



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 24, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Early Years Community Plan 2016-2020 (CES16054) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Grace Mater (905) 546-2424 ext. 4979 Jessica Chase (905) 546-2424 ext. 3590
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

Background

Over the past decade, the Hamilton Best Start Network and the City of Hamilton have been leaders in planning and implementing a system of early years services and supports for children and families in our community. Significant progress has been made to improve programs and services for children and families as a result of the collaborative relationships that have been built over the past decade and the shared commitment of all early years partners.

In January 2013, Children's & Home Management Services (CHMS) staff advised Council of the release of the *Early Years Community Plan, 2012-2015* (CS13002). The plan provided recommendations that have guided the work of the CHMS Division and the Hamilton Best Start Network over the past four years.

In the fall of 2015, CHMS staff identified the need to develop a new Early Years Community Plan (EYCP) to guide the next five years. At that time the City engaged consultants from Policy Planning Plus to develop a new EYCP report which would build on the previous plan. This plan would also build on *Hamilton's Best Start Network Strategic Framework: 2011-2016*.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

The consultants' work was supported by a staff project team and was informed by a community-based Early Years Community Plan Steering Committee which included three members of the Hamilton Best Start Network.

This report will share the highlights, major findings and recommendations from the consultants' report and will identify next steps. The *Hamilton Early Years Community Plan, 2016-2020* executive summary report is attached as Appendix A to Report CES16054.

Stakeholder Consultation and Community Engagement

The Hamilton Best Start Network was engaged in six planning sessions throughout the plan development phase. Their input and feedback helped to inform the process and the recommendations from the plan.

In addition, interviews and focus groups were held with over 100 individuals including:

- Parents and families;
- Early Years Research and Evaluation committee;
- Parent Engagement committee;
- Family Support Leadership Table;
- Four school boards, representing English and French, and Catholic and public boards; and,
- A variety of early years service providers.

There was a particular focus on consulting with service providers and families to understand the needs and perspectives of diverse early years populations including:

- Indigenous families;
- Newcomers;
- Francophone families;
- Young parents;
- LGBTQ parents; and,
- Parents of LGBTQ children and youth.

Key Accomplishments

Over the last four years, significant progress has been made in achieving the goals set out in the last EYCP (2012-2015). Key achievements were identified in four key areas:

- Child care stabilization;
- Access to information;
- Inclusion; and,
- System integration.

These achievements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The City of Hamilton has met one-on-one with 79 licensed child care providers to continue to build strong working relationships and understand how best to support their work;
- A new funding model and agreement were developed that require licensed child care providers to have inclusion policies aimed at increasing access for children and families. This includes policies to ensure an inclusive environment for children with special needs, the requirement for all child care providers that have a funding agreement in place with the City to accept families in receipt of fee subsidy, and active participation in the City of Hamilton's quality initiatives;
- Families and children were engaged in developing the *Hamilton Parent Charter of Rights*, and *Hamilton's Charter of Rights of Children and Youth* (Report CES15051(a)). These charters commit to providing families and children with timely information about programs and services in the early years and to engage them in planning and assessing early years programs and services;
- Planning for the development of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs) has begun with existing Family Support Programs, school boards, organizations serving the Francophone and Aboriginal populations, the professional resource centre, and city staff;
- The Hamilton Child Care Registry was developed and implemented. It provides parents and caregivers with a single online point of access to all licensed child care providers and eliminates the need for families to apply to multiple waitlists. It also provides an online fee subsidy application process;
- The Pathways to Learning Work Group oversaw the redevelopment of the Hamilton Best Start website, with a specific focus on parents and families;
- A review of funding that supports children with special needs and their families was conducted. Recommendations from this review are being implemented. These include a new enhanced service delivery model and service criteria that will increase access and service, enhanced staff training and development, and information management improvements; and,
- The Basic Needs Work Group developed a financial supports inventory aimed at assisting low income families to become aware of and obtain access to available government supports. This inventory, attached as Appendix B to Report CES16054, will be distributed to early years professionals and other organizations interacting with families, such as front-line Ontario Early Years Centre staff, child care providers and police.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Recommendations

The consultant’s report identified that over the past ten years, the early years community in Hamilton has developed the willingness, leadership and capacity to work together to make a positive difference in the lives of young children and their families. Building on this strong foundation, the EYCP 2016-2020, identifies a Course of Action aimed at creating a more integrated system of programs and services that provides an opportunity for all partners to work together to achieve collective impact for the benefit of all children and families. The course of action consists of five key elements:

1. A description and definition of the key components of the early years system.
2. A strategy map that aligns the vision, the focus, and the foundational principles that underpin the early years system.
3. An equity and engagement lens to ensure equitable outcomes for all children and families.
4. A new organizing structure that enables each component of the system to effectively work and learn together.
5. Seven strategic priorities with specific goals and recommended actions for the future.

Stakeholder consultations identified that the current structure of the Best Start Network needs to be refreshed in order to support a systems-level and strategic focus. The new proposed structure is designed to support the implementation of the EYCP vision and strategic priorities. It will be a fluid and dynamic structure that will build stronger partnerships and collaborations in order to build our community’s capacity to enhance learning, development, and well-being for all children and their families.

The seven strategic priority areas were identified through analysis of the environmental scan findings, including a review of the changing landscape. These priority areas were also affirmed by the Best Start Network. The seven strategic priorities are as follows:

Strategic Priority Focus	Overarching Goal
1. Quality, Evaluation & Learning	To lead informed practice and decision-making and ensure continuous quality improvement.
2. Child Care System Planning & Stabilization	To ensure high-quality, sustainable, accessible and, increasingly integrated child care and early learning experiences for all children and their families.
3. Access & Pathways	To ensure all children and families meet with developmental success through the early years journey.

4. Family Support Programs	To create vibrant and responsive hubs of family support services located conveniently throughout the community.
5. System Advocacy & Education	To identify and frame issues and opportunities that, through collective action, can contribute to addressing barriers to equitable outcomes for children and families.
6. Special Needs Resourcing & Strategy	To ensure accessible, supportive, and inclusive early learning environments for all children and an integrated, seamless collection of services that families experience as one system.
7. Before & After School Programs (BASPs) Community-wide Planning	To plan for a system of well-connected BASPs that reflect what families, children, and youth want.

The EYCP report identifies specific actions associated with each of the seven strategic priorities. Examples of these actions include:

- Implementation of a new quality initiative, encouraging and supporting wide participation among child care and early years providers, including family support and before and after school programs;
- Involve neighbourhoods in identifying where destination family supports programs can link with and co-locate with community hubs;
- Identify requirements to facilitate access, as well as address barriers, that prevent access to before and after school programs from the perspective of families and unique/special populations;
- Develop a local work plan aimed at ensuring that the philosophy and guiding principles of the Provincial Special Needs Strategy are echoed throughout the EYCP strategic priorities and to strengthen the capacity of early years partners to work together as a system to support the three tiers of special needs support – universal, at-risk, and identified;
- Identify potential advocacy priorities for the next five years based on a review of the most significant barriers to equitable outcomes for children and families and an assessment of where coordinated efforts could lead to the greatest impact; and,
- Champion the creation and exchange of knowledge gained through seminal data collection initiatives including the Early Development Instrument (EDI), the Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS), the Inclusive Early Childhood Service System

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

project findings, the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) pilot, Census 2016, Ontario Child Health Study, etc.

Further information on the specific actions can be found in the full EYCP report which will be available on the Hamilton Best Start website (www.hamiltonbeststart.ca/eypc/) once it is finalized.

Next Steps

The Hamilton EYCP 2016-2020 will be used to guide the work of the Children's & Home Management Services Division, the Hamilton Best Start Network and the broader early years system. It will inform future investments by providing a clear roadmap of emerging priorities, considerations and opportunities for the next five years.

The plan will be shared with all early years partners at a community meeting being led by the City of Hamilton in November 2016. It will also be posted on the Hamilton Best Start website and City website. A communications strategy to engage stakeholders will be developed.

Staff will continue to work to engage the Best Start Network in the development of an implementation plan which is expected to be completed in early 2017. A transition plan will be developed to transfer the Best Start Network to the new Collaborative Organizing structure.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES16054: Early Years Community Years Plan Executive Summary

Appendix B to Report CES16054: Hamilton BSN Basic Needs Financial Supports Catalogue