

**Dufferin County  
Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan  
2020-2023  
Executive Summary**

**December 2019**

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), Dufferin County is responsible and accountable for managing local licensed child care and early years programs and services. As outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), service system managers are mandated to:

- Establish, administer, operate and fund early years programs, including providing assistance to service operators and evaluating and assessing the impact of public funding
- Deliver and administer local policies respecting the operation of early years programs and services
- Coordinate the planning and operation of early years programs and consult with school boards and other prescribed persons or entities in accordance with legislation
- Assess the economic viability of early years programs and facilitate changes to make programs more viable

Throughout 2018 and 2019 the County undertook a comprehensive planning process to identify priorities for the early years sector. This community planning process focused on licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This Executive Summary provides highlights from the community planning process, along with identified strategic priorities and actions which will be implemented.

The community planning process involved the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including parents/caregivers, service providers, school boards, EarlyON Child and Family Centre staff, licensed child care providers, and other community partners. The community planning process resulted in a clear identification of priorities, and created a blueprint for the early year sector.

**Children in Dufferin County**

The younger child population (aged 0 to 9 years) in Dufferin County is growing. After experiencing a decrease in 5 to 9 year olds and a fairly stable 0 to 4 year old population from 2006 to 2011, both of these age groups realized substantial growth from 2011 to 2016. The 0 to 4 year old population grew 11.0%, and the 5 to 9 year old group grew 11.9%.

The 10 to 14 year old population in Dufferin County continues to decrease. After experiencing a 9.6% decrease from 2006 to 2011, this group saw an additional 3.3% decrease from 2011 to 2016. See the table below for further details.

Age	2001 Population	2006 Population	2011 Population	2016 Population
<b>0 to 4 Years</b>	3,515	3,195	3,220	3,575
<b>5 to 9 Years</b>	8,680 (5 to 14 Years)	3,820	3,480	3,895
<b>10 to 14 Years</b>		4,545	4,110	3,975
<b>Overall Population</b>	51,010	54,435	56,880	61,735

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Community Profile and 2016 Census Profile

The majority of children in Dufferin County live in Orangeville (48.0% of the child population aged 0 to 14 years). The next most populous areas for children aged 0 to 14 are Shelburne, and Mono (see the table below for further details).

Area	0 to 4 Years	5 to 9 Years	10 to 14 Years	Total	% of Child Population
<b>Orangeville</b>	1,770	1,910	1,815	5,495	48.0%
<b>Shelburne</b>	655	635	555	1,845	16.1%
<b>Grand Valley</b>	160	160	195	515	4.5%
<b>Mono</b>	360	455	550	1,365	11.9%
<b>Amaranth Township</b>	180	235	290	705	6.2%
<b>East Garafraxa</b>	115	150	180	445	3.9%
<b>Melancthon Township</b>	195	205	190	590	5.2%
<b>Mulmur Township</b>	130	155	210	495	4.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,565</b>	<b>3,905</b>	<b>3,985</b>	<b>11,455</b>	<b>100.1%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

When looking at the child population trends by geographic area in Dufferin there are a number of important trends to pay attention to, including:

- Overall, the child population in Shelburne, Mono, Melancthon Township, and Grand Valley is growing at a fast pace
- Overall, the child population is declining in Orangeville, Mulmur Township, Amaranth Township, and East Garafraxa

**Summary of what parents/caregivers said**

Overall, parents/caregivers in Dufferin County want programs and services that are:

- *Affordable*
- *High quality*
- *Convenient* (available where and when they want them)

Some of the common themes which emerged over the course of the engagement with parents/caregivers are presented below.

### Affordability

Making child care more affordable

- The cost of child care is a challenge for many families in Dufferin County
- Of those parents/caregivers not using their first choice of care for their child(ren), many report that the cost of care is a barrier to this
- 39.7% of parents/caregivers report that the high cost of care was an issue for them in the past year

## Choice and Availability

Increasing choice and availability of child care

- Many parents/caregivers are using their first choice in terms of type of care for their child(ren)
- For some, the lack of availability of licensed child care centres/homes in their community or the lack of spaces in existing centres/homes is a challenge
- The traditional, licensed child care system is not working for all families. Some parents/caregivers need licensed child care that matches their working hours and other caregiving needs. Of those parents/caregivers not using their first choice of care for their child(ren), some report that there is no care/limited options in their area, there are no spaces available at the licensed centre/home in their area, or that they require more flexible care (emergency care, part-time care, temporary/short-term care, non-traditional hours of care)
- Some parents/caregivers are not always aware of the child care and early years programs and services available to them and their children
- Many parents/caregivers (59.7%) have seen the EarlyON logo in their community
- Some parents/caregivers (29.1%) have not heard of EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Parents/caregivers want EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services to be provided during the day, on weekday evenings, weekends, holidays, and PA Days to better support their schedules and their children's schedules. The hours of operation need to be aligned with children's routines, and parents' working hours
- Of those parents/caregivers who don't use or have stopped using an EarlyON Child and Family Centre 25.5% report that the times and days don't work for them

## Quality

Improving quality and delivering high standards of care

- The top reason parents/caregivers choose their current type of care for their child(ren) is quality of care/staff
- Parents/caregivers like a number of things about EarlyON Child and Family Centres, including the socialization opportunities (for their children and themselves), the programs and activities offered, and the opportunity to get out of the house/have a change of scenery (see the word cloud below)



### Summary of what service providers said

Service providers identified the following as the top issues facing licensed child care in Dufferin County:

- Need for more support for children with special needs
- Recruiting and retaining Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)
- Lack of licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- Staff workload
- High cost of child care for parents
- Lack of child care during non-traditional hours
- Parents' lack of knowledge about the value of licensed child care

Most licensed child care providers (83.3%) report being able to provide inclusive services for children with special needs in their centre, home, or program. Some providers report there are limits to what they can provide.

Overall, service providers identified the following potential areas of focus for the licensed child care sector:

- Cost of care
- Fee subsidy
- Funding to operators
- Recruitment and retention of RECEs/quality staff
- Staff workload
- Location of child care spaces
- Hours of care
- Supports for children with special needs

Many service providers (81.4%) rate their level of awareness of the programs and services offered at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres as excellent or good. Service providers identified a number of potential service enhancements for EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Dufferin County. These include:



- Providing access to EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services in more rural locations
- Focusing on certain groups as part of a targeted outreach strategy (i.e. new/young parents, immigrants/newcomers, low income families, etc.)

Overall, service providers identified the following potential areas of focus for the EarlyON Child and Family Centres:

- Increased access, including hours and locations
- Outreach to populations not currently using the EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Awareness of EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Programs, services, and activities offered at EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Partnerships

### Early Years Priorities, Actions, and Results

Over the next four years, Dufferin County will focus on implementing actions that support the four provincial pillars:

1. Making child care more affordable
2. Increasing choice and availability of child care
3. Improving quality and delivering high standards of care
4. Reducing red tape and administrative burden

Actions that will be implemented in each of these pillars are outlined below, with associated timelines across the four years of the plan.

#### Pillar #1: Making child care more affordable

Actions	Timelines			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Increase municipal maximum for fee subsidy for parents/caregivers accessing licensed child care	➔			
2. Redistribute available core funding into the licensed child care sector		➔		
3. Develop policies to ensure equity for families receiving fee subsidy (i.e. extra costs, municipal maximum, etc.)		➔		

**Pillar #2:** Increasing choice and availability in the early years sector (licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres)

Actions	Timelines			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Develop partnerships with Ontario Works, Employment Ontario, and Georgian College to explore RECE recruitment and retention	→			
2. Review and leverage current child care funding allocation to meet demands while ensuring system efficiency and accountability	→			
3. Access available provincial child care expansion funding	→			
4. Continue to review funding and operational practices to ensure the needs of children with additional needs are met	→			
5. Develop the licensed home child care sector, including an exploration of the barriers in this sector			→	
6. Support the development of a Francophone child care centre and EarlyON Child and Family Centre	→			
7. Increase visibility and awareness of EarlyON Child and Family Centres	→			
8. Conduct targeted outreach through EarlyON Child and Family Centres to identified priority populations (i.e. low income, rural, new families, families with children with additional needs, etc.)	→			

**Pillar #3:** Improving quality and delivering high standards of care

Actions	Timelines			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Transform how quality is supported in the licensed child care sector	→			
2. Develop local child care leaders into pedagogists	→			
3. Continue our work toward a pedagogical approach to quality	→			
4. Develop leadership skills in the licensed child care sector	→			
5. Work with Georgian College to ensure curriculum of new ECE program aligns with Ministry expectations and pedagogical framework	→			
6. Ensure licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs are culturally responsive and inclusive (i.e. Indigenous knowledge transfer)	→			
7. Measure impact of EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs	→			
8. Educate and encourage families to enjoy recreation opportunities in available outdoor spaces	→			

**Pillar #4:** Reducing red tape and administrative burden

Actions	Timelines			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Improve functionality in OCCMS for licensed child care operators		➔		
2. Review EarlyON Child and Family Centre practices and programs for impact and efficiencies	➔			

The actions undertaken in each of the four pillars will help to achieve the following results:

<p>A more affordable early years and child care system</p>	<p>Increased access to early years and child care programs and services</p>	<p>Parents can choose the early years and child care programs that work best for their family</p>
<p>Families have easily accessible information about the full range of early years and child care programs and services that are available to them</p>	<p>A consistent approach to quality across early years settings that supports a continuum of learning</p>	<p>High quality child care and early years programming delivered by engaged and knowledgeable educators</p>