Residential Services Program Review Executive Summary

July 2025

Prepared By:

DAVIS PIER

Executive Summary

The Residential Services Program (RSP) provides funding to service delivery partners who offer vital support to Islanders living with disabilities to receive high intensity supports to live their daily life and a place to call home. The array of residential services on Prince Edward Island is comprised primarily of group homes, small options homes, supported independent apartments, specialized residential services, and the Associate Families Program.

Prince Edward Island's residential services sector has demonstrated its commitment to supporting Islanders living with disabilities through extensive supports, diversity in living options, and a commitment to service improvement. Although the review identified challenges and opportunities for improvement, the strong partnership between the sector and the Government of Prince Edward Island means it is well positioned to adapt and strive to provide even better service to Islanders moving forward. This report provides a number of recommendations that will help both the sector and government deliver a modern, inclusive, and sustainable Residential Services Program.

The residential services sector would benefit from a clear and predictable **funding model** that accounts for expansions and contractions in service offerings. At present, service delivery partners make annual proposals for the costs of their service, but Social Development and Seniors (SDS) has few avenues through which to assess or validate proposals made by partners. As part of the review, the team developed an envelope-based funding model which segments expected costs and provides consistent and transparent funding across categories based on the supports being provided. The model is scalable number of clients served, and their needs, to ensure that funding can be calculated to meet the demand of Islanders seeking access to residential services.

A key challenge being faced by the residential services sector is the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. The sector has recognized this and is keen to help address these challenges. The review identified a number of recommendations related to **stabilizing and growing the disability services**

workforce. These include strengthening sector training and professional development opportunities, pursuing wage and benefits standardization, monitoring and adjusting wages regularly, and implementing a sector-wide approach to initiatives such as sharing resources, advocacy, and workforce planning through the Essential Disability Services Alliance (EDSA) – a sectoral organization stood up by key partners in the sector to support stronger collaboration.

A further challenge is the **lack of a consistent wait list approach** for residential services across the Island. Residential services are provided by service delivery partners, but there is little formalized or required consistency in determining which clients receive service and in which order, including when capacity becomes available. The review identified an opportunity to bring consistency to the system through a simple prioritization mechanism that assesses clients priority based on their current life circumstances and support needs. In addition, the project team suggests the introduction of a consistent wait list template, the introduction of wait list audits, and a future planning registry to support advanced planning for service demand.

At present, SDS does not conduct **formal monitoring of residential services settings** to safeguard clients. This approach is a deviation from other Canadian jurisdictions. The review recommends the introduction of a formal licensing and inspection system for both group homes and small options homes. In the short-term, the project team recommends attaching inspectors to an existing inspection body in the Government of Prince Edward Island to support skills development and mentorship. The team also recommends the development of service quality measures and a monitoring approach across all residential settings in the medium-term aimed at ensuring quality service and which will support the sector to keep up with the pace of change in disability services.

The **Associate Families Program** supports clients to live with members of the community, who provide daily living supports and a warm, enriching home environment. The review's recommendations aim to strengthen the structures supporting the program, including introducing a formal policy along with program guidelines. In addition, the review recommends enhancing supports

for hosts, including training and professional development. The review indicated the need to implement additional client safeguards, such as setting a minimum number of home visits per year. Finally, the review team recommends efforts to grow the program, including a marketing campaign and standardizing and enhancing host compensation.

Taken in sum, this suite of recommendations will help build on a strong record of success in supporting Islanders living in residential services. They will strengthen the sector, build on the strong partnership between SDS and service delivery partners, enhance safeguards, and provide more options for Islanders seeking residential services.