



Road to addiction recovery a long one

Dr. Annabel Mead is literally on the front-lines of treating addictions. Today, she's working out of a temporary Medical Response Unit set-up on a vacant lot in the Downtown Eastside to treat drug overdose patients.

She knows that the best chance for success for her patients – who are ready – is to get them into a treatment recovery program without delay.

That's why she supports Streetohome's exploration of leveraging private sector funding for a provincial commitment to develop and operate a pre-care & transitional housing addiction recovery facility. Individuals would have immediate access to community addiction recovery supports and a temporary place to stay.

The transitional housing component would be for those who have completed a 30 to 90 day, publicly funded, live-in addiction recovery program in BC; do not have stable housing; and are returning to the community to continue their journey. Individuals would be able to stay up to two years and benefit from expedited access to employment opportunities.

Streetohome is also exploring a longer-term, non-profit, live-in recovery community (stays up to four years) for individuals with higher support needs which includes employment and training options.

Research shows the longer an individual stays in treatment, the greater their chance of success. Pre-care & transitional housing and a longer-term, live-in recovery community, that Streetohome is investigating, would provide such options.



Dr. Annabel Mead is a member of Streetohome's Addiction Recovery Committee that commissioned a mapping of addiction recovery treatment programs in the province and is looking at identifying system improvements.

"Patients need options which range from harm reduction to pharmacotherapies, and from outpatient counselling to residential treatment," says Dr. Mead. "Addiction is a complex and chronic issue, requiring a multiple level response, generally over a period of years."

"People learn a lot during treatment but often, after treatment, they are left to their own devices. Unfortunately, relapse is the rule rather than the exception."

"Suddenly there is a whole lot of time to fill, time that was once spent looking for, using, and recovering from drug use," says Dr. Mead. "Intensive supports are needed to help individuals re-structure their daily activity that may include employment and healthier pastimes."

As part of Streetohome's Addiction Recovery Committee, Dr. Mead is

among professionals from the housing, health, education, police, non-profit and private sectors looking at gaps in the system, and where the Foundation may be able to broker change.

"I've worked in a lot of areas in addictions – outreach in the DTES; providing treatment at detox centres; and in recovery settings such as the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addiction and Heartwood, so I've seen how the system works from many angles. We've learnt so much, but I know we can do better and I want to see people supported to maximize their potential for recovery."

in this issue...

- > Superintendent Daryl Wiebe
- > Q&A with Board Member Kevin Falcon
- > John McLernon sets a new flight path

Raising the alarm over mental health & addictions



Superintendent Daryl Wiebe authored the VPD Mental Health Strategy report - outlining how individuals with mental health and addiction challenges coming into contact with police can expect to be treated. Daryl also sits on Streethome's Addiction Recovery Committee.

*Mental health and drug addiction are a high priority for the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). The initial *Lost in Transition* publication (2008) and the recent *Mental Health Strategy* (2016), authored by Superintendent Daryl Wiebe, shone a spotlight on individuals suffering from mental health and addiction issues.*

Most notably, the VPD is now working closely with Vancouver Coastal Health to identify individuals, who are high-risk for causing harm to themselves and others, to get them the appropriate treatment and ongoing care they require. The force has 17 full-time officers dedicated to addressing issues related to mental illness (up from 1.5 in the 1990s), including four who are embedded in the Assertive Outreach Team alongside healthcare workers to identify and treat individuals before they get to a crisis stage. Police and health care leaders

team-up regularly, and the Boards of the VPD, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Providence Health Care meet annually, to discuss mutual challenges and collaborative solutions.

However, while the overall number of violent incidents has gone down, mental health and addiction issues still take up almost a quarter of all police calls. "The overall number of mental health apprehensions is up," says Superintendent Wiebe, "in part because of the population increase and transiency of this vulnerable population in the city."

"Dedicating more resources to community care will reduce the emergency medical response from the police and others, will help make the community safer and, more importantly, will reduce the vulnerability within this community."

"Homelessness is part of the cycle with addiction and mental illness; you can't say which came first – was

it the homelessness that brought on the mental illness or addiction, or was it mental illness and addiction that created homelessness?" says Daryl. "Part of that cycle includes numerous incidences of victimization of those who are homeless or mentally ill and addicted; and, also, criminal activity on the part of individuals to fuel their addictions."

The key is to break the cycle anywhere you can, he says. "You want to get to people before they reach a crisis point and become a risk to themselves and the public. But, we need more options for individuals when they're ready to address their issues. After detox, you can't send them back home to a single room hotel in the Downtown Eastside, where they are faced with the same triggers and are likely to relapse."

"Each individual got to that precarious place in their lives through a series of unfortunate instances, missteps, bad decisions, and often circumstances and influences they had no control over, and we all have a responsibility to help," says Daryl.

Daryl, a member of Streethome's Addiction Recovery Committee, is advocating for the private and public sectors to come together to build an "on-demand" facility where individuals could be triaged quickly to treatment and graduate to short-term housing (up to two years on floors above the treatment space), and a longer-term facility which would provide supportive housing (up to four years) and integration back into the community, including paths to education, employment training, and jobs.

"I'm a big believer in 'we have a plan, let's get started'. That's been the hallmark of my policing career. Some things will work and others won't. We can adjust as we go along. We won't have all the answers at the outset, but progress will be made - individuals will get clean, learn new life skills, obtain a job and become productive members in society."

Q&A: Kevin Falcon



Kevin Falcon joined the Streethome Foundation Board in 2016 and is co-chair of the Addiction Recovery Committee along with John McLernon. Kevin is Executive Vice-President of Anthem Capital Corporation, an investment company with interests in real estate, mining, technology and consumer products. Prior to joining Anthem, he served for 12 years in various senior cabinet positions in the BC government.

Kevin has appeared on Vancouver Magazine's annual list of the 50 most influential leaders in the city on several occasions. He is a recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal for his significant contributions to British Columbia and Canada.

Why did you join the Streethome Board?

Two reasons: firstly, because my history in public life has taught me that the solutions to difficult social challenges don't always rest in government. I like the fact that the Streethome board is made up of distinguished leaders from provincial and municipal government and the private sector. Secondly, Anthem Properties is a significant financial supporter of Streethome and we want to meaningfully contribute to sustainable solutions to homelessness.

Why did you want to co-chair the Addiction Recovery Committee in particular?

As a former Health Minister, I am convinced that we need to take a hard, evidence-based look at the current outcomes (or lack thereof) that we're seeing in our current approach to Addictions. Streethome brings together the best minds to research worldwide who does addictions best and why.

I had a recent opportunity to participate in a study tour of Delancey Street – a long term, live-in addiction recovery community in San Francisco that has been replicated in six other American cities. The model is based on a minimum two year residency that teaches social entrepreneurship, education, rehabilitation and change. The participants run a variety of successful businesses including a moving company, a first-class restaurant, an automotive repair, a screening room and a bookstore café to name a few. It is all accomplished without government funding. I believe that we can adapt the model for Vancouver.

Were there any further insights from your recent study tour of Delancey Street?

I think the greatest insight is the affirmation that at the end of the day, everyone wants to feel like a useful, contributing member of society. While many of the Delancey Street residents have had truly terrible pasts, their ability to turn their lives around and contribute positively again is absolutely inspirational.

What are the deliverables for the Addiction Recovery Committee in the coming year?

We want to bring forward new approaches to improve services offered to those struggling with addictions. We recognize that homelessness is much more than a housing issue. In many cases, it is the consequence of untreated or improperly treated mental health and addiction issues. We want to ensure that a robust system of comprehensive and affordable options is available 'on demand' so that individuals are supported to become contributing members of society.

You've worked in government, and are a former Minister of Health. Have you had any "aha" moments while leading the Addiction Recovery Committee?

Interestingly, what we are learning has reinforced many of my beliefs that received a lot of push back while I was Health Minister. It is very normal for large organizations like a Health Ministry to be resistant to change, even when there are great people with good intentions working within them. Perhaps in a small but meaningful way, we might be able to provide external validation to trying new approaches.

What are your thoughts on the role of the private sector becoming involved in social issues?

The private sector can and should play a greater role in helping solve complex social issues: whether by encouraging a greater focus on outcomes as opposed to process, or simply challenging conventional wisdom. Streethome is a great example of an organization that brings new ideas to the table, brokers collaboration among stakeholders, and leverages private sector funding to tackle societal issues.

What keeps you motivated?

I've always believed that individuals can make a difference in the world. I reject those who say 'it's not worth getting involved' or variations of that theme. We need people to care about issues and get involved to change things for the better.

John McLernon: sets a new flight path



John McLernon (right), Streetohome Board Chair, with Rob Turnbull, President & CEO, Streetohome Foundation.

“We can’t build ourselves out of homelessness”, John McLernon, Streetohome’s Board Chair, says emphatically. People often have additional needs beyond a home and unless those needs are addressed, their housing stability may be at risk. This is why Streetohome is shifting its focus on to the second goal in its original 10-year plan: homelessness prevention.

After a broad consultation with the community and partners, and a review of what’s working in other

jurisdictions, Streetohome is exploring how to broker and leverage additional pathways out of homelessness in Vancouver that include employment and addiction recovery.

As it did with supportive housing, Streetohome is collaborating with experts in employment and addictions and reaching out to the private sector to move the dial once again on homelessness.

One of John’s favourite sayings is “let’s build the plane while we’re flying it”, which has been his approach to addressing the homeless issue in the City. “It’s not always waiting for everything to be planned and

strategized, but looking for the ‘quick wins’. It’s about saying ‘okay, there are things that can be done right away to get the ball rolling that we know are going to have a real impact’.”

“No one knew the complexity of homelessness when we started,” says John. “Conventional wisdom was that we have homeless people, we’ll build facilities for them and the world will be okay, but it was only when we started to really understand the issues, that we realized that we had to focus on prevention.”

He also believes that the private sector will fully support Streetohome’s homelessness prevention strategies, much as they rallied the past eight years to contribute funding towards the construction of 21 buildings (1324 units of supportive housing) that provide homes for more than 1800 formerly homeless individuals including children, youth, single adults, couples, families and seniors.

“The private sector has an opportunity to set the priorities, and by taking a position to say homelessness and homelessness prevention is important to us, government may come in with more money than they would have otherwise.”

about streetohome

Streetohome seeks out innovative and promising practices from around the world; brokers collaboration with the provincial government’s housing and health care authorities, the City of Vancouver and non-profit service providers; and leverages private sector funding for projects that will demonstrate sustainable solutions to homelessness in Vancouver.

Be **part** of the solution.

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Private Sector Leveraged Pathways to Recovery

