
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

New housing model supports people with complex challenges

VICTORIA – A first-of-its-kind complex-care housing program will soon be available for British Columbia’s most vulnerable people who need a level of support that goes beyond the current housing model.

Complex-care housing is a groundbreaking approach to address the needs of people who have overlapping mental-health challenges, substance-use issues, trauma and acquired brain injuries and who are often left to experience homelessness. This program will provide an enhanced level of integrated health and social supports that serve people where they live. The first four housing sites will be in Surrey, Abbotsford and Vancouver.

“For too long, those who suffered from mental-health issues, substance-use or other complex challenges have struggled to get the care they need, when and where they need it,” said Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “This groundbreaking approach will not only support our province’s most vulnerable to secure quality care and stable housing, it will also help our cities build healthier communities.”

Complex-care housing is voluntary and integrated within the health-care system with direct connections to treatment and specialized care that could include support from nurses, peer, social workers and other health professionals. These first four locations will serve approximately 100 people who need enhanced support beyond what is provided in existing supportive housing.

Government will monitor and evaluate implementation of complex-care housing services to inform areas of focus in future expansion.

“The current housing system is not working for those with serious mental-health and addiction issues who cycle in and out of shelters, jail and emergency rooms,” said David Eby, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing. “Pairing intensive health-care supports with housing to support people who are currently living in distress on our streets will improve not just the quality of life of everyone housed through this program, it will improve quality of life of the entire community.”

In addition to the various health, personal, social and job supports provided in supportive housing, the enhanced clinical and other services available in complex-care housing include:

- physical, mental-health and substance-use care;
- psychosocial rehabilitation supports;
- social, emotional and community supports;
- personal care and personal living supports;
- Indigenous cultural supports; and

- co-ordination and navigation services.

“The additional supports provided through complex care will have tremendous life-changing impacts on the health and well-being of the residents at Lookout Housing and Health Society,” said Shayne Williams, CEO, Lookout Housing and Health Society. “I continue to be impressed with the Province’s ongoing commitment to addressing the long-standing gaps in housing and health services throughout B.C.”

Complex-care housing is a component of the provincial homelessness strategy. The Government of B.C. worked with housing and health-system partners, Indigenous partners, people with lived experience and municipal governments to develop a complex-care housing framework and selection criteria for these sites.

Quotes:

Melanie Mark, MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant –

"The need for housing with enhanced supports for vulnerable people has been a long-standing call to action in the Downtown Eastside community. I am optimistic these additional housing supports will be life changing. They will fundamentally empower people to get the extra level of care they need to recover with pride and dignity."

Kennedy Stewart, mayor, City of Vancouver –

“Communities throughout B.C. are seeing first-hand what happens when neighbours with complex needs fall through the cracks. That’s why I’m so grateful that the Province is responding with complex clinical care supports tied to housing. We know from experience here in Vancouver that when we put complex-care housing into place the results are remarkable with fewer calls to police, overdoses and hospitalizations.”

Henry Braun, mayor, Abbotsford –

“The City of Abbotsford is grateful for this announcement from the Province of B.C. today, committing to bringing complex care housing to our community. Complex care will provide vital supports for those vulnerable residents who need it the most and is a welcome addition to our Homeless Prevention and Response System.”

Dr. Victoria Lee, president and CEO, Fraser Health –

“We are pleased to be working with our partners to provide services to people in their own homes, eliminating the barriers that some of our most vulnerable clients face in accessing the comprehensive care that they need and deserve.”

Vivian Eliopoulos, president and CEO, Vancouver Coastal Health –

“This strategy embeds appropriate supports that address the physical, mental and psychological well-being of people with severe mental-health conditions and substance-use challenges. We look forward to supporting this vulnerable population at two Vancouver-based sites and applying our learning to inform a broader roll-out of this approach across other Vancouver Coastal Health-based facilities.”

Learn More:

Learn about A Pathway to Hope, the provincial government's vision for mental-health and addictions care in B.C.: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021MMHA0049-001787>

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