



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

September 22, 2022, 1pm

At Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House

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- **PRESENT:** Doug Peat (Journey Home Community), Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Luke Greidanus (Kinbrace), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Nikita Laranjeira (MOSAIC), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch) Jenny Moss (MAP Exec)
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Co-Chair: Doug Peat (JHC)

Welcome, and land acknowledgement from the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples: the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations.

- **Introductions** to the first in person meeting in 2.5 years!

There followed a discussion about how many can attend – all are welcome if they are connected in some way with RC housing provision.

The **Agenda** was **APPROVED**

The **Minutes** of the June 24 Housing Working Group Meeting were **APPROVED**

- **BC Refugee Resource Network Update**

Background – MAP has a seat at the AMSSA-led BCRRN. This network primarily exists to discuss resources for refugees in BC and specifically Ukrainian CUAET Visa Holders and Afghan refugees via the Refugee Readiness Teams. MAP had requested that the issues pertaining to refugee claimants should be included in this large scope network and Jenny Moss has attended 3 meetings to date.

MAP will be providing information checking, possibly speakers and other resources to large scale Information Guides the BCRRN is planning.

BC CHARMS team has actively attended RRT Housing Working Group meeting to share knowledge and best practices of BC CHARMS.

Action – Doug requested that we ask for MAP HWG to be on mailing list.

- **BC Charms Update**

Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC) introduced **Nikita Laranjera**, new BC CHARMS Coordinator.

Nikita provided the update:

- **Sustainability:** MOSAIC will stay on as lead agency for the 2023-24 cycle since they have the expertise and know how at this important point of the program development. Agreed by MAP Executive/MOSAIC/funder to assure continuity.
- **Advisory Committee** will continue in its present form
- As reported before **BC CHARMS was officially launched** May 16, 2022
- Since then, there has been lots of outreach to recruit users.
- To date BC CHARMS has onboarded 13 agencies – including 3 transition houses
- Met with bc211 to make sure that referrals come to BC CHARMS as well as shelters.

- Nikita hosts 2-hour training sessions and drop-in sessions for questions
- BC CHARMS has produced cheat sheets that have been emailed out PLUS YouTube channels with help around specific points.
- User and participation agreements as well as BC CHARMS Privacy Policies are reviewed and signed by all onboarded agencies.
- BC CHARMS is reaching out to other sectors beyond MAP members
- Metrics: reports will be available regularly describing housing searches with various parameters such as length of time, family type.
- Social media: @BCCHARMS for LinkedIn and YouTube – please add to your social media

Questions:

Concern that youth and single men are told ‘just go to shelters’

Onboarding of that sector to BC CHARMS is very important

And concerns/needs of LGBTQ sector also to be considered.

Response:

via BCNPHA BC CHARMS has had conversations with Landlord BC – some good engagement – especially generated from Afghan/Ukrainian crisis.

Some 2-way conversations have occurred but encouraging more.

via SHELTERS

How can we onboard shelters? It will be via a one-way referral to BC CHARMS:

Onboard shelters without requiring them to be a user – (they already have HIFIS)

There is a webform they can easily use that includes their information, as well as the client’s

In this case vacancies at Shelters won’t be shown largely because:

- a) need real time data as situations in the shelters are changing constantly
- b) also it is preferable not to refer claimants to shelters

bc211, CBSA, IRCC, IRB, Red Cross, churches will be trained in the fall – to be able to refer in the same way.

Added that it’s necessary to add access for refugee claimants in the detention centre via training to CBSA and the settlement workers and lawyers who meet them. AGREED.

Derek:

1) What happened to the question about clients’ change in **status when they want to move from transitional housing to more permanent housing, but still need further help?**

Once housed at any stage they are called **PLACED**? But what happens to their status if they are looking for housing again?

Response: Currently the only status is: *looking / placed / closed without placement* (for those who choose other options like staying with a friend)

At this stage we are only considering transitional housing in the system – we will look again when we include private landlords etc.

If it is a temporary solution like transitional housing the HP or SWO can change the status to *Looking* again – or they can refer to a new vacancy if existing.

Their status does not stop people from looking for housing

Doug suggested: maybe use labels like Transitionally Placed, Permanently Placed – this will also help with data capture.

Marzieh: this is already done via many different types of housing.

Agree that it is important to have the situations reflected realistically so the government knows how many claimants need permanent housing.

2) Appropriate referrals to housing:

At the moment Settlement workers input client data and housing providers put in vacancies only. Settlement workers refer a client to a vacancy that seems to match (8/9 families housed this way since early July)

Derek said it would be useful for **housing providers to have access to all the intake forms** so they could judge for themselves who is a good match for their vacancy

Response: This was discussed at a special meeting – but there are liability issues for MOSAIC due to confidentiality if there are any data breaches.

Common practice is that access to all information is not provided for all clients in the sector.

BC CHARMS will send as many referrals as possible to HP.

But for the sake of confidentiality, we cannot share all intake forms in the system.

Further question: however, the process so far has taken too long so Kinbrace is still calling settlement agencies directly when a space becomes available.

NOTE: System is still new, users are learning how to use it and MOSAIC is working on the speed and efficiency of the process.

Additional note: the process needs to remove the unconscious biases of settlement workers so as not to pre-judge who would match a particular vacancy.

Response: you can add a note to say you are not receiving _____ people (e.g., single)

Suggestion: – maybe remove identifiers and just say gender/age/summary notes.

There was a fulsome discussion on the topic

ACTION: Marzieh would like to hear from other agencies if this bias is happening. She will reach out to Vanessa and Kelly to hear more and address the issue promptly.

- **Goals for this year as we work towards enhancing opportunities across the housing continuum. Discussion around which groups we will engage with.**

1) Temporary Transitional Housing

Journey Home and MOSAIC have *temporary* transitional units – sometimes called ‘meanwhile spaces’ that are separate from permanent transitional housing. Adopting this as new language to attract more units.

- Private landlords have said they could make this available for one year

- JHC has two welcome houses, MOSAIC also has several units, and they are working with developers to have this idea accepted more widely.
- Meanwhile space units are available to refugee claimants for a 3 to 6-month period

Report on JHC: Meanwhile Spaces:

BC Housing accepted the concept for 110-unit facility, but BC Govt rejected the idea without explanation. JHC received 'Reaching Home' Funds to support housing and settlement staff onsite for meanwhile spaces – these 4 staff are still in place for our use.

Developers:

Concert Properties is still onboard until end of January – there are 9 potential sites at \$500/month.

Wesgroup – 6 (2 bedroom) sites – they are now full. Aiming to add more developers to expand capacity.

JHC will be capping the program at 35 units for now – and they can sometimes stretch one-bedroom units for small families as it is only temporary housing.

MOSAIC: Developers contacted MOSAIC in April following BC CHARMS article in Landlord BC magazine and the developer also knew about Iris Challoner (MOSAIC – Operation Not Forgotten Project (ONF))

This developer has 6 houses, some of which are very large, on Granville Street location which they have renovated somewhat and are charging a very low rent - and MOSAIC was very lucky to acquire them. There is an 18-month duration (RC's housed will be set up for a maximum 4 months, and then MOSAIC will help them apply for permanent housing)

Already placed some families and 2 have moved out already – it will be entered into CHARMS database as soon as MOSAIC gets used to running this kind of housing or deciding if they want to run this kind of project. These houses are for Refugee Claimants and Refugees from the ONF project.

This housing is available for next 18 months – then it will be converted into seniors' housing.

MOSAIC has another property in PoCo – which is only used for ONF refugees

- Used occupancy agreements from Kinbrace and JHC – grateful for assistance.
- Doug added that a caveat is not to move folks from temporary transitional to temporary transitional – ALL AGREED.

Doug: JHC (Barry Growe) is working with **municipalities** (Burnaby, Vancouver, Coquitlam) to develop this idea – so that municipalities can encourage developers to include this concept.

Marzieh: Suggested to connect again with **David Hutniak from Landlord BC** – they have webinars, frequent sessions that private landlords attend. We could request to talk about claimants and bring awareness.

Imtiaz: maybe talk to **real estate agencies** who are known as empathetic and who might know of owners/landlords who could be interested.

NOTE: BCNPHA and AMSSA is working to make sure this is part of the election platform through a statement from the Provincial Coalition on Housing for newcomers. This is including refugee claimants.

Kelly (Inasmuch) suggested if a **template letter** was created members could take it to their respective municipalities to start the discussion about zoning, benefits etc. AGREED

Marzieh – if buildings slated for demolition accept ‘meanwhile space’ residents it enables the owners to avoid the huge taxes on vacant spaces.

A Tax credit for housing refugees was also presented as an idea.

2) Permanent Transitional Housing

Definition: units in non-profit houses permanently set aside for transitional housing for refugees.

Or, an agreement to include a % of units for refugees in new builds.

Might ask for the same arrangement for-profit housing providers too.

Kelly - Could you run this through your charity to allow housing providers to write off taxes for providing housing as a charitable donation?

Derek – Kinbrace looked into this but for liability reasons it was not possible

Doug – We have liability coverage in the organization (CCC) running meanwhile spaces that is ‘fire-walled’ from JHC.

There is no thinking at MOSAIC about permanent transitional housing at this stage.

Kelly – what about tiny homes? Lots of these in the valley and maybe we could organize this on some land – connected with Chilliwack producer of tiny homes to discuss.

Possibly for a temporary period for refugee claimants.

Derek: City of Vancouver is interested in these ideas – approving as they have seen a model in Portland.

3) Low-Cost/Subsidized Housing

Marzieh – This has been the basis of our MAP/BC CHARMS & BCNPHA conversations – after the conference last year they will approach other non-profit housing agencies in the same way as Landlord BC. But they are not suggesting another webinar/presentation.

Steven Bennet (Affordable Housing) – suggested his agency wants to offer to RC’s but there must be support from settlement agencies. MOSAIC might be interested in providing such support, also the Muslim Food Bank.

MOSAIC needs to have 1:1 conversation with BCNPHA to follow up.

At what point do we ask **AMSSA** to carry this conversation too at their provincial tables?

Dedicated refugee shelter also an important issue to pursue for immediate housing for new arrivals vital – like [Christie Refugee Welcome Centre \(christiestreetc.com\)](http://christiestreetc.com) in Toronto which is funded by the City.

Low-Cost Market Housing – continue at next month’s meeting

- **Adjourned 2:30 pm** - Next Meeting: Oct 27 at Surrey Central Library