



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local police partner with hospital to launch new mobile mental health engagement and response team to bring clinical expertise directly to those in need

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, March 8, 2018—An innovative partnership between local police forces and community mental health providers is coming to Northumberland thanks to new funding from the Central East Local Health Integration Network (Central East LHIN).

Directly aligned with the Central East LHIN goal to advance integrated systems of care and help individuals remain in their communities and homes, **M-HEART** (Mental Health Engagement and Response Team) combines supports within the justice and health care systems to better assist individuals with mental illness and/or addictions in Northumberland County.

Beginning this spring, M-HEART will be in operation five days per week in connection with both the Northumberland OPP Mental Health Response and Liaison Officer and the Cobourg Police Service Mental Health Response Officer to improve mental health support across local townships and/or municipalities including the Town of Cobourg, Trent Hills, Alnwick/Haldimand, Hamilton, Cramahe and the Municipality of Port Hope. Discussions are currently under way to expand the team's support to the Port Hope Police Service in the near future.

Existing Mental Health Response Officers will be accompanied on ride-along with new M-HEART Social Worker and/or Mental Health Nurse resources to jointly and proactively engage with individuals in the community with mental health and/or addiction issues. The new M-HEART clinicians will provide a mix of supports, including intensive case management, mental health therapeutic treatment, family supports, assertive outreach, advocacy, linkage to hospital-based resources, linkage to community resources (including multi-sector supports, such as income assistance and housing support), as well as primary care connection, all with an aim to support longer term stabilization of a vulnerable population.

Additionally, in the case of the new Mental Health Nurse, medication administration, monitoring and metabolic monitoring will be available immediately in the field.

“From the client’s perspective, M-HEART gives us a new opportunity to bring care to individuals in need in Northumberland—versus waiting for them to come to us—and to better connect them with community supports,” said Jennifer Cox, NHH Manager of Mental Health. “System navigation is a significant challenge for many of the clients and families we serve. Barriers such as transportation can result in individuals lacking the ability to navigate complex services they may not even be aware of. Without support and treatment, small challenges can escalate. M-HEART will aim to shift that through earlier touch points, and a street-level approach to hopefully promote lasting recoveries.”

“Mental health calls for service to Northumberland OPP have been increasing steadily since 2015,” said Lisa Darling, Detachment Commander for Northumberland OPP. “The Northumberland OPP is committed to improving our response to individuals struggling with mental illness and/or addictions. As police, we often encounter these individuals when they are in a state of crisis. We are proud to be part of this collaborative effort between police and the Mental Health Engagement and Response Team. This initiative will undoubtedly advance police interactions by fostering a more integrated and proactive approach in the field. More importantly, it will improve outcomes across Northumberland County for individuals and their families dealing with mental illness.”

“Effective mobile crisis intervention prevents situations from escalating to a point that options are limited,” said Cobourg Police Chief Kai Liu. “This partnership allows for a collaborative approach for people in crisis acting as a gateway to a vast array of support. This intervention model puts the right people in the right place to best serve our community.”

From a justice and health system perspective, anticipated benefits include increased capacity of limited resources within our community through improved coordination, collaboration and connection. Development and implementation of coordinated care plans will further empower individuals and their families to participate in care planning while keeping members of the support system informed. A reduction of Emergency Department visits and repeat visits is also expected, as is reduction in inpatient hospital days, reduction in repeated police involvement, reduced reliance on income supports and an increased participation in community activities/supports.

“Despite existing programming to support individuals in crisis, in calendar year 2017 NHH saw over 1,100 mental health-related visits in our Emergency Department. Similar programs in other jurisdictions have shown this model to be a win-win-win situation for all involved: police, health care providers and mental health/addiction clients,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “As set out in our Strategic Plan, NHH is committed to developing collaborative community partnerships such as this one to better support all the individuals within the west Northumberland catchment we serve.”

“I’m excited to see this initiative foster in our community to provide further support to those struggling with mental health illness. With the coordination of our local police services and mental health providers, this program will offer a much-needed service to those most vulnerable in our community,” said Lou Rinaldi, MPP, Northumberland-Quinte West.

“Congratulations to all the partners in Northumberland County on the launch of this exciting collaboration that will help to ensure timely access to mental health services for some of our most vulnerable Central East LHIN residents,” said Louis O’Brien, Chair, Central East LHIN Board of Directors. “This initiative builds on the highly successful Mental Health Support Unit (MHSU) that was launched in Durham Region in 2008 with local health care providers and the Durham Regional Police Service. We are proud to fund these types of innovative partnerships as we expand access to vital mental health supports across the Central East region.”

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About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation.

Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of more than 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).