

The Best for Our Children, Youth and Families

The First Three Years
of London's Child and Youth Agenda to 2015

Executive Summary



The Child and Youth Network

September 2008

Executive Summary

London's vision for our children and youth is "Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow." As a community, we want our children and youth to be safe, to have supportive relationships and to reach their potential in school and in life. Yet, in 2008, almost one out of every four children and youth in London is being left behind – because of poverty, problems in school, health problems and social stresses.

We can and must do more for all our children, youth and families. London's Child and Youth Network – a network of agencies and organizations that provide services for children, youth and families – is committed to a Child and Youth Agenda to 2015: an ambitious, long-term plan designed to help London achieve its vision for children and youth.

The Best for Our Children, Youth and Families sets out the priorities, goals and strategies for the first three years of the Child and Youth Agenda. Over the next 36 months, the Child and Youth Network – in partnership with families, other organizations, governments and the private sector – will tackle the critical economic, education and health issues that are casting shadows on our children's future. The Network will also change the way services are organized and delivered to make it easier for children, youth and families to access the mix of services, address mental health needs and enjoy a safer community.

Priorities

1. End Poverty
2. Make Literacy a Way of Life
3. Lead the Nation in Increasing Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity
4. Create a Family-Centred Service System

Goals

- To reduce the proportion of London families who are living in poverty by 25% in five years and by 50% in 10 years.
- To be a provincial leader in child, youth and family literacy by 2015.

- To create environments, neighbourhoods and opportunities that promote and support daily physical activity and healthy eating for all our children, youth and families.
- To make it easier for London's children, youth and families to participate fully in their neighbourhoods and communities, and to find and receive the services they need.

Strategies

London's overall approach to creating a more family-centred community is to:

- build on existing programs and partnerships
- use strategies that have been proven effective
- take a life cycle approach, supporting children, youth and families in all age groups and at key stages in their lives
- address the mental health and safety issues facing children, youth and families

The Child and Youth Agenda is community-driven: the needs were identified by the community and the solutions will come from the community – families, agencies, governments and the private sector – working together.

Because each neighbourhood in London is unique and has different needs, the Child and Youth Network will use a neighbourhood approach: developing and testing its strategies to reduce poverty, improve literacy and promote healthy eating and healthy physical activity in demonstration neighbourhoods, evaluating them to see what works – and what doesn't – and then adapting the strategies and using them in other neighbourhoods across the city.

Raising awareness and engaging the community are key strategies in all four priorities – poverty, literacy, healthy eating/healthy physical activity and a family-centred system. The more people understand about how poverty, lack of literacy and physical inactivity affect children's health and well-being, the more likely they are to help solve these problems. The more they know about the services available in our community, the more likely they are to use them.

1. End Poverty

To reduce poverty, the Child and Youth Network will take a comprehensive, long-term approach that addresses all the factors – individual, cultural/geographic, structural and cyclical – that trap families in poverty. London will become part of the province-wide 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction (reduce poverty 25% in five years, 50% in 10 years) that is working to eliminate poverty. London will use a three-part strategy to reduce poverty:

- **Increase awareness and engage the community.** We will involve the whole community – low income families, service providers, government, the voluntary sector and the private sector – in learning about the impact poverty has on the children, youth and families in our community, and in finding creative ways to end poverty.
- **Reduce the impact of poverty and make day-to-day life better.** A Basic Needs Coalition will be formed to develop and enhance programs for families with low incomes, including food and clothing programs, dental care and other health services, transportation programs, addiction services and programs to address domestic violence. Neighbourhood hubs will provide and be access points for a wide range of consistent services, such as child and family supports, that will make day-to-day life better for families.
- **Break the cycle and stop the next generation from living in poverty.** The community will develop long-term solutions that will help families move permanently out of poverty, such as: policies that will provide income security and a living wage; child care and other

neighbourhood programs that help working families; employment and training programs; financial literacy programs that will help families manage their money; safe affordable housing in mixed-income neighbourhoods; and targeted programs to meet the needs of groups at high risk of poverty, such as women, recent immigrants, and Aboriginal people.

2. Make Literacy a Way of Life

London's strategy to improve literacy is based on collaboration among home, school, and community. The four-part strategy will:

- **Promote literacy to the whole community.** The Network will actively promote literacy as a way of life and the benefits of literacy for children, youth and families.
- **Take a neighbourhood approach to literacy.** One neighbourhood in London will help develop and implement its own literacy strategy, which will be evaluated and expanded to other neighbourhoods.
- **Promote literacy from birth.** Physicians, nurses, parents and others will receive information, DVDs, books and training materials that will encourage new parents to talk and read to their infants.
- **Improve family literacy.** The Network will develop programs and resources – such as a family literacy web site, training programs, a family literacy conference and a Family Literacy Resource Centre – that will improve parents' literacy and help them be role models for their children.

3. Lead the Nation in Increasing Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity

To promote healthy eating and healthy physical activity, London will address all the factors that lead to physical inactivity and obesity. The goal is to create physical and social environments that promote safe, healthy, active living and that make the healthy choice the easy choice. The four-part strategy will:

- **Raise awareness and engage the community.** The Child and Youth Network will work with all the community partners already promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity to develop a common city-wide “brand” and social marketing program. Shopping tools, toolkits for professionals and tools for workplaces will help get more people actively involved in promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity.
- **Create healthy, active neighbourhoods.** One neighbourhood will become a demonstration site, and work with the Network to develop and implement a healthy eating/healthy physical activity strategy that targets children, youth and families – and includes changes to the built and social environment. The strategy will be evaluated and then adapted to other neighbourhoods in the city.
- **Give more children, youth and families access to healthy eating/healthy physical activity programs.** The organizations already involved in promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity will come together, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, to find ways to make their programs more accessible to more families (e.g., changing their schedules or locations). They will also adjust programs and provide transportation to make it easier for children and youth with special needs to participate.
- **Measure and track body mass, physical activity and eating habits.** Right now, London doesn't have good enough information about our children's health and their lifestyles. The Network will work with researchers and health practitioners to establish a system to measure and track the body mass, physical activity and eating habits of London's children and youth. That information will be used to identify children at highest risk of overweight

and obesity, to assess the impact of our programs, and to develop initiatives that will help children and youth make healthier choices.

4. Create a Family-Centred Service System

To create a family-centre service system, the Child and Youth Network will work closely together and with families to integrate services and make them available in key, easy-to-use sites in our community. The five-part strategy will:

- **Raise awareness of services.** The Network will do more to make families aware of available services – such as developing a web portal, a services referral map, service kiosks and a 211 phone line.
- **Engage community.** Families and communities will be involved in identifying barriers to using services (e.g., location, hours of services, cost, attitudes) and helping organizations provide more family-friendly programs.
- **Build capacity in the service system to address any unmet needs.** The Network will identify the services available in each neighbourhood, and work together to build their capacity to fill any gaps.
- **Move organizations along the integration continuum.** When planning new programs or services, all organizations will use a new tool – the Integration Assessment Tool – to identify opportunities to collaborate and coordinate their services and make the most effective use of people, skills and resources.
- **Implement community and neighbourhood hubs.** London will establish a series of neighbourhood hubs that will offer a wide range of services for children, youth and families, and make services more accessible.

Putting the Plan into Action

The Child and Youth Network will oversee the entire agenda. As part of their commitment to the Child and Youth Agenda to 2015, each member of the Child and Youth Network has written a letter endorsing our plan for the first three years. They have all agreed to participate in the plan, and to do their part to put our vision into action. The Implementation Steering committees and the Child and Youth Network will be supported by a Child and Youth Agenda Implementation Support team.

The three-year plan and the broader Child and Youth Agenda will evolve over time. Each year, the Child and Youth Network will review the progress, evaluate the impact of each initiative, refine or adjust the plan, and issue an annual progress report to keep the community informed.

Many of the plan's initiatives will benefit all children, youth and families; others are targeted to those most at risk and most in need. All will make a real, measurable difference in the lives of London's children, youth and families. By working together to put our plan into action – neighbourhood by neighbourhood – we will make London a great place to live and raise a family.

**Happy, healthy children and youth today;
caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow**



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Child and Youth Network Members

We would like to thank all the organizations and individuals who are members of Child and Youth Network and others who helped develop the Child and Youth Agenda, and the plan for its first three years.

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Anago Resources - London Administration Office	Mandy Bennett / Kelly Wright	
Arbour Glen Day Nursery, The Edu-Care Board Incorporated	Jamie Grenier	
Association of Early Childhood Educators London/Sarnia Branch	Janet Foster	
At^lohsa Native Family Healing Service	Darlene Ritchie / Chanda Kennedy	
Autism Ontario, London Chapter	Jane Brenneman	
Bethesda Centre / Salvation Army	Cherilyn Meunier	
Big Brothers of London	Glen Mitchell	
Big Sisters of London	Catherine Urquhart (A/P)	
Boys & Girls Club of London	Don Donner (HE/HPA)	
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Centre Communautaire Regional De London	Dieufert Bellot	
Centre of Hope	Nancy Powers	
Chelsea Green Children's Centre Inc	Gerri Doerr (A/P)	
Child Care Advisory Committee	Andrea Brown / Shari Carter / Colette Chapman / Margaret Hoff / Carol Wagg	
Child Minding Monitoring Advisory Support (CMAS) LINC	Lily Johnson (Lit)	
Childreach	Susan Ryans / Huda Hussein	
Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex	Jane Fitzgerald / Regina Whelan / Martha Salguero / Laverne Foran (A/P) / Wendy Pol	
Children's Health Foundation	Debbie Comuzzi	
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Program Children's Hospital London Health Sciences Centre	Monique Presse, Karen Davies, Shawna Cunningham, Tracy Robinson	
Children's Hospital of Western Ontario Adolescent Mental Health Service	Margaret Steele	
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CNIB - Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Sherry Malcho/ Jennifer Urosevic	
Community Living London	Sandy Jefferson (A/P)/ Jill McIntyre/ Michelle Palmer	
Community Services Coordination Network	Liz Prendergast	

Conseil Scolaire de district des ecoles Catholiques du Sud-Quest	Paul Levac
Conseil Scolaire de district du Centre-sud-Quest	Jean-Luc Bernard / Jennifer Lamarche Schmalz/ Sylvain Giroux
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Craigwood / Community Ventures	Sandra Fieber
Crouch Resource Centre	Mary Starnaman (A/P)
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East London Resource Centre	Sandra Neubauer (HE/HPA) / Catherine Watson
Easter Seals	Susan Smith/ Leah Ledgley
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London Community Foundation	Catherine Joyes / Martha Powell
London District Catholic School Board	Wilma DeRond, Susan Ralyea (A/P) / Chris Quinn (Lit) Sue McMahon (HE/HPA)
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London Employment Sector Council	Kim Bewsky (A/P)
London Family Court Clinic	Linda Baker

London Food Bank	Jane Roy / Donna Speller
London Health Science Centre	Tracy Robinson, Lori Hassall, Lisa Hawthornewaite, David Heaton
London Homeless Coalition	Shelley Yeo (A/P)
London In-Home Child Care Providers Network	Joyce Larsh
London InterCommunity Health Centre	Ann Doumkou / Michelle Hurtubise / Vindu Balani / Greg Nash / Sherri-Jo King (HE/HPA)
London Military Family Resource Centre	Sheila Lupson/ Deborah Smith
London Police Service - Family Consultant/ Victim Services Unit	Lisa Heslop / Melikie Joseph
London Police Service - Diversity Officer	Peter Testa
London Public Library	Susanna Hubbard Krimmer / Julie Brandl (Lit) / Brian Rhoden (Lit)
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Ministry of Health Promotion, Sports and Recreation Branch	Jo-Ann Hutchison (ex-officio)
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OEYC, Literacy Specialist	Patti Prentice (Lit)
OEYC London Fanshawe / Merrymount	Deborah Gillis
OEYC London North Centre / Childreach	Susan Ryans / Anne McKay (A/P) / Nici Cole
OEYC London West / London Children's Connection	Eileen Smith
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Simply Kids Incorporated	Garry Foster
Sisters of St. Josephs (Office of Social Justice)	Helene Diesbourg
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Southwest Local Health Integration Network	Tony Woolgar / Debbie Lee / Kelly Gillis
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Women's Rural Resource Centre, Strathroy & Area	Kathryn Eggert
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YOU (Youth Opportunities Unlimited)	Steve Cordes / Kim Bowsky (AP)
Youth Action Centre	Trevor Johnson (HE/HPA)
Youth For Christ	Bob Black, Gil Clelland

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