



# TOOL

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## Personas: Older Adults



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# NOTES FOR ONTARIO HEALTH TEAMS

## Relevant for Teams in:



Application Stages



Year 1 Implementation

## Priority Population:

- Older Adults

## Connecting to RISE:

- [Building Block 3](#): Patient partnership and community engagement (Domain 12 - Community engagement)

Many Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) are focusing on integrating care for older adults in Year 1. The **Personas Tool** can help OHTs consider the nuances and complexities of this population when planning and designing services.

## When building your application, consider with your team...

- What are the most pressing health and social needs of each persona? How might this vary in our local context?
- What are the barriers and challenges each persona experiences as a result of our current health care system and local resources?
- How could each personas' needs be better met with an improved, more integrated, or newly designed program/service?

## When you're ready to tackle the specifics of your plan, consider with your team...

- How can we ensure our service is accessible and safe to each persona?
- How can we make our service interesting and engaging for this person? Which of the personas would be most or least likely to use/benefit from this service?
- Do our plans to integrate care promote social inclusion and mental wellness for each persona?



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# IN A NUTSHELL



*Older adults have skills, strengths, interests, passions and energy that can fuel the network effect of [Neighbours](#). They also have goals, needs and preferences that inform their choices and shape their experiences.*

*As you design services, it's important to think about who you are designing for. Personas are archetypical users whose characteristics and goals represent the needs of larger groups.*

## **What does this tool help you do?**

These personas can help you understand the expectations, needs and motivations of the people you are designing for. They can be useful for gaining a perspective that is similar to the end user. Personas can help you identify a broader range of needs of end users. These personas are based on our extensive field work with [Neighbours](#).

# ABOUT THIS TOOL



## What was the tool developed for?

Partnering with multiple sites across Toronto, Health Commons has developed the [Neighbours](#) initiative, which aims to reduce isolation and improve quality of life. Neighbours is a catalyst for creating connected communities where people take care of one another and neighbourhood assets are activated to meet the health and social needs of residents.

These personas were developed to represent older adults we have met delivering Neighbours. We collected data through ethnographic research, survey responses, conversations, and observations from 2018 to 2019 across 5 housing sites in Toronto (mostly social housing).



## How did we use it?

We use these personas to accurately represent the lived experience of older adults involved in [Neighbours](#) while respecting the privacy of the hundreds of people we've met. We also inform design decision making with these older adults in mind – any new activities we design must account for the needs, goals and realities of Michael, Meilin, John and Zophia.

# HOW YOU CAN USE THIS TOOL



**Test your ideas** for older adults against these personas. How might Zophia respond to your idea?



**Ask the older adults** in your network if these personas make sense to them. If not, make your own.



**Engage with others** who are also interested in supporting older adults using these personas as a conversation starter.

# WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 1 The Helper - Persona for Michael
- 2 The Marathoner - Persona for Meilin
- 3 The Soloist - Persona for John
- 4 The Survivor - Persona for Zophia
- 5 Definitions for interpreting personas

# Michael – The Helper

## Social isolation



## Sense of safety



## Mobility



## Background Information

- Age: 63
- Prefers 'Mikey'
- Born in Nigeria
- Living in Canada for 43 years
- Widower; living alone

## Interests

- Meeting Nigerian-born friends at church
- Making people laugh
- Exploring the local neighbourhood

## Quality of Life

- Is sometimes comfortable asking for help
- Manages many medications
- Values feeling acknowledged

## Connections

- Joins all the programs that are on offer
- Volunteers using skills and experiences
- Wishes he saw his family more

## You might hear Michael say...

- "Government can't do everything, we must help each other!"
- "I find comfort in my spirituality"
- "I'm paying off a loan that isn't mine"

## Signature Neighbours engagement:

- Welcome Committee
- Safety checks (volunteer)

## Tech

- Has a telephone, television, and internet access

## Mobility

- Walks without any assistive devices



# Meilin – The Marathoner

## Social isolation

L-----◆-----H

## Sense of safety

L-◆-----H

## Mobility

L-----◆-----H

## Background Information

- Age: 93
- Born in B.C. to Chinese parents
- Retired teacher
- 2 children and 5 grandchildren
- Widowed twice; living alone



## Interests

- Practicing spirituality
- Organizing community events
- Connecting with family

## Quality of Life

- Survived cancer; now managing arthritis
- Experienced a lot of loss
- Health is up and down

## Connections

- Maintains one close friendship
- Prioritizes activities that provide food
- Helps others when possible

## You might hear Meilin say...

- “For my 85th birthday, I did the CN Tower walk”
- “I have lobby friends but don’t let them in my apartment”
- “They tell me I can’t take care of myself”

## Signature Neighbours engagement:

- Welcome Committee
- Cultural exchange activities

## Tech

- No telephone, television, or internet access

## Mobility

- Walks without any assistive devices



# John – The Soloist

## Social isolation

L-----◆---H

## Sense of safety

L---◆-----H

## Mobility

L-◆-----H

## Background Information

- Age: 72
- Never married; living alone
- Retired handyman
- Born near Barrie, Ontario
- Living urban for 55 years



## Interests

- Garage sales
- Watching sports on TV
- Using the internet at the library

## You might hear John say...

- “When I give people info about myself, I regret it later”
- “I used to hang out on the bench outside, but it’s gone”
- “I wish I could travel”

## Mobility

- Uses a scooter to get around

## Quality of Life

- Describes health as pretty good
- Helped out at home by Personal Support Workers
- Values independence and choice

## Signature Neighbours engagement:

- Drop-in talking cafés
- Safety checks (recipient)

## Connections

- Reaching out means giving up privacy
- Attends wellness program offered onsite
- Desires a companion

## Tech

- Has a phone and television – no internet access



# Zophia – The Survivor

## Social isolation



## Sense of safety



## Mobility



## Background Information

- Age: 78
- Speaks Polish; very little English
- Trained as a dentist
- 1 daughter; spouse deceased
- Living in Canada for 10 years



## Interests

- Going for walks in the neighbourhood
- Singing at church
- Puzzles and conversation

## You might hear Zophia say...

- “My happiest was at the beach with my young daughters”
- “I am grateful to have housing”
- “I used to drink – I don’t drink anymore”

## Mobility

- Uses a walker to get around

## Quality of Life

- Manages anxiety and depression
- Survived a stroke with the help of a Personal Support Worker
- Describes health as very poor

## Signature Neighbours engagement:

- Performing arts (audience)
- Gardening club

## Connections

- Would visit friends but it is too expensive
- Language barriers prohibits new friendships
- Chooses not to live with daughter

## Tech

- Has a telephone – no television or internet access



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Neighbours

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# Definitions



## Social Isolation Low-----High

...is defined by the amount of contact people have with others. A person's social isolation is not static and can vary over time and circumstances.



## Interests

The ways people enjoy spending time and the activities they enjoy doing or learning.



## Sense of Safety Low-----High

...is how safe a person *feels* in their current context, including, their home and neighbourhood. It is defined by a person's sense of safety and security in their immediate surroundings.



## Connections

Interactions and activities that people have with others for both socialization and support.



## Mobility Low-----High

...is the self-reported physical ability a person has. It is measured by the ability to carry out activities of daily living.



## Quality of Life

Overall health, personal well-being and relationships about which people express satisfaction and challenges.

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