

## Emerging Diversity and Inclusion Award Entrant: Gandhi Nivas



A collaborative South Auckland community programme providing support to men involved in family violence is helping its clients and enhancing the diversity and inclusion skills of staff working for the agencies behind it.

In 2013, four out of 14 women killed in New Zealand were killed by partners of South Asian descent; and South Asian men were also disproportionately represented in breaches of Police Safety Orders (PSOs).

After discussions between Counties Manukau Police South Asian Advisory Board and the New Zealand Police, Gandhi Nivas was created. Gandhi Nivas (Home of Peace) is a designated facility that provides temporary accommodation for men involved in family violence, and provides support such as counselling to address underlying issues and to seek solutions moving forward. It assists in achieving a sense of safety for victims by ensuring they stay in their own homes.

Gandhi Nivas has been a collaboration between a number of agencies who share in common the need to respond to the consequences of family violence - the New Zealand Police, Sahaayta, Nirvana Health (East Tamaki Health Care), and Safe Man Safe Family.

The starting point was recognition that men who had been served a PSO after a low-level family violence callout and had nowhere else to go were returning home, thus breaking the order. A disproportionate number of men affected were of South Asian descent.

Investigating this problem, it seemed to be an outcome of a range of factors - greater stigma and shame among this community being foremost among these. As Sahaayta and ETHC serve significant numbers of South Asian families, and have South Asians in their leadership and staff, they were well placed to respond to this issue.

All four organisations then committed significant time and resource, both in terms of leadership to "make things happen" and staffing to provide the service. Since its launch Gandhi Nivas has been expanded to include men of all ethnicities.

Men are referred to the programme by the Police. If there is room to accommodate them at Gandhi Nivas, they are brought to the house. An onsite social worker gets relevant information about the incident. The client checks in and receives the orientation where the house rules are explained. A needs assessment form is completed, then a counselling appointment is set up and, depending on the client's circumstances, assistance with referrals to WINZ, a GP, Citizen's Advice Bureau, budgeting services and Safe Man Safe Family may be given. The client's family is then contacted and offered counselling and support.

Counties Manukau District Commander Superintendent John Tims has fully supported the project from the beginning and ensured there was district-wide buy in from each and every police officer. This included authorising all of the frontline sections from around the Counties Manukau District to be scheduled to attend Gandhi Nivas for familiarisation with the people, premises, services provided and contact details.

"Gandhi Nivas is a shared solution to a common problem for the organisations involved and a new way of working. It delivers solutions or outcomes to the respective organisations involved that would not have existed but for the programme. When Gandhi Nivas opened to all ethnicities it enhanced the diversity and inclusion for the Police in that it gave them confidence that a programme developed specifically for South Asian had universal principles and tools that could be applied across the board with equal success," says East Tamaki Health Care Community Manager Joseph Liava'a.

"For the Sahaayta staff who are on-site to provide counselling and support, the multi-cultural practice allows them to reflect on similarities and differences between cultures, which enhances their own skills and development."

The Sahaayta team members come from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds and speak 18 different languages.

Reaching out to multiple ethnicities allows the team to widen their skills and knowledge in tailoring programmes, supports and referrals to appropriate services.

At the same time, everyone involved in the project has the satisfaction of knowing they are helping intervene early to prevent family violence and to educate and develop awareness around this issue in their community.