

SAFE COMMUNITIES ASHBURTON DISTRICT

SIX MONTH REPORT:

1 JULY – 31st DECEMBER 2023



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 – 31st December 2023

- **Snow and Ski Board Safety** – Mt Hutt staff and the Deputy Mayor visited 4 local schools on the 17th of July, ahead of the schools’ annual ski day on the mountain. Around 500 children heard the ski /snowboard safety messages. Mt Hutt staff were pleased to see that children who had heard the presentation were able to recite the key safety messages when visiting the ski field. As a result, Mt Hutt is keen to repeat this safety promotion in 2024.
- **Safety Village, Ashburton A and P Show, 27th and 28th October 2023** - Significant time was spent planning and co-ordinating the Safety Village. Nine agencies took part in challenging conditions (hail, rain, and a temperature of 3 degrees on the first day, causing some of the agencies to pack up and go home!) promoting a wide variety of safety messages. Each time the Safety Village has run at the Show it has been impacted by the weather, resulting in loss of opportunity to engage with the public. Agencies observed this year that the Show crowd was not there for serious messages about safety and that another option such as a local “Community Safety Day” on a weekend, moving around the district and with access to an indoor, weather-proof facility, could be a better option moving forward. The group will meet in the New Year for further discussion.
- **Unintentional Injury to Children** – this new programme began in March 2023 and 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). To date around 400 children and adults have heard the presentation and taken away a Home Safety Checklist to use to assess any safety issues in their homes.

- **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 2023 were:
 - Passengers transported/number of trips – **172** (same period 2022 = **63**)
 - Kms travelled – **14,957** (same period 2022 = **7,581**)
 - Volunteer driver hours -**341** (same period 2022 = **140.48**)
 - Other volunteer hours (trustees) – **53** (same period 2022 = **19.5**)
- Since the service began in July 2021, to the 31st of December 2023, the service has undertaken 376 trips
- A six-month local newspaper promotion began in September and has attracted a number of new users.
- Three new volunteer drivers were recruited and inducted.
- The Mid Canterbury Community Trust held its third AGM on the 28th of November. All trustees except one committed to a further term.
- **Public Transport Service for Ashburton Township** - at the request of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor Liz McMillan, Councillor Carolyn Camerson (and myself) began looking at the need (or not) for a public transport service for Ashburton Township and what it could look like. An independent social researcher has been engaged by the Council to undertake community and health and social service agency research about demand, preferred destinations, willingness to pay, etc. Research results and recommendations will be available at the end of March, 2024.
- **Falls Prevention for Older People** – A newspaper feature in the Ashburton Courier promoting strength and balance classes and profiling a local person who has benefitted from the classes was run in October. Two “Ageing Well” sessions were run in October at the Ashburton Library, promoting local strength and balance classes, hydration and being smokefree, the ACC NYMBL app, the Mid Canterbury Connector community transport service, and moderate use of alcohol. These sessions attracted around 100 older adults.
- **Theft/Burglary and Scams** – a local newspaper promotion was undertaken in the Ashburton Courier newspaper, along with talks by the mid Canterbury Neighbourhood Support Co-ordinator and displays at Ashburton Library.

- **Parenting Agency Network** – this group met three times over this period to share information about parenting services and gaps. The organising group is looking at incorporating these sessions into another existing local network in 2024 to reduce the number of community meetings local agency staff need to attend.
- **Bike Skills Park** – a Working Group of interested parties (Council, service clubs, Safer Mid Canterbury, Sport Canterbury) was established and a site on the Ashburton Domain secured from the Council. A preferred designer has been selected and funding has been provided by both local Rotary clubs to cover the initial concept design phase of the project.
- **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).

ACC’s 5-year financial support of the project ceased as of 31st December, 2023.

Thanks to the Ashburton District Council for covering the funding shortfall for the programme through to 30th June, 2024.