

Kent House collaboration brings recovery journey home *Resources match needs of individuals who have mental health challenges*

Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS) and Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores) are collaborating to ensure people with mental health challenges can continue their recovery journey in the community with the high level of support they need.

“We’re here to provide the right care in the right place at the right time and by working together both organizations can fulfill that mandate,” says Ontario Shores executive vice-president of clinical services Sheila Neuburger. “When you work separately in silos it’s much harder to achieve, so it’s really for the benefit of the client.”

DMHS executive director Rob Adams says the new partnership means people can move from hospital into the community with the high level of support they need, ultimately enhancing their quality of life.

“You’re coming out of a hospital setting to something that really is your own home, and having the ability to experience living in the community, making your own decisions, directing your own care, directing your own life — it’s about quality for someone’s life.”

Supported with funding from the Central East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), the partnership involves converting DMHS’ low-support housing location known as Kent House to a high-support residence for Ontario Shores’ clients. They are alternative level of care clients facing barriers to being discharged because traditional supportive housing has not been able to meet their more complex needs.

This all changes with Kent House.

The home, located in Whitby, will be renovated and staffed around the clock by a mix of residential counsellors and personal support workers who have completed mental health training. Slated to open in April, Kent House will welcome four individuals who are currently being chosen.

“These are high-needs hospital patients who haven’t been able to move historically because the services don’t match them in the community,” Adams says. “The beauty of this partnership is that we match the resources to meet the needs of the individuals.”

Neuburger says Ontario Shores' clinical teams will work with Kent House staff to support residents on the continuation of their recovery journey. This could mean attending an out-patient clinic or group sessions. Living in a residential setting in the community is conducive to helping people reach their maximum potential.

"We all want to live at home," Neuburger says. "People recover best at home, and their recovery continues because they're involved in meal preparation and other activities of daily living in a better way."

The vision is that Kent House residents will continue to recover and be able to move on to something that is more independent within a year to 18 months. This, in turn, could allow others to move in to Kent House, which then frees up beds at Ontario Shores to provide assessment and/or treatment services to other people.

Neuburger points out that Kent House builds on a similar collaboration between Ontario Shores and DMHS to provide a home for forensic clients. "We have other partnerships but what I think you learn is that you have to plan appropriately, and both organizations have to have very specific accountabilities and live up to those accountabilities. You continue to monitor and evaluate and make sure it's working and correct what's not working. You have to understand what the issues might be and then mitigate them."

Kent House will help to provide more high-support housing in the area, and it represents a creative use of existing services that is helping to put client needs first.

"We need a lot more housing and we need a lot more creative partnerships around housing in the Central East LHIN area," Neuburger says. "So I think it's a good model; it certainly is a cost-effective model because it is less costly to have someone in a home and have them well supported than it is to be in hospital for lengthy periods of time.

"Innovative housing models done in partnerships or collaborations are going to be the wave of the future, and the LHIN has been quite supportive of that."

Adams is excited by the potential to grow partnership opportunities with Ontario Shores and collaborate on a bigger scale to co-ordinate admission to all 46 of DMHS' high-support beds.

"It's really looking at the system of admission and discharge from hospital to community beds . . . and better co-ordinated planning from the hospital involving a community partner," Adams says. "This is two partners working really well together and really looking at the best interest of the client and putting the client experience first."

The Central East LHIN is currently implementing its third [Integrated Health Service Plan \(IHSP\)](#), setting out a shared goal for the local health care system to help Central East LHIN residents spend more time in their homes and their communities.

Mental health and/or substance abuse issues can be very disruptive to individual and family lives. Together with Ontario Shores, Durham Mental Health Services and many other dedicated and innovative health service providers, clinicians and people with lived experience from across Scarborough, Durham Region and the North East, the LHIN is actively working on the [“Community First – Mental Health and Addictions Aim”](#).

For more information on the LHIN’s Mental Health and Addictions Strategy – Implementation Approach, please visit the Central East LHIN website – www.centraleastlhin.on.ca – and click on [“Resource Documents – Planning.”](#)

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