

BACKGROUND

A letter was received in February 2017 from Health Sciences North (HSN) requesting the City of Greater Sudbury's support to address a longstanding system gap regarding the hospital's inability to discharge patients due to the absence of housing arrangements. Within the second quarter of 2016, it was estimated that 8.9% of HSN's mental health inpatients were classified as being homeless at the time of admission. This rate exceeds what is experienced in other mental health inpatient settings within the North East LHIN (6.8%) and at peer hospitals (5.8%).

A meeting was held to review the potential of developing a housing strategy in partnership with the City of Greater Sudbury Housing Services and Canadian Mental Health Association Sudbury-Manitoulin. The focus was facilitating community discharges of stabilized mental health patients currently in hospital. It was determined that there was an opportunity to access social housing stock to assist with the increasing mental health housing shortage and create a flow within the health care system by providing housing to mental health patients who remain in hospital due to the absence of available housing.

The Housing Services Act, 2011, Section 47 provides Housing Services the opportunity to offer Urgent Status on the centralized housing wait list. All applicants seeking rent-geared-to-income assistance must meet the provincial social housing program eligibility requirements in order to qualify for placement on the centralized wait list. In order to qualify for Urgent status, an applicant would be required to meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Persons who are living on the street (no shelter - absolute homelessness and accessing emergency homelessness services); or
2. Persons living in substandard housing which has been condemned by the municipality, for example: property standards violations which require that the unit be vacated in order to complete the work, confirmed by a Court Order or an Order of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal; or
3. Persons using the emergency shelter system as their primary residence, and accessing emergency homelessness services; or
4. Persons whose homes have been destroyed by fire or natural disaster; or
5. Persons awaiting release from hospital who cannot return to their former place of residence and will not be released until suitable housing is found; or
6. Households whose children are at risk of apprehension or will not be returned by child protection agencies due to the household not having adequate housing and the lack of adequate housing is the only protection issue outstanding.

Housing Services assesses eligibility for Urgent Status at the request of the applicant and this process aligns with the request to partner with HSN. If an applicant is eligible for Urgent Status, they take priority on the waitlist under the provincial priority of victims of domestic violence but before the regular chronological wait list.

This collaborative model is supported by a coordinated care approach facilitated by the Health Science North's Health Links team in partnership with community service providers. This approach ensures that a person-centred transition plan would be in place, providing all tenants with the supports they require to live independently.

A Rent Supplement Tripartite Memorandum of Agreement was developed and executed by the three main partners, Health Sciences North, Greater Sudbury Housing Corporation (GSHC), and Housing Services on October 24, 2017. Each partner has a clear role to play in the model and they are as follows:

- HSN assists the client with completing the application for subsidy and ensuring that appropriate supports are in place upon discharge;
- GSHC is the landlord; and Housing Services is providing a rent supplement subsidy to the eligible client. It was determined that three one bedroom units would be made available in a social housing project owned by GSHC. If the model proved to be successful, and additional rent supplement funding was available, additional units could be added to the agreement.
- Housing Service's eligibility criteria for subsidized housing and a client referral protocol were included in the memorandum of agreement.

As of January 1, 2018, two of the three units have been filled with the third unit to be filled effective March 1, 2018.

NEXT STEPS

HSN and GSHC are monitoring the tenancies to ensure that the clients have the appropriate support services in place.

REFERENCES

Housing Services Act, 2011, Section 47,
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06/v1#BK61>