

THE advocate

Support Aviva Under Lockdown

Over the past four weeks of lockdown, Aviva has seen a 34% increase in family violence referrals to our support line.

Averaged out across New Zealand, that's an additional 2800 affected families last month. And we know reporting does not recognise the full scope. In this newsletter, you will read more about what our clients are facing and what Aviva is doing to help.

What about incidents of sexual violence?

While we have seen an increase in family violence, we initially saw no increase in calls to our Sexual Assault Support Service Canterbury (SASSC) 24/7 hotline. For those experiencing sexual violence in their homes, especially for children, there has likely been an increase in violence that the reports do not accurately reflect.

It was noted within our service after the earthquakes and Mosque shootings that throughout the immediate time following, reporting seemed to decline for a period. However, as people began to return to 'normal life,' the reports began to rise significantly. A month into lockdown, we are beginning to see a slight increase in cases that could reflect a similar situation.

How is Aviva responding?

We have moved our team to working remotely, but we remain available to any and all 24/7 with practical assistance and support.



Our priority is to keep people safe – from family and sexual violence as well as COVID-19.

Our 24/7 support line remains our first point of contact for most, with enquiries via our website.

Although all our services are still fully functional, face to face services are extremely limited, and are being undertaken very differently. We are offering clients some creative ways to continue to feel supported, using a variety of audio/visual platforms to engage in face to safe sessions for individual or group programmes.

Unfortunately, many of our clients deal with additional interrelated issues such as mental health, addiction, or poverty. With no open doors to easily walk in, lockdown has limited their access to support. Many clients struggle with phone or internet access

while services struggle to meet rising demand. These pose barriers to actively and swiftly supporting people. The pressure within some homes will continue to rise and risks will rise for people.

How can I help?

Aviva is expecting a loss in donations of up to 30% this year, due to the cancellation of major fundraising events over the coming months. We are holding an Emergency Appeal to fill that gap. Thanks to the kind generosity of our supporters, we are already halfway to our \$70,000 goal, but we still have a long way to go. Please help by making a contribution at <https://emergency.avivafamilies.org.nz>.

If you or someone you know needs support, please call 0800 AVIVA NOW (0800 28482 669).

Finding a Guide Through Uncertainty

COVID-19 has left many of us feeling unsure, like we don't know what to do or what is happening. But can you imagine trying to navigate that uncertainty while also trying to protect your family from violence?

Cayden Hays*, his wife, and their three children had been staying with extended family and living with violence long before COVID-19 reached New Zealand. "We were stressed, under pressure. It was an intense situation." They had already debated reaching out to Aviva on multiple occasions when the lockdown went into effect. "There were five of us living in one bedroom. Having the lockdown meant we had to be at home 24/7. It sort of heightened everything."

A single violent incident with the extended family late one evening finally pushed the Hays to call the police and reach out to Aviva for support. "By 10 o'clock the next morning we were already in touch with our support worker and she was sorting things out with us. She was quick to jump in and help us. It was good knowing she was there."

It wasn't a typical situation, the entire family needed to be removed from their home - both parents, their three children, and their pets. A refuge wouldn't be able to take them all. "It was a super weird situation. We didn't know what to do," Cayden explained.

But Aviva did. Within a few hours their support worker, Sofia, had organised emergency accommodation for the whole family and coordinated with SPCA to take the pets. "It was good to know the next few days were sorted, and we could just relax," said Cayden.



The Aviva team contacted some other supportive agencies and 'friends of Aviva.' Within a few days, they enabled the family to move into a new home, furnished for them. The SPCA dropped by and reunited them with their pets.

"The best thing was knowing that we had somebody there to help point us in the right direction. When everything started happening, there were loose ends everywhere that we didn't know what to do with, so having Sofia there to walk us through each step was amazing," Cayden explained. "Just knowing that she was leading the way made all the difference. To take off that weight of 'What's going to happen?' Not just keeping things on track but having

someone to share the load with, it allowed us to start the recovery and healing process."

That time to recover and heal has been invaluable for the Hays. "It's like a weight lifted off our shoulders. Not just for us as parents, it was a big weight, but for our kids as well. They're finally able to relax. It was a whirlwind where we were staying. It isn't until you get out that you realise how heavy it was."

Sofia has continued to check-in with the Hays every few days. "The follow-up has been amazing. Just before Easter she got in touch and organised a food parcel for us. That was really amazing."

Even under lockdown, Aviva staff are working tirelessly to support people like the Hays to stay safe. "All under lockdown, they made it all happen. We absolutely felt supported," Cayden said. To help keep your community safe from COVID-19 and violence, please consider making a donation to Aviva at <https://emergency.avivafamilies.org.nz>.

*Not his real name.



Continuing Support Under COVID-19

Over the past few weeks, our family support worker, Sofia, has been just one example of the tirelessly working Aviva staff who are trying to keep families safe in lockdown.

Born in India, she came to New Zealand to study psychology before eventually joining Aviva as a coordinator for the group educational programmes. "I organize and plan groups at Aviva. Being a coordinator and sometimes facilitator of the groups, I am able to see the transformation the participants have from when they first attended the group sessions to when they finally complete the programme. And Aviva is a part of that journey walking alongside with them." She also regularly covers the support line and works individually with clients as needed.

The lockdown has not been easy for many of the people she works with. "With families impacted by family violence there's always the stress of uncertainty. It just gets heightened in these situations as they don't know what services are available out there. They don't know who to go to, so that their needs are met."

She recalls some of the stories she has heard on the support line over the past few weeks. A mother from another part of the country whose daughter was assaulted in the Canterbury region, feeling unable to do anything and needing someone who could give her advice and support her daughter. A man sitting in his car, boiling over with anger and scared to go inside for fear that he might hurt his partner, begging for someone to help him stop. "People don't know how and what they can do. That's where we come in – to support them and guide them with possible alternatives and options."

The lockdown restrictions haven't stopped Sofia from finding a way to help, engaging people by phone or video calls where available, and linking them with the appropriate services. Even if she cannot be there in person, if a client needs to make a difficult call to the police, she will stay on the line with them during that call just to be there.

"The purpose is to be available in each and every way possible and support people in keeping themselves safe. We need to be thinking out of the box and keep engaging in this trial and error process."

One of the things making the transition easier are the understanding clients. "Our clients have been very supportive of this new change. Whenever I'm having a discussion or telling them, moving forward what the plan would look like. They have been very supportive and understanding. They have said – We are all in this together."

The current situation may be difficult and leaving many stressed or uncertain, but Sofia knows that having Aviva there to support people 24/7 can help. "I want people to know that what we do is important and very needed, be it in lockdown or not in lockdown," she says. "The families that we work with, they are the families that need our support. They want to overcome violence, they want to work on their relationships, they



Sofia pictured above.

want to lead a safe life. It's just that they need that support, and we are here with that support. We will be supporting them every day and, in every way, possible."

To support Sofia and all of Aviva's dedicated staff in their efforts to support children and families during these difficult times, please consider making a contribution to <https://emergency.avivafamilies.org.nz>.



Welcome Matt and Sarah to the Aviva Family

Introducing the newest Aviva Ambassadors, Matt Brown and Sarah Clare Brown of My Fathers Barber and She is Not Your Rehab (SINYR).

A New Zealand born Samoan, Matt is an internationally acclaimed barber and hair artist, communicator, husband, and father of three children known for “giving great cuts” and “inspiring great men.” He is a survivor of family violence and childhood sexual abuse and shares his story with the men who frequent his busy Christchurch and Palmerston North barbershops, My Fathers Barbers, as a way to foster vulnerability, healing, and connection. A New Zealand Māori (Ngāpuhi) wāhine, his wife Sarah is a celebrant, writer and the communications manager of My Fathers Barbers and She Is Not Your Rehab. She is passionate about their mandate of “creating

violence free communities” and has worked alongside Matt since his brand began.

In collaboration with Aviva and Mapu Maia, Matt and Sarah began hosting a monthly men’s anti-violence and mental health support group out of My Father’s Barber for which we have offered clinical training and perspective as well as access to further individualised support.

Aviva is excited to continue working with Matt and Sarah to help people overcome violence, regardless of where they are in that journey. You can find out more about the SINYR men’s group at facebook.com/sheisnotyourrehab.



Matt (right) and Sarah (left) Brown pictured above.

“Thank you, just thank you. Tonight, I experienced life, hurt, vulnerability, pain and how anger has ruined my heart, soul and destroyed my being. This is our journey of discovery in terms of healing my demons.”

– anonymous men’s group attendee

Thank you to our Supporters

We are incredibly grateful as always to see the kindness and generosity of our supporters. Thank you to everyone who helped make our Christmas Appeal so successful and who have continued to support Aviva through the recent pandemic. Allow us to take a moment to appreciate the funders, groups, and companies that allow us to continue providing our services to the community.

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