

# Oxford County

Review and Update the Child Care and Early Years  
Service Plan 2025-2029

Council Presentation

April 2025

**BEAM GROUP**

---



# What we mean by child care & early years services



## Centre-based licensed child care

13 locations across the County,  
accounting for 50 infant spaces, 155  
toddler spaces, and 510 preschool spaces

## Home-based licensed child care

32 providers, licensed by one of 2  
agencies, providing spaces for up to  
192 children



## EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Provincially-funded and directly  
operated by the County since 2021. In  
2024, the County served 4,367 unique  
individuals over a total of 32,822 visits

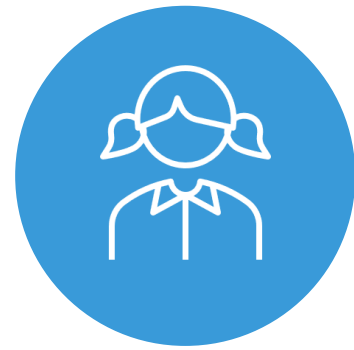
## Special needs services

Childnü Oxford serves families with  
children up to age 12 with diverse needs  
who attend, or are on the waitlist for, a  
licensed early learning program



# Why investing in child care & early years is critical

Research suggests that for every dollar invested in early childhood programs, there is a significant return on investment, with estimates suggesting returns as high as \$5.80 per dollar spent.<sup>1</sup>



## Benefits to **children**

- Enhances children's social, emotional, and cognitive development
- Provides early intervention for children with special needs
- Provides a safe space for play and exploration
- Prepares children for better academic outcomes



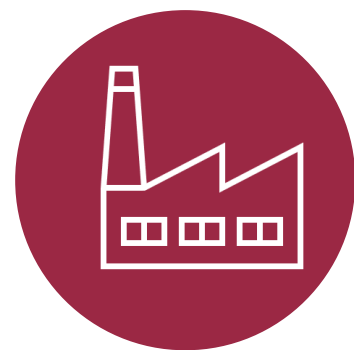
## Benefits to **families**

- Lifts families out of poverty, including by providing support for solo parents
- Helps to educate new parents
- Provides time for children and parents to bond
- Serves as a gender equity tool for women who typically bear greater child care responsibilities



## Benefits to **society**

- Frees up essential workers like nurses and teachers with young children so that residents can access critical services
- Creates connection within the community, particularly for newcomers and those living in rural or remote areas



## Benefits to the **local economy**

- Frees up workers with young children so that local businesses and key industries can hire staff
- Attracts new families to the community, boosting the local workforce

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. (2017). Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care. P. 19. Conference Board of Canada.

# What is a service system plan and why do we need one?

1

## **Our role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM)**

- As CMSM, we are responsible for the planning, funding, and management of licensed child care and early years programs and services
- The Province requires CMSMs to establish a child care and early years system plan every five years

2

## **Supporting local priorities**

- This plan is built on feedback from parents and caregivers, child care operators, educators, local municipal leaders and community services providers
- It also supports Oxford County's mission to "deliver responsive services that improve the community's social, environmental and economic well-being" under the 2023-26 Strategic Plan

3

## **Supporting provincial and federal priorities**

- Our commitments under this plan will help to implement the Ontario Government's vision for all families to have access to child care and early years programs that are accessible, affordable, responsive, and high-quality
- They will also support the ongoing roll-out of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system (CWELCC) - a federal initiative aimed at making child care more affordable and accessible for families by reducing fees and increasing the availability of spaces

# An online survey received responses from 900 parents and caregivers

## Child care

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of centre-based and home-based child care
- Interest in adding more child care spaces, more flexible hours, and additional training for educators
- Some feel that the cost of child care is too expensive

## EarlyON

- High satisfaction with EarlyON programming
- Interest in increased hours, additional programming, and new locations for EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

## Fee subsidy

- Division on whether the amount is adequate – 51% felt it is insufficient and 49% felt it is enough to meet their needs

## Child care waitlist

- 30% of families on the child care waitlist face employment and financial hardship
- 30% of families have arranged for a family member to care for their child and 39% have turned to unlicensed care options

## Special needs resourcing

- Demand for additional training for educators on how to support children with special needs
- Suggestions for more assistance for families with children with special needs to support the transition from child care to school and the addition of EarlyON drop-in sessions for children with special needs



# Key community stakeholders were also engaged

- **Licensed child care operators:** Oxford County hosted a full-day professional learning opportunity attended by nearly 300 educators in April 2024. In addition to gathering feedback during the event, an online survey for all educators and child care operators was also made available to gather feedback. In total, 102 individuals responded to the licensed child care survey.
- **Unlicensed child care operators:** Unlicensed home child care providers in the community were also invited to participate in an online survey. This survey generated only three responses. At the time of the survey, all three respondents were offering child care in their homes, with two having no plans to become licensed through an agency, and one seeking out support from one of the County's licensed child care agencies.
- **Community partners and municipal leaders:** Four in-person co-design sessions were held with County staff, municipal councillors, and community partners delivering services for children across Oxford County:
  - **Spring 2024:** initial sessions focused on what is working well across the system, where there are challenges and brainstorming ideas to address the needs of the community
  - **Fall 2024:** two further sessions were held to discuss specific activities that might be included in the plan. Feedback was gathered on which of these had the highest potential impact and used to finalize the priorities in the plan

# Research identified a range of key themes



## Ten other service system plans were reviewed

- All service system managers are working hard to address **educator recruitment and retention** challenges
- Workforce shortages are limiting service system managers' ability to meet **CWELCC targets**
- Many **vulnerable families are experiencing a heightened lack of access** to licensed child care spaces caused by increased demand for child care and lower parent fees, without proportional increases in capacity
- There is an increased demand for supporting **children with complex needs**
- Transportation remains a key issue for **rural and remote** providers
- Many service system managers have developed **partnerships with community partners** to consider the holistic needs of children and families through strategic planning tables

**The plan includes  
five priorities,  
each with a set of  
corresponding  
actions**





# Priority 1: Increase access to child care and early years programs

- 1 Expand facilities and resources
- 2 Streamline enrollment processes
- 3 Collaborate with community partners

# Priority 2: Support inclusive and responsive programs and services

- 1 Strengthen professional development and capacity building
- 2 Promote inclusive environments
- 3 Support early intervention

# Priority 3: Enhance the quality of child care and early years programs and services

1

Focus on workforce recruitment and retention

2

Support professional development

3

Provide ongoing system support

# Priority 4: Provide more affordable child care

- 1 Maximize funding allocations
- 2 Prioritize spaces
- 3 Activate community support

# Priority 5: Use evidence to improve outcomes for children and families

- 1 Contribute to research and data analysis
- 2 Implement evidence-based practices
- 3 Monitor and evaluate progress





**Questions?**

**BEAM GROUP**

---