



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Lift?

Lift Community Services is a community based non-profit society that has been serving members of qathet Region since 1984. Originally founded by a small group of concerned community members as Powell River Employment Program (PREP) Society, we were renamed to Lift Community Services in 2019.

We offer supportive services in qathet for any community member who needs them, including housing, health and employment services. We also offer literacy and food programs, family support services like prenatal and newborn care, immigrant services, poverty reduction support, and more.

What is supportive housing?

Lift's supportive housing provides low-barrier housing and 24-hour support services to single adults, seniors and people with disabilities who live in the qathet Region and are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Our program is designed to help people find and maintain stable housing. Individuals may be eligible for our program if they:

- *Are a current resident of qathet Regional District*
- *Are low-income*
- *Are homeless or at risk of homelessness*
- *Have mental health and/or physical health needs*
- *Require support services to maintain a successful tenancy*

Other than housing, what support services are offered?

Supportive housing includes 24-hour staff support, two meals a day, laundry and home support, daily wellness checks, appointment reminders, medication delivery, harm reduction services, a community garden, and recreation and social activities.

We also offer individualized supports to help participants reach their personal goals and maintain their housing. Our staff work with participants to set goals and offer life skills coaching, employment connections, budgeting support, and connections to community-based health care services including mental health and substance use treatment.

What is Lift's housing philosophy?

Our Housing First approach is simple and proven: give people housing first, then wrap around supports that will help people improve their health and meet their individual goals for their lives.

Lift approaches housing in a way that is person-centered, realistic and effective for people who have struggled with housing instability, often as a result of complicated physical and mental health challenges. We do this by working with local healthcare and community partners to provide a range of services and connections that support a successful tenancy.

What are the expectations of supportive housing participants?

Every participant pays rent each month, and is required to sign a Participant Agreement before moving in, which outlines the participant's and staff's responsibilities.

While we expect participants to follow this agreement, we also understand that flexibility is essential to successful housing. Consequently, failure to comply with the agreement will trigger an issue resolution process between staff and participants with the aim of identifying the issues and resolving them proactively.

We work hard, in collaboration with other community supports, to keep people housed but terminate tenancies when there are repeated breaches of the agreement without engagement in resolution.

Are participants allowed to use substances in the building?

We operate within a low-barrier harm reduction framework which means that, depending on the participant's goals, we support safer use, managed use, or abstinence, while offering access to health care services and non-clinical supports. This means that someone who uses substances still qualifies to be a resident and will not lose their housing due to substance use.

We do this because evidence shows that covering a person's basic needs (shelter, food, medicine) creates an entry point for the participant to work on their personal goals and improve their lives.

Are people improving their lives by living here?

Absolutely. In an April 2022 report from BC Housing, 75% of Lift's supportive housing participants reported improvements to their overall well-being.

Participants report experiencing less homelessness and housing insecurity, increased access to employment opportunities, and better mental and physical health. We've also supported many individuals to access substance use treatment and find permanent housing in the community.

What training and support do staff receive?

All of our staff receive training in First Aid, Advanced Overdose Response, Mental Health First Aid, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, Indigenous Cultural Safety, as well as ongoing on-the-job training.

We also work with the provincial Mobile Response Team to offer debriefing and psychological support to our staff in instances of stressful or traumatic experiences on the job, and for ongoing education and support.

What is Lift's relationship to BC Housing?

Our supportive housing and shelter programs are funded by BC Housing, which has contracted Lift to deliver the program services. We work with BC Housing to ensure compliance with provincial service standards, and undergo a comprehensive operational review at least every three years. We also work with a BC Housing liaison on an ongoing basis for support with program development and delivery.

We've recently been invited to participate in BC Housing's new Provider Review process, which will conduct a quality assurance survey of the building and how we're managing it. We'll share those results, once completed, later in 2023.

Is supportive housing the best model for housing?

Homelessness and substance use are complex social issues that require complex solutions, and our supportive housing program is one important piece of that puzzle. Most people living at supportive housing are staying housed, safe, and off the streets, and their health and quality of life are improving.

That said, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness, and supportive housing is only one option along the housing continuum. We believe that more options and models are needed in our community, and continue to advocate locally and provincially for additional housing supports in qathet Region.

Who can I contact with a concern about supportive housing?

If you have a question or concern about the Supportive Housing program please reach out – we would love to hear from you.

Feel free to email us at feedback@liftcommunityservices.org, or fill out our online feedback form at go.liftcommunityservices.org/feedback and we will respond promptly.