

Post Designation Case Study- Whangarei

Safe Communities Foundation NZ, November 2007

In March 2006 Whangarei District became a Safe Community of the International Safe Communities Network. The accreditation was achieved through the efforts of a collaboration of key stakeholders, the Northland District Health Board (NDHB), ACC Whangarei, Whangarei District Council (WDC), Whangarei Police, Hauora Whanui, Plunket, Land Transport New Zealand (LTNZ), Roadsafes Northland, Age Concern, Parents as First Teachers, New Zealand Fire Service and Maunu Children's Health Camp. Both pre and post designation, Safe Communities in Whangarei has been under the umbrella of the Ministry of Health funded Te Tai Tokerau Community Injury Prevention Programme (CIPP). However the ongoing active involvement of those groups who were signatories to the Safe Community agreement is questionable and it would appear that there is not a process in place to ensure that they meet on at least an annual basis to review strategies and establish priorities.

Since designation a new CIPP coordinator has been appointed. However the title used on his emails is that of Water Safety Co-ordinator (Injury Prevention Unit) which gives the impression that this is his primary role. This may require further development to ensure that those organisations within Whangarei also identify him as the CIPP coordinator. The previous coordinator, who had a long-term and extensive involvement with the Whangarei community, remains a member of the Safer Whangarei Executive Group (SWEG) which oversees the CIPP. Both the former and current coordinators are based at the NDHB and as previously stated the new coordinator is closely involved in water safety as well as coordinating some of the activities which incorporated the criteria for Whangarei Safe Community Accreditation. While it is acknowledged that the CIPP coordinator is doing a great job with the water safety coalition, given the involvement of a number of community safety areas based within the WDC, it would appear that consideration could be given to the widening of his involvement in the community by the placement of the coordinator for the CIPP within the council rather than within the NDHB. This has been well demonstrated in Waitakere, Waimakariri and Wellington.

The SWEG was formed to provide shared governance for community safety in the Whangarei District, to develop collaborative plans and share information and was in place before designation occurred. Representatives include elected and staff from the Whangarei District Council, ACC, Police, NDHB, WDC, Chamber of Commerce (WCC), and MSD. It meets on a regular monthly basis. In July 2007 SWEG invited a representative from Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand (SCFNZ) to address their monthly forum with the aim of focussing on the development of SWEG and the further development of an action plan. This action plan has not yet been finalised. The Development Manager of the WDC has been in regular contact with staff from SCFNZ.

In July 2006 a regional injury prevention forum for the Northland Region was held in Whangarei coordinated by the SCFNZ. There was a great response from Northland including representatives from CHH Wood Products LVL, Northland Road Safety Trust, Northland Fire Service, IPNANZ, NZIPS, ACC, Community Health Services, CYF, Northland Dental and Public Health, Whangarei District Council, Police, Brain Injury Northland, Northland Pacific Island Charitable Trust, NZ Automobile Association, Ministry of Education, Amokura Family Violence, Far North District Council, Age Concern Whangarei, Dargaville Learning Centre, Whangarei Hospital and Hokianga Health and NZ Foundation Child Health and Family Development. This group suggested that it would be beneficial to develop an overarching Community Safety Plan. However, to date, little progress appears to have occurred in the development of this plan.

Community safety in Whangarei encompasses a wide range of activities, however, it is evident that the four priority areas of the CIPP are:

- 1) road safety projects involving: Road Safety New Zealand, Police, Fire, St John Driving Academy, Brain Injury Assn, Age Concern;
- 2) water-based incidents both boating and unintentional immersions involving: Water Safety NZ, Coastguards, Maraes, NDHB, Sport Northland, schools, Maritime NZ;
- 3) fire safety projects involving New Zealand Fire Service, Housing New Zealand, ACC, Work and Income NZ, Ministry of Education; and
- 4) alcohol-related projects involving; WDC, NDHB, ACC, MSD, Police, Chamber of Commerce, ALAC, Fire, Taxi Drivers, Sports Clubs.

Although not an exclusive list, post designation activities in Whangarei have included:

Road Safety Projects

- Fatal Vision;
- Driver Retraining;
- Bar Staff Training;
- Blackspot Initiative;
- Drive to the Conditions/Speed Project;
- Restraint workshops and check clinics;
- Safe with Age; and
- Driver Licence Assistance Programme.

Water Safety Projects

- Water Sense;
- Swimsation – Swim Survival campaign
- In at the Deep End;
- Coastguard Boating Education;
- Fishing Contests;
- Watersafety New Zealand Road Show;
- Waka Ama; and
- Kaitiaki Moana Project.

Alcohol Related Projects

- Alcohol Agenda for Action – Whangarei Alcohol Strategy;
- Crime prevention Through Environmental Design;
- City Safe Vine Street Shuttle;
- Alcohol Accord;
- Retailers' Survey; and
- Contribution to SWEG through governance role linking crime prevention and injury prevention.

Fire Safety Projects

- Te Kotahikinga Smoke Alarm Project;
- Be Firewise Programme (National);
- Fire Awareness and Intervention Programme (FAIP); and
- Sprinkler Strategy.

Falls Prevention

- Otago Home Based Exercise Programme;
- Tai Chi Classes; and
- Child Falls in under fives.

In addition to the above initiatives ACC consultants also undertake a wide range of work-place safety programmes. Additionally Whangarei District Council has developed a District Crime Prevention Action Plan. Members of the SWEG are involved in implementation of this plan. At the first ever disabled forum the WDC was praised

for its disabled working parking scheme. Their scheme generated considerable interest at the forum as it was considered that it was dealing with issues at the grass-root level rather than with policy.

The four coalitions, Roadsafe, Watersafe, Firesafe and Alcohol, work extensively and collaboratively within their areas of expertise as well as being part of the CIPP. However, while each of these coalitions is active within its area of speciality, since designation the level of cooperation and collaboration amongst the various organisations and communities is not clear. This is disappointing considering the level of enthusiasm and interest displayed by members of the community and organisations at the Regional Forum held in July 2006.

In conclusion, the lack of a Safe Whangarei community wide safety action plan is of concern. The Safe Community movement is based on integration and cooperation. Consideration will need to be given to ensuring the ongoing involvement of those who committed to, and signed, the Safe Community agreement at the time of designation. The ongoing commitment of the organisations represented by these signatories is critical for the credibility of the Safe Communities movement in Whangarei. While the level of commitment and enthusiasm of the CIPP coordinator to injury prevention is to be commended it would appear that the strength of Safe Whangarei lies with the Executive Group SWEG, especially the Community Development Manager at WDC. The SWEG meets regularly and strategically coordinates many of the safety promotion and injury prevention activities. As many of the organisations which comprise SWEG also cover the wider Northland region, Safe Whangarei has the potential to provide leadership and better coordinator to improve community safety outcomes for residents and visitors to Northland.