

# “A GOOD DAY IS WAKING UP INSIDE”

Conversations about homelessness, housing vulnerability, and health care across the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County.

## Executive Summary

A report from the Trent University Homelessness Research Collective

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## THE TRENT UNIVERSITY HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

is a group of faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students interested in community-based homelessness research.

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The Trent University Homelessness Research Collective would like to thank and acknowledge SUZANNE GALLOWAY for her contributions in coding and analysing the data.

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The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes. “Inquiry focused on understanding how vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness access services and navigate to care.” September 4 2018 – August 1 2019.

The Central East Local Health Integration Network, through Community Care City of Kawartha Lakes. “Haliburton County and City of Kawartha Lakes sub-region planning table priority project. Person journey mapping: Focusing on vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness.” October 30 2018 – March 31 2019.

The research team would like to thank and acknowledge the funders and community partners who supported the need for this initiative. Funders and partners wanted to better understand how people who are vulnerably housed navigate to health and social care in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County. The views expressed in this report are those of the interview participants and do not reflect the opinions of funders and partners.



**THANK-YOU** to all members of the Haliburton County and City of Kawartha Lakes Central East Local Health Integration Network sub-region planning table for supporting this project.

**THANK-YOU** to A Place Called Home, Housing Help, and Ontario Works for providing space in their organizations to conduct interviews.

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# ABOUT THIS PROJECT

**This project is a jointly-funded initiative** of the City of Kawartha Lakes and the Central East Local Health Integration Network's Haliburton County and City of Kawartha Lakes Sub-Region Planning Table. Key stakeholders in the region wanted to better understand the social- and health care needs of homeless and vulnerably housed individuals. Funders were arms-length during the process; the research team reported regularly, but were responsible for managing the direction of the project.

**The design of the study** included collection of multiple types of data: (1) interviews, (2) surveys, (3) case conferencing notes, (4) SPDAT / VI-SPDAT records, and (5) hospital records. This report contains only the findings of the interviews; subsequent reporting will detail the methodologies and findings of these additional on-going analyses.

**Interviews were conducted** in October and November 2018, with **53 INDIVIDUALS** experiencing homelessness or housing vulnerability in Lindsay and Haliburton, Ontario. Participants consisted of 21 women and 32 men, between the ages of 17 and 66. Recruitment occurred through snowball sampling, and interviews took place at A Place Called Home, Housing Help, and Ontario Works, in private rooms. Most interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes and were narrative and free-flowing in nature. The interviewer would begin with the statement, "Please tell me about yourself," and then follow the conversation naturally, incorporating a number of prompts that included questions about health, health care, and social service usage. Interviews were audio-recorded and handwritten notes were taken. The recordings were transcribed and subsequently coded by 3 independent reviewers. Coding followed a deductive approach, beginning by identifying broad topics and narrowing them until specific themes and sub-themes emerged. These themes form the structure of this report.

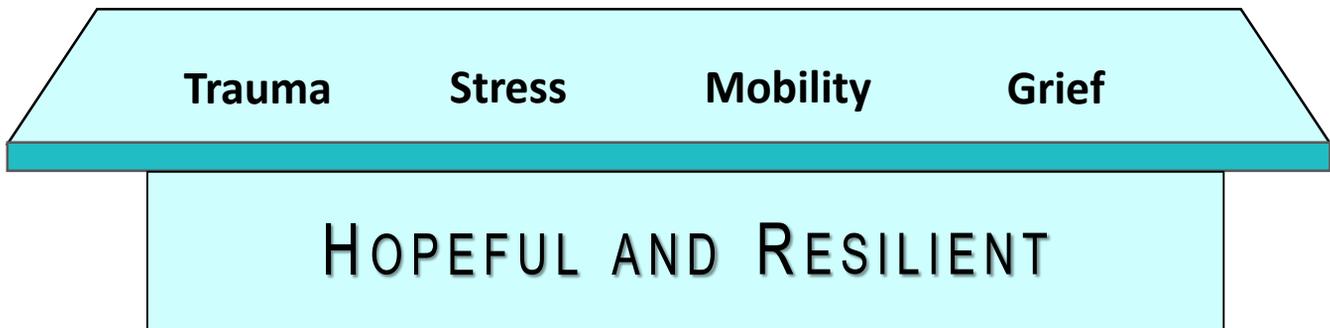
**After drafting this report**, the research team hosted a community meeting with clients and residents of A Place Called Home, on March 19 2019. The two-hour meeting allowed 21 individuals to participate in 5 simultaneous round-table discussions. The findings and recommendations were reviewed with the participants to ensure their views were accurately understood by the researchers and represented in this report. The findings and recommendations were highly validated by these participants.

**Participants in this study** received a \$20 gift card to Shoppers Drug Mart or Giant Tiger as an honorarium for participating in an interview. Those who participated in the community feedback session received a \$40 cash honorarium to compensate for 2 hours of their time. This study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board for research involving human participants at Trent University. Additional reviews and approvals were granted by Ross Memorial Hospital and Haliburton Highlands Health Services.

Questions about this project should be directed to:

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How do vulnerably housed individuals navigate to social and health care?



Social Inclusion

Housing



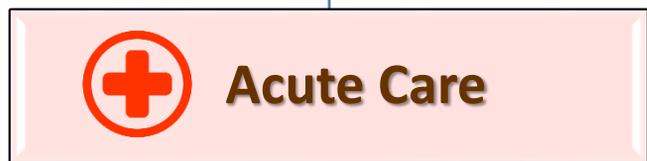
Parenting

Services



Income

Transportation



Chronic Conditions

Providing Care



Sources and Access

Considering Addictions



R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

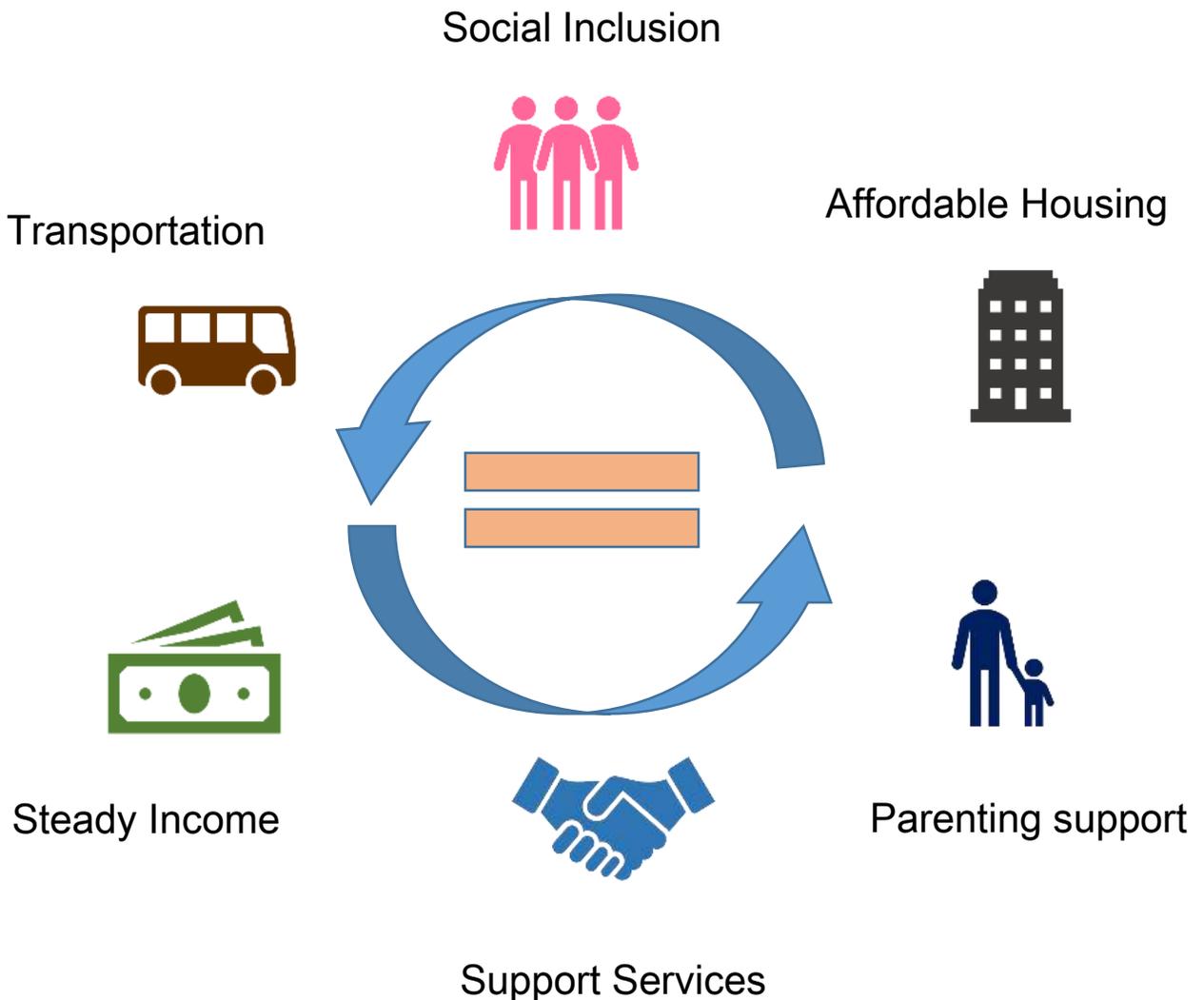
Health Equity

Primary Care

Acute Care

# H E A L T H E Q U I T Y

WHAT DOES HEALTH EQUITY MEAN TO VULNERABLY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS IN  
THE CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES AND HALIBURTON COUNTY?





## 1. ADDRESS BOREDOM TO REDUCE ADDICTIONS

### Key Findings

Having a routine, somewhere to go and something productive to do, was what many considered to be the foundation of a good day.

Instead, many people described feeling bored. They lacked activities that were available at a low-cost.

This boredom was identified as a cause of substance use, particularly among youth.

### Recommendations

Fund health promotion measures, like creating a subsidy to cover the cost of social programs, and providing a paid gym pass to all shelter residents.

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should consider expanding entertainment options to address boredom. Desirable identified options included a pool hall, arcade, skate park, and youth centre.

Develop a sober space where people can drop-in and socialize without being around substances, like alcohol.

## 2. INCLUDE SENIORS IN PROGRAMMING DECISIONS

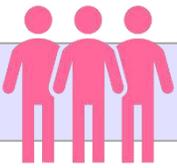
### Key Findings

Seniors wanted mentally and physically stimulating activities. They also wanted to be asked what activities they would like to have.

### Recommendations

Involve seniors in decision-making around their own programming. Offering a lecture series, yoga, tai-chi, or art classes were all identified as being interesting activities among this population.

Reach out to seniors to help them identify what programming already exists in the region.



## 3. INVEST IN FREE-ACCESS CHILDREN’S PROGRAMS

### Key Findings

There are a lot of children in Lindsay but the activities are described as being fairly limited. The library and Boys and Girls Club are valuable resources.

### Recommendations

Continue to invest in children’s programming, such as through the library and Boys and Girls Club.

Lindsay, Bobcaygeon, and Fenelon Falls each have a public park ‘splash pad.’ Creating additional water park facilities would provide free activities for families in the summer.

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should partner with the Trent Community Research Centre and U-Links to conduct an environmental scan of free-access children’s programs.

## 4. BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH COOKING

### Key Findings

Cooking and/or eating together are important ways that people take care of themselves and those they care about.

### Recommendations

People in the community would benefit from a program where they can learn to cook healthy and affordable meals, eat together with others, and take left-overs with them.

Increase awareness of the organizations that currently engage in meal programming.



## 5. DEVELOP AN INTER-GENERATIONAL ART-HIVE

### Key Findings

Artistic and physical hobbies give people something to do, a sense of purpose, and social connections.

Low-cost art programs could provide a key form of socialization, particularly for parents of young children.

### Recommendations

Bringing an 'art-hive' into the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County could give residents a place to engage in art, socialize with others, learn something new, and keep their children engaged. Children could participate in one activity, while their parent(s) engaged in another.

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should conduct a review of how other municipalities have engaged in art-hives to identify best practice approaches that could be adopted locally.

People need a safe place to store their valuable artwork while in transition, such as residing at a shelter. Examining short-term storage options for artwork should also be considered.





# Housing

## 1. INVEST IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Key Findings

Participants were generally aware of housing supports in the community, such as Housing Help, and found them to be valuable.

The housing stock in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County is described as being limited and expensive.

Currently only a minority of people describe their housing as being secure and suited to their needs. Some people have housing, but it is precarious or not suitable to long-term residency. This is not surprising, given recruitment took place out of a shelter.

Affordable / subsidized housing is something people are currently waiting years for.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County are encouraged to continue working with provincial and federal government partners to secure long-term investments in affordable and rent geared to income housing.

Consider alternative housing solutions, such as investing in micro-homes and programs like Habitat for Humanity.

Partnership opportunities could be explored, such as with the Fleming College School of Trades and Technology, to develop and build alternative housing locally.

The City of Kawartha Lakes should also work with Fleming College to explore the construction of new-build student housing to open the rental market.



# Housing

## 2. STRATEGICALLY ENGAGE AND SUPPORT LANDLORDS

### Key Findings

KLH Housing Corp. is considered to be a good landlord that takes care of its buildings and provides a safe environment for tenants.

Private rental housing is described as being a landlord’s market in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

With competition for few housing options, factors such as criminal records, bad credit, and/or staying at a shelter can keep people from being chosen by landlords.

Housing, even after it is obtained, may not be secure. People get evicted – some lawfully and some because they do not have a valid lease that protects their rights.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes would benefit from having a landlord engagement strategy and/or securing funding for a Landlord Engagement Coordinator position.

Landlords may be more receptive to renting to tenants with criminal records, bad credit, and/or histories of homelessness if they have a support worker liaison who will follow-up on any issues that may arise.

One example of how to implement a program of this nature can be found in the [Landlord Engagement Toolkit](#).

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should explore ways to partner with the ‘Landlord and Tenant Law’ course at Fleming College to run a workshop for vulnerably-housed individuals and/or landlords.

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# Housing

## 3. INCREASE PROVINCIAL SOCIAL SUPPORT PAYMENTS

### Key Findings

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program are helpful but do not provide enough to pay for housing and other necessities.

Help with first and last months' rent is helpful, but participants worry about what happens in the months in between.

When the basic income pilot was introduced, participants believed rents in Lindsay were increased. With the pilot ending, those who rely on it to pay for housing may not be able to afford the cost.

### Recommendations

The Provincial Government of Ontario should increase investments in social assistance programs, such as ODSP and OW to allow recipients to pay for housing and other necessities, like food and transportation.

The Provincial Government of Ontario should also provide bridge funding for those who are left vulnerable to eviction based on rental agreements they signed following enrollment in the Ontario basic income pilot program.

## 4. PLAN FOR DISCHARGE OUT OF CORRECTIONS

### Key Findings

The Central East Correction Centre is located in Lindsay. Some vulnerably housed individuals are recently released from incarceration.

### Recommendations

The Central East Correction Centre should work with the City of Kawartha Lakes and John Howard Society to ensure persons are discharged to sustainable housing and not into homelessness. This planning should occur well before the individual's release date.



# Parenting

## 1. HELP PARENTS BY PROVIDING SOCIAL OUTLETS

### Key Findings

Nearly everyone was a parent and spoke about the importance of having their child(ren) in their lives. Grandchildren are an important and exciting part of many people’s lives too.

Many participants were single parents, including a large proportion of single fathers.

### Recommendations

Invest in activities and programs that allow families to spend time together, at low- or no- cost. Previously noted suggestions include investments in public parks, the library, and art programs.

Establish a support network for single parents to socialize and share experiences. A sober space is needed for parents to get together.

Promote existing programs and opportunities for families in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County.

## 2. INCREASE FLEXIBLE / AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE OPTIONS

### Key Findings

Parents need to be able to take a break from parenting – whether for work or leisure – and know that their children are safe and being cared for.

### Recommendations

Increasing childcare options that offer flexible support would be helpful, particularly for single parents.

Provide more after-school programs for children. These could be created at school or in the community, in transportation-accessible places.



# Parenting

## 3. PLAN COLLABORATIVELY ACROSS SECTORS FOR PARENTS

### Key Findings

There are several institutions involved in parents’ lives, including child welfare and correctional services.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes should work collaboratively with the Children’s Aid Society, John Howard Society, and the Central East Correction Centre to ensure mutual clients receive coordinated planning and support.

## 4. INVEST IN TRANSITIONAL AGE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

### Key Findings

Five Counties Children’s Centre is an important resource for individuals parenting children with special needs.

Transitioning to other services, particularly those out of area, at a certain age is challenging. It requires new rapport, loss of existing relationships, access to transportation, and skills to help the child adjust.

### Recommendations

Government funding should be allocated to Five Counties Children’s Centre for transitional programming.

Transitional programming could include investments in mobile workers, who accompany parents and young persons to appointments with new support workers / agencies.

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# S e r v i c e s

## 1. CONTINUE TO INVEST IN LOCAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

### **Key Findings**

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County have many available supports, and are continually improving them.

### **Recommendations**

Continued investments should be made in the organizations that people identified as being particularly supportive in their lives.

These include, but are not limited to, A Place Called Home, Fourcast, Housing Help, Canadian Mental Health Association, and Community Care.





# S e r v i c e s

## 2. BETTER PROMOTE THE LOCAL SUPPORTS THAT EXIST

### Key Findings

Most people were familiar with the local services in close proximity to the shelter, but were less aware of what was available more broadly in the community.

The City of Kawartha Lakes has an impressive number of services that could be used to address gaps in care. However, many are not known about by people who would benefit from them.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes and local organizations should create a marketing strategy to inform residents of the services and supports available.

Advertising what supports and agencies are available should be done in multiple formats including online and offline.

One way to create awareness is to print custom playing cards that have local services and programs on the back of each card. They could also include frequently asked questions or little known facts about local services. Every few months, host a bridge tournament with a grand prize of \$200 going to the winning team and \$100 to the runner-up. Use the decks of cards for playing and hand them out to all players as a door prize afterwards. This approach would give people something to do, provide an opportunity to socialize, and raise awareness of local agencies with minimal cost.





# S e r v i c e s

## 3. RECOGNIZE A PLACE CALLED HOME AS CENTRAL ACCESS

### Key Findings

A Place Called Home (APCH) is a very important source of support in the community.

It serves as a hub to connect with other agencies and provides meaningful relationships to clients.

The food services at APCH are highly praised by residents and clients.

### Recommendations

A Place Called Home should be funded as a central access point to connect with vulnerably-housed individuals.

While APCH serves a vital role of providing socialization, investments should be made in alternative gathering spaces. Relocating social outlets would allow people to continue to get social support, while freeing capacity of the shelter to serve new residents.

A participant recommended that when the television is not in use, APCH could use it to show advertisements for support services, jobs, and housing.

## 4. MAKE THE SYSTEM NAVIGATOR POSITION PERMANENT

### Key Findings

It is common for people to be connected to multiple support agencies and workers.

This requires that they repeat the same information.

A lack of coordinated care was frustrating to participants seeking multiple supports.

### Recommendations

Agencies could coordinate better and be less reliant on clients to initiate communication between their support workers.

Implementing one or more permanent System Navigators to help organizations coordinate care for shared clients would be a worthwhile investment.

R e c o m m e n d a t i o n s



## 5. INCREASE UPTAKE OF PEER SUPPORT WORKERS

### Key Findings

Support workers are important in people's lives. Feeling a connection to the worker can help build relationships.

Shared lived experience can help facilitate connections.

### Recommendations

Organizations that do not already use a peer worker approach should consider whether they have capacity to do so. This model is identified by participants as being particularly helpful for mental health and addictions support.

Further research to identify best practice approaches for peer models is needed. A student-led study of this kind is currently being undertaken through the Trent Community Research Centre and could provide valuable information for interested parties.





# I n c o m e

## 1. EXPLORE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO CREATE JOBS

### Key Findings

Participants want to work.

Career goals are important. Participants talked about their dreams, but also what they needed to do in order to achieve them.

Some are actively looking for employment and others are unable due to injury, illness, and/or addictions.

The jobs in town are described as undesirable.

### Recommendations

Consider alternative approaches to creating jobs in towns, such as an investment in social entrepreneurship. Examples of these investments include Eva's Print Shop in Toronto and Youth Opportunities Unlimited in London.

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should conduct further research on what models of social entrepreneurship could be viable in their communities.

## 2. CREATE AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL FUND FOR ODSP/OW

### Key Findings

Individuals relying on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program spoke about a need for more comprehensive medical and pharmaceutical care.

For some there was a gap in coverage while they stayed at the shelter, or as they moved from one city to another.

### Recommendations

A participant recommendation was to create a subsidy insurance for individuals who experience a gap in medical and/or pharmaceutical care and need coverage.

This participant noted it would not be used regularly but rather applied for on an emergency basis.



## 3. REINSTATE A BASIC INCOME

### Key Findings

The basic income helped improve quality of life in many ways. People felt that it introduced a sense of hope and allowed for long-term planning around housing, reducing debts, and being able to afford daily necessities with less stress.

There is a lot of resentment stemming from the cancelation of the basic income pilot and no clear answers or rationale were provided.

The loss of benefits – like health care and access to Community Care drivers – was a problem for people who moved from ODSP to the Ontario basic income pilot.

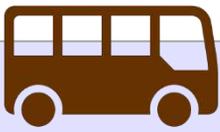
### Recommendations

The Provincial Government of Ontario and/or Federal Government of Canada should (re)instate the basic income project as a means of supporting low-income individuals and providing a better quality of life.

The Provincial Government of Ontario should host an information session in Lindsay to discuss the cancellation with community members and answer outstanding questions.

If reinstated in the future, careful attention should be given to the health care benefits that participants would lose, with alternatives put in place to ensure a high standard of health care access is met.





# T r a n s p o r t a t i o n

## 1. PROVIDE BUS PASSES TO INCREASE CONNECTIVITY

### Key Findings

Some people take the public bus or taxis, but most get around by walking, whether they are physically able to or not.

A lack of mobility interferes with service and health care access.

### Recommendations

Public transportation, such as Lindsay Transit, should explore adding additional routes and hours to existing service.

Some individuals have bus passes, through government supports, but many more would benefit if free-access bus passes were provided to all low-income and/or shelter residents in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

## 2. EXPAND PUBLIC TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE OUTWARDS

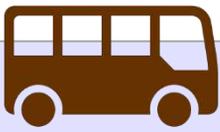
### Key Findings

There is a lack of public transit connecting the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County with larger neighbouring communities.

Creating transit connectivity would increase access to jobs, services, and health care.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should investigate opportunities to connect public transit routes with neighbouring communities, such as Peterborough and Durham Region.



## 3. CONTINUE TO INVEST IN COMMUNITY CARE DRIVERS

### Key Findings

Community Care drivers are a particularly helpful resource for getting to health care appointments out of town.

### Recommendations

Increase investments in Community Care drivers to ensure residents have access to their health care practitioners.

Consider expanding the driving service beyond its current requirements, as possible, to serve a greater population of individuals.

## 4. IMPLEMENT BIKE-SHARING ACROSS THE REGION

### Key Findings

Some individuals had a bike but several others were unable to take theirs with them when they lost their housing.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County should assess their ability to implement widespread bike-sharing programs, such as recently implemented in Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon.



# P R I M A R Y C A R E

WHAT PRIMARY CARE NEEDS AND ACCESS DO VULNERABLY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFY IN THE CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES AND HALIBURTON COUNTY?

<b>Chronic Conditions</b> 	<b>Sources and Access</b> 
Physical Ailments  Pain  Brain Injury  Depression / Anxiety  Mental Illness  Addictions	Health Practitioners  Walk-in / Video Clinics  Alternative Medicine  Correctional Facilities  Dental / Eye / Back / Pain Clinics  Mental Health  Addictions



# Primary Care

## 1. INCREASE LOCAL PRIMARY CARE PRACTITIONERS

### Key Findings

- Living with a chronic illness was common for participants.
- 28% had a primary care physician or nurse practitioner they considered to be accessible.
- 40% had a primary care practitioner in another city, often over an hour drive away. The lack of transportation makes these practitioners inaccessible.
- 32% had no primary care practitioner and had been waiting years for primary health care services.

### Recommendations

- Increase the number of primary care physicians and nurse practitioners in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County.
- Consider incentives to attract and retain primary care practitioners.
- Work with participants who do not have a primary care practitioner to identify and become a patient of existing practitioners in their community.

## 2. EXTEND EXISTING ALTERNATIVES TO PRIMARY CARE

### Key Findings

- Walk-in clinics and hospital emergency rooms are currently being used as alternate sources of primary care.

### Recommendations

- Increasing the number of primary care physicians would decrease this usage, but in its current capacity, additional resources and extended hours are needed for hospitals and clinics to meet the demand.



## 3. INCREASE AND PROMOTE SPECIALIZED CARE SERVICES

### Key Findings

Joint and back pain are common problems identified by participants. Some travel out of town to access specialized pain clinics.

Dental, eye, and chiropractic care were all identified as specialized primary care that is lacking in availability.

Some individuals on ODSP rationed their care, such as seeing a dentist, in case they had an emergency at the end of the year.

It can be a challenge to complete the medical paperwork needed to qualify for ODSP. This prevents some people from getting the care they need.

### Recommendations

Increase awareness of existing programs that address pain management, optometry, dentistry, and chiropractic care.

Provide more liberal government-funding and subsidies for specialized primary care so that individuals can feel confident that if they seek care at the beginning of the year, they will still have care at the end.

Provide funding for a case manager position that specializes in navigating medico-governmental paperwork, to ensure participants receive full benefits associated with the ODSP and OW programs.





## 4. FACILITATE MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS AND CHOICE

### Key Findings

Depression, anxiety, and mental illness were commonly reported. For many, a good day was getting out of bed.

The Canadian Mental Health Association and Fourcast provide good quality mental health support in the community.

Finding the right mental health care practitioner can be challenging. A lot of individuals felt they had drugs pushed on them, that they did not want to take.

Patients may advocate for themselves, but not always feel like they are heard.

### Recommendations

Invest in community based mental health supports that are trauma-informed and offer safe and sober spaces.

Increase overall wellness, such as by addressing the boredom commonly described by participants.

Provide support to individuals who are looking for a mental health practitioner, such as a psychiatrist. Connectivity to more than one potential practitioner would be ideal, to provide patient choice in health care providers.

Allow case workers to attend mental health practitioner appointments, if desired by the client. Familiar case workers can provide a sense of security and assist in asking questions and recording health care information / instructions.





## 5. TREAT ADDICTIONS LIKE A CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION

Key Findings	Recommendations
<p>Drug and alcohol addictions are a prevalent health issue in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County.</p>	<p>Addiction treatment should be funded as a chronic health issue, with the goal of reducing the stigma attached.</p>
<p>Many participants were active users, recovering users, and/or had a loved one with addiction issues.</p>	<p>Promote the existing addictions supports that are available to increase awareness. The Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland Drug Strategy could play a key role in promotions and stigma-reduction campaigns.</p>
<p>Recovery from addiction is difficult and requires personal strength along with social supports.</p>	<p>Introduce more group programs that community members can regularly access, without having to travel to neighbouring communities. AA and NA groups could be expanded for abstinent individuals, but additional harm-reduction support groups are also needed.</p>
<p>There are organizations that offer addictions support in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County, but participants would like more accessible / continuous group support.</p>	
<p>Methadone and suboxone use are common in the City of Kawartha Lakes. Participants expressed feeling dependent on them. Some also felt stigmatized by health care professionals and their loved ones.</p>	<p>Support groups could also be beneficial for partners and family members of individuals living with addictions.</p>
	<p>Continue to fund and expand awareness of the acu-detox program operated by Fourcast.</p>

# A C U T E   C A R E

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BASED ON THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH **HOSPITALS IN ONTARIO**

WHAT DO VULNERABLY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFY AS GOOD QUALITY CARE AND AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT?



## PROVIDING CARE

- Time spent waiting and with care provider
- Feeling welcome or unwelcome
- Communication with patients and other providers



## CONSIDERING ADDICTIONS

- Making assumptions
- Methadone stigmatization and withdrawal
- Overdose prevalence, prevention, and treatment
- Discrimination
- Rehabilitation



## 1. DIRECT FUNDING TOWARDS DECREASED WAIT-TIMES

### Key Findings

When visiting hospital emergency rooms, participants felt they waited a long time.

The care once they were seen was generally good but some felt rushed.

Participants reported the best hospital care experiences were those in which they had time with the doctors and/or nurses and felt listened to.

### Recommendations

Hospitals need more funding and resources to provide each patient good quality care that involves time with their health care provider.

## 2. ALL PATIENTS SHOULD FEEL WELCOME SEEKING CARE

### Key Findings

Some individuals felt hospital staff were frustrated with them personally, particularly for having return visits.

Individuals who had loved ones in the hospital wanted to be included in care decisions.

Being in the hospital can be an overwhelming experience. Having staff show kindness was the marker of quality care for many patients.

### Recommendations

Hospitals should employ a specialized position, such as a nurse or social worker, whose dedicated role is to meet and assist patients who have complex needs upon presentation to hospital.

A position of this kind would be beneficial in sitting with the patient, explaining the process, and coordinating with the treating practitioner.

As much as possible, family members should also be involved in care decisions.



## 3. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION, WITH PATIENT AND CARE TEAM

### Key Findings

Participants expressed frustration if they did not receive follow-up contact after attending a hospital, particularly if referred to a specialist.

Having to seek treatment multiple times for the same issue, whether at the same hospital or different ones, resulted in disjointed care.

Participants expressed mixed views on how much communication they wanted between the hospital and their primary care practitioners.

### Recommendations

Individuals who are vulnerably housed may be difficult to contact for follow-up appointments, due to a lack of permanent address and/or phone number. Upon intake, all patients should be asked about their housing status and whether they have supports. If a patient is residing at a shelter or has no fixed address, multiple points of contact should be collected. These could include their phone number, email address, case worker information, and any organizations that might be able to reach the patient if needed.

Hospitals should work with local organizations to establish discharge plans into stable housing. This planning should be initiated at intake.

It is standard practice to share information between hospitals and primary physicians. However, patient requests for privacy should be respected.



## 1. ENSURE EVERY PATIENT IS TREATED WITH RESPECT

### Key Findings

When seeking treatment at a hospital, many participants felt discriminated against for using substances, being on methadone, and/or staying at a shelter.

Participants who had been admitted to a hospital did not always receive their methadone on schedule.

Withdrawal is a painful experience. Some participants felt hospital care providers did not empathise enough and sometimes misdiagnosed other conditions, assuming withdrawal was the cause of their symptoms.

### Recommendations

Participants felt their best experiences at hospital resulted when they were listened to and treated with kindness. Hospitals should partner with local organizations to host training workshops on respectful treatment for patients with addictions issues. Key partners locally should include Ontario Addiction Treatment Centres, Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland Drug Strategy, and Fourcast.

When a patient on methadone or suboxone is seeking care or admitted to hospital, all efforts should be made to provide the patient with their correct dose on schedule, to avoid withdrawal.

All patients who present at hospital should be evaluated based on the information provided, regardless of whether they have a known history of substance use.

If a patient has a case worker in attendance, that individual should be permitted into the appointment and viewed as an active member of the care team.



## 2. ADDRESS DRUG OVERDOSES THROUGH PREVENTION

### Key Findings

Many participants knew someone who had overdosed, or had overdosed themselves while using drugs.

Overdosing was described as being a source of embarrassment and/or discrimination in health care settings.

Some participants were looking for ways they could help, like having clean needles available, offering safe places to inject, and becoming peer workers.

### Recommendations

The City of Kawartha Lakes should consider implementation of a safe injection site. A facility of this nature could serve as a hub for services and connect substance users with other health and wellness supports.

Several local organizations use a harm reduction model. Services like needle exchange and naloxone kits should receive increased funding, to expand awareness and capacity.

Organizations should be supported in hiring and training peer workers.

## 3. PLAN AND FUND LONG-TERM REHABILITATION

### Key Findings

Residential rehabilitation facilities were attractive long-term treatment options for many participants, but there were none identified in the City of Kawartha Lakes or Haliburton County.

The cost of treatment and travel were prohibitive barriers.

### Recommendations

Review and evaluate the residential rehabilitation treatment options. These options might include bringing a facility into the region through government or private operation. Alternative options include providing funding for treatment and travel outside the community.