

4. Aging in Place

Vision

Yukoners can access the health and social services and supports needed to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own home or community for as long as they wish to, or are able, regardless of age, income, or ability level.

Why Aging in Place is important

Current resources are not always being used effectively or efficiently. In some cases, Yukoners are not receiving the appropriate care at the right time. As a result, these gaps prevent some seniors from aging in place.

We have found that in Yukon, people are admitted to long-term care homes earlier than in most other jurisdictions. Long-term care homes provide a high level of costly care and, for many seniors, this level of care isn't necessary. In some cases, the care needed can be provided in the community, at a much lower cost and in a more familiar location. In addition, the Aging in Place engagement heard that many seniors want to stay in their homes and communities, but a broader continuum of services and supports are needed. Most importantly, seniors, elders and those who are frail want to maintain their independence for as long as possible.

How our system works now

Programs and services

As Yukoners age, there are a variety of programs and services intended to support them.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

There are five long-term care homes in Yukon with a total of 322 private rooms. In the past, these homes have run at or near capacity. Since Whistle Bend Place opened in fall 2018, there are some vacancies and there is currently no waitlist for admission. Currently, individuals in long-term care pay \$35 per day per resident. The cost to provide this care is approximately \$550 per day.

HOME CARE

Home Care supports individuals to live independently in their homes. Services are available for people who have mobility or health constraints. Services offered include: nursing, therapies, speech language pathology, home support (personal care and basic home-making services), social support, and respite and palliative care. Home care can be limited by access to the right type of housing. There are no supportive housing options or assisted living facilities in the territory. Existing housing for seniors doesn't always meet their needs or work well as their care needs increase.



In 2019, there were
422
home care clients in
Whitehorse, and
270
Government of
Yukon homecare
clients in the
communities

RESPIRE AND REABLEMENT PROGRAM

See Supporting High Needs Users section above.

PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAM

See Supporting High Needs Users section above.

COMMUNITY DAY PROGRAM

This program provides day programming that helps individuals maintain their independence, and offers respite for caregivers. Clients have time to socialize, enjoy recreational activities and participate in therapeutic programming.

Possible ways forward for Yukon

In general, people living in one of Yukon's long-term care homes are well supported and have access to the care they need. The engagement process for Aging in Place and first phase of Taking the Pulse highlighted some of the difficulties faced by seniors living in the community.

Here are some of the key recommendations from Yukon's Aging in Place Public engagement and some ideas that were suggested to the panel:



Between Dec. 2018
and Mar. 2019, the
respite and
reablement program
supported

18
clients

Housing and home care

- Support and promote independent living by creating age-friendly building designs and implementing assisted and supportive living options.
- Explore intergenerational housing options, including home share programs, lifetime neighbourhoods or co-housing communities.
- Offer flexible home care options and continue to expand services and their availability.
- Support caregivers by offering a caregiver benefit, and more training and respite services.
- Offer incentives to support aging in place and increase fees for long term care beds. Currently, the fees charged (\$35/day) may encourage people to seek out or stay in care when they may not need it, but find it less expensive than living at home.

Collaborative, people and family-centred care

- Ensure coordinated support services and planning are available to Yukoners as they age.
- Bring health care services closer to home.
- Support individuals and families in their end of life journey. Create opportunities for palliative care to be provided out of the hospital and closer to home.

Supportive communities

- Improve access to activity programs, especially physical activities like walking and exercise programs, social activities and peer groups. Offer more programming for younger seniors (under 75).
- Incorporate an age-friendly approach to communities by working with municipalities and businesses.
- Empower older people to continue to contribute to their communities and cultivate intergenerational contacts.
- Promote and recognize mental health and well-being.
- Support caregivers.

Across Canada, populations are aging and existing supports and services are being stretched. Many jurisdictions have been working on innovative new ways to support people who are frail, seniors, and elders and there are some very promising practices we can look to for ideas. Some common themes in these practices are creating inclusive environments, and promoting social connection to help reduce loneliness. Improving the support available for aging Yukoners will help ensure they have access to the service and supports needed to live safe, independent and comfortable lives.

Questions for discussion

1. Which of these independent housing options would you support;
 - a. intergenerational housing (a shared-living program where seniors and students live together)
 - b. assisted living (providing housing, hospitality and personal care services for adults who can live independently but support due to physical and functional health challenges)
 - c. lifetime neighbourhood (neighbourhoods that are designed to be inclusive regardless of age or disability. The neighbourhoods provide resources like transportation, shopping and service access, social contact, involvement in local issues, and green space access)
 - d. co-housing communities (a senior cohousing community only permits residents who are over a certain age, such as 55. This allows seniors to have a more favorable community for their needs)
2. Right now, long-term care fees are less than what it costs someone to live in the community and receive homecare. Should these costs be similar?
3. What's the most important thing that could be different that would help Yukoners age in place?