

# Transforming Community Based Care

## *Enhancing supports for those with dementia*

SCNergy, Summer 2022

A new model of care in response to the needs of older adults, especially those affected by dementia, has been implemented in rural Alberta.

The [Connecting People and Community for Living Well](#) (formerly known as Primary Health Care Integrated Geriatric Services Initiative [PHC IGSI]) team is working with rural community teams to develop and implement an approach which builds on local knowledge and resources to enhance supports for those with dementia and carers living in rural Alberta.



The aim of this work is to transform how people are supported so that they can continue to live in their own homes and their communities as they age. This is accomplished when health, social, community and municipal partners work together to support individuals affected by dementia – by developing a ‘no door is the wrong door’ approach.

Health Canada grant funding (Jan-2020 through Mar-2023) is supporting a provincial team to partner with Drumheller, Innisfail, Three Hills, Westlock and Stony Plain to identify local resources and gaps, and then prioritize, plan and implement activities.

Under this new model, the participating communities have developed innovative approaches and supports that reflect each of their local contexts, including:

- increasing volunteer opportunities for people living with dementia;
- developing a community day program;
- forming carer support groups;
- starting memory cafes; and
- creating numerous public education events, and implementing multiple other supports such as recreational, and arts programs.



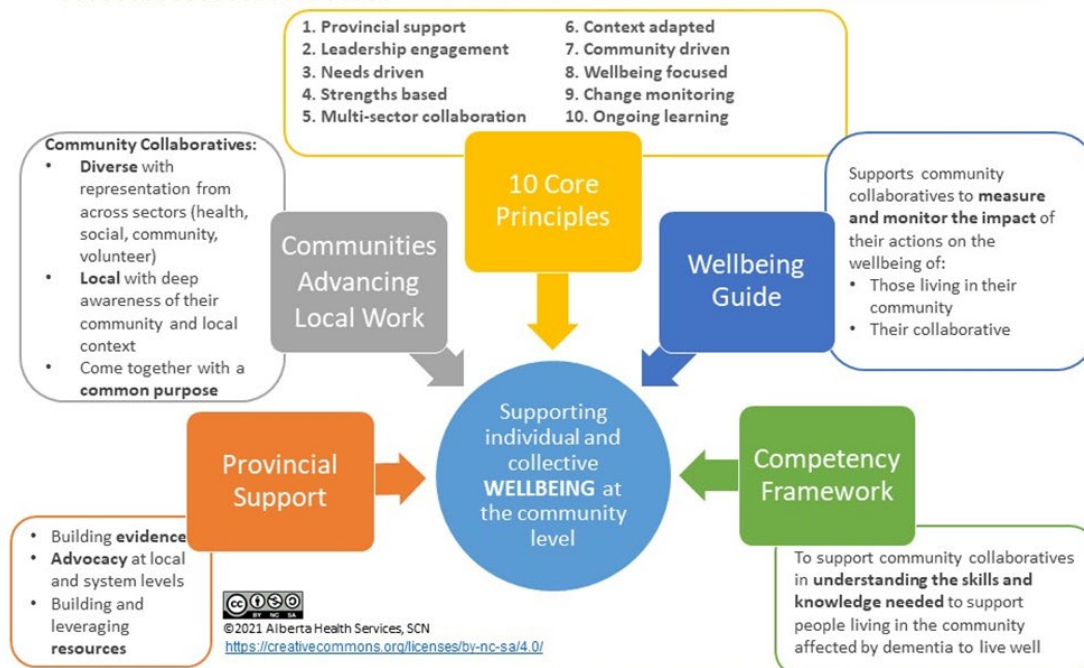
With an increased awareness of available community programs and supports, individuals are linked to the right supports in a timely manner. A community team member summed it up when they said “We can do things together that we cannot do alone.”

The driving force to develop community-based supports becomes clear when factoring in the research:

- A 2020 National Institute of Ageing TELUS Health Survey showed almost 100 percent of Canadians 65 and older are planning to live in their own homes as long as possible.
- Currently in Alberta, 97% of Albertans 65 and older live in private homes and lodges.
- The Government of Alberta anticipates a doubling of older adults in the province’s population by 2040 (Government of Alberta, 2021).
- Dementia increases with age, and it is estimated that between 2015 and 2042 there will be a quadrupling of individuals with a diagnosis of dementia in Alberta (Alberta Health, 2015).

This data points to the opportunity for health, social, community partners to work together to create and improve the selection, design and delivery of community-based supports. To ensure short and long term success of community-based work, individual strengths and wishes; community resources; institutional policies; and societal culture and beliefs must be considered.

By using the McGregor (2007) Wellbeing Framework, this project is building evidence on how the *Connecting People and Community for Living Well* model can be useful at both local and provincial levels. In addition, the emphasis on wellbeing shifts our view from disease-centered to person-centered supports, and provides a common language across health, social, community and public areas.



The five elements of the *Connecting People and Community for Living Well* model are:

- 1) **Provincial Support for local teams:** supporting local teams; creating new and bringing existing provincial resources to teams, building evidence on policy and resources needed to do this work; advocating at local, provincial and national levels for infrastructure and resources to sustain community work.
- 2) **Local work by community teams:** using their deep knowledge, communities come together with the common purpose of improving lives of local residents, and driving planning and implementation of community specific activities. The diverse viewpoints of team members from health, social, community, municipal, the public, and those with lived experience is a key aspect of their success.
- 3) **10 Core Principles:** using a shared set of principles to guide work at local and provincial levels.
- 4) **Wellbeing Guide:** creating an evidence-informed resource for community teams to identify gaps and strengths, determine priorities, inform actions, and evaluate impact. Over time the guide will demonstrate the impact of local actions, and highlight areas of need in health, and social systems and at the policy level.
- 5) **Competency Framework:** 10 competencies which support community teams to understand the skills and behaviours needed to be successful in supporting local residents affected by dementia.

The AHS Health System Knowledge and Evidence team is employing a principle-based approach in evaluating this project. Principles provide guidance for making choices and decisions in diverse contexts. By assessing how the project is implementing the principles allows for an exploration of impacts and lessons learned across all project partners. This approach uses a variety of evaluation methods which makes it particularly suited to capture the complexity of how this work occurs, and what is accomplished at community, project and system levels.

Building on the learnings from this project, this model could be used to support other underserved populations, and build evidence to inform what structures, practices resources and policy is necessary to sustain community level work.

For more information on this work:

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- Visit the [Connecting People and Community for Living Well](#) webpage.
- Join the [Connecting People and Community for Living Well](#) open group on the [CORE Alberta](#) platform.