

A Framework: Older Adult Strategy for Waterloo-Wellington

Briefing Note

Situation

Vexing challenges and persistent barriers are facing health system transformation, including those that threaten the betterment of an aging society.

Nevertheless, opportunities exist to reorient, better align and deepen the integration of care, services and supports for people as they age in our region.

This Framework is offered to help shape systems, services and supports across the WWLHIN sub regions to help best meet the evolving needs of all older adults in Waterloo Wellington over the next 10 years.

Background

Beginning in February 2018 and guided by the Waterloo-Wellington Older Adult Strategy Advisory Committee, the Research Institute for Aging (RIA), in collaboration with stakeholders, embarked on an extensive review and engagement process — *listening to understand* the needs, concerns, perceptions, ideas and recommended solutions for strengthening our local health system to better support people, communities and populations as they age.

We are fortunate to live and work in a region known for its strength in innovation and technology; an area where creativity and leadership come together to solve local challenges, rally around progress and achieve results.

Assessment

General areas for action in which the WWLHIN can show bold and courageous leadership emerged, including the need to:

- Optimize competencies for non-physician health providers
- Deepen the integration of health and social services to improve health equity and reduce health disparity
- Intensify prospective needs-based planning
- Address persistent barriers to information sharing
- Facilitate clearer communication within the health system and with the general public
- Advance regional and whole-of-community approaches to better support population aging and quality of life
- Reorient systems, services and supports around functional areas to reduce structural complexity

Recommendations

Driving purposeful change at the health system level will mean bringing together health and social services in a more coordinated and responsive way to better address the very real needs that older adults and their families are facing, not only today but into the future.

Resting upon a series of priority pillars and key enablers, this Framework offers six overarching and interrelated goals for consideration as foundational to the Waterloo-Wellington Older Adult Strategy:

1. Waterloo-Wellington citizens age well within communities that celebrate their life in society and contributions to their communities, thriving through dignity, purpose, belonging and inclusion.
2. All people living in Waterloo-Wellington are exposed to the conditions and experiences that support optimal health throughout the lifecourse/lifespan.
3. The Waterloo-Wellington health system is designed and coordinated in a way that realizes deep functional integration and the appropriate use of health resources to achieve optimal system capacity in support of an aging population.
4. The Waterloo-Wellington health system fully leverages and capitalizes on intra and intersectoral collaboration, offering a whole-of-community orientation to health, well-being and quality of life.
5. Older adults living in Waterloo-Wellington have universal access to the highest quality of care, services and supports — those that emphasize excellence in safety, effectiveness, person-centredness, timeliness, efficiency and equity.
6. The Waterloo-Wellington health system plays a pivotal and functional role in enabling the empowerment of people as they age, their caregivers and the health and social service providers they rely upon.

Actions

In developing this Framework, the WWLHIN has demonstrated the type of collaborative leadership that will be required to realize sustained movement on key structural, process and outcome improvements.

Moving forward, efforts to catalyze the integration of ideas and collaborative efforts will go far to normalize a new way of working to best serve older adults and their families for years to come. This can begin now, by:

- Better targeting health policy, services and social supports to reduce exposure to the conditions that predispose vulnerability will better support optimal aging in our communities.
- Further confirming and validating the Framework as the basis for a comprehensive strategy.
- Articulating strategic directions and outcomes, including the development of an integrated service delivery implementation plan and a measurement and reporting framework that maps to a series of strategic objectives to achieve measurable improvements for older adults, caregivers, providers and the overall health system in Waterloo-Wellington.
- Harnessing and building strategic leadership to mobilize a coalition of the ready, willing and able
- Ensuring system stewardship and accountability.

Conclusion

This report represents the beginning of a movement that has sparked momentum and captured the wealth of goodwill, insight, effort and expertise that exist across Waterloo-Wellington. It proposes the next step in a journey toward a transformed health system that supports healthy aging and ensures a better quality of life for all people in our region.

At a regional level, collaborative leadership will mean figuring out the most effective and efficient way to cluster services according to functional roles and service dimensions. Indeed, reducing gaps and fragmentation will serve to improve multilevel outcomes related to health, patient and family experience and value. Community-based planning at the sub-LHIN region level will help to determine leadership and accountability, oversight and a model of integration appropriate to the local context.