

The Safe Communities model

What it is and how it works in New Zealand

The Safe Communities model is an internationally recognised model used in many countries throughout the world to bring organisations and communities together to enable injury and crime prevention to happen at a local community level.

In this article, you will find a short explanation of what the Safe Communities model is, how it works, and the benefits and challenges involved. The article also briefly describes the accreditation process and the role of the Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand, and highlights recent examples of alcohol-focused projects that are being undertaken as part of Safe Community initiatives.

About the Safe Communities model and how it works

Community safety impacts on the way people feel and interact in their community. Achieving community safety is not just about reducing and preventing injury and crime; it involves building strong, cohesive, vibrant and participating communities. A safe community is one in which all sectors of the community work together to promote safety. This means forming partnerships, managing risks, educating and informing, and increasing overall safety, especially for the most vulnerable.

The Safe Communities model can help to achieve this. It is not a programme that is replicated in different communities; nor is it a mechanism for assessing if a community is safe or if there are potential risks. Rather, it is a process that creates a local infrastructure to enable community members, community organisations, businesses, local government, government agencies and others with an interest in and concern about community safety issues to work together in a coordinated and collaborative way. This process helps communities to put in place joint activities and projects to address local concerns. These may be concerns about injuries, crashes, antisocial behaviour, violence and crime from multiple causes, including from alcohol use. Each Safe Community initiative is unique to, determined by, and locally owned and driven by a particular community.

Communities, districts or cities that are interested in becoming a Safe Community go through a robust accreditation process that equips the organisations and individuals involved to set up the process and infrastructure needed to succeed. It also usually involves employing a coordinator. The Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand (SCFNZ) provides support throughout the accreditation process as well as ongoing support once an initiative is accredited and up and running.

New Zealand currently has 24 Accredited Safe Communities across 30 territorial authority areas. Many have been running for several years, with the first one starting in 1999.

Below are the current New Zealand Accredited Safe Communities with their dates of accreditation or reaccreditation.

- Whangarei Safe Community (2005, 2011)
- Auckland Safer North (2007, 2013)
- Auckland Safer West (1999, 2006, 2013)
- Tauranga Moana Safe City: Tauranga City and Western Bay of Plenty District (2007, 2014)
- Treasure Rotorua (2010, 2014)
- Safer Taupo (2010, 2015)
- Safer Tairāwhiti Community Trust (2012)
- Te Wairoa He Hāpori Haumarū (2014)
- Safer Central Hawke's Bay (2012)
- Safer Napier (2010)
- Safer Hastings (2013)
- New Plymouth Injury Safe (2005, 2010)
- Safer Whanganui (2010)
- Palmerston North Safe City (2014)
- Safer Wairarapa: Masterton District, Carterton District, South Wairarapa District (2010)
- Safer Porirua City (2008, 2014)
- Safe Hutt Valley: Upper Hutt City and Lower Hutt City (2010, 2015)
- Wellington City Safe Community (2006, 2012)
- Nelson Tasman Safe at the Top (2011)
- Marlborough Safe & Sound @ the Top (2014)
- Waimakariri Safe Community (2008)
- Safer Christchurch (2008)
- Safer Waitaki (2013)
- Invercargill City & Southland District Safe in the South (2016)

There is no standard structure for Safe Communities. Some Safe Community coalitions are organised as a programme or section within a territorial authority, district health board or primary health organisation. Others opt to become part of a larger, not-for-profit umbrella organisation. The host agency then usually acts as the fund-holder, employs or contracts the services of the coordinator, and may provide office space and other support. Some Safe Communities have become independent legal entities, usually a charitable trust. This allows the programme to be completely autonomous rather than operating within a host agency.

An international dimension

The Safe Communities model was developed and established in Sweden in the 1990s following the First World Conference on Accident and Injury Prevention, in Stockholm, in 1989. Since then it has expanded worldwide to more than 270 designated Safe Countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) also recognises its value and provides some overarching support. New Zealand is part of the Pan Pacific Safe Communities Network (PPSCN), which also includes Australia, the United States of America and Canada. The Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand is one of the lead organisations for PPSCN and all New Zealand Safe Communities are members. PPSCN is currently in the process of developing formal relations with WHO.

How to become an Accredited Safe Community

Many communities already have agencies, networks and collectives working in the fields of violence and injury prevention, and safety promotion. The Safe Communities model does not reinvent the wheel or duplicate these existing networks but provides a mechanism to bring organisations and individuals together to share information, establish priorities and plans, and work more effectively.

The starting point is recognising and identifying the people and organisations that are already active, and seeking their buy-in to the Safe Communities process. The next step is to undertake a scan or survey of crime and injury data and build a living inventory of the needs and issues in the local community, and the services that are currently being delivered. If there is sufficient interest and momentum, the next step is contacting SCFZN, who can visit and provide support through the various stages of the accreditation process.

Communities seeking accreditation are asked to demonstrate how they meet the six criteria of the Safe Communities model, but accreditation is a flexible process. It involves a review and validation of the collaborative governance, planning and research/ data analysis processes in place, and recognition of the programmes and activities, communications and evaluation that are undertaken. Responsibility for setting and evaluating performance measures and outcomes sits with a Safe Community governance group or committee which is established as part of the process. Ideally a coordinator is also employed.

The six criteria of the Safe Communities model are:

1. **Leadership and collaboration** – demonstration of leadership by the coalition or group focused on improving community safety.
2. **Programme reach** – the range and reach of community safety programmes operating throughout the community/region, including an indication of the extent to which they are based on proven or promising intervention strategies.
3. **Priority setting** – demonstration of programmes that target and promote safety for high-risk/ vulnerable groups and environments.
4. **Data analysis and strategic alignment** – analysis of available safety (injury, violence, crime and perception) data for the community/region and how proposed strategies align with established national/state/ regional priorities and action plans.
5. **Evaluation** – outline of expected impacts and how they are being measured or evaluated.
6. **Communication and networking** – demonstration of community engagement with relevant sectors of a community/region and ongoing participation in local, national and international Safe Communities networks.

Accreditation also includes a site visit by SCFNZ.

Next steps and ongoing support

Once accreditation and reaccreditation are confirmed, action begins in earnest. Projects and activities undertaken are many and varied. The diagram below illustrates the scope of issues and partnership activities.



An annual report of activities and an annual survey of coalition partners are completed. A reaccreditation process is undertaken every 5–6 years. Often Safe Community programmes choose to hold an accreditation ceremony to formally celebrate successes and partnerships created. An example is the Safer Napier programme, which has been accredited since 2010 and is currently applying for reaccreditation. On 6 November 2015, 43 agencies signed a five-year Memorandum of Commitment to signal their ongoing participation in the Safe Community programme.

SCFNZ provides ongoing support and advice to Safe Community programmes, including hosting regular webinars, an annual national hui, and regional forums and workshops on a range of topics. Information is also provided via SCFNZ's website safecommunities.org.nz. SCFNZ is a non-government organisation with charitable trust status and receives funding from a number of government agencies to carry out its national support role.

Safe Communities alcohol-focused projects

Alcohol harm reduction is a good example of a focus area for a Safe Community initiative. Because alcohol impacts on society in multiple ways and across various sectors, many agencies and groups have an interest, and play a role, in reducing alcohol-related harm. As a result, no single agency has the mandate to manage or deliver everything and a combined approach is needed. Government agencies in the health and social services sector, the justice and education sectors, local government, the hospitality sector and alcohol industry, and a myriad of non-government organisations and community groups all have a role to play.

The following pages have short summaries of three examples of recent, alcohol-focused Safe Community projects.

Useful web links and resources

Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand's website – safecommunities.org.nz – has contact details, links, information and resources on Safe Communities in New Zealand.

The Pan Pacific Safe Communities Network (PPSCN) website – ppscn.org – has useful international information including links to Safe Communities initiatives in other countries.

Palmerston North Safe City's Safe City Angel (Project Vanguard)

The aim of Palmerston North Safe City's Project Vanguard is to reduce alcohol-related harm in the city's central business district (CBD) for young people (mainly women) aged 16–24 years. Safe City Angel was a 12-month pilot project undertaken between April 2014 and March 2015.

The project was an early intervention, collaborative initiative in which a youth worker was funded by the Safe Community's Safety Advisory Board and ACC and employed and managed by the Youth One Stop Shop (YOSS). The Safe City Angel worked in the CBD on Fridays and Saturdays from 10pm to 4am alongside the Safe City Hosts security contractor, door staff, and Police, providing young people with practical assistance, advice and education about safety and drinking. She also identified at-risk young people and made appropriate interventions, including assistance to a place of safety and follow-up calls.

The Safe City Angel initiative was very much a collaborative project. It was overseen by a project group that met monthly and had representatives from the Safety Advisory Board, ACC, Police, the Safe City Hosts contractor, ARCS (Abuse and Rape Crisis Support), MidCentral District Health Board's Public Health, and YOSS. Process data was collected throughout the project and this enabled monthly reporting against key performance indicators. Information was also provided on trends on alcohol use and victimisation, safety, and follow-up as well as feedback from stakeholders.

A stakeholder survey carried out with door staff and Safe City Hosts in September 2014 found that 63% thought the Safe City Angel had made the CBD a safer place for women at night. A repeat survey increased this finding to 85%.

Key learnings and successes included having:

- the right person employed who could engage with young people
- support from Safe City Hosts, Police and door staff
- publicity and awareness raising about the project
- the design and distribution of business sized hand-out cards with helpful numbers and key prompt questions about planning a night out
- a focused, collaborative project group that was able to make things happen
- in-kind services, support and collaboration that enabled the lean budget to go further.

This project provides an example of how the Safe Communities model works, as it demonstrates key Safe Communities accreditation criteria. These are: leadership and collaboration; communication and networking; programme reach; priority-setting (based on local research); data analysis (including evaluation); and strategic alignment.



One for One campaign targets rugby league in Hawke's Bay

Safer Napier's (Napier Safe Community's) Rugby League Hits Hawke's Bay project aimed to encourage responsible drinking at the Melbourne versus St George Illawarra Dragons NRL game at McLean Park, Napier, on 25 July 2015. The project was led by Napier City Council (NCC), Hawke's Bay District Health Board (HBDHB) and the Safer Napier programme. It was sponsored by the Hawke's Bay Joint Alcohol Strategy Group, which includes NCC, HBDHB, Hastings District Council, Health Hawke's Bay, Police, Central Hawke's Bay District Council, and Wairoa District Council.

The promotion involved staff from HBDHB and NCC, and volunteers from Te Kupenga Hauora, Ahuriri, who hosted a stall and handed out 1,600 One for One branded water bottles and the Health Promotion Agency's *Drink Check* guide to game-goers aged 18+ as they came in to watch the game. The initiative built on the high-profile Hawke's Bay District Health Board's One for One campaign implemented during other recent large sporting and cultural events. The One for One message is to drink one glass of water for every alcoholic beverage, whether at home or at licensed premises. Other merchandise was also used to promote this message at the game, including branded t-shirts, bunting and mats.

Observations during the distribution of resources and anecdotal post-game feedback suggest the bottled water and *Drink Check* pamphlets were both well received and used. Police reported that there were no arrests at the game and that the event was well managed. Wider benefits of the project included: maintaining the profile of the One for One message with the target audience; working collaboratively with colleagues and other agencies, including Council licensing inspectors, Police and the event organisers; and potentially creating more opportunities in the future to participate in other large events.

Learnings identified included:

- Positioning the stall inside the main entrance and near one of the bars was the ideal location for distributing resources to our target audiences.
- Bold branding consistently used for staff and volunteers, resources and on the stall clearly promoted the message.
- Volunteers were well briefed and clearly understood the message being promoted. They were confident in interfacing and engaging with the public.
- The scratchy multi-choice section of the *Drink Check* pamphlet again proved very useful and gave an interactive component to the message.
- The bottled water was very popular.
- The promotion's profile further raised awareness of the project's activities among members of the Hawke's Bay Joint Alcohol Strategy Group who were working at the game.



Tauranga Moana Safe City's Not Beersies promotion at Mt Maunganui

The new event On The Lawn – a food, wine and beer festival, held for the first time on 8 January 2015, provided an ideal opportunity for Tauranga Moana Safe City to partner with HPA to promote the national Not Beersies campaign messages. On The Lawn had replaced the Blues, Brews and BBQs beer and food festival, which had deteriorated in recent years in terms of crowd behaviour during and after the event. It had also been a source of a number of issues for Police and St John Ambulance and had generated many complaints from the local community.

HPA's Not Beersies campaign promotes water as a spoof beer brand. It supports the work that has been done through previous campaigns to provide people with a language to ease up – Say Yeah, Nah – and to discourage pushing alcohol on others – 'They're not saying no to you, they're saying no to the beersies'. The target audience is those aged 18–35 who drink at medium- to high-risk levels and are open to change.

Tauranga Moana Safe City representatives approached the organisers of On The Lawn, who were extremely receptive to the Not Beersies campaign and provided a site at the festival for free. The promotion consisted of setting up a site with the Environment Centre Hydro Hub. This is a large, purpose-built water tanker that dispenses filtered drinking water. Staff were recruited locally and wore Not Beersies t-shirts. A chill-out zone was provided using retro sun loungers and colourful water jugs.

The promotion had a positive influence on the behaviour of patrons at the event and, together with a high standard of event management, contributed to no incidents being recorded by Police, event security or St John Ambulance.

Subsequent activities by Tauranga Moana Safe City included participation at the Welcome Bay Family Music Festival, requests for Not Beersies resources, and interest in the Hydro Hub. The promotion shows what can be done to promote national campaigns at a local community level and at not much cost.

Community-based activities are an essential component of promoting national campaign messages. On The Lawn was an excellent environment to promote and put into practice the Not Beersies message and this has been repeated at the 2016 On The Lawn festival.



Imagery from the Say Yeah, Nah campaign, and the Tauranga Moana Safe City's team at On The Lawn.