

Child Care and Early Years

SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN

2020 TO 2023



CHILDREN'S SERVICES
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York Region



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A Message from York Region Chairman and CEO and Members of Regional Council

York Regional Council is committed to building strong, caring and safe communities that meet the needs of residents at all ages, stages and abilities.

Positive early childhood experiences have a lasting impact and help develop confidence and resiliency. Supporting early childhood development has a high return on investment by improving children's health and education outcomes and can reduce the need for other social services later in life.

For parents and caregivers, a strong child care and early years system can support them to be their child's biggest advocate. It can also promote greater economic independence for families by providing parents the opportunity to upgrade their skills through education or training.

Together with our community partners, The Regional Municipality of York is focused on building a high-quality child care and early years system that is accessible, affordable and responsive. This plan aligns with our mission to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A PARTNERSHIP WITH YORK REGION COMMUNITIES

The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) works closely with community partners to offer a wide range of child care and early years programs and services to our nearly 170,000 children aged 0 to 12 years and their families.

York Region continues to be one of Canada's fastest growing and most diverse communities. As resident demographics and needs continue to change, our system must too. We want all children and families to benefit from a child care and early years system that supports children's learning and development and families' overall well-being.

The 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is an opportunity to continue building a child care and early years system with the community that puts children and families at the centre. The plan provides a common focus and set of priorities to make sure we continue to support the Region's changing needs **as a system**. It also establishes services for children based on four pillars: accessibility, affordability, responsiveness and quality. These pillars reflect the Province's mandate to York Region and set the foundation for our priorities and actions over the next four years.

This plan was created in partnership with York Region's communities. It is our opportunity to continue strengthening our role as Service System Manager for child care and early years services in York Region.



OUR PRIORITIES

York Region's Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (the plan) was developed in consultation with community partners across our nine local cities and towns. It focuses on five priorities:

1 Decisions based on data

Enhancing access to data to understand the impact of programs and services so we can make the right investments

2 A system that works together to plan services

Supporting a seamless system of services that exist where they are most needed

3 Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development

Building capacity in the community so parents, caregivers and child care and early years professionals understand and can support children's growth and development

4 A responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and stakeholders

Building a system that responds to changes in our population and provides enhanced, relevant customer service

5 Children are included and have access to services

Enhancing awareness of services and increasing access so all children can benefit

This plan also includes 25 key actions to be implemented over the next four years. The actions will help us move towards our vision of building a system that supports children's learning and development, and families' overall well-being.

BACKGROUND AND LANDSCAPE

YORK REGION AT A GLANCE

Understanding York Region's children and their families is critical to helping us plan services that meet their needs. This snapshot, using 2016 census data, provides an overview of some of the characteristics used to inform our planning. For a comprehensive review of children and families, please read *A Profile of Children in York Region*. The Profile is available at york.ca/children

York Region was home to **166,760** children aged 0 to 12 years. This is a 10% increase since 2006 (15,710 children).

22,135 people in census families* with at least one child aged 0 to 12 years were recent immigrants.**

Since 2011, the greatest percentage increases in York Region's aged 0 to 12 years population were in King (**32%**) and Whitchurch-Stouffville (**28%**).

12,415 people in census families* with at least one child aged 0 to 12 years spoke neither English nor French.

The southern three cities and towns were home to almost **75%** of York Region's aged 0 to 12 years population.

14% of children aged 0 to 12 years (23,250 children) were living in low income.

In 2015, the low income threshold for a family of four in York Region was just over \$44,000 a year.

Since 2006, the Francophone population aged 0 to 12 years increased by **1,955** children.

Since 2006, the Indigenous[†] population aged 0 to 12 years increased by **385** children.

13% were single parent families (13,375 census families* with at least one child aged 0 to 12 years).

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

* Refers to a couple (married or common law) and their children, or a lone parent and their children. Grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present also constitute a census family. All members of a census family occupy the same dwelling.

** Refers to those that arrived in Canada between 2011 and 2016.

† The term "Indigenous" is synonymous with the Statistics Canada term "Aboriginal".





GEORGINA

EAST
GWILLIMBURY

NEWMARKET

AURORA

WHITCHURCH-
STOUFFVILLE

KING

RICHMOND
HILL

VAUGHAN

MARKHAM

MANDATORY PLANS TO MANAGE THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

All child care and early years Service System Managers must have a plan (further explanation of the Service System Manager role is found on pages 10 and 11). The Province of Ontario has taken a number of steps towards building an early years system that is high-quality, seamless and accessible for children and families. The Province recognizes the critical role Service System Managers play in understanding the needs of their communities and planning and managing their local child care and early years system. As such, under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, Service System Managers are required to establish a child care and early years service system plan for their service areas that includes:

Requirements	What we did
An environmental scan to ensure that planning decisions are informed by an understanding of community demographics, current services and gaps to help determine opportunities to address community needs	Developed A Profile of Children in York Region that details demographic and socioeconomic information on children and families, as well as services offered by York Region to support them, such as Child Care Fee Subsidy, Early Intervention Services programs, and EarlyON Child and Family Centres. The Profile is available at york.ca/children
A description of community planning using a transparent and inclusive engagement process to ensure that plans reflect community needs	Identified and engaged key stakeholders throughout the development of this plan to ensure that priorities and actions are responsive to community needs. A description of the community planning process and key findings can be found on pages 14 to 19.
Strategic priorities and intended outcomes that align with provincial direction and community needs	Used results of the environmental scan and stakeholder engagements to develop strategic priorities and objectives that align with Regional and provincial direction and are targeted towards supporting children’s learning and development and families’ overall well-being. For further details, see pages 20 to 25.
A measurable and action-oriented implementation plan that describes how priorities will be met	Developed 25 key actions to make progress on each priority, with performance measures to track and evaluate progress over the course of the four-year plan. See pages 26 to 29 for our implementation plan.
Accountability methods including the public posting of plans	Committed to reporting on the status of planned actions at the mid-point of our plan and at the end.

York Region has developed a plan that meets provincial criteria and is flexible so we can adapt to any shifts in provincial priorities, while keeping the needs of the Region's children and families at the forefront of our planning. We will continue to work with all of our partners to ensure that York Region is well-positioned to continue building a child care and early years system that benefits all children and families.

The 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is one piece of the overall modernization of child care and early years services across Ontario. Appendix 1 outlines additional information on the journey of children's services modernization.

Building the child care and early years system: Our vision

We are focused on building a child care and early years system that supports children's learning and development, and families' overall well-being.

To move towards this vision, York Region will work with key partners to build a more **collaborative, integrated** and **transparent** approach to system planning.

Together, we intend to build a system that is:

- Committed to delivering accessible, affordable, responsive and high-quality services
- Inclusive of all children and families
- Outcomes-focused with evidence-based decisions
- Accountable to public funding



YORK REGION AS SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGER

Under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, York Region is responsible for planning, overseeing and managing the system of services for children aged 0 to 12 years at the local level, which includes the following:

Required responsibilities in legislation

- Policy development
- Local system planning
- Administering provincial funding
- Assessing and supporting economic viability of licensed child care programs

Other areas of service

- Direct service delivery, including delivering Child Care Fee Subsidy to parents
- Financial assistance for programs that provide temporary care, such as recreation
- Capacity building opportunities
- Commitment to evaluating the impact of public funding

York Region has been involved in all required responsibilities and other areas of service under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

York Region takes a holistic approach to planning services that meet the needs of children, families and service providers. Through these various responsibilities, we shape policies in response to local needs, build the capacity of our partners, support families to understand their child's needs and make child care more affordable so parents can go to work or school.

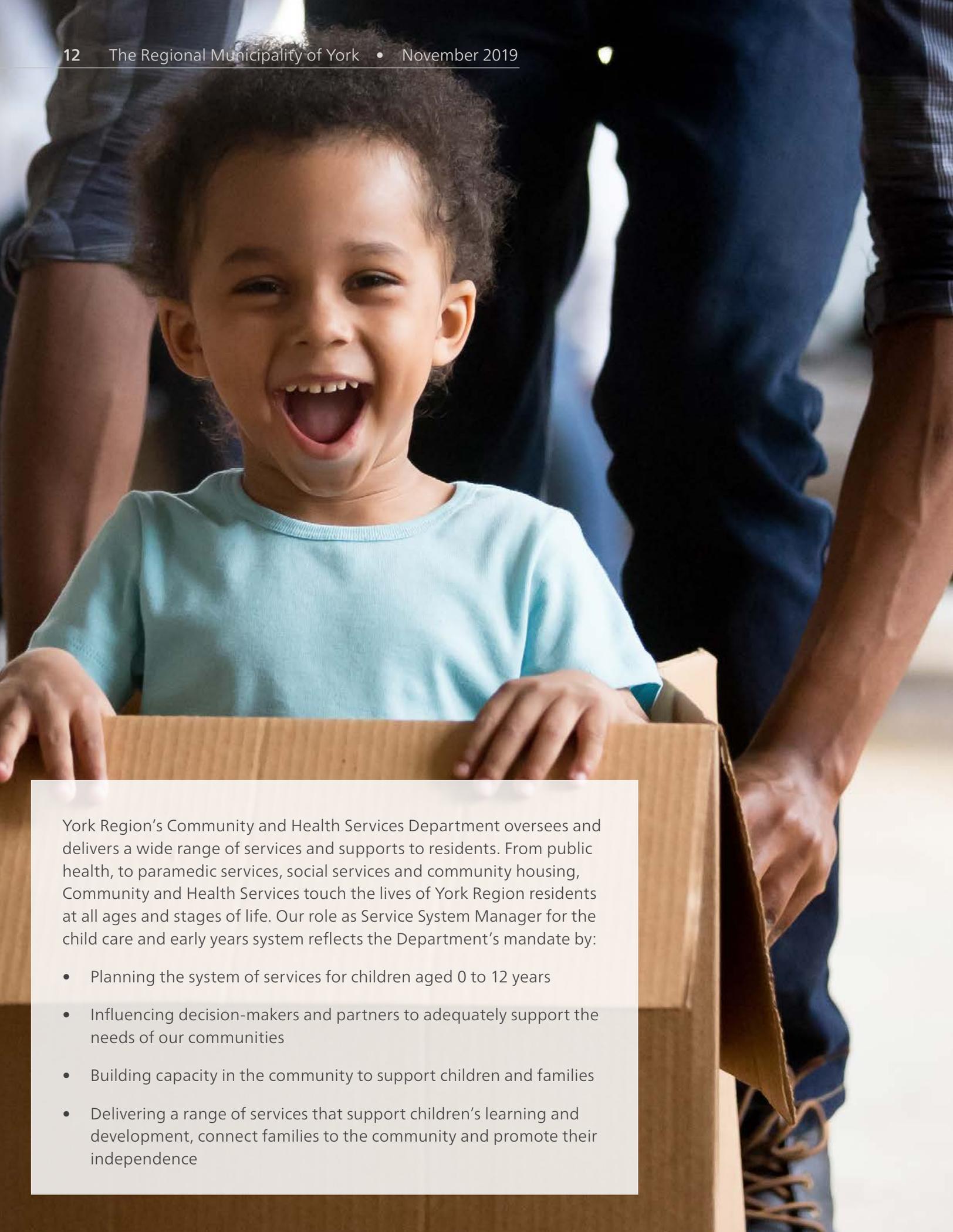
We directly deliver a range of services that support child development and help families better participate in their communities and the economy. We are people-centred and work hard to make sure our services are integrated and personalized to support families' diverse needs. We support children, families and service providers by:

- Delivering **Child Care Fee Subsidy** so families can afford licensed child care and go to work or school
- Providing financial assistance so families can access **recreation, camp and after school programs** so their children can be socially engaged and actively participate in their communities
- Building licensed child care operators' capacity to support children by providing **professional development** and funding for operational costs including **toys and equipment** that support the quality and safety of programming for all children
- Helping to attract and retain quality Registered Early Childhood Educators in the licensed child care sector by providing **operating grants** to licensed child care centres



- Enhancing access and **inclusion for children with special needs** in licensed child care while building the capacity of child care staff to support children of all abilities through the York Region Inclusion Support Services program
- Helping **families of children with special needs** understand their child's needs and implement strategies at home to support future success in school, the workplace, and the community through the York Region Infant and Child Development Services program
- Managing the system of **EarlyON Child and Family Centres**, which connects families and caregivers to the community, supports children's learning and development and builds parents' child development skills and knowledge

York Region is well-positioned to manage the child care and early years system and lead the work outlined in this plan. We have oversight of the system and can enhance partnerships with other levels of government and sector leads such as school boards and children's mental health. We view the system as a whole across all nine local cities and towns and work to ensure that families receive equitable services across the Region. For example, in 2018/2019 we expanded access to EarlyON Child and Family Centres across the Region by opening new centres where they are needed most and/or increasing hours of operation. We also use data to inform our decisions, which includes using demographic and program data to inform new policies for programs.



York Region's Community and Health Services Department oversees and delivers a wide range of services and supports to residents. From public health, to paramedic services, social services and community housing, Community and Health Services touch the lives of York Region residents at all ages and stages of life. Our role as Service System Manager for the child care and early years system reflects the Department's mandate by:

- Planning the system of services for children aged 0 to 12 years
- Influencing decision-makers and partners to adequately support the needs of our communities
- Building capacity in the community to support children and families
- Delivering a range of services that support children's learning and development, connect families to the community and promote their independence

Highlights from 2017 and 2018

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS



In 2018, helped **10,907** children living in low and moderate income attend licensed child care so their **parents could go to work or school** through Child Care Fee Subsidy



Decreased the waitlist for Early Intervention Services programs by **53%** to support **children with special needs and their families faster** (from 134 in 2016 to 63 in 2017)



Families most in need – those with incomes below **\$36,000** annually – received Child Care Fee Subsidy with **no wait time**



In 2018, **12,969** children visited EarlyON Child and Family Centres **100,044** times to support their **learning and development**



In 2018, **405** licensed child care centres received **early intervention support** (an increase of 95% from 2015)



In 2018, **87%** or 169 children and youth reported tangible positive life changes from participating in **after school programs**



In 2018, **194** children and youth built **life skills and confidence** through after school programs



In 2018, provided funding to **324** licensed child care centres so they could purchase **specialized toys and equipment** to support inclusion for all children attending licensed child care



In 2018, **2,171** children received support for their **social, emotional and developmental health** through the Infant and Child Development Services program



In 2017, delivered e-learning sessions to **128** early years professionals to build their **capacity to support children of all abilities** and **99%** felt confident in applying the inclusion strategies in their work



In 2018, **513** licensed child care centres and 12 home-based child care agencies received **wage enhancement funding** for Registered Early Childhood Educators so they could offer safe and inclusive child care to all families



In 2018, supported inclusion of **2,008** children in **licensed child care programs**



In 2017, **83%** or 104 residents surveyed reported **increased confidence** in advocating and caring for their child as a result of the Infant and Child Development Services program

CONSULTATIONS AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

Ongoing collaboration with the community is vital in building a plan that reflects the needs of York Region children, families and stakeholders. Throughout 2018, stakeholders were engaged to inform the development of the 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (the plan).

Stakeholder groups included:

- Children's Aid Society
- Children's mental health agencies
- Children's rehabilitation services
- Children's services planning tables
- EarlyON Child and Family Centre operators
- Francophone partners
- French and English school boards
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Licensed centre-based and home-based child care operators
- Non-profit operators
- Parents and caregivers
- Parks and Recreation Departments of local municipalities
- Regional partners, including Public Health, Housing Services, Homelessness Community Programs, Ontario Works, Paramedics and Seniors Services, Integrated Business Services and Strategies and Partnerships
- York Region Integrated Children's Services division management and staff

We also began discussions with the Chippewas of Georgina Island to build this relationship and will continue to seek their input on building a child care and early years system that reflects the needs of Indigenous communities in the Region.



Who We Engaged

150 child care operators

53 children's services organizations

323 parents of school-age children surveyed through school councils:

184 parents in English school councils and 139 parents in French school councils

61 York Region Integrated Children's Services division staff

to understand what they would include in an ideal system for children aged 0 to 12 years

Engagement Activities

10 engagement meetings and information sessions

to understand stakeholders and partners' ideal system, update on the progress of the service plan and seek feedback on priorities

3 key stakeholder meetings with sector leads in education and children's mental health

to discuss mandated roles and how we can work together to build the system

5 internal and external consultations sessions

to understand current services, gaps in the system, opportunities for collaboration, and discuss system planning

2 community surveys

to understand the features of stakeholders' ideal system, how parents access information, gauge service use and gaps and learn about what is most important to York Region families

Families with children aged 0 - 6 years

On January 1, 2018 York Region became responsible for the local management of EarlyON Child and Family Centres. To support the implementation and roll out, York Region engaged community members and families with children aged 0 to 6 years to better understand their needs. The feedback provided was also used to inform the development of this plan. Activities included:

- **6** pop-up sessions across York Region
- Surveyed **405** community members including parents/caregivers of children aged 0 to 6 years

WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

We heard from parents, caregivers, Regional staff, partners and service providers about community needs, gaps and opportunities to build an integrated system. The feedback demonstrated that families and service providers want many of the same features in the system, such as reduced waitlists for services. It also demonstrated that staff, partners and service providers have a strong understanding of the needs of children and families in York Region.

The common themes that emerged through our community engagements helped create a clear direction for the priorities of this plan.

We asked: What does your ideal system include? What is most important to you regarding child care and early years programs and services?

We heard:

This informed:

1 ENHANCED ACCESS TO DATA AND EVALUATION

PRIORITY #1

Feedback from staff and service providers:

- Community partners and service providers have access to relevant demographic data on children and families in York Region to help design services to better support community needs
- A robust evaluation system that tells us how we are doing, measures outcomes and allows for proactive planning and decision making
- Community partners and service providers have access to data that highlights the physical, human and organizational resources that exist regionally at a neighbourhood level. This helps them deliver services where they are most needed

DECISIONS BASED
ON DATA

We heard:

This informed:

2 PLANNING FOR AND BUILDING THE SYSTEM

PRIORITY #2

Feedback from parents and caregivers:

- A system that has capacity to support the demand for services, including child care
- Increased program capacity in EarlyON Child and Family Centres so families are not turned away due to lack of available space
- Decreased waitlists for supports for children with special needs and increased support while waiting for services

Feedback from staff and service providers:

- Expanded system capacity through partnerships, resource sharing and referral pathways so families do not have to repeat their story multiple times
- A collaborative system that considers community needs in planning upfront
- Building on existing planning tables so different groups are not trying to tackle the same issue in silos
- Reduced waitlists for services and prioritize families based on need

A SYSTEM THAT WORKS
TOGETHER TO PLAN
SERVICES

3 BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

PRIORITY #3

Feedback from parents and caregivers:

- Programs and services have the capacity to support children of all abilities
- Programs are run by positive, well-trained staff who are mindful of safety

Feedback from staff and service providers:

- A system where families are not asked to leave a program because staff are not equipped to manage or support children with special needs
- A skilled workforce and high-quality child care and early years services
- Professional development and capacity building (including e-learning) to support all children
- Parents and professionals are able to recognize “red flags” in children’s development
- Professionals build trusting relationships with parents to support difficult conversations

PARENTS, CAREGIVERS
AND PROFESSIONALS
HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE
AND CAPACITY TO
SUPPORT CHILD
DEVELOPMENT

We heard:

This informed:

4 SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING FAMILIES

PRIORITY #4

Feedback from parents and caregivers:

- Services that offer more flexible hours of operation, such as evenings and weekends
- Increased programs in languages other than English, including French
- Continued opportunities for children and families to be connected to the community
- Programs that are age-group focused and provide learning activities that parents and children can do together
- A continued focus on different types of children's learning

Feedback from staff and service providers:

- Services are responsive to families' needs, including locations, hours of operation and language needs
- A system that keeps the "parent voice" at the forefront
- A case management system that reduces the amount of information families are required to share at each intake point
- Increased online services for families (self-service options) with recommended related services to support system navigation

A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

5 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

PRIORITY #5

Feedback from parents and caregivers:

- A focus on building awareness of services and access to online information on programs available in the community, such as Francophone services
- Access to affordable options for child care
- More early years programs available across the Region so families do not have to travel long distances

Feedback from staff and service providers:

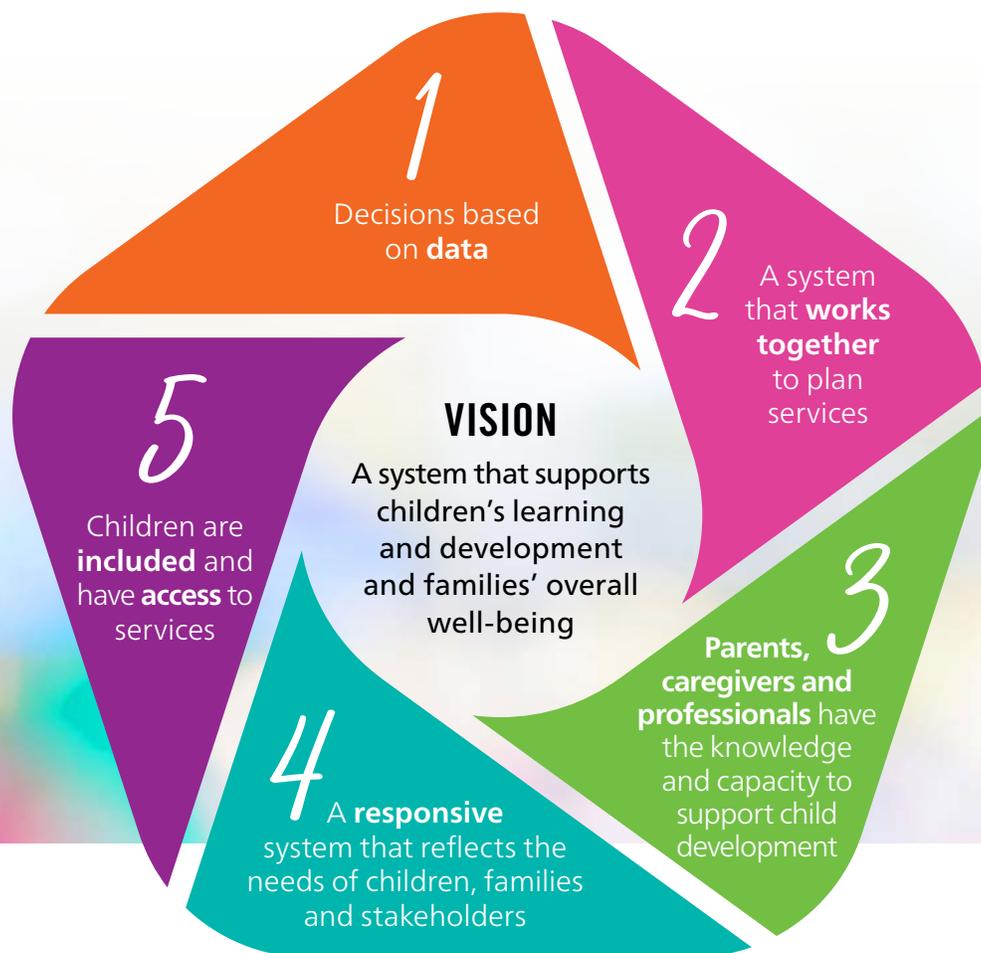
- Families have easy access to information and know where to get it
- Regional staff and child care and early years staff know about programs in the community so they can better link families to the right services

CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES



OUR PRIORITIES

The 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan focuses on **five key priorities** based on feedback from York Region staff, stakeholders, parents and caregivers.



This plan also establishes services for children based on four pillars: accessibility, affordability, responsiveness and quality. These pillars reflect the Province’s mandate to York Region and set the foundation for our priorities and actions.

Each priority is aligned with multiple pillars. As we make progress on our priorities over the next four years, we will build a more accessible, affordable, responsive and high-quality child care and early years system.

PROVINCIAL PILLARS

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY

What they mean for York Region

Promotes equitable access across the Region and full participation for children and families

Improves affordability of early years services

Services reflect children and families’ diverse needs so parents can choose the options that work best for their family

Services are delivered by highly-skilled professionals who work to meet the needs of families

Priority 1: Decisions based on data

Why is this important?

Making decisions based on data means that we understand our population and the impact our programs and services have in helping us achieve our system goals. With increased access to data across the system, this information informs coordinated service planning.

What do we want to achieve?

- Enhance community partners’ access to data to support stakeholders in decision making based on local community needs
- Develop common outcomes to understand the impact of programs and services across the system, inform services changes and demonstrate value for money

How will we get there?

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	KEY ACTIONS
Enhance community partners’ access to data to support stakeholders in decision making based on local community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number and types of demographic profiles created and shared with community partners • Increase percentage of community partners that report the census data and profiles are useful for their planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information on demographic and census data (population growth, age, income) with community partners to inform planning and service delivery from consistent data • Continue to use internal data (such as Access York inquiries) to better understand client needs and how clients interact with the system
Develop common outcomes to understand the impact of programs and services across the system, inform service changes and demonstrate value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of partners participating in a data working group • Increase percentage of service providers that adopt the outcomes framework and report on outcomes measures • Increase percentage of service providers that feel confident using data to inform service planning and reporting on outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a children’s services data working group with internal and external representation focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an outcomes framework that can be used consistently by community partners • Supporting community partners to interpret data for service planning and implement common evaluation practices through capacity building • Enhancing data collection including feedback from families

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY



Priority 2: A system that works together to plan services

Why is this important?

When we have a system that works collaboratively to plan services, stakeholders are better informed, partnerships grow and services are more integrated to better support children and families.

What do we want to achieve?

- Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate
- Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists across the Region

How will we get there?

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	KEY ACTIONS
Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of partners participating in the planning table • Increase percentage of service providers that use the definition of quality for program planning and evaluation • Increase percentage of service providers delivering high-quality children’s services based on the definition of quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Service System Manager, establish a planning table for children’s services in York Region • Work with community partners to develop a definition of quality for children’s services in York Region that aligns with provincial direction • Work with sector leads in education and children’s mental health to create a seamless system
Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists across the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease percentage of cities and towns that are considered unserved or underserved in children’s services • Increase number of new/expanded partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support use of site selection models to help identify areas that are underserved and determine opportunities to expand partnerships to address service gaps • Investigate community hub opportunities and support a “matching service” to available physical space • Work with service providers to merge All Our Kids program with EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Advocate and work with community partners to support access to transportation for families with low income to attend programs and services

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY



Priority 3: Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development

Why is this important?

Parents, caregivers and child care and early years professionals play an important role in supporting child development. When they have the skills, knowledge and resources to support our youngest population, we build children’s future success in school, the workplace and their communities and support a strong economy and healthy, vibrant Region.

What do we want to achieve?

- Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support all children and families
- Support parents and caregivers to understand and support their child’s needs so they can be their child’s biggest advocate

How will we get there?

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	KEY ACTIONS
Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support all children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of participants by service area (i.e. licensed child care, recreation, EarlyON etc.) • Increase number of professionals using the capacity building calendar • Increase percentage of participants that feel confident in applying capacity building activities to their work • Increase percentage of participants that feel the capacity building activities are relevant/useful for their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Region’s strategy for child care and early years’ professionals to increase their ability to provide an integrated approach to children’s services and reduce their reliance on direct Regional intervention • Build an online calendar of educational and knowledge sharing events and make it available to all eligible early years professionals • Work with internal and external partners to deliver capacity building activities for professionals that reflect community needs, such as Francophone and Indigenous organizations
Support parents and caregivers to understand and support their child’s needs so they can be their child’s biggest advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase percentage of families of children with special needs who are better able to help their child participate in all aspects of daily life • Increase number of capacity building activities delivered for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support families to implement strategies for their children with special needs to increase participation in all aspects of daily life • Support families with children aged 0 to 6 years by providing information on child development and making community connections through EarlyON Child and Family Centres

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY



Priority 4: A responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and stakeholders

Why is this important?

York Region continues to grow and our residents have diverse needs. As the demographics and needs of children and families continue to change and evolve, our system must too. For children and families to reach their best outcomes, services must reflect and support their needs, and give parents options that work best for their family.

What do we want to achieve?

- Build and expand partnerships to design and deliver services that reflect community needs
- Enhance Regional processes to improve customer service and support the delivery of high-quality services

How will we get there?

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	KEY ACTIONS
Build and expand partnerships to design and deliver services that reflect community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of additional or enhanced services/service options created • Increase number of new/expanded partnerships formed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build partnerships and enhance service options to better reflect changing needs, such as designing and delivering culturally-responsive programming
Enhance Regional processes to improve customer service and support the delivery of high-quality services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease wait times for children/families with a high/moderate/low need in York Region’s Integrated Children’s Services division • Increase number of families using online applications/resources • Increase number of service providers using online applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve waitlist management and update how families are prioritized to receive service to meet current and future realities • Offer more online services through updated technology and other opportunities, such as online applications, calculators, resources or training

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY



Priority 5: Children are included and have access to services

Why is this important?

When parents and professionals know about services available in their communities, have up-to-date information and have a system that offers more choice, we make it easier for families to access and benefit from services regardless of their needs.

What do we want to achieve?

- Enhance Regional and child care and early years staff and parents’ awareness of services available in the community so families can access the right services at the right time
- Increase access to child care and early years programs so children and families have more choices and opportunities to benefit from quality services
- Continue to plan strategically to support children of all abilities

How will we get there?

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	KEY ACTIONS
Enhance Regional and child care and early years staff and parents’ awareness of services available in the community so families can access the right services at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of impressions/online reach generated from web page and social media • Increase percentage of clicks on Connections Newsletter from subscribers • Increase Access York inquiries for Integrated Children’s Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance York Region web content to better support clients in system navigation and understanding available services • Explore opportunities in the community to increase families’ awareness of services • Educate internal staff and external agencies on programs and services available for the community
Increase network of child care and early years programs so children and families have more choices and opportunities to benefit from quality services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase percentage of children with special needs who are able to maintain quality child care placements • Increase percentage of licensed child care spaces available to families receiving Child Care Fee Subsidy • Decrease number of children with an immediate need waiting for subsidized child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support children with special needs to access quality/flexible child care options • Maximize provincial funding opportunities for families with low income to access licensed child care • Build relationships with off-reserve Indigenous organizations to help ensure access to culturally-responsive programming
Continue to plan strategically to support children of all abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of community partners that adopt York Region’s Inclusion Charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support children of all abilities by ensuring inclusion is embedded into service planning

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE

RESPONSIVE

QUALITY



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This is York Region's first Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (the plan). It provides a starting point to continue to build our system over the next four years. It is intended to be flexible and responsive to shifts in timelines or provincial priorities. Continued funding from the Province of Ontario will help to ensure our success, while ongoing monitoring will ensure accountability.

York Region will implement the plan with partners. By working together internally and with our communities, we will make progress under each priority to achieve the objectives of the 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan.

Appendix 2 provides an overview of work under each of the priorities in the plan that is already underway. The actions taken in 2019 will build momentum for the 2020 to 2023 implementation schedule and help make system level changes within the time period of the plan more attainable.



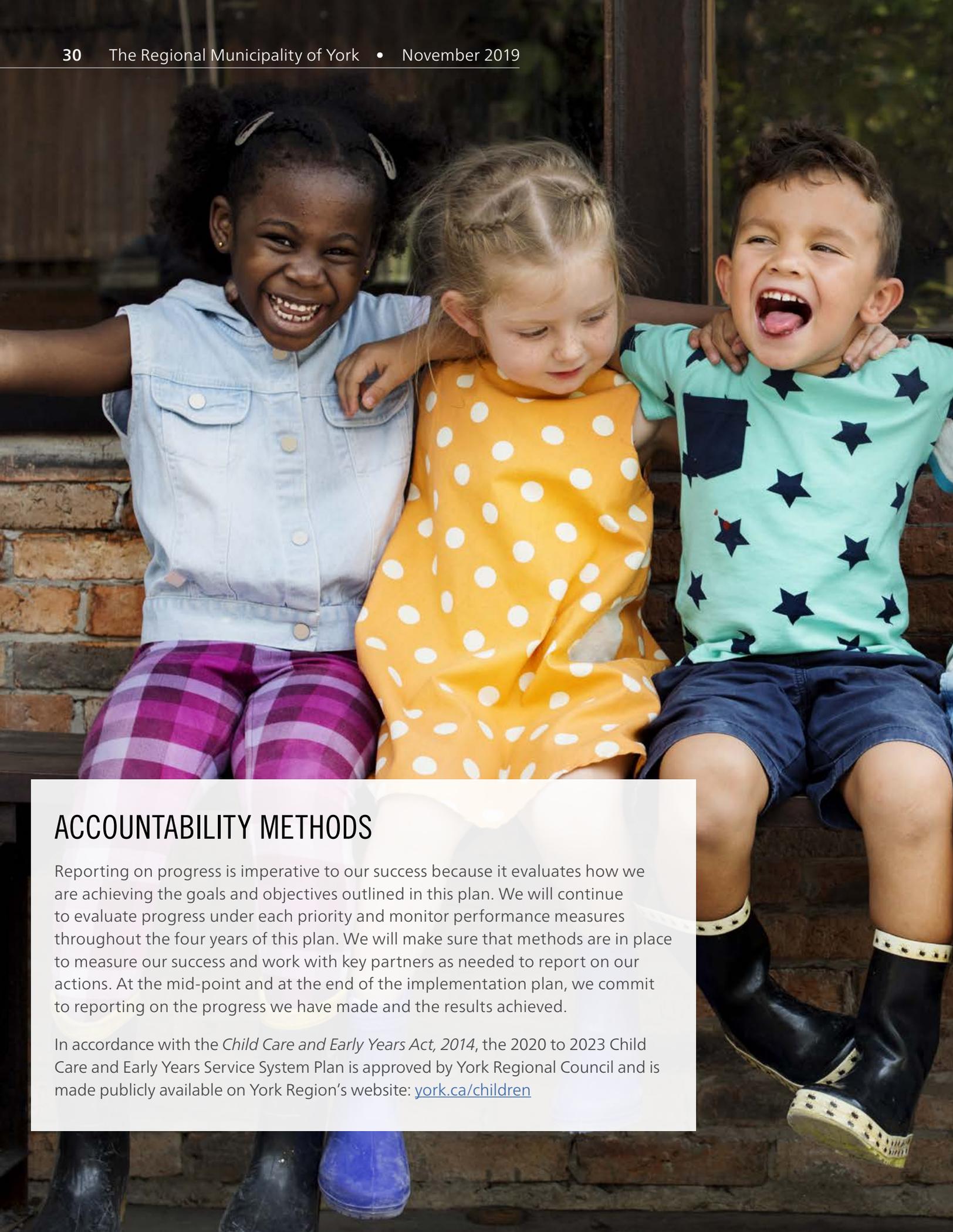


FOUR-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Over the course of this four-year plan, we will implement the actions under each priority to continue building a system that supports children’s learning and development and families’ overall well-being.

	Actions	Timelines			
		2020	2021	2022	2023
Objective					
Priority 1: Decisions based on data					
Enhance community partners’ access to data to support stakeholders in decision making based on local community needs	1. Share information on demographic and census data (population growth, age, income) to community partners to inform planning and service delivery from consistent data	●		●	
	2. Continue to use internal data (such as Access York inquiries) to better understand client needs and how clients interact with the system	●	●	●	●
	3. Establish a children’s services data working group with internal and external representation focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developing an outcomes framework that can be used consistently by community partners b. Supporting community partners to interpret data for service planning and implement common evaluation practices through capacity building c. Enhancing data collection including feedback from families 	●	●	●	●
Priority 2: A system that works together to plan services					
Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate	4. As Service System Manager, establish a planning table for children’s services in York Region	●	●	●	●
	5. Work with community partners to develop a definition of quality for children’s services in York Region that aligns with provincial direction		●		
	6. Work with sector leads in education and children’s mental health to create a seamless system	●	●	●	●
Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists across the Region	7. Support use of site selection models to help identify areas that are underserved and determine opportunities to expand partnerships to address service gaps	●	●	●	●
	8. Investigate community hub opportunities and support a “matching service” to available physical space	●	●	●	●
	9. Work with service providers to merge All Our Kids program with EarlyON Child and Family Centres	●			
	10. Advocate and work with community partners to support access to transportation for families with low income to attend programs and services		●	●	●

Priority 3: Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development			
Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support all children and families	11. Implement the Region’s strategy for child care and early years’ professionals to increase their ability to provide an integrated approach to children’s services and reduce their reliance on direct Regional intervention	●	●
	12. Build an online calendar of educational and knowledge sharing events and make available to all eligible early years professionals	●	●
	13. Work with internal and external partners to deliver capacity building activities for professionals that reflect community needs, such as Francophone and Indigenous organizations	●	●
	14. Support families to implement strategies for their children with special needs to increase participation in all aspects of daily life	●	●
	15. Support families with children aged 0 to 6 years by providing information on child development and making community connections through EarlyON Child and Family Centres	●	●
Priority 4: A responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and stakeholders			
Build and expand partnerships to design and deliver services that reflect community needs	16. Build partnerships and enhance service options to better reflect changing needs, such as designing and delivering culturally-responsive programming	●	●
	17. Improve waitlist management and update how families are prioritized to receive service to meet current and future realities	●	●
	18. Offer more online services through updated technology and other opportunities, such as online applications, calculators, resources or training	●	●
Enhance Regional processes to improve customer service and support the delivery of high-quality services			
Priority 5: Children are included and have access to services			
Enhance Regional and child care and early years staff and parents’ awareness of services available in the community so families can access the right services at the right time	19. Enhance York Region web content to better support clients in system navigation and understanding available services	●	
	20. Explore opportunities in the community to increase families’ awareness of services	●	
	21. Educate internal staff and external agencies on programs and services available for the community	●	●
	22. Support children with special needs to access quality/flexible child care options	●	●
	23. Maximize provincial funding opportunities for licensed child care spaces available to families with low income	●	●
Increase network of child care and early years programs so children and families have more choice and opportunities to benefit from quality services	24. Build relationships with off-reserve Indigenous organizations to help ensure access to culturally-responsive programming	●	●
	25. Support children of all abilities by ensuring inclusion is embedded into service planning	●	●
Continue to plan strategically to support children of all abilities			



ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

Reporting on progress is imperative to our success because it evaluates how we are achieving the goals and objectives outlined in this plan. We will continue to evaluate progress under each priority and monitor performance measures throughout the four years of this plan. We will make sure that methods are in place to measure our success and work with key partners as needed to report on our actions. At the mid-point and at the end of the implementation plan, we commit to reporting on the progress we have made and the results achieved.

In accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, the 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is approved by York Regional Council and is made publicly available on York Region's website: york.ca/children



CONCLUSION

York Region continues to grow and our residents have diverse needs. In response, our child care and early years system must continue to evolve in a way that reflects residents' needs so we can support children's learning and development and families' overall well-being.

Investing in the early years is important. By helping parents participate in the workforce and promoting children's learning and development, we are supporting a strong economy and healthy, vibrant communities.

This is York Region's first Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (the plan). It will continue to be an important guide in shaping service delivery and bringing the community together to work as a system. This plan is flexible and will allow us to continue to adapt to children's and families' changing needs, as well as shifts in provincial priorities. We will continue to keep children and families at the centre of our planning.

This plan will enable us to continue strengthening our role as Service System Manager. York Region is well-positioned to manage the child care and early years system and we will use our position and expertise as a Regional government to build partnerships with other levels of government and sector leads, such as school boards and children's mental health organizations. Working together as a system, we will build services that are accessible, affordable, responsive and high-quality to benefit all children and families across York Region.

APPENDIX 1: THE JOURNEY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES MODERNIZATION

Since 2009, the Province of Ontario has taken a number of steps towards building an early years system that is high-quality, seamless and accessible for children and families. The Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (the plan) is one piece of the overall modernization of children's services across Ontario.

When	What	What it means for York Region
1998	Social Services management was downloaded to municipalities by the Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an upper-tier municipality the Region was designated a Consolidated Service System Manager • Enhanced role for the Region to support child care services agencies • Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada where municipal levels of government hold responsibility for social services
2012	Transfer of child care responsibilities and child and family programs from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced role for the Region in delivering child care • Enhanced collaboration between early years, municipal and education partners • Increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services for children aged 0 to 12 years • Greater focus on childhood learning and development
2013	Introduction of the new Child Care Funding Formula and Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funding and flexibility to best meet local needs • More responsiveness to demand for services and enhanced stability in the system • Reduction in waitlist for Child Care Fee Subsidy and Early Intervention Services programs
2014	Implementation of full-day kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced collaboration with education partners • Children aged four to five years no longer required access to child care • Enhanced opportunity to support younger children in child care
2014	Release of How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new guiding framework for child care and early years programs about learning through relationships to support healthy child development

When	What	What it means for York Region
2015/16	Introduction of the <i>Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New rules for governing child care in Ontario • Strengthened health and safety requirements in child care so parents can make informed choices about their care
2017	Release of Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear vision for the child care and early years system • A focus on affordability, access, quality and responsiveness • Emphasis on further integration of early years and child care programs for York Region families
2017	Introduction of the new Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funding to expand licensed child care services
2018	Launch of EarlyON Child and Family Centres and transfer of responsibilities to Service System Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased management, planning and delivery of a suite of core services related to engaging parents and caregivers, supporting early learning and development, and making connections to other services • Enhanced integration and consistency among EarlyON Centres across York Region • Greater flexibility to offer services to best meet local needs
2019	Release of the 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to assess community needs and identify service gaps and opportunities • Ensures greater accountability, inclusivity and transparency • Sets out system-level priorities to assist with local community-level planning
2020 - 2022	Implementation of further changes to the funding formula including cost-sharing measures for Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New cost-sharing measures and decreased administrative allowances require Service Managers to contribute financially to the Child Care and Early Years System in new ways • Greater emphasis on sustainable service models and reducing administrative burden when system planning

APPENDIX 2: 2019 ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2019, we implemented the following actions:

Action	2019 Achievements
Priority 1: Decisions based on data	
Share information on demographic and census data (population growth, age, income) to community partners to inform planning and service delivery from consistent data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Releasing A Profile of Children in York Region, outlining key population, demographic, socio-economic and program data for the community to access
Continue to use internal data (such as Access York inquiries) to better understand client needs and how clients interact with the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing data analysis for Early Intervention Services programs to better understand service needs and inform program planning
Priority 2: A system that works together to plan services	
Work with sector leads in education and children’s mental health to create a seamless system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the existing work of Early Intervention Services programs and community partners to support seamless mental health services for children aged 0 to 6 years
Support use of site selection models to help identify areas that are underserved and determine opportunities to expand partnerships to address service gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the work of the EarlyON Child and Family Centres site selection model to support decision making for York Region Child Care Services
Investigate community hub opportunities and support a “matching service” to available space through community asset data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring opportunities for early years services at The Link in the Town of Georgina
Work with service providers to merge All Our Kids program with EarlyON Child and Family Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for the alignment of All Our Kids program with EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Action	2019 Achievements
Priority 3: Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development	
Work with internal and external partners to deliver capacity building activities for professionals that reflect community needs, such as Francophone and Indigenous organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing work with partners to provide important information about child health for parents and caregivers in EarlyON Child and Family Centres
Support families to implement strategies for their children with special needs to increase participation in all aspects of daily life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Routines-Based Model approach to service delivery and implementing self-assessment tools to support families
Support families with children aged 0 to 6 years by providing information on child development and making community connections through EarlyON Child and Family Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the 2019 Parenting is Heart Work Conference, celebrating parents and caregivers' expertise, strengthening engagement with their child and promoting their child's learning and development
Priority 4: A responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and stakeholders	
Improve waitlist management and expand prioritization models in York Region's Integrated Children's Services division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating policies and income priority levels for Child Care Fee Subsidy
Offer more online services through updated technology and other opportunities, such as online applications, calculators, resources or training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing a mapping tool to support families to easily find licensed child care centres and available space Offering updated online training modules to support inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care settings
Priority 5: Children are included and have access to services	
Educate internal staff and external agencies on programs and services available for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing information sharing with Ontario Works staff to build their awareness of child care and early years services
Support more children with special needs to access quality/flexible child care options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing capacity building opportunities for licensed child care staff
Maximize provincial funding opportunities for licensed child care spaces available to families with low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to enhance processes for Child Care Fee Subsidy to help eligible families access licensed child care in their community

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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york.ca/children
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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request. Please contact: 1-877-464-9675