

Report to Dearness Home Committee of Management

To: Chair and Members
Dearness Home Committee of Management
From: Leslie Hancock, Administrator, Dearness Home
Subject: Realigning Resident Accommodation at Dearness Home
Date: February 17, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Administrator, Dearness Home, and the concurrence of the Acting Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, this report related to the reduction of the number of secure Home areas from two to one at the Dearness Home BE RECEIVED for information.

Executive Summary

Dearness Home currently operates two care units that are equipped with secure exit doors and are optimized to provide space for residents with cognitive challenges who may seek to leave the building. Moving to a single secure unit will more closely align the provision of secure accommodation with the demonstrated need.

In reducing the number of secure units from two to one, the total number of beds at Dearness Home will remain unchanged at 243 long term care beds.

The move to one secure unit will mean that Dearness Home is still able to ensure that all exit seeking residents enjoy a physical environment that is tailored to their needs. Additionally, a single secure unit will mean that elevated hours of care and the attention of staff with superior skills and training will be concentrated, optimizing the care and quality of life of the residents that meet the criteria for such a unit, primarily exit seeking residents.

Because 22% of Dearness accommodation is currently secure, the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) presses the Home to admit a disproportionately large number of mobile and potentially physically or sexually aggressive people who are suffering from cognitive decline. This delays filling empty beds as due diligence to avoid inappropriate admissions can be lengthy. Operating fewer secure beds will reduce the number of inappropriate persons being put forward for admission by the LHIN and should shorten the time needed to admit residents. This will help ensure the available beds at Dearness are more fully utilized by the community.

The timing of this recommendation coincides with a unique opportunity presented by the pandemic, where the Home has experienced a significant number of empty beds. Acting now to implement a reduction in the number of secure units in the Home can benefit the admission process, address bed vacancy challenges, better utilize staffing resources, and can be accommodated for the individuals currently residing in these units without undue disruption.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The proposed change in provision of service for exit seeking residents supports the goal of Leading in Public Service by better matching service to demand, thereby ensuring resources are concentrated and accommodation is most appropriate for all residents.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

Dearness Home provides long term care for 243 residents in 9 care units that each house 27 residents. 2 care units are presently designated as secure: 1 is located on the

ground floor (1 east) and the other is on the third floor (3 west).

Secure units have coded exit doors and a wander guard system (which sounds an alarm and locks the unit's door when a resident wearing a bracelet tries to leave). They are intended to help ensure the safety of residents who actively seek to leave the Home and would be in danger if they did so. However, as deteriorating health progresses, many of those who initially require secure accommodation cease to exit seek or lose the mobility to do so.

Residents who are mobile and exit seeking are often younger and more physically able. Some are also verbally and/or physically aggressive and may pose a risk to other residents and staff. Targeted but limited government funding helps Dearness train and deploy some staff with special skills to deescalate these behaviours, but the overall government funding model does not fund the additional staff hours the Home must schedule to provide appropriate care.

As the vast majority of those in need of care do not require secure accommodation, many long term care Homes have never had secure units and others that did have them, including Homes run by other municipalities, have reduced their number of beds or eliminated them altogether.

Should Dearness Home move to only operating one secure unit the overall number of beds accommodating residents will remain unchanged. At this point in the pandemic, in part due to being unable to admit residents who cannot maintain 14 days of isolation after admission to the Home, there are several empty beds at Dearness Home, which would allow for a relatively quick transition and change.

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

None

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 What are the Advantages of Moving to One Secure Unit at Dearness Home?

With more than 1 in 5 beds at Dearness Home being secure, provision of beds for exit seeking residents exceeds demand. Experience shows that the proportion of residents in the two secure units that truly require that level of restriction to help prevent them leaving is usually around 50%, so reducing to a single unit will better accommodate actual need.

Redesignating the 3rd floor secure unit to non-secure and utilizing just our 1st floor secure unit will mean that all exit seeking residents can enjoy the unit that is designed for their special needs. Unlike the 3rd floor unit, the 1st floor location provides safe access to a nicely landscaped and securely fenced external garden area for risk free recreation. The first floor unit also provides unique physical adaptations to spark memory and provide comfort. Purpose built provision includes a snoezelin room, with sensory stimulation apparatus, and both a virtual laundry and a virtual nursery, which look realistic by combining physical features with large wall murals

Moving to a single secure unit will mean that the investment in additional staffing hours needed to cope with exit seeking residents can be flowed to one unit instead of being watered down by being split between two units. This additional oversight will help prevent employee and staff injuries. Also, those staff with a special aptitude for caring for this challenging resident population will be concentrated, enhancing care, engagement and quality of life.

A reduction in the number of secure units will allow residents who no longer require such accommodation, due to physical or cognitive decline since admission, to live in a quieter, general care environment that is more in tune with their needs. This is

supported by the Long Term Care Homes Act, which sees living in a secure unit as an environmental constraint that should be removed from those who do not need it.

Operating only a single secure unit will reduce the number of aggressive and mobile people that the LHIN presses Dearness Home to admit. Such individuals, who often are suffering cognitive decline or brain injury, may cause employee and resident distress and injuries, and their actions sometimes require police intervention and/or transfer to hospital. Declining their admission is problematic as there are limited grounds under the legislation to refuse those ill-suited to the limited resources long term care can offer. Where the LHIN successfully argues those limited grounds to decline are exceeded, sanctions may be applied to the Home by the Ministry of Long Term Care.

2.2 Do we need to retain the Current Number of Secure Beds at Dearness Home?

There is no legal requirement to provide secure care units in the Long Term Care Homes Act and Regulations or in our service agreement with the LHIN.

Many Long Term Care Homes have never offered secure accommodation, and others that did have since removed them (such as municipal Homes in Lambton County).

Based on our experience regarding the proportion of residents that truly need secure accommodation, moving to a single secure unit will adequately service the need in our community.

2.3 Why is now the time to make this change?

Pre-pandemic, Dearness Home was normally at or almost at capacity, making it almost impossible to move residents within the Home.

During the pandemic, regulation requires Dearness Home to plan to successfully isolate all newly admitted residents in their room for 14 days. As candidates for secure accommodation cannot comply with this requirement, filling the empty secure beds is almost impossible, robbing the health system of much-needed accommodation.

Due to the secure admission problem and other issues with LHIN placement during the pandemic, Dearness Home currently has many unoccupied beds and there is a unique opportunity to move residents to more appropriate care settings.

3.0 Key Issues and Considerations

3.1. What are the challenges presented by moving to one secure unit, and the suggested solutions?

Where families of exit seeking residents who will be asked to move from 3rd floor to 1st floor are concerned about the change, management will explain the reasons why the move will benefit their loved-one (see “Advantages” above).

If families of non-exit seeking residents currently living in secure units question the need to make these changes, management will explain that the secure area is no longer required for the resident and other Home areas are very similar, better suited to their needs and quieter.

Where it becomes apparent that a resident newly admitted to the Home actually has previously unknown or undisclosed exit seeking behaviour, or where a current resident develops such behaviour, Dearness may work with the family to move the individual to the secure area. Where the secure unit is at capacity with appropriately accommodated residents, the exit seeking individual may be moved to 3 West (the former secure unit) which will retain the wander-guard security that can secure the door if they attempt to leave. As an additional safety measure, the main entrance to the Dearness Home, which is the only exit point unprotected directly or indirectly by card

access security, also features wander-guard technology (locks and alarm sounds when a resident wearing a wander-guard bracelet attempts to leave).

The LHIN may express concern regarding a reduced number of secure beds. Assurance will be given by Dearness management that the Home retains an appropriate level of secure accommodation. Management will also point out that moving forward it will be easier to fill many of our currently empty beds during the pandemic.

4.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

Moving from two to a single secure area will not negatively impact funding. The formula for Government (base) funding is calculated on a per resident/per day basis, regardless of the accommodation type or the designation of the unit. Resident/family co-payments for accommodation are set by accommodation type (private or basic) and remain the same in either secure or non-secure units.

A proportion of the government funding varies according to the particular needs of the residents in the Home as measured by the RAI MDS assessment system, which is populated by computerized inputs from Dearness Home staff. The current RAI MDS based CMI funding model does not provide for the extra time spent dealing with those cognitively challenged residents who exit seek, but it does reward time spent with those who require more physical assistance. As we anticipate that the overall mix of residents will remain consistent with the proposed change, we anticipate needs based funding will remain stable.

We anticipate lower WSIB costs will flow from accommodating all exit seeking residents together, due to the concentration of the additional staffing Dearness Home provides for their needs in only 1 care unit.

Conclusion

Although some residents require secure accommodation at Dearness Home, the current provision exceeds demand.

Moving all those in need of secure care to a single care unit will provide exit seeking residents with the most appropriate environment and more hours of care, guided by staff with enhanced skills. Those currently accommodated in a secure unit who no longer need to be there will live in general care units better attuned to their needs.

There are no regulatory concerns raised by the proposed change, the risk of inappropriate admissions will be reduced and there will not be a negative financial impact. Service provision to the community will be unaffected.

Recommended by: Leslie Hancock, Administrator, Dearness Home
Concurred by: Kevin Dickins, Acting Managing Director Housing,
Social Services and Dearness Home

CC: L. Livingstone, City Manager
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