

Health Links

The Health Links aim is to improve care for people living with complex conditions. The intent is to better coordinate care for people with complex need and improve information sharing. This is done by bringing together the following health care providers:

- Primary care providers
- Specialists
- Hospitals
- Long-term care
- Home care
- Other community supports

By bringing these organizations together Health Links patients receive more timely care. Family physicians and nurse practitioners are able to connect patients with specialists, home care services and other community supports, including mental health services.

When patients are being discharged from the hospital Health Link helps with timely follow-up and referral to services like home care, and reduced risk of re-admission to hospital. Better care for the patients is provided when health care providers, patients and their caregivers work as a team, to allow for a smooth patient journey through the health care system.

Health Links promote the philosophy of “one patient, one plan, one team.”

The entire South East LHIN geography is covered by seven Health Links all led by the following Primary Care organizations:

- Four Community Health Centres
- Two Family Teams
- One Family Health Organization

Hospitals, Community Care Access Centre, and Community Support Services are very involved in Health Link's Steering Committees, Working Groups and Collaborative Care Planning. Health Links small governance model guides relationship building between Health Links partners, which has been successful through:

- High level of primary care provider engagement
- Multiple planning sessions with Primary Care groups
- Planning meetings of the Health Link partners to establish the vision, values, priorities, activities and timelines of the Health Links
- Regular Steering Committee meetings at the local Health Link level as well as broader stakeholder meetings
- Regular meetings of the 7 Health Link Lead organizations with the South East Community Care Access Centre and the South East LHIN

To help measure the early outcomes of Health Links a regional Health Link evaluation are underway. There are early indications of success in the areas of care coordination, acute hospital inpatient and emergency department utilization, partnerships, and provider and patient engagement. Three of the Health Links reported that coordinated care for patients with complex conditions reduces the number of admissions to acute hospitals and the number of visits to emergency departments

Patients are finding the health link approach to coordinated care is helping them be better informed and self-aware, knowing that their care is more respectful, personal and compassionate, and they feel less alone.

The Health Link care coordinators also established a learning community to exchange knowledge, share and spread ideas and best practices.