Stella’s Circle
Hope Lives Here
Aging in Community
Perceptions From Stella’s Circle

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Sponsors: St. John’s Catalyst Fund & Stella’s Circle
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Overview of Presentation

- Background
- Objectives of Study
- Research approach
- Results
- Discussion
Aging in community

- What is “aging in community”? (Thomas & Blanchard, 2009)
- Maintaining dignity and independence (Black, Dobbs, and Young, 2015)

Key themes: meaningful involvement, aging in place, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, transportation and mobility, and health and well-being.

- Particular challenges for persons:
  - Who live with complex mental health needs (Henwood, Katz, and Gilmer, 2015)
  - Who are homeless (The Lancet, 2014)
Stella’s Circle History
Naomi Centre
Brian Martin Housing Resource Centre
Front Step
Jess’s Place

Community Support Program
Just Us Women’s Centre
Emmanuel House

Intake Assessments & Individual Counselling
Employment Counselling & Transition Groups
ABE Level 1
Work Experience
We’ve been noticing a trend…
1. To explore the nature and extent of programs and services that are needed to support older tenants with complex mental health needs as they age in the community.

2. To consider what will be required of supportive housing providers as they support seniors with complex health needs as they age in the community.
Methods

- Qualitative approach

- Data collection

- Recruitment (45 – 55 years; 56+ years)

- Ethics approval (HREA 2017.077)

- Limitations
## Results

Table 1. Possible participants by program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Possible participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One on one interviews</strong> (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Groups (4)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Support Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55 yrs. (n=10)</td>
<td>45-55 yrs. 24 + 7 = (n=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 years + (n=5)</td>
<td>56 years + 47 +3 = (n=50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results

Table 2. Focus Group by program and age of participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Community Support Program 56 years +</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Supportive Housing and Front Step Program 56 years +</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Community Support Program 45-55 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Supportive Housing and Front Step Program 45-55 years</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1 - “Aging” equated with declining health and its effects

- More doctors visits (physical and mental health)
- Many participants reported having chronic conditions
- Issues with mobility
- Loss of independence
## Theme 1 Particular concerns with aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistive devices &amp; transportation</th>
<th>Financial pressures</th>
<th>Emotional impact of aging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for devices</td>
<td>Cost of living on fixed income</td>
<td>Stress arising from physical health, impacts mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transit</td>
<td>Health care costs</td>
<td>Lack of mobility leads to isolation, and impacts mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need affordable rent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 2  
Health defines housing needs  

Safety, Including security

Seniors are vulnerable. They do not receive the same respect as they did in the past.

“I am living in an apartment building. It is not nice as there have been thefts.”

“I am living in a bedsitter. It is not clean, I have had my food stolen.”

“I had a brick thrown through my window. Now I have an apartment with Stella’s Circle.”
Theme 2
Health defines housing needs

Tenure in transitional housing, halfway houses is time limited.

Others have to move due to their health status.
[I have to move as] there are stairs ...I prefer and need an apartment on one floor.”
“I live in a house. I cannot stay where I am living much longer.”

Tenants who are living in apartments operated by Stella’s Circle are generally satisfied with their housing units. Most wanted to stay connected to Stella’s Circle.
Theme 2
Health defines housing needs

Support Services

Physical needs help to define housing requirements. However, participants also require emotional support. Some have support of family, many do not. For emotional support, many place high reliance on Stella’s Circle.

“Emmanuel House is like my second family. If only for them,..I do not know where I would have been…I would be lost.”

Not having access to support services was a concern to some participants.

“I do not have it, though I need home care”.

“I am living in a board house so I get nothing (home care services) from Stella’s Circle.”
Theme 3 – Tenants’ Expectations

Participants expect they will need extra support services and programs.

“I need help now, and am going to need more help”.

“You are supposed to enjoy your golden years but it does not get easier. If you need help, it should be available.”

Participants want to avail of additional programs and services to help them have meaning – social, health, useful activities, work.

Suggestions: community centre, exercise class, community garden, cooking classes, art gallery
Most want to stay connected to Stella’s Circle.

“ I keep in touch with Stella’s Circle so when I need help, I have family.”

“ I feel connected to other clients.”

“ I want to stay connected with Stella’s Circle the rest of my life.”
Theme 3 Stella’s Circle support for aging in community

Stella’s Circle provides mental health supports, not physical care

Programs aim to keep clients/tenants in the community, and out of institutions

Gaps in programs exist
## Theme 3 – If tenants need care…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What if a tenant require placement in a personal care home/LTC?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenants – most felt that this would not be an acceptable option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlier – “If I cannot manage, I will go to a home. I am not afraid of it”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella’s Circle - Tenants may not be accepted for placement – Options?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stella’s Circle has expertise and capacity to provide services to adults with complex mental health needs.

Now, it must consider how it will respond to the physical needs of its aging clients/tenants.

“Stella’s Circle has expertise dealing with its [client] population, not services for aging [clients].”
Discussion- Dignity and respect

Key themes (Black, Dobbs, and Young, 2015)

- Meaningful involvement
- Aging in place
- Respect and social inclusion
- Communication and information
- Transportation and mobility
- Health and well-being

Tenants of Stella’s Circle views are consistent
To plan a way forward, Stella’s Circle could invest resources to inform planning by:

1. Assessing the needs of tenants 45 Years+,
2. Build connections with organizations serving seniors, and
3. Identify gaps in its services and in the continuum of services, to:
   - maintain client/tenants in community, or
   - continue to extend support though residing elsewhere, e.g., in a care facility.
Thank-you to the Advisory Committee and Support Staff

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Carolyn Bruss
Debbie Hanlon

Discussion
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