

# THE advocate

## Learning to Understand Himself

Aviva receives approximately 4000 calls for support a year. Recently, we received a call that was a little different. A woman called just to say thank you, not for herself, but for her partner who received support through Aviva's ReachOut service. After just a couple of months, she said he had completely changed.

Trent\* came to Aviva after his partner recommended it to him. "We were going through some troubles and realised we needed some help with things," he explains. Trent had been through three anger management courses and supervision prior to coming to Aviva. "But this guy here," he says, indicating his support worker Nicky, "out of all the professional help I've received, this guy is the best!" Trent elaborates, "He talked and listened. That's the most important thing. And I knew he was listening because he gave me the right answers!"

Trent has struggled with anger and needing to prove himself right for years. Through his past courses, Trent built up a toolbox of communication skills and tactics for removing himself from situations where he described himself as "quite scary." The tools were helpful, but he continued to find himself struggling with relationships. When he came to Aviva, he

finally began to understand the "why" behind his anger and work through his past trauma. "[Nicky has helped me] to be able to allow myself to grieve. Allow myself to feel happiness not as a foreign feeling. He's very naturally pin-pointed key points to the puzzle that I've been looking for, for quite a few years." Trent recalls how he was treated as a child for his ADHD and how he has seen those experiences reflected in his own children after they were given the same diagnosis. "ADHD kids were always seen as naughty and punished for it," he explains.

Having already put in years of work to learn the right tools for controlling his anger, Aviva and Nicky may have just been there at the right time and with the right listening ear; but the improvement Trent has made is undeniable. Trent describes his current relationship with his partner as, "Fantastic!" but what he says has changed the most is other people's response toward him.



Trent now uses what he has learned every day. Whether it is being a better partner, helping his children avoid the same challenges his ADHD gave him, or his interactions with others, Trent says, "I just like people to be happy and good. I don't like to see people unhappy."

As Trent continues to work on himself and his understanding, we hope he and the people in his life have a future full of love and happiness.

\*Not his real name

# Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern Visits Aviva and The Loft

In April 2019, Aviva was excited to welcome Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to The Loft. The goal of her visit was to learn more about Aviva's approach to family and sexual violence, and The Loft's integrated model for addressing social inequalities and their impact on wellbeing.

According to data released by the New Zealand Police in June 2019, the police are called every four minutes to investigate an episode of family harm, 14% of young people report being hit or physically harmed on purpose by an adult at home, and 50% of New Zealand homicides are caused by family violence. "New Zealand stats have been abysmal for a very long time and we've known it for a very long time," Director of Innovation and Strategy Nicola Woodward explains. "However, we don't know if the most recent increased number of police call outs reflects an increase in family violence or an increase in people's trust that if they call the police, they'll get the help they need."

Prime Minister Ardern's visit came shortly after the government's announcement that it would invest in the development of services for family and sexual violence. Ardern stated, "My goal has always been for New Zealand to be the best place in the world to be a child and that means supporting parents and communities to ensure children grow up in secure homes free from violence." Aviva has been developing its holistic child and family centered approach to family violence since 2011, recognising the importance of pro-actively reaching out and earlier intervention in breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence to achieve this very goal.

During her visit, Ardern dropped in on a Peer Support community training course to meet people with lived experience



Prime Minister Jacinda Adern with Poto Williams MP and Nicola Woodward visiting The Loft.

of overcoming violence and joined Plunket's infant drop-in clinic. She also connected with practitioners from across The Loft partners to discuss the most critical issues facing New Zealand families. "It's very promising and it indicates movement in the right direction," Nicola says regarding the government's interest in Aviva and The Loft's service models. "The ability to achieve Aviva's and The Loft's potential for children, families and communities is not only subject to transforming how we respond to family and sexual violence, but also transforming how the government responds. We're all parts of one interdependent system."

Since the Prime Minister's visit, The Loft partners have been invited to submit a funding

proposal to government to support and develop The Loft's approach for children and families. The Loft sits at the heart of Aviva's strategy to change how we respond to family violence and sexual violence. Family violence and problems closely connected with violence, such as mental ill health, are the main reasons people walk through The Loft front door. The government's recognition of The Loft model and Aviva's approach is highly encouraging as we continue our journey to create the best possible response model to family and sexual violence. Sadly, demand for Aviva's services always exceeds the funding we receive from government. Please consider helping us in creating a better world for our children by making a donation at [donate.avivafamilies.org.nz](https://donate.avivafamilies.org.nz).



## Helping Families to Have Truly Happy Holidays

We often think of Christmas as a magical time. The barbecues, blossoming pohutukawa and endless summer. It is a time to relax and appreciate our loved ones. But that's not an easy task for everyone.

The holiday season can be a difficult time for many of the families we work with. It is one of the busiest times of year for us, with staff working on Christmas and New Year's Day. Family violence affects every member of a family, from those who experience it, to those who use it, to the children who witness it. *Violence does not prejudice based on an ethnicity, religion, socio-economic group, gender, age or sexuality.* From our clients doing their best to become better parents and partners, to our staff trying to help families reach their best potential, to our leaders continually working to expand our services to all who need them, we are all trying to make a better society for our families and our children; a society free from violence.

### We can't do it without you

Consider giving a gift to Aviva this season to help our families have their own happy holidays. Make a donation directly to Aviva at [donate.avivafamilies.org.nz](https://donate.avivafamilies.org.nz)

If you would rather make an in-kind donation, here are some suggestions:

- ✦ Petrol and grocery vouchers
- ✦ The Warehouse or Eastgate Mall vouchers
- ✦ Phone top-ups
- ✦ Entertainment passes for families
- ✦ Christmas gifts for all ages and genders
- ✦ Wrapping paper and gift tags
- ✦ Gifts for men, teens, and young adults

Thank you for helping us spread Christmas joy to families in your community.



Stitch overcame violence and learned the meaning of Ohana/family. Now he's ready to run and show others that they can too.

## New Year, New Me

It's time to finally achieve that New Year's resolution to get fit!

Aviva is looking for people to join our team of Aviva Activators and run in the 2020 City2Surf on 22 March and/or ASB Christchurch Marathon on 31 May while fundraising for Aviva. Whether you run every year or it's your first time, why not use the opportunity to support family and sexual violence services in your community? Aviva will be offering tips and tricks along the way to help you raise money and be a better runner.

Not a runner? There are plenty of other ways to be an Aviva Activator. This year, Revolution Church raised over \$2000 for Aviva with an evening of Musical Bingo. Whether it's a sausage sizzle, a mufti day, or a resolution to finally try skydiving or shave your head, think about how you can turn it into a chance to raise awareness and raise some funds for your local community.

The Aviva Activators webpage can help you raise funds and keep track of your progress. Check it out at [fundraise.avivafamilies.org.nz](https://fundraise.avivafamilies.org.nz). Let us know your plans so we can help you out.

# We Couldn't Do This Without You

Did you know that Aviva benefitted from 7,943 hours of GIFTED time last year? In recognition of their dedicated service, two of our fabulous volunteers, Renata Hopkins and Bev Shepherd, received Volunteer Recognition Awards from Volunteer Canterbury on 17 June 2019.



LEFT Bev and her supervisor Tania at the Volunteer Canterbury Awards. RIGHT Renata with Ruth Dyson MP at the Volunteer Canterbury Awards.

“There were so many volunteer groups that I’ve never heard about. It was amazing,” says Bev. “I felt slightly embarrassed because I was like, why am I getting this award? I said to the other volunteers in the team that the award was really for all of us,” Renata explains.

Renata joined Aviva’s Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) as a volunteer almost a year and a half ago. Renata’s mother had been a volunteer for Aviva when it was still a women’s refuge, creating a natural interest for her. She often works the overnight shifts for the 24/7 SASSC helpline. “Sometimes you just have to get up, put your clothes on and go,” she says, describing her late-night shifts supporting people at medical examinations. As a freelance writer, Renata has plenty of experience speaking

with people about their stories. She brings those skills to her work with SASSC. “You’re there to listen and help in whatever way you can, even if that’s just making a cup of tea,” she says. “I’m always amazed by how brave and strong people are, despite the traumatic experience they’ve been through.”

Bev has been working as an administrative volunteer at Aviva for almost three years. After she retired, she immediately turned around and said, “It’s time to give back to the community.” Bev does everything – filing, copying, cleaning, picking up donations, refueling cars. Her supervisor Tania Kitto says, “She is always willing to go above and beyond with a smile and willingness. We are so grateful to have such a willing, efficient, flexible volunteer of time and tasks – a volunteer extraordinaire!” Bev explains, “You do it because you want

to help out. And for your own mental health. Giving is really good for your own mental health.” Bev recalls her own experience overcoming domestic violence and being reliant on her grandmother to take her in. At the time, refuges and family violence services were not as prevalent as they are now. When she first started looking for volunteer opportunities, she knew she wanted to support family violence services and make sure the people going through similar situations have the support she did not. “It’s a worldwide issue,” she elaborates. “I’ll stay here as long as they want me. I really enjoy it. I can’t think of any reason I would leave unless they don’t need me anymore.”

Aviva relies on the generosity of caring individuals like Renata and Bev to play an active part in their community by gifting their time, skills, and energy to help others. If you are interested in volunteering with Aviva, there are several ways. You can volunteer regularly like Renata and Bev, or just for one-off projects. To find out more, contact [enquiries@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@avivafamilies.org.nz).

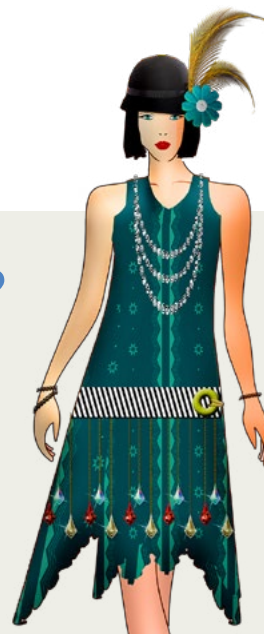
**“Get started! It’s a great place to come and volunteer!” -Bev.**

## Ready for the Roaring Twenties?

The jazz, the fashion, the art. Let’s harken back to exactly one century past at Aviva’s Roaring Twenties Ilam House Party. Save the date for 1 April 2020.

Get dressed up in your most dapper suits and best flapper dresses as we dance and dine to music of the era like we are in the Great Gatsby. There will be a live and silent auction.

Keep an eye on our website at [avivafamilies.org.nz](http://avivafamilies.org.nz) for more information.



# Nicola Says Farewell After 8 Years of Leadership and Innovation

Nicola Woodward has led Aviva since 2011, formerly as CEO and most recently as Director of Strategy and Innovation. She will leave us shortly before Christmas after eight years of service to the agency and the communities we support.

Nicola joined Aviva, known then as Christchurch Women's Refuge (CWR), following the agency's decision to disaffiliate from the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges. The decision was based on the recognition that it needed to develop a whole family approach and change the way it provides services if we wanted to achieve our goal of breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence.

After 30 years in related fields, Nicola brought a wealth of experience in innovating, leading and transforming government and societal responses to deeply embedded problems. This included her frontline work setting up London's first needle exchange and harm minimisation service, to developing national policies in the UK to address the multiple effects of social inequalities. Nicola used this experience to explore the contemporary benefits, limitations and unintended consequences of the refuge model CWR founded in 1973. "The public perception, shared by many women, was that we had to leave our relationships, homes and employment, remove our children from school, and enter a refuge to become safe. One of the unintended consequences of this was that it placed the burden of responsibility on women to take action to become safe and protect our children."

Nicola encouraged another perspective. "Achieving a violence free New Zealand calls

for all of us to reflect personally on how we see and behave towards others." In particular, she elaborated, "Men who are using violence bring their personal stories too. To support individuals and families to become safe, we need to understand all of our past experiences and influences." In 2012, in partnership with Canterbury Police, Aviva developed the award winning ReachOut service for men using, or at risk of using, violence. Our services further expanded to include specialist youth services to respond to the growing problem of adolescent intimate partner violence and familial violence, evidence-based specialist peer support services, and microfinance services. In 2014, Aviva and START partnered to rapidly develop the Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) following the sudden closure of the Monarch Centre. "Our mindset has changed. Our language has changed. Our name has changed. Our behaviours have changed. But our purpose is the same," explains Nicola.

One of Nicola's biggest challenges during her time with Aviva has been co-leading the development of The Loft with other partner agencies. "People and families experiencing violence have a broad range of needs that have to be addressed quickly to enable safety. The Loft's emerging model of frontline,



Nicola Woodward

management and leadership practice makes it much easier for families to access support and much easier for practitioners across multiple organisations to work together," Nicola explains. "Since opening The Loft we've connected with hundreds of individuals and families who would otherwise not have asked for help." Nicola describes The Loft as a "manifestation" of everything Aviva has aspired to become since she joined eight years ago. "I still go into the reception to welcome the courageous people walking through the door and think, 'We made it. We actually did it!'"

This courageous and innovative woman has made a significant contribution to Aviva and our purpose to enable New Zealand to become violence-free. "What I takeaway isn't so much a sense of pride, it's an inner strength that comes from remaining true to why we're here as an organisation and what I believe in as a human being." As Aviva looks to its future, Nicola offers some departing advice, "Keeping hold of our truth means continuing to listen, learn and remain generous; to explore, innovate and partner to achieve more for children and families than we can alone. But most of all, I'd encourage us all to deepen our belief in everyone's intrinsic goodness and our collective potential to enable Aotearoa New Zealand to become violence free."

# Motivating Families to Reach Their Full Potential

“Great man.” “Natural empathy.”

“Life which he shares and he’s not afraid of.”



Nicky at the Loft.

This is how clients describe their Aviva Family Support Worker Nicky Sofai, as he approaches almost 20 years of service in the sector.

After years of work in alcohol and drug counselling, facilitating restorative justice, and working as a private consultant for family violence, Nicky has brought his talents to Aviva. He works with everyone, men, women, youth, and the children in our Tamariki Group. “What I love about Aviva is that we work with the whole family, people using violence and experiencing violence. Including children,” Nicky says. His primary focus, and where he has proven highly instrumental, is his work with ReachOut for people using violence or at risk of using violence.

Nicky has his own experience witnessing violence as a child in Samoa, describing how his father would drink and become violent towards his mother. He remembers how it affected

him growing up and starting a family while dealing with his own problems with alcohol. For many years, he never questioned his drinking, it was just what they did in his family. He recalls finishing work, going straight to the pub and drinking into the late hours of the night without pause. “Then one day deciding I’d had enough,” he says. “I wanted to take my children out of that kind of life. That motivated me to keep going.” Nicky had built a successful business in Samoa, but he understood that, “the only way to live and fulfill my family was come here and start all over again.” He brought his family to New Zealand to do just that. “Coming here. It was good. It gave me an opportunity to raise my own kids the way I believe.”

After stopping drinking, moving away from the violence that plagued his childhood, and making a better life for his family where his children could thrive, Nicky was inspired to support other families to overcome

their own struggles. “I love to see families doing well. I love to see happy, successful, healthy, wealthy families without violence,” he says. If that means sharing his own story, he is not afraid to do so. “I had so many people asking, ‘Have you ever had any experience with alcohol or drugs?’ I replied, ‘Well, I did study, but at the same time, you want to know about my experience, where do you want to start?’ If part of my life journey can be to help to motivate someone, I will openly share it.”

That openness and empathy is what makes Nicky so good at what he does. He never fails to see the strength or goodness in a person. Even when speaking of his own father’s violence, he describes him as “an awesome dad” and expresses a gratitude for their reconciliation. When talking about his ReachOut clients, Nicky says, “There’s still a good person. There’s still potential. They have so much strength in them. They just have rubbish on top of them.” These people are willingly choosing to enter the service, admitting that they are using violence, and working to make a better life for their families and their children. Similar to Nicky, many bring their own stories of witnessing or experiencing violence, addiction, or struggling with mental health. “It inspires me to see just whoever is sitting in front of me. They’re so full of potential,” Nicky says. “It’s the people that make me keep going.”

The work of people like Nicky relies on the generosity and support of the community. To support our staff in their work to help people overcome the long-term effects of violence, please make a donation at [donate.avivafamilies.org.nz](https://donate.avivafamilies.org.nz).

**“There is a light at the other end of the tunnel and Aviva is one of those places that can give you hope.” -Nicky**

# The Practicality of Domestic Violence Leave

As of April 2019, the New Zealand Government has adopted the Domestic Violence Victims' Protection Act in response to the country's staggering family violence statistics. This act has been praised by news media and family violence agencies alike, but what does it actually mean for employers and their employees affected by violence?

According to Employment New Zealand, the Act "adds legal protections in the workplace for people affected by domestic violence." These protections include the right for employees to take at least 10 days of paid domestic violence leave, ask for up to two-months of flexible working arrangements, and not be treated adversely in the workplace because of their experiences.

Kayla\* had only recently started her new job when she decided to seek help with her violent relationship. She joined Aviva's group programme for women experiencing violence but realised she would need to miss work to attend the full course. Her support worker encouraged her to seek leave and assisted in setting out the terms for her request. Having been a past donor, her CEO Mike\* was already familiar with Aviva services. "We were sympathetic to her situation and saddened that it was occurring. We had no hesitation in approving the request for DV leave," he says.

"[The programme] really did help me to understand the cycle of violence, and finally allow me to let go," Kayla explains. "It really would not have been possible without the support of my work and the ability to have the leave."

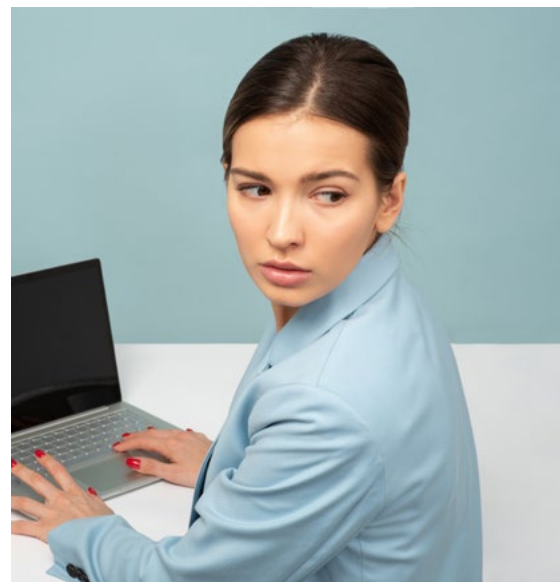
The benefits of the Act are clear, but Aviva General Manager Nicki O'Donnell notes that there is still a gap. "For us, it's all about inclusiveness. You can't change the cycle of violence if you are only working with people

experiencing family violence." Aviva believes in everyone's potential to become a better parent, partner or citizen and that, in order to achieve a violence free society, people using violence need to be included in the conversation.

There are other practical barriers to requesting leave. Admitting you are experiencing or using violence is a highly difficult process. People often feel shame, guilt, or confusion, and may be uncomfortable discussing their situation with friends or family, let alone an employer. The legislation's lack of a confidentiality policy and the employers' right to ask for proof further discourages people from reaching out. Although a high-risk situation may have a police report attached, most of the violence taking place today will never come to the attention of the police or professional services. Someone experiencing violence may not have "proof" to give.

Nicki explains that as part of the Human Resources team at Aviva, she would not ask for proof of domestic violence. "When people come and ask you [for domestic violence leave], they are courageous to say something is not right. As much as employers may have a DV policy in place, there needs to be some flexibility."

Mike agrees with the need for flexibility, having ignored his own six-month service requirement to grant Kayla's request. "We would approach each situation



independently, rather than be guided by policy," he explains. Mike and Kayla further emphasise the value organisations like Aviva can offer, whether it be acting as a liaison, giving guidance, or offering peace of mind. "With all you are already going through and have been through, it's nice to have the support in place," Kayla says.

Although Mike's understanding helped Kayla to overcome a violent situation, it may not be that way for everyone. "It's easy for us to say come and talk. But will they?" Nicki asks.

Aviva has created "Let's Talk / Me Kōrero" to help start the conversation. If you are interested in making sure everyone in your workplace feels safe and respected to come forward with their experience, contact [community@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:community@avivafamilies.org.nz) to find out more.

\*Not their real names



Past donations to Aviva.

## Thank You to Our Supporters

We continue to be incredibly grateful to all the support we receive, from homemade biscuits to children's backpacks to furniture for clients. Thank you for always being there when we put a call out and to all the individual donors who are supporting our community to live free from violence.

### FUNDERS

- New Zealand Ministry of Social Development
- New Zealand Ministry of Justice
- Steadfast Foundation
- Lion Foundation
- Dove Charitable Trust
- Lois McFarlane Charitable Trust
- Christchurch City Council – Community Grants
- Catholic Diocese of Christchurch/ Tindall/Hoatu Fund
- Helen Stewart Royle Charitable Trust
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- Pitcaithly Body Corporate Services

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- Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery School
- St. Margaret's College
- St. Andrew's Church
- Christchurch Foundation
- NZ Federation of Women's Institutes Canterbury
- Revolution Church
- Rekareka Girl Guides
- Zonta Club of Christchurch South

**Let's Talk!**  
Me kōrero

If you were experiencing family or sexual violence who could you talk to about it?

How would you support a family member, friend or colleague who was experiencing family or sexual violence?

Think about the last time you had a conversation about family or sexual violence. It is not something we talk about often, but perhaps it should be. Year after year, the statistics show that New Zealand has the worst rates of family violence in the OECD. People say, "We need to be talking about this." Then Let's Talk about it! Aviva has developed Let's Talk / Me Kōrero to help start the conversation. If your community group, club, or workplace is interested joining the conversation, contact [community@avivafamilies.org.nz](mailto:community@avivafamilies.org.nz) to find out more.

We need to make these conversations commonplace, so the next time someone needs help, we can be there. #LetsTalk #MeKōrero

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