

Dementia: A Call to Action

Action 3: Commit to Developing Long Term Care Settings that Reflect Current and Emerging Best Practice in Built Environments and Person-Centred Care

This action addresses the need for people living with advanced dementia to have living environments that support them with quality psychosocial and physical care.

What we know:

As the number of people living with dementia is increasing the current number of long term care spaces is falling short of the demand. People are facing lengthy waits at home after their need for care has increased and family members are finding care stressful.

Some people with dementia are awaiting placement in hospitals because of the complexity of their care exceeding what family care partners are able to provide. Because hospital settings are purpose built to facilitate medical care, people with dementia who experience lengthy hospital stays may become deskilled while awaiting placement in a personal care home because the hospital setting lacks a home like environment that promotes the person's abilities, strengths and interests.

Following moving to a personal care home, people with more advanced dementia often live approximately 18-24 months as they experience greater health complexity that leads to end of life.

It is observed that well planned physical environments promote person-centred care that leads to quality of life for residents. It is also noted that the most important attribute of a care setting is compassionate, caring, person-centred staff members who believe that they "work in the person's home; the person does not live in their workplace."¹

The goal of quality of life for people with dementia who reside in long term care can be achieved through integration of commitment to provide living spaces that exemplify best practice and to prioritize development of a care staff that is committed to person-centred care.

Recommended Responses:

- Plan new personal care homes and upgrade existing environments to respond to emerging best practice in building standards and principles.
- Develop policies and procedures to facilitate an integrated approach to movement of individuals between providers of care inclusive of Home Care, Acute Care and Long Term Care.
- Align personal care home standards with principles of person-centred care so as to move from task based care to care that recognizes the person's uniqueness and understands the world from the person's perspective.
- Continue support of dementia care education for all staff of long term care homes.
- Inaugurate a dementia care education initiative for staff of acute care sites.

¹ Alzheimer Society of Canada, PC P.E.A.R.L.S.® 7 elements of person-centred care, 2014