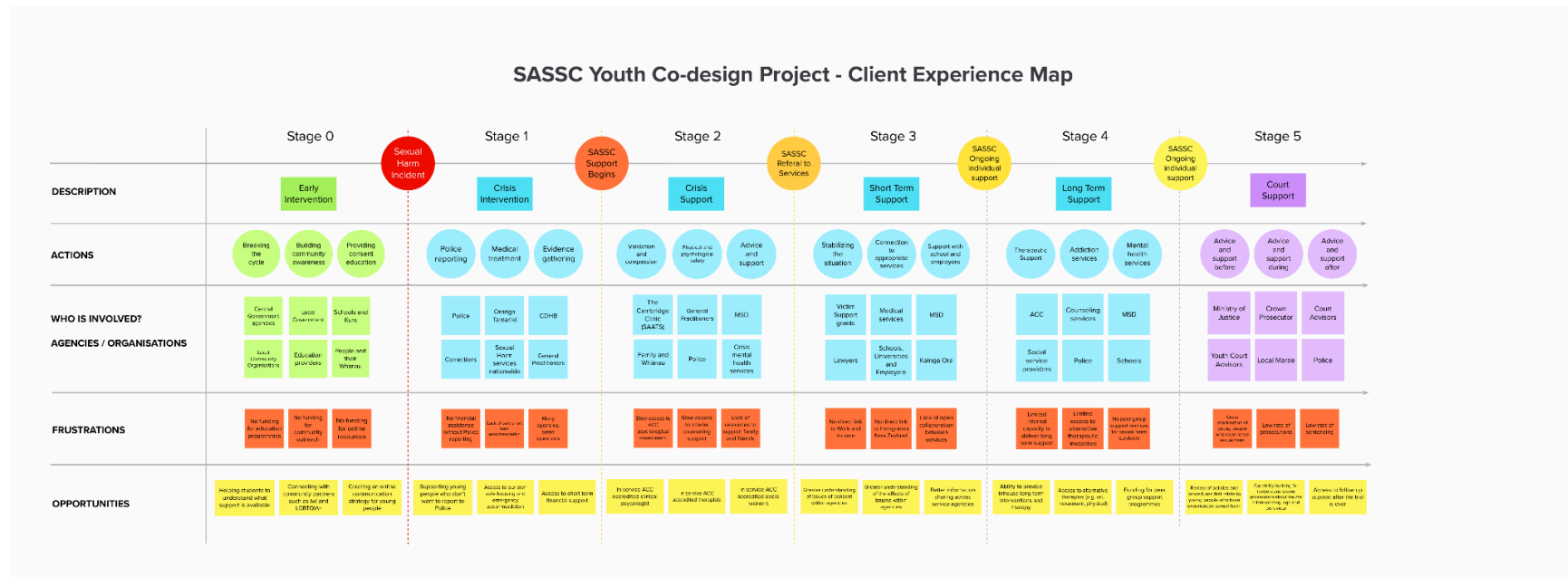
The second part of the report describes the diversity of individuals that get referred to SASSC through a set of nine 'user personas' to help us better understand the array young people who experience sexual harm.

The SASSC Youth Service Co-design project is an attempt to take the observations and insights gathered over time and evaluate these more fully through gathering the opinions and experiences of youth and their family/whānau in a systematic way. The project provides a clarity on these insights and presents an aspiration of what a future service specifically catering to youth could look like.

Part One: Service Blueprint

To better understand what the SASSC service do we need to understand the process that someone goes through after disclosing sexual harm. To do this we created a 'service blueprint' to map the journey and describe the kind of support that SASSC offers.

Working with the SASSC service we identified four discrete stages in the current client experience and one additional stage that the team felt was essential in any future development of the service. Under each stage we describe the service in terms of actions, agencies, frustrations, and opportunities.



Stage 1: Crisis Intervention (hours)

“I wasn’t really looking for anything from the people I told, all I really wanted was support.”

– SASSC youth voice

This is the stage immediately following a disclosure of sexual harm that is either acute (recent), or historic in nature. Sometimes young people and/or their parents/caregivers will contact SASSC through the support line to disclose sexual harm and explore support options moving forward, but more commonly young people and/or their parents/caregivers are referred to the SASSC service after they have reported sexual harm to one a number of agencies. These agencies include: The New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, Canterbury District Health Board, National Sexual Harm services, Family Planning, or to schools or a general practitioner. One common source of referrals to SASSC is the Cambridge Clinic, a free “specialist medical service for anybody over the age of 12 who has been sexually assaulted or abused, recently or in the past.”

The SASSC service on an average receives 2-3 referrals for crisis support for youth and/or their parents/caregivers. In this initial ‘crisis intervention’ stage SASSC primarily plays a ‘walking alongside’ role. The team provides the young person and/or their parents/caregivers with emotional support in the immediate aftermath of the sexual harm incident and with practical support in navigating the various agencies involved in reporting the sexual harm, the collection of evidence, urgent medical care, and giving a statement to the Police.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Funding and contractual, along with legal and ethical responsibilities of the workers is often in contrast to the desires of young people and at time their family/whānau, in particular, when it comes to police and/or Oranga Tamariki reporting.
- Limited options for emergency safe housing for youth that live alone.
- Limited accessibility to short term financial assistance for young people. The current financial assistance options are viewed to be lengthy and complex by the youth.

Stage 2: Crisis Support (days)

“Whilst therapy and support is important, for recent sexual harm, the focus should be on immediate needs such as a medical check or a Police report. From there, you can build on long-term support.”

– SASSC youth voice

Following the initial disclosure of sexual harm, the SASSC team can start to provide additional professional support. This can involve an assessment of needs and referring the client for ACC counselling. This stage is also about making sure that the young person and/or their parents/caregivers have the immediate support they need to feel safe both emotionally and physically. This might involve arranging access to emergency accommodation in cases where the youth doesn't have anywhere to go and food. It can also involve helping the young person decide how much they want or need to disclose their experience to family/friends and supporting them to manage themselves in this time of crisis. In other words, making sure that both youth and/or their parents/caregivers/friends have the essential initial and crisis support they need to feel safe.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Not always being able to arrange rapid needs assessment at short notice including care and protection concerns.
- Few supports for family/whanau in navigating and understand the system and government agency involvements. However, at times this can be compounded by a young person not wanting family/whānau to know as there's not always a choice in this for the young person.
- Not always being able to provide immediate ACC counselling.
- Not always having the resources to provide support to family/whānau.

Stage 3: Short Term Support (weeks)

“When I finally came to terms with what had happened to me, my immediate needs were: affection, support – both mental and emotional, and having some alone time to process my thoughts about the abuse.”

– SASSC youth voice

Once the immediate crisis stage has been navigated, the SASSC service starts the work of providing short term individual and family/whanau support for the young person. This includes making referrals to relevant youth services. The support required are often practical in nature and can involve contacting the young person’s school, University, or employer and arranging leave. It can also involve liaising with agencies such as Work and Income, Kainga Ora, 298 Youth Health and Immigration New Zealand to make sure that any benefits, accommodation, and visas are secure in the short term. At this stage the SASSC team are also making sure that the family/whānau of the young person has access to the legal advice and other health care support that they want and need.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Not having a direct link to agencies such as Work and Income and Immigration New Zealand to help provide security for young people following a sexual harm incident
- Lack of support groups for youth who have experienced sexual harm.
- Not having access to immediate in-service counselling or psychotherapy

Stage 4: Long Term Support (months and years)

“I really benefited from art therapy to heal from my experience of sexual harm.”

– SASSC youth voice

Once the young person and their family/whānau are in a stable and supported environment then the work of providing the long term individualized professional emotional and psychological care can begin. For the SASSC team this currently means helping the young person to access ACC funded counselling and psychotherapy. In some cases, this stage might also involve helping the young person to access drug and alcohol addiction services and mental health community support. All of this requires navigating a range of agencies and service providers, for both youth and their family/whānau.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Having more ACC accredited counsellors and psychotherapists to refer to.
- Provide additional training to Aviva staff to deliver the brief intervention service that can provide relief from trauma symptoms and promote stabilization and regulation.
- Lack of alternatively funded therapeutic modalities, especially non-verbal approaches such as art and movement-based therapies.
- Being able to provide support that is more meaningful in a therapeutic sense.

Stage 5: Court Support (various)

“I think having that support is super important as the most difficult part of the police process is the courts.”

– SASSC youth voice

According to the Ministry of Justice, less than a third of sexual violence cases reported to the police make it to court. Only 11 percent of reported sexual violence cases end in conviction, and only 6 percent result in a prison sentence. For the SASSC team this stage of supporting the individual’s journey is often happening at the same time as other stages in the process. Depending on the circumstances, prosecutions can happen very quickly or take years. Either way this process involves supporting the individual and their family/whānau to navigate a number of people representing different agencies including Department of Justice Court Advisors and Youth Court advisors, the Crown Prosecutor, and the Police. This process at times can also be re-traumatizing and stressful to navigate.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Working with Government agencies to improve the experience of the Justice system for young people who have experienced sexual harm
- Wraparound support for young people before, during, and after the case has been heard by the courts.
- Follow-up support for young people whose cases don’t make it to court.
- Support for young people when a not-guilty verdict is arrived at.
- Longer-term support for people when there is an incomplete court process and might have to go through the whole process again.

Stage 0: Early Intervention and Prevention (lifetimes)

“Explaining consent as well as education for sexual harm is important for the individual as well as the wider family.”

– SASSC youth voice

Right from the start of the process of creating this service blueprint to describe the journey of young people who experience sexual harm, the SASSC team was clear that the real potential for transformational change was right at the beginning of the causal chain. The team saw the benefits in working alongside the young person, their family/whānau, and other professionals to engage in early intervention to bring a shift in the system. For this reason, we need to add another stage to the service blueprint.

Given the limited resources available for addressing the impacts of youth sexual harm services in New Zealand and limited funding available for early intervention and prevention, this stage is largely hypothetical. Essentially it would involve the sexual harm support professionals to have the ability to deliver proactive community and schools-based education and outreach programmes. The key to doing this successfully is to do it in partnership and collaboration with Central Government, Local Government, Schools and Kura, Community Organizations and Service Providers, and Local Communities. The goal would be to build knowledge and understanding of what sexual harm is and how it affects people, develop understanding around healthy relationships, build skills and capability for communities to intervene early and keep young people safe, and to break the cycle of intergenerational abuse and trauma in our communities and families.

Challenges and Opportunities

The SASSC team identified the following challenges and opportunities at this stage:

- Having resources to connect with local schools and Kura.
- Having greater resources to better connect with Māori, Pasifika, Migrant, Disabled, and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Having resources to build partnerships with agencies and organizations to better support young people.
- Having the resources to develop a world leading online communications strategy and suite of educational tools to support young people to stay safe.

Part Two: Client Personas

One of the challenges of presenting the work that the SASSC team do is trying to convey the trauma and pain experienced by the young people that they work with on a daily basis. In part two of this report, we meet nine young people that are referred to the SASSC service. The purpose of developing these 'client personas' is to help us better understand the experiences and challenges that professionals face in supporting young people who have experienced sexual harm.

Young people come from diverse backgrounds and experience sexual harm in a variety of complex and challenging ways. The following nine personas are designed to give these young people a voice in a way that respects their privacy and anonymity. A persona is not a real person, but they are a way for us to empathize with the lived experience of actual young people in a way that statistics often fail to provide.

The process of developing these client personas obviously involves a certain amount of generalization. In creating these personas, we have sought to find a balance between describing 'typical' clients and at the same time describing the 'exceptional' and diverse needs that young people who have experienced sexual harm face.

1. Sophie's story



"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."

– SASSC youth voice

Sophie is a 16-year-old high school student living in Christchurch. She comes from a middle-class home with two professional parents and a younger brother. Up until last year her life has been safe, secure, and reasonably normal for a young middle class Pākehā woman growing up in a stable home environment.

Sophie contacted the SASSC team after finding out that a boy she recently had a casual sexual relationship with had taken a video recording of them having sex. This video recording has been uploaded onto a 'revenge porn' website and several of Sophie's friends had viewed the recording.

She is presenting with a range of anxiety and stress related behaviours. In particular she is reluctant to give any information about herself and desperate to protect her privacy. Sophie has no idea what she can do to get help.

The SASSC team provides Sophie with validation and support to unpack the experience that she is going through. They explain the current legislation as well as its limitations. They connect her with information from Netsafe and the Police. They also talk her through what she can practically do to secure her online accounts and better manage her use of social media.

The challenge for young people like Sophie is that while she may have consented to having sex with this boy, she did not consent to being filmed let alone for those images being made public. She is unsure what her rights are and even whether a crime has been committed. She needs to have her experience validated and needs specific advice about how to proceed. The Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 is really hard to prosecute under. SASSC team members feel obliged to explain this to Sophie so that she has realistic expectations about what the Police are likely to be able to do.

Aviva would like to provide young women like Sophie:

- Support within family/whānau context in a timely and effective manner.
- The time and resources to lobby for legislative change to better protect young people from online abuse and coercion.
- Education programmes to high school students to create safe and secure relationships and better equip them to deal with online abuse especially around sexual harm and coercion.
- Ultimately, they would like justice for young people like Sophie who are victims of online sexual harm.

2. Amber's story



“When survivors open up (to others) I would hope they accept them exactly as they are, as well as acknowledge that they have been harmed.”

– SASSC youth voice

Amber is a 22-year-old Pākehā woman living in short term rental accommodation with her young son. She grew up in an abusive household and at a young age got involved with a man who was part of a gang. At high school she started using drugs and now has a problem with methamphetamine addiction. Her life has been shaped by intergenerational trauma and an insecure home environment.

Amber contacted the SASSC team because her current partner (who is also part of a criminal gang) is becoming increasingly physically violent and sexually abusive towards her. Amber needs help but is anxious not to be seen as betraying her partner and his associates to the Police.

Amber presents as frustrated and hostile. She has a history of previous harm that was not taken seriously when she tried to report it. She is caught between desperately wanting and needing help and feeling dependent on her partner and fearful of the organized crime gang he is part of. She is also suspicious of the Police and social service agencies.

The SASSC team helps Amber access short term financial support so she can get food and accommodation away from her abusive partner. They also provide safety planning and ‘safe@home’ information as well as encouragement and advocacy.

What Amber really needs is a comprehensive ‘wrap around’ intervention including basic safety and privacy, ongoing help concealing or transforming her identity, health care and alcohol and drug support, long term safe and secure housing, and long-term counselling for both the historic family abuse and the recent incidents of partner violence she has experienced.

Aviva would like to provide:

- Fast track a protection order for young people like Amber who are experiencing gang related sexual harm.
- They would also like to be able to provide community education to reduce the stigma experienced by women in gangs.
- Ultimately, they would like to see gang members held accountable for the treatment of young women and children.

3. Salma's story



“Within a service, having a representation of different staff would be important for immigrants and migrants as it is easier to speak in their first language.”

– SASSC youth voice

Salma is a 19-year-old migrant woman who has been living in Aotearoa New Zealand for just over a year. She moved here with her husband from Pakistan immediately after their marriage, which was arranged by their families. She is well educated and was looking forward to further study at University but her conservative husband has told her that he wants a family and that she will need to stay at home. Salma doesn't know anyone in New Zealand and has a limited understanding of our cultural norms and legal system.

Salma contacted the SASSC team after her husband recently physically and sexually assaulted her. She feels isolated and unsure where she can turn to for understanding and support.

Salma presents with shame and guilt at letting her family down. She feels that people won't believe her and is also fearful of her partner and his extended family. She is trapped in an abusive relationship in a foreign country. She is also fearful that her immigration status might mean she will be sent back to Pakistan and her unsupportive family.

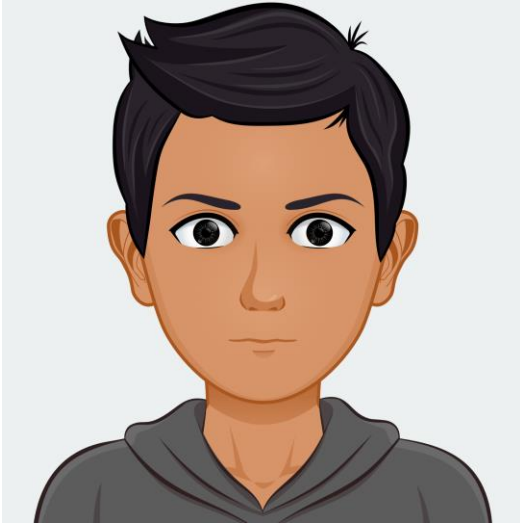
The SASSC team helps Salma to validate the seriousness of her experience. They provide education and resources about consent and about her rights under New Zealand law. They work with Salma to access either culturally specific support or a 'non-cultural' or generic support from an appropriate agency.

What Salma needs is a comprehensive plan moving forward. She also needs her own social connections in the community that are safe and supportive. She also needs to know that her status as a resident in Aotearoa New Zealand is not necessarily dependent on her living with an abusive partner.

Aviva would like to provide young migrant women like Salma with:

- Wrap around support to build Salma's self-confidence and social connections in the community.
- Culturally responsive support and advice in partnership with Immigration New Zealand.
- Increase capability, knowledge, and sensitivity across the sector in how to support migrant women.

4. Jacob's story



“If men were to seek advice, I would hope they would go to a support service as opposed to keeping it to themselves.”

– SASSC youth voice

Jacob is a 16-year-old boy from a working class Pasefika family. He has a strong sense of his identity, faith, and community. His parents and siblings are very supportive of his academic achievement, and he enjoys school as well as participating in team sports on the weekends. Jacob is likely to be the first person in his extended family to go to University. Despite being a calm and gentle person, Jacob has recently started drinking and getting into fights.

Jacob contacted the SASSC team after getting especially drunk at a party and accidentally punching one of his friends who tried to break up the fight. Jacob knows that he is having trouble with anger and violence. He suspects that this might be connected to an experience of sexual abuse that he experienced between the ages of 7 and 10 when his uncle was living in the family home.

Jacob presents as an intelligent and articulate young person who is confused about the way he has started behaving. He is doubtful of the kind of support available outside his own culture and community but has nowhere else to turn.

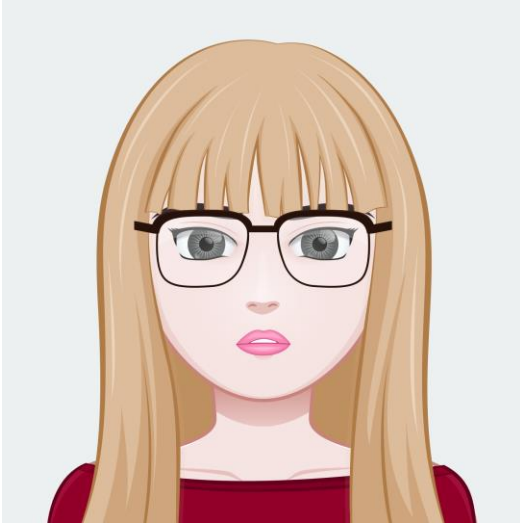
The SASSC team provides validation of the seriousness of Jacob's experience and refers him to culturally relevant support and advocacy services. If Jacob decides to tell his parents about his experience, then this can include holistic family and whānau support. The SASSC team will also provide resources and education about consent. They can also help Jacob find emergency housing if necessary.

What Jacob needs is someone who can understand the complexity of the situation without overreacting. Ideally someone from a similar cultural and religious background who can connect with Jacob's calm and gentle demeanor.

Aviva would like to provide:

- A more culturally diverse team that can better support young people like Jacob.
- Cultural responsiveness across the sector to help agencies meet the needs of young people from Pasefika communities who experience sexual harm.
- Culturally appropriate support to family/whānau to address their needs and provide a holistic support to Jacob.
- Community education and outreach to help schools, church groups, and sports clubs to understand the signs of abuse and how to support young people to get support.

5. Ally's story



“Clients should be able to determine the frequency of support, and this can be open to change.”

– SASSC youth voice

Ally is an 18-year-old Pākehā woman in her first year at Canterbury University. She has moved into a student flat with some girlfriends from high school, mainly to get away from her wealthy parents who she finds overbearing and anxious about her. Ally is confident, capable, and looking forward to a successful career of her own.

Ally contacted the SASSC team after she was sexually assaulted by a fellow student after a party at her flat. She has decided not to report the incident to the Police, or to tell her family, but realizes that she needs support to understand and process what happened. She has tried the University counselling service but recognizes that she needs more expert support. She wants to put the incident behind her and doesn't want to be defined by the experience.

Ally presents as an intelligent and confident young woman who is struggling to process a traumatic event. Ally has proactively accessed online resources to help her understand her own experience but remains anxious about telling her friends and the stress and trauma is affecting her studies, which is causing more stress and anxiety. She wants to be strong and independent but recognizes that she is isolated and needs help.

The SASSC team helps by validating Ally's experience and the choices she is making. They provide an emotionally regulating experience of being alongside this person, support her with information around trauma impacts and skills building around managing their distress. They help with writing letters of support and connecting Ally with support at the University. They also provide advice about the long-term effects of sexual harm and different kinds of counselling available.

What Ally needs is a confidential service that will support her choices. She needs help to navigate the aftermath of this event, and advice about how to move forward with her life in a way that gives her the practical support she needs.

Aviva would like to provide young women like Ally with:

- A peer support group
- Self-confidence and self-esteem building
- Family and whānau support.

6. Bobby's story



“The support services just need to be diverse in who it has working for them because they would be the best people to address the needs of the rainbow community.”

– SASSC youth voice

Bobby is a 19-year-old of Māori and Pākehā descent. Bobby has identified as gender non-binary for several years and recently they decided to start transitioning from a female to a male identity. Bobby's lived experience includes bullying at school, self-harm, and a periodic eating disorder. They have enrolled in several courses at the local polytechnic and currently work in two part time jobs.

Bobby contacted the SASSC team after they experienced sexual harm within the local LGBTQIA+ community. This is not the first time Bobby has experienced this, and this incident was more serious. Bobby is reluctant to report the incident, both because of negative experiences they have had with agencies and the justice system, as well as a sense of loyalty to the LGBTQIA+ community.

The SASSC team supports Bobby by validating their identity choices and using correct pronouns. They also acknowledge the complexity of Bobby's situation and the difficult choices they face. Practically the SASSC team connects Bobby with resources and external referrals to services that are LGBTQIA+ specific.

Young people like Bobby need understanding and respect. They also need a range of support and advocacy including LGBTQIA+ counselling, health checks, alcohol and drug support, and ongoing support for the journey of transitioning.

Aviva would like to provide young people like Bobby with:

- LGBTIQIA+ diverse counsellors
- Community and school-based education that reduces social stigma towards LGBTQIA+ people.
- Cultural responsiveness training across the sector to support LGBTQIA+ young people.

7. Anne's story

"For Māori, support that is more interconnected with whanau and extended family and iwi could help to identify the needs of the whole group."

– SASSC youth voice



Anne is a 25-year-old woman living and working in Christchurch. She identifies as having both Māori and Pākehā ancestry and has been married for five years and has two children. Her husband works in the construction industry and Anne recently started working again as the office manager at a local retail business. Recently Anne saw a documentary on TV about the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, and this triggered vivid memories of the sexual abuse and psychological manipulation she experienced as a child by a close family member.

Anne contacted the SASSC team after experiencing a range of difficulties in her intimate relationship with her partner. These are obviously connected to her experience of historical sexual abuse. She disclosed some of her experience to a close friend when she was in her late teens but decided not to report the abuse to the Police.

Anne presents seeking help with the immediate problem of her intimate relationship with her husband. Anne's experience of sexual harm and psychological abuse took place when she was a child and the long-term effects of this violence are undermining the life Anne has managed to build for herself.

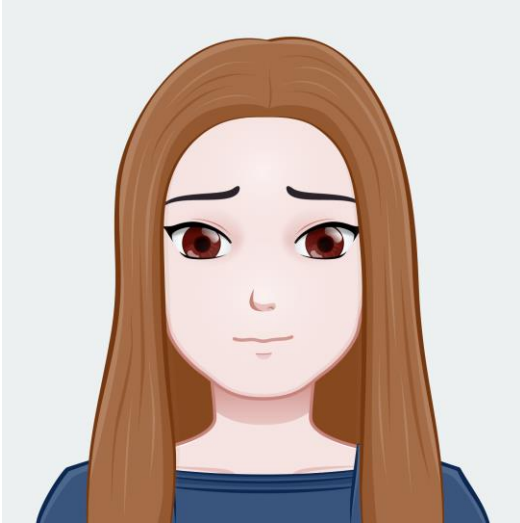
The SASSC team helps Anne to understand how historical harm impacts people's lives. They provide her with resources that she can share with her partner. They also provide her with information about the police process and support her to liaise with the Police if she decides to report the historical abuse.

What Anne needs is validation that her experience matters and that there are people who can support her to move forward. Anne also needs justice and to see the user of violence held accountable.

Aviva would like to provide:

- Urgent counselling funded by ACC
- Easy access to partner counselling and sex therapy
- Support with disclosing historic abuse with the wider family and whānau.

8. Scarlet's story



"I really needed someone who could support me in my journey as a survivor and not judge me for my work."

– SASSC youth voice

Scarlet is a 23-year-old Pākehā woman who moved to Christchurch to get away from a dysfunctional family in the North Island. She works as an exotic dancer at a brothel in the city. She likes the money that she earns and the fact that she doesn't have to have sex with the clients. Mostly she likes the party lifestyle her job funds. Scarlet enjoys drinking and using recreational drugs.

Scarlet contacted the SASSC team after she was violently assaulted by a client after being followed home from work one night. Despite suffering serious injury to her face and body Scarlet is confused about whether the incident was sexual harm or not because the perpetrator was a client at the club. She is also concerned about reporting the incident because she had been using drugs earlier that night, and how her employer would react.

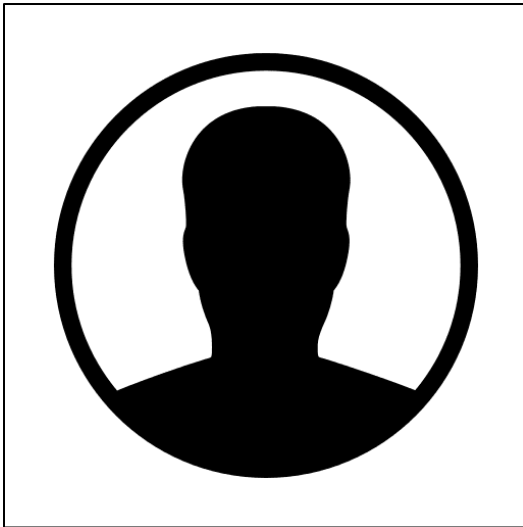
The SASSC team provides Scarlet with validation about the seriousness of the assault. They provide information about Employee support and workplace safety. They can also support with a protection order and alcohol and drug support if needed. SASSC also helps Scarlet with a referral to the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective.

Scarlet urgently needs a health check and victim support and education about her rights under the law. She also needs to report the assault to the Police and to be supported through that process.

Aviva would also like to support people like Scarlet with:

- Personal safety and consent education.
- Advocacy and representation for sex workers and their right to a safe workplace.
- Public education to reduce stigma for sex workers/adult industry workers as a community.

9. Tane's story



“Text messaging or instant messaging is helpful because calling doesn’t work for everyone.”

– SASSC youth voice

We know very little about Tane because he is one of many young people who choose not to report their experience of sexual harm. We only know about him because he is using the Aviva website and because he calls the anonymous helpline.

From what Tane is willing to share, we think he is Māori and in his early twenties. He is heterosexual male who was sexually assaulted while he was at high school. It is likely that he disclosed the incident at the time and had a negative experience, either not being believed or being advised not to report it to the Police. It sounds like he has a full-time job and a steady girlfriend, but he is starting to experience emotional dysregulation and feelings of shame and anger. Tane is struggling to reconcile his strong masculine self-identity with the powerlessness of his sexual assault.

The SASSC team provides Tane with a range of online resources to help him make sense of what he has experienced. The anonymous helpline provides a sensitive listening when he needs support. SASSC can also provide education regarding the Police reporting process so Tane can make an informed decision about reporting. They also provide education for partners.

What Tane urgently needs is validation that his lived experience matters and that what he is going through can be navigated. He clearly needs time and space. Online resources provide the information he needs, and the helpline conversations help build the trust needed for him to take the next step.

Aviva would like to continue to provide people like Tane with:

- A listening ear
- Discreet online resources
- Fully funded assistance for young people who desperately need to access support, without the requirement that they report the sexual harm to Police or social services.

Summary

“Making this organisation more well-known is important for people to access”

– SASSC youth voice

Research suggests that 1 in 6 young New Zealanders experience sexual harm before the age of 18. As a society we need to be doing more to prevent, educate and empower young people to understand sexual harm and consent.

Most of the young people and their family/whānau that have been referred to the SASSC service over the last six years had limited knowledge around their rights and the supports they could turn to. The service has supported them by listening, validating, educating, them; and supporting them to navigate the complex landscape of government agencies reporting and support service providers, and their own emotional responses to their experience.

The aim of the SASSC Youth Project is to highlight the gaps in the current support systems for youth who have experienced sexual harm and present a scope of service delivery that specially caters to the youths’ developing needs. The report is aspirational in nature in terms of what a future service specifically catering to youth could look like.

The case for better funding of both early intervention and prevention, crisis support, and ongoing social work support is obvious.

However, contracting is about more than just securing the financial resources needed to deliver crisis and long-term support to our young people. Recognizing the importance of youth sexual harm services would provide sexual harm support professionals with a mandate to build better relationships across the complex landscape of government agencies and service providers.

This process of connecting the system to itself is a form of *whanaungatanga* or creating relatedness. Building strong and healthy relationships across the sector is vital if we want to create more joined up services and a less traumatic experience for young people who experience sexual harm and who have chosen to disclose it.

As a society we need to explore much more fully the experiences of young people disclosing and how to make this safe for them and their family/whānau, especially when reporting exposes them to further trauma. This also must be balanced with safety and care and protection priorities so that the whole system works to keep the young person safe from further harm.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. I hope its highlighted important facts that need to be taken into account when thinking the kind of service framework that is required to support the young people who have experienced sexual harm. I hope that it has also given you an understanding of the systemic barriers and challenges faced while seeking support for the young people. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and respect for everyone in the SASSC team at Aviva. The work you do is truly inspiring. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou katoa.

Billy Matheson
Director
EXP Ltd

SASSC Co-design Project Participant Bios

Sofia Ayushi

SASSC Senior Clinician

Bachelor of Psychology (2015), Post-Graduate Diploma of Psychology (2017), Certificate in Trauma-Informed Care (2021)

Four years' experience in supporting and working with adults, youth and children with trauma, disability, educational and psychological needs. Three years' experience in working with individuals who have experienced family harm and sexual harm, two of which included programme development for adults, youth, and children. Currently working with clients in the SASSC full time role; establishing support following historic or acute sexual harm. Areas of interest and specialization: Trauma- informed support for adults, youth, and children.

Abby Heppelthwaite

SASSC Senior Clinician

Registered Social Worker; Bachelor of Social Work (2015)

Previous experience with at-risk youth and young mothers in an NGO setting. Four years' experience in forensic mental health, working with high-risk clients who were rehabilitated back into the community. Short-term work in the community mental health sector, working with clients who have complex needs such as Borderline Personality Disorder. Currently working with clients in the SASSC full time role; establishing support following historic or acute sexual harm. Utilization of models such as Strengths-Based Practice, Trauma-Informed Care and Crisis Intervention. Interest in other creative therapies including art therapy as well as yoga as a means of healing for survivors of sexual harm.

Kim Grooby

Client Services Manager (FSW)

Diploma in Counselling (2013), Bachelor of Arts in Art History and Theory (2010)

Previous experience as a Youth Worker in Christchurch. Experience working in the drug and alcohol sector with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in remote outback Australia. DRUMBEAT Facilitator (building resilience through rhythm). Experience in facilitating various group programmes. Worked at Aviva since 2017 mostly with adult clients experiencing family violence as a Family Support Worker, both in an individual capacity and facilitating group programmes. Particularly interested in offering alternatives to talk-based therapy. An interest in art has fueled this desire to be creative with trauma-informed practice.

Isabel Lutz

SASSC Clinician

Registered Social Worker; Bachelor of Social Work (2014)

Three years working in a women's refuge in Germany. Three years of experience in working with youth in a protected residential and educational setting as well as working with minored refugees in the same setting, as well as work in supporting clients who have experienced domestic and intimate partner violence. Experience in working with trauma and complex trauma (DID), violence prevention and crisis support (sexual violence and family violence). Currently working with clients in the SASSC full time role; establishing support following historic or acute sexual harm. Areas of specialization include: Systemic Theory and Practice, Intercultural Approach, Elimination of Marginalization, Feminism, LGBTQIA+ Rights and Transformative Justice.

Jordyn Clark

SASSC Clinician

Two years' experience as an afterhours SASSC worker, supporting clients through their medical examination. Currently working with clients in the SASSC full time role; establishing support following historic or acute sexual harm. Areas of interest and specialization: Ecological Model, Intersection between Trauma and Culture, LGBTQIA+ Issues. Specific interest in supporting transgender Individuals.