

Living Space overview

For a period of 18 months from October 10, 2017 to March 31, 2019, CMHACT partnered with 11 community support organizations to develop a strategic partnership to address and end homelessness in Timmins. This was to be achieved through the creation of a permanent centralized hub for serving the homeless and at-risk community as well as the creation of centralized model for service re-alignment. Termed Living Space, this initiative aimed to make services and supports readily available to people at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness in our community. This initiative did not want to simply get people off the streets, but rather, provide a comprehensive array of supports that assist people in achieving longer term stability. By providing housing and support in a patron-centred environment, Living Space engaged patrons where they are at, fostering an atmosphere of trust where opportunities for change can be discovered.

Best practice suggests that pro-active, community-based interventions and outreach services are more likely to break the cycle of homelessness, and delivery of coordinated services from different providers in a central, non-intimidating location facilitates collaboration, communication and results in better client service outcomes. Consequently, in July 2017, a building was purchased. This property at 27 Cedar St. North was to become the central access point for the homeless service system in our community. A sustainable model of service re-alignment which best supports those patrons experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. This has promoted greater client access to services and supports by offering coordinated inter-agency services from a single, central facility.

Funding from HPS was instrumental for the set up of the building as well as supporting the opening of the shelter and day services during the first few months of operation. The building was well suited to the aims of the project and incorporated three floors. This set-up would provide several support options for patrons. This includes emergency /crash shelter, transitional housing, case management -housing outreach.

- 1) Overnight crash shelter. The ground floor serves as an emergency low-barrier shelter. Living Space welcomes all people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, regardless of ethnicity, culture, or

orientation. *It* also operates from a low barrier perspective. Meeting people where they are at. To be successful in breaking the cycles of chronic homelessness, instability and substance use, support is provided within this high tolerance environment. Being a low-barrier shelter allows *people to attend as they are (intoxicated, ill) to access a safe, warm place with no other option.* 20 -25 people can access the shelter per evening. The shelter opened its doors in January 26th 2018. While LS does not promote the possession of drugs, alcohol, paraphernalia, or weapons on site, staff does not ask patrons to be abstinent, only that they do not use in the building. Hours of operation were limited to 830 pm to 730 am for the first 12 months requiring patrons to 'leave' for the day; however, over the last six months, LS has been able to support remaining open ostensibly 24 hrs ,7 days a week with support from staff, volunteers as well as community partners.

- 2) Transition rooms: 13 Temporary short term (ie. 3-6 months) residential rooms for patrons transitioning from abject homelessness /crises to long term permanent housing. Patrons are offered housing support from Aboriginal housing services to assist with locating and maintaining long term permanent housing. LS has partnered with the Bail Program through the ministry of the Attorney General to support four rooms / individuals at LS who are released through the local courts but require surety like support in a residential setting.
- 3) A multi-use space / floor designed in an open-concept environ. The spaces are furnished and accessible for private consultation for service providers, volunteer organizations and patrons. The space also includes a comfortable lounge area for patrons, two private client consultation rooms, and a medical assessment room for visiting health care professionals. Presently both Aboriginal housing services and the Cochrane district Social services Planning Council are permanently renting space on the floor. The provision of primary care services through living space is being planned out with CMHA and Misiway health services. Both agencies carry Primary care services and plans are being outlined to support clients utilizing living space. It is anticipated that primary care will be ready to service clients as of September 2019. Presently EMS and our local Health unit are providing Harm reduction services in that space.

At the outset of the project it was proposed that CMHACT would carry the mantle of lead agency for the facility. CMHACT co-partnered with DSAAB regarding the renovations and set up of the building. CMHACT also supervised

the development and supervision of the overnight shelter portion and its staff. However, as discussions with the LS board continued it became clear that incorporation of Living Space would better serve the goals and objectives and ensure greater sustainability. As of April 2019, Living Space has become fully incorporated. It now has its own executive director and is independent of any agency re: its day to day operations. This will ensure a continued focus on addressing the issues of homelessness.

Activities and Outcomes:

In addition to the creation of the LS building itself, several other objectives were identified to be addressed within the timeframes outlined in the HPS funding agreement.

These were:

- The creation of an overnight shelter for the Timmins area. No such shelter existed before Living Space

- Reduce barriers to accessing homelessness supports by establishing the CHAT Hub partnership network to re-align multi-sector service provision in a centralized and coordinated way

- Reduce service and administrative redundancy in the region by having partners share a common vision re homelessness and subsequently coordinate their program offerings and share the administrative/overhead burden

- Improve the relevance and accessibility of data on homeless and at-risk populations in Timmins through the collection of up-to-date data and by creating a centralized portal for aggregating and sharing data and resources across partners

- Use the lessons learned from the CHAT pilot / Living Space to create a data collection and service re-alignment model that can be sustained by partners after the funding period and replicated in other communities

- Formalize partnership agreements and potentially

ongoing financial commitments from partner organizations

-Increase awareness around homelessness among primary and secondary community stakeholders

To meet these objectives the committee and LS staff and volunteers facilitated the following:

- A CHAT Hub Coordinator was brought on board at the onset of the initiative and remained in place until November of 2018. They were responsible for the development of several new strategic partnerships, and the coordination of partner services. The coordinator oversaw the completion of renos as well the development of shelter services; including hiring and training of staff, shelter policies and procedures and the commencement of daytime outreach services. The new ED and coordinators for Living Space have continued to build on those initial items.
- The CHAT Steering Committee evolved into the Living Space steering Committee/ Board. Committee. Terms of reference were developed along with MOUS for all participating board agencies.
- Equipment and furnishings necessary to create a welcoming and functional environment for all three floors was purchased and are in place to support the needs of both clients and CHAT Hub service providers.
- A coordinated data collection/sharing process currently remains in place and it is anticipated that a comprehensive system such as HiFIS will be place by September of 2019. This will allow not only for collection of data locally but to compare feedback on a larger scale.
- A comprehensive outreach/promotional strategy including online and social media promotions was undertaken, a website and other relevant social media options were

developed for Living Space ie Facebook were created and have been instrumental in increasing awareness of community outreach activities

- Ls has been collecting data regarding usage of services since opening in January 2019. This has included aggregating client data to monitor the number of clients accessing services, their background story, and the types of services they've accessed, maintained, refused or dropped.
- Ls has also performed surveys with clients to identify their needs and gather initial feedback on what's provided at LS, including gaps in services and ways to enhance existing supports. This has been built in to the
- A robust volunteer program has been created. This has assisted with the role of daytime support as well the shelter.
- Volunteers and Ls staff have been trained on both the Period Prevalence and Point in Time methodologies. Ls has partnered with Laurentian University Partnered with the enumeration process in July of 2018.
- A Post Project funding transition plan was undertaken with incorporation to negotiate sustainability. A strat plan has been developed to assist with this issue. moving forward.
- Disseminate findings at the local, regional and national levels through various online and promotional activities listed in the dissemination section
- LS Continues continues to formalize partnership agreements with new service delivery partnerships. Eg.

City of Timmins: An application is being prepared for support with exterior renovations as part of Living Space's "Good Neighbour Policy". The goal is to establish and maintain a welcoming outdoor environment at Living Space to curb negative behaviours and improve relations with our neighbours.

Communication is on-going regarding developing a strong partnership between Living Space and Nishnawbe Aski Nation. A community meeting is being organized to further explore opportunities to coordinate resources.

Service usage

2018	Ind contacts	Overnight stays	Ind. Supported day	
Apr	949	243	55	
May	1213	235	52	
June	1478	287	76	
July	1624	320	64	
August	1040	196	65	
Sept	1551	293	72	
Oct	1485	293	62	
November	1191	279	53	
December	1238	311	55	
totals	11769	2457	574	

2019	Ind. Contacts	Overnight stays	#Ind supported-Day		
Jan	1270	431	48		
Feb	977	250	39		
Mar	986	273	46		
April	1061	236	57		
totals	4294	1190	192		