

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.	03-07-97-0127
Your File/V/Réf.	
DATE	4 February 1997
TO/DEST.	Co-ordinator Community Services Committee
FROM/EXP.	Commissioner, Social Services Department
SUBJECT/OBJET	RESPONSE TO CSC MOTION #3 - CONVALESCENT CARE FOR MEN WHO ARE HOMELESS

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

In response to correspondence from the Chair of the Street Health Coalition to the Community Services Committee concerning the lack of services and accommodation for men who are homeless and who require convalescent care, the Department was asked to comment on the services available in this area. The Street Health Coalition is a community coalition of organizations who work together to address the health needs of the persons who are homeless. This report provides an update on activities and issues related to this matter.

THE NEED FOR CARE

The concern raised by the Street Health Coalition relates to problems that arise when homeless men accessing hospital services are not ill enough to be admitted but are not well enough to be on the street or in regular shelter care. Often the decision not to admit to the hospital is based on the assumption that the individual has a home to return to and perhaps someone to provide basic care for a short period of time.

In addition, illnesses like the flu and colds develop into more serious and costly to treat illnesses when persons are unable to rest or have fluids and adequate nutrition. Conditions like fractured limbs or ulcers are difficult to heal when clients have to walk the streets all day. The Street Health Coalition noted that shelters and day programs lack the capacity to adequately respond to the needs of these men.

Representatives from the Social Services Department and from Home Care met with the Street Health Coalition and discharge planners from area hospitals to address the issues.

THE SPECIAL CARE UNIT AT THE SALVATION ARMY BOOTH CENTRE

In response to the concerns that were raised, the Salvation Army established a Special Care Unit at its Booth Centre in early 1995 to accommodate men with special needs. The Special Care Unit shelters men who require physiotherapy or occupational therapy but are unable to access these services in the community, and men who have an illness or injury that requires rest or medical attention. The unit also accommodates men with mental health difficulties who require a quiet environment and/or privacy.

All shelters serving men can refer persons to this unit. A Client Admission Review Board, made up of representatives from the shelters and from community agencies, assesses the men referred for admission. Ongoing collaboration with several community agencies ensures the appropriate management and support to the men who are admitted.

Over a 10 month period, the unit sheltered 25 men who stayed 92 days on average. The average age of those admitted was 50. Over 70% of the men were residing in other shelters or were homeless before admission to the Special Care Unit.

Home Care has made services available to all the shelters to ensure that persons with physical difficulties could gain access to required treatment in their immediate place of residence.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

At a meeting of the Shelter Advisory Committee on September 18, 1996, at which the chair of the Street Health Coalition was present, progress in regards to this issue was discussed. Views were expressed that the Special Care Unit was a valuable addition to the resources available for men requiring convalescent care or other special attention. In addition the provision of home care services in the shelters was greatly valued.

It was noted however that concerns still exist for some vulnerable men and women who require additional care and attention. In particular the Special Care Unit does not have an elevator thus limiting its access. In addition, there are insufficient services and supports to help persons who are without family or friends and living alone, to remain in their accommodation when they are seriously ill. There are a number of men in the terminal stages of AIDS, who are not willing to enter the shelters and as a result little care can be provided.

The Street Health Coalition will pursue these unresolved issues and will seek solutions to address them.

Approved by

Dick Stewart

cc: Wendy Muckle, SHCHC