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The Regional Municipality of Durham

Minutes

Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness (DACH)

Tuesday March 26, 2024

A regular meeting of the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness was held on Tuesday March 26, 2024, via Microsoft Teams at 1:00 PM

Attendance:

Present:

- Alex Cheng, Blue Door
- Amanda Freer, Blue Door
- Ashley McDonald, Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
- Atiya Siddiquei, Muslim Welfare Home
- Caitlin Rae, Back Door Mission
- Christina Barrow, John Howard Society Durham
- Clarence Keesman, The Refuge
- Elizabeth Smart, YMCA Durham
- Geralda Bray, John Howard Society of Durham Region
- Heather McMillan, Christian Faith Outreach Centre
- Hermia Corbette, Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
- Jennifer Garton, Durham Mental Health Services, Lakeridge Health
- Jessica Barbuto, North House
- Jessica Hanson, United Way Durham Region
- Jessica Robinson, Community Living Durham North
- John Henry, Regional Chair
- Julie Chartier, BGC Durham
- Ian Griffiths, VHA Home HealthCare
- Laurie Hudson, Salvation Army
- Margaret Eskins, DARS
- Marla Walters, Christian Faith Outreach Centre
- Maurice Brenner, Councillor, City of Pickering
- Mona Emond, North House
- Nathan Gardner, Back Door Mission
- Patricia Liang, Community Development Council of Durham (CDCD)
- Patricia Nokes, Regional Chairs Office
- Sandra McCormack, The Denise House

- Shannon Jackson, Durham Youth Services
- Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Region of Durham
- Tracey Hardinge, Canadian Mental Health Association Durham (CMHA)
- Tracey McGarry, The Participation House Project Durham Region

Staff Present:

- Amanda Bongard
- Ashley Smith
- Erin Waugh
- Erin Valant
- Jessica Morgan
- Jocelyn Siciliano
- John Kimmerly
- Kendall Stoiner
- Lisa McIntosh
- Meaghan Middleton

1. Welcome and Attendance & Land Acknowledgement

- Record name and organization in the chat

2. Homelessness Systems Update

- 2024-2025 funding will be available once the budget is approved by Council. New funding agreements will be created and reviewed prior to being executed.
- Would like to thank everyone for the efforts to make winter warming a success this year and will be wrapping up March 31st.
 - Outreach team has been involved to assist with transport and connecting patrons to shelters.
 - Coordinated access between centres has been valuable.

3. Outreach Team

- Community engagement team consisting of 12 staff who have been actively supporting the region for two months, available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day including holidays.
- Access point for the By-Name list.
- Working with community partners, concerned citizens as well Durham Region Transit to connect with homeless individuals, build rapport and assist with connecting them to supports in the community.
- As of March 20th, the team has engaged with 2,405 individuals, located 111 encampments, attended 20 calls from Durham Region Transit and 144 interactions at bus stops. As of March 2nd, 75 community wellness checks have been done and since March 18th, 11 group interactions with 61 people.
- Home office will be located at 1635 Dundas St. To streamline coordinated access to housing and homelessness supports you can contact by email homelesshelp@durham.ca or by phone at 905-666-6239 ext. 5510. Communications will be triaged.

4. Human Trafficking and Transitional Support Program Overview

- Divisional Human Trafficking Quick Response Team
 - Human Trafficking was added to the Homelessness Portfolio in early 2024 as precariously housed or homeless individuals, particularly youth aged, are the demographic most at risk of sexual exploitation.
 - Team is comprised of community-based Case Coordinators who support Survivors of Human Trafficking by administering Ontario Works Assistance, ensuring safety in crisis situations, and completing tasks such as community advocacy, medical/mental health support, community integration, financial stability, and housing supports.
 - The Team works closely with Durham Regional Police Service and Victim Services, meeting monthly with the Victim Services Human Trafficking Team and on a day-to-day basis, as well as supporting DRPS Drop In Initiative.
 - Both VS and DRPS have provided feedback that the recent change to this small divisional team has led to greater collaboration with both organizations, and stronger wrap around supports for survivors.
 - In 2023 there was a monthly average of 4.2 survivor referrals between OW and VSDR HT Teams.

- VAW Shelter Liaison
 - VAW Case Coordinator Liaison works with individuals and their children who are residing in VAW shelters.
 - Since February 2024, the Liaison has been a part of the support team who have assisted with 5 transitions from shelter to being housed.

- Safety Network Durham Team
 - Team of Ontario Works Case Coordinators who provide service during every Monday and Thursday Safety Network Drop In date.
 - Ontario Works supports are integrated with community Intimate Partner Violence supports to streamline access to services for survivors and their children.

- Transitional Support
 - Support individuals on the BNL with housing readiness through Intensive Case Management and maintaining housing through Housing Retention Case Management.

- Community Hub Teams
 - Administer Ontario Works from the Back Door Mission - each Case Coordinator has a caseload of individuals with No Fixed Address.
 - Starting in April 2024, a Case Coordinator will have a caseload of individuals with No Fixed Address in Ajax/Pickering working out of the Ajax Hub and DARS to provide service to individuals in the community.

5. Housing Stability Program Update

- The Housing Stability Program will transition to the Region of Durham on April 1st.
- The program will continue to assist with rental arrears, heat/utility arrears, last month's rent deposit and moving costs.
- Applications can be completed online [Housing Supports - Region of Durham](#) or by calling the Coordinated Intake and Eligibility Unit at Social Services at 905-666-6239 ext. 1803. Questions or concerns can be sent by email to HousingStabilityProgram@durham.ca.
- Applications will be reviewed within 2 business days and the client will be contacted by the Program Assistant.
- Consent can be signed digitally with an option of a wet signature if required.
- Policy changes include:
 - Accommodation costs can be 90% of total income (previously 80%)
 - No longer required to be covered by Landlord Tenant Act.
 - Application period will move from 30 days to 10 days.
 - Asset limit has decreased.

6. 1635 Dundas St East Opening

- Patrons have been slowly transitioned into the shelter with 13 rooms available to house 45 individuals.
- Priority access has been given to Whitby residents who have been accessing the winter warming centre.
- Space for the public will open on Monday April 1st.
- Meetings have been held monthly with CFOC and the community liaison group.
- Wrap around services will be provided on site with the assistance of community partners and the Outreach Team.

7. DARS Pickering Transitional Housing

- Received a \$50,000 grant from Pickering Casino for Affordable Transitional Housing project which will house 6-7 individuals on 5 acres of agricultural land.
- Super intendant will be moving onto property and will live there 24/7 to mitigate any issues.
- Residence will be responsible for caring for livestock including chickens, goats, a rescue pig and a few ducks as well as growing crops to supplement the food budget, sell at a market and donate to local food banks.
- Durham College Architecture professor and students have been offering suggestions on how to refurbish the barn, possibly acting as a shell for an additional 3 tiny homes on the property.
- A new sewing machine and free lessons has been donated to teach individuals how to mend their own clothes.
- Expected to open on World Homeless Day, October 10th. Details to follow.

8. The Refuge Affordable Housing Building

[The Refuge – Working with homeless and street youth since 1999 \(refugeoutreach.com\)](http://refugeoutreach.com)

- Permanent affordable housing for youth experiencing homelessness. The building will include 22 studio apartments and 4 accessible units. Units are 150-200 sq feet and include a kitchen and bathroom with shower. Building also has a gym and 4 offices available for rent to youth focused organizations.
- Cost of housing will be the housing benefit if receiving social assistance (Ontario Works - \$400/month, Ontario Disability Support Program - \$500/month). A full-time housing worker will be on site.
- Opening Fall of 2024. Tours are currently available.

9. Service Provider Updates

- Denise House to open a new 33 bed shelter and support services facility including on-site pet accommodations in August/September 2024.

10. Other Items

- Welcome to Alex and Amanda from Blue Door Support Services, service operator selected for the Beaverton Transitional Supportive Housing residence.
- Beaverton Transitional Supportive Housing is targeting occupancy for summer 2024.
- GAP Committee held a screening of “Us & Them” on March 21st. To learn more please visit <https://mindfuelfilms.ca/films/us-and-them>.
- Alan Robbins announced his retirement as Director of Housing Services for the Region of Durham.

11. Next Meeting – Tuesday May 28th, 2024, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm