

## SAFE COMMUNITIES ASHBURTON DISTRICT

### SIX MONTH REPORT:

1 JULY – 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2024



*Our Vision: Ashburton District, our place, a safe place to live, work and play, free from preventable injury and harm*

*Short version: Keeping ourselves, our families and our communities safe*

## The Ashburton District Safe Community Programme

The Safe Community Programme for Ashburton District works to increase action on injury prevention and safety promotion through **local collaborations**.

While the programme is small in terms of funding, it aims to make an impact on local community awareness about key safety concerns through agencies pooling resources and working collaboratively.

Working together provides the opportunity to take a district-wide, strategic overview of community safety issues in the district and enables greater reach and a collective “weight” to respond to them.

And the local focus allows for new safety issues/concerns to be addressed as they arise in the community. For example, Ashburton Police alerting the Programme and Mid Canterbury Neighbourhood Support about concerning levels of theft/burglaries in the district; and ACC advising the high rate of skiing/snowboarding injuries for Ashburton children aged 5-14 years.

## Background

Ashburton District is “safe”, but it can be safer. Analysis of district data, research and community consultation tells us that falls in older people, leading to both fatal and non-fatal injury; road crashes; theft and burglary and family harm are key safety concerns for Ashburton District. Key priority areas identified for Ashburton District are:

- Rural Safety/Social Isolation
- Falls in Older People
- Road Safety
- Alcohol, Drugs and Community Safety (early intervention/prevention)
- Harm Reduction/Prevention (e.g. theft/burglary)

- Social/Community Wellbeing

The Safe Communities Steering Group of 27 agencies is chaired by Deputy Mayor, Liz McMillan, and works to a Strategic Plan (2019-2024) and an annual Business Plan, to address the key priority areas identified for Ashburton District.

A Co-ordinator is employed 20 hours a week by Safer Mid Canterbury to work with the Steering Group and roll out projects in the Business Plan.

Working Groups are developed for projects, which agencies “self-select” to join if they have an interest. This also enables a number of agencies/interested parties which are not members of the Steering Group to join the Working Groups.

The Steering Group meets bi-monthly and receives reports from the Working Groups.

The Steering Group recognises the work of other networks focussing on community safety (for example, the Road Safety Co-ordinating Committee; the Family Violence Network) and works collaboratively with them.

## Key Achievements: 1 July – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

- **Ski Safety** – Mt Hutt ski field staff visited 3 local schools on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, ahead of these schools’ annual ski day on the mountain. Around 320 students heard the ski /snowboard safety messages. This is the third year Mt Hutt Ski Field has partnered with Safe Communities to deliver this roadshow.
- **Unintentional Injury to Children –**
  - this programme uses the Safekids Aotearoa Toolkit to talk to groups of parents, teachers and older children, such as Plunket groups, Early Learning Centres, etc, about dangers in the home (eg access to poisons, medicines, etc). During this period 20 children and adults heard the presentation and took away a Home Safety Checklist to use to assess any safety issues in their homes.
  - This programme has been delivered by the Family Wellbeing Co-ordinator at Safer Mid Canterbury but, due to the cessation of funding for this programme, the Toolkit has been gifted to Plunket and their staff trained in its use, so that it can continue to be utilised to promote safety in the home with Plunket families.

- **Rural Safety/Isolation: “Mid Canterbury Connector”  
Community Transport Service**

This project aims to reduce rural and social isolation by looking at the need for a low-cost community transport service, driven by volunteers, to bring people living in the more rural/remote areas of the District into Ashburton Township for medical appointments, doing business with Council, seeing friends and family, etc.



During this period:

- Statistics for the 6-month period July to December 2024 were:
  - Passengers transported/number of trips – **181** (same period 2023 = **172**)
  - Kms travelled – **18,757** (same period 2023= **14,957**)
  - Volunteer driver hours -**397** (same period 2022 = **341**)
  - Other volunteer hours (trustees) – **51** (same period 2023 = **53**)
- In November the service celebrated undertaking 660 trips since it began in July 2021.
- The Mid Canterbury Community Vehicle Trust entered a partnership with the Rakaia Community Association to utilise their community vehicle to take people from Rakaia and Methven wanting to travel into Ashburton Township. This has eased the load on the Ashburton-based vehicle, which continues to do pickups from other areas of the District.
- A part-time Bookings Co-ordinator was employed to undertake the bookings and administration for the service and the Trust was successful in securing Lottery Community funding for the role for the next 2 years.
- The Mid Canterbury Community Trust held its third AGM on the 12 of November. All trustees committed to a further term.
- **Public Transport Service for Ashburton Township** – the Safe Communities Co-ordinator provided assistance to the researchers looking at the need (or not) for a public transport service for Ashburton Township and what it could look like. The results were presented to the Council at a workshop on the 12 September and the Council then requested a report on options moving forward.
- **Falls Prevention for Older People** – Another falls prevention expo targeting older adults (“Spring into Spring”) was held at the new Library, Te Whare Whakaterere, on the 24<sup>th</sup> September, with 11 agencies participating. Around 110 older adults attended.
- **Scams Community Roadshow** – Mid Canterbury Neighbourhood Support, Digital Waitaha and the ASB Bank worked together to co-ordinate and promote a roadshow around four local venues (Ashburton Township, Methven, Hinds and Rakaia), bringing messages about keeping safe from scams to older adults in safe, small group settings. Around 50 people attended the sessions.
- **Bike Skills Park** – significant progress was made on this project over July to December, 2024, including the granting of a resource consent for the facility, establishment of a trust which will apply for funding towards its construction, development of a Funding Plan and speaking with key funders, and confirmation of the draft detailed design and costing to be used when applying for funding in 2025.
- **Age Friendly Ashburton Strategy and Action Plan:**

- A meeting was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> September for interested agencies/individuals to hear about the concept of “Age Friendly”, what is planned for Ashburton District and to seek their feedback. Over 30 people attended the meeting.
- A funding application for \$15,000 plus GST was successfully submitted to the Office for Seniors Programme (MSD) to undertake a Community Needs Assessment to inform the development of the Age Friendly Ashburton Strategy/Action Plan. This is a substantial piece of work which will involve analysis of Census and other data, plus interviews and a community survey of older residents and agencies which work with older people. The results will be used to inform the development of an Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan for the District. Work will commence on the Needs Analysis in March, 2025.
- Initial work commenced on the development of a paper, large print booklet on services and support for older adults living in the District.
- **Event Planning Calendar for Event Organisers** – After planning and running a falls prevention event in September, unaware when setting the date several months before that it clashed with other key community events attracting the same target market of older adults, the Safe Communities Steering Group noted the need for an event calendar for event organisers to check when planning events over 2025.

2024 saw a proliferation of small community events, which, while great for the community, increased the possibility of clashes, possible duplication of effort and demand on agencies, particularly emergency services, to be present at every event. This has the potential to lead to agencies declining to be present and staff/volunteer burnout.

Keep Learning Mid Canterbury and Safe Communities formed a partnership and developed a simple Google calendar option for agencies/event planners to list their events and check what else is happening over 2025.

- **Safety Promotion** - The Ashburton Courier newspaper’s free, monthly Safe Communities column continued during this time, with spaces offered to Safe Communities member agencies. This has been a great way for community agencies to promote their safety messages and services and for the Safe Communities programme to be profiled in the local media. Social media (Facebook) has also been used to promote various activities over the year.

## Concluding Remarks

Ashburton District has developed a robust coalition of government and community stakeholders, working across a range of sectors, under the Safe Community “umbrella”.

Working collaboratively and the sharing of skills, knowledge, resources, information, ideas and experience between local community safety agencies will increase community safety in Ashburton District over time. It also enables the group to be responsive to local and national safety issues and concerns as they emerge (for example scams/fraud).

Thanks to the Ashburton District Council for funding the Safe Communities Programme and to Deputy Mayor Liz McMillan for her chairing of the Steering Group, and support for the Programme.