

# Safe Communities Overview



## **What is a Safe Community?**

Aotearoa New Zealand has a well-established local, regional and national Safe Community network that supports wellbeing, placemaking, resilience and community safety initiatives. There are no other national organisations, networks or coalition models that offer a comparable structure and reach.

The Safe Communities concepts embody the values and philosophies of whanaungatanga (relationships) manaakitanga (respect, care, and support) and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination and autonomy). It is seen as a mechanism for bringing together agencies and groups that usually work in isolation or in silos to develop a collective 'lens' and generate a collective 'weight' to the process of identifying and responding to pressing community issues. A setting where conventional thinking can be challenged, where new and innovative ideas are developed and where there is a balance between strategic and tactical thinking/planning.

Safe Communities can best be described as a Network of Networks. Across Aotearoa New Zealand participation at a local level engages key government agencies including ACC, Police, Fire Service, CDEM, local authorities (Mayors, elected members, staff), DHBs, MSD; NGO sector including specialist health and social services; Iwi/ Māori organisations; Local specialised services including Regional Sports Trusts, REAP, Community Funding organisations; Local networks including Family Violence Prevention, alcohol-harm reduction, older people's support, youth sector, rural sector, workplace safety, road safety, business, town centre, community and neighbourhood groups. Communities commit to achieving and maintaining the criteria for accreditation (the Safe Communities model), with most Safe Communities hosted and/or funded by their local Council and several are collectives between two or more Councils.

Since SCFNZ was established in 2004, there has been exponential growth of Safe Communities, with just over 3.3 million (68%) New Zealanders living in an accredited Safe Community. 26 cities and districts are currently engaged in the network and participation is open and accessible to any and every community within Aotearoa New Zealand.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a potentially catastrophic scenario for Aotearoa New Zealand. Safe Communities coordinators around the country were deployed in the response phase and are active in the recovery phase where they are drawing on their extensive knowledge and community links/connections. Safe Communities is proving to be flexible, adaptable and responsive.

## **What is SCFNZ's role in this process?**

SCFNZ is an Agent for Change working alongside communities to promote safety, wellbeing and resilience through:

1. **Relationship management:** national and interagency engagement, local and regional collaboration, maintaining the network of networks
2. **Development and distribution of information and resources:** national and international data, research, analysis and planning tools, evidence-based 'best buys'.
3. **Personal and organisational development:** webinars, workshops, regional and national hui, coaching and mentoring
4. **Communications:** web-based, social media, zoom/skype, phone/email, site visits
5. **Marketing and promotion:** 'telling the stories', building and raising the profile, advocating for funding and resources, bringing new voices and partners to the table.



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## **Why an integrated approach to supporting Safe Communities?**

SCFNZ vision (*Communities in New Zealand are safe, vibrant, resilient and connected, He haumarū, hihiri, manahau me hono hapori i roto i Aotearoa*) provides a platform for the achievement of New Zealand government wellbeing agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Safe Community movement is committed to working together to collectively strengthening Safe Community cultural capability, diversity and inclusion.

Safe Communities is aligned to central government objectives including: Department Internal Affairs Purpose: ACC Strategic intent; Ministry of Health: Health Promotion Agency focus on reducing drug and alcohol-related harm; Ministry of Social Development outcomes; NZ Police Prevention First Strategy; NZTA 'Safer Journeys 2020'.

The Local Government Act 2002 recognises that Territorial Authorities have an important role to play as they are the most effective deliverers of local services. The Local Government Amendment Act 2018 includes "promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of communities in the present and for the future". The Safe Communities model is well placed to address the needs of local government to address the four wellbeings – in particular the social and cultural aspects.

## **What are the benefits?**

The Safe Community movement is committed to working together to collectively strengthen cultural capability, diversity and inclusion. It recognises that in working with tangata whenua we contribute to a safer environment not only for Māori but for all New Zealand communities.

In the post COVID-19 'new normal', Aotearoa New Zealand needs robust and proven leadership at grassroots community level. While the nation needed and got an emphatic response from central government that averted the health risks of the pandemic, the social and economic effects of the pandemic will take years to recover from. The impacts of unemployment, access to housing, health and education, and safety and wellbeing have only heightened inequities for the more vulnerable groups within the community. Local responses to local needs are critical, and Safe Communities provides a means to harness collaborative responses to mitigate and address those inequities.

The difference that SCFNZ as an organisation wants to see for communities in Aotearoa New Zealand is:

- **Increased community capability and self-determination** Communities have the skills, leaders and capabilities needed to drive and sustain positive local change to achieve their aspirations.
- **Increased synergy** through developing collaborative relationships that can build critical mass and credibility.
- **Increased impact and reach.** One message many voices, resulting in the continuity of messages and interventions, and their sustainability.
- **Increased family and whānau resilience** People have the skills, strategies and networks that they need to achieve and maintain wellbeing.
- **Increased inclusion and social cohesion** Connections are built within and between communities, creating an environment in which people feel included and that they belong.
- **Increased social equity** All people, families and communities can access safe housing, health, education, sporting and employment opportunities.
- **Enhanced community safety.** Improvements in perceptions of safety, the creation of vibrant yet safe environments, adoption of safer behaviours, increased wellbeing with a long-term reduction in severity and incidence of injury/violence/crime and alcohol related harm.

