



Committee Minutes

Mental Health and Addictions Task Force

April 19, 2022 – 9:30 AM

The Mental Health and Addictions Task Force met on the above date through electronic means with the following members participating:

Present: Councillors Carleton, Hutchinson, O'Leary, Burley, Mackey, Keaveney, Clumpus and Warden Hicks; Phil Dodd, Clark MacFarlane, Naomi Vodden, Dr. Arra and Sandra McLay-Winters

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Heather Morrison, Clerk; Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services; Kevin McNab, Director of Paramedic Services; Rob Hatten, Communications Manager and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator

Alison Govier, Coordinator - Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy was also in attendance. Dr. Zayed was also in attendance from the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

Call to Order

Chair O'Leary called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations.

Delegations

Francesca Dobbyn, Executive Director, United Way Bruce Grey

Francesca Dobbyn addressed the Task Force on behalf of the United Way Bruce Grey, the Salvation Army, and OSHaRE. Salvation Army locations include Hanover, Owen Sound, Port Elgin and Wiarton. Each of these organizations are autonomous with programs varying from location to location.

It was noted that the Salvation Army offers food bank services, income tax clinics, Christmas assistance, emergency relief in food, clothing and household furnishings.

OSHaRE offers meals to those who request one. Typically there would be rotating seating for 150 however during the pandemic, operations have shifted to provide take out lunch and supper on weekdays and bagged lunch on Saturday. OSHaRE also provided over 12,000 meals for people without housing that were sheltered in motels during parts of the pandemic and to those isolating because of COVID-19 outbreaks. There has been incredible demand for food in the community, especially during the pandemic.

She spoke to the difficulty in accessing services without a formal diagnosis and the importance of preventing episodic mental illness from becoming chronic. It is important to be able to get timely access to primary care.

Other issues that exist include lack of adult dental care programs, lack of non-prescription pain management and caregiver burnout / stress.

Barriers that need to be addressed include referrals to non-OHIP covered services to get faster treatment, extreme poverty, connectivity, access to safe affordable housing, transportation and overcoming the lack of centralized case management.

Barriers to supporting these requests include fear in the community, siloed and restricted funding, needs that exceed the funds available, dependence upon fundraising to meet the needs, too much focus on emergency needs rather than prevention, and a distrust of the autonomy of those seeking supports. Further, the complexity of needs is growing.

Solutions include a universal basic income, more in-community supports and centralized case management

Living in a perpetual crisis mode presents many obstacles. It was stressed that establishing trust is an important factor in getting someone to say yes to making a change.

Discussion occurred on funding that does not allow for flexibility to best meet the needs. It is a barrier and lobbying at higher levels could assist in loosening restrictions on designated funding which tie the hands of organizations to do what they feel is best.

Grey County could assist with housing. There is a lack of short term housing available for people while they look for long term housing.

Jill Umbach – Poverty Task Force

Jill Umbach then addressed the task force. She noted that the Poverty Task Force consists of over 52 partners and coordinates and communicates to address food security, housing, income and employment, among others. The Poverty Task Force also identifies gaps in services and inequities.

She then spoke to the harm reduction approach. They support evidence informed interventions that prevent fatal drug poisoning, increased harm reduction outreach

services to support community food and housing programs on the frontlines, and the integration of indigenous harm reduction principles and practices.

Discussion occurred on harm reduction and the notion that there is comfort with the principles for those directed involved in the sector. There is more discomfort with these principles among the general public and there is a need to break through that in order to address the problem.

The underlying premise of harm reduction is that someone's use shouldn't affect their access to services. It is important to create safe spaces for people who may be using drugs and for staff as well. This has been difficult during the pandemic. Agencies, governments, boards, etc. are all encouraged to provide harm reduction training to staff.

There was an inquiry regarding the data that exists on the linkage between mental health and addictions. It was noted that mental health does predispose a person to substance use. There is data on this subject and statistics were shared. It is important to look at the data before interventions. Using evidence informed practices is possible too if there is no access to local data.

The Task Force recessed, then reconvened.

Tanya Roberts – Community Safety and Well Being Plan

Councillor Clumpus left the meeting at this time.

Tanya Roberts provided an overview of the Community Safety and Well Being Plan. It is legislated under the Police Services Act and the plan was approved as of July 2021 by both Bruce and Grey Counties. The goal is to get from emergency responses to preventative strategies and reduce crime through social development.

Key goals of implementing the community safety and well-being plan include: greater access to services, alignment on key safety and well-being issues, and enhanced evidence based decision making and systems planning.

She then shared some statistics, noting that crime rates are showing a downward trend, however social disorder calls have been increasing.

Ms. Roberts then overviewed the governance model and roles and responsibilities.

There are five priority areas on the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Action Tables: addictions and substance use, poverty and income, housing and homelessness, mental health, and crime prevention.

The Situation Table for Acute Risk (STAR) meets weekly and includes various organizations where a response to a situation is initiated within 48 hours. It was noted that data is collected about local priorities and evolving trends to help inform the

community safety and well-being plan process.

She then identified gaps that emerged from the situations. Trends show that a gap may exist in Grey Bruce regarding a support model for people with complex overlapping risk factors (mental health, addictions, cognitive/developmental challenges, and anti-social/criminal behaviour).

Questions and comments were addressed around data, population data, varying needs around housing and the need to explore housing options with people. Matching people to the right type of housing is critical. Further work needs to be done to examine what attracts someone to a space where they establish trust and then move forward to get help and access services.

It was noted that there could be benefit in having a presentation from the Centre for Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction, part of Ontario Health.

Correspondence

Media Release – Funding for Grey Bruce Health Services through the Addictions Recovery Fund

Warden Hicks left the meeting at this time.

MHA08-22 Moved by: Councillor Mackey Seconded by: Councillor Hutchinson

That the correspondence from MPP Bill Walker regarding funding for Grey Bruce Health Services through the Addictions Recovery Fund, be received for information.

Carried

Other Business

An update will be provided at a future meeting on opioid response from Public Health.

Naomi Vodden left the meeting at this time.

MHA09-22 Moved by: Councillor Mackey Seconded by: Councillor Carleton

Whereas mental health challenges can occur early in life, with children often not having the understanding about what mental health is, supports available, and how to manage mental health in their daily lives; and

Whereas building resilience early in life is an important aspect of promoting mental well-being; and

Whereas there is strong evidence of the importance of focused education on mental health to target children to build resilience at this age group including identification, prevention, intervention and supports;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the Mental Health and Addiction Task Force, on behalf of Grey County Council request that the Minister of Education implement a mental health education curriculum beginning in primary school to provide children with the necessary tools to support ongoing resilience and mental wellness; and

That this resolution be forwarded to all Grey County municipalities for support; and

That, due to the timing of the upcoming provincial election, this resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Education, and copied to the Minister of Mental Health and MPP's Bill Walker and Jim Wilson ahead of Council approval in accordance with Section 25.6 (b) of the County's Procedural By-law.

Carried

Next Meeting Dates

May 17, 2022 at 1:00 PM.

On motion by Councillors Burley and Hutchinson, the meeting adjourned at 12:16 pm.

Brian O'Leary, Chair