



EVERYONE HAVING A HOME... IT'S NOW WITHIN REACH



BRINGING LETHBRIDGE HOME
PROGRESS REPORT 2013

CONTENTS

- 1. Messages4
 - 1.1 Message from the Mayor
 - 1.2 Message from the Chair & Manager
- 2. Quick Facts7
- 3. Five and 10 Year Plans and Housing First Philosophy8
 - 3.1 Our Five Year Plan and the Provincial 10 Year Plan
 - 3.2 Housing First Specialist Report
- 4. Housing First Enterprise14
- 5. Housing First Support Programs26
- 6. Diversion Team31
- 7. Community Partners33
- 8. Research, Evaluation & Monitoring37
- 9. It's Now Within Reach: Filling in the Gaps42
- 10. Events & Training45
- 11. Thank you50





*“The strength of the nation derives
from the integrity of the home”*

— **Confucius**, a Chinese teacher, editor,
politician, and philosopher



1. MESSAGES



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

I wish to congratulate the dedicated individuals who comprise Social Housing in Action (SHIA) as well as acknowledge the commitment of our community stakeholders and partner agencies whose continued collaboration ensures we are making progress to Bring Lethbridge Home. Although it may have appeared impossible to some only a few years ago, the objective of ending homelessness is clearly within reach in Lethbridge as well as other communities across Alberta.

It's reassuring for me, as a community leader, to know that our most vulnerable citizens are being treated with dignity and respect, which is helping them make meaningful, lasting change. As many of these citizens become successfully housed and receive the support they need, they become healthier and enjoying a vastly improved quality of life. This is due, in no small part, to the integrated network of support services and programs which have been developed. Among these are the Clean Sweep program which allows clients to have a tangible role in keeping our downtown clean, and the Housing First teams which help foster positive landlord relations.

A key to your success has been informing and involving the broader community in your efforts to end homelessness.

On behalf of Lethbridge City Council and our entire community, I commend you and wish you success as you continue to implement this plan. We applaud your steadfast commitment and passion to see it become reality. We join you in celebrating the achievements to date which are helping to foster a healthier community.

Sincerely,

Rajko Dodic, QC

Sipioohkitopii (Night Rider)

Mayor



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & MANAGER

It is truly a time to reflect and celebrate the achievements of Lethbridge's Housing First Agencies and the programs that support people to be successfully and permanently housed in our community. As we reveal the many accomplishments and outcomes achieved over this past year, we are reminded of the strength and resilience of our community, agencies, its people and the collaborative partnerships that signals ending homelessness is truly within reach. These are further described within this report utilizing the analogy of the essential components in building a strong sustainable home...the foundation, walls, roof, windows, pathway and front door.

We are truly grateful for the dedicated and committed community partners and the extensive volunteerism that consistently builds on the achievements and efforts to continuously learn, build capacity, innovate, seek and apply evidence based practise...all to better serve people experiencing homelessness and the many barriers they face in their ability to live with purpose and participate in community life. The strengthened relationships between the City Council and SHIA,

Housing First agencies, all levels of government, community stakeholders and participants have resulted in the positive outcomes for the people we serve. These outcomes clearly indicate that we, as a caring community of practice, are able to successfully move the homeless into their own homes and improve the quality of their lives through supports and engagement.

In our report last year we highlighted existing services and identified new initiatives to further our ability to end homelessness in Lethbridge. These have been strengthened and realized over this past year as we welcomed HomeBASE to provide centralized intake and assessment, the Aboriginal Housing First Team to support people moving from reserve to urban life in our community, the Furniture Bank to provide the essentials of furnishing a home for the first time as well as the Diversion Program at the Shelter and the willingness of Woods Homes to launch a Housing First Team for youth. Brassard House is housing aged people with the most complex needs and the Clinical Intervention Service Team, piloted through Alberta Health Services, is now a funded team through SHIA. This is the result of innovative funding to enhance addiction and mental health services in Lethbridge. These bold and innovative teams are a solid indicator of the courage and ground-breaking approaches embraced by the com-

munity and province to further meet the unique needs of various populations in Lethbridge. We are so grateful for the opportunity and the trust extended by the funders to enhance services through the development and implementation of innovative programming and continually improving existing programs.

Research continues to better inform our practices and approaches. The Research Forum led by the provincial Research Consortium under the leadership of Bob Campbell and Dr. Yale Belanger brings the reality of research findings to application by the service providers. The relationship with broader research agendas, both nationally and provincially, further supports practice.

With the results of the Homeless Census 2012 and the outcomes of the Housing First agencies and programs, we know that ending homelessness in Lethbridge is a reality. As we embark on the 5th year of the 5 year Plan to Bring Lethbridge Home, we recognize the need to build a client-focused sustainability plan through community consultation and planning. It will be grounded in evidence based practise and the achievement of positive outcomes, include strategies to prevent homelessness in the first place and continue to strengthen community systems, the fidelity of the Housing First approach and take steps to ensure the availability of affordable housing stock and housing options.

Bringing Lethbridge Home' is about truly ending homelessness...it's a reality that's now within reach. *Let's just do it!*



Dr. Gary Bowie, Chair,
Social Housing in Action



Diane Randell, *Apamakiitstanaki*, Manager, Community
& Social Development, City of Lethbridge

2. QUICK FACTS

- 967 households were permanently housed
- 103 new Housing First participants received permanent Housing this last year
- 46 Housing First participants graduated from the Housing First program.
- 122 individuals received intensive follow-up support
- HomeBASE Centralized Intake program created
- Street homeless reduced by 50%
- 93% reduction in street homelessness since 2008
- 94% of people housed remain housed
- HomeBASE received 194 referrals from January 1 to March 31
- 623 individuals and families still on wait lists for permanent affordable housing
- 25% decrease in total shelter population over the past year
- 27% decrease of homeless population over the past year
- over 1,000 new affordable housing units have been created since 2008

Definition of a Housing First Graduate

Active in a Housing First program for a year or more. During that time of activity, maintained housing for 6 months consecutively. Acuity or complexity levels consistently dropped. Participant and follow-up worker agree together that the support is no longer necessary.



3. FIVE AND TEN YEAR PLANS AND HOUSING FIRST PHILOSOPHY

OUR VISION

Permanent housing for all people living in Lethbridge

OUR MISSION

To ensure permanent housing for all people living in Lethbridge by creating and implementing an innovative, systemic and comprehensive plan

Bringing Lethbridge Home has been the overarching theme and goal of the plan to end homelessness in Lethbridge. And that is exactly what has been happening. We have been permanently housing hundreds of individuals and families that otherwise would not have had the opportunity or the support to be successful in that housing. Since the onset of our 5-year plan, 967 men, women, and families have been provided a permanent home.

Just as our goal is to create, fill, and stabilize new homes for the

most vulnerable people in our community, the symbolism of creating a home can be used as an analogy to emphasize and highlight what has been developed in our community. These developments are designed to enable us to accomplish our goals and push us the final distance to ending homelessness in Lethbridge. We are almost there!

So to begin this unique analogy, it is important to understand that every good home starts with a solid foundation. In Lethbridge that foundation has to be the strength of both “Bringing Lethbridge Home”: A 5-Year Plan to End Homelessness and the Provincial 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. These plans provide the vision, direction, and strength necessary to take the appropriate action which will see this work through.

The Housing First philosophy and methodology provide an extension to the foundation by being the steps leading to the front door. With Housing First providing the basis for all the housing work, it also can be viewed as the strength and approach utilized behind everything we are doing in Lethbridge to end homelessness.

3.1 OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN AND THE PROVINCIAL 10 YEAR PLAN

Alignment: Bringing Lethbridge Home – Our 5 Year Plan to End Homelessness (2009-2014) is fully aligned and integrated with the

Provincial 10 Year Plan and the Community Plan developed for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

We believe we will end homelessness through the Housing First approach, as well as...

- Prevention of homelessness, which includes addressing the root causes
- Rapid re-housing of people who find themselves in a homeless situation
- Client-focused services and care through coordinated community services

Guiding Principles: Guiding Principles are required in all the important work we do together:

1. Visionary, innovative and brave leadership of all orders of government is essential
2. Housing is a basic human right. An adequate stock of housing must be accessible, safe and affordable
3. Any response to ending homelessness is based on the Housing First approach
4. Our community is strengthened socially and economically when all people are safely and securely housed

5. Creation of opportunities for self reliance, social integration and community participation, supports people to successfully sustain their housing
6. Continuous learning and improvement is imperative and includes evidence based practice
7. Strong collaborative partnerships are essential and best serves the community

Our Six Bold Goals In our plan to end homelessness in Lethbridge

1. Develop and increase permanent housing opportunities
2. Reduce NIMBY (not in my backyard) through education, positive communication and neighborhood relations
3. Continue to implement and expand the Housing First approach
4. Provide enhanced and coordinated services for people who are experiencing homelessness or near homeless
5. Ensure access to emergency shelter and housing options when needed, but work to move people quickly to permanent housing
6. Prevent people from experiencing homelessness

Shelter Visioning:

Within the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, there are strate-

gies dedicated to reducing the occupancy in Emergency Shelters to only meet the emergency shelter needs. This prevents people from becoming entrenched in chronic homelessness. To achieve this strategy, SHIA and the Emergency Shelter service providers have embarked on a journey to implement steps that will support the provincial goals in Lethbridge. These strategies include the Diversion Program to minimize the length of stays at the Shelter, increase of permanent supportive housing initiatives such as Brassard House, Castle Supportive Housing, and Hestia Homes.

Interagency Council on Homelessness (IAC):

The Interagency Council on Homelessness is a provincial commission that was launched in February 2013 by Premier Redford. The mandate of the IAC is to provide advice and guidance on policy, regulatory and program changes required for successful implementation of the provincial 10-year plan. Accountable to the Minister of Human Services, the group will report annually on progress made on the implementation of the plan who will then report to the Government of Alberta.

Lethbridge is honored to have been appointed to the IAC through the appointment of Diane Randell as the representative of the Family & Community Supportive Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA) and is one of the 32 individuals representing various sectors and

government with knowledge and expertise of community, prevention, housing and homelessness. The Prevention of Homelessness is one of the strategies being addressed by the IAC. Diane Randell is the Chair of this Sub-Committee.

The Provincial Secretariat on Ending Homelessness under the leadership of Dr. G. Bowie, Chair, was thanked and recognized for the significant contributions in the development and initiation of the 10 Year Plan.

3.2 HOUSING FIRST SPECIALIST REPORT

The 2012/2013 year was filled with learning and change. Both have resulted in tremendous growth and positive outcomes for the Housing First world in Lethbridge. Existing programs were enhanced, new programs were put in place and centralized intake went into full swing. Even though various challenges arose such as staff turnover or community emergencies which created additional work for our teams, the work of housing the most complex and chronically homeless in the city moved forward with high rates of retention.

Within my responsibility of providing the clinical and operational support to all Housing First teams, the focus this past year has been

on four core areas. Those include continued fidelity to Housing First, SPDAT based Intensive Case Management (ICM), formalized clinical support for all teams, and creating a seamless housing first system through centralized intake. The highlights are briefly described as follows:

Continued Fidelity to Housing First:

Housing First is the locally and Provincially chosen approach of accomplishing the task of ending chronic homelessness. Adhering to the core principles of that modality is vital to our success. Some of those core principles include:

- Prioritizing clients with the most complex and chronic needs
- Housing clients first, and then addressing areas that threaten that housing
- The belief that housing is a basic human right
- Choice
- Housing is not conditional upon compliance, treatment, or abstinence
- Follow-up is essential

Given that these core principles are not to be tampered with, Housing First on the whole must also be evolutionary and flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of the community it is being executed in.

This highlights the importance of learning and understanding the specific needs of our community and put in place programs that address those needs and fill important gaps. Lethbridge does not have the same client population as you would find in other communities. The same programs as you might find in Edmonton or Grande Prairie are not necessarily appropriate here. So considerations of the Lethbridge demographics, both in geography, and the people themselves, must be considered when developing and implementing programs.

SPDAT Based Intensive Case Management (ICM):

As mentioned in previous reports, the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), developed by OrgCode Consulting Inc., provides the basis by which much of the Housing First efforts stem. This tool helps us determine Housing First eligibility, prioritization of clients into Housing First programs, how clients are moved onto team case loads, and the specific barriers and strengths an individual has in their ability to maintain housing. Follow-up support is essential. The SPDAT also provides the basis by which the follow-up service plans are developed and therefore drives the objective based case management that must occur in order to achieve and continue high retention rates.

Objective based case management involves having a follow-up worker develop a specific goal and client driven service plan which then drives regular and consistent follow-up visits with a focus on

strategies and activities that are congruent with the clients needs and address the barriers for maintaining permanent housing. It is not “check ins.” It is not phone calls. It is direct client contact doing specific objective based work with the client. As a result, we expect to see and report next year dramatic decreases in SPDAT scores and significant increases in client stability and independence. Within this year many individuals reach the point of “Graduation” from Housing First and as mentioned we are already seeing applaudable rates of housing retention, especially considering the complex nature of many of the service participants.

Formalized Clinical Support:

In the past two years regular meetings were being held with each team to provide consultation, guidance, and support. This worked well and it marked the beginning of bringing all Housing First teams together. But something that was missing was the connection on a regular basis to the massive amounts of knowledge and expertise that could be offered by our partnering organizations. To address this we took an existing meeting that was similar to what we wanted but more focused on one of our teams and revamped it to become a formalized method for all teams to bring forward their cases and receive that invaluable feedback and guidance. This turned into our “Housing First Case Consultation.” This has become a tremendous source of con-

nection and support both from and to the partner agencies and our own. Workers have the opportunity to bring a structured case presentation to the table each week. They share some background and other key pieces of information and then ask one or two specific questions they need help with. At that time valuable and insightful discussion occurs and the Worker always leaves with some actionable steps and strategies they can utilize to address their questions. As a result of this consultation, agencies are able to provide a different level of support to clients. A weeklater, the Team Lead of the Worker provides some follow-up information and the current status of the client that was consulted the week prior. Workers who have taken advantage of the consultation process find it helpful and are often surprised at how much was actually accomplished.

These consultations are attended by multiple members of our professional community. They would include the team leads from all Housing First teams and representatives from Alberta Works, AISH, Lethbridge Housing Authority, Downtown Policing Unit, the CIS Team, McMan Addiction Outreach, Lethbridge Emergency Shelter, as well as Mental Health and PDD as needed. We are continuing to grow the numbers at the table as needs arise. The amount of support and liaising we receive from our community partners has been astounding and incredibly helpful. So meetings like this have become essential and standard tools in the work we are engaging in.

Seamless System Through Centralized Intake:

This will be detailed more later on as we highlight HomeBASE but for now it is important to note how effective it has already been as a new process by being able to address the housing needs and referrals of hundreds of individuals and families in this short few months of being fully operational.

I look forward to a new year full of even more exciting developments and outcomes as we have now established a solid base of programs and processes to very effectively move forward into some of the final stages of ending homelessness in Lethbridge.



Wally Czech

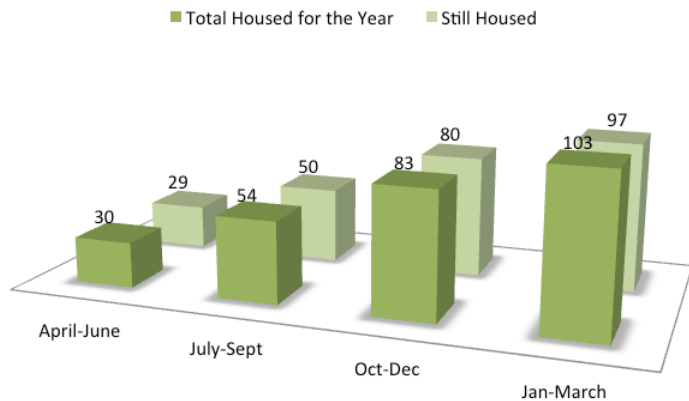
Housing First Specialist
Community and Social Development
The City of Lethbridge



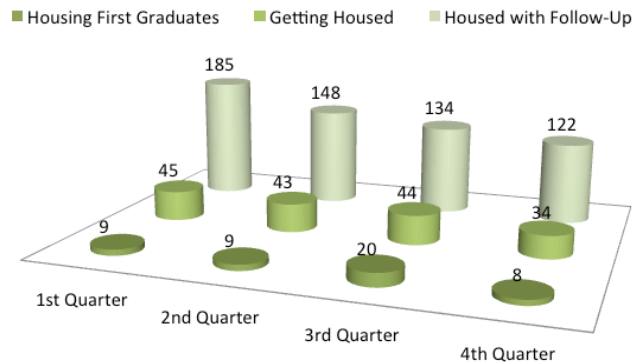
4. HOUSING FIRST ENTERPRISE

The frame of our house consists of the Housing First Enterprise developed in Lethbridge. This would include all of the specific Housing First Teams that are funded to house the homeless as well as provide the intensive follow-up to ensure housing stability. Over this last year our Housing First teams assisted in finding and supporting 103 new permanent homes with a recidivism rate of only 5.8%. That means that only 6 of those households were not maintaining housing at the end of the year. This is quite a feat considering the complex level of individuals and diverse ages our teams are working with. We would like to introduce and describe our Housing First teams for you.

HOUSING & RETENTION



2012/2013 ACTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL HOUSING FIRST PARTICIPANTS



HOMEBASE - THE FRONT DOOR

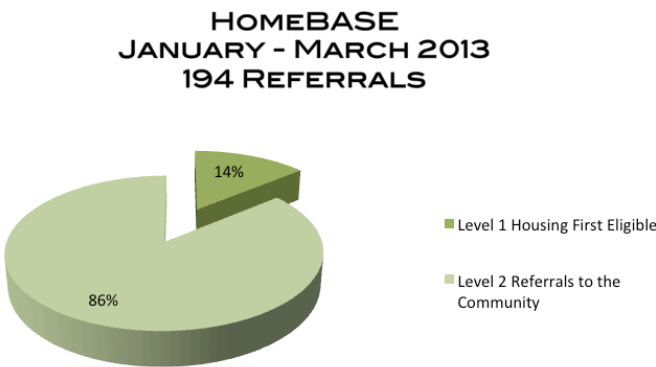
The front doorway of the framework is HomeBASE. Although only fully operational in January 2013, HomeBASE has quickly made an impact, not only by becoming the gatekeeper and entry into Housing First, but also in the community. HomeBASE has become a much needed option and streamlined mechanism to handle people with housing and homelessness issues.

HomeBASE is the centralized intake, triage, and referral program. All housing and homelessness concerns are channeled through this program where they are first screened for Housing First eligibility. If deemed “Housing First” eligible, people become what are termed a “Level 1” referral. This means they will then go through the process of intake, prioritization, triage, and referral to the most appropriate Housing First team. A warm transfer will occur between the HomeBASE Intake Worker, the Team Lead of the appropriate Housing First team, and Service Participant.

If the person is not Housing First eligible, they are a “Level 2” referral and receive a referral, recommendation, and where possible a warm transfer to an appropriate agency or service in the community. Based on research and data from other Housing First experts, these Level

2 referrals would far outnumber the Housing First referrals. This has remained true for Lethbridge however having HomeBASE to do that filtering prevents Housing First teams from struggling with appropriate referrals, ensures fidelity to Housing First, and eliminates the need for clients to tell their story multiple times and agency bouncing looking for the right program to work with them. From January to March of 2013, HomeBASE saw 194 individuals. Out of

that they were able to determine, and successfully refer 27 individuals to appropriate Housing First programs. One of the primary reasons these individuals do not qualify for Housing First is due to fact that they are relocating to Lethbridge. Of the 194 intakes at HomeBASE,



93 were people that had just moved into our community in search of employment, supports, or other reasons. HomeBASE was also able to make, on behalf of the Level 2 clients, 298 referrals to other agencies and programs in the community that could be of benefit to them. No client leaves HomeBASE without some level of service. This coming year, we will be able to provide statistics that will indicate the housing success of the individuals that have been referred to Housing First programs.



The HomeBASE Team

HomeBASE Success Story (of individual that was not eligible for Housing First.)

HomeBase met with a participant at the beginning of March. Paul is a 33 year old male whom had been staying at the Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre for about a month. He had become homeless after being incarcerated. Paul had come to HomeBase seeking assistance with housing and employment. He informed his worker that he has been working with Global Training to build his resume and has

been utilizing the Alberta Works Job Board. He did not qualify for Housing First however the intake worker provided him with other resources such as the Job Search form, Job Confirmation form, rent report, rental listings and the getting connected booklet. HomeBASE encouraged him to continue job searching.

Within a couple of days Paul let HomeBASE know that he had a rental property viewing scheduled and a job interview. The HomeBASE staff congratulated him, wished him luck and encouraged him

to follow through.

By the end of the month he came back to HomeBase to let them know that he was successful in getting a job and had started working and he was working. He was also working with Alberta Works to get a damage deposit secured to get his own place. Since then he has also informed HomeBASE that he has secured housing and is now working full time.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH (“OUTREACH”)

Along with HomeBASE, Community Outreach is another program operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). This is a diverse Housing First team with a mandate to work with the most complex, multi-barriered, high acuity chronically homeless people in our community. However these are individuals that are able to be housed in market housing, and maintain that housing through the efforts of Intensive Case Management (ICM) and follow-up supports.

Life with Outreach begins with an Outreach Worker whose role is to help the participant find housing and stabilize income. Once accomplished, the participant is then referred to a Follow-up Worker to assist the client in addressing any issues that are potential road blocks for them to maintain permanent housing. Follow-up occurs until the client reaches the point of “Housing First Graduation” or until the Service Participant moves to another community, chooses to not access the service any longer, or loses their housing and is unable to be located for 3 consecutive months. Community Outreach works with women, men, and they also have a special team designed to work with youth ages 18-24 that also meet the criteria mentioned above.

Outreach Success Story: This story illustrates not only the amazing changes these individuals have undergone since obtaining housing but also highlights the importance of taking a creative and collaborative approach when serving individuals with multiple complex barriers. This success story is unique in that it involves three individuals who sought out services from Community Outreach independently yet it was determined through consultation with the participants that they may be more successful in maintaining housing if housed together.

The three participants are Brooks, her father, Jason, and her partner, Scottie. Community Outreach staff had been attempting to engage both Scottie and Brooks in services several times since 2010. Outreach first met Scottie and Brooks when they were couch surfing with Jason. Though they both

indicated at different times they were interested in accessing services they were not able to meet with staff often enough to obtain housing.

In the fall of 2012 Community Outreach staff was able to encourage Brooks and Scottie towards actively engaging in services. One challenge we faced was determining who would work with these two as Brooks was eligible for supports from the Youth team and Scottie from the adult team. It was determined that each would receive a worker from the appropriate team.

At that time Scottie and Brooks were couch surfing with Brooks' father who was living in a boarding house which was not a secure building and where environmental health hazards were present. The three individuals indicated to staff that they would like to live together. Brooks and Scottie indicated that Jason required assistance with his daily living skills and that they would like to be

able to support him. One challenge with this was that Jason was receiving supports from another agency and, though he had previously worked with Community Outreach, he no longer met the mandate of the program. After consulting internally and with McMann staff it was determined that these individuals had sufficient supports in place to live together in a two bedroom suite.

Scottie, Brooks and Jason moved into their suite in January, 2013. Since that time Brooks has discovered she is pregnant and has connected with Better Beginnings and First Steps. All three of these individuals see addiction counselors and Brooks sees a mental health therapist. Scottie has reported that he has completed the requirements of a probation order and that he currently has no legal concerns for the first time in several years. Both Brooks and Scottie were invited to participate in neuropsychological assessments and their Career and Employment Consultant and Community Outreach workers

began to follow up on the recommendations made during these assessments.

When asked how housing has changed each of their lives and the following responses were given:

"It's better having a place, I don't have to sleep outside anymore and I don't get in fights anymore."

"I'm staying out of trouble, haven't done anything illegal, I feel more safe." –Scottie

"I don't drink as much at home, my daughter makes sure I take my medication and my family takes care of me."



YWCA Residence Success

Story: Melaniel moved in to the YWCA residence in October 2012, after spending the majority of her life in and out of the prison system. She was able to stay housed for 6 months at the Residence. (This was the longest time she had been out of prison) During that time she secured psychiatric support, and a counsellor. She was also able to obtain AISH and have many needed assessments done. She has successfully moved to Edmonton and to the best of our knowledge she is still in housing in Edmonton.



YWCA The Residence Team

THE RESIDENCE

The YWCA operates two of our Housing First agencies. One of those is the Residence which is located on the 2nd and 3rd floors at the YWCA. The Residence has a mandate house and support woman with multi-barriers, and highly complex needs. This is a permanent supportive housing program. Service participants referred to the Residence as Housing First clients, are assigned a follow-up worker who will do ICM. The Residence also has a follow-up worker that continues the ICM for those women that leave the YWCA for various reasons. This keeps the case loads of the residence counsellors manageable.



YWCA HESTIA Homes Team

HESTIA HOMES

The second program through the YWCA is HESTIA Homes. This program is permanent supported housing for youth ages 18-24. These youth are not connected to Children's Services and are homeless or at risk of being homeless but are less complex than those being served by the youth team at Community Outreach. HESTIA is made up of 3 houses with 3 rooms each. There is a live in mentor available in the evenings that help with life skills and basic home management but HESTIA also provides each client with a follow-up worker who does ICM and supports them in housing even if they leave HESTIA until the point of "Graduation."

HESTIA Homes Success Story:

Preston was known to the YWCA due to his long history with Child Welfare and his involvement in some of the other YWCA programs. Preston was discharged from Child Welfare after turning 18 years old because he was not going to school or working. Preston lost his housing as he had no way to pay for it and he was drinking heavily. After losing his housing he stayed with a family member and got a dog. He was asked to leave the house in which he was staying at and had nowhere to go.

Preston came to the YWCA with a garbage bag of clothes and a dog. YWCA Hestia Homes staff were able

to secure a place for his dog to live and allowed Preston to temporarily move into the YPM house until which time he could move into Sunrise III. Preston was involved in the process of assembling furniture and took real pride in the home.

During his time residing at the Sunrise III house, Preston stopped binge drinking on his own and really connected with the staff and role model. Through the YWCA partnerships, Preston was able to secure employment and save money to move out on his own. He is now completely on his own, working full time and has graduated from Hestia Homes Program.





WOODS YOUTH SHELTER HOUSING FIRST TEAM

Over the past year Woods Homes Youth Shelter has been working to create a Housing First team for youth under the age of 18. Eligibility criteria continues to be formalized however this team is now in place and has been working diligently at supporting these under 18 youth in market housing situations and providing the ICM necessary to help them maintain it. The first priority at Woods is to always look at “Family First”; however there are times when family is not an option and youth need to have another choice in where they can live safely with a sense of permanence.

Woods Success Story: “K” is the youngest client I have on my caseload. At 16 years old she had been living in group homes for close to 2 years and was growing very tired of it. We received the referral from her Case Worker asking if we could look at independent living for her. We met with this young lady at her group home and quickly realized that she was ready to live on her own, as long as there were appropriate supports in place. We explained the Housing First program and philosophy to her and she said she agreed to the program and was looking forward to working with us.

In our next meeting, we coached her on calling landlords to set up viewings and she was able to set

up two different viewings for the following day. The first place we went to was not appropriate for her but in all of her excitement, she thought it was perfect and wanted to move in the following day! We were able to work with her to weigh out the pros and cons after which she chose to wait to see the other place as well as give us a chance to speak with her Case Worker. Together we were all able to determine that a better place could be found. After a few more viewings, we found a perfect bachelor suite for her to call home.

As excited as she was to move out on her own, K was extremely anxious about not having anyone around. She was used to being

in places where there was always other youth and staff around. K asked her follow-up worker to come see her everyday for the first week to check in on her. Was also informed that she could call or text the shelter at anytime of the day or night if she needed anything. These daily visits lasted all of 2 days when she informed us that she was good and we could start coming over weekly rather than daily. K has now been in her place for 3 months and is doing extremely well.

K attends school full time and is on track to graduate in the next 2 years. There was a brief period of time that she took advantage of being an independent student being able to excuse herself from

class. She has since realized how detrimental this was and has asked that her caseworker have to excuse her from class so she can be held accountable. K has also engaged in counseling and although she was hesitant because she has tried counseling before and did not get what she needed out of it, she has really connected with her counselor and sees her bi-weekly. K has really started to open up and become more confident in herself and her abilities since beginning counseling. K is also starting a part time job at a fast food restaurant. She is looking forward to having extra money to decorate her home and start to build herself a life.



ABORIGINAL HOUSING FIRST TEAM

One of the new Requests for Proposal (RFP) from this year was for the Aboriginal Housing First Team. This contract was awarded to the Blackfoot Family Lodge Society who originally had the agreement for working with First Nation women transitioning from the Reserve to urban life. Due to new trends and feedback from the community, the need to enhance that service to women by adding the same support to men and families with or without children. This team includes both outreach workers to house people and stabilize income as well as follow-up workers who provide ICM once these individuals obtain permanent housing.



Aboriginal Housing First Team Success Story: Dee Anna is a single mother of 2 children. Dee Anna wanted a better life style for her and her children and fled a domestic violent relationship. It was hard at first to leave the relationship, but she knew that she wanted to raise her sons in a more positive and stable environment. Dee Anna came to Blackfoot Family Lodge three months ago and only stayed for a day. Dee Anna was chosen to be part of a pilot project between the Blackfoot Family Lodge and Aboriginal Housing Society Support Services. The Aboriginal Housing Society has set aside 2 units for the Blackfoot Family Lodge to help house families.

Dee Anna has now been housed for 3 months with The Aboriginal Housing Society. She has been available for every scheduled home visit with the Blackfoot Family Lodge follow-up worker. She has been very motivated to look for employment and is out there every day handing out her resume and filling out job applications. She takes the advice of the follow-up worker and is now in the Job Finding Club with Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge and the Launch Program with Global Training. She also attends the programs that are offered at the Blackfoot Family Lodge. Dee Anna just received great news that she got accepted in the Up-Grading Program at the Red Crow Community College and she will start this year.

Dee Anna continues to work on making a better life for herself and her children. She stays positive every day and her perseverance is admirable. Dee Anna's favorite saying is "In order for anyone to help you, you must be ready to help yourself."



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR HOUSING FIRST TEAMS!

Our teams have worked incredibly hard this year despite various challenges and obstacles. They continued to produce inspiring outputs reflected in the charts seen in this report and the homeless census data. Even more significant are the heart warming outcomes described in the success stories that have also been shared in this report. This year we want to celebrate, congratulate, and thank our teams. Their tireless effort and countless hours spent are benefiting the participants the most. The community is also a better place because of the work they are doing and the work they are doing has brought us "Within Reach" of ending homelessness in Lethbridge.



5. HOUSING FIRST SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Once a client has been assessed and triaged to one of our Housing First teams, and they have been housed, the work begins to strengthen and help that client to sustain their housing situation and help them along the road to independence. This can be a difficult and lengthy process which requires great effort and time on the part of dedicated follow-up workers. Drywall in a home begins to make what looked like a bunch of sticks take the shape of an actual home. Similarly, programs have been created to augment the work of Housing First teams to assist clients with an easier and more effective transition from the homeless life to a life with a roof over their head. Often these individuals leave the streets without employment skills, access to clinical support for their addictions and mental health concerns, and meaningful daily activity. These programs are all designed to assist in these areas and continued efforts will be made to strengthen the supports available to Housing First clients while helping them to create connections in the community which will result in lasting and beneficial relationships for years to come.

HOUSING FIRST CASE CONSULTATION

Each week the Housing First Specialist facilitates a formal case conferencing and collaborating meeting for all Housing First teams and many of the community partners. This provides front line workers an opportunity to consult about clients they are working with and receive feedback and guidance from several experts in the community which will assist in their ICM. It is also a time for partners to discuss items and individuals they have concerns about and to ensure proper communication is in place and that effective collaboration is in tact.

HOUSING REGISTRY

As a function of the Community LINKS program, the Housing Registry is a unique data base developed to assist individuals in locating and obtaining suitable and affordable housing options. It is also designed to assist our Housing First teams in locating appropri-

ate housing for their participants. The data base allows an individual to customize their search for rental properties within the city and it provides landlords with an additional option for advertising their rental units. This registry is an online database which can be viewed by anyone with access to internet. Alternatively, sheets with the various rentals can be printed off and provided to perspective renters. This last year the website received over 2400 hits with 116 inputs by landlords. The registry received 111 actual referrals with the majority being by telephone and walk-in or self referrals.

CLEAN SWEEP

When visiting downtown, you may see individuals with bright orange vests keeping the downtown area clean and tidy. This is the result and benefit of our Clean Sweep program. In partnership with the Downtown BRZ, Clean Sweep has become a program where Housing First clients can learn to become part of a team to better the city. At the

same time they learn employment skills, stay active, and have meaningful daily activity. Some financial remuneration is provided and the participants feel good about their efforts. This last year, Clean Sweep recorded a total of 24 active clients. Fifteen of them were new to the program this year and five individuals graduated from the Clean Sweep program moving on to regular employment. This just goes to show how much of a difference it makes to the participants to have the opportunity to be productive and learn new skills.



LETHBRIDGE LEGAL GUIDANCE (LLG)

Due to the vast number of participants being supported through Housing First, there are also a large number of landlords involved. Both the participants and the front line staff are working to foster positive renter to landlord relationships. These relationships makes is essential to ensure that proper and accurate information is made available to both the participants and the landlords in an effort to thwart negative situations that could potentially arise. As a result, we have an ongoing contract with Lethbridge Legal Guidance. They provide regular seminars relating to tenancy issues, as well as individual support to both tenants and landlords.

This past year yielded a large number of hours being put into this work. Between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013, LLG assisted 101 individuals with their landlord/tenant legal issues. 60 individuals were aided with legal advice through a weekly clinic offered every Tuesday evening by volunteer lawyers. Of those 20 were referred for full legal representation by LLG Staff Counsel and were able to resolve their issues amicably.

CIS TEAM

In a partnership with Seniors Mental Health, The Clinical Intervention and Support (CIS) Team took flight this year. This was also a response to the ongoing difficulties our Housing First front line workers have had with some of the extremely com-

plex cases. As a sort of hybrid Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team, CIS offers our Housing First teams and participant's mobile expertise, consultation, and support in the areas of addiction and mental health, as well as a liaison to psychiatry and medical supports. Co-located with HomeBASE and Community Outreach, CIS is closely connected to the most complex and vulnerable of our homeless population. The CIS Team has also been instrumental in assisting in the development of other programs that will be highlighted later such as Brassard House, and the Post Release/Offender Housing First Team. In a short time they have made a tremendous impact on many lives and are a huge benefit to the Housing First world in Lethbridge.

"Since I'm doing my art, I'm somebody. Before, I was just another homeless person – a nobody. Now people recognize me. They stop and ask me how I'm doing and what I'm working on. I'm somebody now." – RAW Art Program Participant



RAW ART PROGRAM

Real Artists at Work (RAW) is another program designed to support Housing First participants. Both current and graduated participants gain meaningful daily activity and a sense of purpose and belonging in the community. Originally this program was being run out of the Bowman Centre and now is housed at the new CASA. Participants receive on site instruction and support and obtain supplies to assist them in their artistic endeavors. The Art program at the Emergency Shelter has now been incorporated into RAW. At the end of this year 8 active participants are in the



program and that number is expected to rise in the next year especially with the inclusion of the shelter program. One participant's work was included in the inaugural exhibition at CASA.



VAN HAARLEM:

Our Community Partners and Housing First Agencies Exceed Expectations to Re-house Fire Victims

As fire destroyed an historic building in one of Lethbridge's most established neighbourhoods, the Van Haarlem boarding Home's 26 residents were permanently displaced.

In the midst of already working to capacity, our community partners and agencies immediately responded to quickly provide the necessary services for people in crisis, establish stability and commence re-housing options. Local hotels were seconded to support the immediate housing needs and their service was truly appreciated by the teams

as permanent housing options were sought. The following are commended for their immediate commitment and full team participation to meet the housing and support needs of the people in crisis, many of whom were and became Housing First clients;

Alberta Works
AISH
HomeBASE
Community Outreach Team
Lethbridge Regional Police Service
City of Lethbridge Fire Department
Victim Services
Lethbridge Transit
Canadian Red Cross
Interfaith Food Bank
YWCA
Lethbridge Hotel Operators





6. DIVERSION TEAM

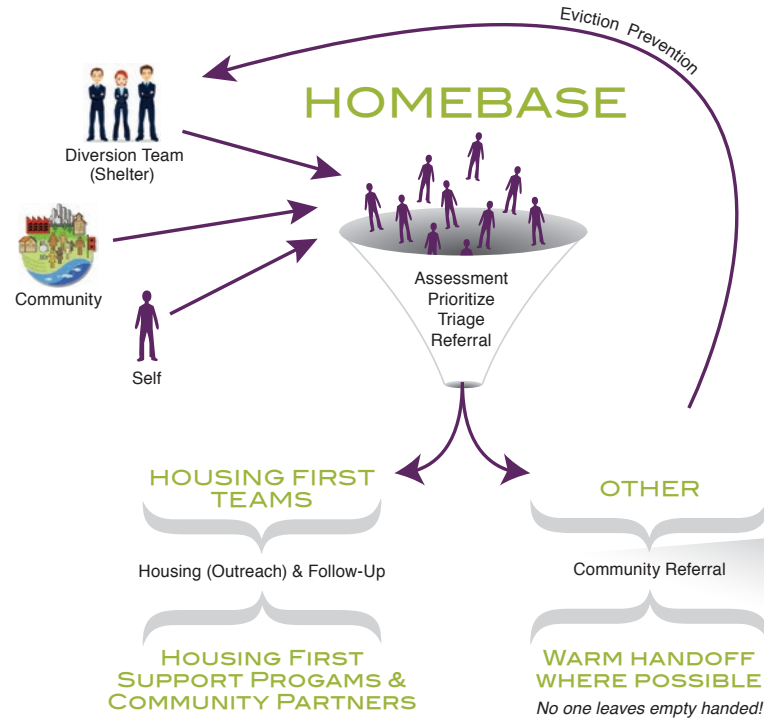
Every home needs a pathway leading to it. It makes it much easier for service participants to find the front door. In doing our part to support the Provincial plan to dramatically reduce shelter beds, we have made a shift with one of our Housing First teams to become the sidewalk to our symbolic home by becoming a primary referral source to HomeBASE...our front door.

We have learned over the years that to end homelessness (instead of just manage it), the people being served must have greater connection to the community and less to the homeless world. Even though there is currently a need and purpose for truly emergency shelter, it is also know that the longer an individual remains at the shelter, the more difficult it becomes for that person to leave homelessness. In our efforts to create less opportunity for our participants to spend time in and around the shelter and more time in the community, programs have been slowly removed, including one of our Housing First teams from the shelter. A shelter Diversion Team was established.

The Diversion Team began working fully in this capacity towards the end of this year. They have a primary function to make immediate connection to those that enter the shelter for the first time and begin the process of directing them to an alternative. They work hard to quickly connect people to HomeBASE by doing an initial Housing First pre-screen, then making that warm hand-off to centralized intake. If the participant is not Housing First eligible, Diversion's job is to work with them to create an immediate action plan outlining the best and quickest pathway out of the shelter.

Another function of the Diversion Team is from a preventative perspective. There are individuals or families that wind up in jeopardy of losing their existing home due to eviction and loss of income among other things. If support is not provided to these individuals, they too could end up as shelter guests. Therefore in an effort to divert and prevent people from entering the shelter, this can provide shorter term Intensive Case Management to assist them in maintaining their current living situation or find something more feasible. At that point they can begin addressing the issues that likely put these people in their predicament in the first place. Any housing issues coming through HomeBASE related to eviction prevention, are referred to the Diversion Team.

HOUSING FIRST IN LETHBRIDGE





7. COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The roof of a house is an essential piece that is added to the top of the frame to keep out weather and provide protection from the elements. In our symbolic home, the vast number of committed and special partners working with the teams functions as a roof. There is always a risk when one begins to list individuals or groups for fear of leaving someone out, however, we would like to highlight some of them.

DOWNTOWN POLICING UNIT



Formerly known as the “Downtown Beat,” this team has not only made amazing strides in creating supportive relationships with the homeless population, but they have also begun to be recognized nationally for the innovative policing they are providing in this community. In fact, they will be presenting at the first Canadian Alliance conference on ending homelessness in Ottawa at the end of October. This



group sits at our consultation tables. They advocate for our clients. They work to find supportive solutions instead of assuming the only solution is ticketing and the justice system. In the process, the clients in question have been developing a greater trust in the police. This leads to fewer negative incidents. The Downtown Unit was also a recipient of an award for Innovation in support of housing at this year's Housing Awards Luncheon.

ALBERTA WORKS

The Lethbridge office of Alberta Works has been a partner in the efforts to end homelessness from the beginning of the 5 Year Plan. Because of the abundant reliance upon them for participant income support, they have seen the need to step up, adjust

processes, make special assignments, and participate in a vast amount of committees and projects. This team has a passion for helping Lethbridge's most vulnerable and they have gone the extra mile to ensure that everything possible has been done. All Housing First teams have been able to connect and collaborate. One example of the amount of time, energy, and commitment Alberta Works puts into ending homelessness is their direct involvement in the P12 Test Centre which concluded this year. This project created a streamlined system of helping clients navigate Government of Alberta (GOA) programs and have better access to services and income streams needed to improve their quality of life. Alberta Works was a key player in making the P12 be a success and even dedicated a staff member

to the most pivotal role in ensuring that the processes were carried out properly.

AISH

Alberta's Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), since the inception of the P12 Test Centre, continue to be a stalwart partner in the initiatives to assist the homeless. AISH, as one of the GOA programs identified in the test centre as an important link, has been "all in" from the moment they were asked to participate. Like Alberta Works, AISH has also made concessions with certain processes, and adjusted their staffing to allow for a specialized role connected to the test centre and the Housing First programs. Their support and involvement has made it possible for many of our Housing First participants to advance to

a higher quality of life and have the resources they need to leave homelessness and begin a new, safer life.

PDD

As a result of the P12 Test Centre, and through specialized assessments that were made available to the test participants, Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) came into the picture. Several of these participants were deemed to be a fit for PDD supports. Although it has posed challenges, this organization has worked diligently to build capacity in their programming to address the unique and complex challenges of a population they typically have not served. PDD has taken on some of these individuals and are working to accommodate others that have met the criteria to be included in their programs.

OPG/OPT

There are other organizations that, as a result of the test centre, have quickly been brought

into the picture. It is important to note the role of the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) and the Office of the Public Trustee (OPT). Due to the assessments that transpired, these two organizations have been called upon to look into how and if their services would be beneficial. They have both stepped up to the table and have been open and willing to look at these participants and how they can support the efforts being made with them. Again, this is a population that are fairly new clients of these organizations. As they believe in helping all people, and having compassion and a desire for everyone to have the best possible quality of life, these organizations have made concessions and gone beyond what is expected to assist in this work.

OTHERS

Multiple other organizations have been overwhelmingly involved and supportive of the work being done in Lethbridge to end homelessness. SHIA thanks all the organizations

that are present at our discussion tables, on our committees, and at our events in support of this rewarding yet challenging undertaking.

Without the level of collaboration experienced with all our partners, SHIA would not have been able to accomplish as much as we have. The community partners provide the important pieces that enable our participants to finally get a roof over their heads. Our partners are acknowledged at the end of this report.

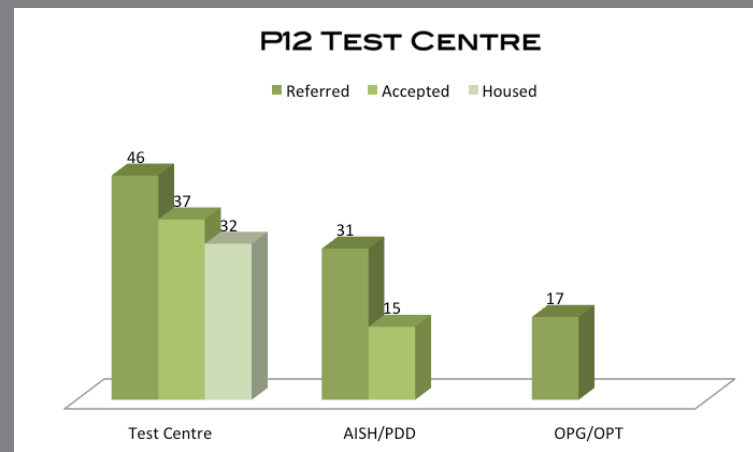
ALBERTA SUPPORTS LETHBRIDGE HOMELESS OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICES TEST INITIATIVE (P12)

A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years, was adopted by government in 2009. The Lethbridge Homeless Outreach Support Services Test Initiative was a partnership with the Common Service Access Implementation Office, the Family Violence Prevention and Homeless Supports Division, and the City of Lethbridge to directly respond to two of the strategies in the 10 year plan:

- Strategy 6 – Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability, and
- Strategy 7 – Make it easier for clients to connect with Alberta government programs and services.

The initiative designed and tested a new process to connect chronically homeless clients working with a Housing First Outreach Worker with Ministry programs and supports. The testing period ran from April to October 2012.

The test provided an opportunity to work collaboratively with several partners to improve outcomes for homeless individuals in the Lethbridge area. The original intent was to streamline homeless client applications and eligibility determination for Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD), and Alberta Works Income Support (IS). The test was later expanded to include eligibility determination for the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) and Office of the Public Trustee (OPT).



* Not all clients referred to PDD were assessed by the end of the test therefore more would have been deemed eligible.



8. RESEARCH, EVALUATION & MONITORING

When suggesting that this area represents the windows of this house, we are really saying that this is how we keep close watch over all the work being done and looking for ways to improve what is already happening.

Youth homelessness has been identified as a priority for Bringing Lethbridge Home. Through the development and pending implementation of the Youth HUB and the formation of the Housing First teams for youth, it became apparent that better informed policy and practise was required. Research projects focused on youth with complex needs is underway with the University of Lethbridge.

Ongoing monitoring through an online database and program evaluation is critical for the continuous improvement of the Housing First Programs, Brassard House, the Clinical Intervention Support Team and other interventions. SHIA is privileged to be supported through partnership with the University of Lethbridge and the Research Consortium in the research and analysis of the outcome monitoring of the programs including the Project Connect and Homeless Census data.

In addition, monthly reporting from each funded program is submitted and culminates into a yearly summary report of all Housing First data. The tracking of areas such as numbers of newly housed, those receiving follow-up support, recidivism, and more, inform future changes and best practices. Research, evaluation and monitoring is an essential aspect of work with the homeless. It helps in identifying trends, locating gaps, determining the effectiveness of the existing programs, and ensuring best practices and fidelity to Housing First. These allow us to look into the windows of this house to see what is working and what is not and stay in tune with the unique needs of the people we are trying to serve.



*“Lethbridge has shown that smaller communities can also have great success in addressing homelessness. Adopting a Five Year Plan, Lethbridge has successfully implemented a broad Housing First strategy that has the homelessness sector working together to support a range of targeted Housing First programs. Lethbridge has also been an innovator in addressing Aboriginal homelessness through its integrated Housing First strategy, and in working collaboratively with Lethbridge Regional Police Service to develop an approach that moves away from the ‘criminalization of homelessness’ response common in so many communities, to one that engages a community policing unit in working to support homeless people to access services and supports. Lethbridge has made great strides in reducing homelessness, and in the past year saw a 50% decrease in absolute street homelessness over the past year, and a 15% decrease in emergency shelter occupancy over the same period (Social Housing in Action, 2012).” - **Stephen Gaetz**, Professor at York University, Director of the Canadian Homelessness Research Network “Homeless Hub”.*



RESEARCH FORUM

As part of the ongoing efforts to ensure the work is evidence based and practice is continuously monitored, including trends and other factors associated with homelessness, the Research Consortium hosted to the Southern Alberta Housing and Homelessness Research Forum. The purpose of the forum was to bring experts and professionals together to learn about and discuss current activities, future directions, and engage in collaborative planning to inform the 2013 research agenda.

With the keynote by Dr. Stephen Gaetz, Director of the Canadian Homelessness Research Network, and Associate Professor at York University, the forum had an amazing start and continued to informative and captivating to over 100 researchers, experts, and others interested in the world of homelessness research. Attendees were treated to information on the impact discrimination has on the homeless by Cheryl Currie, Assistant Professor of Public Health at the University of Lethbridge. Wally Czech, Housing First Specialist joined with Barry Bezuko, Director, Homeless Cross-Ministry Initiatives, Alberta Human Services to share information and research implications of the P12 Test Centre. Sergeant Tiffany Housworth of the Lethbridge Regional Police Downtown Policing Unit highlighted their Crisis Intervention Techniques Initiative in Community Policing. Dr. Yale Belanger, Associate Professor of Native American Studies shared details around the Youth Homelessness Research Initiative. And finally, Karen Stone, Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness provided a description of the Council and its purpose. The forum rounded off with group discussions on where the future of homelessness research in Southern Alberta should go. Feedback about the forum was that it was interesting, informative and well done.





HOMELESS CENSUS

The 2012 Homeless Census was conducted on October 3, 2012 and is the 9th Annual Homeless Census. The point in time count occurs the same day and time every year and the purpose is to provide comparative data to the previous Homeless Censuses, to understand possible service gaps, and provide current information for planning and monitoring the outcomes of the Housing First and homeless initiatives.

The data collected from the 2012 Homeless Census indicated a 27% decrease in the total

homeless population over the past year, the sheltered homeless population decreased by 25% in the last year while those living in absolute homeless decreased by 50%. A total of 99 people were identified as homeless in 2012 census, which is a 27 % decrease from 2011 (136).

Since the Homeless Census was conducted in 2008, there has been a 93% decrease in absolute (street) homeless in Lethbridge to 2012. As the graph below indicates, the rate of homelessness gathered by the Homeless Census is progressively decreasing year to year. With a point in time count we will never

capture every homeless individual that exists at that time however as the graph indicates, there is a definite trend occurring in the decrease of numbers. That is what tells the story.

The focus of the Census is to acquire quantitative data from individuals interviewed on the street as well as those accessing agency shelter and transition housing supports. Qualitative observations on demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, visible minority and familial presence, of the people interviewed were also incorporated into the study. The people interviewed were also



asked to comment on the reasons they believe have held them back from obtaining secure, affordable and sustainable housing, as well as their feelings on the accessibility of

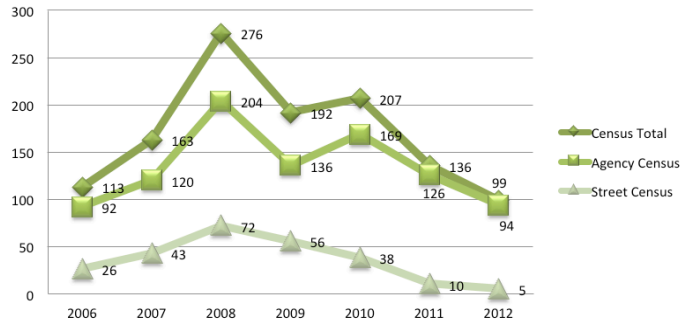
subsidized housing in Lethbridge.

The Lethbridge Housing Authority and Treaty 7 Urban Indian Housing Authority were con-

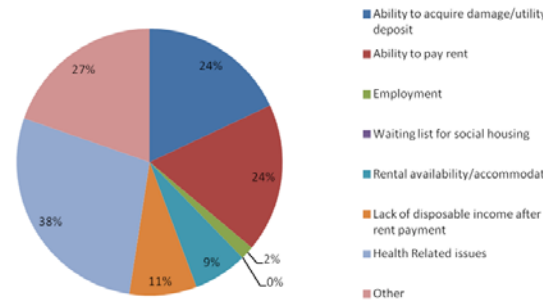
tacted to discuss the number of subsidized housing units in Lethbridge, as well as the number of individuals currently on wait lists for these units, which turned out to be 623.

Local agencies and facilities known to serve the homeless population were also asked to participate in the Census.

7 YEAR TREND OF HOMELESSNESS



Unable to find housing due to: (45 Respondents)





9. IT'S NOW WITHIN REACH: FILLING IN THE GAPS

In order to start putting the finishing touches on and in a new home, it is important to fill in the gaps created by the drywall with mud, tape, and paint. Add the insulation and siding to the outside, and anything else that might have been missed along the way.

In the work we are doing in Lethbridge to end homelessness, we are also making great effort to locate and fill any gaps in services and supports needed to round off our already effective system. There are a few missing pieces identified and effort is being made to put things in place to address these gaps.

BRASSARD HOUSE

In the process of diligently trying to house the most complex and vulnerable people in our community, and reduce the numbers of long term guests at the emergency shelter, there are some individuals that are not a good fit for market housing. This is due to their frail and medical conditions combined with other co-occurring barriers that make it impossible for them to sustain housing on their own. These individuals will benefit most from a special environment where they can be independent, safe and have access to supports for their physical and mental health and addictions all in one location.

In partnership with Covenant Health, a 12 bed program has been created as an interim project to the 40 bed St. Joan's Haven project slated to be build for the same purpose. The interim project will be housed in a private pod at St. Michaels. This will be a permanent home for these individuals. For some of them it will be the first permanent home they have

ever known. This project is ready to be implemented. Each resident will have their own bedroom with their own bathroom and shower. There will be a common area for visiting and watching TV, and they will have their own outdoor courtyard which is connected to their private exit and entrance where they can come and go freely. Those working with this population have been waiting anxiously for this option. The individuals slated to move into Brassard, have expressed joy in the opportunity to rest from their tiring lifestyle on the streets and in the shelter.

STABILIZATION UNITS

There are often times when Housing First participants find themselves very close to accessing permanent housing. In the short term they might have to wait for income, supports, or documentation. This is not a positive scenario for them. Having some place safe and free of the influences of the homeless life would make all the difference, yet there have been no options. Work is already

underway to establish several stabilization units to serve just such a purpose. Individuals or families, even youth under 18, that meet the criteria, will be able to move into a suite that has an ongoing paid lease. These units will be designed to be short term. When a service participant reaches the point where they are able to take on a lease themselves, they can choose to take over that stabilization unit. This would mean that a new stabilization unit would be located and leased to replace it. The other option would be, with the help of their Housing First worker, find something different and more appropriate for their needs. These units will be available to all Housing First teams.

POST RELEASE/ DISCHARGE HOUSING FIRST TEAM

One additional gap that has been identified is connected to both the Justice and Health system. Many individuals are released into homelessness from incarceration and psychi-

atry or acute care at the hospital. Often these individuals end up filling up staying at the shelter and/or couch surfing with others in the community, which puts their housing in jeopardy. In the worst case scenario, they could wind up sleeping rough in unsafe locations. It is our belief that the best way to prepare for someone's discharge or release is to begin the preparation as soon as possible after they have been admitted. The Post Release/ Discharge Housing First Team will have the responsibility of creating connections with both systems. Then they will need to create processes that will allow work to be done upon admittance, throughout the stay, and as release approaches, to ensure that whatever supports and housing arrangements are needed can be made. This will prevent many from entering into homelessness once released from these environments. Some connections and strategies have already begun as partnerships have been formed. This team will be assigned the task of continuing that work and jointly find ways to better facilitate

releases into the community.

CASTLE CONCIERGE

Following the vein of the need for permanent supportive housing, one floor of the Castle apartments is undergoing renovations to create the scene for another level of supportive housing. There will be 24 hour staff and supports available to assist with basic life skills. These suits will be mandated for individuals that have difficulty maintaining housing without some level of around the clock support available. Most of the difficulties facing this population are around cognitive barriers and mental health.

HOUSING FIRST FURNITURE BANK

The RFP went out and a successful proponent has been chosen to operate the Housing First Furniture Bank. The Salvation Army will be very shortly beginning a service that will provide newly housed Housing First participants the opportunity to turn their new house

into a home. Each newly housed participant will be able to go to the furniture bank and choose the items they want to furnish their home. This will be done at no cost to the clients. They will receive everything from living room furniture to table and chairs and beds. Even pictures to put up in their new house will be available. Once they have chosen their furniture, arrangements will be made to deliver the furniture at no cost to the client. This program will also serve as a venue for teaching Housing First participants with further opportunity to learn and develop employment skills through volunteer work at the furniture bank.

OTHER PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

It is quickly become apparent throughout the province, that there is a growing need for permanent supportive housing, Lethbridge is no different. It has been identified that there are approximately 20 more individuals requiring a similar level of supportive housing. However,

these individuals are more mobile and certain behaviors would make it difficult for them to integrate well in the Brassard world. Permanent supportive housing is seen as the most appropriate options for these clients. This is why a submission has been made to the province highlighting this issue as one of our current priorities and greatest needs.

There is also the identified need for housing specific to First Nation men and families leaving the Reserve to live in Lethbridge. Due to various factors, it is often difficult for them to find and secure permanent housing; therefore progress is being made to solidify housing options designated for that purpose.

10. EVENTS & TRAINING

Another aspect of ensuring a house is a home is the need for ongoing maintenance and general improvements. In the Housing First world, the same concept applies. This maintenance involves continuous training, professional development, and participation in events to enhance and promote growth for those that participate. With that in mind, it is vastly important to continue to provide those opportunities to the Housing First programs and others that support that work. This last year many of these kinds of opportunities were provided.

PROJECT CONNECT

Every year SHIA hosts two Project Connect events. One in the fall at the beginning of November, and the other is at the end of March.

This year was no different. These events provide a tremendous opportunity for connection and support to the marginalized members of our community. Twice a year the Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization (LSCO) opens its doors to a trade fair atmosphere of over 50 different services, organizations, and options. Anywhere from 250 – 400 participants, depending on the weather and other factors, register upon arrival, and receive a free bag provided by Lethbridge Housing Authority. At that point they are free to filter through the facility doing everything from getting a haircut and a photo to completing their taxes, getting immunized, accessing addiction support, and much more. They spend their time talking to agencies and gathering what they need from the many give away items and donations provided by agencies themselves and generous members of the community. There is live entertainment donated by members of a local growing band sensation the Bamboo Gup-



pies, and a free full course lunch provided, cooked, and served by the LSCO staff and local chapters of the Lions Club. Participants then complete an exit survey when leaving which provides us with understanding of how well their needs are being met and how we can improve the event and services for them. They take with them a free bag lunch provided by Covenant Health and a bus pass donated by the City of Lethbridge.

HOUSING AWARDS

This year SHIA hosted the 7th Annual Affordable Housing Awards Luncheon. This event is meant to highlight and honour the work being done by organizations and groups to enhance and support the housing efforts in the community. The awards are presented to projects that exemplify excellence in leadership, partnership, and innovation and design. The awards for 2012 went to:

Habitat for Humanity

After beginning in 1993, Habitat for Humanity Lethbridge officially became an affiliate with Habitat for Humanity Canada and received charitable status the next year. Their mandate is to eliminate sub-standard housing world-wide with non-discriminatory policies. They work with low-income families from any ethnic, social, or religious background. To date Habitat has built homes for over 26 families in Lethbridge. During the last build well over 150 volunteers came out to support what was happening. With the support of many local businesses and organizations, and 2 annual events to raise funds, they are able to continue to provide a valued service in the community. The City of Lethbridge and the Province of Alberta also assist in the cost of land acquisition and construction. Man-

aged by a volunteer board and just one part time staff, Habitat is able to have virtually all funds received go directly to the cost of each project. Habitat for Humanity strives to give families a “Hand Up” rather than a “Hand Out.”

The HOME Program

The HOME Program provides education, financial assistance and resources for families looking to move towards home ownership. While the program was originally developed to work with low and moderate income families it has been accessed by all income levels. The Program has provided homeownership education to over 4000 individuals and families and continues to work with over 1,650 families including 932 that have been



successful and are now part of The Tool Box, a post-purchase program to insure home ownership is sustained. The down payment or closing cost assistance is available to all participants.

The HOME Program, in cooperation with mortgage providers and insurers allows the individuals to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and to be given additional latitude within the current automated qualification systems now in use.

The Downtown Policing Unit (Downtown Beat)

The Downtown Beat unit is a 7 member team within the Community Policing Division of the Lethbridge Regional Police Service.

Current members include Sergeant Tiffany

Housworth, Constables – Joel Odorski, Braylon Hyggen, Josh Bucsis, Shaun Millband, Jonathan Blackwood and Bruce Hagel

Their primary area of responsibility is the downtown core and surrounding areas of influence which they patrol on foot and bike year round. The initial model of DBU was developed in 2008 as a response aimed at addressing chronic criminal and social issues in the downtown core of Lethbridge. In addition to several other duties, this small group of DBU members has frequent interactions with the homeless and disenfranchised individuals who spend much of their day downtown. Initially the group attempted to curb certain behaviours with the use of traditional police

tactics such as tickets and charges, but in many cases this Band-Aid approach provided short term solutions and only resulted in criminalizing social issues.

Members are now encouraged to be cognizant of the condition and needs of the individuals they are dealing with, and to focus their response on finding ways to modify, eliminate or reduce the negative behaviours. They work hard to connect individuals to Housing First Agencies, and others support services. They are very involved in outreach and case management activities, and have gone far above and beyond their traditional policing role to help individuals obtain the help and resources they need. Through their hard work they have developed strong positive relationships with many individuals

and have become advocates for those that seem to be falling through the cracks.



TRAINING

Training, education, and professionals development remains a priority for the Housing First programs in Lethbridge. This year training continued for the entire enterprise as well as with individual teams and separate staff members as needed to ensure that the necessary skill sets and knowledge is standard and consistent.

SPDAT

With the permission of Iain De Jong, President of OrgCode Consulting Inc. and developer of the SPDAT tool, the Housing First Specialist began the year by providing the Housing First teams with a basic SPDAT training. Then a short time later, Mr. De Jong came himself to provide an extended training to introduce an updated version of the SPDAT as well as the new Family SPDAT. Also this year, Mr. De Jong created and provided interested parties a Train the Trainer for the SPDAT. The Lethbridge CBO attended that and now has individuals certified to provide ongoing SPDAT training for Housing First teams. Since then there have been two additional SPDAT training sessions.

ICM

Intensive Case Management serves as the basis for the essential follow-up work being done with clients once they have been housed. This includes SPDAT and objective based home visits as well as visit frequency which is determined by acuity and the complexity of the individuals being served. ICM is not check-ins or phone calls or waiting for clients to show up at the office. ICM is direct, in home where the client is at, intensive work addressing the barriers to maintaining housing. A full two day ICM training was developed and delivered to all Housing First programs. Another ICM training time is being determined for the upcoming year.

ETO 101

With the importance of data collection and ensuring the outputs and outcomes of the Housing First initiative in Lethbridge is being monitored appropriately, it is essential that all programs are familiar and consistent with the use of the Efforts to Outcomes data base. Developed by the Grant and Event Support Coordinator at the Lethbridge CBO, ETO 101 is delivered on a regular basis either in a group setting or otherwise as needed to ensure that with staff turnover and new programs, all staff are educated properly to the workings and nuances of ETO. Agencies also have direct ongoing contact with the CBO for any ETO concerns that arise. ETO 101 was delivered twice in the last year.

Leadership

Current and up and coming leaders in the Housing First world in Lethbridge were invited to participate in a join leadership training with similar individuals from the Medicine Hat CBO. Jim Clemmer, a nationally renowned expert in the field and presenter of the Extraordinary Leader program, came for two days and facilitated an intense and inspiring seminar. Attendees were able to also participate in a 360 exercise and received professional feedback on the results. Seventeen members of the Lethbridge enterprise were able to attend and all gained valuable insight and directions for the future as leaders.

Motivational Interviewing

For this next year, a priority is being placed on accessing and implementing both a basic and advanced level of Motivational Interviewing training. Work is being done to acquire a trainer both certified to train in that area but also someone that can provide Housing First and homeless specific strategies and techniques with that intervention. This training will then become part of the standard required training in Lethbridge.

Family and Youth Housing First Conference

Professional development is important to gain ideas and learn what works in other parts of the world with Housing First. This year the Housing First Specialist had the opportunity to go to Seattle with a front line worker to participate in this sold out conference. Conferences such as this include sessions related to best practices, Housing First in general, new housing models, as well as new and unique methods of working with the homeless population. Each year there are conferences like this that are recommended by the Lethbridge CBO and some that scholarships are made to allow front line staff to attend.

11. THANK YOU

Our collaborative Community Partnerships, engaged and committed Housing First Agencies and Programs and the strong relationships with our municipal, provincial and federal funders will continue to be the firm foundation for the successful implementation of the 5 Year Plan. We are grateful to:

OUR FUNDERS

- The City of Lethbridge
- Alberta Human Services
- Service Canada – Homelessness Partnership Strategy

OUR HOUSING FIRST AGENCIES

- Community Outreach Team
- Wood's Homes Housing First Team
- Aboriginal Housing First Team
- Diversion Program
- Hestia Homes for Youth
- YWCA Residence
- HomeBASE

OUR PARTNERS

- 5th on 5th Youth Services
- Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge
- Aboriginal Housing Society
- Alberta Health Services (Seniors Health, Addiction & Mental Health)
- Alberta Human Services
- Alberta Justice
- Alberta Research Consortium on Ending Homelessness
- Allied Arts Council
- Architects
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Blackfoot Elders
- Canadian Mental Health
- Citizens of Lethbridge
- City of Lethbridge
- CMHA
- CMHC
- Covenant Health
- Downtown BRZ
- Faith Community
- Immigrant Services
- Lethbridge Alberta Works – Employment & Immigration

- Lethbridge College
- Lethbridge Corrections
- Lethbridge Emergency Shelter and Resource Centre
- Lethbridge Family Services
- Lethbridge Homebuilders
- Lethbridge Housing Authority
- Lethbridge Legal Guidance
- Lethbridge Regional Police Services
- Lethbridge School District 51
- McMan
- Metis Association
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)
- Real Estate Board
- Red Crow College
- Service Canada
- Southern Alberta Community Living Association (SACLA)
- Southern Alberta Self Help Association (SASHA)
- Southwest Child and Family Services
- Treaty 7 Urban Indian Housing Authority
- University of Calgary – Faculty Social Work



“Bringing Lethbridge Home’ is about truly ending homelessness...it’s a reality that’s now within reach. Let’s just do it!”

– **Dr. Gary Bowie**, Chair, Social Housing in Action, and
Diane Randell, *Apamakiitstanaki*, Manager, Community
& Social Development, City of Lethbridge



• BRINGING LETHBRIDGE HOME
PROGRESS REPORT 2013
WWW.BRINGINGLETHBRIDGEHOME.CA