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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Health and Social Services Committee
From: Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2020-SS-12
Date: September 10, 2020

Subject:

Durham's homelessness support system update and next steps

Recommendation:

That the Health and Social Services Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the transformation of Durham's homelessness support system.

2. Background

2.1 At Home in Durham, the Durham Housing Plan 2014-2024, commits to reducing chronic homelessness to zero over the next five-years. Work is being done to transform Durham's homelessness support system to a transparent, standardized and needs-based approach that can track our progress towards achieving this goal.

2.2 The Region of Durham was invited to join the Built for Zero Canada (BFZ-C) campaign in July 2019. The Region was one of the nine communities selected from a pool of 16 candidates.

2.3 The BFZ-C campaign is led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH). It is a Canada-wide change effort that helps a core group of leading communities work towards ending chronic homelessness.

- a. The Region is developing a robust Coordinated Access System that meets CAEH quality standards. Once the Coordinated Access System is fully operationalized, the Region will measure month-over-month reductions in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in our community.
- 2.4 Coordinated Access is a requirement under Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy funding. All Reaching Home designated communities, including Durham Region, are required to implement Coordinated Access by March 31, 2022.
 - 2.5 To advance this work, a coordinated access working group has been created under the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness (DACH).

3. By-Name List

- 3.1 The first milestone for Durham's Coordinated Access System is to operationalize our By-Name List (BNL). A BNL is a real-time list of all people experiencing homelessness in Durham and includes specific data points to support prioritization and program matching. Knowing the people experiencing homelessness by name and prioritizing the most vulnerable is essential to ending homelessness in Durham. For more information about By-Name Lists, see Attachment #1.
- 3.2 Durham achieved an 11/11 on our BNL Scorecard in June 2020. This means that Durham has implemented the steps needed to effectively operate our By-Name List. The next step is to track our data for three months, from July to October, to ensure it is reliable and accurate.
 - a. After three months, Built for Zero will set Durham's baseline for chronic homelessness. We will then start tracking monthly trends against our baseline to measure progress towards ending chronic homelessness.
- 3.3 The first month of By-Name List data tracking was July. The data shows that there are 28 active chronically homeless people on Durham's By-Name List. Of the 28, 6 are unsheltered:
 - a. Sixteen are adults
 - b. Nine are youth
 - c. Three are seniors
 - d. The longest length of time homeless is two years
- 3.4 Durham will progress to the Reduce to Zero cohort once the chronic homelessness baseline has been set. The Reduce to Zero cohort tracks monthly reductions in chronic homelessness using a Coordinated Access System.



Figure 1: Built for Zero Canada Cohorts

4. Coordinated Access System

- 4.1 Coordinated Access is a process that helps people experiencing homelessness get help in a coordinated, standardized way. In a Coordinated Access System, service providers use a shared information system and work together to triage, assess and prioritize people consistently to get supports.
- The 'Durham Region's Coordinated Access System' overview (see Attachment #2) provides more information about Durham Region's Coordinated Access System.
 - The alternative to Coordinated Access is to continue to provide services on a first-come-first-served basis. This model allocates resources to those who can better navigate the support system, not those who need the services the most.
- 4.2 There are three key steps to Coordinated Access:
- Directing people experiencing homelessness to Community Access Points to be added to the By-Name List.
 - There is an established process for intake onto the By-Name List in Durham through five Community Access Points.
 - Using a common assessment tool and transparent prioritization criteria to triage people for available housing supports.

- The 'Prioritization of Access' attachment provides more information on Durham's priorities (see Attachment #3).
- c. A centrally managed referral process for housing supports.
- All housing-focused programs receiving homelessness funding are participating in Durham's Coordinated Access System and fill vacancies directly from the By-Name List.
- 4.3 The Region has already begun to operationalize its Coordinated Access System. The 'Coordinated Access Process Map' (see Attachment #4) provides an overview of how Coordinated Access is working in Durham.
- a. Youth service providers successfully housed 13 of the 37 youth on the BNL within two weeks of finalizing the Community Priorities for youth.
- b. From January to June 2020, 57 chronically homeless people were housed.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Region of Durham is committed to reducing chronic homelessness to zero over the next five years. To achieve this goal, the homelessness support system is focusing on:
- Supporting people on the By-Name List who are actively homeless by triaging their needs in a more coordinated way.
 - Operating a Coordinated Access System to improve the outflow of our homelessness system to housing opportunities.
- 5.2 The Region of Durham is one of the core communities supported by the Built for Zero Canada campaign, led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), to work towards ending chronic homelessness.
- 5.3 The first step in this process is to operationalize the By-Name List and develop a Coordinated Access System (CAS) that meets CAEH quality standards. Once the CAS is operationalized, the Region will be able to measure month-over-month reductions in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in Durham.

6. Attachments

Attachment #1: What is a By-Name List?

Attachment #2: Durham Region's Coordinated Access System

Attachment #3: Coordinated Access Process Map

Attachment #4: Prioritization of Access

Respectfully submitted,

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services

Recommended for Presentation to
Committee

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