

Passionate About People

Kate Jones is one of Aviva's Family Support Workers and also our Group Education Coordinator. When you make a donation to Aviva, it often goes to help pay for the skills and services of talented and caring people like Kate, who every day listen to, support and advocate for children and women living with and leaving behind family violence. The support you enable her and her colleagues to give is literally life changing – sometimes, even life-saving.

Kate worked at Aviva for 18 months, her first role since graduating with her degree in Social Work. It's not a profession that will make you rich, but for Kate who had "always had a passion for helping and supporting other people" it was a perfect fit. Through her studies she had learned a lot about family violence and although it is "challenging", Kate also finds it "really rewarding."

As a Family Support Worker Kate meets with women and children, assessing where they're at as a family, supporting them to set their own goals and exploring what will help them to move forward, free from violence. She puts women in touch with practical support (e.g. Work and Income or lawyers), draws up safety plans with clients and helps answer our 0800 AVIVA NOW Support and Information line.

Kate also co-ordinates our specialist family violence education programmes for children and women in Christchurch. She interviews and assesses children's and women's readiness for a programme, rosters the group facilitators (including herself), orders resources and arranges transport to and from school for children attending the Tamariki programme.

Whilst learning all of the 'behind the scenes' work required to make the group happen has been challenging, Kate "just love(s) facilitating both groups. I get inspiration from the women, how strong and open they are, and with the children, the best thing is the check-ins to see how they are doing at the start of each session. They come up with some cool things; it's nice for them to have a place to share that."

Supporting people who've experienced the trauma of family violence is not the easiest day job. "The support line is one of the most challenging aspects of the job" says Kate. "You have no idea what is going to come up when you answer that call. It could be a referral, or it could be someone in a crisis and when that happens, you've just got to remain calm. It's a lot of responsibility. People want immediate fixes and you can't give them that, but you can give them suggestions on where to next. Certain stories can be hard to deal with, especially hearing about what children have been through or witnessed. You have to train yourself to switch off, but sometimes you can't just leave it at the door. That's where we're really lucky here – we have a great team and we can check in with each other and talk it out together."

The other side of the coin though is that "you get to see people change; it can even be the way they talk. They start off lacking confidence and putting themselves down. Even after a few appointments they change the way they speak about themselves. It's so worth it all when a woman comes to you saying 'I wouldn't have been able to do this without you.' I remember one woman that I supported the whole way through – I took her first call, then she became my community client and then she was in the group I facilitated. In our final session we all write messages for each other and in my card she wrote 'you saved my sanity in my darkest hour'. That is where it pays off."