



## Quality Improvement Narrative

# Reflecting on The Elliott Community's Pandemic Journey and Looking to the Future of Long-Term Care

July 11, 2022



## Overview

The Elliott Community is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that has served the seniors' community in Guelph for greater than 100 years. We are a member of AdvantAge Ontario and accredited by CARF Canada. The Elliott Long-Term Care Residence consists of 85 residents living in 4 resident home areas. One of the resident home areas is a secure environment that accommodates 11 residents living with various types dementia who may wander and need a safe space to do so.

Our mission is:

*"Quality choices in a caring and inclusive, home-like community. A tradition of promoting dignity and independence for those we serve and their families"*

Our values are:

*Integrity, Compassion, and Caring*

The Elliott Community undertook a strategic planning process in 2021 and developed a plan for 2022-24. The plan is based on 4 key Strategic Directions. They are designed to enable The Elliott Community to be as flexible and innovative as possible to respond to the uncertain and transformative times of the COVID and post-COVID periods. They are also designed to continuously improve The Elliott Community's high

standard of care; financial stability; and community partnerships. We plan to continue to grow the breadth of our association with The City of Guelph, as well as other key community partners, and continue to be a major resource in the delivery of health care services in the post-retirement, assisted living and long-term care sectors.



Our Strategic Directions:

1. *Expand and strengthen Long-Term Care facilities*
2. *Be a sector leader in human resource management*
3. *Strengthen financial well-being and sustainability*
4. *Widen our reach into the community*

The Elliott Long-Term Care Residence continues to be committed to Continuous Quality Improvement and is supportive of the renewed focus on quality in the recently enacted Fixing Long Term Care Act and Regulations. We look forward to strengthening our connection with the Guelph-Wellington Ontario Health Team and aligning our future quality initiatives with a collaborative quality improvement plan (cQIP). Through The Elliott Community's collaborative efforts of our interdisciplinary team and engagement with our community partners, we are working to improve the quality of care we provide as well as improve the quality of life of the residents we serve.

Despite the many challenges that COVID presented, our Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey was conducted, as planned, in September 2021 and all required organizational practices were met to achieve a 3 year CARF Canada Accreditation, awarded in July 2021. The Elliott Community was able to maintain its commitment to quality improvement by pivoting the quality plan to focus on compliance with infection prevention and control directives; communication with community stakeholders; and maintaining/redeploying human resources to ensure resident care was supported through this sustained, global crisis.

This year, our quality improvement plan (QIP) will reflect on our experiences over the past two years; set goals for transitioning to a post-COVID period; and contribute to the Ontario Health priority of health system recovery. Our 2022/23 interim quality improvement workplan includes four Ontario Health priority indicators and three custom indicators identified as priority for The Elliott Community. All seven indicators support our strategic plan directions as well as overall health system recovery.

 <b>COVID-19 Health System Recovery</b>			 <b>Strategic Direction(s)</b>
Theme	Indicator	Type	
Theme I: Timely and Efficient Transitions	Potentially avoidable emergency department visits for long-term care residents	OH Priority	#1 & #4
Theme II: Service Excellence	Resident experience: Being able to speak up about the home	OH Priority	#1 & #2
	Resident experience: Having a voice	OH Priority	#1 & #2
	Resident experience: Recommending TEC	TEC Custom	#3 & #4
Theme III: Safe and Effective Care	Percentage of long-term care home residents not living with psychosis who were given antipsychotic medications	OH Priority	#1
	Potentially avoidable urine specimen collection for laboratory testing	TEC Custom	#1
	Mask fit testing for organizational employees	TEC Custom	#2 & #4

**Reflections since last QIP submission**

The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed the health care system and highlighted how important the long-term care sector is to serve the care needs of Ontarians. A positive side of the pandemic is a greater depth of understanding and respect for how interconnected our systems are AND how resilient we can be when we work together.

The Elliott Community organizational quality improvement plan shifted priorities in response to the resources required to manage change through the COVID pandemic waves. A Pandemic Plan was developed that focused on communication, compliance with directives, and human resources. It was necessary to put planned quality initiatives on hold to ensure the safety of residents and staff. Everyone contributed to this endeavor. Staff members were often experiencing redeployment to support areas of the community in need. For example, administrative and leadership team members joined the effort to ensure residents received proper nutrition and hydration, seven days a week.

With lockdowns in place and a no-visitor policy directive, frequent communication became essential. Over 100 email communications were sent out to staff, residents and families in 2021. The recreation team facilitated hundreds of virtual connections between residents and

their family members, via zoom calls and reading out emailed notes. In addition, a pen pal program was fostered between surrounding community members and residents.

Maintaining the human connection through all the barriers that COVID necessitated was essential to combat the effects of isolation, for everyone.

Health human resources scarcity has impacted our healthcare system and The Elliott Community is no exception. Our human resources department implemented six different recruitment programs to meet the challenge. In addition, wellness programs became more robust to support the mental health and wellbeing of employees. Despite the focus on COVID, the nursing department was able to provide over 50 education sessions since the beginning of the pandemic. This education supported the diligent infection prevention and control practices as well as the maintenance of clinical skills with such topics as falls prevention, wound care, and documentation.

The Elliott Community acknowledges the ongoing heroic team effort for all the additional tasks that are now a daily reality. Providing high-quality long-term care, constrained by resources, was difficult prior to the COVID pandemic. This crisis required an immense amount of effort from everyone involved. Additional tasks include:

enhanced high-touch surface cleaning; resident and staff testing; vaccine administration; daily symptom screening; ensuring proper personal protective equipment (PPE) availability and appropriate use; and all of the other duties as assigned. The difficulty with PPE procurement was alarming and stewardship practices were of the utmost importance. A new team of employees were hired to ensure active screening at the building entrance as well as running COVID testing clinics. This team was instrumental in adapting the clinics as they evolved from PCR specimen collection (to send to the laboratory for testing) to implementation of onsite rapid testing procedures. Also, N95 mask-fit testing became a sudden need for every employee for their safety and to prevent the spread of infection to residents. The Elliott Community invested in training and equipment to manage this safety initiative in-house and will continue to do so moving forward.

The flexibility of the community to quickly adapt to continuous changes in their daily lives and work flow was (and continues to be) impressive.

Our community's advantage was having an established infection prevention and control (IPAC) lead position in place prior to the pandemic. This role, as well as our networking with Public Health, IPAC Community of Practice group, and IPAC hubs supported our COVID

pandemic management success. Although we experienced outbreaks in our home, we lost no community members to this disease. We are proud to report that 100% of our employees are fully vaccinated for COVID, demonstrating their dedication to health and safety in their workplace.

In spite of the pandemic challenges, stakeholders know The Elliott Community is a pillar of stability that people can depend on in times of uncertainty. It is a community where residents feel safe in their home and staff are committed to meaningful work. Regardless of the unpredictability that exists in our lives, The Elliott Community has adopted an organizational tone of steadfast reliability and established longevity.

Under new legislation of the Fixing Long-Term Care Act and to support a continuous and sustainable high standard of care, The Elliott Community will renew our approach to quality. This includes the addition of a new role that is focused on organizational quality across departments and facilities. The Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management Resource Nurse will support departments to move their quality improvement plans forward as well as assisting with the identification of new initiatives and support implementation of changes. This role will ensure that quality improvement plans are aligned with organizational strategic directions

as well as our Long-Term Care Service Accountability Agreement.

The Elliott Community quality improvement perspectives have also evolved with regards to the level of involvement of frontline staff, residents and families in the co-design of quality improvement recommendations. Going beyond response to individual feedback and resident/family council advocacy, members from these stakeholder groups will become representatives on the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee where they will collaborate with us to make recommendations for organizational quality initiatives.

This collaborative committee is an opportunity for individual and organizational growth. Through education on continuous quality improvement we will learn together, build relationships and strengthen connections between our organization and its stakeholders.

### **Resident partnering and relations**

Ontario's long-term care model of care has certainly been tested by restrictions experienced over the past two years. Without the in-person support of family and volunteers, The Elliott Community had to quickly adapt to fill the gaps and maintain the home-like environment. At first, the challenges seemed insurmountable. Limitations on gathering and freedom of movement throughout the

community affected the recreation and dining experiences for residents. Hearing and/or cognitive impairment previously challenged the ability of many residents to receive the message when verbally communicating with staff and universal mask use makes it almost impossible at times. Care conferences, family communications, and resident/family council meetings could no longer be held in-person. Just to name a few of the challenges.

However, the innovative team at The Elliott Community found a way. Several of the necessary changes actually improved resident experience and will be maintained as we move into a post-COVID period.

Enhanced surface cleaning, HEPA air purifiers and HEPA vacuum cleaners will continue to be used to promote confidence in the safety for residents to gather in small groups for programming, have spontaneous interactions in common spaces, and use the dining rooms.

Voice amplifiers were made available to all staff to support effective communication with residents in the face of universal mask use. These devices continue to benefit resident's understanding and social connectedness with staff members.

Small group programming requires more frequency and the ability to travel throughout the building, creating

connections with residents in their home areas. The efficiency of bringing the program to residents, as opposed to assisting residents to a central location, was found to be a benefit for some types of activities. The adaptation of small group programming will also continue to be a resource to combat isolation during any future outbreaks of influenza or otherwise.

Virtual or hybrid care conferences will continue for family members who live further away or have barriers to visiting in-person. The recreation team continues to read emailed notes from family members and some of the pen pal relationships between residents and community members have continued independently. In addition, family council meetings pivoted to virtual and the attendance has never been higher. They plan to continue to meet virtually going forward.

Dissemination of information in a timely manner was a factor on a daily basis and many of the changes made will continue as we promote sustainability of strong communications with our stakeholders. Website posting and email distribution lists for family communication became the more efficient means and preference for most. An emergency control group was developed in response to COVID directives but will continue on as an operations communication group to help manage building projects from a systems level. Virtual Health,

Health Connects, Vital Hub, iTacit, Activity Pro, and Access Visitor were some of the technology platforms implemented and have continued to provide support for The Elliott Community.

When viewed through the most positive lens, the COVID pandemic has been a massive quality improvement project for our community. It required everyone to become accustomed to change. We have not only survived but found ways to thrive, build capacity, expand our minds to find creative solutions and gain more respect for our community's resiliency. Our resident's ability to adapt with us and continue to bring us moments of joy and laughter is what kept us going. Moving forward, the timing is right to seize the opportunity to grow as an organization and make continuous quality improvement part of daily life. The Elliott Community is committed to collaboration and the work needed to do so.

### **Resident Experience**

*"COVID taught us that it is not only the recreation team's responsibility, everyone has a role to play in resident engagement."* - Samantha Corman, Community Engagement Manager

Social connectedness is vital to everyone's wellbeing. The restrictions necessitated by the COVID pandemic had a

negative impact on resident quality of life, even though they reduced the risk of infectious disease transmission. We learned that there needs to be a balanced approach between social connection and infection control practices when providing long-term care.

By shifting our perspectives we can see how current practices contribute to resident social connectedness. For example, common area surface cleaning and a focus on facility air quality not only supports interruption of infectious disease transmission, it also allows residents, families and staff members feel safe to use the common spaces that foster social connections.

Recognizing that residents engage in different ways, in addition to program attendance, the recreation team have begun tracking self-directed leisure activities observed in the common spaces of the community. This information indicates that residents are self-motivated, not isolated, and feel connected to their community.

In addition, resident-centered initiatives can also promote social connectedness. For example, our dietary team works with residents to include their favourite recipes into the regular menu. Sharing about their favourite foods and reminiscing together at the dining table supports meaningful connections between residents and with the staff members who care for them.

Moving forward, The Elliott Community will seek further opportunities to restore and enhance social connectedness. We will collaborate across departments to engage residents and improve their quality of life. Some planned initiatives are: rebuilding our volunteer program; licensing staff members for resident outings using our bus; and surrounding community engagement fundraising events. Improving our presence on social media will strengthen our familiarity within the surrounding community; increase recognition of the work we do; and bring opportunities for partnerships.

Furthermore, we will review our resident satisfaction survey questions through a quality improvement and sustainability lens in order to meet the changing needs of our resident population. Going beyond seeking feedback about our current practices, we will include questions that access information about how The Elliott Community can improve the quality of their lives and nurture social connectedness. By simply asking “What does community mean to you?” we will continue to grow and adapt to resident’s changing needs for years to come.

### **Contact information**

Sherri Enns, Chief of Resident Services (Administrator)  
Heather Van Cauwenberghe, Director of Care  
Jocelyn Alves, Quality Improvement and Risk  
Management Resource Nurse



**Other****Ontario Health Team**

The Elliott Community is one of the 18 core partners in the Guelph-Wellington Ontario Health Team (GW OHT) that have come together to transform our local health system that meets the needs of our residents now and in the future. A foundational expectation and objective of this system transformation is to develop a health care system that attracts and retains staff who not only have good experience, but find joy in the work they do. This is critical for Long-Term Care organizations like ourselves who are faced with the challenge of finding great staff who are passionate about the care of the elderly.

Partnering with other organizations to solve this challenge together will be fundamental to the success of this transformation. We will be required to do business differently and this monumental task has been embraced by the leaders and organizations they represent. Trusting relationships and Board guidance has ensured us that we are doing the “right thing” for the “right reasons” as we forge ahead in developing a new way of organizing and delivering care. While our Long Term Care home continues to feel the pressures of increasing resident acuity we will continue to collaborate with our partners to develop and implement new models of care to better support our residents and their families. The Ontario Health Team is a unique opportunity to work with our community partners to develop a local system that is

responsive to the needs of the residents of our community to ensure they receive the care they need when they need it. As a partner in one of the first 24 OHT’s, we know that together, we will be able to achieve much more than we could on our own.