



Good Shepherd
New Zealand

Making a Difference

Economic harm



November 2022
Aotearoa New Zealand



**I didn't have access
to our bank accounts
and I never had a
say in the money
decisions at home.**

– Good Shepherd NZ client

Given how many families we insure as an insurance industry leader in New Zealand, it's staggering to think so many of our customers could be victims of economic harm, which is a form of family violence.

– Gail Saipani, Suncorp New Zealand Customer Advocacy and Performance Executive Manager

TACKLING ECONOMIC HARM

A lack of financial independence, and dealing with the impact of economic harm (or economic abuse), are cited as key reasons people stay in violent relationships or are unable to overcome the enduring effects of abuse and establish a life free from family violence.

Family violence is pervasive and deeply damaging to whānau and communities across Aotearoa and one of our greatest shames, accounting for more than 40% of a frontline police officer's time and affecting one in two New Zealand women over the course of their lifetime.

With statistics like these, it is not possible for one part of our community to effect change by itself – it requires a societal shift driven by collaboration across businesses, government, social services and others.

Tackling economic harm is a critical component of this shift, and there are steps we can take towards this in our roles as employers, policymakers and providers of goods and services for New Zealanders.

This snapshot highlights the work and progress that is making a difference. It provides a blueprint of actions that can be replicated and developed across a range of sectors, with the aim of inspiring organisations and individuals to look with fresh eyes at the role they can play in eliminating family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It can be overwhelming to consider how much work there is to be done to address economic harm when it is such a complex issue. But together, **we can make a difference**.

For those organisations that have told us, "Yes, we'd love to do more, can you tell us how?" we hope this snapshot encourages you to integrate and share some of the resources that have been developed. It's also a chance for you to review your own policies, processes and products to better serve your customers, clients, employees and your community when their lives are touched by economic harm.

Family Violence Act (2018)

Economic abuse is currently a form of psychological abuse under the Act.

Government need to designate economic and financial abuse as its own form of violence alongside psychological, physical and sexual abuse.

This has already happened in the United Kingdom and most Australian states.



Fleur Howard

Chief Executive, Good Shepherd NZ

WORKING TOGETHER

More than **3,000** people working

in financial services, health and the community sector attended presentations to learn more about economic harm and how to direct clients to the appropriate support.



BNZ worked with Good Shepherd NZ to provide **specialist family violence no interest loans** for people experiencing economic harm.



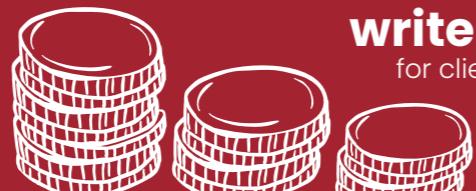
Suncorp New Zealand worked with Good Shepherd NZ to develop **training based on real insurance scenarios**

for more than 100 staff members, so they could feel more confident to identify and respond to economic harm.



Banks are monitoring and addressing transactions that contain messages intended **to abuse, harass or intimidate** the recipient

Banks and creditors have worked with social services to **reduce or write off debts** for clients experiencing economic harm.



AUT and Good Shepherd NZ published a Healthy Financial Relationships Toolkit to help people have conversations with their partners and **encourage healthy financial behaviours** in relationships.

Reciprocal referral pathways have been created

between family violence and debt collection agencies, financial mentors, insurance companies and banks to ensure people can access the right support.



ASB, BNZ and Westpac have **adapted their processes to better support**

clients experiencing economic harm. Including flexibility around I.D verification, support navigating separate accounts, and concealing location, account numbers and personal details if requested.

After 30 years of marriage, I never expected to have to flee to a Women's Refuge safe house to save my life. I took with me thousands of dollars of debt, joint debt. But I had one thing in my favour, a powerful, supportive bank, Westpac. They had been able to find a way to free me from the debt that I was slowly paying down. There are very few ways to express how this made me feel, in that moment I could see a more positive future.

– Anonymous Westpac customer

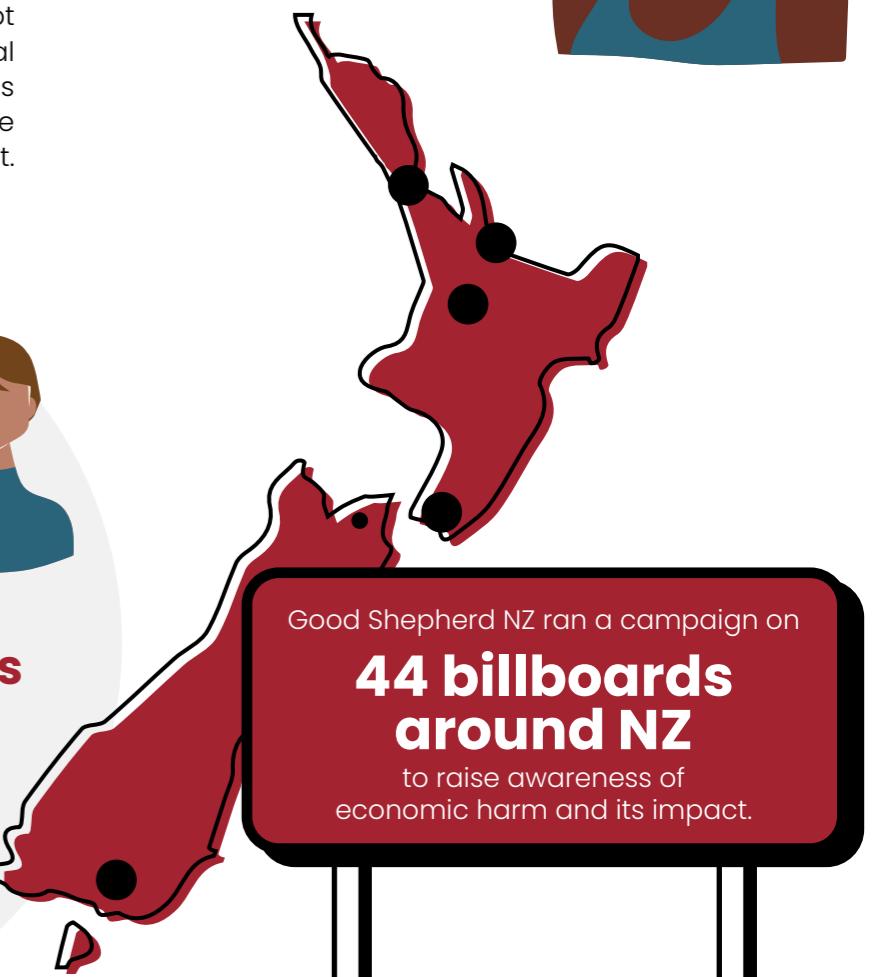
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Shine worked with banks to raise awareness of **banking issues facing family violence clients**.



Good Shepherd NZ ran a campaign on **44 billboards around NZ**

to raise awareness of economic harm and its impact.



Leaving my relationship was only the start

After leaving her violent relationship, Amy* quickly realised starting again was going to be harder than she thought because of the economic harm that left her with poor credit history and bad debt tied to her name.

Life was good before the family violence. I had been working at a medical clinic in Auckland for many years and had recently taken my eldest two children to the Gold Coast, our first holiday. Then I met him, my ex.

While I was in that relationship I felt isolated from everyone. I was holding down a full-time job, trying to overcome postnatal depression after a traumatic birth and working with injuries from the violence. When I would return home after work, I couldn't do anything for myself because I had to meet other people's demands.

I remember the week before I left the relationship my phone went missing suspiciously for a whole week. I had no contact with anyone.

The night I left with my kids I was beaten in front of our whole street. We left everything behind but leaving was only the start of my journey. I had a serious concussion from the beating, a bad credit history and \$15,000 debt that we both incurred, which I was left to deal with on my own.

I had no real starting point and too many important issues to sort all at once. Initially we lived in a Women's Refuge. I kept a notebook with names and numbers of some of the many people and organisations I got in touch with – there were 20 for a start. By the time we left Refuge six months later because lockdown had been so hard, I had been connected with double – 40 different people and organisations.

Everything linked to money was hard, really hard. I had sympathy because I was in a Refuge but not a lot of places understood what that meant. I was always on the end of the phone asking to delay payments or set new arrangements because of my situation – but I wasn't allowed without incurring more fees. For instance, I rang the debt collection agency to make arrangements for the parking ticket I had and my first problem was my address. I had to use someone else's also explaining I was in Refuge. The second frustrating bit was they wouldn't take what money I could afford to set up the payment. They were aware of my situation, but it made no difference.

I had so many difficulties with MSD. I really struggled getting what I needed from them. What did help was Women's Refuge having their own MSD case manager. After Refuge it took four months of us floating around – regularly hungry and financially exhausted before we found a home – and we only managed to find a place because of someone I knew.

In my new home I had to have guarantors for my utilities. Including for the power company I had used for my last four rentals over the past ten years. My record wasn't good enough for them because of my credit history and I didn't have the couple of hundred dollars they wanted in bond either. When it came to negotiating repayments and leaning on other community services, I had to prove my story each time with all my paperwork, including the protection order.

When we moved into our new home, I met my Financial Mentor, Mike. It had been nearly a year since I had left my relationship. Once I connected with Mike, he connected me to Vanessa from Good Shepherd NZ, and I knew then I was onto something. I finally had support to deal with the money side of things and I wasn't fighting on my own. It was thanks to both their backing and knowledge that I was able to actually get somewhere. Vanessa was a God send. Her expertise and ability to relate made everything less daunting.

I remember Vanessa helping me reach out to my bank for support with my \$6,000 of debt. When the bank wiped the debt, I just cried! It didn't seem real. It halved my debt problem and I could finally begin to see the end – free from everything that tied me to this old relationship. The best option I had left to get rid of the remaining debt was to tap into my Kiwisaver – Vanessa helped me with the application. Getting rid of my debt made the most difference because I was finally free to make choices.

Now I am back working and am in private practice. I'm able to buy kai for my whānau and save a small amount of money each week. This is what freedom looks like for me – living within our means, no longer relying on other people or organisations and making my own decisions.

TAKING ACTION

Presentations and workplace training

- Shine worked with Good Shepherd NZ to integrate more information about economic harm into its DVFREE Tick family violence programme for workplaces.
- Suncorp New Zealand engaged Good Shepherd NZ to develop specialist economic harm training based on authentic insurance scenarios, for more than 100 client-facing staff, so they could feel more confident providing appropriate support for customers.
- BNZ provided Spot and Refer training about economic harm for around 90% of customer-facing bankers, and a webinar for all staff to learn more about economic harm.
- Good Shepherd NZ introduced the topic of economic harm to over 1,000 people through presentations and training sessions. The audiences included policymakers, advocates and client-facing staff in finance, health and community services.
- 2,500 Westpac employees completed training which supports staff to spot the signs and gives them ways to help customers impacted by economic harm.

We want anyone who feels harassed by a payment, or message in a payment, to feel safe to report it to their bank.

– Frances Ronowicz,
Head of Social Impact, BNZ

Process changes

- ASB modified parts of its customer on-boarding processes to support customers temporarily in emergency accommodation without access to personal documentation.
- BNZ's work to expose the issue of abusive transactions has led to a reduction in people using financial transaction processes to send abusive messages to its customers.
- Westpac has stopped 120 customers from sending abusive transactions and is building an algorithm to better identify and stop payments sent to harass others.

We've been able to create a direct channel to support some of our customers who are financially vulnerable as a result of family violence. As a bank, we are well positioned to help and support our customers through difficult times when they need us the most.

– Adis Garabet,
Extra Care Contact Centre Manager, ASB

"I grew up watching my father financially control and abuse my mother. I just wanted you to know it was healing for me to see that people such as yourselves are bringing this issue out into the open."

– Anonymous Good Shepherd NZ webinar participant

Specialist support

- Good Shepherd NZ started piloting a specialist economic harm support service to support people with the financial and economic challenges of family violence.
- BNZ worked with Good Shepherd NZ to pilot 'Family Violence No Interest Loans' for clients impacted by economic harm, and whose circumstances meant they were not eligible for a standard no interest Good Loan.
- Reciprocal referral pathways have been developed between banks, financial mentors, family violence and debt collection agencies to make it easier to access the support they need.
- DebtManagers worked with Good Shepherd NZ's economic harm support service to establish fairer repayment plans and provide debt relief and write-offs for clients experiencing economic harm.
- Shine worked with major banks to reduce barriers and create referral pathways to specific people or teams, to support customers with banking needs relating to their experience of family violence.
- BNZ's economic harm team has been established since 2020 and was initially a pilot to identify and learn what support customers need when they have experienced economic harm. The team is now a permanent fixture in its Social Impact Team and has enabled 289 customers who have experienced economic harm to take control of their financial future.

I was having issues negotiating for a joint debt in the name of my client and her abusive ex-partner. My client had continually serviced the joint debt without any financial input from her ex. Negotiations with her creditor were going nowhere, so when I was told of Good Shepherd's expertise on the subject of economic harm I reached out to their new economic harm service, and they helped secure a fantastic outcome for my client.

— Russell Thompson, Financial Mentor Whanganui Budget Advisory Service

Awareness

- Good Shepherd NZ created 44 digital billboards across New Zealand with messaging about economic harm to raise awareness.
- Westpac, BNZ and ASB created specialist pages of information about financial and economic harm, as well as information about how they can support affected customers.
- Several clients have been supported by the Good Shepherd NZ team to tell their stories in the media to encourage others to reach out for support.
- Good Shepherd NZ published over 40 free resources on its website which are dedicated to support better understanding and responses to economic harm. These have been viewed over 40,000 times by more than 12,400 people.

Prevention

- AUT and Good Shepherd NZ launched a Healthy Financial Relationships Toolkit to provide tangible support for people to talk to their partners about money. The toolkit aims to give people more financial confidence to discuss money issues, as well as reinforce norms about what healthy financial relationships look like.

The BNZ team helped me more than I ever expected. I had debt from a previous controlling relationship and even though the relationship had ended, it still had a hold on me. They looked at my debt and gave me options that gave me control for the first time.

— Anonymous BNZ client

- Shine and Good Shepherd NZ worked together to include economic harm in their 'Champions Training' family violence prevention programme, delivered to secondary school students in the Wellington region.
- DebtManagers distributed 10,000 flyers about healthy financial relationships and using the Healthy Financial Relationships Toolkit.

Advocacy

- Shine highlighted issues with major banks and insurance companies and advocated for process improvements that will benefit customers affected by family violence.
- Good Shepherd NZ collated the issues identified in its economic harm support service pilot and published an insights report, outlining specific changes that can be made in financial services and government to benefit clients affected by family violence.
- Shine and Good Shepherd NZ provided feedback on the New Zealand Bankers' Association Additional Care Principles to support improved banking guidelines for people experiencing family violence and economic harm.

International research finds that more than 90% of cases of physical and emotional forms of family violence will also involve economic harm.

In the first 12 months of piloting an economic harm support service, Good Shepherd NZ provided support for more than 170 people.

Addressing the financial impacts of family violence

Rachel Williams, from Hutt Valley Women's Refuge, has been regularly referring clients to Good Shepherd NZ's pilot economic harm support service.

Rachel shares her thoughts about why the service is crucial to helping her support her clients to get back on their feet again.

People underestimate how common it is for people to weaponise money and use it as a form of control. Almost all of my clients need support for economic and financial harm.

This new service is filling a massive gap – massive. Previously when economic and financial harm were involved, we would go to budgeting specialists who weren't trained with a social lens or the knowledge of how to work with people experiencing trauma and family harm. Often, they would unintentionally make situations harder.

We also maybe had the option of MSD, but a lot of the time our clients can't access MSD because they don't have a low enough income. There really was no economic or financial support pathway for people in abusive relationships before this service.

This new economic harm support service brings an informed perspective that doesn't judge. Instead it understands trauma and the client's point of view; and it knows how to navigate New Zealand's financial and legal landscape to get the right outcome for our clients.

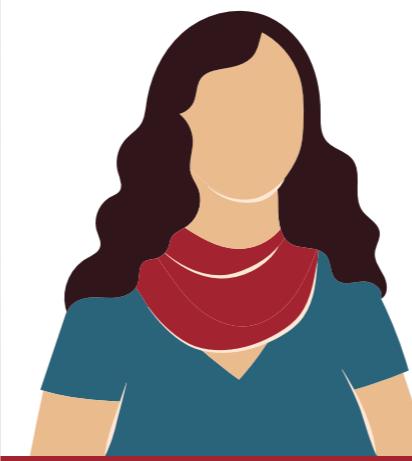
It brings empathy, solutions and builds financial capability for people experiencing family violence.

If we can give people financial security and confidence, we can help them leave their abusive relationships.

What I particularly like about this service is it works alongside the support we're already providing. It's collaborative. It means we're not crossing over, we're both working to get the best outcome for this person who is experiencing family harm. I have my expertise and the service brings theirs. It means it's filling a gap and not repeating the work of other services – and I can't underestimate just how important this gap is.

I also know the service will help people recognise they're being abused. It encourages people to reach out for help with money and if you think about it, asking a question about money is far less of a jump compared to calling Women's Refuge to access a safe house. When they engage with the service, they come away with an understanding that actually, what they've been experiencing isn't okay and take the conversation forward from there.

I am thrilled that the economic and financial challenges of family harm are finally being addressed. It's already helping so many people find their feet again and in the long-term, it will really make a huge difference.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

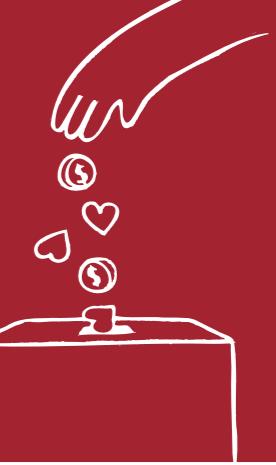
We are grateful to the organisations mentioned in this report that have already joined us to work towards a shared goal of addressing economic harm.

We invite you to join us by taking these actions:

Fund Good Shepherd NZ's economic harm support service

This service is vital for people to access the support they need to overcome the impacts of economic harm and achieve independence.

Talk to us about partnering to ensure the financial sustainability of this service, so we can support as many people as possible to live free from violence.



Replicate these actions in your community

Talk to us and the organisations in this report about how some of these actions may work for you.



Train your teams

Talk to us about how we can support you with training and resources for your staff.



Upskill yourself and your whānau

Learn more about economic harm. Visit our website to access free resources and share them with friends and whānau.



Use your voice

Support us to advocate for economic abuse to be recognised as its own form of abuse in the Family Violence Act.



**Thank you to the
individuals who have
shared their stories
for this snapshot.**

**And thank you to the
following organisations
for their contribution to
this important work:**

ASB
AUT
BNZ
DebtManagers
Shine
Suncorp
Westpac



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