

PQI Report October 2020

Along with a few minor items discussed at this month's PQI meeting, the largest agenda and the one that led to the most lengthy and meaningful discussion was around the first ever Community Feedback Survey. Other items discussed were managing client confidentiality on Sharevision, some changes to critical incident reporting and how that reporting will be responded to, and a further discussion around our internal case note process/procedure with an update on how that may be changing moving forward.

Community Feedback Survey

Overview

This was a major undertaking by the PQI committee as not only was it the first of its kind, but we had a very large amount of responses to this survey compared to other surveys we have released in the past. For some background, it is a COA requirement that we illicit feedback from all stakeholder groups. During our initial accreditation process we identified these stakeholder groups as our clients, our staff, the partner organizations we work alongside, and the community-at-large. The first two groups have been asked for feedback for several years while the first partner organization survey went out in 2019. Due to the monumental task that garnering feedback from the community would entail, and on the advice of our former COA consultant, it was decided that we would wait until year two of our accreditation to go through the fourth and final stakeholder feedback process. That time came this past month.

In terms of how the survey process has been carried out, the Community Feedback Survey was hosted through an online survey and requests to take part went out through the ASK Wellness Society social media accounts as well as posts on individual community pages. Staff members were also asked to spread the word about this so there was a word of mouth aspect as well. The survey itself was a series of questions that mirrored those we ask the other three stakeholder groups for comparison purposes, as well as some questions specific to this stakeholder group that were proposed by members of the PQI committee. Each question was asked in the form of a statement about what we strive for or believe that we do and as the survey taker to rate us on a sliding scale as to whether or not they agreed with that statement. Along with each of these questions was an option to leave a comment pertaining to the statement that was made. Additionally, in order to help us direct our attention to not only the topics in question but also the community, we released three surveys with one each for Kamloops, Merritt, and Penticton.

Unfortunately, we received a very limited number of results from Merritt and Penticton (7 and 16 respectively) so while I will reference the results it must be kept in mind we can not say these are a true representation of the sentiments within those communities. On the positive side, we had what the PQI Committee feels was a great number of responses from Kamloops with 197 surveys filled out, by far the largest number of responses we have seen to any of our stakeholder feedback surveys.

Results

Given the work that we do and the often negative view of us and our clients we have seen over the years it was not expected that we would get glowing reviews during this process. It is also no secret that whenever you are asking the general public for their thoughts, whether it be about a social service agency or a survey from your local grocery store, people tend to be more inspired to speak up when they have an issue. As a result, this survey found that while our other three stakeholder groups generally find the work that we do and the way that we do it to be of excellent quality, those who responded to this survey did not share that sentiment. As seen in the table below (Figure 1), while we never received a score that dropped below a 3.9 out of 5 on any of the questions we asked of the other stakeholder groups, the highest we received on any of the Community results

was a 3.85 out of 5 which we saw from the professionalism questions response in Merritt. While there is a ton of data and information that was received through this process, I will now highlight some of the main themes the PQI noted from the survey in this report.

Figure 1

Category	Clients - 2019	Partners - 2019	Partners - 2020	Employees - 2019	Community - 2020
Mission Statement	4.3/5	4.2/5	4.4/5	4.2/5	Merritt – 2.95 Penticton – 2.7 Kamloops – 2.05
Ethics	4.4/5	4/5	4.5/5	4.4/5	Merritt – 3.5 Penticton – 3.2 Kamloops – 2.35
Professionalism	4.6/5	4/5	4.3/5	4.2/5	Merritt – 3.85 Penticton – 3.45 Kamloops – 2.55
Collaboration	4.5/5	3.9/5	4.3/5	4.5/5	Merritt – 3 Penticton – 2.35 Kamloops – 1.8
Core Values	4.5/5	4.5/5	4.3/5	4.5/5	Merritt – 3.3 Penticton – 2.65 Kamloops – 2.05
Knowledge	4.6/5	4.3/5	4/5	4.1/5	Merritt – 2.25 Penticton – 2.25 Kamloops – 2.35
Safety	4.6/5	3.9/5	4.2/5	4.2/5	Merritt – 2.5 Penticton – 2 Kamloops – 1.5
Cultural Safety			4.3/5		Merritt – 3.05 Penticton – 2.95 Kamloops – 2.45
Increasing Community Knowledge					Merritt – 2.25 Penticton – 1.65 Kamloops – 1.9
ASK's Responsibility to Deal With All Homelessness Issues (5 means it is solely ASK's responsibility)					Merritt – 2.65 Penticton – 2.25 Kamloops – 2.65

Themes/Trends

- 1) It has been no secret over the last several years that there is an ongoing belief that the ASK Wellness Society actively works to bring homeless people to Kamloops or at very least the fact we offer services to this population has led to a rise in the number of homeless in the community. Even in the small sample sizes from the other two communities we serve, it can also be seen that this sentiment is shared in Penticton and Merritt as well. Upon discussion within the committee around this matter we have come up with a recommendation:

Recommendation: We create a survey/questionnaire that our staff engage clients both in our housing programs as well as those we come in contact with on the street asking how long they have resided in the community, what brought them to the community, and how they got here. These results will then be shared with the local media in order to in hopes of quelling the belief that the ASK Wellness Society has actively tried to bring more homeless people to our communities.

- 2) The second common theme in terms of comments within these surveys is the idea that because we offer harm reduction and other street level services we are somehow against rehabilitation and only want to see our clients find ways to use substances safely. While it is certainly true that one of our mandates is a harm reduction approach and we feel we can't help to get people well if they do not survive their addiction during this opioid overdose crisis, it has illuminated a gap in our public communication efforts to show that not only is it a goal of ours to connect people to health and rehabilitation services, when they are willing to do so, but that we in fact offer forms of rehabilitation services as part of our programming (AASH). It also shows a general lack of knowledge within our communities around how addiction affects people, which is of no surprise, but does further inform of us of the work needing to be done not just by us, but as society as a whole. A common word that is seen throughout the survey comments is "enabling" as there are many who believe our approach simply allows people to remain unwell and does not help them in any way.
- 3) While other common trends are things that we may view as the result of an infuriated public and while they are concerning may not necessarily be justified, one trend we saw that has also been noted at PQI and other meetings within the Society in the past is the need for better training of our staff. What's interesting about these comments is while there may be who clearly assume a lack of training due to the issues they see or a belief that the training provided makes them "professional enablers", there are several responses where people mention conversations they have personally had with staff who say they (the staff) feel not ready or thrown into situations on the job. What is interesting about these comments is it echoes some of the feelings shared by front line staff at the PQI meetings and in conversations between committee members and staff.
- 4) There is a clear concern in the community's we serve when it comes to safety. There are aspects of this we can't control i.e. people generally feeling safe in their community due to a rise in homelessness, however there are also several comments relating to something we can control which is the feeling of safety, or lack thereof, around our sites and the businesses around our sites.

- 5) Finally, a less common theme than other but possibly more disturbing within the Kamloops feedback is criticism and at times personal attacks directed at our CEO Bob Hughes. It has been noted in the past by our Board of Directors that previous communication approaches that had Bob as one of the most prevalent and loudest voices around these social issues may have served to put the target on him and as a result in the past several months a conscious effort has been made to only make media statements when it is of benefit to the Society. Comments regarding Bob range from things related to item number 1 which is the idea that he somehow personally profits from an increase in the homeless population which is why he has led the charge to bring more homeless people to Kamloops to personal attacks against him and his personal life (i.e. his relationships and what part of town he lives in).

Conclusion

While much of this report has focused on the negative feedback as that is where we are able to take information from in order to improve the quality of our services, it does not mean all the feedback was negative. There are several comments from people who clearly have received services from us in the past or know somebody who did and are incredibly appreciative of it. With this being the first year of this feedback being received it provides a baseline for community feedback and will be most useful when this process is undertaken again in 2021 which will allow us to see whether strategies implemented as a result of this and other feedback have improved or worsened the community sentiments when it comes to our services.

While they are lengthy, I have included as an attachment to this e-mail a copy of each survey for readers to see and if there are any themes that a reader feels were not mentioned in this report or need further investigation I welcome any input that can be provided.