

## **Advice on Addressing Safety Concerns in Newtown: Blueprint for Immediate Action**

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### **Background**

Wellington City Council is aware of, and actively responding to, the increasing safety and wellbeing issues in Newtown. To help shape a coordinated response, Council recently convened a meeting of key agencies operating in the area, including social housing providers, Police, health and mental health services, and outreach agencies such as DCM and the Wellington City Mission. The discussion confirmed that safety issues are escalating and that greater visibility and presence from both Police and Council are needed. Agencies also emphasised the importance of community-centred actions, with local services and residents playing a central role in leading the next steps.

The City Safety & Wellbeing Plan is strongly anchored in the CBD and underpinned by a wide network of initiatives, systems, and partnerships that have been built over time. From work done through the Pōneke Promise, Council, Police, outreach services, community patrols, and businesses are linked into a coordinated framework that supports safety interventions and sustains long-term improvements. Initiatives in the CBD are therefore not standalone efforts; they sit within an established and well-connected system.

In contrast, Newtown has not had the same level of investment in coordinated interventions. While the suburb benefits from the presence of committed social agencies and active community organisations, these efforts have often been ad hoc, driven by individual groups or short-term responses rather than a sustained, integrated framework. This means Newtown's strengths, its active residents and strong local services, have not yet been harnessed within a cohesive system that can deliver lasting impact.

For this reason, simply transferring CBD initiatives into Newtown will not work. The issues are different, the community is different, the health and safety responsibilities and requirements are different, and the response must reflect those differences. For example, a uniformed patrol is likely to generate further community concerns about over- enforcement. A successful approach in Newtown needs

to be tailored to its context, shaped by local priorities, and designed with the people who live, work, and deliver services there. Council can perform a role in support of this by providing coordination, technical advice, and agency connections that help the community lead a sustainable and effective response.

The August 2025 CPTED report (attached) provides the evidence base for this tailored approach. It assessed five priority sites identified by the Newtown community as areas where poor environmental conditions and problematic behaviour are impacting safety and amenity:

- Constable Street public toilets and playground
- Millward Lane
- St Thomas's Church car park
- Riddiford Street bus stops
- New World supermarket entrance

The report found that while natural surveillance is strong during the day, inadequate lighting, overgrown vegetation, poorly defined boundaries, and slow maintenance responses reduce visibility and perceptions of safety at night. It also highlighted issues with access control, such as recessed alcoves that attract encampments and misuse, and the need for clearer ownership cues in public and semi-public spaces.

It recommends a balanced mix of environmental improvements and social measures, enhancing the physical environment to improve visibility and perceptions of care, while also strengthening coordinated partnerships between agencies, businesses, and the community. Delivering these actions will require joint effort between Council, social agencies, property owners, and the community, with some works achievable within current budgets and others requiring additional investment.

## **Resourcing this Plan**

We will activate components of this plan in the short term by re-focusing existing operational work. To meet the immediate needs in Newtown, the team will temporarily re-prioritise its current programme of work, pausing or slowing selected activities where necessary. This approach ensures that available capacity is directed to Newtown without seeking new resources, while maintaining alignment with Council's broader operational responsibilities. We will ensure this short-term redirection does not compromise the delivery of our existing city safety initiatives.

- Exploring opportunities for a visible, on-the-ground presence in Newtown through coordination and facilitation activities with local services and agencies.
- Coordinating the delivery of the action plan and the work programme outlined in the tables below.
- Monitoring, reporting, and adapting our approach based on impact and community feedback.

## **Future Resourcing**

When our efforts intensify in one location, the pressures and issues often shift elsewhere. The current City Safety and Wellbeing Plan is designed to disrupt unsafe activity and behaviours in the CBD, but unless the root causes are addressed, these behaviours may reappear in other locations where they face less disruption.

Wellington City Council can play a facilitation and coordination role, but as a territorial authority we do not hold the levers to address the deep social drivers of harm, such as mental health, addiction, or housing insecurity. These sit largely within the remit of Central Government agencies. While we cannot resolve those drivers directly, we can contribute valuable insight, share data, and provide timely advice to support stronger advocacy on behalf of communities.

To respond effectively to shifts in city safety challenges, Council needs the ability to scale our operations up or down depending on where issues emerge, and to apply a consistent, standardised approach to any suburb or community that requires facilitated

coordination for safety initiatives. At present, our resourcing is optimised for the CBD, limiting our capacity to respond at the same level in other areas when new concerns arise.

A future resourcing model should ensure that:

- We can rapidly redeploy and expand our team's presence in emerging hotspots without compromising existing commitments.
- Our approach is consistent and equitable, ensuring communities receive the same standard of coordination, communication, and safety support.
- We can look for opportunities to partner with key government agencies, service providers, and community organisations where appropriate.
- We provide timely information and evidence to enable joined-up responses across Council, agencies, and community partners.

### 1. Newtown Community-Led & Partnership Actions

The following provides a blueprint for potential community-led initiatives. These examples are not prescriptive but are intended to demonstrate how Council can help facilitate and support action while ensuring leadership sits with local stakeholders. Specific actions and priorities would need to be designed and owned by the community, social agencies, and government partners active in Newtown.

Proposed Action	Objective	Lead / Partners	Timeframe	Success Measures
<b>A weekly Social Agency Action Day</b> where local agencies walk key Newtown streets during peak times to uplift visibility, reassure commuters, and demonstrate collaboration.	Increase visibility of agencies/providers in the area	Local social service providers, housing providers	Weekly	Regular visibility in the community, collective awareness of who is rough sleeping, begging and who is working with who.

<b>Business-led evening lighting activation</b> by keeping canopy lights on after hours	Improve ambient lighting along retail corridor	Business owners, Newtown Business Association	Immediate and ongoing	Fewer dark spots recorded in night audits
<b>Neighbourhood safety hui</b> with local agencies and residents	Build trust, agree joint priorities, and improve reporting pathways	Community Consortium, Te Toi Mahana, Salvation Army, City Mission, Police	Twice yearly	Attendance numbers; agreed joint actions
<b>Alcove and private space management</b> with CPTED design changes advised by City Safety and Urban Design teams	Reduce encampments and misuse of private alcoves	Property owners, Council Urban Design and City Safety Advisors	Medium term	Number of persistent encampments decreases
<b>Explore shopfront safety upgrades</b> using Safer Shopfronts guidance	Strengthen shop security and deter opportunistic crime	Business owners, supported by Eyes On network	Ongoing	Uptake rate of guidance; reduced victimisations
<b>Supportive guardianship at shuttle pick-up site</b> at St Thomas's Church	Reduce antisocial behaviour and improve safety for service users	Whakamaru, social agencies, church representatives	Short term	Reports of antisocial behaviour decline
<b>Drug harm and addiction service hui</b> with health and community services	Coordinate drug harm reduction and addiction service response related to relevant cohorts (eg, housing)	Tu Whatu Ora, AOD and homelessness services, Police, Harm Prevention team	Medium term	Identified possible solutions for health and mental health, and AOD concerns. Increase in awareness of harm reduction,

				housing and addiction services
<b>Community clean-ups &amp; beautification days</b> targeting Millward Lane, Riddiford Street bus stops, and Constable Street playground	Increase visible guardianship, remove signs of neglect	Newtown Community Consortium, local residents, business owners, Street Cleaning & Growth (support)	Quarterly	Reduction in graffiti/rubbish complaints; improved survey feedback

## 2. Newtown Council-Led Actions for consideration and further investigation (Council levers; some require additional Capex)

*Note: Several physical works (e.g., lighting upgrades, CCTV installs, needle bins) will require additional capital or re-prioritisation. Others can begin within existing operational budgets.*

Action	Objective	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Success Measures
<b>Work with Wellington Electricity to prioritise an upgrade of lighting</b> at Wilson Street Carpark Constable Street toilets, and St Thomas's Church frontage & lane	Improve night-time visibility and deter antisocial behaviour	Transport & Infrastructure, Safe City, Wellington Electricity	Short term	Lux levels meet CPTED standards; positive change in safety surveys
<b>Install two more solar-powered CCTV cameras</b> in Police-identified hotspots	Strengthen monitoring and evidence gathering	Safe City CCTV Operations, Police	Short term	Number of incidents captured; operational use in enforcement
<b>Vegetation clearance &amp; sightline improvements</b> along Constable and Riddiford Streets	Enhance natural surveillance	Street Cleaning & Growth, Transport & Infrastructure	Immediate and ongoing	Clear sightlines maintained in quarterly inspections

<b>Enhanced cleaning &amp; rapid response to graffiti/litter</b> in hotspot areas	Reinforce perception of care and management	Street Cleaning & Growth	Immediate and ongoing	Reduced time to remove graffiti/rubbish
<b>Painted boundary lines around high-risk ATMs</b>	Signal ownership and deter loitering	Safe City, Urban Design	Medium term	Decrease in loitering reports near ATMs
<b>Public needle disposal bins</b> near Constable Street toilets	Reduce unsafe disposal of needles	Safe City, Harm Prevention	Short term	Fewer needle-related complaints
<b>Tenancy behaviour escalation pathway</b>	Respond quickly to public safety impacts from nearby tenancies	Safe City, Housing & Tenancy partners	Medium term	Reduced repeat incidents linked to specific properties
<b>Business perceptions of safety survey</b>	Track impact of interventions	Safe City	Late 2025	Survey participation rate and improvement in safety scores

### Next steps:

1. City Safety and Connected Community teams to reprioritise operational tasks in the very short-term in order to concentrate on:
  - Establishing a visible, on-the-ground presence at the Newtown Community Centre.
  - Coordinating the delivery of the community and partner-led action plan and the work programme that flows from it.
  - Monitoring, reporting, and adapting the approach based on impact and community feedback.
2. City Safety team to complete preliminary scoping and engagement activity, including costings, for interventions outlined in the Council-led actions table, to support future Council decisions related to City Safety initiatives.