

Highlights from the Seniors' Forum on Aging At Home

On October 11th, a group of 34 seniors came together from all parts of the South East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) for a Seniors' Forum on aging at home. The participation of seniors was facilitated by the Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging, the only member representing the provincial Councils on Aging association in the South East LHIN. Seniors who were invited to take part in the forum either have needs for services at home, personal experience caring for loved ones, relatives or friends in their homes, have ties to their community through their volunteer work, or simply have an interest in aging at home.

The objective of the forum was to help determine what matters most to seniors. The forum involved:

- A review of the priorities for changing the south east local health system, as set out in the South East *Integrated Health Services Plan*, and the strategies to address those priorities included in the South East LHIN *Annual Service Plan*.
- Round table discussions regarding whether it is more important to have services and supports that are unique to each community, or whether seniors with similar needs should have access to similar services no matter where they live in the south east.
- The prioritization of *Annual Service Plan* project steams, which are within the scope of the provincial Aging At Home Strategy.

The outcome of these discussions is a guiding principle which will constitute the basis for the development of a care delivery model for the south east, as well as clarity with respect to what kinds of projects are important to seniors.

Guiding Principle

“Seniors with similar needs should have access to similar services and supports no matter where they live in the south east.”

Seniors who participated in the forum were unanimous in opting for services and supports that are similar throughout the south east. The other option presented to them for discussion was whether services and supports should be unique to each community, given that communities in the south east are all different.

Here are some key points raised by seniors to explain their preference:

- Seniors are mobile, moving closer to their families; therefore, services moving with them are a must.
- We feel there should be equal opportunities for all. Seniors need care wherever they live.
- Hopefully this will equalize access and support for all.
- We like the idea that core services be made available to all communities. It also provides the opportunity to add services if needed by certain communities.
- When people move, they know what to expect. It will be easier to keep people informed and may be cheaper in the long run. It will be easier to plan for something that can be done in all communities.
- A consistent approach will be easier to communicate, which is important if patterns of use need to change.
- Consistency means quality, and it will be easier to educate the public, so seniors know what is available.

Projects of Importance to Seniors

For this portion of the discussion, participants were asked to review and then select the top three projects streams from a list of five project streams that are within the scope of the provincial Aging At Home Strategy, as put forward in the South East LHIN’s *Annual Service Plan*. The below chart reflects their top three priorities. The project that garnered the most votes has to do with supportive housing and/or living. Projects intended to reduce the number of seniors staying in hospital, identify and plan for elderly at risk and that enable illness recovery and recuperation received an equal number of votes. The project with the least number of votes pertains to treating urgent but non-threatening life/limb conditions in a setting other than a hospital emergency department.

Project stream:	Number of "table" votes
1. Projects that reduce the number of seniors staying in hospital	√ √ √ √ √ (5)
2. Projects that reduce the need for seniors to go to the emergency room for urgent but non-threatening life/limb conditions	√ √ √ (3)
3. Projects that identify and create contingency plans for elders at risk	√ √ √ √ √ (5)
4. Projects that provide supportive housing and/or supported living	√ √ √ √ √ √ (6)
5. Projects that enable illness recovery and recuperation	√ √ √ √ √ (5)