Exploring new ways to live in community…

A conversation about supported living for people with developmental disabilities in BC



October 2015

COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to several key people for leading and facilitating the work that's been done in this area over the past couple of years:

- Dan Collins for having the idea and starting to talk about it.
- The leadership of Community Living Victoria, Langley Association for Community Living, Richmond Society for Community Living, Chilliwack Society for Community Living, and Delta Community Living Society for responding to the idea and initiating the survey and the roundtable.
- The leadership of Community Living BC for supporting the roundtable and the release of this report.
- Kim Lyster for analyzing the survey results and facilitating the roundtable discussion.
- Faith Bodnar and the Inclusion BC folks for arranging and hosting the roundtable.

Executive summary

This report offers some thinking about supported living for people with developmental disabilities in BC – how it looks like now and how it could look like in the future. It highlights many of the strengths associated with this residential option and identifies some of the challenges we need to collectively tackle. The content of the report is based on a survey and roundtable discussion, both conducted in 2013. These were initiated by a group of service providers and supported by Community Living BC (CLBC).

The survey results showed that supported living is funded and delivered in a variety of ways and supports people with a wide range of issues - health, home and financial management, housing, social and community life, relationships, coordinating with other supports, and responding to crises. The service providers who responded articulated some key strengths of supported living. It offers individualized supports and choice allowing people to live in their own homes. It is strengths-based and can help people build relationships outside the "service world". It is an important safeguard and can offer one way to balance support and self-determination.

They also identified concerns with the funding model and barriers to access. These included difficulties attracting staff, challenges around building the trusting relationships needed to make it work, people not knowing about it, issues around managing vulnerabilities and risks, poverty, and the lack of affordable accessible housing options for people with developmental disabilities.

The roundtable included about 40 people – a mix of service providers and CLBC staff, along with a few individuals and families. The group heard about the survey results and about a vision for supported living put forward by John O'Brien some twenty years ago. This vision is of an alliance between an individual and an agency – a values-based way of being together, rather than a traditional service provision relationship. It is governed by principles such self-determination, interdependency, and community as the source of solutions.

In reflecting on both this vision and the current reality in BC, roundtable participants produced the following thoughts, ideas, and insights:

What have we learned so far?

- We need to be flexible, creative, and open.
- Supported living works really well for some people but is not for everyone.
- Trusting relationships among agency staff and individuals and families are key.
- Resources such as skilled staff and back-up supports make a difference.
- Community is messy – real lives are not neat and tidy all the time.

- Generic supports such as medical, addictions, and mental health services are important.

What challenges do we face?

- The current funding model does not consistently allow for flexibility such as transition funding, weekend / after-hours supports, or front-end loading of support hours.
- There is concern about supported living being potentially isolating for people.
- It is hard to find and keep staff who are a good match for individuals.
- Expectations may differ among individuals, families, and the funder.
- Coordinating supports with other agencies, such as mental health, can be hard.
- Balancing risk and self-determination is sometimes a challenge.

What stops people from using supported living?

- There is limited awareness of it as an option.
- Contracting and funding requirements can rule out creative solutions.
- The actual cost of housing is not covered – meaning that poverty and lack of affordable, accessible housing make it impossible for many people to access.
- BC Housing priorities no longer include people with disabilities.
- Housing availability and choices can be limited – even for those who can afford it.
- Accessibility can be a barrier for those with physical disabilities.
- There can be a lack of awareness or flexibility at the service provider level.
- There is limited time for planning and matching of staff with individuals.
- Access to transportation, recreation, and other community resources may be limited.
- There are negative attitudes and discrimination from landlords and in communities.
- There is a fear of the unknown and of potential failure.
- People have vulnerabilities that may not be well managed – such as addictions or mental health challenges.

How might we change the framework?

- Make funding more flexible and portable.
- Create new funding options such as transition support and front-end loading of support hours.
- Look at a "housing first" approach for people with addiction or mental health challenges.
- Don't add more administrative requirements when making changes.
- Seek a reasonable balance between flexibility and accountability for funding.

How do we build community capacity and partnerships?

- Focus on intentionally building community capacity and public awareness – create tools, opportunities, and resources to do this.
- Share experiences, showcase successes, and celebrate creativity.
- Engage with individuals and families.

- Build partnerships with BC Housing, mental health partners, and other key public agencies.
- Ally with municipalities, employers, and businesses in seeking solutions.
- Seek connections with other agencies supporting vulnerable people.
- Assume that community has capacity – map it and take a positive, community development approach.
- Take risks with new ideas.

What do we need to be aware of?

- Issues with people aging and their needs changing.
- Expectations of youth about living independently.
- Street-involved young people.
- Supported living as a good arrangement for couples and families.
- Keeping the focus on right relationships.
- Using technology to address risks and communications.
- Informal safeguards.
- Expressing leadership and creating mentorship within the sector.
- Focus on life-long planning.
- Balancing risk and self-determination – recognizing that these shift and change over time and depend on one's perspective.

The report closes with an invitation for people to participate in a larger conversation about supported living – including a series of suggested discussion questions. The intention is to stimulate more conversation that leads to new ways to support people to fully realize the vision and values of community living.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The idea of supported living has been around for a while in BC: people with developmental disabilities living in their own homes or apartments with various kinds of supports to help them with their daily activities. However, not a lot of people have chosen this option. We have not collected information or talked much about a full vision for supported living – what that could look like, what the barriers are, and how we can work together to facilitate it.

The time has come to have that conversation. We have enough experience to have learned some things. There seems to be an interest in pushing past how we have done things so far to explore new ways to support people to fully realize the vision and values of community living.

Like many conversations, this started with just a couple of people – a few service providers talking about how to be more responsive and innovative in our supported living approaches. Then we mentioned it to a few folks at Community Living BC (CLBC) and found they shared our curiosity to find out more and explore the possibilities.

So we initiated a survey asking other service providers what they know and think about supported living. Then we organized a gathering – a roundtable – a way for service providers, families, individuals, and CLBC staff to begin this conversation. We learned about what people are doing now, what concerns and challenges they see, what some new ways might look like, and what changes might be needed to create those new possibilities with people while ensuring their well-being. This report summarizes the results of the survey and the roundtable, and offers some ways forward for people interested in exploring new ways that people with developmental disabilities can live in community.

We hope that this intentional dialogue will take us somewhere exciting and helpful – just as similar processes have advanced other changes – such as the changes we have seen in shared living, employment, and safeguards.

We know that we need to involve more people in thinking, exploring and sharing information. In particular, we need to involve individuals and families. This report is the first step. We invite you to join us in the next steps as we ask, "What next for supported living?"

In this report, we refer to ourselves as a big collective "WE".

"WE" are a group of service providers, aligned with CLBC, in a shared commitment to have this dialogue.

"WE" present this report in a spirit of collaboration and inclusion, and invite you to respond and participate in the conversation.

A word about language

For the purposes of funding community living services for adults with developmental disabilities, CLBC defines supported living as follows:

> **SUPPORTED LIVING** is a residential option that provides individuals living independently in the community with assistance in daily living. This service is available to individuals who own, lease, or rent their own homes. Supported Living services include outreach support and cluster living.
>
> **Outreach support** provides targeted hourly support to individuals through one-on-one or group arrangements. Within **cluster living**, an on-site contractor provides ongoing support to a group of individuals who have homes close to one another (typically within the same apartment building).
>
> (from the CLBC website - http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/individuals-families/support-for-adults/types-of-support/)

For this residential option, CLBC generally funds a maximum of 15 hours of support per week per individual. People who receive supported living funding may also receive other CLBC-funded services, such as employment or skill development support.

Across the province, people use a wide variety of words and definitions to talk about these kinds of support arrangements. These include: supported apartment living, independent living, and semi-independent living. These are all variations on a theme. The key concept is that people have their own home and receive supports that enable them to live their lives in their community. They do not live in a staffed residence and they do not have "caregivers" as such.

When we use the words "supported living" in this report, we are referring to all the various possibilities for what this may look like – whether or not they actually exist right now. We do not see the conversation being limited by the current description of funding categories.

The current situation

What the survey tells us about supported living

In the spring of 2013, we circulated a survey through our networks in BC – asking as many supported living service providers as we could find about what they are doing. We received 20 responses – most were from urban or suburban parts of the province and a few were from rural or remote areas. Most were from community living agencies and a few were from community agencies offering multiple types of services.

This is not a large number and we are cautious in interpreting the results as the whole story. However they offer a useful place to start. So with that caution, here are the main results:

Funding options

- Just over 60% are globally-funded – meaning that a certain number of people can use the service and new people can enter when someone leaves.
- About 20% use all or mostly individualized contracts, meaning that the funding is attached to the individual, not the program.
- The remaining 20% use a mixture of global and individualized funding.

Positive aspects of globally-funded contracts

- Provides flexibility for staff to respond to changes in people's lives and needs.
- Allows sharing of hours to respond to crises.
- Makes it possible to maintain a stable staff group with required skills.

Positive aspects of individualized contracts

- Person-centred – the service is built around the individual.
- Viable alternative to staffed residential or shared living setting.
- Person has more choice and voice.

Concerns with funding models

- Fixed hours of service for individuals make it hard to respond to changes in needs.
- There can be a funding gap between old and new contracts.
- It is hard to attract and keep staff for "one person at a time" on individual contracts.
- Service usage is hard to predict.
- Inconsistent access to weekend / evening support.
- Assigned hours do not always honour the time to build relationships with staff.
- Individualized contracting can result in a less stable staffing response.

Funding categories

- About a third are funded under the supported living category in the CLBC catalogue of services – either outreach support or cluster living.

- About a third are funded through other catalogue of service categories – community inclusion or shared living..
- The remaining third are funded through a combination of these funding categories.

Service hours

- Individuals receive an average of 2-6 hours per week of service.
- Some people have monthly check-ins only.
- Some people have more intensive support of up to 15 hours a week.
- Most supports are provided by agency staff.
- Different agencies support different numbers of people – from as few as 10 to over 100. The average is 20-50 people supported by one agency.

Supports provided

Agencies provide lots of kinds of supports. Here are some of them.

Health - medical appointments…addictions…sexuality…medical crisis response

Home and financial management - cooking…shopping… budgeting…bill paying…legal issues

Housing - dealing with BC Housing… landlords…crises like floods or bedbugs

Social and community life - social connections…advocacy…transportation… safety…accessing services

Relationships - relationship support…parenting skills…personal safety…internet safety

Support co-ordination - coordinating other supports…negotiating the system…help with paperwork

Crisis response - eviction…mental health issues…hospitalization

Strengths of supported living

- People's choices about their lifestyle and schedules are honoured.
- People live in their own homes.
- Service is individualized for each person.
- It is strengths-based – supports people to expand their own capacity.
- It is well-suited for people who do not want the restrictions of other models – like staffed residential or shared living.
- It can help people build relationships and lives outside the "service world".
- It is an important safeguard for people – sometimes the only support in their life.

Barriers to accessing supported living

- Managing vulnerabilities and risks can be challenging.
- Many individuals, families, and CLBC staff are not fully aware of this residential option.
- Poverty and a lack of accessible, affordable housing prevent people from obtaining the service.
- The allocation of funding / hours does not always seem linked to actual needs.
- There is a perception that it may be isolating.
- There are undeveloped linkages with community partners.

In summary…

The survey paints a picture of people finding creative ways to harness available funding to honour people's choices and support them to have independent lives in their own homes. Supported living is usually the most independent option provided by agencies.

People's needs change week-to-week. Responsiveness and flexibility are key – and not always easy to provide. Lots of different types of supports are provided - reflecting people's real lives. Sometimes, supported living is the only safeguard in people's lives.

Agencies provide day-to-day supports as well as crisis response. Some also play a coordinating role with other services – an intermediary role helping people negotiate the system and community to get what they need. The precise role depends on the culture of the agency. Relationships between staff and the people being supported are essential to successful supported living – it takes time to develop trust and the dynamics can be complex.

There are many reasons why people may not access supported living. It is not very well known as an option. Poverty and lack of affordable or accessible housing are very real barriers. Some people live with vulnerabilities that require more intensive involvement of other services. And some people perceive that supported living can actually be isolating, as individuals are living by themselves and may not have people in their lives.

One woman's life – meet Susan

Susan Anthony is an enthusiastic participant in the Supported Apartment Living (SAL) program operated by Community Living Victoria (CLV). She is a shining example of what successful supported living looks like today. She enjoys her part-time job, is active in Special Olympics, and has more friends that she can keep track of. SAL supports her with cooking, meal planning, shopping, budgeting, and home management.

SAL grew out of a dream that several parents had about how their adult children with developmental disabilities could live more independently and be well supported as their parents got older and eventually passed away.

Susan had previously lived in a basement suite in her parents' home and in an apartment with a roommate.

Here is how SAL works:

- Susan and eight other individuals live in their own apartments in a typical four-story building, conveniently located close to shopping, medical services and transit.
- Eight individuals receive BC Housing subsidies to help with the cost of rent.
- SAL also offers outreach supports to four people who live in other places – three of them own their own condos.
- There are four part-time support staff based in the building. They provide supports seven days a week, from 9 am to 9 pm. There is no overnight staffing, but there is 24-hour emergency on-call support from CLV if needed.
- People use on average five hours a week of individual support. However, this is flexible depending on people's needs at the time, and can be shared.
- The individuals have become friends. They have dinner together sometimes, host events in their respective apartments, and plan their own community adventures. They look out for each other and help each other when someone is having a bad day, the power goes out, or other things come up.
- There are monthly group meetings to plan out the social calendar and to learn about things such as safety in the community, first aid and being a good tenant.

This is an active and involved group of people who have a lot of fun together living in their own community, while each has their own personal space. SAL reflects the key values of community living – relationships, community presence, capacity-building and independence. It offers a balance of safeguards and self-determination – enabling people to live real lives in their community while feeling safe and connected.

Here's what Susan has to say about living at SAL:

"I love it when the SAL staff and my parents work together to support me.

I love that the staff are there to help me deal with the struggles in my life.

I love that I have privacy in my whole apartment – not just in my room like if I lived in a group home.

My parents don't have to worry about me as much because I have the SAL staff supporting me.

Living independently gives me the freedom to do what I want. Best of all, I like the friends I have created in the SAL program."

~ Susan Anthony

A vision for the future

In 1993, John O'Brien, of the Centre of Human Policy at the University of Syracuse, wrote an article called "*Supported Living: What's the Difference?"* In it, he challenges us to think differently about supported living … to change the conversation. He offers an exciting future vision for what supported living could look like. Although this article is over twenty years old now, it is very timely to this conversation in BC. Here are some of the key points from that article.

The nature of the relationship

O'Brien talks about being **in alliance with people**, rather than providing a program or service for them. This means that instead of only talking about the rules that govern a funding model, or the structure of a program, we talk about a way of being with people that is values-based and more equal. This fundamentally changes the relationship. Here is how O'Brien describes what supported living could or should be:

> "a person with a disability, who requires long term, publically funded, organized assistance, allies with an agency whose role is to arrange or provide whatever assistance is necessary for the person to live in a decent and secure home of the person's own."

This offers a vision where the relationship is about things like liberation, interdependency and possibility.

It challenges the way we think about funding contracts and categories – they become the tools to do the job – not what drives the relationship. The concept of alliance becomes the focus – a lens through which we can view a different way of being with people in community.

O'Brien sees the potential and power of supported living…and challenges us to respond to the possibilities that open up when we make that shift.

"Supported living focuses at the scale of individual lives, where there is the best chance of understanding the problems and possibilities in each person's situation…

Supported living seeks to cooperate with people with disabilities to develop the assistance they need to get on with their own lives."

(John O'Brien)

Principles

O'Brien offers several principles that are central to this vision:

- personal agency
- choice
- individual lifestyles & preferences
- community as the source of solutions
- partnerships with collateral community services and citizens
- the value of interdependency

How do we get there?

He also suggests the key elements needed to make this vision a reality:

- public policy that supports the vision and potential
- allies who will assist individuals to help define their choices, build personal support networks, and safeguard against intrusive and disrespectful regulatory and service practices
- flexibility in funding and creative supports
- service providers who are responsible for assisting people to deal constructively with their vulnerabilities
- a community capacity building lens

Reflecting on the current reality

In June 2013, about 40 people gathered at a hotel in Richmond, BC to begin the conversation. We called it a roundtable. We were a mix of service providers and CLBC staff, along with a few individuals and families. There is a full participant list in the Appendix.

Under the guidance of Kim Lyster as facilitator, we reviewed the results of the survey and the vision offered by John O'Brien. Then we talked about our own experiences in various communities across the province, and our ideas for making it better. This section summarizes those discussions. The quotes are all from participants at the roundtable.

What is working well?

When it is done well, supported living can be transformative …

People can have real lives

People can have real choice and independence and flexibility – a chance to grow, learn and gain confidence in a natural living space. There is a wide variety of living arrangements and potential for truly fluid arrangements that focus on the person and their life journey – not on funding categories and systems. Supported living can enable families to see their adult children as contributors to society rather than only as dependents – a real shift in thinking and perception.

There are advantages to globally-funded contracts

Global funding provides some efficiencies. It allows more flexibility for agencies to deploy staff as needed to respond to people's needs as they change. The stability means that agencies can hire and keep long-term staff who are a good match for individuals and who can develop trusting relationships with the people they support. Global funding may be most advantageous for large agencies as smaller agencies may not be able to maximize the flexibility and efficiencies.

There are also advantages to individualized contracts

Individualized contracts can enable the most customized supports for an individual. They can be very flexible and can be more easily moved between different living arrangements (e.g. moving from a supported living arrangement to a shared living arrangement). Individualized contracts can also be combined with global funding to customize supports.

What have we learned from supported living so far?

People shared the lessons from what they are doing now …

We need to be flexible, creative, and open

Openness to new ways of doing things and taking the risks to try them are key to success. We need to remember that people already have relationships in their lives. We need to find and build on them. Often the most successful ideas come from the people closest to the individual. We also should not assume that all the supports that someone needs to have a good life have to come from one agency – supports can be built flexibly based on what different agencies do best. We have to be open to new and unexpected partnerships.

It works really well for some people, but is not for everyone

Supported living can work really well for some people – for example for young adults who are looking for a more independent option. Or for people who struggle in a more traditional, less flexible service model. However it is not going to work for everyone, and we should not expect it to. For some people, it may work well for some time and then, if their health needs change for example, it may no longer be their best option. We need to resist the temptation to make supported living the "flavor of the month" and try and make everyone fit into it.

Relationships are key

Supported living often works best when there is supportive family in an individual's life. It takes a long time to build trusting relationships with an individual and their family or other supporters. And yet it is the strength of these relationships that sustains a supported living arrangement in the long term. So it is important to take the time to build trust and comfortable connections.

Resources make a difference

Stable, skilled staff are vital to successful supported living. So too are places to meet and plan, ways to communicate effectively, and back-up supports for when the unexpected happens. All of these require funding and agency resources.

Community is messy

Real lives are not predictable and tidy all the time. Supported living does not always come in a nice neat package. And we should not expect it to. Sometimes people will not use or need their "funded hours" one week, but will need twice as many the next week. Their needs will vary day to day and week to week. What may be an unacceptable risk in one environment may not be in another. Crises do not only happen between nine and five on weekdays. Someone may have to go into hospital and need support with discharge planning and advocacy. We need to expect and embrace messiness.

Generic supports are important

Just like everyone else, people accessing supported living services need generic supports in their lives: a family doctor to monitor health and nutritional needs, regular check-ups with a dentist, an optometrist and others. Personal supports and counselling around addictions, domestic abuse or financial challenges are also required for some people. These needs reflect the complexities of our typical communities and modern lives.

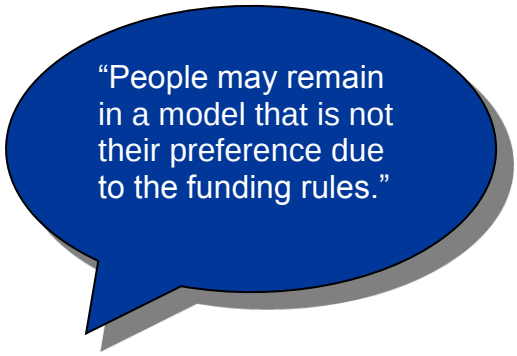
Some creative things people are doing …

- A drop-in program so people can choose when they want to engage in supports.
- One family built a small cottage on their property and the agency provides support for the individual living there.
- We have a nine-person unit with on-site child care and respite space.
- We access community kitchens and gardens and other neighbourhood activities.
- Contracting out support network development support – to activate a presence in community with and around an individual.

What challenges do we face?

While there are many success stories out there, often the reality on the ground does not reflect the potential possibilities. Here are some of the challenges that people are working with …

Funding model



Our discussions confirmed what the survey told us – that people use a variety of funding categories for supported living. Some of the aspects of successful supported living are not explicitly included in what CLBC funds (e.g. transition funding to support people moving from one type of service to another, weekend / after-hours crisis support, or front-end loading of support hours to enable someone to get successfully set up in a new arrangement). Also, the staffing ratios for co-ordination funding are sometimes insufficient – what works for shared living (1:25) is not appropriate for supported living. Some agencies are responding by covering some costs themselves or by creatively putting together funding from more than one pot.

Potential isolation

Ironically, loneliness and isolation can be an unintended consequence of life in community. People living on their own in apartments may see fewer people and feel lonelier than people living in other residential arrangements. It can be challenging to find creative, yet natural ways to support people to make friends and to strengthen and expand the natural support networks they may already have. Such efforts need to be intentional and sustained. At the same time, we need to be aware of the potential for cluster-type living to start to look like a segregated model – if all or most of the apartments in a building for instance are lived in by people with developmental disabilities in supported living.

Staffing

It can be challenging to find and keep the right staff who are a good match for the individuals they are supporting. The skill set can be unique and varied. For example, they may need skills related to addictions or mental health or may need to be able to truly relate well with street-involved young adults. Matching staff and individuals takes time. It can be particularly hard to find and keep staff who are equipped to deal with the variety of crises that can arise.

Expectations

Sometimes what an individual wants is different from what their family is comfortable with. Sometimes an individual does not want a worker as such – they just want help when they want it – and they are not willing to engage in planning. There can also be differences between the expectations stated in a funding contract and what is important **to** the person and what is important **for** the person.

Working with others

Expectations can also vary widely among the various funders and agencies involved. Other funding or support systems (e.g. mental health services) may not step in and provide services if they feel that the individuals fall within the CLBC mandate. At the same time, CLBC does not have the expertise or funding capacity to provide specialized mental health supports for people. The boundaries between responsibilities of different professionals can be quite inflexible and the rules about funding and contracting can differ widely. It can be a big challenge to address these issues and coordinate with the other types of supports that people require.

Balancing risk and self-determination

Generally, the people looking at supported living are quite independent and want to become more independent. They want to try new things, learn new skills, and meet new people. They want to take the kinds of risks we all take in our lives. This is important for people to develop the confidence and skills to manage themselves and their lives. They may, however, live with certain vulnerabilities that require safeguards of some kind. It can be a challenge to find this balance and to adjust as things inevitably change. Having a "plan B" from the beginning can be important in establishing trust that there will be support if things go sideways at some point.

What stops people from using supported living?

We know that there hasn't been a lot of uptake of the supported living option right now so we talked about the reasons why that is the case …

Barriers related to CLBC

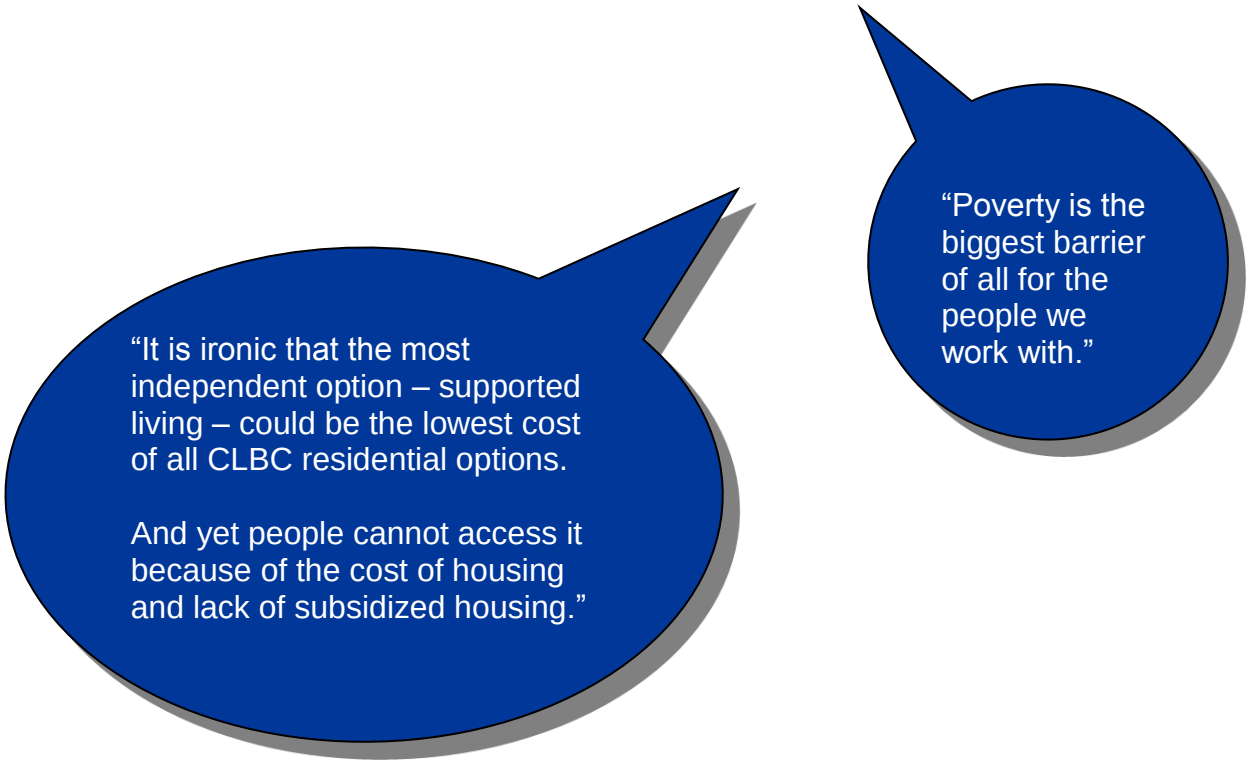
- Waitlists to get into a globally-funded or block-funded service.
- Confusion about what different words mean – independent living, supported living, community inclusion, etc.
- Rules related to funding categories (e.g. supported living cannot be provided in the family home).
- Administrative requirements around procurement and contracting that can rule out creative solutions.
- Limited promotion or information about the option for individuals and families.
- The actual cost of the housing is not included in the funding provided – unlike staffed residential or home sharing arrangements.
- Funding to support life transitions or crises is not always available.

Barriers at the service provider level

- Lack of adaptability or flexibility around hours or staffing decisions – sometimes related to union contracts.
- Limited time for planning and matching of staff and individuals.
- Lack of knowledge about the possibilities of supported living.
- Whole new skill set required to build or renovate and then manage apartments.
- Harder for smaller agencies to adapt and shift resources around to meet individual needs.

Barriers related to housing

- Cost of buying or renting a place to live for people on low or fixed incomes.
- Lack of subsidized housing through BC Housing – people with disabilities are no longer a priority for housing subsidies – it has shifted to seniors and homeless people.
- Rules associated with BC Housing subsidies – they are sometimes tied to a specific unit, which restricts someone's choices about where to live.
- Safety and suitability of housing that people can actually afford.
- Availability and choices of housing even when people can afford it.
- Accessibility of housing for people with physical disabilities.

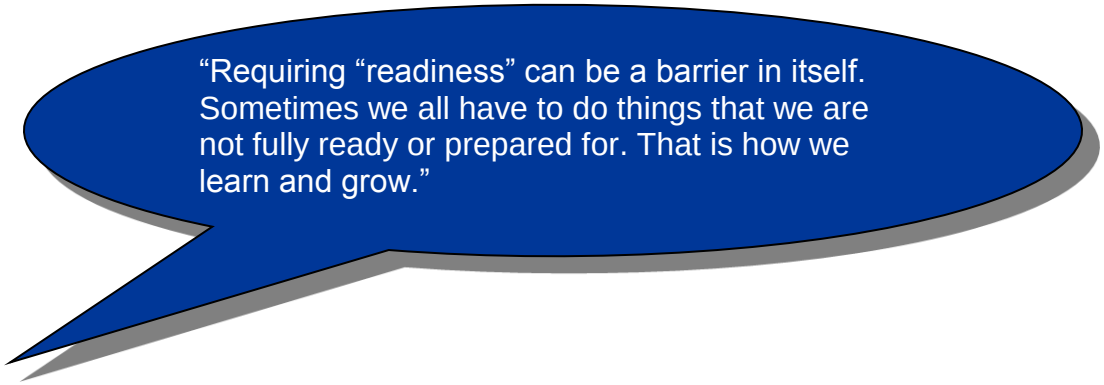


Barriers at the community / society level

- Transportation.
- Issues and understanding with landlords.
- Resistance to change – not everyone is comfortable with the shift.
- Issues with roommates or neighbours – such as noise or attitudes.
- Lack of community resources or capacity.
- Accessibility of community services such as recreation centres.
- Negative assumptions, attitudes and discrimination in the community – whether from landlords, employers, co-workers or neighbours.
- Agencies such as Employment Standards and Worksafe BC view the person's home as a workplace, which can lead to requirements that are not compatible with it being a real home.
- Lack of community awareness.

Barriers related to individuals and their families

- People making decisions or choices that contribute to their vulnerabilities and may result in them being exploited.
- Addictions or mental health challenges that are not well-managed.
- Different perceptions and tolerance about what risks are OK to take.
- Behaviours that are not well understood or supported.
- Fear of the unknown – of trying new things.
- Fear of failure – people cannot imagine it working safely.
- Lack of trust or confidence in the capacity of the agency.
- Lack of information.
- Some families can help with the cost of housing – others cannot.



Looking forward

How might we change the framework?

We explored what changes might help address some of the barriers we have identified and move us towards a future vision for supported living. We do not endorse all these ideas, but we do think they are worth talking about some more. We also recognize that some of these ideas are contradictory and need more discussion …

Make it more flexible

- Create more fluidity between the funding categories for shared living and supported living (e.g. allow more support hours at times or provide funding to help pay someone's rent).
- Find ways to enable staff and agencies to "get a bit messy" when designing unique solutions with individuals and families – make the solutions be about the individual's strengths and needs even if they go a bit outside the standard categories.

"Let's make the lines between the funding categories a little more grey."

- Empower families to take a role in designing services.
- Allow movement in and out of individualized contracts to accommodate changing family capacity and circumstances.
- Make funding portable.
- Give agencies more scope to manage hours and funding – to move them around between people as needed. Help families understand that some of "their" funded hours may actually be used by someone else sometimes.
- Be clearer about what exactly can be funded under each category and what the intent is so that there is more consistency across the province.

Create new options

- Allow transition support (e.g. provide supported living supports in the family home for a while and then transition to an independent arrangement).
- Allow "front-end loading" – more funding at the start to help someone get established.
- Consider a hybrid funding model that captures the efficiency of global funding and the flexibility of individualized contracts.
- Consider an option that is outside the funding categories altogether – based only on an individual's strengths and needs as they shift and change over time – that allows an agency to provide or access whatever the most appropriate services are.

- Rethink the funding categories – maybe combine some of them – to enable a wider range of options.
- Ensure adequate resources to support skill development even if that means more than 15 hours some weeks.
- Look at a "housing-first" model of support for people with significant issues related to addiction and / or mental health.
- Enable drop-in formats (e.g. an outreach approach where people's supports are not scheduled).
- Consider longer-term contracts to offer more stability for people.
- Provide a housing subsidy to everyone.

Be careful

- Don't add more paperwork or administrative requirements when making changes.
- Keep the focus on maximizing the potential of each individual to make choices and live a real life.
- Seek a reasonable balance between being a bit messy in order to honour people's choices and potential and still being accountable for funding and services delivered.

How do we build community capacity?

We learned from examining the John O'Brien article and from our own experience that building and sustaining alliances are key. As well as building alliances with individuals and their families and supporters, we also need to get better at building alliances within our communities…strengthening the community webs that will sustain people for a lifetime…

What we know about building capacity

- Focus intentionally on doing it – it does not happen by chance.
- Share our strengths and celebrate our successes.
- Taking things personally does not help build community.
- Build alliances with each other.
- Take responsibility rather than looking for somewhere else to put blame.
- People who live independently create pathways of connection that can help others.
- Employment is a key connector for people.
- Responding to complex support needs requires outside expertise and help.
- Don't be afraid to share our experience.

How do we build and facilitate alliances and partnerships?

We talked about applying a community development "lens" to the work of creating and sustaining supported living arrangements. People felt this was key to developing capacity and trust within communities, and to legitimizing and encouraging creative solutions.

Ideas included showcasing innovative approaches and success stories, explaining what we can offer and what we need, articulating better how supported living benefits everyone, and seeking win-wins with other agencies. There were different opinions as to whether CLBC should consider funding this kind of community development, or whether it is better to have agencies do it in a more organic way with no funding rules to limit its freedom or flexibility. Here are some of the actions we talked about.

Things CLBC can do

- Build a partnership with BC Housing about how to work together to provide affordable housing with supports for people eligible for CLBC funding.
- Create new resources to support creative possibilities – such as a handbook for agencies that want to develop new housing units.
- Create conscious public education tools – like short videos about successful supported living stories.
- Leverage the STADD one-government approach to address the issues around partnerships with mental health and addictions services.
- Consider providing community development funding.

Things service providers can do

- Demonstrate and share expertise.
- Showcase success.
- Explore co-housing and intentional shared spaces as possible approaches.
- Engage the business community in seeking solutions/sharing risk in new ventures.
- Engage employers in partnerships.
- Create visible presence in community – be "of the community".
- Take risks with new ideas – think forward and look outward.
- Address people's fears with real-life success stories.
- Seek alliances with others serving vulnerable people (e.g. seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses, homeless and street-based services, addictions and mental health service providers). Look for ways to exchange services and pool resources (e.g. offer an agency's van to pick up seniors who need a ride).
- Create spaces and opportunities for people to connect.
- Work on the assumption that community has capacity – a positive approach.
- Undertake conscious public education – don't leave it to chance.
- Clearly identify the issues and then possible solutions.
- Create mentorship opportunities.
- Map your community to get to know it better.
- Deliberately host conversations and distribute resources.

Who do we need to include in the conversation?

We generated a long list of players we see as necessary to expanding this conversation – agencies and people we need to build alliances with and engage in caring about successful supported living. Many of these are non-traditional allies who have common concerns.

Provincial agencies	■ MLAs ■ Ministry of Social Development - PWD Benefits ■ CLBC ■ CLBC-funded counselling supports ■ Schools, universities, education and special education professionals ■ WorkBC ■ Ministry for Children & Family Development (respite, parenting supports) ■ Public Guardian & Trustee (estate planning and legal protections for people who lack legal capacity)
Housing	■ BC Housing ■ Non-profit housing associations ■ Business community and chambers of commerce ■ Developers ■ Financial institutions
Health care	■ Mental health services ■ Addictions services ■ Ministry of Health ■ Canadian Mental Health Association ■ Family doctors ■ Local hospitals ■ Brain injury services and associations

We need to talk with…

Municipal sector	■ Mayors and councils (social planning, accessible/affordable housing, development) ■ Recreation centres ■ Union of BC Municipalities ■ Police agencies (registry for vulnerable people, community policing, mall security)
Families & individuals	■ Advocates ■ Self-advocates ■ Family organizations
Broader community	■ Helpful, safe places for vulnerable people and the agencies that create and support them ■ Personal and relationship counseling supports ■ Faith-based and cultural communities ■ First Nations organizations ■ Community gatherings and events ■ Financial planners (estate planning, RDSPs) ■ Potential future service providers

"We need to brag a bit more about the exciting and innovative things we are already doing."

What do we need to be aware of?

In thinking ahead, we recognize that there are some important trends and perspectives to consider. Here are some things to think about…

Emerging needs and expectations

- As people with developmental disabilities get older, their health and personal care needs will change. Currently, supported living cannot accommodate such changes to a great extent. Can supported living arrangements be responsive and flexible enough to meet such needs? Can we support people to age in their homes? Can we ensure they have access to end-of-life supports?
- Young people who have grown up through inclusive schools have expectations about living independently. They may also not want to be "tied down" to a specific schedule of support hours. How can supported living respond? What does that mean for where we provide service and who we hire to do it? How do we facilitate the transition to adult living while ensuring adequate safeguards are in place?
- Some young people have been or are street-involved in various ways. Can supported living create ways to reach them where they are and create a bigger presence? Who do we need to work with to do that?
- Supported living can be an appropriate arrangement for couples, including those with children. Who do we need to work with to make that workable and safe?

Expanding our perspective

- We need to keep the focus on right, deep relationships.
- Use accessible technology to help people be connected and safe (e.g. smart houses, smart phones, lifelines, electronic-based cues). Technology may offer lots of new ways to help reduce risk. We will need to expand who we are talking with to find these solutions.

- Informal safeguards hold the key to truly safe and inter-dependent lives. We will need to expand what exists and find more ways to facilitate people having support networks around them.
- Many individuals and families do not know about supported living as an option. CLBC staff and agencies will need to make a concerted effort to improve information and to create conversations where supported living can be an option in appropriate situations.

Expressing leadership

- Purposefully create mentorship within the sector.
- Facilitate life-long planning – a shift from just thinking about current needs and services.
- Pull back from the day-to-day demands and think "big picture" about how to shift resources towards more independent options.
- Take the time for an "inquiry phase" before moving to a "solutions phase". We need to fully understand what all the players are thinking and doing before designing solutions – otherwise the solutions will only work for some of the players.
- We don't need to gather more information – we need to get on with it.
- Reward and celebrate creativity.

Balancing risk and self-determination

- Living with appropriate risk is a challenge we all deal with in our lives.
- Any authentic life carries some risks in living it.
- It depends where you sit – a young adult is likely to have a different perspective on vulnerability and risk than her mother.
- Avoid a "catastrophizing" perspective – it is impossible to remove all risk from someone's life.
- Work at negotiating clear roles and responsibilities so that when/if something happens, people know what to do.
- Vulnerabilities and tolerance for risk will change over a person's lifetime.
- Balance is a helpful concept to work towards.
- Consider the connections between vulnerability/risk and accountability for service provision and quality. Work within those complexities and tensions.

Continuing the conversation

How do people participate?

Now that you have seen what we have talked about so far, we hope you have something to add! The more people who participate, the deeper the understanding and awareness we will have and the more creative solutions and ideas we will generate. There are lots of possible ways to continue this conversation …

- Share your stories of success – maybe through the newsletter at your agency or the CLBC newsletter, or in other creative ways.
- Use this report and the O'Brien article as a training or workshop tool/topic.
- Work with your local CLBC office and / or agency to initiate local discussion/inquiry forums. Collect the ideas that get generated.
- Examine aspects of how we are doing the work now – what changes could we make to things such as staff training for example?
- Consider this as a topic for community councils, conferences, workshops, presentations, staff training / orientation, regular meetings between CLBC staff and service providers, etc. There are lots of possible venues and vehicles to continue the conversation.

How do we get started?

Here are some discussion questions to get you started. Use them to guide your conversations … or make up your own.

1. How is supported living connected to other conversations and changes underway in community living? Such as employment, aging, safeguards, quality of life?

2. What is the role of advocacy and self-advocacy in driving and facilitating change?

3. How can we use the John O'Brien vision to help us more forward?

4. Do we need to change how we think about vulnerability and risk and safeguards?

5. How do we balance people's self-determination with accountability for service quality?

6. How can we guard against ending up with segregated situations- where people live in a building with mostly or only other people with developmental disabilities?

7. Is there some better language we could use – maybe "supported living" is not the right terminology for what we are trying to do?

8. Do the job descriptions and recruitment approaches for supported living staff start to look different as we support emerging groups of people? Maybe we need entirely new approaches?

9. How can we make our way through the "chicken and egg" challenge? Expanded capacity only comes from doing new things and it is hard to do new things without expanded capacity.



Appendix: Roundtable Participant List

June 26 2013 at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel

Debra Pierce	Richmond Society for Community Living
Janice Barr	Richmond Society for Community Living
Wendy Brophy	AiMHi (Prince George)
Melanie Florentino	Cranbrook Society for Community Living
Brenda Gillette	Chilliwack Society for Community Living
Shelby Hagel	Chilliwack Society for Community Living
Jeff Gilbank	Chilliwack Society for Community Living
Linette Baker	Community Living Victoria
Ernie Baatz	Spectrum Society for Community Living
Wendy-Sue Andrew	Lifetime Networks
Teresa Griffiths	Langley Association for Community Living
Dodd Relland	Langley Association for Community Living
Dan Collins	Langley Association for Community Living
Sky Hendsbee	Langley Association for Community Living
Kim Bucholtz	Langley Association for Community Living
Wendy Padwick	North Shore Connexions Society
Elizabeth Roach	North Shore Connexions Society
Tara Asquith	Delta Community Living Society
Anita Sihota	Delta Community Living Society
Fernando Coelho	PosAbilities
Lynn Roberts	Powell River Association for Community Living
Lilla Tipton	Powell River Association for Community Living
Bob Lipsett	Thompson Okanagan Community Services Co-op (Kamloops)
Jan Miscich	Family Support
Faith Bodnar	Inclusion BC
Colleen Walton	Parent (Victoria)
Susan Anthony	Individual in Supported Living (Victoria)
Jennifer Valenciano	CLBC Quality Service Analyst (Simon Fraser)
Reta Derouin	CLBC Policy and Practice Analyst
Carol Goozh	CLBC Vice President, Policy & Program Development
Tamara Kulusic	CLBC Manager, Policy & Program Development
Chandy Drozda	CLBC Facilitator (Surrey)
JoAnn Morrison	CLBC Quality Service Analyst (Upper Fraser)
Nina Linguanti	CLBC Quality Service Manager (Victoria)
Marlo Roller	CLBC Quality Service Analyst (Victoria)
Jai Birdi	CLBC Director, Regional Operations (Fraser Region)
Grant Huffman	CLBC Quality Service Manager (Kamloops)
Jack Styan	CLBC Vice President, Strategic Initiatives
Kim Lyster	Consultant / Facilitator of Roundtable
Kate Irving	Consultant / Recorder and Report Writer