



Region of Waterloo Children's Services

# Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan Progress Update

2019



Region of Waterloo  
COMMUNITY SERVICES



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# **I**ntroduction





## Introduction

### Letter from the Director of Children's Services

I am excited to share with you this Progress Update on our Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Service Plan 2016-2020. Children's Services, Region of Waterloo released the ELCC Service Plan 2016-2020 as the result of planning and wide-spread engagement. The Service Plan has guided the strategic work of Children's Services as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM).

The first half of the Service Plan implementation has been a time of significant system expansion and change in ELCC. This Progress Update describes some of the innovative approaches that have been taken between 2016 and March 2019 to increase access, affordability, inclusion and quality of licensed child care and early learning programs. The progress is made possible through new and ongoing Provincial, Federal and Regional government investments.

In 2018, we surveyed over 1,800 parents with children ages 0-4 years in licensed child care about their experiences in their child care program and the system. We learned that there are lots of things we are doing right – 96% said they would recommend their program/educator to a family member or friend and 94% agreed that their program has had a positive impact on their family's day-to-day life. There were also many areas for improvement such as affordability (50% said the cost of child care is a significant financial stress to their family), the experience of finding and securing child care through OneList, and awareness of Special Needs Resourcing supports. We will continue to revisit and collect valuable parent feedback to inform local strategies for strengthening our ELCC system.

We have made valuable progress in implementing our Actions and Strategies, but we still have lots of work ahead for 2019 and 2020. This Progress Update outlines key activities for 2019 and 2020.

I want to thank our community partners for their continued commitment to making Waterloo Region a community where all children thrive. Our collective, strategic work is making a difference.

Barbara Cardow,  
*Director, Children's Services*



## Community Context, Planning and Engagement

The early learning and child care funding and system context has experienced substantial change since the ELCC Service Plan was released in 2016. To ensure locally responsive implementation of system changes and of the ELCC Service Plan Actions and Strategies, Children's Services led and supported a variety of planning and engagement strategies with key stakeholders. Key system changes and/or engagement strategies since the release of the ELCC Service Plan in 2016 include:



### Transformation of child and family programs



In 2017, the Province expanded the duties of Region of Waterloo, Children's Services as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) to include child and family programs. The purpose of the revision of duties was for CMSMs to support the transformation of the existing programs to high quality Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (now called EarlyON). Responsibility for local data and planning services to support early learning and child care shifted as part of this transformation. Funding significantly increased (from \$2.3 million to \$4.1 million) to address the new requirements and accomplish the vision for EarlyON.

Children's Services engaged with the Children and Youth Planning Table on a community-led planning process to develop an initial plan for transforming local Ontario Early Years Centres to EarlyON programs. The initial plan included a comprehensive needs assessment examining data at the neighbourhood level to determine priorities. In 2018, a local lead agency for EarlyON was selected (YMCA Kitchener-Waterloo) to lead the implementation of the plan.

To reflect this new role, Service Plan strategies and actions have been updated in the Progress Report to include child and family programs in addition to child care, wherever appropriate.

### Licensed child care expansion funding



In 2017 and 2018, both the Provincial and Federal governments made significant new financial investments to support increased access to and affordability of licensed child care. In 2018, the Provincial Child Care Expansion Plan provided \$6.9 million and the Federal Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement provided \$3.1 million in new investments. The priorities for the 2018 funding were additional fee subsidies, increasing access to licensed child care, and increasing affordability. These investments aligned well with the goals in the ELCC Service Plan and allowed implementation of the

Actions and Strategies of the Service Plan on a larger and quicker scale than initially anticipated. Any changes to this source of funding will impact activities for 2019-2020.



### Journey Together



The Journey Together initiative was launched in 2017 by the Province in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to enhance access to culturally relevant, Indigenous-led early years programs and services. Through this initiative, Healing of the Seven Generations completed an ELCC needs assessment and program proposal for First Nations, Métis and Inuit families in Waterloo Region. The proposal was developed through engagement with the local First Nations, Métis and Inuit community. Based on the program proposal, Children’s Services secured funding for an Indigenous-led child and family centre. The Indigenous-led child and family centre, operated by Anishnabeg Outreach, will open in 2019. It is the first Indigenous-led ELCC program in Waterloo Region and represents an important step towards creating a culturally-responsive ELCC system that meets the needs of local First Nations, Métis and Inuit families.

### Other new funding opportunities



In addition to the funding and role changes described above, two other new funding initiatives were released in 2018 – Base Funding for Licensed Home Child Care (\$2.1 million in 2018) and Fee Stabilization Support (\$1.9 million in 2018). Both initiatives allowed for some flexibility (within Funding Guidelines) to respond to local needs. Interim funding approaches were developed for 2018, and in 2019 and 2020 longer-term strategies for the funding will be developed in alignment with the ELCC Service Plan. Opportunities for engagement and feedback will be part of the planning process for developing the new approaches.



## Children & Youth Planning Table, Smart Waterloo Region and Wellbeing Waterloo Region



Children and Youth  
Planning Table  
of Waterloo Region



Wellbeing  
Waterloo Region

Community-wide collaboratives play an important role in mobilizing diverse community stakeholders to have an impact on big issues the community is facing. Since 2016, there are new developments in cross-sectoral collaborative efforts that connect closely with ELCC.

In Waterloo Region, the Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT) is a community-wide partnership working together to achieve the vision of “happy, healthy children and youth – today and tomorrow”. Children’s Services is an active member of the CYPT. The planning work for the transformation to EarlyON was under the leadership of the CYPT and the CYPT data team identifies and analyzes data that is used to assess local ELCC needs.

Smart Waterloo Region is a local cross-sectoral project, that was a finalist for the Federal Government’s Smart Cities Challenge. It grew out of work of the CYPT and Wellbeing Waterloo Region (another community collaborative). The challenge statement for the project is: “We will become the benchmark community in Canada for child and youth well-being by using early intervention, youth engagement and a connected-community framework to create adaptive, data-driven programs and scalable learning technologies that improve early child development, mental health and high school graduation rates.” Children’s Services staff provided data and planning support related to child care and early learning and development to support the project proposal. The proposed project focused on looking at data at the neighbourhood level through new platforms. Waterloo Region did not win the Smart Cities Challenge, but the community is developing a plan to move forward with some priorities, building on the significant momentum and work to date.



### Collaborative planning with local school boards

In 2017, the Early Years Joint Strategic Planning Group was formed to support collaborative planning between Children’s Services and local school boards.

The Province also provided additional investments to support 1 FTE per school board, designated as the Early Years Lead, to focus on collaborative system planning for the early years. Through the Joint Strategic Planning Group, Children’s Services partnered with local school boards to apply and receive Schools First Capital Funding for new child care and EarlyON Programs.

Children’s Services is also working with school boards to support a coordinated quality initiative for before- and after-school programs, inclusion and smooth transitions for all children, seamless and clear access to before- and after-school programs through OneList, and to support workforce development.

The Early Years Leadership Strategies prepared by each school board outline additional ways that the school boards and Children’s Services will continue to work together to improve the early learning and child care system.



Waterloo Region District School Board



Waterloo Catholic District School Board

### 2018 Child Care Survey



Children’s Services conducted the Child Care Survey in 2018 to ask families with children aged 0-4 years about their family’s experiences with licensed child care in Waterloo Region. In total, 1,880 respondents from 93 child care programs completed the survey, representing 34% of the families accessing licensed child care for ages 0-4 year in Waterloo Region. Findings from the survey supported the Actions and Strategies identified in the ELCC Service Plan (e.g., cost was the most common factor respondents would change about their child care experience). The findings were also used to inform specific activities to implement in the Service Plan (e.g., feedback about OneList shaped specific resources that are being developed).



**U**updates  
on progress,  
outcomes and  
implementation



## Updates on progress, outcomes and implementation

### Highlights of Service Plan progress

Actions to move the ELCC Service Plan forward in Waterloo Region have been closely aligned with the vision described in Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017). This vision has four key pillars: access and availability, affordability, responsiveness and inclusion, and quality. This section highlights some of the most significant actions and accomplishments that have been achieved or are in progress as of spring 2019.

## Access and availability

"Increasing access to early year's programs to give families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services."<sup>1</sup>

 **767**

**new licensed child care centre spaces** for children ages 0-4 years **opened in 2017 and 2018.**

**4 new and 3 expanded child care centres** are expected to **open in schools by December 2020**, with **licensed capacity** for at least

 **475 children**  
ages 0-4 years.

  
**Over 50**

new licensed **home child care caregivers** received **start-up grants** to **increase access to licensed home child care** for children ages 0-4 years.

**EarlyON**

**2 new** EarlyON **sites opened** (in Elmira and Kitchener) and **1 site was renovated and relocated** (in Cambridge).

**4 new** EarlyON sites located in schools are **scheduled to open by December 2020.**

## Affordability

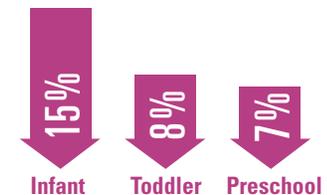
"Ensuring that early years programs and services, including licensed child care, are within affordable reach for families."<sup>2</sup>



The subsidy waitlist was **eliminated** in 2017.

**Daily child care fees** in participating programs **went down** as a result of the **Fee Reduction Pilot** (starting July 2018).

Average amount parents saved on child care fees:



“ We highlighted [the fee reduction] to prospective families when they were coming in for tours and in many cases it helped with the decision making versus going with [unlicensed] child care that may be less expensive. ”

- Quote from a Centre participating in the Fee Reduction Pilot



## Responsiveness and inclusion

“Providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate, located in schools, communities, workplaces and home settings so that parents – including parents who work irregular hours – can choose the options that work best for their family<sup>3</sup>”.

## Quality

“Enabling safe and reliable programs built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments, and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and well-supported staff<sup>4</sup>”.



**97%** of respondents to the 2018 Child Care Survey said **their educators respond to their child’s individual needs.**



The **Indigenous-led child and family centre** is scheduled to **open in 2019**. This is the **first Indigenous-led early learning program in Waterloo Region.**



**Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) funding** was **increased by 14%** to support **inclusion of all children.**

**NEW**  
**Fall 2019**

**SNR supports** will be **offered** to licensed child care **after-school programs.**



**Early Years Engage** | Continuous quality improvement in Waterloo Region

**Early Years Engage**, the new continuous quality improvement approach, **launched in 2017.**



**All child care sites** will participate in at least **one site visit through Early Years Engage by 2020.** The approach focuses on setting goals, measuring and using data for planning, and involving all staff and board members in planning.



**130 kits** Every local licensed child care centre and home child care program received kits with **items that support belonging and inclusion** of all children in licensed child care.



**89** **child care sites** received **One-Time Technology Grants** in 2018 to support increased quality in licensed child care programs.

“*We were able to purchase a tablet for staff to document learning through photos, videos and learning stories.*”

- Quote from a Centre receiving a Technology Grant

“*My child care center has always been willing to work with [Special Needs Resourcing] to support the needs of my child or any child in their care. They also provide written progress reports and goals for each individual child to support their needs.*”

- Quote from a parent in the 2018 Child Care Survey

## Service Plan updates by Action and Strategy

### Action 1

#### Develop a master plan for development of licensed, high quality ELCC in Waterloo Region

##### Strategy 1.1

Work in partnership with local school boards to identify areas of need and utilize the Provincial Schools First Capital Program to build new ELCC centres (including child care and EarlyON) co-located with new schools.

##### Progress to date

- 5 new child care programs opened in schools with licensed capacity of 358 0-4 spaces (infant, toddler, preschool) and 625 before- and after-school spaces (JK/SK, school-age) (2017-2018).
- One new EarlyON program opened in a new school (2017).
- Joint planning committee formed between school boards and Region (formed 2017, presently active).
- School boards worked with the Region of Waterloo to develop and submit board-specific Early Years Leadership Strategy Plan outlining a plan for supporting the implementation of Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2018).

##### Activities 2019-2020

- 4 new child care programs in schools with an estimated capacity for 350 children ages 0-4 years expected to open by December 31, 2020.\*
- 3 expanded child care programs in schools with an estimated increased capacity of 150 children ages 0-4 years expected to open by December 31, 2020.\*
- 4 new EarlyON programs to open in schools by December 31, 2020.\*
- Implement the 2018/19 Early Years Leadership Strategies and develop 2019/20 Early Years Leadership Strategies.
- Work with school boards and the Province to ensure new ELCC programs in schools receive adequate funding for start-up expenses.
- Continue to work collaboratively with school boards to identify new opportunities to co-locate ELCC centres with new schools.



\*Dependent on level of Provincial and Federal funding received



## Strategy 1.2

**Work with the Provincial and Federal governments to seek additional funding for growth of new child care spaces and EarlyON programs.**

### Progress to date

- Both the Provincial and Federal governments released strategies to grow licensed child care starting in 2017.
- In 2018, the Region of Waterloo received \$13.95 million in new funding (above 2016 levels) to support increased access to and affordability of licensed child care through Expansion Funding, Base Funding for Licensed Home Child Care and Fee Stabilization Support. .
- An ELCC Expansion Funding Plan was developed and implemented in 2018. It included capital funding, start-up and operating funding for new licensed spaces, and funding opportunities to improve affordability (see Action 2) (2018).
- Between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018, 767 new centre-based spaces for children ages 0-4 years (17% growth) and 1,282 new spaces for school-aged children (24% growth) were created (2017-2018).
- Start-up grants were provided to over 50 new licensed home child caregivers to increase access to licensed home child care for children ages 0-4 years.
- EarlyON funding grew from \$2.3 million to \$4.1 million to support the planned new EarlyON Centres (2018).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Continue to advocate for funding to maintain recent ELCC growth and to support anticipated ELCC growth.
- See also Strategy 1.1.

## Strategy 1.3

**Incorporate planning for child care spaces in the Regional Official Plan for growth and development to design a neighbourhood-based approach to planning, with key public and private sector partners.**

### Progress to date

- Smart Waterloo Region is a local cross-sectoral project, that was a finalist for the Federal Government's Smart Cities Challenge. The challenge statement for the project is: "We will become the benchmark community in Canada for child and youth well-being by using early intervention, youth engagement and a connected-community framework to create adaptive, data-driven programs and scalable learning technologies that improve early child development, mental health and high school graduation rates." Though the project did not win the Smart Cities Challenge, the community is developing a plan to move forward with some priorities, building on the significant momentum and work to date. Any activities related to data at the neighbourhood level have the potential to impact ELCC planning (2018-present).
- The current Regional Official Plan was approved in 2015 and is in place until 2031. That is expected to be the next opportunity for significant changes.
- Staff in Children's Services have started to develop new relationships with Planning departments at the Region of Waterloo and lower-tier municipalities to identify opportunities for collaborative planning related to child care growth (2018-present).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Smart Waterloo Region next steps planning will happen in 2019. Priority actions may be implemented starting late 2019/ 2020.
- Continue to build relationships with Planning departments at the Region of Waterloo and lower-tier municipalities, to support collaborative planning for child care growth (2019-2020).
- Research models of private-public partnerships in child care (2020).
- Launch a new Early Years System Steering Committee as part of the Children and Youth Planning Table to support cross-sectoral early years planning (2019).

### Strategy 1.4

#### Enhance the CMSM capacity to track, monitor and evaluate service demands to support community planning.

#### Progress to date

- As part of the Ministry of Education’s transition of child and family program funding (Ontario Early Years Centre funding in Waterloo Region) to CMSMs, funding for early years data analysis and planning services was also transferred to the Region of Waterloo. This transfer of funding allowed further integration of early years data services (e.g., Early Development Instrument, Kindergarten Parent Survey) and child care data (e.g., licensed ELCC spaces) (January 2017).
- The Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres Initial Plan (supported by the early years data analysis services funding) included a comprehensive data-informed needs assessment (released August 2017).
- Developed a plan for creating and implementing a real-time Child Well-being Dashboard and a data sharing platform as part of the Smart Waterloo Region project (see Strategy 1.3 for more information). The scope of implementation will be dependent on priorities determined by Smart Waterloo Region (2018-2019).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Receive Early Development Instrument (EDI) data in 2019, analyze data and release to the community by 2020.
- Analyze Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS) data and release to the community by 2020.
- Review Early Years Experiences at Kindergarten (EYE@K) data collaboratively with school boards and determine next steps (2019-2020).
- Participate in the Smart Waterloo Region Data Collaborative. Support priority activities identified by Smart Waterloo Region that relate to ELCC data and planning (2019-2020).
- Analyze OneList data to better understand service demands and current waitlist pressures (2019-2020).
- Launch a data system for EarlyON to track data related to program participation to support planning for EarlyON (2020).





## Action 2

**Improve access to affordable, high quality, licensed early learning and child care services and experiences for all families.**

### Strategy 2.1

**Work with community partners to develop strategies that will alleviate the cost of ELCC to make it more affordable to families.**

#### Progress to date

- Removed the Child Care Fee Subsidy waitlist, serving an average of 2,860 children per month in 2017 and 2,970 children per month 2018, using Provincial and Federal Child Care Expansion Funding (2017-2019).
- Introduced the Fee Reduction Pilot, reducing full-day child care fees by \$12/day for infants, \$5/day for toddlers and \$4/day for preschoolers, 90% of licensed child care operators with an agreement with the Region of Waterloo chose to participate (started July 2018-2019).
- Provided Child Care Affordability grants to non-profit licensed child care programs participating in the Fee Reduction Pilot to maintain and/or reduce base child care fees (2018).
- Overall, fees were reduced by 15% for infants, 8% for toddlers and 7% for preschoolers in 2018.
- Provided Enhancement funding for Licensed Home Child Care (using new Provincial Licensed Home Child Care Base Funding) to reduce home child care parent fees between \$1 and \$3/day (2018).

#### Activities 2019-2020

- Continue the Fee Reduction Pilot at rates of \$10/day for infants, \$3/day for toddlers and \$2/day for preschoolers (2019-2020).\*
- Continue funding Licensed Home Child Care fee reductions at 2018 levels for 2019.\*
- Develop a new base funding approach for Licensed Home Child Care that reduces the cost of home child care on an ongoing basis (2019-2020).\*



\*Dependent on level of Provincial and Federal funding received

## Strategy 2.2

**Work with Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Province to expand the income threshold for child care fee subsidy to increase access for families with limited income.**

### Progress to date

- The Fee Reduction Pilot was developed based on consultation with local families and other municipalities through OMSSA. In the absence of an expanded income threshold, the purpose was to reduce fees and increase access for families not eligible for child care fee subsidy (2018).
- Staff actively worked with other municipalities through OMSSA to identify key funding priorities for the 2019 Provincial budget related to affordability of child care for all families (2019).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Develop a local approach and policies as required to implement new affordability strategies developed by the Province (as required 2019-2020).
- Continue to meet with other municipalities through OMSSA Children’s Services Network, and the CMSM Network, and advocate to the Province for improved affordability of child care for families (ongoing).



## Strategy 2.3

**Continue to monitor the progress of a federal National Early Learning and Child Care Framework and work to support any national initiative related to child care and child well-being.**

### Progress to date

- Canada and Ontario entered into a multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework in 2017. Through this Framework, \$2.29 million in funding in 2017 and \$3.06 million in funding in 2018 was received in Waterloo Region. The funding was part of the local Expansion Funding Plan. This funding was used to remove the waitlist for fee subsidy and to provide capital funding for new licensed child care spaces (see Strategies 1.2 and 2.1).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Continue to monitor federal policies on Early Learning and Child Care and adapt approaches as required (ongoing).



## Action 3

### Build capacity to support inclusion of all children in high quality, early learning and child care experiences.

#### Strategy 3.1

#### Work with local First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners to create culturally relevant child care and early learning experiences and services.

##### Progress to date

- Healing of the Seven Generations completed an ELCC needs assessment and program proposal for First Nations, Métis and Inuit families in Waterloo Region. This project was funded through the Ministry of Education's initiative: "The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples" (2017).
- The Region submitted a proposal under Journey Together for an Indigenous-led child care centre and child and family centre as well as an Early Childhood Education scholarship program for Indigenous students. The proposal was partially approved: funding was received for an Indigenous-led child and family centre (\$100,000 for one-time capital and \$367,500 for one-time and ongoing operating expenses). An additional \$450,000 for capital was then received through a call for applications in the Provincial Community-Based Capital Project funding (2018).
- Anishnabeg Outreach was the successful organization in the Expression of Interest to lead the creation and operation of an Indigenous-led child and family centre (2018).

##### Activities 2019-2020

- The Indigenous-led child and family centre is scheduled to open in 2019.
- A partnership between Anishnabeg Outreach and YMCA Kitchener-Waterloo (lead agency for EarlyON) is planned to support coordination of early learning services, learning and professional development, and capacity building of both staff and organizations (2019-2020).
- Develop a plan for engagement of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit service providers in Waterloo Region (2020).



### Strategy 3.2

**Build upon community expertise, best practice and professional development to reshape approaches to wholistic and strength based views of children, families and professionals.**

#### Progress to date

- Funded the development of a Pedagogical Leadership Course through a partnership with the Professional Resource Centre at Conestoga College and supported 36 participants to take the course (2018).

#### Activities 2019-2020

- Establish and launch a pedagogical community of practice (2019).
- Develop a local plan, including a measurement framework, for developing pedagogical capacity through the Provincial Centres of Excellence (2020).
- Develop EarlyON Best Practice standards through a collaborative process (2020).

### Strategy 3.3

**Expand on opportunities to increase knowledge, understanding and approaches to support the many diverse needs in our community.**

#### Progress to date

- A tiered approach to providing occupational therapy and speech language services in licensed child care was piloted and evaluated in 2017 (Partnering for Change). The evaluation revealed that the tiered approach was successful in building capacity of educators and parents to support the inclusion and full participation of all children. Based on the evaluation results, the tiered approach was implemented for kinesiology, speech language pathology and occupational therapy as part of Special Needs Resourcing for licensed child care (2016-2018).
- 130 specialized adaptive equipment kits were provided to licensed child care centres and home child care consultants. The purpose of the kits was to build the capacity of licensed child care programs to include all children through providing equipment/toys that support diverse needs (2018).
- The review of Special Needs Resourcing (see 3.4) will focus on capacity building.

#### Activities 2019-2020

- Develop video training to be used to explain Special Needs Resourcing to people working in licensed child care (2019).





### Strategy 3.4

**Monitor and evaluate the efficacy of current approaches and take action to change if needed.**

#### Progress to date

- A review of the existing Special Needs Resourcing in child care service delivery and collaborative planning model began in 2018. The review will result in revisions to the model and new outcomes and performance indicators.
- A new role of Behaviour Therapist as a Special Needs Resourcing support is being piloted in licensed child care for ages 0-4 years. This role responds to identified needs from Special Needs Resourcing and child care staff for specialized support regarding complex behaviour. Initial evaluation results are showing significant positive impacts (2018-present).
- An additional Special Needs Access Point (SNAP) position was added to ensure adequate and timely processing of referrals and support to parents and child care programs (starting 2018).
- Temporary additional staffing was added to address waitlist pressures in Special Needs Resourcing that were the result of the transition to a tiered model of service. The waitlists for physiotherapy and speech language pathology were eliminated and the waitlist for occupational therapy was significantly reduced (2018).
- See also Strategy 3.3.

#### Activities 2019-2020

- Complete the review of the Special Needs Resourcing review, including a review of the pilot Behaviour Therapist role (2019).
- Implement a revised Special Needs Resourcing model for the licensed child care system serving children ages 0-4 years (including licensed home child care) (2019-2020).
- Implement a new Special Needs Resourcing model for the licensed child care system serving children ages 4-12 years (including licensed home child care) (2019-2020).



## Action 4

### Address the service experience for families within early years services.

#### Strategy 4.1

Work with community partners, parents and private and public sector to develop a communication and marketing strategy to improve access to early years services.

##### Progress to date

- The Region led a child care fee subsidy communication campaign to increase awareness of fee subsidy (2018-2019).
- The Region of Waterloo led a quality child care campaign to increase parent's understanding of quality child care (2018-2019).

##### Activities 2019-2020

- Continue implementing quality child care campaign more broadly through the community with a priority on social media communication (2019-2020).

#### Strategy 4.2

Build upon the success of OneList Waterloo Region to develop enhancements, decrease confusion and improve the service experience for families.

##### Progress to date

- Five child care operators received funding to support improvements to OneList processes. These centres reported increased enrollment, increased communication with families throughout the enrollment process and more efficient, clearer processes to ensure that outcomes are sustained (2018).
- The Region of Waterloo committed staff resources for one year to focus on making improvements to OneList. Activities were prioritized based on feedback from families (through ongoing feedback and the Parent Survey) and operators (through ongoing engagement and a focused survey). Key activities have been related to improving access for parents, enhancing supports for Operators and clarifying expectations for Operators (2018-2019).

##### Activities 2019-2020

- Launch a new parent OneList site that includes significant improvements to the user experience (including mobile compatibility) (2019).
- Develop new parent resources to support the use of OneList (2019-2020).
- Make technological improvements to the child care operator OneList site that improve efficiency and ease-of-use (2019-2020).
- Overhaul all policies and procedures for OneList use for child care operators to improve consistency (2019-2020).
- See also Strategy 4.3.



### Strategy 4.3

**Work with school boards, other early years service providers to create a more seamless experience for families as they transition between services.**

#### Progress to date

- The Region of Waterloo, school boards, and the Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative are working together to support recent changes to the process of children with special needs transitioning from licensed child care to school. This work is being led by the Transition to School Committee (2018-2019).
- A working group is developing a new strategy for making the process of finding before- and after-school care easier for families (2018-2019).
- See also Strategy 1.1.

#### Activities 2019-2020

- Pilot and finalize a new strategy to simplify how parents use OneList to find before- and after-school care (2019-2020).
- See also Strategy 1.1.

## Action 5

**Mobilize a renewed approach to continuous quality improvement for all early years services that is responsive, effective and measurable.**

### Strategy 5.1

**Implement a new approach to continuous quality improvement with clearly stated outcomes and measures for all related early years programs.**

#### Progress to date

- Early Years Engage was launched in 2017. This new approach focuses on continuous quality improvement through an annual quality improvement planning cycle for all licensed child care programs receiving funding from the Region of Waterloo (2017).
- An evaluation of the Early Years Engage work to date was conducted to identify potential improvements to existing processes and next steps in the full implementation of Early Years Engage (2018-2019).
- Annual site visits and group meetings have been conducted with approximately 2/3 of licensed child programs who are part of the Early Years Engage process. The purposes of the site visits are to observe the program, engage with staff working in child care ratio, discuss progress and support development of work plans that are focused on quality improvement goals (2017-2019).
- The Region of Waterloo conducted the Child Care Survey to ask families with children aged 0-4 years about their experience with licensed child care in Waterloo Region. In total, 1,880 respondents from 93 participating programs completed the survey (34% of families accessing licensed child care in Waterloo Region). Results from the survey are being used to support program-level improvements as part of Early Years Engage and system-level strategies (2018).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Continue to conduct site visits and conduct one site visit with every licensed child care site in a Purchase of Service agreement with the Region of Waterloo by 2020.
- Implement changes to Early Years Engage based on evaluation results (e.g., streamline and clarify processes) (2019-2020).
- Continue to explore approaches for quality measurement (2019-2020).
- Strengthen partnerships and clearly define roles in quality improvement and capacity building between Region of Waterloo, Conestoga College, and school boards (2019-2020).
- Develop a coordinated joint plan for quality improvement in school-age programs with school boards (2019).

### Strategy 5.2

#### Implement community wide standards of practice relating to wages, working conditions and approaches to pedagogy.

#### Progress to date

- The Region of Waterloo commissioned Conestoga College to conduct a local workforce study to understand the challenges and opportunities in the ELCC workforce in Waterloo Region. The survey was completed by over 480 people in 2018 and a final report is being prepared (2018-2019).
- New detailed salary data was reported by all child care operators and EarlyON programs in Waterloo Region in 2019. This information will be used to inform local funding and policies regarding wages. Initial analysis (e.g., median wage) is available in the 2018 ELCC Profiles.
- Fee Stabilization Funding was used to provide up to a \$0.70 per hour wage increase in 2018 for over 1,100 staff working in licensed child care, while maintaining child care fees (2018).
- Enhancement funding was provided to licensed home child care operators (using new Provincial Licensed Home Child Care Base Funding) to increase home caregivers' compensation between \$5 and \$10 per day (2018).

### Activities 2019-2020

- Develop and implement a communication and engagement strategy for the workforce study conducted by Conestoga College (2019-2020).
- Train local pedagogical leaders through the Provincial Centres of Excellence and develop a plan (including an evaluation/ measurement framework) for trained pedagogists to support pedagogical improvements in licensed child care (2019-2020).
- Present detailed salary information to ELCC stakeholders (2019).
- Develop a new base funding approach for Licensed Home Child Care that increases caregiver compensation on an ongoing basis (by 2020).\*
- Develop standards for wages in ELCC and supporting policies/ funding as appropriate (2020).



\*Dependent on level of Provincial and Federal funding received



# N next steps

## Next steps

Children's Services will continue to implement the ELCC Service Plan in 2019 and 2020 using a flexible and responsive approach. Actions 2019-2020 identified in the Service Plan Update provide an overview of key actions for the next two years, based on progress and ELCC context as of March 2019. Many of the actions for 2019-2020 are focused on developing measurement frameworks and enhancing data. This work will provide the foundation for meaningful and measurable outcomes and targets to be included in the next service plan.

In the remaining years of the ELCC Service Plan, Children's Services will continue to monitor local data, ELCC research and Provincial directions and adjust the implementation plan to ensure it meets emerging needs and trends. Progress against expected actions will be monitored and reported back to key stakeholders when significant milestones are reached, when there is significant progress and/or change, and at the end of the ELCC Service Plan cycle.

Engagement with key stakeholders, including families, child care operators, school boards, the Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative, Region of Waterloo Community Services, and other municipalities, will remain a priority throughout the implementation of the ELCC Service Plan and the development of the next plan (expected to begin in 2021).





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