

Executive Summary

On March 18, 2019, the Emergency Shelter Review report was presented to the Community Services Committee with recommendations towards establishing a modernized shelter system with equitable funding models and core service levels. On May 13, 2019, an Emergency Shelter Review - Update report was brought to Community Services Committee to provide next steps in transitioning the emergency shelter system in accordance with the recommendations received.

This report provides an interim update on the progress completed with the emergency shelter system transition.

Background

The City of Greater Sudbury (City) has a service manager mandate from the Province of Ontario to coordinate and/or deliver programming to reduce or prevent homelessness. The City utilizes funding from the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal level of government to provide services, in partnership with community service providers, for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, which includes homelessness prevention, emergency shelters, and housing support programs.

In 2018, an evaluation of the emergency shelter system in Greater Sudbury was completed with a goal to receive recommendations towards establishing a modernized shelter system with equitable funding models and core service levels that fit with other community services within a Housing First integrated system approach to addressing homelessness. On March 18, 2019, a report was presented to the Community Services Committee with recommendations for right sizing the shelter system with options for re-profiling based on various scenarios, implementing an equitable funding model, and developing core shelter standards with a low barrier and housing focused approach

On May 13, 2019 an Emergency Shelter Review - Update report was brought to the Community Services Committee to provide next steps in transitioning the emergency shelter system.

The report stated that, in line with the recommendations from the emergency shelter review, over the next year the intention would be to move to a well coordinated, housing focused, and outcome based shelter system. This would be accomplished by implementing:

- a diversion program which will divert people away from shelters and to other housing solutions at their first contact with the homelessness service system
- a low barrier year round youth shelter for people of any gender aged 16 to 24 years
- a low barrier year round adult shelter for people of any gender aged 25 and over at the Off The Street Shelter at 200 Larch Street
- a safe housing focused year round shelter for families at Cedar Place
- shelter standards which include housing focused, outcome based practices
- a coordinated access system with key data and outcome measures

- immediate access to housing supports based on a person's need

Diversion Program

Diversion is a formalized practice within a homeless service system intended to prevent the use of emergency shelter by providing individualized supports prior to families and individuals entering the shelter system. Diversion programs help people seeking shelter to identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connect them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

Diversion has been identified as a best practice, which can:

- reduce a person's length of homelessness
- support a person to find other safe supportive housing options without entering the shelter
- ensure shelter bed spaces are available for the people with the highest needs

On June 4 and 5, 2019, training on diversion services was provided to community partners by the Director of Training from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Full training was provided to over 50 front line and management staff from the Homelessness Network, Canadian Mental Health Association, Emergency Shelters, Ontario Works, N'swakomok Native Friendship Centre, Monarch Recovery Services, and YWCA Genevra House. An additional 25 people received an introduction to diversion services from various community partners within the health, housing, corrections, and social services sectors.

Since June, community partners have been implementing diversion services using a one on one approach with persons who are at imminent risk of homelessness.

Men's Emergency Shelter Program

On March 9, 2019, the Salvation Army provided notice to the City that they would be discontinuing the operation of the Men's Emergency Shelter Program effective May 10, 2019, as a result of a number of challenges they were experiencing in relation to the aging facility, operating costs, staffing issues, and financial constraints.

In response, the City's Social Services Division approached other community service providers, resulting in the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) agreeing to work with staff to develop a temporary solution. On September 4, 2019 CMHA will open a temporary low barrier shelter at 146 Larch Street, Sudbury. This program will provide services for up to 20 individuals aged 18 and older who identify as male, and to individuals who identify without a gender (non-binary), who feel comfortable staying in a men's shelter. The program will be open nightly from 10:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m., and will offer a safe environment, warm cots for sleeping, light snacks, and refreshments. This program will remain open until November 1, 2019 when the Low Barrier Shelter Program will re-open at 200 Larch Street.

Between May 10 and September 4, 2019, CMHA, in collaboration with other community partners, have been providing diversion and outreach services to men experiencing homelessness.

Low Barrier Adult Emergency Shelter Program

On November 1, 2019, the CMHA is planning to reopen the Off the Street Low Barrier Shelter at its new permanent location at 200 Larch Street. In line with the shelter review recommendations, the Off the Street Low Barrier Shelter will move to a year round model of operation and will provide a low barrier, housing focused approach to adults of all genders. An amended purchase of service agreement utilizing the funding model recommended through the shelter review will be completed with CMHA to consolidate this change.

Youth Emergency Shelter Program

Following the release of the emergency shelter review recommendations, L'Association des jeunes de la rue (AJR) has advised the City that they intend to discontinue the Youth Emergency Shelter Program effective September 1, 2019, as they have decided to concentrate on prevention and support programs. The Youth Emergency Shelter Program provides 16 beds for all gender youth aged 16 to 19 years and has been operating at approximately 30% capacity.

AJR has made arrangements to transfer its Board and Foyer Notre Dame facility to Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury (CSC) for continued operation of homelessness services, including the Community Outreach Program and Extreme Cold Weather Alert services. AJR is willing to continue to provide up to five emergency shelter beds for youth aged 16 and 17 from September 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 in order to provide time for the City to secure another Youth Emergency Shelter Program.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) will be issued to seek input from community partners involved in the provision of services to youth. Following that, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be prepared to seek a service provider to operate a 16 bed Low Barrier Emergency Shelter Program for all gender youth aged 16 to 24 years. In preparation for the EOI, Social Services and community partners have toured two well-functioning low barrier youth shelters in Peel and York Region, and have connected with other youth services within Sudbury to look at partnership opportunities.

Coordinated Access System and Core Shelter Standards

The development of a Coordinated Access System within the homelessness serving system is a requirement of the Federal Reaching Home Funding agreement. Through additional Community Capacity funding provided, a Data Analysis Administrator will start in August 2019 to support this coordination including the onboarding of HIFIS 4.0 and the gathering of key data points and outcome measures across the community partners.

Core shelter standards are under development and will include diversion requirements, quality data collection, and key outcome and performance management.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to work with community partners to transition the emergency shelter system and a report will be brought back in early 2020.

Shelter Review and Recommendation Report presented at the Community Services Committee meeting on March 18, 2019

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&lang=en&id=1351&itemid=15924>

Emergency Shelter Review – Update report presented at the Community Services Committee meeting on May 13, 2019

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&lang=en&id=1353&itemid=16699>