

NORTHERN NOTES

June 2020



“WITHOUT MARK AND FAMILY WORKS WE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT THIS FAR!”

Leila* was an anxious little girl who found it very difficult to adjust to changes. Her dad drifted in and out of her life. He would promise to come and take her out and spend time with her but he always let her down. As a result, Leila became very attached to her mum Jade*.

When Leila started school this attachment developed into a daily challenge. Everyday Jade would walk her daughter to school, but Leila would cling onto her when she would try to leave. Leila would cry, scream, and kick the wall. Jade struggled to leave Leila and would eventually give up and take her back home again.

This went on for weeks with Leila refusing to settle. The school were keen to help Jade and her daughter so they referred them to their Family Works Social Worker in School, Mark*.

Jade and Mark wanted to ensure that Leila was able to find a safe and positive connection with her school so they sat together to come up with a plan for Leila. Jade would drop Leila off at the school gate and Mark would spend the first 30 minutes of school with Leila engaging in art activities - painting, drawing, and colouring - before taking her into class.

Soon Leila began to show positive signs that she was starting to come out of herself. Without being asked, she started to help other new kids in her class settle into school, showing them around and

ensuring that they too are as well looked after as she was. Then she began to make friends and join in with her school mates more and more.

Leila loves to share her experience with her new friends about when she first started school.

She is now caring, fearless and always determined to be involved in school activities.

Jade is delighted with her daughter's progress and just how well she has settled into her class. Leila has discovered her own sense of empowerment and a new strength within herself. She has found her place and a real sense of belonging.

“Leila started school not being able to settle in. I found it so hard helping her with schooling, but I thank Mark for all his help. Without him we wouldn't have had made it this far. Thank you so much for everything you have done to help us, it means such a lot to us.”

*Names changed and photostock used to protect identities

GRANDMA'S DETERMINATION TO HELP HER GRANDCHILDREN MEANT FAMILY WORKS WAS ABLE TO GUIDE THEM THROUGH ROUGH TIMES



Katie* and Jordan's* dad was twenty-five when he suddenly passed away. Their mum was unwell, and couldn't manage the children on her own so grandma Helen* stepped in to take charge of her two grandchildren.

Both children had been struggling to come to terms with their mum's ill health and now they were faced with the grief and loss of their dad dying. They became withdrawn and anxious, and developed low self-esteem. Too afraid to let themselves feel loved and cared for, they often ignored Helen when she tried to talk to them.

However, Helen was determined to do everything in her power to give Katie and Jordan a fair start in life. She decided to get professional help for the children and arranged for them to meet their own Family Works counsellor to help them deal with the sudden loss of their dad and the absence of their mum. Family Worker Christy* met Katie and Jordan and began to develop trust with them, encouraging the children to share their worries with her.

The children opened up, and were able to express their deepest feelings about losing their dad, and explore their overwhelming emotions and fears of being left alone. Katie and Jordan made great progress. Helen found that the children's spirits were lifting and they began sharing not only their feelings about their dad but also their happy memories of him too.

Today Katie and Jordan often talk about their dad and they have a close, loving relationship with their gran.

*Names changed and photostock used to protect identities

Making a lasting difference



A bequest to Presbyterian Support Northern is a simple and positive way to support our vision of a better life for everyone. It's a personal way to make sure your support can live on to benefit future generations. Anyone can leave a bequest and whatever the size of your gift, it will make a positive difference.

If you would like to discuss leaving a bequest or would like more information please contact **Suzanne Ward (09 520 8628)** suzanne.ward@psn.org.nz
All enquiries will be treated in confidence.

HOW JULIA MADE HER OWN STORY

Twins Julia* and Kate* were both feeling deeply unhappy. A couple of years ago, their mum Laura* had separated from their dad who had been abusive for years. The twins had frequently witnessed their dad's violence towards their mum.

Eventually, Laura found a new partner who moved in and became the twins' step-dad. He was kind and easy-going but just as the twins were getting close to him, he fell ill and passed away. Both children were over-come with sadness at this sudden loss. Julia found it particularly difficult to manage her grief and frustration. She started arguments with them that soon escalated into Julia hitting them. Kate became very confused and afraid of her sister's behaviour.

Laura approached Family Works for help. Family Worker Amy* reached out to help Julia manage her grief and anger. Julia shared that she felt her emotions were out of control. Amy taught her to look at her life in a different way by using story telling techniques to help her understand what was going on. Amy also helped Julia understand her grief, and soon she was able to connect with happier memories of her stepdad.

Laura is so happy with the changes she's seen in Julia. She's relieved that her daughter has found a way to work through her anger and grief, and Kate's loving having her sister back.

*Names changed and photostock image used to protect identity



PSN FOODBANK AND THE CHALLENGES OF OPERATING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, our Auckland Foodbank has seen a huge rise in need amongst our communities.

Under the strict lockdown rules, many people had to stop working. A few are still being paid a wage, but many more are either on reduced wages or have had their wages stopped or lost their jobs completely. Many can only purchase food on payday, so losing that pay cycle means no income – no shopping.

As the general public started panic-buying and the supermarket shelves emptied, the pressure on our struggling families increased. And it wasn't just individuals and families coming for help either: there were sometimes 10 food parcel requests from Refuges per day, and it wasn't long before our Foodbank had empty shelves too.

Just as things were getting really dire, the local community stepped up, including 'Kiwi Harvest', who gather and drop off rescued food, and 'Mrs. Coconut' who provided some delicious coconut yoghurt. 'United Fresh' agreed to provide the Foodbank with 50 boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables every week.

We have many families who've never asked for help before. Some of them are very proud people, and to have to ask for a food parcel is truly difficult for them.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown us all how everyone can come together, strengthening ties through inter denominational relationships, and by broadening our connections with Kiwi businesses who in a time of crisis have come to support communities in desperate need.

Sadly the demand has not diminished. We know that many families will continue to need support over the next few months and other families will have to find the courage to reach out and ask for help.

If you are in the wider Auckland area and would like to contribute please contact Anne Overton ph. 027 520 8653 or visit <https://www.familyworksnorthern.org.nz/campaign/hungry-families>

A MUM'S DETERMINATION TO HELP HER SON SHINES THROUGH

Teri* was struggling to help her son Paul*. Paul was very anxious and reluctant to go to school. He was frequently depressed and withdrawn, and would barely talk. Teri discovered that Paul was being bullied at school, but she wasn't able to find a way to be supportive or talk through the difficulties with him. Her own childhood had been very hard, her family often putting her down, demeaning her and making her feel inadequate. Without effective parenting skills to draw on, Teri felt lost. But she was also determined to make things better for Paul.



Teri discovered Family Works and approached them for help.

After an initial meeting, family worker Kacey* discovered how much of an impact Teri's upbringing had on her sense of self-worth and ability to parent effectively, and how that had impacted down the generations to effect Paul and his sense of worth. So she came up with a plan to help both Paul and his mum.

To start with, Kacey set up a safe space to work with Paul where he could learn to express himself openly. At first, she found Paul was very quiet and couldn't speak up. He would cry instead. Kacey slowly encouraged Paul to think about his feelings and emotions. Then using sand tray therapy and art, Paul began to talk about what he was feeling. He admitted that he was afraid to go to school in case he was bullied.

Kacey discovered that Paul felt worthless and that he didn't deserve any help. Kacey began to work with Paul and Teri together. She helped them both understand how their own feelings of worthlessness was contributing to feelings of uselessness and being undeserving of help.

Providing strategies to increase Teri's parenting skills and develop better communications between them, Kacey soon found both Paul and his mum developing a strong bond. They began to talk openly in sessions about how they were feeling, and Kacey was able to describe ways to work through problems and worries effectively.

One day Teri reported that Paul came home from school and asked her directly for help and advice. They were both able to work through the problem using strategies they'd learnt in sessions with Kacey, and validate what Paul was worried about, as well as work out a plan to resolve his problem. Then Teri decided to access her own counselling too, so that she could continue to work through the effects her own upbringing had on her, and increase her self-belief and sense of self-worth.

Paul and his mum have a strong nurturing relationship now. They discuss things openly and are loving the sense of empowerment and strength it is giving them.

*names changed and stock photos used to protect identity

Honour the memory of a loved one

A special way to honour a loved one when they pass away is by offering friends and family the opportunity to make a donation in their memory or in lieu of flowers to celebrate their life.

In Memory donations can be made in a variety of ways –

- online at www.psn.org.nz/donate
- by post – simply send your donation with a covering letter, including your name, address and the name of the person who you are donating in memory of to : Presbyterian Support Northern, PO Box 99890, Newmarket, Auckland 1149
- at the funeral service – please include your name and address if you would like a receipt. Ask the funeral undertaker or a family member to forward these on to us.



If you would like us to let the bereaved family know that you have made an In Memory gift please include their details. Any such donations can be acknowledged to them, although the amount of your gift remains strictly confidential.

THIS CHILD NEEDED A VILLAGE AND HE GOT IT

When a child and his carer faced insurmountable challenges, Family Workers brought together a team of professionals to achieve a remarkable result

Luca* is a young boy who has a range of special needs. He was facing severe difficulties at school, and struggling to follow lessons. He also displayed serious behaviour issues, and was a real challenge at home. Luca had grown up being cared for by an aunt and her partner, but last year his situation became more challenging when his aunt decided to move away and left him in the care of her partner Nick*.

Nick gladly embraced his new role as Luca's primary carer, but shortly discovered that he was ill equipped to help. He had no knowledge of how to address Luca's issues. Nick eventually gave up his job in order to give him his full attention.



Kelly,* a Family Works Social Worker in School (SWiS) had been noticing Luca's difficulties. Learning of Luca's and Nick's situation, she brought in Susan,* a Family Works Strengthening Families coordinator who was experienced in addressing complex family concerns.

Together they sat down with a team of professionals, including a psychologist, to help identify Luca's unique needs and the support Nick needed to be the carer he wanted to be. They brainstormed strategies from teaching Nick new techniques to connect with Luca, to helping the boy sleep better, and providing food parcels so that the young family didn't have to go without — they made sure that Luca got the assistance he needed and provided Nick with the guidance he was hoping for. Luca was diagnosed with ADHD so Kelly was able to ensure that he got the specific

help he needed to manage this. He's much calmer now, sleeping well throughout the night, and is starting to follow lessons in school. He still has some behaviour issues but markedly less than before. Kelly helped him to connect with the medical services that Luca needs. Nick has been transformed by this experience as well and feels more confident, equipped and supported. He knows he's not facing challenges alone. "I would've given up," Nick says, describing the impact of the help he received. And for the first time, he is feeling hopeful about Luca's future.

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To donate, please use your personalised response slip, or send your gift to Presbyterian Support Northern, PO Box 99890, Newmarket, Auckland 1149. Alternatively visit www.psn.org.nz to donate online by credit card.

