

**FOR DISCUSSION: Focus of the Aylmer-Elgin-St. Thomas CSWB Plan  
CSWB Plan Coordinating Committee Meeting - February 18, 2021, 2:00 p.m.**

Integration of service system planning and leveraging resources for a proactive, balanced and collaborative response to big, complex issues that require an integrated solution, focusing on:

- Mental Health and Well-Being
- Housing Security
- Substance Use and Addiction
- Education And Skills Development
- Public Safety

The top issues identified in each of these areas through the engagement strategy are presented in the table below.

Priority Area	Identified Issues	Asset Inventory – What’s already being done?
<p><b>Mental Health and Well-Being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available and affordable mental health supports/resources/services/programs (lack of programs, supports and services, counsellors, long waiting lists)</li> <li>• Mental health supports/resources/services in the western part of Elgin County (West Lorne in particular) and in rural areas and small towns (Aylmer)</li> <li>• Mental health support for people living on the streets is very limited</li> <li>• The visible number of individuals with mental health issues in St. Thomas (especially the downtown core, Talbot Street), and the perceived threat to individual’s safety</li> <li>• Access to 24/7 crisis support needs to be available</li> <li>• Agencies need to work in a more coordinated fashion (referral protocol is needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victims Services Elgin offers 24 hour in-person, no appointment required support and transportation for women experiencing a mental health crisis</li> <li>• Wellkin is working on a health reform project with other local partners to move from silos to seamless collaboration, mapping crisis pathways and creating a coordinated mechanism for navigating the system</li> <li>• Wellkin has a child and youth wellness Hub</li> <li>• CMHA Elgin – Middlesex has a Reach out Line and a 24/7 web chat</li> <li>• West Elgin Community Health Centre has a mental health team</li> <li>• Conservation Authorities are beginning the discussion around green spaces and their contributions to wellness and mental health particularly given the COVID-19 pandemic</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is stigma around seeking help for mental health issues</li> <li>• Police and physicians need training to respond to mental health crises</li> <li>• Lack of resources for children and youth - the mental health of children and youth and resources to support them, including a focus on prevention</li> <li>• Resources to support the LGBTQ+ community</li> <li>• Housing options for individuals with mental health issues</li> <li>• The provision of wraparound care for individuals with mental health issues</li> <li>• Early intervention for mental health issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Top Areas of Focus Identified by the Advisory Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to services for residents (more resources, more counsellors, shorter wait lists)</li> <li>• 24/7 mental health supports</li> <li>• Streamlined access to services – one stop easy access</li> <li>• Supports for youth - both reactive and proactive. How can we prevent mental health crisis from escalating?</li> <li>• Street level solution – bring the services to the people</li> <li>• Early intervention for mental health issues</li> <li>• Reduce stigma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical intervention is offered through physicians</li> <li>• Elgin Mental Health and Addictions Network</li> <li>• Psychiatric Survivors Network of Elgin (PSNE) provides peer support (walk in, warmline or email)</li> <li>• SWPH is in the early stages of developing a mental health and wellness strategy and are close to completing a health equity position statement</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of all types of housing – The need for a range of diverse housing options, including</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of St. Thomas – micro-apartment construction at 614 Talbot Street</li> </ul>

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	<p>apartments, social housing, supportive housing, universal design units, transitional housing, etc. We need more stock across the County for the full range of housing. Housing location – proximity to transportation and employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A low vacancy rate/a lack of availability of rental housing</li> <li>• There are fewer supports available in the far east and west. They are further away from larger population centres</li> <li>• Rural areas have limited housing availability, a lack of rental property in rural Elgin</li> <li>• A lack of affordable housing</li> <li>• There is a need for more barrier free housing and universal design housing units. This is often overlooked in construction projects</li> <li>• There is a need for dementia-friendly spaces. With support, they could live on their own longer</li> <li>• People wishing to rent need credit checks, references, ID, etc. How/where can they get ID? Where do homeless people keep their ID?</li> <li>• An homelessness issue (especially in St. Thomas), hidden homelessness (couch-surfing), focus on Housing First as an approach to homelessness</li> <li>• For people who live in shelters, where do they go between open hours? Many go to the library, sleep there – this can present some challenges at the libraries (substance abuse). During COVID, the libraries have been closed or open with limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doug Tarry Homes has committed to building tiny homes</li> <li>• East Elgin Housing Initiative</li> <li>• Educating Police Services about dementia and homelessness (Alzheimer Society Elgin-St. Thomas)</li> <li>• St. Thomas-Elgin Affordable &amp; Social Housing Strategy</li> <li>• St. Thomas Social Housing</li> <li>• Pan-Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing</li> <li>• St. Thomas Central Community Health Centre helps people get documentation/ID needed for rental applications.</li> <li>• West Elgin Support Services is working on increasing supportive housing in the area (West Elgin Housing Working Group- WEHWG)</li> <li>• YWCA – Youth Homelessness Protocol</li> <li>• Municipal Councils considering the use of surplus lands</li> <li>• City of St. Thomas encouraging the creation of “granny suites”/Accessory Dwelling Units</li> <li>• Homelessness Matching System (Coordinated Access System Committee – rapid rehousing of those experiencing homelessness)</li> <li>• Housing and Homelessness Action Group</li> <li>• Inn out of the Cold</li> <li>• Indwell</li> </ul>

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	<p>capacity, where are they going now? Do they have access to washrooms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-think the shelter approach (move from shared shelter spaces to hotel rooms with health care supports)</li> <li>• System navigation – where do people go to learn about all the different housing options? Is there a centralized place with up-to-date and accurate information from this area?</li> <li>• Tenant vandalism may lead to a decrease in available rental properties. Property owners may want to get out of the rental market.</li> <li>• Unsafe housing</li> <li>• Too much focus on building condos/houses that are expensive to purchase</li> <li>• Youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities as populations with more vulnerability in the area of housing security</li> <li>• Need centralized intake/access to housing</li> </ul> <p><b>Top Areas of Focus Identified by the Advisory Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health and supportive housing</li> <li>• Seniors housing</li> <li>• Youth homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable housing – rental properties and new housing construction. Working with contractors to increase housing supply – if private builders build more rental properties/multi-resident housing/homes, current renters can move up to</li> </ul>	

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	<p>the next level and free up rental properties. Have to work on supply first and then affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System navigation – where should people go if they need to find housing?</li> <li>• Reduce stigma around homelessness</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Substance Use and Addiction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of education needed on substance use, early intervention is critical</li> <li>• Number of naloxone kits distributed is having an influence on number of hospital visits – more treatments on street by police / EMS, less urgent trips to hospital</li> <li>• Downtown St. Thomas the main driver, need to canvas users and gain their feedback such as having a survey and staff person ask questions at places like Out of the Cold</li> <li>• Aylmer noticing more visible signs of usage – municipal staff now cleaning up sharps in parks and this can’t be sustained by municipalities</li> <li>• There is a perceptual problem in downtown St. Thomas that it is not safe</li> <li>• Attitudes on safe injection sites with safe supply have to change – there is a role for SWPH and community health centres to provide support services at these sites</li> <li>• Alcohol is still the biggest challenge and impact</li> <li>• We need a safe-injection/consumption site – safe supply is part of this which mitigates street cutting of drugs with substances like fentanyl (London provides a good model)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Community Health Centre (supported by SWPH) is working with partners to develop an Elgin Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy</li> <li>• SWPH launching a needle management strategy for the City of St. Thomas this spring</li> <li>• Needle exchange kits being distributed by Central Community Health Centre</li> <li>• Updated school curriculum does include lessons on substance abuse, dangers</li> <li>• Clinic 217 has a doctor working with community agencies, Thames Valley Health Team on rapid access to addiction treatment model</li> <li>• Being factored into non-profit housing planning, counselling services and space – challenge is that housing is often municipal but health care services provincial</li> <li>• SWPH is leading a tool on system navigation in concert with local agencies</li> <li>• Addiction Services Thames Valley programs and services</li> <li>• CCHC and SW Public Health harm reduction programs</li> <li>• Elgin Mental Health and Addictions Network</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addictions is increasing and is very prevalent in St. Thomas, specifically in the core of the city</li> <li>• Concerns with discarded needles</li> <li>• A growing overdose/opioid crisis</li> <li>• There is a stigma attached to addictions and public education should be a focus</li> <li>• Lack of services, supports and resources in this area, especially in small communities (need treatment programs, and a rehab centre)</li> <li>• Need to focus on wraparound, accessible care in the moment and harm reduction for those who do not want support from the system right now</li> </ul> <p><b>Top Areas of Focus Identified by the Advisory Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile Outreach Team - Full wraparound services, involving health professional involved with police services, a team in the field with services available beyond business hours so that the police do not always have to respond</li> <li>• Plan needs to enhance awareness of what addiction is and encompass alcohol and tobacco as these challenges are county-wide and widespread – recommendations of Elgin Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy involving CCHC need to be considered as that work includes people with lived experiences which may be missing in data gained through plan</li> <li>• A safe injection site (St. Thomas)</li> <li>• Consultations with primary care physicians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tobacco: Regional Tobacco Control Area Networks focus on prevention, cessation, protections/enforcement; tobacco cessation programs with local agencies and across the province (e.g., Smokers' Helpline)</li> <li>• Ontario Public Health Collaboration on Cannabis (shared resources, knowledge exchange)</li> </ul>

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<b>Education And Skills Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make access to supports easier</li> <li>• Reduce stigma</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education should support all abilities, be culturally sensitive, support diversity and anti-discrimination</li> <li>• Life skills training, skills training for jobs, and lifelong learning are important</li> <li>• Lack of school resources in West Elgin</li> <li>• Digital literacy</li> </ul> <p><b>Top Areas of Focus Identified by the Advisory Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life skills education</li> <li>• Need for ongoing adult education</li> <li>• Increase the high school graduation rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fanshawe College</li> <li>• TVDSB Adult Education</li> <li>• YWCA upgrading</li> <li>• Adult literacy programming</li> <li>• ESL</li> <li>• Continuing education</li> <li>• School boards</li> <li>• Post-secondary</li> <li>• Youth Independence Program at YWCA</li> <li>• EMO Workforce Planning and Development Board</li> <li>• Literacy Link South Central (service planning)</li> <li>• YWCA/Fanshawe providing digital literacy</li> <li>• St. Thomas Public Library has a program that people in St Thomas are able to access that helps them practice using online platforms</li> <li>• Connected Canadians is another resource available to help people learn online platforms</li> <li>• Adult literacy programs (3) in Elgin County already have expertise in digital literacy and provide programming to individuals in their programs</li> </ul>
<b>Public Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People want to feel safe where they live</li> <li>• St. Thomas was named more frequently as a community with more criminal activity</li> <li>• There is not a lot of serious crime in Aylmer-Elgin-St. Thomas, but that they are experiencing and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Thomas Police Services</li> <li>• Aylmer Police</li> <li>• Elgin OPP</li> <li>• St. Thomas-Elgin Safe Communities Coalition</li> <li>• Victim Witness Assistance Program</li> </ul>

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	<p>hearing about break-ins, petty theft, property theft, drug use and drug trafficking, animal cruelty, and human trafficking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages between criminal activity and other elements of community safety and well-being, including mental health issues, addictions, poverty, food security, unemployment, housing/homelessness, social inclusion/a sense of belonging and/or education</li> </ul> <p><b>Top Areas of Focus Identified by the Advisory Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not discussed by the Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim Services Elgin</li> <li>• Community Policing Committees</li> <li>• Elgin St. Thomas Safe Communities Coalition (prevention of injuries and deaths in local workplaces, on area roads and in all aspects of life. Priorities include: Motor vehicle collisions, falls, sports and recreation, abuse and self-harm, assault and abuse)</li> </ul>

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