



Northumberland County's Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan

2024 Update and Progress Report

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Early Years Services
Community & Social Services

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Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan Update

In 2018, Northumberland County's Early Years Services Division initiated a comprehensive community engagement project to identify priorities, actions, and indicators of success for the Early Years sector. The result of this consultation was the creation of a rich and ambitious Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan to guide the system from 2019 through to 2024.

Unfortunately, the pandemic greatly affected child care and early learning programs beginning in 2020 and into 2022. Many of the second and third-year action items from the Service Plan were put on hold while the Early Years system was reacting, planning, and implementing the "new normal" for early learning and child care programs. Despite these challenges, significant progress was made in many of the priority areas and the groundwork was laid for work to come in 2024 and beyond. A summary of the five priority areas and the accomplishments achieved to date will be outlined below, along with new initiatives that will be implemented or are in progress.

Northumberland County Early Years Services will be working on a new plan for 2025 to 2030, in collaboration with local service providers, community partners, early learning staff, and children and families.

Northumberland Early Years Services

Northumberland County is the Service System Manager (SSM) responsible for planning and managing licensed child care services, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and other ministry-funded Early Learning programs and services. Early Years Services ensures the Early Years system reflects local needs and remains consistent with current legislation, regulations, and policy.

In Northumberland County, Early Years Services supports five main program areas: EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Licensed Child Care, Special Needs Resourcing, Professional Learning and Quality Improvement, and Indigenous-Led Child and Family Programs. Early Years programs and services are funded through the Ontario Ministry of Education (MEDU), the Federal Government, and Municipal levy contributions.

Early Years programs are governed by the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, which came into effect August 2015. This legislation was designed to improve quality, health, and safety in the child care and Early Years system across Ontario.

Licensed Child Care in Northumberland

Currently, there are 9 organizations licensed to provide centre-based child care in Northumberland, operating 32 centres. All but one are non-profit. There are two licensed home child care agencies licensed for up to 24 homes. There are 1987

licensed centre spaces and up to 144 licensed home care spaces in Northumberland serving children from infancy to school age.

School-aged spaces are the most numerous, accounting for 41% of licensed child care spaces. This is followed by kindergarten spaces, at 29%. Preschool spaces make up 18% of licensed child care spaces, with 8% of spaces for toddlers and 3% for infants. Family age group spaces made up the remaining 1% of licensed centre spaces. Increased staffing needs for younger age groupings results in fewer spaces available for those ages.

Current Status of Licensed Child Care in Northumberland

There is a high demand for licensed child care across the County. Northumberland County's Early Years Services assesses the status of child care waitlists regularly. The last review was completed in 2023, with an updated report to come by mid-year 2024. A Child Care Needs Assessment was also conducted in both 2022 and 2023, to better understand child care related pressures and challenges for families in the region.

- As of June 2023, there were 1910 children on centre waitlists for care in Northumberland County.
- 777 children were in immediate need of child care at the time data was collected.
- Toddlers made up the largest share of waitlisted children, at 34.6%, followed by preschoolers at 22.1%.
- Infants made up 17.8% of waitlisted children, school-aged children made up 15% of waitlisted children, and kindergarteners made up 10.4%.
- Long waitlists/lack of spaces was the most commonly identified barrier on both the 2022 and 2023 Child Care Needs Assessment (increasing from 60% of responses to 81% between 2022 and 2023).

Other barriers to accessing child care in Northumberland include hours of operation and location/distance. At the earliest, child care centres open at 6:30 AM and the latest they remain open is 6:00 PM, with care only available Monday to Friday. There are currently no evening or weekend hours offered via centre-based care in Northumberland. While home child care providers may operate in the evening or on weekends, most child care spaces are centre-based. Overall, licensed child care options are limited for parents who do not work traditional hours. In addition, accessing care close to their home or work can be challenging for families. Population density across Northumberland municipalities ranges from 18.8 to 915.7 people per square kilometer, representing variability in the degree of rurality across the region.

To improve access to child care, the Ministry of Education's *Access and Inclusion* framework, outlined below, will ensure that child care spaces are built where they are most needed.

Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

In March 2022, the Ontario government signed a federal agreement establishing a national child care strategy (Canada-Wide Early Learning and Care Agreement, or CWELCC). The intent of the CWELCC system is to improve access to affordable and accessible licensed child care spaces, in addition to supporting the early childhood workforce through wage compensation and professional learning opportunities. Through this agreement, Ontario has committed to the development of 86,000 licensed child care spaces by the end of 2025 (less 15,000 spaces already created since 2019). The agreement has also resulted in lower fees for families that attend licensed centre or home-based child care, with the goal of an average fee of \$10 a day by 2026.

Affordability

Under CWELCC, fees for children aged 0 to 5 have been reduced by 52.75% since the beginning of 2022. In Northumberland, on average, parents pay \$20 for full-day centre-based care and \$21 for full-day licensed home child care, depending on the age of their child (this includes infants, toddlers, and preschoolers). 2022's Child Care Needs Assessment survey results indicated that over half of parents/caregivers found affordability to be a barrier in accessing child care. In 2023, post-CWELCC implementation, this was reduced to 1% of responses.

Figure 1 shows the median cost of child care in Northumberland for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarteners (under the age of 6) for both centre-based care and licensed home child care. These spaces are supported by fee reduction under CWELCC. Costs for full-day centre-based child care decrease as children get older, from approximately \$22 per day for infant care to \$18 per day for preschool care. Similarly, licensed home child care costs \$22 per day for infants and approximately \$21 for toddlers and preschoolers. Fees for kindergarten aged before and after school care (for those under the age of 6) were approximately \$13 per day for both centre based and licensed home child care.

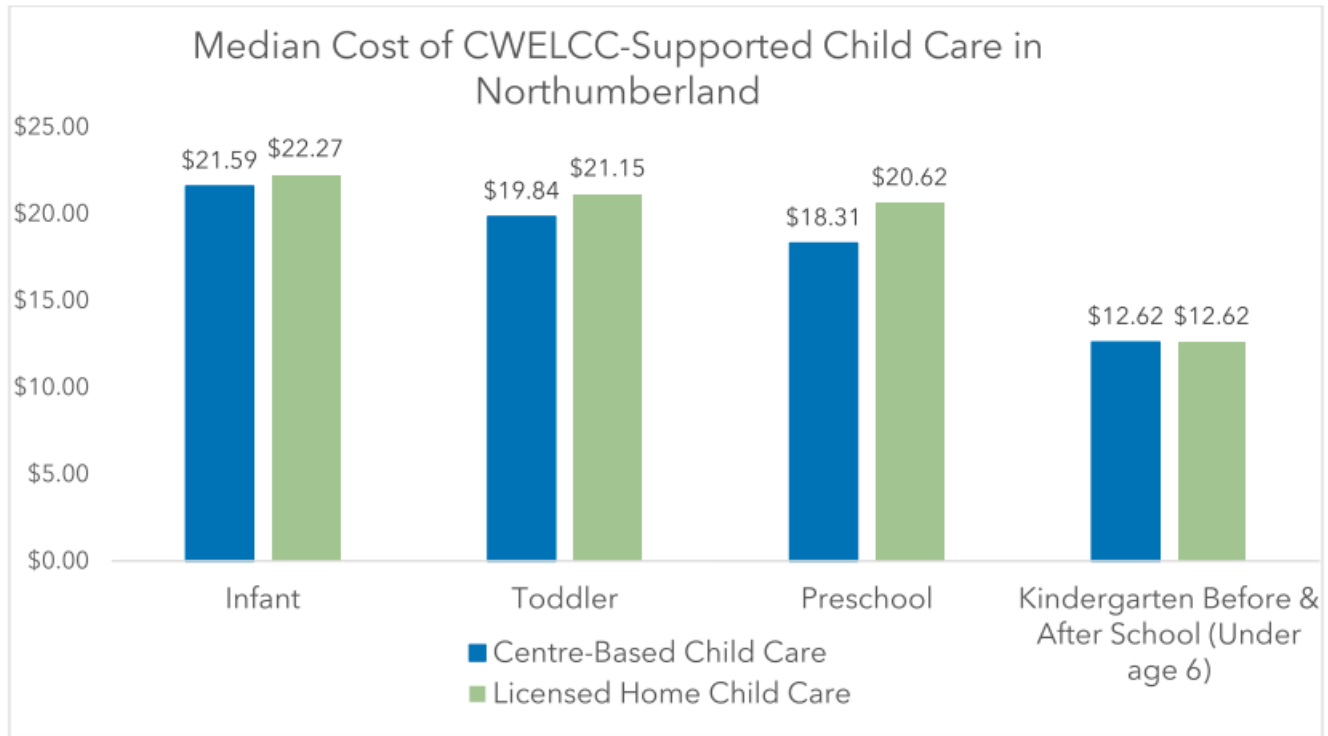


Figure 1. Median cost of CWELCC-supported child care in Northumberland

For eligible families, Northumberland County also supports a program providing fee subsidies for child care. As of December 2023, a total of 336 children were supported by fee subsidy; of these, 22% were fully subsidized. At the time of writing, there was no waitlist for fee subsidies in Northumberland County.

Access and Inclusion

With the implementation of the CWELCC system, an additional 86,000 licensed child care spaces will be created in Ontario by the end of 2026. These spaces are intended to increase accessibility for children 0 to 5, with the goal of having one affordable child care space available for approximately every 3 children aged 0 to 5 and to meet the needs of typically underserved communities across the province. A directed growth model has been established to support the *Access and Inclusion* Framework.

Directed Growth Strategy

A directed growth strategy has been developed to allocate funding for new spaces for children aged 0 to 5 across SSMs, with a focus on working toward a common provincial access ratio of 37%. Under this model, the MEDU has allocated 404 spaces to be created by Northumberland County by the end of 2026. The model is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities, and capacity for growth. Currently, only Cobourg has greater than 37% access. To ensure 37% access in all

Northumberland municipalities, 816 new operating spaces for children aged 0 to 5 would need to be created.

Of the 404 spaces currently allocated, 345 are community based and 59 are school-based spaces. The school-based spaces are dictated by the Ministry. The community spaces can be net new licensed centre-based spaces, net new licensed home child care spaces or a combination of both. If a school space has been identified locally, these spaces would count towards community spaces.

The Ministry has identified the following groups as priority targets for these spaces:

- Children from low-income families
- Children with special needs
- Families who work non-traditional hours
- Children from diverse communities including Black, racialized and newcomers
- Indigenous children
- Francophone children
- Underserved communities/areas

In Northumberland County, two additional factors were added:

- Demand for space/waitlist
- Rural community

Northumberland County has developed a framework based on the factors above to determine where to prioritize the 404 targeted growth spaces. The framework used existing child care capacity, demand for child care, demographic information, projected growth, and socio-economic factors to rank each municipality. The rankings for each factor were combined to determine where to prioritize new child care spaces. This framework is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it best reflects the changing needs of the area. Currently, the neighbourhood rankings, from highest to lowest priority, are:

1. Cobourg
2. Trent Hills
3. Port Hope
4. Brighton
5. Alnwick/Haldimand
6. Cramahe
7. Hamilton

While Northumberland County recognizes that all our communities have unique needs and demands relating to child care, this expansion program is meant to ensure neighborhoods which have been traditionally underserved and/or have high

populations of the Ministry identified groups, are prioritized in the allocation of these limited spaces. However, all opportunities will be reviewed and considered to ensure we entertain all options to best serve our communities. The creation of centre-based spaces is subject to the availability of existing buildings within the priority areas which meet the requirement of a licensed child care program. Details relating to the building requirements for licensed child care centres can be found in the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)* and are subject to the approval of licensing, municipal by-laws, public health requirements as well as building and fire codes. While the focus is on the priority neighbourhoods, it is understood that some areas will have more opportunity to grow with the overall goal to achieve 404 spaces across Northumberland County.

In 2023, two licensed centre-based expansion projects were initiated, with one complete to date. This resulted in 10 infant spaces opening in Brighton. The second project will add 15 spaces via a family age grouping in Cobourg.

Licensed home child care (LHCC) has also expanded in Northumberland. In 2022, there were 8 homes open, for a total of 48 spaces. As of 2024, there are 15 homes with locations in all 7 member municipalities. There are 9 additional homes expected to be operating by mid-year 2024, resulting in 144 total spaces via LHCC. The Early Years Team will continue to be open to discuss expansion opportunities with all local partners.

Start-Up Grant Funding

Start-Up Grant Funding may be available to selected operators to support the implementation of these expansion spaces. This grant will only support operators who are in alignment with Northumberland's Directed Growth Strategy. This grant will fund facilities to be retrofitted, renovated, and/or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for children under the age of six for full day programs only. Therefore, the focus is on infant, toddler, and preschool age groups.

Eligible Expenses: Centre-Based Applicants

- Play-based materials, equipment and furnishings (both indoor and outdoor)
- Non-consumable supplies
- Renovations, additions or repairs to current or potential child care facilities
- Leasehold improvements
- Changes to outdoor spaces as a result of the expansion

Eligible Expense: Home-Based Applicants

- Play-based material, equipment and furnishings (both indoor and outdoor) that can be transferred between home child care licensees as required

Ineligible Expenses:

- Purchase of land or buildings
- Debt costs including principal and interest payments related to capital loans, mortgage financing and operating loans
- Property taxes
- Expenditures related to 6 to 12 age groups
- School-based child care spaces
- Indoor and outdoor renovations, additions or repairs to home child care licensee premises or potential home child care licensee premises

Initial requests went out to member municipalities and school-boards, looking for opportunities for partnerships and space in municipal buildings and schools for the expansion of licensed child care. The Early Years Team also held child care operator group meetings and met one on one with each operator to discuss expansion opportunities either within their own site or potential new spaces for centre-based care.

For 2023 and into 2024, three centre-based projects have been identified under Start-Up Grant funding. In total, these initiatives account for 166 infant, toddler, and preschool-aged spaces. When considering these and the already approved projects in 2023, a total of 191 centre-based spaces will be added in 2023 and 2024.

Workforce Compensation

Provincial and federal funding supports have assisted child care licensees in improving educator wages. The existing provincial Wage Enhancement Grant provides up to an additional \$2 per hour for eligible child care program staff working in licensed child care and up to \$20 per day for home child care caregivers. CWELCC introduced an annual increase of \$1 per hour for program staff as of 2023 (compounding each year) and a wage floor that RECE wages are brought up to if their wages fall below the threshold. All licensed centres and home agencies are participating in the wage enhancement program, with all CWELCC enrolled licensees also providing their staff with CWELCC wage compensation. In 2024, to improve educator recruitment and retention, the wage compensation guidelines were modified to ensure greater access to these supports, including increases to the maximum wage caps. As a result, it is anticipated that 100% of Northumberland's RECEs and RECE supervisors will receive wage compensation support in 2024.

Workforce and Professional Development

An essential aspect of quality child care is a well-trained workforce. In recent years, the Early Years sector has been facing a crisis in recruiting and retaining qualified

educators. Northumberland County has taken several actions to improve recruitment and retention of child care workers, in addition to the wage supports outlined above:

- Northumberland established the Early Years Employment Initiative (EYEI) in 2022 and 2023, with another cohort expected for 2024. EYEI is a six-week paid program in partnership with Fleming College. The participants spent two weeks in class receiving training and certificate opportunities to prepare for a four-week placement in an Early Years setting. This exposed students to the multitude of career options available in the Early Years sector.
- Extensive professional learning opportunities have been provided to educators, including a 12-week self-regulation certificate program that supports understanding children’s behaviors and well-being. Educators have also participated in workshops on mental health, building leadership skills, and effectively communicating with children. Beginning in 2022, an annual full-day professional learning event is held to mark Early Childhood Educator and Childcare Worker Day. Support is provided to child care operators to close for this day and ensure all staff have the option to attend.
- Funding is provided to early childhood educators enrolled in college programs to cover the cost of books and technology not covered by existing Ontario ECE grants. This encourages educators to improve their qualifications while reducing potential financial barriers/pressures.

The workforce and capacity-building initiatives are supported by the Northumberland Workforce and Capacity-Building Mentor, a two-year contract position operated out of Five Counties Children’s Centre. This position has provided an existing educator from Northumberland the opportunity to build leadership skills and become a mentor and support to all Early Years programs.

[EarlyON Centres in Northumberland](#)

EarlyON Child and Family Centres serve three main goals: to engage parents and caregivers, to support early learning and development, and to make connections for families. To achieve this goal, Northumberland EarlyON programs involve many community partnerships. These partnerships include connections with public health, parenting programs, special needs services, libraries, recreation, forestry, child care, Indigenous organizations, school boards, and local child and youth services.

Currently, Northumberland County offers seven permanent EarlyON Child and Family Centre sites and periodic programming at six mobile outreach sites. Three lead organizations run EarlyON programs: Compass Early Learning and Care-Beehive, Brighton Children’s Centre, and YMCA Northumberland.

Along with increasing access to child care, it is also important to ensure equitable access to EarlyON programs. An evening mealtime EarlyON program and weekend EarlyON programs have been added to reach families whose schedules may not align with regular EarlyON hours. Additionally, the number of EarlyON outreach sites continues to grow to meet families in their own communities.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Early Years and child care programs and services play a vital role in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community. All children, families, and educators deserve to feel included and respected.

Northumberland has taken actions to support Indigenous families and encourage all families to learn about local Indigenous culture. In partnership with the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, Northumberland has established an Indigenous Early Learning Team and delivered Indigenous-led programs to EarlyON and child care centres. This team also provides training to educators and Early Years partners regarding Indigenous culture. In addition to outreach within the community, a dedicated Indigenous EarlyON room was established in the Cobourg EarlyON in 2023. Equity, diversity, and inclusion resource kits containing books, dolls of diverse backgrounds, and musical instruments and other tools from different cultures were distributed to child care and EarlyON programs. Additionally, in 2022, an Early Years DEI Working Committee was established, and this group will guide future programming and service delivery. These and other programming highlights will be outlined further in the section below.

2022-2023 Highlights and Accomplishments

2023 marked the second year of CWELCC and the first full year of implementation of the agreement. It was a year of transition, growth, and progress as the entire Early Years System also returned to full operation post-pandemic. A summary of the progress and accomplishments made in 2022 and 2023 will be highlighted below, reflecting the five priority areas identified in the 2019-2024 Service Plan. Goals and actions for 2024 and beyond will also be outlined.

Priority 1: Communication, Connections, and Community

- Expanded EarlyON outreach to include 5 partner locations and 4 libraries, collaborating with a variety of community partners in primarily rural areas.
- Enhanced partnerships with Northumberland Paramedics and Northumberland Forest.
- Increased EarlyON promotion via specific community-wide initiatives, celebrating Family Day, Literacy Day, and March Break. EarlyON Bingo

encouraged families to visit a variety of programs and services across the region.

- The number of visits made by children (aged 0 to 6) to a Northumberland EarlyON Centre increased by 118% compared to 2022, with a total of 14,313 visits in 2023. In 2023, 1308 unique children and 973 unique parents/caregivers attended a Northumberland County EarlyON program.
- Established the Early Years Working Group, a sub-committee of the Northumberland Children and Youth Collaborative. This group connects front-line service workers from several providers, for the purpose of knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- 1229 families participated in 5 surveys between 2020 and 2023 to inform Early Years and child care planning.
- Through a partnership with Rebound Child and Youth Services, 404 families were supported through Triple P parenting programs. A total of 6 agencies regularly participate in the Triple P network and offer these supports to families. In addition, via outreach programming, 197 youths aged 7 to 12 and 511 youth aged 13 to 18 received services through Rebound.

Priority 2: Service Access

- The number of licensed child care spaces grew by 131 between 2019 and 2023, including a new infant room that opened in Brighton in 2023. Expansion of four additional centres is in progress, for a total of 191 infant to preschool spaces added from these five projects.
- 100% of non-profit licensed child care providers are participating in CWELCC as of 2023.
- Average reduction of 52.75% in child care fees for children 0 to 5 under CWELCC. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of families reporting affordability as a barrier was reduced from 51% to 1% (via the Child Care Needs Assessment survey).
- A new prenatal program was offered via EarlyON in 2023, with support offered by a public health nurse. Evening programs, featuring a light dinner, as well as weekend programming are also offered to ensure families have the opportunity to attend outside of traditional hours.

Priority 3: Early Childhood Educators

- Beginning in 2022, a county-wide professional development day was offered to educators. This aligns with Early Childhood Educator and Childcare Worker appreciation day and will be continued on an annual basis. In October 2023, 225 educators attended.

- 60% of 2022 Early Years Employment Initiative participants and 80% of 2023 participants obtained jobs in the Early Years sector or pursued continuing education in Early Years. In 2023, the program included partnerships with Watton's Employment Services, Fleming College, as well as local high schools and school boards.
- 326 child care program staff and supervisors participated in professional learning sessions in 2022. As well, 31 educators participated in a 12-week self-regulation certificate program that supports understanding children's behaviors and well-being. Educators have also participated in workshops on mental health, building leadership skills, and effectively communicating with children.
- Northumberland engaged in a provincial wide communications and promotion campaign to highlight the importance and role of the Early Years sector.
- We also participated in a provincial wide data collection initiative spearheaded by the Atkinson Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, to better understand the Early Years child care workforce at a regional level ("Knowing Our Numbers").
- Open tour nights were offered to educators to visit and learn from other child care centres.

Priority 4: Physical Health and Well-being

- In partnership with YMCA Northumberland, offered specialized training with Dr. Beverlie Dietze, who is an expert on outdoor pedagogy.
- Also offered multiple mental health promotion sessions for Early Years staff and parents with renowned child psychiatrist Dr. Jean Clinton ("Connections are Key").
- Continued Northumberland's Self-Reg journey, with numerous staff participating in The Mehrit Centre's Early Childhood Development Program.
- Maintained an array of EarlyON program offerings that promote physical well-being, including outdoor events, park and forest visits, as well as regular programs at the Baltimore Turf, Hastings Field House, and the Port Hope pool.

Priority 5: Culture and Diversity

- An Indigenous EarlyON room was established in Cobourg in 2023, which was visited by children 417 times.
- Language of the Land website launched in 2022 to promote the language of the Anishinaabe people, through child-friendly characters that provide cultural tales, word games, and language learning.

- Events and training opportunities were offered with a DEI focus, including acknowledgment of Black History Month, Truth and Reconciliation Day, and National Indigenous People’s Day, in addition to 2023’s ECE Appreciation Day.
- Numerous opportunities offered for Medicine Walks.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion resource kits containing books, dolls of diverse backgrounds, and musical instruments and other tools from different cultures were distributed to child care and EarlyON programs.

Priorities and Actions for 2024

Building on the success of 2023, goals, targets, and priorities for 2024 will be outlined below, along with progress and highlights to date.

Priority 1: Communication, Connections, and Community

- In 2024, Northumberland EarlyON once again offered March Break events, which were very well-attended.
- EarlyON Bingo ran for the second year, with 94 families submitting completed Bingo cards. This initiative promoted family participation in a variety of programs and services. A 5% increase in program average EarlyON program attendance was observed during the Bingo initiative.
- Continue to explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership between County services (e.g., Forest).
- Continue collaboration with member municipalities and school-boards to expand child care and EarlyON.
- Maintain existing partnership with Rebound Child and Youth services to offer parenting supports throughout the region.

Priority 2: Service Access

- In the first quarter of 2024, began offering specific EarlyON programming for the immediate post-partum period (“The Fourth Trimester”) with support from a registered midwife.
- An online fee subsidy portal is in development and will be launched in early 2024. This will increase service access and ensure simple and secure communication between caseworkers and clients. Additional content and information will be on the County website to ensure families are aware of available supports related to fee subsidy.
- Continue promotion of fee subsidy for eligible families. A communications and promotion plan is in development with the County’s Communication Department to ensure families are aware they may be eligible even under the CWELCC system.
- Continued implementation of CWELCC fee reductions.

- Monitor and adjust *Access and Inclusion* Framework to increase number of licensed spaces, especially in municipalities with low access and demonstrated need.
- Review EarlyON outreach locations regularly to ensure they support EarlyON access across all municipalities.

Priority 3: Early Childhood Educators

- Support initiatives that will increase the number of Registered Early Childhood Educators.
- Continue with professional learning opportunities for existing educators.
- In conjunction with Early Childhood Educator and Childcare Worker Day, continue to offer a full-day professional learning event. Support is provided to child care operators to close for this day and ensure all staff have the option to attend.
- Collaborate with Economic Development Department to explore opportunities to increase qualified RECE workforce.

Priority 4: Physical Health and Well-being

- The results of the most recent cycle of the Early Development Instrument (a measure of child health and development) are expected to be released in summer 2024. These results will be used to guide professional development and programming offerings for staff, children, and families. These findings will also inform our directed growth plan, as there may be areas of increased need identified.
- Host an outdoor/physical education event with Dr. Beverlie Dietze.
- Professional development opportunities will be offered throughout the month of May 2024, with a focus on self-care and mental well-being.

Priority 5: Culture and Diversity

- Expand the scope of this priority area to focus on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) across the system.
- Support educator training in IDEA.
- Expand and build on the acknowledgement of Indigenous People's Day, Black History Month, and Truth and Reconciliation Day, in addition to supporting and recognizing other marginalized communities.
- Act on recommendations from DEI Working Committee.
- Continue the work of the Early Years Indigenous Team, including expanding resources for families (e.g., Language of the Land website), and increasing programming offerings.
- Monitor caseload of SNR staff and quantify the increasing demand for enhanced services.

Measurement Indicators for 2024

Progress in the priority areas during the final year of the plan will be monitored via the following indicators:

Priority 1: Communication, Connections, and Community

- Participation in EarlyON programs and events, via number of unique and total visits.
- Number of collaborative partnerships between EarlyON and service providers.

Priority 2: Service Access

- Average daily cost of child care.
- Number of families receiving fee subsidy.
- Number of licensed child care spaces created.
- Number of home care providers.
- Number of children on child care waitlist.
- Participation in child care and EarlyON by rural families.
- Amount of EarlyON programming offered in rural areas.

Priority 3: Early Childhood Educators

- RECE wages.
- Percentage of educators that are RECEs.
- Number of RECE job openings/vacancies.
- Number of professional learning opportunities offered and attendance at these events.
- Early years quality tool (Learning Quality Reflection) responses.
- Annual Professional Development Feedback survey responses.

Priority 4: Physical Health and Well-being

- Percentage of children vulnerable on Early Development Instrument.
- Participant participation in and feedback from mental and physical health professional development sessions.

Priority 5: Culture and Diversity

- Participation in Indigenous-led child and family programming (unique and total visits).
- Number of programs offered and child cares/EarlyON centres supported.
- Child, family, and educator ratings of inclusion and belonging on feedback surveys and quality tool responses.
- Educator and leader participation in professional development related to child behaviour and development.

- Number of children receiving special needs supports from Five Counties Children's Centre.

Summary

Northumberland County supports EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Licensed Child Care, Special Needs Resourcing, Professional Learning and Quality Improvement, and Indigenous-Led Child and Family Programs. Northumberland is looking to continuously improve services to better serve our community. Much has been accomplished over the past few years, such as taking actions to improve the Early Years workforce and overseeing the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan. Northumberland will continue to work towards enhancing and supporting the strong Early Years system that exists in the County, primarily in the areas of access, affordability, quality, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Acronyms and Definitions

Child care operator/licensee/agency/provider: These terms are used interchangeably to refer to the head office/primary operator of the child care centre or home agency. All child care operators and agencies referred to in this report and who hold a service agreement with Northumberland County are licensed by the Ministry of Education.

CWELCC: Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. A 5-year agreement between the federal and provincial governments designed to improve access and affordability in the child care sector, as well as the retention and recruitment of early childhood educators.

EDI: Early Development Instrument. This population-level measure assesses child vulnerability in 5 domains. Traditionally the EDI is completed every 3 years.

LHCC: Licensed Home Child Care. LHCC agencies operate and oversee multiple homes under their head office. Northumberland has two agencies overseeing up to 24 homes.

MEDU: Ontario's Ministry of Education. The MEDU is responsible for funding EarlyON, child care, and special needs resourcing. The Ministry also provides funding for Indigenous-led programming, workforce and professional development, and quality initiatives.

RECE: Registered Early Childhood Educator. RECEs are registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. Child care operators are required to have a certain number of RECEs in their programs.

SNR: Special Needs Resourcing. Services are provided via Five Counties Children’s Centre and funded by the County. This refers to enhanced child care supports and the Resource Consultants who work with child cares and EarlyONs.

SSM: Social Services Manager, formerly referred to as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) or District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB). SSM’s oversee social service programs, including Ontario Works, Housing, Homelessness, Food Security Services, and Early Years.

The full 2019-2024 Early Years and Child Care Plan is available upon request. The 2025-2030 plan will be in development throughout 2024, in collaboration with community partners, families, and service providers.