

TRANSITION FROM HOMELESSNESS PROJECT



Community Consultations

AFTER CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH 51 INDIVIDUALS with lived experience, service providers and leaders in the Kingston community, and releasing our report to a broad range of stakeholders, we conducted three virtual world café events occurring on April 23, April 30 and May 7, 2021. During these events, we collaborated with 59 unique individuals in an effort to generate ideas for solutions aimed at enabling persons to thrive following homelessness. These individuals represented a broad range of stakeholders representing 23 organizations:

- Persons with Lived Experience
- Community members and advocates
- Addiction and Mental Health Services – KFLA
- Providence Care
- Home Base Housing
- HIV/AIDS Regional Services
- KFLA Public Health
- Kingston Health Sciences Centre
- City of Kingston
- Ryandale Transition House
- Kingston Interval House
- Lennox & Addington Interval House
- Dawn House
- Resolve Counselling Services
- Veterans Affairs
- Ongwanada
- Developmental Services Ontario
- Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation
- John Howard Society
- YMCA of Eastern Ontario
- Anglican Diocese of Ontario
- Western University
- Queen’s University
- McGill University

“Homelessness can be a moment in time, not a lifelong destiny”

The community consultations recognized that isolation, loneliness, and ongoing need to simply survive can keep people in precarity following homelessness. The ideas and solutions developed may help to mitigate these potential pitfalls, and help people to thrive following homelessness:

Having places to find “your people”

- Through the creation of a “hub” specifically for persons who have been housed following homelessness, individuals could be offered readily available services and opportunities to develop connections with friends, peers, community members and other natural supports. This “hub” could also support individuals living with substance use disorders on a continuum from harm reduction to abstinence and provide resources in the moment to support the goals of the individual – to use more safely, change their substance use or stop using altogether – based on what they think is the best approach for them.

Opportunities to create a life of meaning – whatever that means for the person

- Embracing lived experience and peer support as unique expertise could help fulfill the desire to give back to one's community through recognized, paid and formalized roles within all community agencies – in positions that help to inform policy, program creation, resource development and service provision
- Through a person-centred approach, individuals should be encouraged to develop personal interests – education, employment, leisure, and creative activities. This could be delivered through a “hub” or other supports distributed throughout the community, as well as providing financial supports that prioritize activity and investment beyond just surviving.

Other communities are doing it...why can't we?

- Novel approaches to community engagement and service delivery have been accomplished in communities in Canada and throughout the world – we can look to established, successful models and re-create these for the Kingston context. Incorporating opportunities to measure outcomes allows for approaches to be expanded upon, re-worked, or re-invented to best meet the needs of the Kingston community.

Help us help others

- Adequate training for all services and supports – peer specialists, all employees and management, housing providers and community members – in trauma-informed, person-centred service delivery is needed across the community.
- Anti-racist, anti-oppression, and cultural safety training needs to be a priority – providing services that understand the individual experience within a historical system helps to guide the development of culturally sensitive approaches.
- The culture of existing services needs to shift toward embracing that notion that “it's okay to not be ok all of the time,” and provide opportunities for regular debriefing, allowing for support workers to access emotional support when needed, and work together across agencies to feel empowered to do the best work possible. Protecting the emotional safety of service providers can enable them to be in an optimal position to provide the best possible care.

Collaboration is key

- Kingston has many resources available, but often we find ourselves “working in silos”. Implementing processes that encourage collaboration could alleviate some of this isolation. We don't need to only work in the same spaces, but we need to be at the same tables – service providers, community members and individuals with lived experiences of homelessness – making decisions about how to work together in the best interests of the individual.
- Development of a system of communication among supports humanizes how we respond to individuals – breaking down silos to provide more immediate, effective and tailored supports regardless of where the individual presents for assistance.

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To access our report, “Beyond Surviving” which summarizes the findings of the research that provided a foundation for this community consultation, please follow this link: https://bc79be03-948b-49fb-a866-463bc7f2cc25.filesusr.com/ugd/fbaf23_77459e9007e340f3b3ba382c785804db.pdf