

Oxford County
Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan
December 2019



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1.0 Introduction

The *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA) requires service system managers to establish a child care and early years services plan (service system plan) that encompasses the following areas:

- Licensed child care (centre-based and home-based care)
- Licensed before and after school programs for children ages 4 to 12
- Authorized recreation and skills building programs
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Service System Managers are required to develop a Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan in accordance with provincial requirements under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) and submit to the Ministry of Education. This plan must be updated at least every five years, and child and family programs must be consulted on the development and implementation of plans.

According to Provincial guidelines, key elements of the service system plan include:

- Environmental scan results that assess current and future child care and early years service gaps and opportunities
- A description of the community planning processes that was used to inform the development of the plan, and a commitment to consult, at regular or relevant intervals, through the life of the plan
- Strategic priorities and intended outcomes that are responsive to community needs and align with Ontario's vision for child care and early years and provincial interest
- A measureable and action-oriented implementation plan that describes how strategic priorities and outcomes will be met

A comprehensive planning process was undertaken in Oxford County to develop this Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan. This is a five year plan, outlining priorities for January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2024, with actions being initiated in 2019. This document provides a summary of the community planning process that was undertaken to inform the development of the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan for Oxford County, along with identified strategic priorities and actions which will be implemented.

The community planning process involved the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including parents/caregivers, service providers, school boards, current child and family program providers, and other community partners. The community planning process resulted in a clear identification of priorities, and created a blueprint for the development of this Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan.

The Provincial Context

Programs and services offered through the child care and early years service system are key in supporting the realization of Ontario’s vision for the early years. This vision states,

“Ontario’s children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high quality, accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development today and a stronger future tomorrow.”

Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017) identifies four pillars of the early years and child care system: Affordability, Access, Quality, and Responsiveness. Each of these pillars are outlined below.

Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
Ensuring that early years programs and services, including licensed child care, are within affordable reach for families	Increasing access to early years programs to give families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services	Enabling safe and reliable programs built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments, and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and well-supported staff	Providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate, located in schools, communities, workplaces and home settings so that parents – including parents who work irregular hours – can choose the options that work best for their family while reducing red tape and administrative burden

This plan is designed around these four pillars.

Role of the County of Oxford as CMSM

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are responsible and accountable for managing local child care and early years programs and services. As outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, service system managers are mandated to:

- Establish, administer, operate, and fund early years programs, including providing assistance to operators and evaluating and assessing the impact of public funding

- Deliver and administer local policies respecting the operation of early years programs and services
- Coordinate the planning and operation of early years programs and consult with school boards and other prescribed persons or entities in accordance with legislation
- Assess the economic viability of early years programs and facilitate changes to make programs more viable

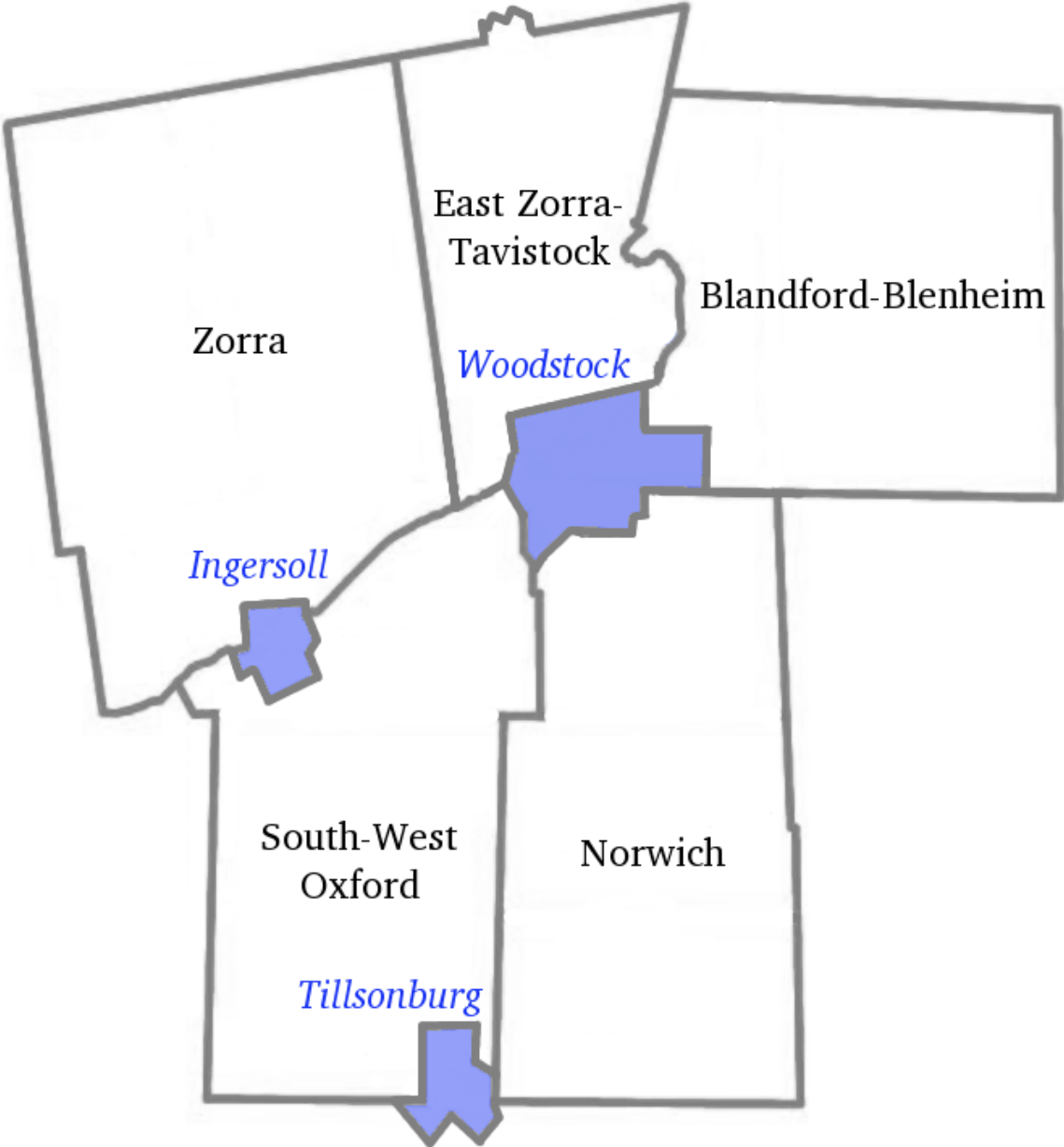
As a CMSM and community we are excited to move this plan to implementation. Building on the strengths of our current system of supports and services, we will continue to create a seamless service experience for families and children that is responsive to their needs.



2.0 Community Profile

Oxford County is located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario. The county is comprised of five rural townships and three urban municipalities (Woodstock, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg), with Woodstock being the most highly populated urban area.

See the map below for further details about the geography of Oxford County.



Oxford County borders six other Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) catchment areas:

- City of London
- City of St. Thomas
- County of Norfolk
- Region of Waterloo
- City of Stratford
- City of Brantford

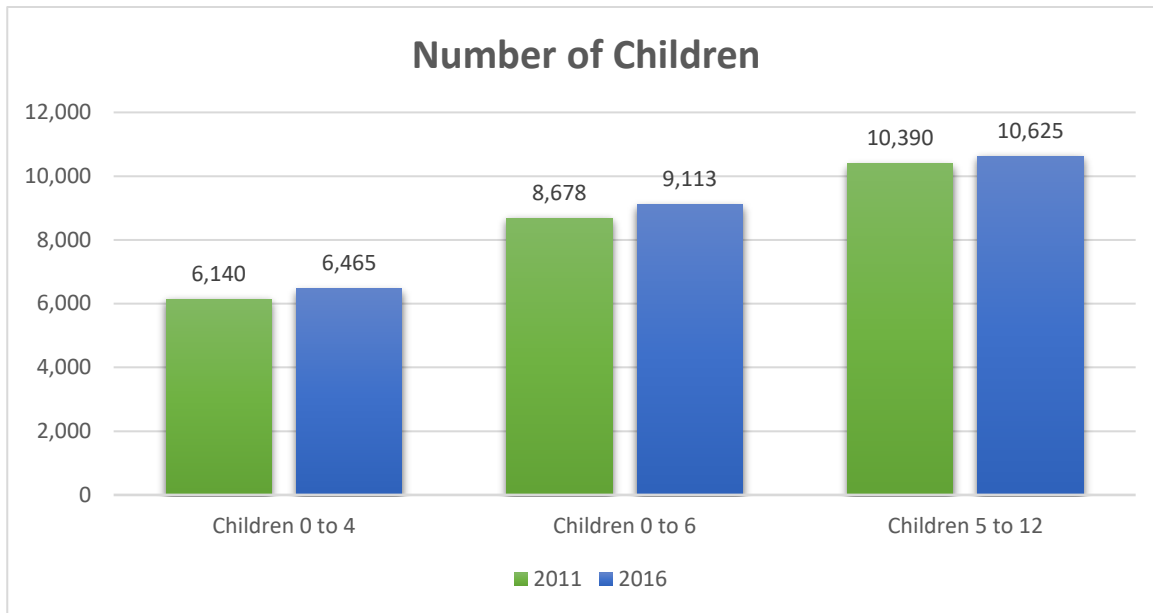
This plan has also looked at opportunities to work collaboratively with other CMSMs.

Oxford County experienced a 4.9% increase in its overall population from 2011 to 2016. This is comparable to the growth in Ontario, as a whole (4.6%). As of 2016, 110,860 individuals lived in Oxford County. Woodstock is the most populated area in the county, with 40,900 individuals. As a municipality, Woodstock is growing at a faster pace than the overall county. It realized an 8.3% increase since 2011. This rate of growth is projected to continue in Woodstock through 2026.

In terms of growth, Ingersoll is also growing at a slightly faster rate than the overall county. From 2011 to 2016 Ingersoll saw a 5.0% increase in its overall population. Blandford-Blenheim experienced the slowest rate of growth with a 0.5% increase in its overall population from 2011 to 2016.

Overall, from 2011 to 2016, the child population in Oxford County has increased (see the graph below). The number of younger children (aged 0 to 6 years) is growing at a slightly faster rate than the overall population in Oxford County.

- In 2016, 6,465 children aged 0 to 4 years lived in Oxford County. This is an increase of 5.3% from 2011. The 0 to 4 population comprises 5.8% of the overall population
- In 2016, 9,113 children aged 0 to 6 years lived in Oxford County. This is an increase of 5.0% from 2011. The 0 to 6 population comprises 8.2% of the overall population
- In 2016, 10,625 children aged 5 to 12 years lived in Oxford County. This is an increase of 2.3% from 2011. The 5 to 12 population comprises 9.6% of the overall population



As of 2016, Oxford County is home to 10,785 immigrants (9.7% of the population), with 0.5% of Oxford's total population (515) being recent immigrants (immigrating between 2011 and 2016). According to the 2016 Statistics Canada census data, 2.7% of the population (3,040 people) speak a non-official language as their language spoken most often at home.

The most common non-official language spoken at home in Oxford County is German, with 800 individuals reporting this as the language they speak most often at home (2016). The second most common non-official language spoken at home is Dutch (465 individuals). In Oxford County, 225 Francophone individuals report speaking French most often at home, equating to 0.2% of the total population (2016).

Although there is limited documented information about the Low German Speaking Mennonites in Oxford County, collaborative efforts with St Thomas-Elgin and Norfolk Counties have highlighted this population as a growing consideration for planning purposes.

Oxford County is home to a number of Indigenous persons. The 2016 Statistics Canada census reports that 2,050 persons self-identify as Indigenous in Oxford County. This equates to 1.8% of the total population.

15.8% of children under the age of 6 live in low-income families. Many of these children live in Woodstock (415 or 33.9% of all children under the age of 6 living in low-income families). Populations at a higher risk of low income include: new immigrants, children and youth, lone parents, single individuals (particularly senior women), persons with work-limiting disabilities, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, and women.

Further and more detailed information about Oxford County is presented in the Community Planning section of this report.

3.0 Community Planning

The County of Oxford actively engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders and community partners to ensure its Child Care and Early Years Plan was responsive to community needs, existing service capacity, and community goals and priorities. The groups that participated in this planning process are:

- Parents/caregivers
- Service providers
- School boards
- Current child and family program providers
- Other community partners

The engagement strategy employed with each of these groups is outlined below.

Parent/Caregiver Engagement

Information was collected from parents/caregivers through a survey that was distributed in the fall of 2018. This survey was available online and in hard copy. A total of 500 parent/caregiver surveys were completed. Based on the total population with children at home, the confidence interval of the sample is 4.32 at a 95% confidence level.

The validity of the responses to the parent/caregiver survey was further confirmed by the profile of people who responded to the survey. Of note:

- Parent/caregiver responses were received from every township and municipality across the county
- The highest percentage of responses were from parents/caregivers residing in Woodstock (44.4%), Tillsonburg (13.7%), and Ingersoll (10.0%)
- A cross section of parents with children of different ages responded to the survey

Service Provider Engagement

An online survey was utilized to collect information from service providers. A total of 102 service providers responded to the survey. A range of service providers responded to the survey, with 64.7% of respondents from the licensed child care sector. See the table below for the types of service providers who responded to the survey.

Type of Service Provider	# of Responses	% of Responses
Licensed, non-profit child care, centre-based program	41	40.2%
Licensed, for profit child care, centre-based program	4	3.9%
Licensed, private home day care program	9	8.8%
Licensed, non-profit school age program (before/after school care)	10	9.8%

Type of Service Provider	# of Responses	% of Responses
Licensed, for profit school age program (before/after school care)	2	2.0%
Summer camp	1	1.0%
EarlyON Child and Family Centre	6	5.9%
Special Needs Resourcing program (funded by the CMSM)	9	8.8%
School	2	2.0%
Other programs for families and children	18	17.7%

In addition to the online survey, engagement sessions were held to inform the development of the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan. These included:

Name of Group	Date of Engagement Session	Purpose of Engagement Session
Children’s Services Network	May 24, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 participants • Introduction to the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan and proposed approach • Feedback on parent/caregiver engagement • Initial feedback about pressure points in the licensed child care sector
Children’s Services Network	February 7, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 participants • Identification of outcomes for the child care and early years system • Review of survey responses and data related to licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Identification of potential strategic priorities for the plan
Child Care Operators	March 18, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 participants • Review of survey responses and data related to licensed child care • Identification of potential strategic priorities for the plan
EarlyON Child and Family Centre Staff	April 12, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 participants • Review of survey responses and data related to EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Identification of potential strategic priorities for the plan

Representatives from local school boards also participated in these engagement sessions.

Summary of what parents/caregivers said

Some of the common themes which emerged over the course of the engagement with parents/caregivers are presented in each of the four pillars below.

Affordability

Ensuring that early years programs and services, including licensed child care, are within affordable reach for families

- The cost of child care is a challenge for many families in Oxford County
- Of those parents/caregivers not using their first choice of care for their child(ren), many report that the cost of care is a barrier to this
- 43.9% of parents/caregivers report that the high cost of care was an issue for them in the past year

In their own words...

"Before and after school programs ...are also expensive and yet the only option for many working parents."

"Given that subsidy is available for combined annual incomes of \$80,000, and also, because of its high cost, licenced daycare doesn't typically seem like an option for those of us living middle class."

"I stay home because it costs too much for 3 children."

"My partner has to work part time and care for our son when I go to college January because child care costs are high."

"Our family does not qualify for fee subsidy, however, with two children in licensed care the cost is incredibly high and seriously impacts our finances to the point of relying on loans/family support. With no family members in the area care is required. An option for partial subsidy would make a world of difference for us."

Access

Increasing access to early years programs to give families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services

- Many parents/caregivers main type of care for their child(ren) is their first choice
- For some, the lack of availability of licensed child care centres/homes in their community or the lack of spaces in existing centres/homes is a challenge

- Of those parents/caregivers not using their first choice of care for their child(ren), many report that there is no care/limited options in their area, there are no spaces available at the licensed centre/home in their area, or the hours of care they require are not available
- Some parents/caregivers are not always aware of the child care and early years programs and services available to them and their children
- 62.2% of parents/caregivers have seen the EarlyON logo in their community
- 25.8% of parents/caregivers have not heard of EarlyON Child and Family Centres

In their own words...

“After school care in my home area is very sparse.”

“Currently on mat leave. Worried about lack of licensed child care (home & centre) available in Ingersoll.”

“I chose to leave my job and stay home to do daycare because I was unable to find child care for both of my children - full-time for one, before and after school and summer for the other - in the same location, in our bus/school zone.”

“I do not have nor know where to access care for my children when they are sick.”

“I live in a small town and there are no other options for child care within my town other than home daycares (most are unlicensed) and before and after program at the school which is unaffordable and does not meet my hours of work.”

“I'm still looking for daycare for my son for 2 months from now. I have been looking since January 2017.”

“I've never heard of the EarlyON Child and Family Centres/early years programming...”

“The website needs better info (i.e. program dates and times). I don't use the service because I can't find anything about it.”

Quality

Enabling safe and reliable programs built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments, and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and well-supported staff

- The top reason parents/caregivers choose their current type of care for their child(ren) is quality of care/staff
- Parents/caregivers like the socialization opportunities (for their children and themselves), the programs and activities offered, the opportunity to get out of the house/have a

change of scenery, and the learning/educational experience for their child at EarlyON Child and Family Centres (see word cloud below)

something kids age social interaction new toys nice house play kids different helps play learn
Great place parents interaction children always resource S daycare interact children
safe space different activities play group meet variety activities social new songs free
friendly gives welcoming son close home good Early Years Centre home
us house moms available staff meet moms time setting house place
play experience go great way programs offered kids day
children interaction love fun socialize connections
great group use toddler also families activities age learn
meet parents new story daughter different toys opportunity well nice drop
interact new things baby power young baby adults services people
socialization ideas allows every EarlyON others enjoy information many place go
children age circle time see learn play community play kids age location explore

In their own words...

“Gave my grandchildren an early opportunity to a structured educational setting & introduction to socializing with other children.”

“We use it to expand the children's exposure to play with new children and to become comfortable with new settings. My favourite part is the story/sing song at the end because it exposes the children to the concept of sitting and focusing on what a "teacher" is saying.”

“We are very happy with the child care provided at the {Child Care Centre}. Our child loves going twice a week and we feel very comfortable and happy sending him there. The staff are terrific and caring.”

“{Child Care Centre} has been incredibly wonderful for my 8 year old when she was younger (before starting JK), and now for my 3 year old. I have never worried about the care they receive while at daycare and this is a big deal to me. Both my children adore the lovely staff which gives me peace of mind. I wouldn't have chosen any other childcare centre to send them.”

“Our daycare provider is one of a kind. Has taught our daughter sign language and teaches her French.”

“My son attends the {Child Care Centre}, and he loves it! The team of caregivers there are great and very passionate about children.”

Responsiveness

Providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate, located in schools, communities, workplaces and home settings so that parents – including parents who work irregular hours – can choose the options that work best for their family

- The traditional, licensed child care system is not working for all families. Some parents/caregivers need licensed child care that matches their working hours and other caregiving needs
- Of those parents/caregivers not using their first choice of care for their child(ren), many report that the hours of care they need are not available
- Parents/caregivers report that the following were issues for them in the past year:
 - Emergency care (25.3%)
 - Part-time care (22.7%)
 - Care for PA days/summer (21.2%)
 - Non-traditional work hours (15.7%)
 - Temporary/short-term care (15.2%)
- Some parents/caregivers report having difficulty accessing child care that is culturally appropriate and inclusive
- Parents/caregivers want EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services to be provided during the day, on weekday evenings, weekends, holidays, and PA Days to better support their schedules and their children's schedules. The hours of operation need to be aligned with children's routines, and parents' working hours
- Of those parents/caregivers who don't use or have stopped using an EarlyON Child and Family Centre 44.6% report that the times and days don't work for them

In their own words...

"Work/life balance was the main reason I quit my job to be home with my 11 and 13 year old. Balancing work hours and hours of caregiving services was extremely difficult. Many parents leave for work earlier than the drop off times and stay later than pick up times. Many of the issues surrounding childcare revolve around parent work hours. It's very difficult to manage without one parent that has a more flexible work schedule."

"We're both paramedics and because of shift work (7-7 days, nights and weekends) if we didn't have my retired mother in law to watch our son don't know what we would do."

"The opening time of {the Child Care Centre} should be 6:00am, this can arrange people to go to work by 7 instead of finding someone/babysitter to drop them to school or to bus."

"It's hard to find a daycare open past 430 or 5. My daycare now is open till 430 and I wouldn't get done work till 5 then I have a 30 min drive home, so I had to contact my work and ask to have my hours changed so I can be on time picking up my girls."

“We need services offered by French first language speakers in order to provide quality education and care services to our French community.”

“Oxford County is not equipped to provide supports for special needs children in care. We were booted from the system with no offer of further support. We were unable to secure supports ourselves so our son is now cared for at home. It is unfortunate that you cannot serve the most vulnerable.”

“I would like to attend programs, but the times they are offered in my community are all during my child’s nap times.”

“I thought it would have been helpful to have more afternoon or even an extra evening hours available.”

What service providers said

Licensed Child Care

In the online survey, service providers identified the following as the top issues facing licensed child care in Oxford County:

- Recruiting and retaining RECEs
- Lack of licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers
- Need for more support for children with special needs
- High cost of child care for parents
- Staff workload
- Parents' lack of knowledge about the value of licensed child care
- Lack of licensed child care spaces for school age children
- Lack of transportation to get to child care
- Lack of child care during non-traditional hours

Most licensed child care providers (92.5%) report being able to provide inclusive services for children with special needs in their centre, home, or program. Some providers report challenges with having adequate resources/staff to support children with special needs.

“Not enough adequate resources or staffing to support the needs of a special needs child, including minor special needs such as severe autism.”

“We are expected to provide an inclusive environment, and do our best, but resources need to be more available in order to keep our well-being positive and burnout/stress low.”

“However, at times it can be limited due to resources or staffing.”

The most frequently mentioned topics/subjects that would help licensed child care providers create a more inclusive environment in their classroom/centre/home include:

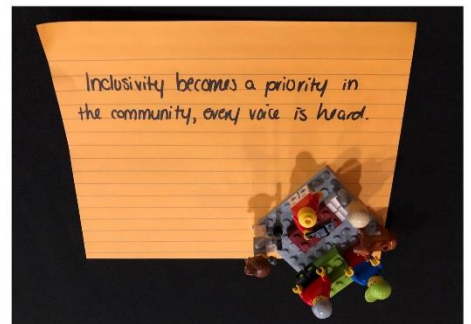
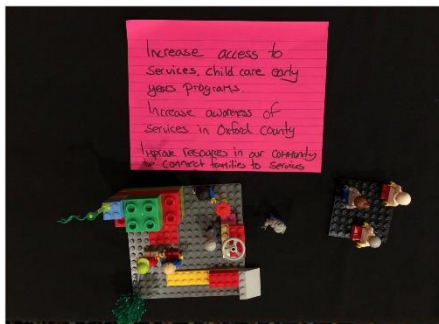
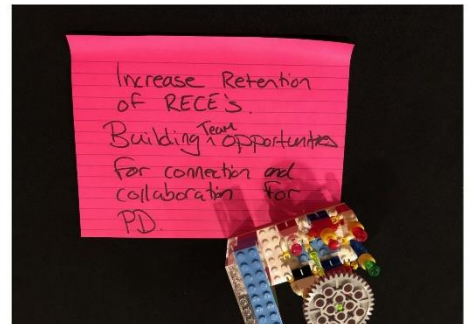
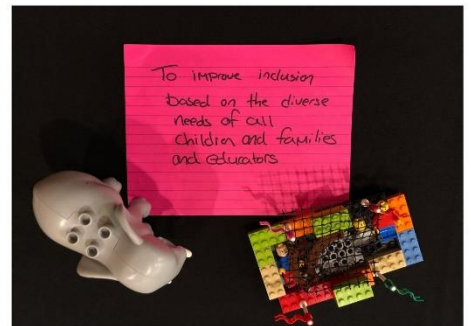
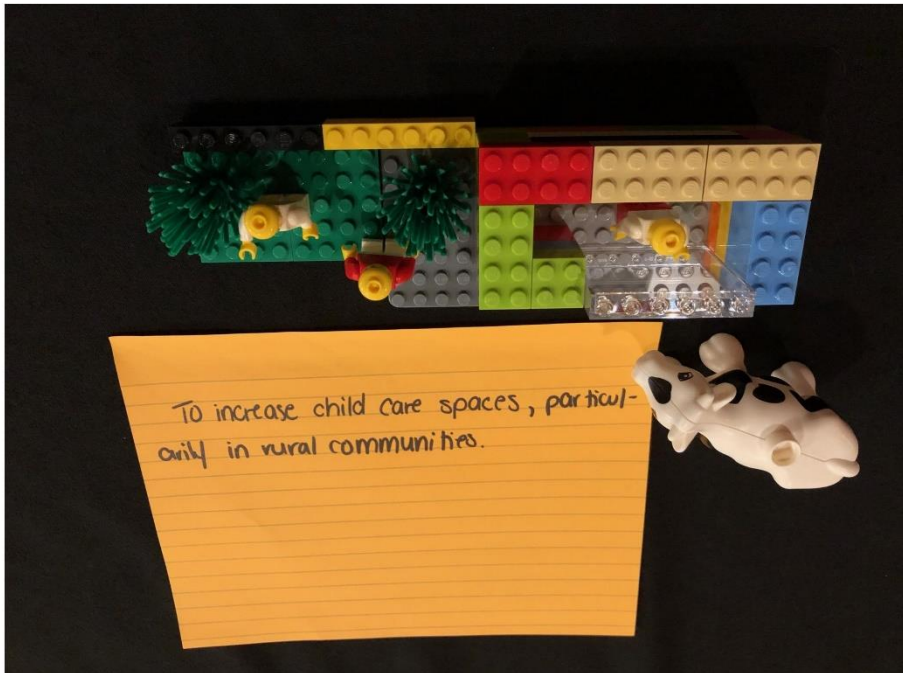
1. How to talk to parents about concerns
2. Challenging behaviours
3. Sign language, alternative communication
4. Creating an inclusive environment
5. Strategies and tools
6. Autism
7. General – special needs

The majority of licensed child care providers, Special Needs Resourcing staff, and EarlyON Centre staff (90.6%) feel supported in their professional development learning opportunities. Most frequently mentioned topics/subjects for further training information include:

1. Mental health
2. Special needs
3. Behaviours
4. Working with school age children
5. Anxiety
6. Outdoor/natural classrooms
7. Wellness
8. Documentation
9. Continuous Professional Learning (portfolio)
10. Autism
11. Working with parents

Overall, service providers identified the following potential areas of focus for the licensed child care sector:

- Cost of care
- More child care spaces
- Professional development for educators
- Recruitment and retention of RECEs/quality staff
- Hours of care
- Resources for special needs
- Inclusion
- Flexible care options



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

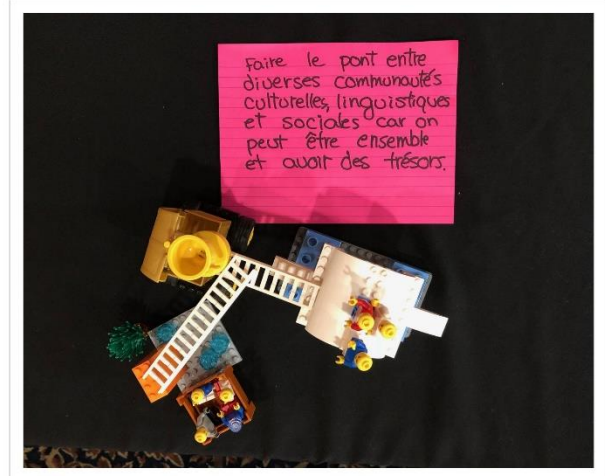
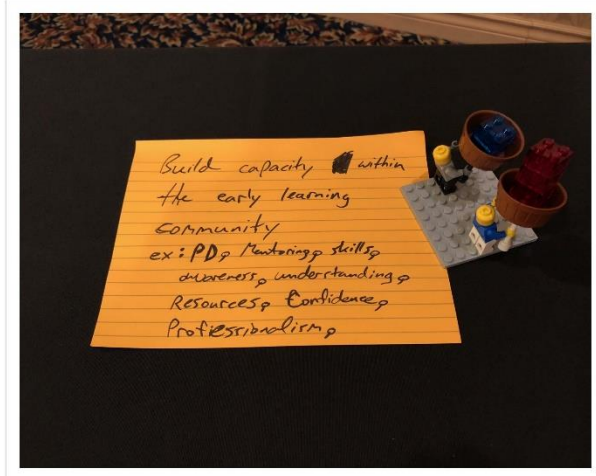
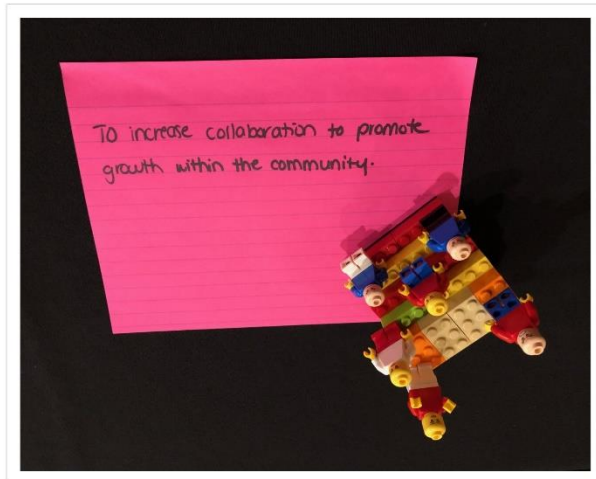
In the online survey, service providers identified a number of potential service enhancements for EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Oxford County. These include:

- Providing access to EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services in more communities (i.e. other locations in Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, and other rural locations, etc.)
- Focusing on certain groups as part of a targeted outreach strategy (i.e. low income families, new/young parents, rural/remote families, Low German speaking families, high risk families, children with special needs, etc.)
- Raising awareness of the programs and services offered at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Although many (63.6%) of service providers rate their level of awareness of the programs and services offered at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres as excellent or good, some providers in Oxford County haven't heard of the centres.

Overall, service providers identified the following potential areas of focus for the EarlyON Child and Family Centres:

- Professional development for staff
- Awareness of EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Hours and locations for EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Meeting the diverse needs of families
- Programs, services, and activities offered at EarlyON Child and Family Centres



What we know about families and children

A number of indicators were looked at to develop a profile of children and families in Oxford County, and to assist with the assessment of community need.

Family Demographics

Number and Location of Children Aged 0 to 4 Years

- In 2011, there were 6,140 children aged 0 to 4 years in Oxford County, comprising 5.8% of the total population
- In 2016, there were 6,465 children aged 0 to 4 years in Oxford County, comprising 5.8% of the total population
- There was a slight increase (325 or 5.3%) in the number of 0 to 4 year olds from 2011 to 2016, slightly higher than the increase in the overall population (4.9%)
- Towns, townships, and municipalities which experienced a growth in the number of children aged 0 to 4 years from 2011 to 2016 include: Blandford-Blenheim, East-Zorra Tavistock, Norwich, and Woodstock

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Children 0 to 4 (2011)	Number of Children 0 to 4 (2016)	% Change (2011 to 2016)
Blandford-Blenheim	385	410	6.5%
East-Zorra Tavistock	325	385	18.5%
Ingersoll	750	705	-6.0%
Norwich	815	885	8.6%
South-West Oxford	515	510	-0.1%
Tillsonburg	730	730	0.0%
Woodstock	2,115	2,370	12.1%
Zorra	500	485	-3.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Number and Location of Children Aged 0 to 6 Years

- In 2011, there were 8,678 children aged 0 to 6 years in Oxford County, comprising 8.2% of the total population
- In 2016, there were 9,113 children aged 0 to 6 years in Oxford County, comprising 8.2% of the total population
- There was an increase (435 or 5.0%) in the number of 0 to 6 year olds from 2011 to 2016, corresponding with a 4.9% increase in the overall population
- Towns, townships, and municipalities which experienced higher than average growth in the number of children aged 0 to 6 years from 2011 to 2016 include: East-Zorra Tavistock, Norwich, and Woodstock

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Children 0 to 6 (2011)	Number of Children 0 to 6 (2016)	% Change (2011 to 2016)
Blandford-Blenheim	571	572	0.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	483	534	10.6%
Ingersoll	1,035	1,041	0.6%
Norwich	1,155	1,233	6.8%
South-West Oxford	740	740	0.0%
Tillsonburg	1,042	1,042	0.0%
Woodstock	2,965	3,257	9.8%
Zorra	678	694	2.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Number and Location of Children Aged 5 to 12 Years

- In 2011, there were 10,390 children aged 5 to 12 years in Oxford County, comprising 9.8% of the total population
- In 2016, there were 10,625 children aged 5 to 12 years in Oxford County, comprising 9.6% of the total population
- There was a slight increase (235 or 2.3%) in the number of 5 to 12 year olds from 2011 to 2016, lower than the increase in the overall population (4.9%)
- Towns, townships, and municipalities which experienced higher than average growth in the number of children aged 5 to 12 years from 2011 to 2016 include: East-Zorra Tavistock, Ingersoll, and Zorra

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Children 5 to 12 (2011)	Number of Children 5 to 12 (2016)	% Change (2011 to 2016)
Blandford-Blenheim	780	690	-11.5%
East-Zorra Tavistock	675	610	9.6%
Ingersoll	1,190	1,305	9.7%
Norwich	1,350	1,355	0.4%
South-West Oxford	895	895	0.0%
Tillsonburg	1,235	1,290	4.5%
Woodstock	3,485	3,640	4.4%
Zorra	760	830	9.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Language

- According to 2016 Statistics Canada data, the rural municipalities south of Woodstock have a higher percentage of residents speaking a non-official language most often at home (Norwich, South-West Oxford), with 5.0% or higher of the population speaking a non-official language most often at home (see the table below for further details)

- German and Dutch are the most common non-official languages spoken at home in Norwich and South-West Oxford
- Other top languages spoken at home in other municipalities include: Polish, Spanish and Portuguese (Woodstock), German, Hungarian and Vietnamese (Tillsonburg), German and Dutch (Zorra and East-Zorra Tavistock), and Dutch, Polish and Hungarian (Blandford-Blenheim)

Town/Township/ Municipality	Total Population (2016)	Number Speaking Non-Official Language Most Often at Home	% of Population Speaking Non-Official Language Most Often at Home
Blandford-Blenheim	7,399	65	0.1%
East-Zorra Tavistock	7,129	70	0.1%
Ingersoll	12,757	120	0.1%
Norwich	11,001	655	6.0%
South-West Oxford	7,664	410	5.3%
Tillsonburg	15,872	390	2.5%
Woodstock	40,902	1,175	2.9%
Zorra	8,138	155	1.9%
Oxford County	110,860	3,040	2.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Indigenous Families

- In 2016, 2,050 Indigenous persons self-identified as living in Oxford County, up from 1,350 in 2011
- Indigenous persons comprise 1.8% of the total population
- The majority of Indigenous persons live in Woodstock (935 or 45.6%)
- Other municipalities with a higher number of Indigenous persons include: Ingersoll and Tillsonburg (see the table below)

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Indigenous Persons (2016)	% of Total Indigenous Population (n=2,050)
Blandford-Blenheim	115	5.6%
East-Zorra Tavistock	40	2.0%
Ingersoll	325	15.9%
Norwich	120	5.9%
South-West Oxford	95	4.6%
Tillsonburg	360	17.6%
Woodstock	935	45.6%
Zorra	55	2.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Francophone Families

- In 2016, 225 individuals in Oxford County identified French as the language spoken most often at home
- Every town/township/municipality in Oxford County has some individuals living there who identified French as the language spoken most often at home
- 140 of these individuals (62.2%) live in Woodstock, representing 0.3% of Woodstock's total population (see the table below for further details)

Town/Township/ Municipality	Total Population (2016)	Number Speaking French Most Often at Home	% of Population Speaking French Most Often at Home
Blandford-Blenheim	7,399	10	0.1%
East-Zorra Tavistock	7,129	10	0.1%
Ingersoll	12,757	10	0.08%
Norwich	11,001	10	0.09%
South-West Oxford	7,664	15	0.2%
Tillsonburg	15,872	15	0.09%
Woodstock	40,902	140	0.3%
Zorra	8,138	15	0.2%
Oxford County	110,860	225	0.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Percentage of Children Living in Low Income

- Communities with higher rates of children living in low income (LIM - after tax) include: Ingersoll, Norwich, South-West Oxford, and Tillsonburg (see the table below)

Town/Township/ Municipality	% of Children <6 Living in Low Income (LIM)	% of Children <18 Living in Low Income (LIM)
Blandford-Blenheim	7.1%	7.1%
East-Zorra Tavistock	8.8%	7.5%
Ingersoll	17.0%	15.0%
Norwich	19.7%	16.1%
South-West Oxford	19.2%	15.1%
Tillsonburg	21.9%	17.6%
Woodstock	14.9%	13.7%
Zorra	11.1%	10.6%
Oxford County	15.8%	13.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Early Development Instrument (EDI) Vulnerability

The Early Development Instrument is a population measure of children’s ability to meet age appropriate developmental expectations in five general domains: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

- 28.3% of children in Oxford County are vulnerable on one or more domain (EDI, 2015). This is lower than the provincial average of 29.4%
- Municipalities with a higher than average percentage of children vulnerable on one or more domain include: Woodstock and Norwich

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Percentage of Children Vulnerable on one or more Domain (2015)
Blandford-Blenheim	24.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	28.8%
Ingersoll	26.4%
Norwich	30.0%
South-West Oxford	14.3%
Tillsonburg	24.9%
Woodstock	33.8%
Zorra	20.2%
Oxford County	28.3%
Ontario	29.4%



Child Care and Early Years System Capacity

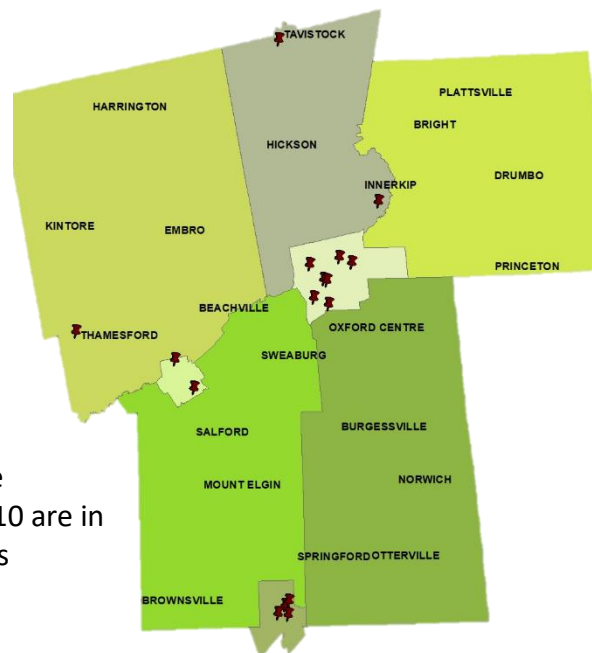
Current Licensed Child Care Programs

As of December 2018, there are the following spaces in the licensed, centre-based child care programs:

Infant, Toddler, Preschool Spaces	School Age Spaces
593 licensed spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 infant spaces • 153 toddler spaces • 400 preschool spaces 	2,089 licensed spaces
499 operating spaces (84.1%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 infant spaces • 128 toddler spaces • 340 preschool spaces 	892 operating spaces (42.7%)

In addition to the centre-based programs, the current home child care agency is able to license up to 50 homes in Oxford County. As of December 2018, there are 14 licensed home providers.

- There are eight licensed child care centres in Woodstock, four in Tillsonburg, and two in Ingersoll (see map)
- The other five townships have a total of three licensed child care centres (in Tavistock, Innerkip, and Thamesford)
- 20 of the 40 infant spaces in Oxford County are located in Woodstock, 10 are in Ingersoll, and 10 are in Tillsonburg. There are no licensed infant spaces available in any of the five Townships



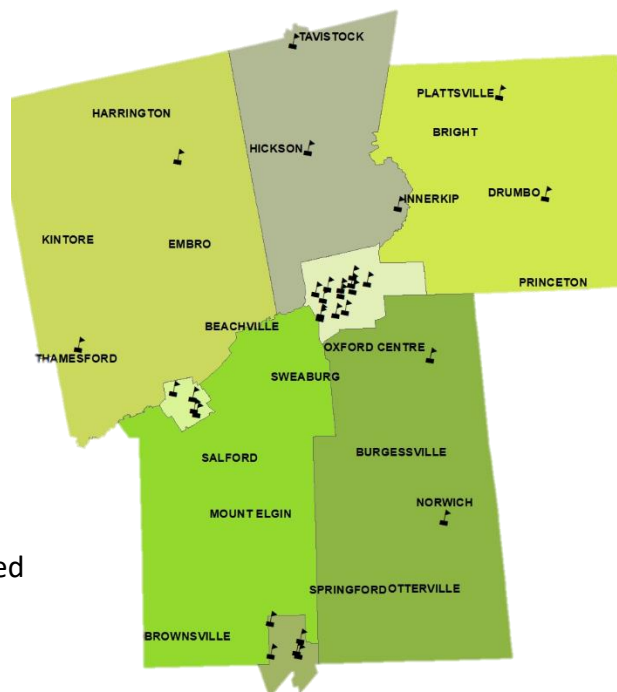
Based on the current licensed capacity in the centre-based child care system:

9.3% of children aged 0 to 4 have access to a licensed child care space

This level of access to a licensed child care space is well under the current Provincial average of 20%. Oxford County will continue to work with community partners to explore opportunities to increase licensed spaces/centres over the course of the next five years.

In terms of licensed before and after school programs:

- Woodstock has 14 programs
- Tillsonburg has five programs
- Ingersoll has four programs
- Zorra has two programs
- East-Zorra Tavistock has three programs
- Blandford-Blenheim has two programs
- Norwich has one program
- South-West Oxford does not have a publicly-funded elementary school



Based on the current licensed capacity in the licensed before and after school system:

14.3% of children aged 5 to 12 have access to a licensed child care space

This level of access to a licensed child care space is well under the current Provincial average of 20%. Oxford County will continue to work with community partners to explore opportunities to increase the number of licensed child care spaces.

There is also a challenge with equitable access to licensed child care across Oxford County. Access to a licensed child care space for 0 to 4 year olds and 5 to 12 year olds in the towns, townships, and municipalities in Oxford County are outlined in the table below.

% of Children with Access to a Licensed Child Care Space (Centre-Based)		
Town/Township/ Municipality	Children 0 to 4 Years	Children 5 to 12 Years
Blandford-Blenheim	0.0%	13.9%
East-Zorra Tavistock	13.0%	17.0%
Ingersoll	13.8%	15.5%
Norwich	0.0%	1.8%
South-West Oxford	0.0%	0.0%
Tillsonburg	22.1%	20.0%
Woodstock	12.4%	20.4%
Zorra	0.0%	11.3%
Oxford County	9.3%	14.3%

Current EarlyON Child and Family Centre Locations

As per the EarlyON Child and Family Centre Community Needs Assessment and Initial Plan provided to the Province in 2017, 2018 was a transition year for EarlyON Centres in Oxford County. Over the course of 2018:

- Service was provided by the existing service providers (Oxford Community Child Care)
- The County of Oxford managed the service contract with the service provider

The current EarlyON Child and Family Centre model in Oxford County uses main sites and satellite locations to meet the diverse needs of the urban and rural communities that are served. At present there are:

- Three main EarlyON sites, located in Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg
- Twelve EarlyON satellite¹ sites

The locations of these current program sites are noted in the table below.

Current Program Sites	Town, Township, Municipality
Woodstock Main Site, 21 Market Street East	Woodstock
Ingersoll Main Site, 24 Raglan Street	Ingersoll
Ingersoll Satellite Site, 190 Thames Street South	Ingersoll
Tillsonburg Main Site, 126 Concession Street East	Tillsonburg
Tillsonburg Satellite, 119 Bidwell Street	Tillsonburg
Tillsonburg Satellite, 59B Potters Road	Tillsonburg
Satellite - 11 Vincent Street, Innerkip	Blandford-Blenheim
Satellite – 324105 Mount Elgin Road, Mount Elgin	South-west Oxford
Satellite – 207 Main Street West, Otterville	Norwich
Satellite – 383908 Salford Road, Salford	South-west Oxford
Satellite – 25 Main Street, Princeton	Blandford-Blenheim
Satellite – 68 Mill Street East, Plattsville	Blandford-Blenheim
Satellite – 165 Dundas Street, Thamesford	Zorra
Satellite – 138 Huron Street, Embro	Zorra
Satellite – 10 Tidey Street, Norwich	Norwich
Satellite – 116 Woodstock Street South, Tavistock	East Zorra-Tavistock

A total of 87.5 hours of direct service per week are being provided to children and families through the current EarlyON Child and Family Centre program sites.

¹ EarlyON satellite sites do not have dedicated physical space

4.0 Action Plan

Child Care and Early Years System Outcomes

The outcomes identified for the child care and early years system in Oxford County include:

1. Increase choice and availability of child care and early years programs and services for families in Oxford County
2. More Oxford County families have access to a full range of licensed child care programs and services
3. A higher number of Registered Early Childhood Educators are working in the child care and early years system in Oxford County
4. A more affordable early years and child care system
5. High quality child care and early years programming delivered by engaged and knowledgeable educators
6. Families can easily find information about the range of child care and early years programs and services that are available to them

Strategic Priorities and Actions

The following tables highlight the strategic priorities and actions that the County of Oxford will take over the course of January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2024 to help achieve the above noted outcomes for the child care and early years service system. These strategic priorities and actions were identified through the comprehensive community planning process that was undertaken.

The six strategic priorities for the Oxford County Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan include:

1. Modernize the child care and early years system
2. Increase access to licensed child care
3. Support the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)
4. Manage and support initiatives that work to make licensed child care more affordable
5. Support integrated professional learning opportunities in the child care and early years system
6. Increase awareness of the child care and early years system

Actions that will be implemented in Oxford to implement these strategic priorities are outlined below.

Strategic Priority #1: Modernize the child care and early years system

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Work with child care providers to explore opportunities to expand the hours of operation of licensed care (in both centres and before and after school programs)		✓		✓
2. Explore flexibility with part-time placements in licensed child care centres to maximize the use of licensed spaces and meet parents' needs (i.e. therapeutic referrals for fee subsidy)		✓		✓
3. Explore funding emergency care in licensed child care centres		✓		✓
4. Review the new Special Needs Resourcing model		✓	✓	✓
5. Review the general operating grant funding formula	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Review contractual arrangements with licensed child care providers with respect to inclusion, quality, and outcomes		✓	✓	✓
7. Review the EarlyON Child and Family Centre service delivery model (i.e. locations, hours, etc.)		✓	✓	✓
8. Investigate a business model approach for licensed child care operators			✓	✓
9. Explore partnerships with service providers to support children and families (i.e. children over the age of 6)		✓	✓	✓
10. Explore how to better support the full range of care options for parents/caregivers	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Explore opportunities to support targeted programs and services for children and families	✓	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Priority #2: Increase access to licensed child care

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Increase the number of licensed home child care providers in both rural and urban communities (i.e. marketing, number of agencies, incentives for toys/equipment, etc.)		✓		✓
2. Continue to support/explore ways to ensure a fair compensation for licensed child care providers given the available resources		✓	✓	

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
3. Explore the establishment of for profit licensed child care centres		✓		✓
4. Explore expanding licensed child care through school capital projects (i.e. Woodstock and Ingersoll)		✓		✓
5. Investigate the use of authorized recreation and skill building programs for after school and pilot in one community	✓	✓		✓
6. Explore the customization of after school programs for 9 to 12 year olds		✓	✓	✓

Strategic Priority #3: Support the recruitment and retention Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Build community partnerships to support the recruitment and retention of ECEs (i.e. Colleges, MTCU, Ontario Works, Employment Ontario, high schools, Community Futures Program, etc.)		✓	✓	
2. In collaboration with Child Care and Early Years service providers, explore innovative ways to recruit ECEs to Oxford County (i.e. incentives)		✓	✓	

Strategic Priority #4: Manage and support initiatives that work to make licensed child care more affordable

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Maintain the flexibility to do cross-County agreements for fee subsidy	✓	✓		
2. Continue to explore ways to maintain or reduce the cost of licensed child care given the available resources	✓	✓		

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
3. Streamline the number of care codes for funding licensed child care through the fee subsidy program	✓			✓
4. Explore creating a range for cost of licensed care across Oxford County	✓	✓		✓

Strategic Priority #5: Support integrated professional learning opportunities in the child care and early years system

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Ensure that capacity building funding continues to meet the child care and early years system needs in Oxford County			✓	
2. Support an annual event for home-based care providers			✓	
3. Provide leadership and support for the merger of a new professional learning committee			✓	

Strategic Priority #6: Increase awareness of the child care and early years system

Local Actions	Provincial Pillars			
	Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
1. Promote existing child care and early years services (i.e. websites, videos, pictures, etc.)		✓		
2. Promote the benefits of licensed child care (home and centre-based care)		✓	✓	
3. Promote the benefits of EarlyON Child and Family Centres to parents/caregivers and service providers		✓	✓	

Measurement Framework

The table on the following page outlines the performance measures that will be used to ensure the child care and early years system outcomes are being achieved. Baseline data have been collected, and surveys will be conducted as part of the process for the next service system plan to measure change over the course of the five years.

Outcomes					
Further choice and availability of child care and early years programs and services for families in Oxford County.	More Oxford County families have access to a full range of licensed child care programs and services.	A higher number of Registered Early Childhood Educators are working in the child care and early years system in Oxford County.	A more affordable early years and child care system.	High quality child care and early years programming delivered by engaged and knowledgeable educators.	Families can easily find information about the range of child care and early years programs and services that are available to them.
Performance Measures					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children and adults accessing EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Number of direct service hours for EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Number of children supported by Special Needs Resourcing supports • Number of Special Needs Resourcing hours delivered • Hours of operation for licensed child care centres • Hours of operation for licensed before and after school programs • Number of parents/caregivers and children participating in targeted programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cross-County agreements • % of children aged 0-3.8 years with access to licensed child care spaces • % of children aged 4-12 years with access to licensed child care spaces • Number of licensed home child care providers in both rural and urban communities • % of parents/caregivers reporting that their main type of care is their first choice • Number of children accessing authorized recreation and skill building programs • Number of licensed home child care operators • Number and location of licensed child care centres • Number of children on the waitlist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of RECEs working in licensed child care centres • Number of RECEs working in EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Number of RECE student placements in Oxford County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children/families accessing fee subsidy • Average cost of licensed child care in Oxford County per age group • % of parents/caregivers reporting that high cost of care was a challenge for them during the past year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of professional learning opportunities provided in Oxford County • Number of educators participating in professional learning • % of educators reporting that they feel supported in their professional learning opportunities • Number of home-based care providers attending annual event • % of children vulnerable on Early Development Instrument report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of parents/caregivers reporting having seen the EarlyON logo in their community • % of parents/caregivers aware of EarlyON Child and Family Centres • % of parents aware of the child care fee subsidy program and its income threshold • Number of engagements with Oxford County Children's Services social media posts • Number of views/hits on Oxford County Children's Services webpage

Action Plan and Timelines

The following table details the actions to be taken over the course of the five year service system plan and the year(s) in which the work will take place. This action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis with the Children's Services Network to ensure its ongoing relevance to Oxford County.

Strategic Priority #1: Modernize the child care and early years system

Actions	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Work with child care providers to explore opportunities to expand the hours of operation of licensed care (in both centres and before and after school programs)	→				
Explore flexibility with part-time placements in licensed child care centres to maximize the use of licensed spaces and meet parents' needs (i.e. therapeutic referrals for fee subsidy)	→				
Explore funding emergency care in licensed child care centres			→		
Review the new Special Needs Resourcing model	→				
Review the general operating grant funding formula	→				
Review contractual arrangements with licensed child care providers with respect to inclusion, quality, and outcomes		→			
Review the EarlyON Child and Family Centre service delivery model (i.e. locations, hours, etc.)	→				
Investigate a business model approach for licensed child care operators	→				
Explore partnerships with service providers to support children and families (i.e. children over the age of 6)	→				
Explore how to better support the full range of care options for parents/caregivers	→				
Explore opportunities to support targeted programs and services for children and families	→				

Strategic Priority #2: Increase access to licensed child care

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Increase the number of licensed home child care providers in both rural and urban communities (i.e. marketing, number of agencies, incentives for toys/equipment, etc.)	→			
Continue to support/explore ways to ensure a fair compensation for licensed child care providers given the available resources	→				
Explore the establishment of for profit licensed child care centres			→		

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Explore expanding licensed child care through school capital projects (i.e. Woodstock and Ingersoll)	→				
Investigate the use of authorized recreation and skill building programs for after school and pilot in one community	→				
Explore the customization of after school programs for 9 to 12 year olds	→				

Strategic Priority #3: Support the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Build community partnerships to support the recruitment and retention of ECE's (i.e. Colleges, MTCU, Ontario Works, Employment Ontario, high schools, Community Futures Program, etc.)	→				
In collaboration with Child Care & Early Years' Service Providers, explore innovative ways to recruit ECE's to Oxford County (i.e. incentives)	→				

Strategic Priority #4: Manage and support initiatives that work to make licensed child care more affordable

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Maintain the flexibility to do cross-County agreements for fee subsidy	→				
Continue to explore ways to maintain or reduce the cost of licensed child care given the available resources	→				
Streamline the number of care codes for funding licensed child care through the fee subsidy program			→		
Explore creating a range for cost of licensed care across Oxford County			→		

Strategic Priority #5: Support integrated professional learning opportunities in the child care and early years system

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Ensure that capacity building funding continues to meet the child care and early years system needs in Oxford County	▶				
Support an annual event for home-based care providers		▶			
Provide leadership and support for the merger of a new Professional Learning Committee	▶				

Strategic Priority #6: Increase awareness of the child care and early years system

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Promote existing child care and early years services (i.e. websites, videos, pictures, etc.)	▶				
Promote the benefits of licensed child care (home and centre-based care)	▶				
Promote the benefits of EarlyON Child and Family Centres to parents/ caregivers and service providers	▶				

5.0 Moving Forward

We have received the Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guidelines for 2020. This plan is intended to meet the needs of families through affordable child care, increased choice and availability while improving quality and delivering high standards of care. The Ministry has highlighted considerations that will be made to the child care funding formula in 2020 which will include changes to municipal cost-sharing and administration thresholds. The County of Oxford is excited to begin the process of implementing this five year child care and early years' service system plan.