



Whanganui, New Zealand

Safe Communities is a concept that recognises safety as a “universal concern” and a responsibility for all. It creates an infrastructure in local communities to increase action on injury prevention and safety promotion through the building of local partnerships. The World Health Organization views the Safe Communities approach as an important means of delivering evidence-based violence and injury prevention strategies at the local level. Safe Communities is an “umbrella” model in which key stakeholders work collaboratively in all aspects of community safety, it is not another programme it is an integrated way of addressing community safety.

To be re-accredited, a community is required to maintain the standards around the six criteria based on the Safe Community Model. The review team included: Tania Peters, Laurie Gabites, Cathy Bruce, Lyndsey Jacobs and Suja Shunmugavelu (international desktop). Individual assessments were undertaken, teleconferences conducted and then the feedback collated. In late June 2016 the team observed first-hand cross-sectorial collaboration and reach and effectiveness of community safety initiatives occurring in Whanganui. The certifying team were also joined by representatives from the Health Promotion Agency, Accident Compensation Corporation and New Zealand Fire Service.

The Safer Whanganui redesignation application is an excellent example of a community that has undertaken an analysis of data, identified best practice programmes, incorporated appropriate processes to identify key stakeholders to participate in the leadership group and produced an extremely comprehensive application for reaccreditation. In their application and in annual reports Safer Whanganui has successfully demonstrated the implementation of community safety promotion initiatives within their reference groups of road safety, family violence, safety & wellbeing, alcohol & other drugs, emergency planning and justice. These community safety initiatives are aimed at people across the life-span covering the road, home, school, public spaces, work and leisure environments.

The site visit was well organised and progress was demonstrated in the areas of reducing alcohol related harm, civil defence, falls prevention, crime prevention and urban design, family violence, fire safety, community engagement and safety & wellbeing. Discussions relating to governance, data collection and evaluation as well as future directions, were covered. SCFNZ and the review team were extremely impressed with the innovative collaborative projects demonstrated, the community development approach and the commitment of key agencies. The integrated use of spaces and services is a real strength of this community.

Furthermore Safer Whanganui is an outstanding example of collaborative leadership, involving local authority, central Government agencies and community networks. It is impressive to see such a diverse range of stakeholders involved. A major strength highlighted during the review process included the long history and strong commitment from senior positions within key stakeholder’s organisations and the inclusion of Safe Communities in Council’s long term plan. ACC key safety trends highlighted in the application show that Whanganui has made progress with all trending downwards. Reviewers look forward to seeing the results cards populated.

The Safer Whanganui Coalition is to be commended for the management of their community safety promotion programme. It encourages a continuous improvement approach, so Safe Communities has become business as usual in the development of a positive safety culture and the creation of safer environments for the city. In undertaking the site visit and review of Safe Whanganui the review team considered that the following points would further assist Whanganui in its continuous-improvement approach to community safety:

- ⇒ The Safer Whanganui Coordinator maintains the database of all community safety programmes operating within the region, including the evidence base for the programme. This will provide the ability for each working stream to be able to determine any gaps in delivery.
- ⇒ Further consideration is given to the development of horizontal linkages by integrating key safety initiatives across all the priority areas, for example, stressing the need for people to consider risk and make appropriate choices and link this into your communication strategy.
- ⇒ Consideration be given to have the business sector and networks involved in Safer Whanganui, either as a communication channel, involvement in planning days or on the governance group.
- ⇒ Consideration be given to have the disability sector involved in Safer Whanganui, either as a communication channel, involvement in planning days or on the governance group.
- ⇒ Continues to ensure that programmes selected are evidence based i.e not just the data that informs programme development but that programmes selected are based on proven or promising strategies.
- ⇒ That Whanganui take a strategic approach to alcohol and ensure that any research completed as part of the development of a local alcohol policy is also considered as part of a wider approach to reducing alcohol-related harm in Whanganui.
- ⇒ That Whanganui continue to maintain their commitment to RBA and that consider developing evaluation guidelines to reflect current practice and thinking in regards to the RBA Population outcomes and indicators.
- ⇒ To maintain their designation status, Safe Whanganui will need to complete an annual report in line with requirements. We also strongly recommend continuing to complete the coalition survey. The Whanganui City Council should have a link on their website to their Safe Community status.

In conclusion, congratulations to all those involved with Safer Whanganui and who have contributed to making Whanganui a Safe Community. However, it is important to remember that reaccreditation does not mean that Whanganui will always be safe from injury and crime. What it does mean, that Whanganui has a robust coalition of key government and community stakeholders working across a range of sectors that are providing effective and passionate leadership, using an evidence-based approach and are committed to reducing harm and improving community safety.