

Neighborhood Networks

Strengthen Primary Care Through Physician Networks

February 2022

Executive Summary

The case study is one of several created as part of the General Practice Services Committee's evaluation of the Patient Medical Home in British Columbia. These case studies provide a closer look into community projects deployed across the province that help build a provincial picture of Patient Medical Home innovation and implementation.

This case study explores the development and implementation of three neighborhood networks in Burnaby, BC. In Burnaby, a neighborhood network is comprised of family physicians working in a defined geography, along with Burnaby Division staff functioning in supportive roles. Funding for the networks is provided by the Division. The neighborhood networks were developed with the goals of:

1. Building and improving interconnectivity between family physicians
2. Providing opportunities for family physicians to collaboratively plan for primary care networks
3. Enabling family physicians to share care with other providers and practice to their full scope
4. Improving patient access to medical care

The case study used data collected across multiple sources, including a literature review, review of project documents, twelve interviews, and two network meeting observations.

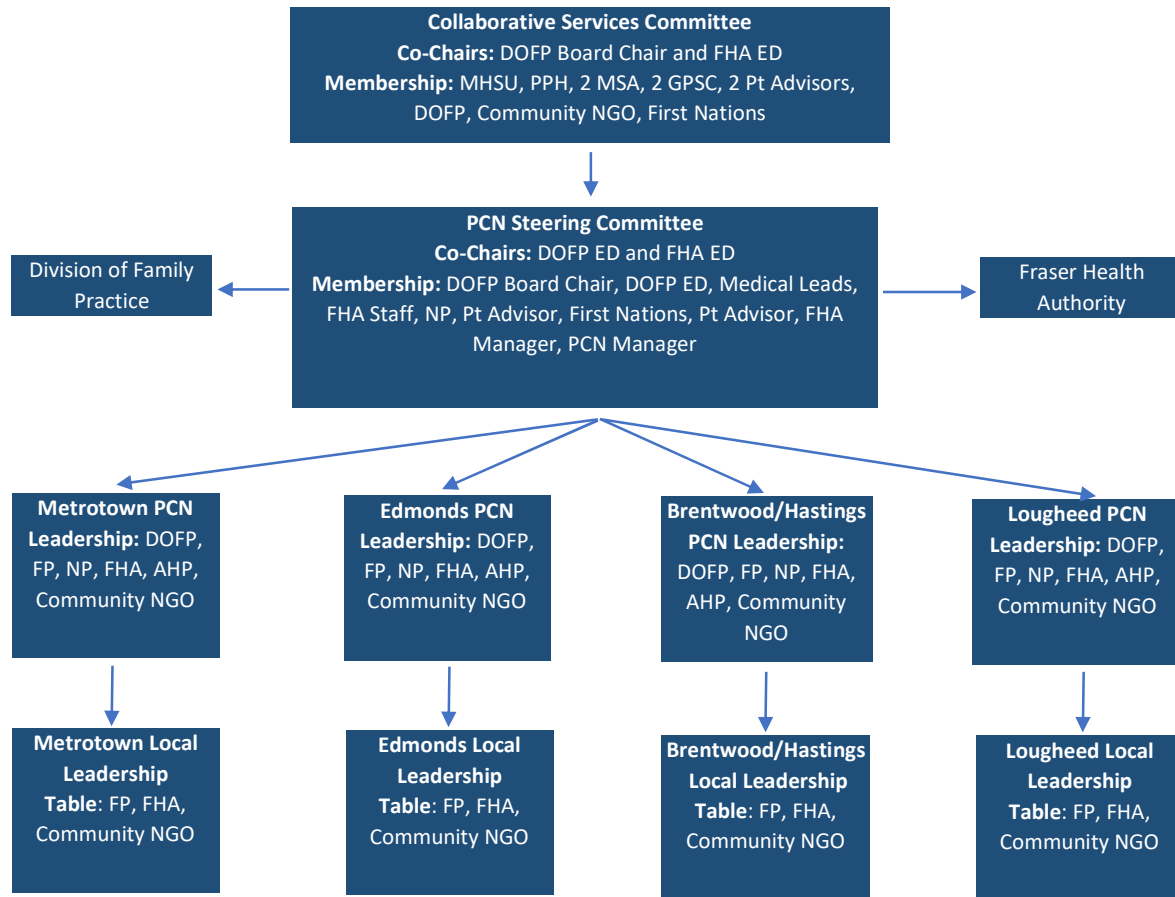
Background. The creation of neighborhood networks in Burnaby was prompted by family physicians who recognized the need to bring together family physicians from across local communities to increase their interconnectedness, provide opportunities for local Primary Care Network planning, and enable methods for sharing care with each other, all with the larger aim of improving patient access to medical care across Burnaby. A key contributor to the successful formation of the neighborhood networks was the special attention physician leaders and Division staff paid to constructing neighborhood network meetings that were focused, efficient, engaging, and, ultimately, perceived by physician participants as a valuable use of their time.

Outcomes. The interviews with family physicians and Division staff indicate that the neighborhood networks have made progress toward their overall goals. The neighborhood networks have become an important venue for bringing Burnaby FPs together to plan local primary care delivery and improvements. The networks have supported FPs to meet each other, in some cases for the first time, and have also supported important informal relationships to develop outside of formal neighborhood network meetings. Burnaby's neighborhood networks have supported family physicians to learn from each other, identify options for locum coverage and after-hours care, and support referrals to specialist care throughout the networks.

A key outcome of the neighborhood networks was the development of a set of neighborhood network-specific Local Leadership Tables to interface with the corresponding Primary Care Network (PCN) in order for neighborhood networks to contribute to the design and implementation of healthcare delivery through the PCN. The proposed governance structure is shown, below, in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Proposed Burnaby Primary Care Governance Structure



Most importantly, family physicians were able to increase patients’ access to care by referring patients to their family physician peers, expanding their use of locums, working on the development of an Urgent and Primary Care Clinic, and procuring additional healthcare resources for the neighborhood networks.

To summarize, around a quarter of full-time Burnaby FPs attend the neighborhood network meetings, an attendance level encouraged by communicating a strong vision, leveraging engaged physicians leaders, sustaining Division support, and continuing to promote the neighborhood networks to family physicians throughout Burnaby. Maintaining the progress of the neighborhood networks through continued support by the Division and Fraser Health, establishment of the Local Leadership Tables, completing the health data integration, and increasing efficient provider to provider communication will work to solidify Burnaby’s neighborhood networks as a critical component of the local healthcare delivery system.