

# Social Worker PILOT PROJECT

## LONG-TERM CARE

*The Social Worker pilot project sets the stage for an infusion of best practices.*

Seven nursing homes in the counties of Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth in southwestern Nova Scotia took part in a year long innovative pilot project which assessed and evaluated the value and impact of having a Social Worker as part of their care teams. A professional Social Worker became a valuable resource within each long-term care facility, offering a holistic approach towards strengthening residents' ability to live their happiest and healthiest lives.

The **residents** had formally communicated that the Social Worker made substantial impact for residents making major life decisions and facing multiple challenges adjusting to life in long-term care through trustworthy, skilled support and care.

The **organizational culture** shifted quickly when residents and families can place their trust in a neutral third party, which is the Social Worker. The position became most impactful when leadership and staff involved the Social Worker and

integrated their role at all levels to ensure the Social Worker is knowledgeable about shifts in practices and how this will affect the relationship with residents/families.

**Staff** also responded very favourably to the Social Worker position as did management and physicians. Staff valued the expertise given to residents citing the insight into complex cases, behavioural challenges, overall mental health well being and professional growth educational opportunities and self care for team members.

## Improved mental health services and mental well being for the residents

### IMPACT

Improved mental well being of our residents, and increased well being of care team members who provide care to residents who suffer from mental health conditions  
Decreased behaviors, increased resident satisfaction

### UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES FROM CHALLENGES

Support extended to families in transition and to staff by shifting the burden of care to the Social Worker as specialist in mental health/emotional support during time of extreme staff burnout and poor staffing availability; Limited availability due to multi-site scenario diluted the full impact that the services could offer

### IMPLEMENTATION

Without access to ongoing Social Worker, any benefits experienced from this service will not be sustained



**Improved mental health services and mental well being for our staff**

## Enhanced the collaboration with sector partners

### UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES FROM CHALLENGES

A necessary step for the Social Worker to maintain her own network of supports

### IMPLEMENTATION

Connections made but fast being lost as the main point of contact is no longer present and working to sustain these relationships



**CONCLUSION:** Despite the challenges associated with working through a pandemic and this valuable resource being stretched across seven facilities in a large geographical area, the Social Work role was very well received in the LTC facilities. The Social Worker's impact and broad scope of contributions were appreciated by residents and families and many have commented that it will be a huge loss to no longer have the role available. Continued access to Social Work services is very much worth exploring.