

VCH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families



Bowen Island Primary Care Network

Community Engagement Summary Report

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Background

Under the direction of the Ministry of the Health, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Division of Family Practice are developing Primary Care Networks (PCN's) that will change the way people access health services where they live, and better connect family doctors and nurse practitioners with other health care professionals in the community.

The benefit for family doctors and nurse practitioners will be convenient access to a supportive network of people and services for expanded patient care. For patients and clients, it will be timely, coordinated and comprehensive, primary care when its needed so individual health care needs are met more effectively. Overall, PCNs would strengthen teamwork, communication and centre services around patients and their families.

In order to understand the primary care needs of the North Shore communities staff led an engagement process to hear from residents, patients, their families and their caregivers to understand their experiences with our current health care services and programs and understand how it can be improved to support their health and wellbeing without having to leave the North Shore.

How we engaged

-  In early May 2019, residents of Bowen
-  Island were invited to attend a discussion to learn more about the benefits of a Primary
-  Care Networks and to ask questions and share their experiences of primary care.
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VCH Community Engagement



The forum was promoted through posters, email, social media and Eventbrite. Local community partners encouraged participation in the forums.

What we asked

The following questions were posed to participants:

1. Is it important to have access to a **longitudinal primary care provider (one who knows you)** when you need it? Why?
 - Do you have challenges finding a primary care provider?
 - Do you have any challenges getting in to see your primary care provider?
2. Where do you currently go when you need health care?
3. If you work or spend significant time on the mainland, is it your preference to have your regular primary care provider on the mainland or Bowen?

KEY POINTS:

- It is difficult finding a GP when you live on an island that has one GP.
- Having GP or NP that is accessible can provide proactive health care and reduce reactive or crisis focused health care.
- The same person to provide primary care over a period of time creates stability in health care management.
- Virtual care options should be available.
- Increased availability of community based resources could support better overall primary care.

What we heard

Is it important to have access to longitudinal primary care provider (one who knows you) when you need it? Why?

- **Do you have challenges finding primary care provider?**
- **Do you have any challenges getting in to see your primary care provider?**
- The current status is that there is one family doctor on Bowen Island that works four days a week and one doctor that works for one day a week. There are 1200 patients on this GP's panel and 3800 residents on BI.
- The majority must find a GP off island which can be problematic due to travel and lack of GP accepting patients.
- Not being able to find a family doctor or getting in to see a family doctor with limited access results in erratic health care
- The more vulnerable or health compromised a person is the more they need that longitudinal care of a consistent family doctor in order to avoid crisis or emergency
- A regular family doctor means personal contact and knowledge of a person's medical history. That longitudinal care results in a holistic view of the person and their needs. It is especially valuable when the whole family sees one doctor.

Where do you currently go when you need health care?

- About a third of residents see the family doctor on Island while the rest access primary care on the mainland.
- Limited access to lab services and no diagnostic services make it necessary to seek these services off Island
- Residents with chronic conditions or multiple health care conditions must go off Island for any speciality health care.
- Having a range of options for daytime and after hours health care services would be a relief for island residents and would mitigate costs of off island transfers and emergencies

If you work or spend significant time on the mainland, is it your preference to have your regular primary care provider on the mainland or Bowen?

- Access to care needs to be convenient when you have ferry travel to contend with. There are often only short windows of time which are convenient for Bowen Island residents who work or attend school off the island.
- For the most part people would prefer to have access to primary care on the island in a way that is convenient and flexible and provides options which include access after 5 pm and on weekends.

"It is critical to have a GP who knows you, you don't need to repeat your story they know your history."

"Due to difficulty of access people are muddling by; not getting the health care they need to stay well or improve as it is too difficult"

Who we heard from

The community of Bowen Island was invited to participate in this dialogue. We promoted the session through community partners, on Facebook, and Eventbrite. Residents and community partners from the Bowen Island participated. Overall 18 participants attended the session.

"Those with chronic illnesses can be challenging to manage for the GP on island. Having access to virtual specialists could help support management of their health needs."

Summary and Recommendations

- Expand lab services on the Island; more days and hours.
- Consider current allocation of resources for off island transfers and plan for on island care that could mitigate transfers and emergencies
- Consider reassessing fee structure of on island community paramedic to increase use and decrease off island transfers
- Have diagnostics available on the island to be able to have x ray and ultrasound
- Build a Community Health Centre with urgent primary care access
- Access to annual physicals by GP that are covered by MSP
- Provide virtual and digital care options for Bowen Island residents