

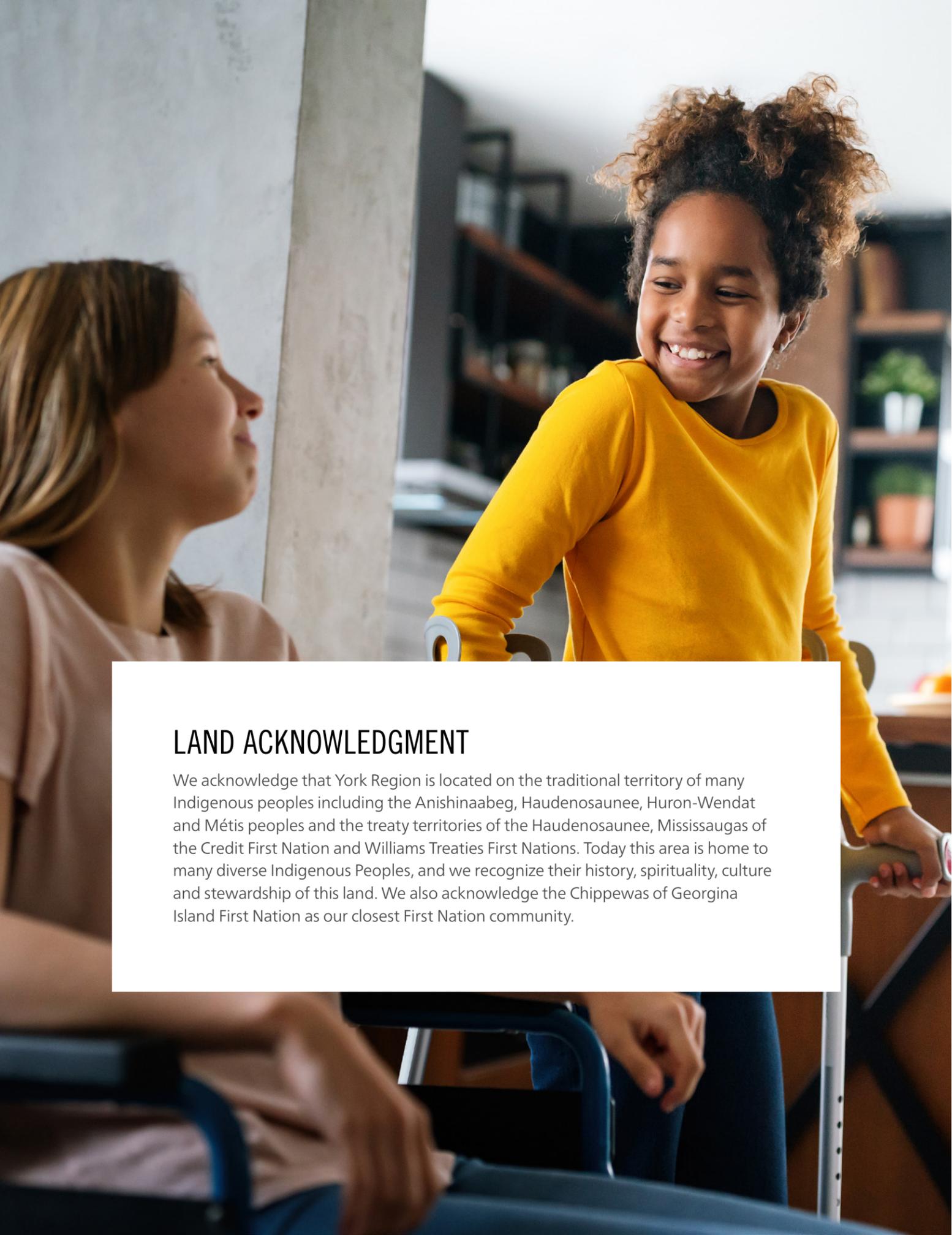
Child Care and Early Years

SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN

2024 TO 2027



CHILDREN'S SERVICES
york.ca/children
#StartswithkidsYR



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. Today this area is home to many diverse Indigenous Peoples, and we recognize their history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of this land. We also acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as our closest First Nation community.

A MESSAGE FROM YORK REGION CHAIRMAN AND CEO AND MEMBERS OF REGIONAL COUNCIL



Chairman & CEO
Wayne Emmerson

York Regional Council is committed to building strong, caring and safe communities and meeting the needs of residents at all ages, stages and abilities. The updated *2024 to 2027 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan* aims to support the health and education outcomes of York Region's youngest residents and their families.

Building on the success of our previous plans, we know positive early childhood experiences have a lasting impact and help develop confidence and resiliency. Supporting early childhood development benefits the whole community by improving children's health and education outcomes and reducing 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, caregivers and professionals with the knowledge and capacity to support child development.

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



Mayor
Frank Scarpitti
City of Markham



Regional Councillor
Michael Chan
City of Markham



Regional Councillor
Jim Jones
City of Markham



Regional Councillor
Joe Li
City of Markham



Regional Councillor
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Mayor
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Town of Newmarket



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City of Vaughan



Mayor
Margaret Quirk
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Naomi Davison
Town of Georgina



Mayor
David West
City of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor
Godwin Chan
City of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor
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City of Richmond Hill



Mayor
Tom Mrakas
Town of Aurora



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Town of East Gwillimbury



Mayor
Steve Pellegrini
Township of King



Mayor
Iain Lovatt
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Our Priorities	7
Background	8
Mandatory Plans to Manage the Child Care and Early Years System	12
2020 to 2023 Accomplishments	14
Supporting the Provincial Interest: Access and Inclusion	18
Consultations and Community Planning	22
System Pressures.....	24
Feedback from Community Consultations	26
Moving our Priorities forward for 2024 to 2027	32
Priority Area 1: Service Providers have the data they need to provide quality programming	33
Priority Area 2: Partners coordinate effectively across the service system to support the needs of children and families	34
Priority Area 3: Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development	35
Priority Area 4: A responsive system that reflects needs of children, families and the community.....	36
Priority Area 5: Children are included and have access to services.....	37
Accountability Methods	38
Conclusion	39
Appendix A: 2020 to 2023 Accomplishments	40
Appendix B: CWELCC Priority Areas	48
Appendix C: York Region Children’s Services Program Descriptions	49
Appendix D: 2024 to 2027 Four-Year Implementation Plan	54

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request. Please contact 1-877-464-9675.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A PARTNERSHIP WITH YORK REGION COMMUNITIES

The Regional Municipality of York works closely with community partners to offer a wide range of child care and early years programs and services to over 160,000 children from birth to age 12 and their families.

As one of Canada’s fastest growing and diverse communities, York Region’s system must evolve to meet changing needs. All children and families should have access to a child care and early years system that supports children’s learning and development and families’ overall well-being.

The 2024 to 2027 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (2024 to 2027 Plan) aims to continue building a child care and early years system that prioritizes the needs of the community, with children and families at its core. The 2024 to 2027 Plan outlines a clear set of priorities to support the Region’s evolving needs as a system. It commits to advancing priorities set out by the Province enabling families to access programs and services and feel a sense of belonging within the service system.

This Plan was developed in partnership with York Region’s communities, and presents an opportunity to further strengthen the Region’s role as Service System Manager for child care and early years services in York Region.



OUR PRIORITIES

York Region’s 2024 to 2027 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan was developed with input from community partners in all nine local cities and towns and builds on the previous Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (2020 to 2023 Plan). Both internal and external partners agreed the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Children’s service system. As a result, the five priorities from the original plan have been carried over to the current plan with some minor revision. Over the next four years, York Region will continue to focus on five Priority Areas:

TABLE 1: 2024 TO 2027 CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN PRIORITIES

Priority Area	Description
1. Service Providers have the data they need to provide quality programming	Enhancing access to data so service providers and community partners can better understand the population they are serving and the impact of programs and services to help inform decision making
2. Partners coordinate effectively across the service system to support the needs of children and families	Coordinated service planning ensures a seamless integrated system of services 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 needs of children, families and the community	Building a flexible and adaptable system able to respond 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

Each Priority Area has several actions and deliverables that will help guide the sector work over the next four years to reach shared goals.

BACKGROUND

York Region is one of 47 Service System Managers mandated by the Province to plan, oversee and manage child care and early years services for children aged 0 to 12 years. Child care and early years programming falls under the direction of the Ministry of Education, as part of the broader education portfolio. The overarching Provincial goal is to support Ontario’s families and children with a system of responsive, high quality, accessible, integrated services that are sustainable and contribute to healthy child development and to the growth of the economy. The Region provides oversight of the child care and early years system in York Region, and directly delivers a number of programs to children and families. A complete list of internal programs and services can be found in Appendix C.

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	Other areas of service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy development • Local system planning • Administering provincial funding • Assessing and supporting economic viability of licensed child care programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 impact of public funding

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.



York Region Children’s Services supports children, families, child care providers and the community in delivering high quality services. The goal is to give children the best start in life and keep families socially and economically engaged. Its roles include:

- Overseeing more than **550 licensed child care centres** and providing **funding to make child care more affordable** for families with low incomes
- Delivering the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. **90% of child care operators in the Region are participating**
- Providing Child Care Fee Subsidy for licensed child care to eligible low-income families. In 2023, **8,233 children from 5,442 families had benefited** from this subsidy
- Directly delivering early intervention services to children with special needs, at home and in licensed child care settings, **helping more than 4,700 children in 2023**
- Managing **a range of drop-in early learning and parenting programs**, including EarlyON, for families with children from birth to six years of age
- Providing **subsidies** for local municipal **recreation programs**

CONTEXT

Using 2021 Census data to gain insights into the demographic changes in York Region's children and their families is crucial to planning services that meet their needs. Understanding the composition of families, where they are located across the region and their dimensions of diversity is critical to build a system that is accessible, inclusive and responsive to family needs. These are the key highlights from the 2021 Census data:

In 2021, York Region was home to **160,845** children aged 12 years and under. This is a **3.5%** decrease since 2016 (5,915 children)

6,665 children from birth to age 12 were recent immigrants*

Since 2016, the greatest percentage increases in York Region's 12 years and under population were in East Gwillimbury (**66% or 2,305 children**) and King (**8% or 310 children**).

The Region's southern three cities and towns (Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill) were home to almost **71% (114,720 children)** of York Region's 12 years and under population

York Region was home to **5,305** Black children aged 12 years and under. Black children population was highest in Vaughan **31% (1,670 children)** followed by Markham **27% (1,440 children)**

10% of children aged 12 years and under (15,835 children) were living in low income. In 2021, the low income threshold for a family of four in York Region was just over \$43,000 a year

The Francophone 12 years and under population was **3,585** children. **9%** (310) were living in low income

The Indigenous 12 years and under population was **1,055** children. **14%** (150) were living in low income

14% of the total population were single parent families (15,710 census families** with at least one child between birth and 12 years).

York Region was home to **97,555** visible minority children aged 12 years and under.

12% (11,790 children) of visible minority children aged 12 years and under were living in low income

12% of Black children aged 12 years and under (**640 children**) were living in low income

* refers to those that arrived in Canada between 2016 and 2021

** 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.



MANDATORY PLANS TO MANAGE THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

Under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, Service System Managers responsible for child care and early years must have a plan in place to oversee their local child care and early years system. The Province of Ontario has taken steps towards building a high-quality, seamless and accessible early years system for children and families and they are supportive of the critical role of Service System Managers in understanding the needs of their communities and effectively planning and managing their local child care and early years system. A summary of actions the Region took to achieve provincial system plan requirements includes:

Provincial Requirements	Actions
An environmental scan to ensure planning decisions are informed by an understanding of demographics, current services and gaps to help determine opportunities to address community needs	Engaged community partners across York Region to evaluate the success of the 2020-2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan and identify strengths of the existing service system and opportunities to address further needs and changing communities
Community planning using a transparent and inclusive engagement process to ensure plans reflect community needs	Identified and engaged community leadership tables to ensure priorities and objectives are responsive to community needs
Strategic priorities and intended outcomes align with provincial direction and community needs	Used results of the environmental scan and community consultations to make minor changes to the existing strategic priorities as they continue to align with Regional and provincial direction and are focused on supporting children’s learning and development and families’ overall well-being
A measurable and action-oriented implementation plan that describes how priorities will be met	Developed 13 actions for the Priority Areas, with performance measures to track and evaluate progress over the course of the next four years
Accountability methods including the public posting of plans	Committed to updating our community leadership tables on the status of planned actions at the mid-point and completion of the Plan

York Region has developed a plan that meets provincial criteria, is flexible and can adapt to shifts in provincial priorities, while keeping the needs of the Region’s children and families at the forefront of future planning. York Region will continue to collaborate with our partners to ensure we can build an accessible and inclusive child care and early years system.

Building the child care and early years system: Our vision

York Region is 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.

The Region will provide leadership 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



2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the past four years, the child care and early years sector has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and is now recovering from it. Due to pandemic-related closures of schools, EarlyON centres, child care facilities and workplaces, and restrictions on in-home visits, many families were left without critical children's services. The 2020 to 2023 Plan's priorities and objectives played a crucial role in helping York Region manage challenges related to the pandemic and continue to provide high-quality services to children and their families. Some achievements over the last four years are provided below, with a complete list available in Appendix A.

Priority Area One: Decisions based on data

- Circulated the Children's Profile to community partners
- Circulated 2021 Census population data to community partners
- Updated 64 Early Years Community Profiles to support service planning. Early Years Community Profiles are an interactive online resource designed to support program, service and policy planning for young children and their families at the neighbourhood level in York Region
- Used data from a new Children's Services Portal, an online portal for residents to register for EarlyON programs and Child Care Fee Subsidy to inform future system planning

Priority Area Two: A system that works together to plan services

- Opened six emergency child care centres providing care to over 130 children of essential health care and other frontline workers during the initial province-wide closure due to COVID-19 in March 2020
- Collaborated with EarlyON providers to virtually connect isolated families with the Region's Early Interventionists who provided answers to parents' questions about their children's development
- Engaged with children's mental health community agencies to provide support to children and child care staff during the pandemic
- Partnered with the Region's Economic Development team to provide information and resources to child care operators on federal and provincial supports and benefits, to ensure they could continue to operate until reopening

Priority Area Three: Parents, caregivers and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support Child Care Fee Subsidy

- Provided 552 virtual and in-person professional development sessions with a cumulative attendance of nearly 30,000 participants over four years
- Conducted virtual information events annually for parents of children with special needs, including 20 group sessions that helped 547 families over four years prepare their children for elementary school in September
- Launched Parenting is Heart Work workshops for parents. In 2023, 123 parents participated to learn strategies to support their child's development



Priority Area Four: A responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and the community

- Provided virtual training in March 2021 to 220 staff from York Region and external agencies on children's mental health needs. This included training staff in the accredited Fear Less Triple P program, which teaches parents strategies to help children aged two to six with anxiety. The initiative was a first-of-its-kind in Ontario pilot project
- Developed a new online portal for families in York Region to easily register for EarlyON programs and apply for child care fee subsidy
- Collaborated with agencies in York Region and Simcoe to create the York Simcoe Autism Network to respond to the province's call for applications for the Ontario Autism Program
- Increased equitable access to the Child Care Fee Subsidy priority wait list by changing the program eligibility from a flat income rate to an income measure that reflects family size
- Developed hybrid service delivery models for programs that provided virtual service through the pandemic to maintain the flexibility and benefits of virtual appointments without losing the value of 'in-person service'
- Supported families' return to recreation programs with 1,301 children receiving subsidies to participate in 2,788 local recreation programs in 2022 and 2023

Priority Area Five: Children are included and have access to services

- Initiated virtual visits for families of children with special needs during the pandemic, with staff making nearly 100 video visits in the first week of the March 2020 COVID-19 shut-down, expanding the program to include virtual group sessions with multiple families at once to reduce social isolation
- Partnered with Mackenzie Health, Oak Valley Health, and Southlake Regional Health Centre to offer virtual neonatal follow-up clinics, so that families with children at higher risk of medical complications or developmental delays received care from a multi-disciplinary team, including York Region Children's Services staff
- Launched Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) program in 2022, to make early learning and child care settings more inclusive by providing staff training and strategies and funding additional classroom support when needed
- Launched and implemented the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system to increase affordability of licensed child care for children from birth to age six in York Region. 90% of York Region's operators registered for the new funding system. Through this Program, the Region was able to reduce parent fees by 50% for 33,000 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care funded spaces



Our System in Recovery:
2023 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

2023 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF HOW OUR INTERNAL PROGRAMS HAVE RECOVERED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO DELIVER IMPORTANT SERVICES:



Helped **8,233** children living in low and moderate income attend licensed child care through the Child Care Fee Subsidy **so their parents could go to work or school**



Supported inclusion of **2,003** children in licensed child care programs



2,725 children received support for their social, emotional and developmental health through the Infant and Child Development Services program



1,185 children from low-income families attended municipal recreation programs with their peers, a 51% increase over 2022



216 children and youth developed life skills and confidence through after school programs in four community housing communities



515 children from low-income families attended municipal summer camp programs, a **40% increase over 2022**



13,078 children visited EarlyON Child and Family Centres **130,980** times to support their learning and development



170 children attended overnight camps and **79** youth attended leadership camps



1,051 children from birth to three years and at risk of developmental delay attended neonatal follow-up clinics for developmental assessments by a multidisciplinary team



Coordinated **139** professional development sessions to support the on-going learning, development and retention of early learning professionals. Sessions were attended by **7,518** professionals

SUPPORTING THE PROVINCIAL INTEREST

YORK REGION'S CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE GROWTH PLAN

In March 2022, the Ontario and Federal governments signed the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The goal of the new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system is to lower child care costs and improve access, quality and inclusion across Ontario's child care and early years sector. Ontario will receive \$13.2 billion over six years to implement the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system, and relies on Service System Managers to deliver the program.

The Province of Ontario aims to provide more families with access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care, regardless of where they live. Under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the province has committed to creating 86,000 new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026, including more than 4,900 new licensed child care spaces for children under the age of six since April 2019. The goal is to create affordable child care spaces in communities with the greatest need, particularly in underserved service areas across the province.

The province requires each Service System Manager to develop a Directed Growth Plan that identifies underserved priority neighbourhoods based on the target groups established by the province: children living in low income families, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone children and Indigenous children.

York Region used a data-driven and equity-focused approach to identify priority area neighbourhoods, using criteria consistent with those used by municipalities in other jurisdictions.

Based on these criteria, five neighbourhoods were identified as having a combination of low access rates, low vacancy rates and a high presence of children from the targeted population groups. Starting in 2023, new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system-funded spaces are targeted to these five priority area neighbourhoods: East Markham, Central Vaughan, Central East Gwillimbury, West Georgina and North Georgina. Additional information on the Region's Directed Growth Plan is available through the [September 2023 report to Regional Council](#). A map of the Region's Directed Growth Plan is included in Appendix B.





INCLUSION

The Province of Ontario acknowledges that every Ontarian has their own unique circumstances that can act as barriers that will need to be identified and addressed in the creation of an inclusive system of early childhood education. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system presented an opportunity for the Province of Ontario and Service System Managers to introduce initiatives that support the needs of diverse, underserved and vulnerable populations, including low-income, Francophone, Indigenous, Black, racialized and newcomer communities, and children with special needs. It aims to support children to have access to inclusive environments where they can participate, play, and learn in meaningful ways, and form authentic caring relationships. Improving access increases the number of child care spaces available to priority populations. An inclusive system is one where everyone feels as sense of belonging within the program.

Over the next four years, York Region will focus on identifying and removing barriers to access for priority populations through the planning, management and delivery of programs and services. As Service System Manager, the Region will work to integrate child care and early years services, schools and specialized community services, and collaborate with key partners to ensure the principles of inclusion are upheld in both internal and external services. These principles include:

1. **Accessibility:** Implement intentional and instructional intervention approaches that enable children to actively engage in all parts of the day including play, learning activities and social interactions
2. **Participation:** Custom strategies, accommodations, modifications and adaptations to spaces and programs so that children can fully engage with each other and their environment
3. **Belonging:** Create a sense of connectedness to others, that an individual's experiences are valued, support forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, and the natural world
4. **Equity:** Ensure everyone has what they need to succeed by removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others

The Region is committed to applying these principles not only in our child care spaces, but across the broader service sector, to increase access and inclusion.

CONSULTATIONS AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

ENGAGING CONTRIBUTORS AND COLLABORATORS

Ongoing collaboration with the community is vital to building a plan that reflects the needs of children, families and communities in York Region. Throughout 2023, community collaborators were engaged to provide input into the development of the 2024 to 2027 Plan.

In fall 2023, draft objectives and actions were shared with community leadership tables to identify opportunities for collaboration over the four-year implementation of the Plan.

Community 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
- Licensed centre-based and home-based child care operators
- Community non-profit organizations
- 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
- Management and staff from York Region Children’s Services

Additional consultations with internal and community leadership tables included:

- Human Services Planning Board
- Newcomer Inclusion Table
- York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group
- Diversity and Inclusion Staff Committee
- Homelessness Service Providers Table
- Community and Health Services Policy Managers Table
- Local Municipal Recreation and Community Services Directors and Commissioners Table



SYSTEM PRESSURES

As a Service System Manager, the Region has a broad view of systemic barriers and their impact on access to programming, and is working to actively dismantle these barriers and fully realize potential impacts of available services.

There has been a lot to celebrate in the child care and early years sector over the last several years. Locally, there is a stronger network of services available to support children with disabilities. The Region is now working more actively with all our partners and system capacity has increased. There is great potential to increase access to the service system and create a community where children and their families can participate fully and achieve their full potential.

The federal government’s investment in a national child care strategy is significant. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care investment is a welcomed development, but increased demand for child care and limitations in attracting and retaining qualified child care staff pose new challenges for our service system to address over the next four years. York Region’s labour force replacement ratio is declining with 0.9 people entering the labour force for every person leaving it in 2021. As a result, recruitment across the child care sector is challenging. This is due, in part, to low-wages within the sector and a shortage of candidates.

Labour shortages have been an issue in early learning and child care programs since implementation of full-day kindergarten in 2014. As part of increasing access to early learning programs for children starting at age four years, the province required that a Registered Early Childhood Educator be part of every kindergarten classroom staffing complement. These positions, acquired through local school boards, often come with higher pay, health and pension benefits. As low wages have persisted in licensed child care programs for younger children, Registered Early Childhood Educators typically leave licensed child care for higher paying positions once they have acquired the experience the school boards require. As a result, licensed child care programs are often staffed by new graduates.

Province-wide closures of child care programs and stressful work environments throughout the pandemic also contributed to many educators choosing to leave the sector entirely. Recruitment and retention of new graduates continues to be a challenge given the stressful work environment, low wages, lack of mentorship, and shortage of graduates from Early Childhood Education programs.

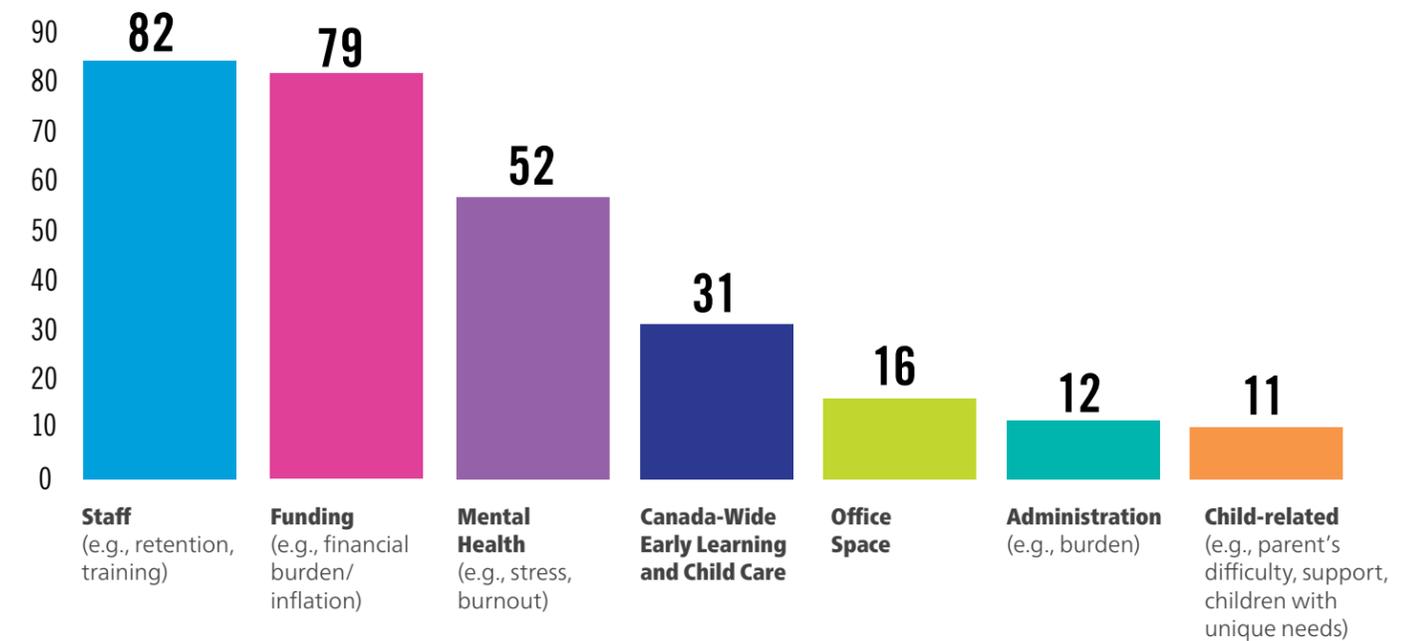
Through community consultation, partners identified pressures they experienced, including:

- Staffing (e.g. retention, training)
- Funding (e.g. financial burden/inflation)
- Mental health (e.g. stress, burnout)
- Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care
- Office space/location
- Administration (e.g. burden)
- Child-related (e.g. parent’s difficulty, support, children with unique needs)



Throughout the consultations, participants were asked to identify system pressures they are experiencing or hearing from families. Responses were then grouped into themes, and a breakdown of those themes is illustrated in Figure 1. Feedback received through consultations confirmed the pandemic is having lasting impacts on the stability of the sector. The national investment in affordable child care is significantly shifting the funding model within the sector, causing its own set of challenges, such as reconciliation due to multiple funding streams. This feedback was incorporated into the actions and deliverables within this Plan.

Figure 1. 2023 System Pressures



FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS:

Staff held community engagement sessions to hear from service providers about the challenges experienced over the past four years, including emergency actions taken in response to the pandemic. Staff consulted with many internal and external partners to complete a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise to review each of the priority areas. Below is a summary of feedback received by priority.

PRIORITY AREA 1: SERVICE PROVIDERS ACROSS THE SECTOR ARE USING DATA TO INFORM DECISION MAKING*

*Priority Area 1 in the 2020 to 2023 Plan was “Decisions based on data.” To reflect community feedback the priority area was updated.

STRENGTHS

- Data is informing decisions and planning
- Increased availability of data
- Data is helping establish partnerships with culturally specific communities
- Data is helping to identify trends

WEAKNESSES

- Communities need more support interpreting the data, knowing what is available and how to access it
- More transparent and collaborative approach desired to data sharing among partners
- Demographic questions can pose barriers to accessing services
- Data collection/reporting can be time-consuming and administratively burdensome
- Data accuracy

OPPORTUNITIES

- Making data available that is accessible for both agencies and parents
- Increase data literacy of operators so that they can better apply data to program planning
- Using technology to reduce time commitment of data entry
- Neighbourhood-specific data
- Collecting social identity data to support equity and planning

THREATS

- Inaccurate information
- Misinterpretation of data, particularly for partners without internal data teams
- More data on priority populations including 2SLGBTQ+ families
- Timely access to data

PRIORITY AREA 2: SERVICE PROVIDERS WORK TOGETHER TO PLAN THE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE*

*Priority Area 2 in the 2020 to 2023 Plan was “A system that works together to plan services.” To reflect community feedback, the priority area was updated.

STRENGTHS

- Coordination between the Region and service providers
- Broad service system with wide range of supports for families
- EarlyON programs are now easier to access through the central registration portal
- Circles of Practice for child care operators
- Strong relationship with school boards
- Strong partnerships within disability services (i.e., York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program, Children’s Treatment Network, Local hospitals, Early Intervention Services)

WEAKNESSES

- Timely access to services (i.e., waitlists)
- System is still difficult to navigate
- Access to quality educators
- Gaps in service for children with different diagnoses
- Lack of knowledge of trauma-informed care
- Lack of therapy options for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

OPPORTUNITIES

- Connections with Applied Behavior Analysis therapy programs
- Relationship with local municipalities
- Partnerships with Ontario Autism Program
- Using community leadership tables as ongoing partners

THREATS

- Burnout
- Recruitment and retention of child care staff
- Lack of information on future funding formulas
- Lack of adequate spaces to meet growing demand in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system

PRIORITY AREA 3: PARENTS, CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

STRENGTHS

- Professional development workshops provided (both quantity and quality)
- Virtual services increased accessibility
- Resources for Inclusion Support in Early Learning Settings (RISE); process is simple and easy
- EarlyON programs provide a good opportunity for parent support and networking
- Transition to a coaching model in Inclusion Support Services

WEAKNESSES

- Professional development sessions can lack practical skills
- Lack of workshops for parents
- Registered Early Childhood Educator shortage limits capacity building and opportunity for training
- Parents get their information from unreliable sources (e.g., social media)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide information for centres to give to parents
- More funding to support staff retention
- Providing information in multiple languages
- Large-scale EarlyON programs campaign to increase parent knowledge of supports available

THREATS

- Lack of parent knowledge can threaten children's access to supports
- General awareness of programs and services
- Staff burnout limits their ability to participate in capacity building after-hours

PRIORITY AREA 4: A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

STRENGTHS

- EarlyON programs have increased access to services for families
- Inclusion Support Services connects child care programs to support quickly
- EarlyON programs information included in newborn package at hospitals is connecting families to service
- Strong support for service providers
- Hybrid models of service delivery

WEAKNESSES

- Limited support for parents' mental health
- The complex needs criteria are too limiting
- Wait lists for York Region Speech and Language Program
- 30-day waiting period for Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) and lack of long-term classroom assistant support
- Lack of Indigenous programming
- Limited access to child care
- System is not responding to increased demand and needs of children with disabilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Extend workforce funding
- Common platform for parents, Early Interventionist and educators to discuss resources
- Increased support for families with diverse backgrounds
- Professional development days for staff
- More collaboration with child care operators
- Language-specific programs
- Culturally-specific support for parents and children with minimal language barriers

THREATS

- Children with disabilities will not be supported
- Lack of support for the Francophone community

PRIORITY AREA 5: CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

STRENGTHS

- Strong relationships with Early Interventionists
- Free training and workshops for families
- More inclusive spaces for children with disabilities
- Classroom plans and Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) supports have been helpful
- Transition support between Infant and Child Development Services and Inclusion Support Services
- Warm transfers to other programs
- Joint planning with therapy teams
- Inclusion supports for Positive Leadership Activities for Youth (PLAY) and Recreation Summer Camp

WEAKNESSES

- Frequency of visits with Early Interventionist
- Onboarding students is time-consuming
- Inaccessible outdoor spaces
- Transportation barriers to accessing programs
- Help for individuals in remote communities
- Knowledge sharing between providers (e.g., doctors)
- Lack of camp programs for children with disabilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased coordination between services
- Increased awareness of services available
- More Positive Early Childhood Education program mentoring for front-line staff
- Increased training on inclusion for educators
- Engage diverse communities including Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S and others

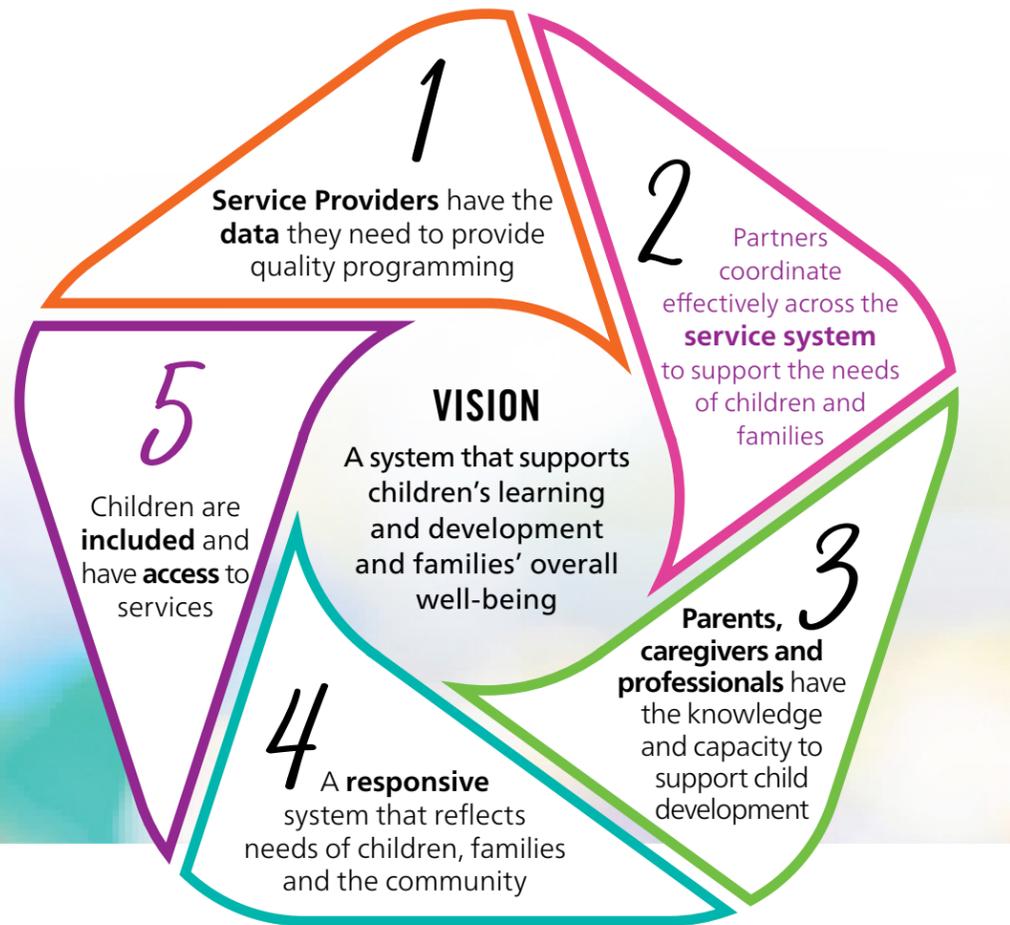
THREATS

- Timeliness of services
- Lack of adequate funding
- Registered Early Childhood Educator recruitment and retention
- High turnover in staff, and lack of experience among new hires



MOVING OUR PRIORITIES FORWARD FOR 2024 TO 2027

The 2024 to 2027 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan continues to build on the priorities established in our 2020 to 2023 Plan.



While the previous plan allowed the Region to thoughtfully respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic created new challenges in achieving some of the plan's key actions. Some of those actions are still relevant, while others have been modified due to the pandemic or other system pressures. Each objective and key action of the 2020 to 2023 Plan were carefully assessed and those that remain relevant given the changes in the environment have been carried forward into the 2024 to 2027 plan.

Feedback from consultations indicated the priorities still resonate with our communities. Actions and deliverables reflect provincial priorities for a child care and early years system that is high-quality,

affordable, flexible and inclusive; and the Region's vision of strong, caring and safe communities. Achievement in each of the priority areas aligns with the Region's Corporate Strategic Plan priority to protect and promote residents' well-being, and the Community and Health Services Department Integrated Human Services Plan objective to provide access to a quality, coordinated system of social service supports when and where people we serve need them. Ultimately, these actions will bring the Region closer to a service system that supports children's learning and development and families' overall well-being. An implementation plan is in Appendix D.

PRIORITY AREA 1: SERVICE PROVIDERS HAVE THE DATA THEY NEED TO PROVIDE QUALITY PROGRAMMING

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES
1.1 Community partners have access to the data they need to support making programming decisions that reflect local community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of community partners using our tools (i.e., Early Development Instrument (EDI), Children's Profile) per 50 partners % increase of partners using data tools to inform decision making % of meetings with community partners that discuss data # of program enhancements made as a result of key performance indicator data Achieving an equitable access rate to child care for children from birth to age five in Priority Area neighbourhoods Number of CWELCC spaces provided per 1,000 children in CWELCC Priority Area neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners have consistent access to demographic and census data to inform their program planning Community partners have understanding of how clients interact across the service system Evaluate equitable access to programs and services using data collection and feedback from families Planning and service delivery is informed by collective data and an understanding of the needs of children and families
1.2 Internal Children's Services Teams provided with periodic updates on key performance indicators to improve program performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the distribution of not for profit and for profit child care operators as directed by the Ministry of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and continue to evolve key performance indicators for York Region Children's Services Key Performance Indicator Framework is used to evaluate York Region programs annually
1.3 Use an equity-based and data-driven approach to guide implementing Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) to ensure all families are able to benefit from the investment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute new CWELCC spaces for 2024-2026 across Region's Priority Area neighbourhoods (Appendix B) Additional spaces are allocated using a data-driven approach Priority Area neighbourhoods are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect community need

PRIORITY AREA 2: PARTNERS COORDINATE EFFECTIVELY ACROSS THE SERVICE SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES
2.1 Build and enhance a seamless system for families to navigate easily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % change in the number of families using existing portals (i.e., Children’s Services Portal – EarlyON Registration) Average wait time for service compared to the standardized wait time for each program (in days) Average wait time for in-home service for children diagnosed or at risk of having a developmental delay (in days) Number of regulated child care spaces in York Region per 1,000 children (12 and under) 	<p>The system responds strategically to future needs by leveraging the capacity of the Region to support planning</p> <hr/> <p>A seamless system in education, mental health and disability services through partnership with sector leads</p> <hr/> <p>Promote community and provincial initiatives to support inclusion of all children across the sector</p>
2.2 Work with government partners to promote recruitment and retention of early learning professionals across the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % change in licensed vs. operating capacity % new hires for CWELCC-funded classrooms (recruitment) % replacement staff for CWELCC-funded classrooms (retention) 	<p>Active engagement with other levels of government and neighbouring Service System Managers to implement recruitment and retention strategies</p>
2.3 Work with sector partners, including parents, to place available resources and services where demand exists across the Region to reflect local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % receiving wage enhancement funding (retention) Staff caseloads are reflective of child population proportion across the Region % change in wait times across municipalities for each program Child population distribution across the Region is reflective of caseload distribution 	<p>Work with community partners, including community leadership tables and parents, to determine where resources are needed, reduce barriers and increase access to programs for priority populations</p> <hr/> <p>Enhanced site selection models effectively identify underserved areas, facilitating strategic partnership expansion and targeted interventions</p>
2.4 Advocate to provincial and federal governments for additional funding for Children’s programs		<p>Regular meetings with federal and provincial ministries to advocate for the needs of York Region families</p>

PRIORITY AREA 3: PARENTS, CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

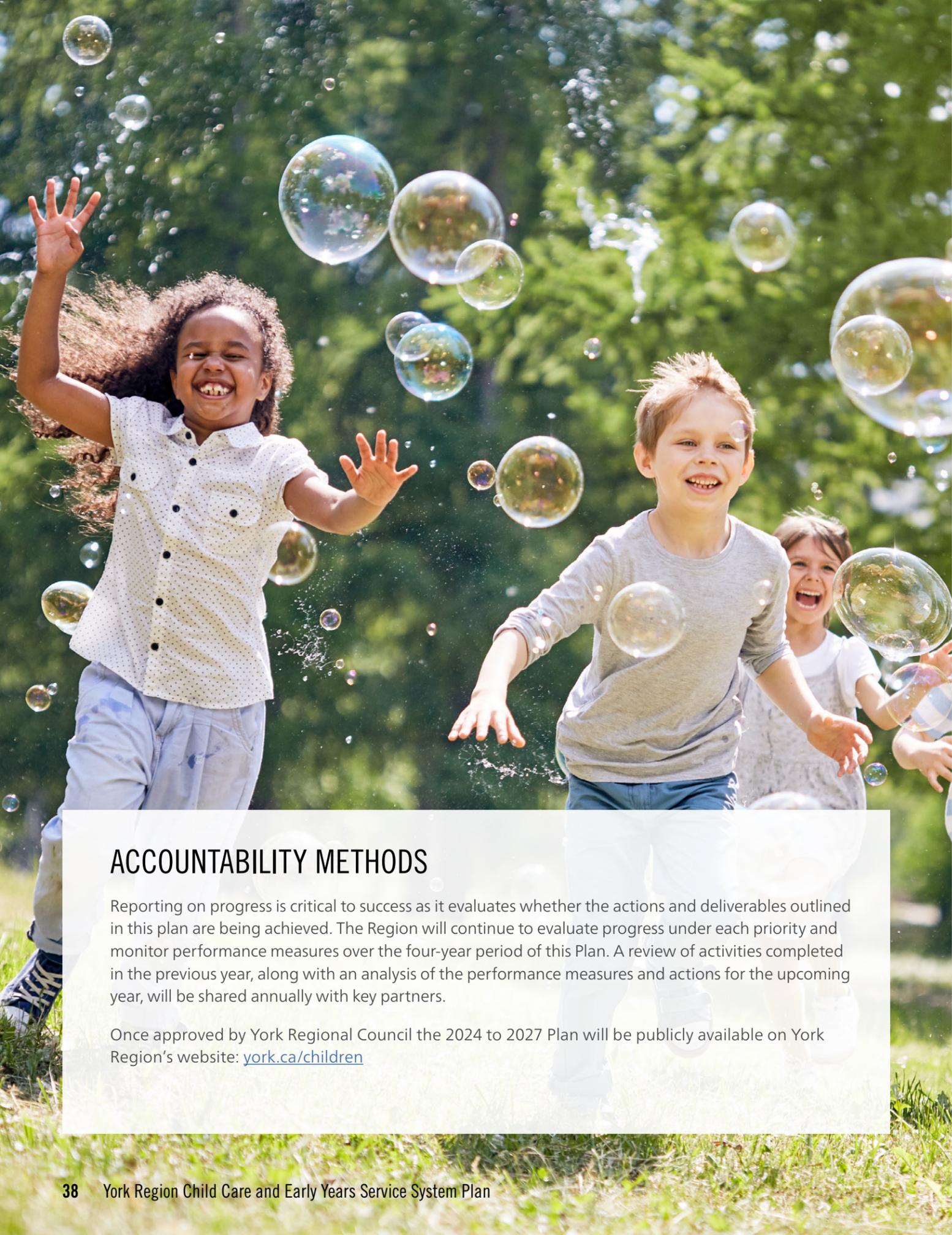
ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES
3.1 Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support the diverse needs of all children and families and increase access to priority populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % centres participating in capacity building activities (General) % centres participating in capacity building activities related to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility % not-for-profit vs. private participation in capacity building activities % centres completing Positive Early Childhood Education program training % Infant and Child Development Services children achieving Family Service Plan outcomes within six months 	<p>Expand online access to support professional development activities for Early Learning Professionals</p> <hr/> <p>Expand network of Early Learning Professionals trained in Positive Early Childhood Education program to support inclusion</p> <hr/> <p>Deliver capacity building activities for professionals that reflect community needs and increase access for priority populations</p> <hr/> <p>Early Learning Professionals implement strategies for the children they serve who have disabilities to increase participation in all aspects of daily life</p>
3.2 Support parents and caregivers knowledge of child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % Inclusion Support Services children achieving Individual Service Plan goals within six months York Region’s performance on Early Development Instrument results (pre/post-pandemic) compared to Ontario baseline % of children who score low by domain in York Region compared to Ontario Increased open and click rate data for Family Matters electronic newsletter 	<p>With support from the Region, families implement strategies for their children with disabilities to increase participation in all aspects of daily life</p> <hr/> <p>Enhanced collaborative partnership between EarlyON Child and Family Centres and Early Intervention Services to support families with children zero to six years</p> <hr/> <p>Enhanced online presence to establish York Region as a reliable source of information on child development</p> <hr/> <p>Establish compliance with the French Language Services Act to better support the Francophone population</p> <hr/> <p>Increase readership and engagement with Family Matters newsletter</p>

PRIORITY AREA 4: A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES
4.1 Increase access and inclusion in licensed child cares and identify where further support is needed to improve accessibility, participation, belonging and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed child care reflects community composition Staff in licensed child care is reflective of their communities % of CWELCC applications scoring high for existing access and inclusion practices % operators applied and approved for Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) funding % of operators approved for Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) who used the funding available to support inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the Community and Health Services Equity Tool to support continuous improvement in programs and services Develop an access and inclusion implementation strategy for licensed child care operators Parents are engaged in identifying barriers to access and inclusion in licensed child care Increased integration to support inclusion Uphold Inclusion Principles from the <i>Access and Inclusion Framework, 2023</i> by ensuring all children can engage in all parts of the day and feel a sense of belonging in licensed child care
4.2 Work with sector partners to design and deliver services that reflect children, families and community needs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships exist to design and deliver culturally responsive programming Work with mental health community service providers to provide mental health supports for children 0-12 years

PRIORITY AREA 5: CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES
5.1 Early learning and child care professionals are aware of services available in the community so families can access the right services at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with the Connections electronic newsletter Increased engagement with york.ca/children Annual child care cost per normalized subsidized child care space #/% of eligible children who register for recreation subsidies provided through PLAY and Recreation Summer Camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> York Region web content supports system navigation and translation to multiple languages Families have increased awareness of services Internal staff and external agencies have the education they need to accurately refer to programs and services available for the community
5.2 Children and families have more choices and opportunities to benefit from quality services across the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of children participating in after school programs in social housing # of children 12 years of age and under served in Inclusion Support Services % of programs educators spend outside with children and families # of educators/centres participated in Walking Together Through the Four Seasons #/ % of children with special needs who are able to maintain quality child care placements # of children with an immediate need waiting for subsidized child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with disabilities are able to access quality/flexible child care options More families with low income are able to access licensed child care Expanded knowledge of the Walking Through the Four Seasons pedagogy and other Indigenous learning across the sector
5.3 Plan strategically to remove barriers to access for all children		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program eligibility requirements permit equitable access to services and programs are meeting their stated objectives Inclusion is embedded into service planning to support children of all abilities



ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

Reporting on progress is critical to success as it evaluates whether the actions and deliverables outlined in this plan are being achieved. The Region will continue to evaluate progress under each priority and monitor performance measures over the four-year period of this Plan. A review of activities completed in the previous year, along with an analysis of the performance measures and actions for the upcoming year, will be shared annually with key partners.

Once approved by York Regional Council the 2024 to 2027 Plan will be publicly available on York Region's website: york.ca/children

CONCLUSION

York Region is growing and its residents have diverse needs. In response to this, our child care and early years system must continue to evolve in a way that reflects residents' needs to 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, the Region is supporting a strong economy and healthy, vibrant communities. Access to high-quality child care and early years programs is most beneficial to children, as those who participate in such programs show better performance in school and have lower reliance on social services into adulthood.

York Region's second Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, will guide the Region in responding to changes in the child population and increasing access to services to ensure every child and family feels included. While the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care investment is a welcomed addition, the increased demand for child care and the instability in qualified staff present new challenges for our service system to address over the next four years. The Plan will continue to be an essential guide in shaping service delivery and bringing the community together to work as a system.

The Plan maintains the flexibility of the first plan, which proved to be invaluable and will allow the Region to continue adapting to the changing needs of children and families, as well as shifts in provincial and federal priorities as the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system continues to roll out. There is a commitment in the Plan to continue keeping children and families at the centre of future planning through ongoing engagement.

This plan will continue strengthening the Region's role as Service System Manager, allowing it to manage the child care and early years system and build partnerships with other levels of government and sector leads, such as school boards, children's mental health and children's developmental service organizations to build services that are accessible, affordable, responsive and high-quality to benefit all children and families across York Region.

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 1: DECISIONS BASED ON DATA

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
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"> Prepared and circulated the Early Development Instrument report Provided support to school board partners with 2023 Early Development Instrument roll-out Circulated 2021 census data as it became available
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"> Prepared internal data definitions for all existing performance measures Updated Early Years Community Profiles Pre/Post survey for Positive Early Childhood Education
Establish a children’s services data working group with internal and external representation focused on:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the community this work was hindered by the pandemic however work continued internally
a. Developing an outcomes framework that can be used consistently by community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a key performance indicator framework by an internal working group to be used consistently across internal programs
b. Supporting community partners to interpret data for service planning and implement common evaluation practices through capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed internal key performance indicators to support program evaluation
c. Enhancing data collection including feedback from families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved response rate for Infant and Child Development Services parent survey with point in time survey to all families Engaged parents for feedback on Infant and Child Development Services virtual service delivery to inform recovery planning Engaged parents in EarlyON Quality Assurance survey

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 2: A SYSTEM THAT WORKS TOGETHER TO PLAN SERVICES

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
As Service System Manager, establish a planning table for children’s services in York Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established community planning table with lead partners from across the sector including education, mental health, child care operators, and municipal recreation
Work with community partners to develop a definition of quality for children’s services in York Region that aligns with provincial direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared a continuous quality improvement framework for EarlyON Child and Family Centres
Work with sector leads in education and children’s mental health to create a seamless system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion Support Services worked with York Hills to support emergency child care Worked with Children’s Mental Health to develop training for early learning and child care professionals through calendar of events and Mackenzie Health series for Early Childhood Educators. Developed a mental health pathway for children zero to six years to streamline services and breakdown silos in the system Trained staff in Fear-Less Triple P to support mental health of children aged two to six years Ongoing service delivery of Fear-Less and other Triple P was built into the Early Intervention Services and EarlyON Pathway enabling more families access and decreasing the demand on Infant and Child Development Services staff
Support use of site selection models to identify areas that are underserved to determine opportunities to expand partnerships to address service gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site selection models were developed and are being used to determine need for space and funding agreement decisions Site selection tool was updated to include 2018 Early Development Instrument data Launched EarlyONtoGO programs; Mobile EarlyON programs operating at Stay Bridge Hotel and Leader Place Shelter

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 2: A SYSTEM THAT WORKS TOGETHER TO PLAN SERVICES

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
Investigate community hub opportunities and support a “matching service” to available space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant and Child Development Services and Inclusion Support Services worked with EarlyON to develop a coordinated and collaborative supports to families to help build a more inclusive and seamless children’s services system. • Circle of Play sessions delivered in EarlyON Child and Family programs • Rebranded EarlyON website to raise awareness of EarlyON Parenting Hubs
Work with service providers to merge All Our Kids Programs with EarlyON Child and Family Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with service providers to merge All Our Kids Programs with EarlyON Child and Family Centres to streamline service delivery and maximize available funding
Advocate and work with community partners to support access to transportation for families to attend programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in partnership with Ontario Works to support transportation needs of youth from Afghanistan from families in financial need

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 3: PARENTS, CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a new approach to classroom assistant funding through the launch of Resources for Inclusion Support in Early Learning Settings (RISE)
Build an online calendar of educational and knowledge sharing events and make available for all eligible early years professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Support Services staff began sharing professional development session with their child care clusters with the use of Mailchimp • Developed facilitator registry for professional development session leaders
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"> • Developed a capacity building working group to take a coordinated approach to planning professional development sessions across Children’s Services
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"> • Transitioned to virtual services to continue to support families during province-wide closures, within their home environment • Facilitated transfer process from Inclusion Support Services to Infant and Child Development Services during province-wide child care closures due to the pandemic • Staff are maintaining fidelity in Routines-Based Interview model and Routines-based home visiting protocol
Support families with children aged 0 to 6 by providing information on child development and making community connections through EarlyON Child and Family Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched Triple-P Fear-Less and Parenting is Heart Work workshops for parents

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 4: A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
<p>Build partnerships and enhance service options to better reflect changing needs, such as designing and delivering culturally-responsive programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed an online electronic referral for School Age Programs Inclusion Support Services made program enhancements to better support School Age Programs Developed capacity building videos to support on-boarding of classroom assistants with inclusive practices in licensed child care Launched Positive Early Childhood Education program to build capacity of Early Childhood Educators. Worked with CareFirst and Vaughan Health to support access to services for families in need in high priority areas. Increased partnership with Public Health and Children’s Aid Society Developed a pathway to support the unique needs of newcomer families in need of support with their children with special needs Entered into a new partnership with partners in York and Simcoe to support families with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder diagnosis and build capacity amongst infant and child development professionals. Collaborated with agencies in York and Simcoe to create the York Simcoe Autism Network to respond to the provinces call for applications for the Ontario Autism Program Infant and Child Development Services is a service delivery partner for two caregiver mediated models

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 4: A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

KEY ACTIONS	ACHIEVEMENTS
<p>Improve waitlist management and update how families are prioritized to receive service to meet current and future realities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated eligibility and waitlist policy for Child Care Fee Subsidy Updated waitlist management policy for Infant and Child Development Services
<p>Offer more online services through updated technology and other opportunities, such as online applications, calculators, resources or training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented virtual capacity building sessions to increase access to training for early learning and child care professionals Updated email policy to allow staff to communicate effectively and safely with families over email Created an online portal to streamline applications for Resources for Inclusion Support for Early Learning Settings (RISE) Created an online referral form access inclusion supports for School Age Programs Increased online supports for families receiving Child Care Fee Subsidy including the ability to upload documents in the application and use of email to communicate with clients Developed a central client registration portal for EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs Developed hybrid service delivery models as part of pandemic recovery

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 5: CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

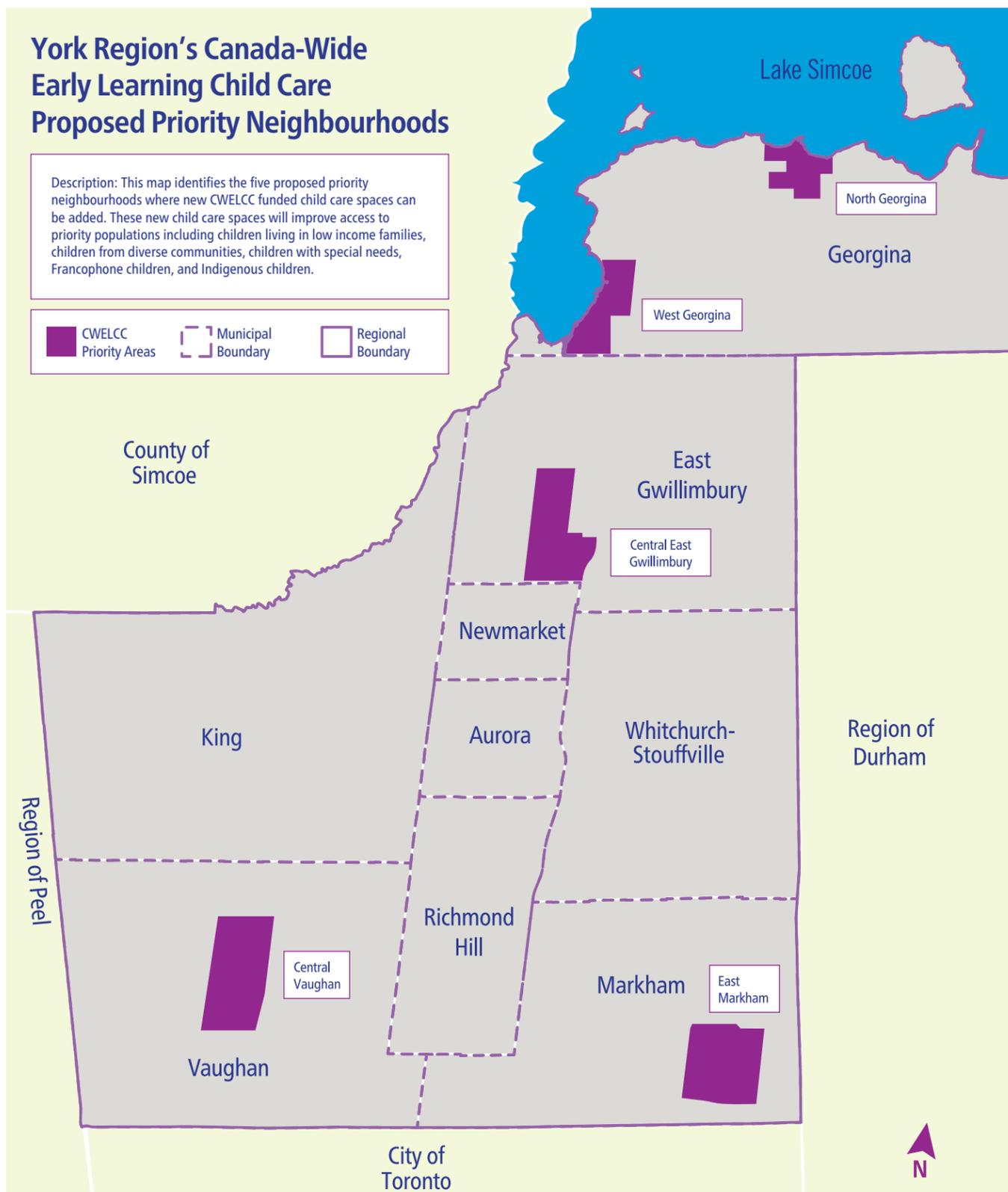
KEY ACTIONS	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Enhance York Region webpages to better support clients in system navigation and understanding available services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created a Training and Supports for Early Learning and Child Care Professionals webpage for staff to navigate and register for training opportunities
Explore opportunities in the community to increase families' awareness of services and support system navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant and Child Development Services and Inclusion Support Services worked with EarlyON to develop a coordinated and collaborative supports to families to help build a more inclusive and seamless children's services system Developed a pathway to support the unique needs of newcomer families in need of support with their children with special needs Launched Family Matters, a newsletter for families receiving child care fee subsidy
Educate internal staff and external agencies on programs and services available for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Investment Fund information shared with internal staff through virtual session Infant and Child Development Services and Inclusion Support Services staff provided opportunity to build and share system knowledge on programs such as Homelessness Community Programs, Ontario Works and community colleges Developed a Community Program Coordinator committee to share best practices among staff

APPENDIX A – 2020 TO 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 5: CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

KEY ACTIONS	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Support more children with special needs to access quality/flexible child care options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to School Age Program inclusion supports Child and classroom specific support provided to licensed child care programs Launched Positive Early Childhood Education program to build capacity of Early Childhood Educators Provided Routines Based Interview collaborative consultation visits to support the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care Provided virtual support throughout COVID and in-person when necessary to ensure children were able to maintain quality child care placements
Maximize provincial funding opportunities for licensed child care spaces available to families with low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Eligibility and Waitlist policy for Child Care Fee Subsidy Eliminated Summer Care Only and Kindergarten Subsidy to maximize the funding available for all families Implemented the Canada wide Early Learning and Child Care system including signing agreements with 90% of eligible child care operators and issuing funding to support two fee reductions for families
Build relationships with off-reserve Indigenous organizations to help ensure access to culturally responsive programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted a seasonal pedagogy in EarlyON Child and Family Centres
Support children of all abilities by ensuring inclusion is embedded into service planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated an inclusion requirement into the Child Care Contract for 2022-2026 Drafted an Inclusion Policy to support contract inclusion requirement

APPENDIX B – CWELCC PRIORITY AREAS



APPENDIX C – YORK REGION CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

PROGRAM	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
Child Care Services		
Funding for Child Care Operators	York Region offers funding to child care operators through Child Care Services Agreements	<p>Child care operators who enter into an agreement with York Region can receive funding from multiple funding streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Operating Grant Provides funding to top up staff wages beyond minimum wage, and support general operating expenses such as rent and food expenses. • Child Care Fee Subsidy The program benefits parents with low-income who would otherwise be unable to afford licensed child care. • Resources for Inclusion Support in Early Learning Settings (RISE) Allows licensed child care operators to hire additional staff to support all children in the program, including children with exceptional needs. • Special Purpose Funding Special Purpose funding provides financial support for child care operators to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the toys and equipment in classrooms • Meet Public Health, Ministry of Education and playground inspection non-compliance items • Provide training and development opportunities to child care and early learning staff • Subsidy for Staff Salaries Staff salary grants allow child care operators to increase staff salaries in an effort to bridge the wage gap between Registered Early Childhood Educators working in the publicly-funded education system and those in the licensed child care sector.

APPENDIX C – YORK REGION CHILDREN’S SERVICES PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

PROGRAM	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
Child Care Services		
Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care	National program to increase access and affordability of licensed child care for children aged zero to six years of age	Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care is a federally funded program, through an agreement with the province and administered by the Region. The program will reduce parent fees to \$10/day by 2025. Child care operators had to opt-in to the program by November 2022; 90% of licensed operators in York Region had opted-in to the program by the deadline.
Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS)	OCCMS supports the administration of provincial funding. York Region manages OCCMS on behalf of the Ministry of Education through an annual service contract.	OCCMS enables Service System Managers and child care centres to manage their child care funding The Region supports the development and testing of new features and assists Service System Managers across the Province with testing and training staff on OCCMS
Capacity Building	Coordinated professional development for Early Learning and Child Care staff, supervisors, and operators to build the overall capacity and quality of the Early Learning and Child Care System	Sessions focus on developing five core competencies: Professional Alignment, Health, Safety and Well-being, Child Development, Equity and Inclusion, and Business Practices. Sessions are provided largely by external third-party experts, but also through internal partnerships such as with Public Health.

PROGRAM	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
EarlyON and Children’s Community Programs		
EarlyON Child and Family Centres	EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free support services and programs to parents, caregivers, and their children from birth to six years old in Ontario	EarlyON programs are delivered through permanent centres and mobile sites (such as local libraries, schools, community centres and parks) and are operated by four agencies. EarlyON programs are high-quality, inclusive, welcoming places where qualified Early Childhood Professionals help families and caregivers support their child(ren)’s development and well-being.
Recreation Subsidies	York Region offers subsidies for recreation programs, day camps and youth overnight camps	Recreation programs and day camp subsidies provide children from families with low income the ability to take part in leisure activities. The subsidies that are available are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY): Subsidies for seasonal municipal recreation programs for children age 4-18 and their single parents • Summer day camp funding: Subsidies for municipal summer day camp for children age 4-12 • Youth overnight camp funding: Subsidies for approved overnight camps for youth age 12-17

APPENDIX C – YORK REGION CHILDREN’S SERVICES PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

PROGRAM	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
Inclusion Support Services – Children with Special Needs		
Inclusion Support Services (ISS)	Inclusion Support Services supports children with special needs from birth to age 13 who attend licensed child care in York Region and require support to fully participate in programs	Inclusion Support Services provides support to individual children through collaborative consultation visits with educators and support for families’ service coordination needs, as required. Inclusion Support Services is funded through the Special Needs Resource funding provided by the Ministry of Education
Infant and Child Development Services – Children with Special Needs		
Infant and Child Development Services (ICDS)	Infant Child and Development Services supports families with children from birth to six years of age (or school entry) who have been diagnosed with or are at risk of having a developmental delay	Infant and Child Development Services provides early intervention to children to support their development and help them participate in daily routines within their home environment
Neonatal Follow-Up Program	Coordinated through Infant and Child Development Services, the program provides neonatal services for infants and children at higher risk of developmental delay due to prematurity or birth complications	Neonatal Follow-Up Program is offered in partnership with all three Regional hospitals. The goal of the program is to monitor the development of infants and children with a multi-disciplinary team, identify potential delays and provide interventions early to support the child’s healthy development.
Therapy Services	Therapy services support the development of children (from birth to age six) who require occupational therapy and physiotherapy	The Early Interventionists in either Inclusion Support Services or Infant and Child Development Services is the primary service provider who can make referrals to and then works collaboratively with the occupational or physiotherapist, as needed



APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – PRIORITY AREA 1: SERVICE PROVIDERS ACROSS THE SECTOR ARE USING DATA TO INFORM DECISION MAKING

ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINES			
			2024	2025	2026	2027
1.1 Community partners' have access to the data they need to support making programming decisions that reflect local community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of community partners using our tools (i.e., EDI, Children's Profile) per 50 partners % increase of partners using data tools to inform decision making % of meetings with community partners that discuss data # of program enhancements made because of key performance indicator data Achieving an equitable access rate to child care for children from birth to age five in Priority Area neighbourhoods Number of CWELCC spaces provided per 1,000 children in CWELCC Priority Area neighbourhoods 	1.1. Community partners have consistent access to demographic and census data to inform their program planning	●			●
		1.1.2. Community partners have understanding of how clients interact across the service system	●	●	●	●
		1.1.3. Evaluate equitable access to programs and services using race-based data collection and feedback from families		●		●
		1.1.4. Planning and service delivery is informed by collective data and an understanding of the needs of children and families	●	●	●	●
1.2 Internal Children's Services Teams provided with periodic updates on key performance indicators to improve program performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain auspice rate for not-for-profit child care operators as indicated by the Ministry of Education 	1.2.1 Establish and continue to evolve Key Performance Indicators for York Region Children's Services	●	●		
		1.2.2. Key Performance Indicator Framework is used to evaluate York Region programs annually			●	●
1.3 Use an equity-based and data-driven approach to guide implementing Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) to ensure all families can benefit from the investment		1.3.1. Distribute new CWELCC spaces for 2024-2026 across Region's Priority Area neighbourhoods (Appendix A)	●	●	●	●
		1.3.2. Additional spaces are allocated using a data-driven approach	●	●	●	
		1.3.3. Priority Area neighbourhoods are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect community need	●	●	●	

APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – PRIORITY AREA 2: SERVICE PROVIDERS WORK TOGETHER TO PLAN THE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE

ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINES			
			2024	2025	2026	2027
2.1 Build and enhance a seamless system for families to navigate easily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % change in the number of families using existing portals (i.e., Children’s Services Portal – EarlyON Registration) • Average wait time for service compared to the standardized wait time for each program (in days) • Average wait time for in-home service for children diagnosed or at risk of having a developmental delay (in days) 	2.1.1. The system responds strategically to future needs by leveraging the capacity of the Region to support planning	●	●	●	●
		2.1.2. A seamless system in education, mental health, and disability services through partnership with sector leads	●	●	●	●
		2.1.3. Promote community and provincial initiatives to support inclusion of all children across the sector	●	●	●	●
2.2 Work with government partners to promote recruitment and retention of early learning professionals across the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of regulated child care spaces in York Region per 1,000 children (12 and under) • % change in licensed vs. operating capacity • % new hires for CWELCC-funded classrooms (recruitment) • % replacement staff for CWELCC-funded classrooms (retention) 	2.2.1 Active engagement with other levels of government and neighbouring Service System Managers to implement recruitment and retention strategies .	●	●		
2.3 Work with sector partners, including parents, to place available resources and services where demand exists across the Region to reflect local needs local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving wage enhancement funding (retention) • Staff caseloads are reflective of child population proportion across the Region • % change in wait times across municipalities for each program • Child population distribution across the Region is reflective of caseload distribution 	2.3.1. Work with community partners, including community leadership tables and parents, to determine where resources are needed, reduce barriers and increase access to programs for priority populations	●	●	●	●
		2.3.2. Enhanced site selection models effectively identify underserved areas, facilitating strategic partnership expansion and targeted interventions		●	●	●
2.4 Advocate to provincial and federal governments for additional funding for Children’s programs		2.4.1. Regular meetings with federal and provincial ministries to advocate for the needs of York Region families	●	●		●

APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN –
**PRIORITY AREA 3: PARENTS, CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS HAVE
 KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINES			
			2024	2025	2026	2027
3.1 Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support the diverse needs of children and families and increase access to priority populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % centres participating in capacity building activities (General) • % centres participating in capacity building activities related to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility • % not-for-profit vs. private participation in capacity building activities • % centres completing Positive Early Childhood Education program training • % Infant and Child Development Services children achieving Family Service Plan outcomes within six months • % Inclusion Support Services children achieving Individual Support Plan goals within six months 	3.1.1. Expand online access to support professional development activities for Early Learning Professionals	●	●		
		3.1.2. Expand network of Early Learning Professionals trained in Positive Early Childhood Education program to support inclusion		●	●	●
		3.1.3. Deliver capacity building activities for professionals that reflect community needs and increase access for priority populations		●	●	●
		3.1.4. Early Learning Professionals implement strategies for the children they serve who have disabilities to increase participation in all aspects of daily life	●	●	●	●
3.2 Support parents and caregivers knowledge of child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Region’s performance on Early Development Instrument results (pre/post-pandemic) compared to Ontario baseline • % of children who score low by domain in York Region compared to Ontario • Increased open and click rate data for Family Matters electronic newsletter 	3.2.1. Families implement strategies with support from the Region for their children with disabilities to increase participation in all aspects of daily life	●	●	●	●
		3.2.2. Enhanced collaborative partnership between EarlyON Child and Family Centres and Early Intervention Services to support families with children zero to six years	●	●	●	●
		3.2.3. Enhanced online presence to establish York Region as a reliable source of information on child development	●			
		3.2.4. Establish compliance with the French Language Services Act to better support the Francophone population	●	●	●	●
		3.2.5. Increase readership and engagement with Family Matters newsletter		●		

APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN –
PRIORITY AREA 4: A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS NEEDS OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINES			
			2024	2025	2026	2027
4.1 Increase access and inclusion in licensed child cares and identify where further support is needed to improve accessibility, participation, belonging and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed child care reflects community composition Staff in licensed child care is reflective of their communities % of CWELCC applications scoring high for existing access and inclusion practices 	4.1.1. Apply the Community and Health Services Equity Tool to support continuous improvement in programs and services		●	●	
		4.1.2. Develop an access and inclusion implementation strategy for licensed child care operators	●			
		4.1.3. Parents are engaged in identifying barriers to access and inclusion in licensed child care	●	●	●	●
		4.1.4. Uphold Inclusion Principles from the Access and Inclusion Framework, 2023 by ensuring all children can engage in all parts of the day and feel a sense of belonging in licensed child care	●	●	●	●
4.2 Work with sector partners to design and deliver services that reflect children, families and community needs community needs		4.2.1. Partnerships exist to design and deliver culturally responsive programming	●	●	●	●
		4.2.2. Enhanced mental health supports for children zero-12 years	●	●		

**APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN –
PRIORITY AREA 5: CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED AND HAVE
ACCESS TO SERVICES**

ACTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINES			
			2024	2025	2026	2027
5.1 Early Learning and Child Care professionals are aware of services available in the community so families can access the right services at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with the Connections electronic newsletter Increased engagement with york.ca/children Annual child care cost per normalized subsidized child care space #/% of eligible children who register for recreation subsidies provided through PLAY and Recreation Summer Camp 	5.1.1. York Region web content supports system navigation and translation to multiple languages	●	●		
		5.1.2. Families have increased awareness of services			●	●
		5.1.3. Internal staff and external agencies have the education they need to accurately refer to programs and services available for the community	●	●	●	●
5.2 Children and families have more choices and opportunities to benefit from quality services across the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of children participating in after school programs in social housing # of children 12 years of age and under served in Inclusion Support Services % of programs educators spend outside with children and families # of educators/centres participated in Walking Together Through the Four Seasons 	5.2.1. Children with disabilities are able to access quality/flexible child care options	●	●	●	●
		5.2.2. More families with low income are able to access licensed child care	●	●	●	●
		5.2.3. Expanded knowledge of the Walking Through the Four Seasons pedagogy and other Indigenous learning across the sector		●	●	●
5.3 Plan strategically to remove barriers to access for all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> #/ % of children with special needs who are able to maintain quality child care placements # of children with an immediate need waiting for subsidized childcare 	5.3.1. Program eligibility requirements permit equitable access to services and programs are meeting their stated objectives		●		
		5.3.1. Inclusion is embedded into service planning to support children of all abilities	●	●	●	●

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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