

# Complex Needs Housing

Equity, opportunity and belonging for people living with complex needs



## WHAT ARE COMPLEX NEEDS?

Complex needs refer to the broad and diverse group of individuals who experience overlapping mental and substance use disorders, multiple developmental disabilities, acquired brain injuries or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) often resulting in the experience of homelessness, along with being frequent users of crisis and emergency services.

Supports are often provided by a multitude of different organizations, in a variety of locations across the community, creating barriers to access for people with complex needs. Roughly 250 individuals in the Central Okanagan had moderate to very high complex needs in 2020. These individuals are someone's child, parent or relative—with their own unique stories and experiences—who require support to move from surviving to thriving.

**Safe, reliable housing is a right for everyone, including people who experience complex needs.**

## WHY IS HOUSING AND SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS IMPORTANT?

**Housing is a basic human right.** Housing is among the most important determinants of health and well-being. It provides a sense of identity, belonging and social support. Supporting people experiencing homelessness and reducing poverty contribute to making Kelowna safe and inclusive for our most housing vulnerable.

**An appropriate model of supportive housing is lacking in the provincial system.** The provision of housing with integrated supports is needed to enhance the continuum of care.

Systems and institutions that perpetuate racism and colonial exclusion need to be decolonized, barriers to education, training and employment removed and trauma-informed care introduced.

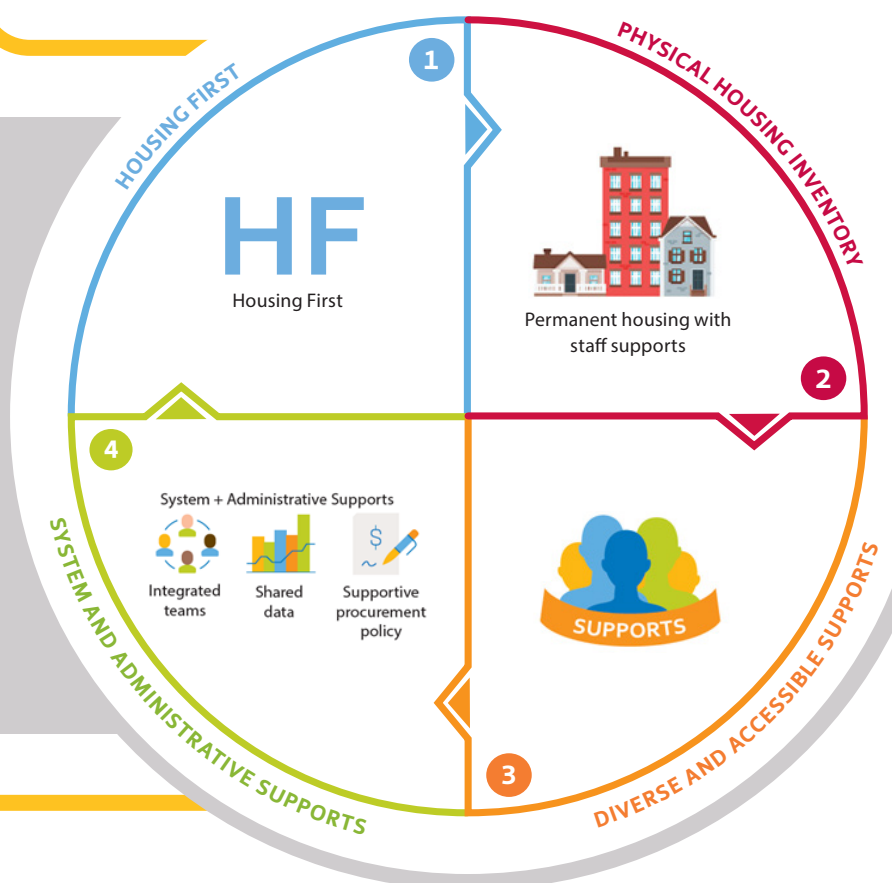
**Housing with health supports for people with complex needs is cost effective.** Failing to provide housing and health supports requires continued crisis responses at a cost to social, health care and justice systems.

## WHAT WE KNOW

- 50-75% of clients accessing social services experience complex needs.
- There is a need to address the stigma that follows people with complex needs.
- There is a lack of qualified staff with specific training to support individuals with complex needs.
- There is no housing designed specifically for people with complex needs, although Ellis Place aims to provide greater supports for this population.
- Solutions need to incorporate Indigenous leadership, cultural safety and belonging.
- People with complex needs who live outside the main centres of Vernon and Kelowna need to travel which is a barrier to access.

## WHAT DOES A MODEL FOR COMPLEX NEEDS LOOK LIKE?

The Journey Home Housing First approach prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, ending their experience of homelessness and serving as a platform for them to access the supports they need.



**Complex Care Housing supports the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society's goal of eliminating homelessness by 2024.**

## WHY DOES REGIONAL ADVOCACY MATTER?

To understand how to provide safe and supportive housing to those with the most complex needs in our community, the City of Kelowna, the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society and consultants from Urban Matters developed an evidence-based Advocacy Paper. The City has since initiated a regional coalition that includes the City of Vernon, City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, and Okanagan Indian Band. The Complex Needs Housing Initiative aspires to create further dialogue across the organizations involved to make decisions on next steps together.

- 1 HOUSING FIRST:** Housing First moves people experiencing homelessness rapidly into stable long-term housing with supports.
- 2 PHYSICAL HOUSING INVENTORY:** Housing types for people with complex needs range from 3-5 unit townhomes to 20-40 unit apartments.
- 3 DIVERSE AND ACCESSIBLE SUPPORTS:** On-site staff, direct access to specialists and complementary community health supports.
- 4 SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS:** Shifts in system design, service delivery, data systems and procurement processes are required. Potentially create a new third-party entity to provide supports with appropriate procurement models that encourage innovation.