

**Child and Youth Network for Best Start
Terms of Reference
May 2007**

VISION

Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow (May 2007)

MANDATE

Starting in the fall of 2007, the role of the Children and Youth Network will be to plan, implement and monitor the Children and Youth Agenda for the community of London. Membership will be increased to include more youth service providers, youth, the business community and parents of children and youth.

The Children and Youth Network for Best Start has been formed to provide a coordinated decision-making mechanism to effectively plan, implement and monitor Best Start as well as to facilitate the development of the Children and Youth Agenda in our local community in accordance with the 2007-2008 Best Start Community Plan (MCYS) and the City of London's Neighbourhood and Children's Services Division Mandate.

SCOPE

Best Start and the Children and Youth Agenda will create a comprehensive integrated system of services that supports families with children from birth through the transition into school and into adulthood. The initial phase of Best Start created new licensed child care spaces. The second Best Start Phase will build on Phase One achievements and focus on matters of system integration. The scope of the Best Start System Integration Plan and the Children and Youth Agenda is intended to be as broad as possible, covering the spectrum of children and youth services, social, cultural and neighbourhood supports, health and education.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRINCIPLES

It will be critical to the success of this initiative that responsibilities and expectations are clearly understood by all parties. There are a number of stakeholders that are involved in Best Start and the Children and Youth Agenda, from a policy/support perspective to a service delivery role. Membership may be redefined or altered depending on the need and issues at the time.

The following principles will guide the planning for Best Start and the Children and Youth Agenda in London. Members of the Children and Youth Network for Best Start will demonstrate willingness to:

- Actively participate and work together towards our common goal
- Educate themselves and share knowledge on best practices
- Practice due diligence for our children, youth, families and our community
- Strive together for our children, youth and families
- Embrace mutual respect in our interactions while focusing on a common goal
- Remain open-minded and thoughtfully listen with intent to understand
- Engage in dynamic exchange of information and resources

PURPOSE

The Children and Youth Network for Best Start will be formed by the City of London to provide the community with the benefit of expert opinions in order to make the best decisions possible to achieve the Best Start Vision, which is the foundation for the Children and Youth Agenda.

Members of the network will be encouraged to:

- Provide expertise in areas of children and youth services to assist in the work of the Children and Youth Network for Best Start and the Children and Youth Agenda
- Provide assurance of a holistic approach to child and youth development issues
- Liaise with community partners and within their sector to help build momentum for Best Start and the Children and Youth Agenda
- Participate in the development of the Phase 2 System Integration Plan and the Children and Youth Agenda
- Participate in the implementation of the Plan following approval from the Province.
- Make the Children and Youth Agenda a reality in our community

MEMBERSHIP

The Children and Youth Network for Best Start will reflect the unique composition of the local community and a broad range of community perspectives as suggested in the list below. It will be critical that participants are able to make decisions on behalf of the organization. Organizations and individuals will be required to show their commitment to the plan by signing it.

- Aboriginal service providers
- Business sector
- Child care services & preschool programs (including child care operators)
- Child protection services (includes Children's Aid Societies)
- Children and Youth
- Children & Youth mental health & treatment services
- City of London
- Community and Neighbourhood Resource Centres
- Developmental Services
- Faith Communities
- Family Counselling Centres/Family Services
- Family & Community Health Teams, Primary care providers, Local Health Integration Networks
- Francophone service providers, French Language Network
- Libraries
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Regional Office (ex officio)
- Multi-cultural service providers
- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Parents & Families (diverse and inclusive as possible)
- Preschool Speech and Language Services, Infant Hearing, Blind Low Vision Programs
- Recreation Programs, Seniors, volunteer sector
- School boards (4), private elementary & secondary schools
- The Middlesex London Health Unit
- Universities and Colleges
- Youth Service Providers