



Evaluation of Know Your Neighbours

An initiative of Lifewise & Takapuna Methodist Church



Executive Summary

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EVALUATION OF KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This evaluation explores approaches and outcomes of the Know Your Neighbours community development initiative. Know Your Neighbours grew from a partnership between Takapuna Methodist Church ('TMC') and community and social development agency Lifewise. The premise behind Know Your Neighbours is that building better connections between residents can make neighbourhoods healthy, fun and vibrant places to live.

The aim of this evaluation was to look at the difference Know Your Neighbours has made to selected neighbourhoods, and how it has made this difference. To do this, the researchers used a mixed methods study which involved document review and analysis, interviews, neighbourhood conversation groups and observation.

Key Findings

History

In 2006, motivated by concern for those living on the margins of society and a desire to create positive, constructive and inclusive communities, Lifewise and TMC began to explore options for working together to realise a shared vision of community development within communities on Auckland's North Shore. In April 2007 a Community Development Worker was employed to design, implement and lead a community development project, or series of projects, among North Shore communities.

Background and Foundations of the Community Development Project

During the project's foundation period the Community Development Worker ('CDW') put much effort into building relationships and making connections within the North Shore and wider Auckland communities, meeting with more than 60 representatives from NGOs, council and government and attending more than 20 meetings. The CDW was supported in this process by the project reference group who understood that the groundwork and preparation was not only essential, but also *takes time*.

External mentoring¹ was particularly important during this period, as it allowed the CDW to make meaningful connections between the theory behind community development and place-based practice in a community or neighbourhood, as well as exploring new ideas and themes as they emerged.

Consultation identified isolation and disconnection as prominent community themes, particularly as they related to how people felt about living in their

¹ Also known as external supervision.

2007

MOU signed, CDW role begins, period of knowledge generating and building of key relationships.

2008

KYN named, brochure and KYN newsletter developed, door knocking and resident-led developments in Sunnynook & Meadowood.

2009

Roundabout Meadowood formed, first International Food Festival held. First Auckland-wide Neighbours Day held.

2010

Strengthening Our Neighbourhoods project with Neighbourhood Support starts. Partnership formed with Inspiring Communities to plan Neighbours Day Aotearoa (NDA).

2011

Beach Haven, Northcote, Roundabout Meadowood developments continue. First nation-wide NDA campaign – team expands to four partners.

2012

Second nation-wide NDA goes ahead, involving thousands. CDW contract finishes, closing this chapter between Lifewise / TMC.

neighbourhoods. Prominent too, was the idea that isolation and disconnection could only be adequately addressed from within communities and neighbourhoods. It was while wondering how the project could help people to know their neighbours that the CDW found her focus and sense of purpose and the project found a name. Thus, Know Your Neighbours developed into the signature work of the community development project.

The Know Your Neighbours Initiative

The initiative focuses on enabling neighbourliness rather than attempting to provide it. The vision is to create supportive, inclusive, creative, healthy, and connected neighbourhoods with strong local leadership.

Two strategic arms form the structural basis of the initiative:

1. Supporting street and neighbourhood development; and
2. Raising awareness and influencing change.

At a local level, the mission of KYN was to support the building of social capital within streets and neighbourhoods by helping to increase the levels of communication, interaction, and support between neighbours. On a wider level, KYN employed a number of strategies, including media and communication, networking, the national Neighbours Day Aotearoa campaign, and teaching, advocacy and workshops to raise local, regional, and national awareness of neighbourliness.

Outcomes

1. Supporting street and neighbourhood development

The results of this evaluation suggest that KYN has contributed to creating stronger, connected, and more inclusive neighbourhoods in North Shore communities, in particular the suburb of Meadowood (Unsworth Heights), and the streets Taurus Crescent and Greenslade Crescent.

Specific outcomes for these communities include:

- **Building trusting relationships between neighbours.** This has contributed greatly to increased feelings of safety and security, e.g. 93% of participants who took part in a community activity reported increased feelings of safety and security, and an actual reduction in crime rates e.g. the reported burglary rate in Taurus Cres dropped from ten burglaries to two burglaries between 2010 and the end of 2011. Residents are more likely to report increased feelings of social support, or knowing that their neighbours are around to assist in a stressful or emergency situation. Those most likely to report increased perceptions of safety, security and social support include new migrants, the elderly and young families.

Safety & Security

Nine out of 10 (93%) participants in the “Amazing Place” community treasure hunt in Meadowood say that taking part in the event made them feel safer in their community (Source: Our Amazing Place evaluation report, April 2012)

In 2010, Taurus Cres had 10 reported burglaries, three reports of wilful damage, four stolen motor vehicles and three dumped stolen vehicles. Residents started connecting with each other in March 2011. By the end of 2011, just two burglaries, one report of wilful damage and two stolen cars were reported on Taurus Cres. Both police and neighbourhood support representatives believe that the drop in crime is directly linked to the neighbourhood connections built in 2011

- **Greater community connectedness and social cohesion.** This has occurred through local street- and neighbourhood-based activities such as neighbourhood groups, barbeques, food festivals, community workshops, setting up Neighbourhood Support groups, localised consultation and planning groups and setting up neighbourhood communication channels, such as Facebook pages. The Meadowood community, for example, have held ten community events over five years, reaching at least 10 per cent of neighbours per event, with some events attracting more than one-fifth of all residents. In all instances these projects have been community-led, that is, the residents have chosen the projects they want to work on and have decided the time-frames of the activities. Community connectedness has also been built through the formation of social ties which have developed as a result of the activities in the neighbourhood. Many residents, particularly those who have limited English language skills, have found new ways to connect with each other such as gardening and story-telling. These connections have been shown to have impacted positively on the well-being on the entire neighbourhood, regardless of participation.
- **Neighbourhood social capital.** This has been built through the formation of local residents’ groups, the sense of shared purpose and a shared community vision and the inclusive nature of neighbourhood events and activities. One neighbourhood is currently intentionally building its social capital around neighbourhood care and support in order to enhance the capacity of their community to deal with social issues such as family violence and child maltreatment.

2. Raising Awareness and Influencing Change

It appears that KYN is contributing to a growing national awareness of neighbourliness and is influencing some change at the local, regional, and national levels.

- **Neighbours Day Aotearoa** is growing in impact. In 2012, 683 people had registered their NDA event, compared with 213 in 2011. An evaluation of Neighbours Day 2012 found that more than half (60%) of respondents felt safer as a result of knowing their neighbours better and were more likely to ask for help (71% as compared with 48% prior to the Neighbours Day event). More than half of respondents had shared contact details with their neighbours after their Neighbours Day event, and four in ten, or 41 per cent had formed or strengthened a neighbourhood support group. Lastly, 57 per cent of respondents planned to have more regular contact with their neighbours in the future.
- Communication channels such as **brochures, newsletters and local and national media** coverage are contributing to a raised awareness of neighbourliness among the general public. Whilst the impact of media coverage cannot be easily measured, the relatively quick

QUICK STATS

Neighbours Day Aotearoa Outcomes

An evaluation of Neighbours Day 2012 found that:

- There was increased perception of neighbourhood safety. More than half (**60%**) of respondents said that they feel safer as a result of knowing their neighbours better
- Participants experienced an increased feeling of trust in their neighbours. Before NDA **48%** of respondents were likely to ask for help, compared to **71%** after neighbours day.
- Over half, **55%**, of respondents have shared contact details with their neighbours as a result of NDA2012.
- Four in ten, or **41%** of respondents formed or strengthened a neighbourhood support group and **57%** of respondents plan to have more regular contact with their neighbours in the future.

uptake of Neighbours Day in 2012 would suggest that the media coverage of this event is impacting on both national awareness and action.

- It appears that the **practice of others who work or have an interest in strong, connected neighbourhoods has been influenced by the KYN initiative**. At a local level, some members of TMC have organised neighbourhood events or have participated in community capacity-building events. For Lifewise, one of the foundational partners of the project, KYN has helped inform and influence a model of support based on community-led development. Externally, some community workers who have some knowledge of the KYN initiative have started to apply some of the KYN practice principles in their own communities or with their own organisations. One of the biggest outcomes for these workers has been to understand the value of the micro-contact; the doorstep conversation.

Know Your Neighbours in Action

Sharing the vision of supportive, inclusive, creative, healthy, and connected neighbourhoods has enabled KYN to attain wide support and has offered those involved ownership over the challenges of, and the solutions involved in, reaching the vision.

Effective external mentoring played a key role in actively supporting and extending learning, enquiry and reflection. Intentional reflective practice enabled the CDW to constantly reflect on what was being learned, and to hold that against the KYN vision and the theoretical principles that underpinned the initiative.

Specific ways in which the KYN approach and actions supported local street and neighbourhood development include:

- Linking with existing groups and organisations;
- initiating conversations with local residents;
- working alongside residents;
- encouraging inclusiveness;
- supporting and developing community leadership;
- understanding community motivation;
- naming and celebrating small successes; and
- Managing the complexity of the initiative so it didn't become too onerous for residents, neighbours and communities.

Specific actions which have contributed to raising awareness and influencing change include:

- Using social marketing principles to assist with the design and promotion the Neighbours Day Aotearoa campaign

- Working with other change makers who share the vision of strong, connected communities

By networking with other community groups and organisations, working alongside and mentoring residents, and supporting and developing local leadership, KYN has enabled local residents groups to become self-sustaining entities, thereby helping to ensure the on-going sustainability of the initiative. Sustainability of street and neighbourhood development is further encouraged through:

- Street or neighbourhood drivers;
- setting up a group of people, with complementary skills;
- having a gathering place;
- the use of multiple methods of communication;
- visible neighbourhood action or events; and
- having the support of local agencies and networks.

KYN appears to be an initiative which has provided value for money. Overall, there was agreement from organisations, individuals, and neighbourhoods involved in the implementation of KYN, that it *was* cost effective, and, more importantly, that it appears to have been a worthwhile investment of time, money, and resources.

Particular challenges faced by the initiative included protectionism from some who felt that a community development project in North Shore communities would be duplicating work already perceived to be done. The location of the CDW, who worked in isolation from others within Lifewise and TMC was also challenging at times, particularly with regards to feedback and support from other team members. This could be addressed in future initiatives of this type.

Know Your Neighbours: *How theory and principles inform vision and action*

