

Poverty Stakeholders Meeting

October 12, 2012

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Lee Manor Auditorium

875 6th St. East, Owen Sound

Welcome:

Francesca Dobbyn welcomed attendees and roundtable introductions were made.

Notes from Previous Meeting:

Notes from meeting held on July 31, 2012 were distributed and reviewed. Shared vision of poverty reduction in community was reviewed.

Operation Sharing Meeting Notes:

Notes from September 25th delegation trip to Woodstock distributed and reviewed. Attendees provided insight to experiences of Operation Sharing and what it could mean for our own Grey Bruce community, given the resources already in place through various service agencies and organizations. Delegation attendees indicated the trip was a great experience and that there are many opportunities for local planning to learn from the work already completed in Woodstock. Key learnings were identified, with particular emphasis to communication as it was stressed by Board Members of Operation Sharing that even after 30 years of program development communication can still be an issue and must remain a priority. Barb Fedy reported the supportive nature of the hosts at Operation Sharing and indicated a \$150.00 donation to the Soup Kitchen had been made on behalf of the delegation as a token of appreciation for the day of learning. Other documents from Operation Sharing provided to meeting attendees including brochure with services identified and upcoming pilot training program that will be offered as a short term residential course to explore ways to overcome poverty, taking place in Woodstock from Nov 22-27th.

Participant Exercise:

Francesca facilitated balance of meeting through identifying that big picture thinking is needed for effective planning. An exercise was utilized to encourage meeting attendees to:

1.) Identify their organization's most pressing needs as follows:

- Fiscal responsibilities are a challenge as more funds are needed to help deliver programs
- Volunteers with specific skills are needed, particularly in area of administration
- Partnerships, organizations with the capacity to partner
- Political will, staff are engaged but need political support to build programs/services
- Political connection/community engagement
- Housing stock needs to be affordable, available and suitable
- Sustainability to continue supports is a challenge once people are housed
- Availability of services and coordination of services

- Need to continue to build inroads to work collaboratively with services we do have
- Need political engagement at all levels, not only municipal, need to be able to influence legislative changes
- Need more time to address the volumes of work
- There is a disconnect with ministries/decision makers for time requirements to change programs and/or complete grant applications
- Rural based expectations

2.) Identify what are the factors creating these needs:

- Lack of knowledge in community re how much poverty costs
- Increased cost of living
- Depressed wage rates
- Govn't supports not tied to inflation
- Linear thinking, inside silos. i.e. grocery sales in 2nd week of month when there is no money left for families on assistance, hydro payments
- Policies geared to urban Ontario i.e. transportation
- General economy
- Move to part time jobs with no benefits
- Shame based culture re low income/disability/mental health
- Nimby (not in my back yard attitudes)
- Shift from industrial based economy to knowledge based economy
- Need to shift from current—hapless/unwilling/undeserving to helpless/those who can't/deserving system of service delivery
- Culture based on thought that if individuals work hard, success and independence will come to you and if you don't make it, it is your fault (Western culture thinking) VS European culture thinking where it is a collective responsibility as a country to look after our people i.e 3 yr mat leaves
- Culture of fear abroad in community of people who are different, unknown
- Removing programs despite the need (i.e. education decision to remove tech courses in elementary education, removal of alternative school programs although both were successful)
- Right hand vs left hand leads to lack of cohesive planning
- Devaluation of education (i.e. 20-30% of 30-60 yr olds in Grey Bruce do not have high school education completed)
- Unwritten class structure in Grey Bruce
- Lack of job opportunities
- Decentralization moving to regionalization (CCAC) for a further disconnect with community
- Tightening of eligibility criteria for services
- Owen Sound draws people without reason to come , lack support when they are here
- Lack of local input to planning

3.) Identify what's working well:

- Communication in certain sectors
- Community responds well in a crisis
- Willing to learn from others/look at alternative solutions
- Rural connections are such an asset, have to know one another to make it work whereas urban programs work in silos and they don't know one another, leads to duplication
- Friendly turf protection, competitive
- Have been positive changes when can bend the mandates and be somewhat flexible
- Embraced social determinants of health
- Not afraid to advocate and hold organizations to their mandate
- Significant provincial support (i.e. Min of Health evidence based health promotions locally such as alcohol program can therefore back up the case that is being made)

4.) Identify what needs to improve:

- Buy-in so community understands why it's their problem too. Changes language from "them" to "us".
- Continue to share good data to build a better case for funding opportunities. Collective info sharing is needed to create a picture to community at large
- People who utilize the services need to be included in discussion, dialogue and planning
- Share successes to enlighten/motivate community
- Front line staff can build capacity, then can support more in need and continue success
- Need to allow services to do what they can and better use resources
- Need to change attitudes
- Need to speak as "one"
- Must break down terms such as "poverty" and "homeless" as are too vague
- Need a designated clear speaker on poverty in community, there is no designated champion/advocate but must find someone that is trusted

5.) Lessons:

- Need collective voice, people need access to all supports/services and not just one
- What is important is Person
- Must ask what it is the person needs, not what the service provider thinks they need
- People with lived experience need to be part of the solution, they will guide to what is needed and can advise regarding policy development
- Need to ensure message is out to community at large, converted are already on board

6.) Going forward:

- Continue to meet
- Suggestion for updates from parties around table to ensure everyone knows what is happening in each service organization
- Agenda to be circulated to motivate attendance

- Provide update to Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and changes to Community Start Up Benefit at next meeting
- Continue communications flow
- Invite other sectors to the table for discussions, such as police, mental health and addictions, Salvation Army

Roundtable Updates:

- Good food box update provided (15.00 per box for fresh fruit and veggies in season), 18 sites across Grey and Bruce with Owen Sound having over 100 boxes accessed but is temporarily suspended due to administrative issues. Current regrouping and seeking help from someone with financial background. Hoping to be back in operation for Dec. Currently those in Owen Sound who can are using other communities for delivery.
- VLC has been operating for 12 years and is citing an increase in violence lately. Trying to determine if they should continue services and if they chose to continue, how to do so. With little support, VLC has operated 24 hrs/day every of year and the challenge is that if they stop, what happens to people who come to the door. They are providing services at a major subsidy as they believe it is more advantageous to shelter people in need than turn them away.
- OSHaRE members travelled to Woodstock and participated in overview of Operation Sharing. Report that they are appreciating all of the efforts happening in community. Their plans for meal provision include hot supper meal 5 days/week night. This allows for sustainability after initial launch with Heart for Hungry on Valentine's Day in 2013. Supper meal important to OSHaRE as will address families with kids after school and also for health conditions such as diabetes needs through the night. There are currently 6 people on board of incorporated OSHaRE of faith background along with many others. The plan is continue to support other services such as Union Place brunch program and Kitchen Table soup kitchen. There is hope to share space with other organizations such as Safe'n Sound to allow as many groups as possible for people in need to access.
- Y Housing is continuing work to prevent evictions and homelessness. Busy summer and people seem to need many more supports, not just one issue to be resolved. Most recent 2 months have seen very hard to serve such as substance abuse, mental health needs. Intention from Y is to provide housing so the client can then have access to other needed supports. Praise for staff as they are working diligently to fill needs and are working collaboratively with partners in community. Staff are listening to people and not letting personal judgement/standards get in the way of helping. Have started a 3 month follow up with clients and are also working through budgets with clients at intake as prevention. TIP—people in need of cell phones for contact can access for \$37.00/month through Cellerama
- Ontario Works is struggling with changing programs, funding decreases and more clients to serve. Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative outlined effective Jan 2013 but more detail to be provided at next meeting re Community Start Up Benefit changes. Caseloads continue to climb. Also emphasized that although many organizations service

clients in both Grey and Bruce Counties, they operate differently and eligibility criteria for some benefits is different, creating a challenge for service providers and clients.

- Grey County Housing update included changes to Ontario Renovates as is now operating through County. There is money available in some programs for forgivable loans over 10 years. Further funds could be accessed for accessibility needs. Home ownership program continues but challenged by changed mortgage rules.
- Public Health received money from Min of Health for 2 positions and is addressing health equity. There is work with lower tiers to complete assessment tools with new developments regarding impacts to sum communities contained within communities (i.e. accessible, low income). Looking at info and data to determine what areas have what and what is needed in others. Current examination of existing health unit programs to see if they are reaching most vulnerable people. Starting Nov 1 programs are addressing healthy eating, physical activity and there will be cooking classes at OEYC for community that will run through to end of May. Food Grey Bruce is going to be giving out cards to people who have food needs. They are working with grocery stores to do so. Hope to launch for people who have emergency needs.

Next Meeting: Set for Friday November 2, 2012 at Lee Manor Auditorium