

Policy Discussion Papers Preliminary Discussion

Request for Recommendation Priorities Committee



Type of Decision									
Meeting	June 20 th , 2007				Report Date	June 1, 2007			
Decision Requested	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
	Direction Only				Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed

Report Title
Best Start Community and Child Care Plans, 2007/2008

Budget Impact / Policy Implication	
X	This report has been reviewed by the Finance Division and the funding source has been identified.

Recommendation

The Best Start Community Plan and Child Care Plan will provide policy direction for the Children Services Section for 2007-08 and beyond. Activities proposed in the Plans support the Section's business plan and overall goals.

The City receives Best Start funding from MCYS at 100%. Activities proposed in the Plans that have a financial impact will be funded by Best Start funding or as part of the Children's Service Section's regular funding for child care and related services.

Whereas Best Start is Ontario's plan for early learning and child care and the City of Greater Sudbury is the lead partner in the local Best Start Initiative; and

Whereas, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) has requested a Best Start Community Plan from each local Best Start Network and a more detailed Child Care Plan from each CMSM , to be submitted by June 30, 2007; and

Whereas the Children Services Section has consulted widely with all Best Start Partners in developing the Best Start Community Plan and the Child Care Plan which will provide direction for 2007-08 and beyond; and

Whereas, all Best Start Network partner organizations will be asked to sign off on the Best Start Community Plan

Therefore be it resolved that City of Greater Sudbury Council approve the City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Community Plan and Child Care Plan and direct staff to submit both Plans to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

X	Background Attached
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	Recommendation Continued
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Recommended by the Department

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Background:

On November 25, 2004, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services introduced their Best Start initiative which included a \$5 billion commitment over a five-year period starting in 2005-2006. The framework for the Best Start Initiative has been built on the premise that all children and youth should have the opportunity to succeed and families should have access to service regardless of income. According to MCYS, Ontario's Best Start Plan will "provide for the healthy development, early learning and child care of Ontario's children in their first years. Through Best Start, children will acquire the physical, social-emotional, language, thinking and early literacy skills that are required to arrive at school ready and eager to learn. Research shows these investments will reap economic and social benefits as children grow up and become happy, healthy and contributing members of society." Ontario's Best Start includes investments in Early Learning and Child Care as well in children's healthy development.

The Ministry, through the City of Greater Sudbury, has invested in a major expansion of licensed child care and improvements to the child care subsidy system which have made more families eligible for child care subsidy. The City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Network was created, made up of partners from all four school boards and the child care, family support and specialized children services sectors. This Network provides direction at a local level for Best Start activities and is currently overseeing the development of a network of 12 Best Start early learning and care hubs in schools throughout the community. Through Best Start, specialized services such as Preschool Speech and Language services have received additional funding to expand their programming.

Greater Sudbury has been a leader in the Province in moving forward with the Best Start Vision. The Children Services Section exceeded its Ministry targets for Licensed Child Care Expansion by more than 44%. Because Best Start funding levels were based on the number of child care spaces created, Greater Sudbury has received additional funding and has been able to hire project staff to help move the Best Start Vision forward. With the assistance of these contracted staff, the Best Start Network is involved in a significant re-organization of the delivery of children's services which will result in the opening of Best Start Hubs throughout the City where parents will receive coordinated access to a large range of services. The first four Hubs are slated to open in September 2007. Greater Sudbury will be one of the first non-demonstration communities in the Province and the only one in Northern Ontario to have Best Start Hubs operating.

MCYS has requested that the Best Start Network submit a Community Plan of their progress to date and proposed activities for 2007-08 by June 30th and has requested the CMSMs add to this a Child Care Plan detailing specific plans and activities as they relate to the Licensed Child Care system. These plans are provided and a synopsis is provided below.

1. Best Start Community Plan- Summary

The Best Start Community Plan has been developed with the ongoing input and participation of all Best Start partners and includes a description of the progress made implementing Best Start as well as an outline of the Best Start Network's plan to implement the Best Start vision of an integrated system of early learning and care for all children in Greater Sudbury.

Progress towards Achieving the Long-Term Vision for Best Start

The following are the key accomplishments of the Best Start Network in 2006/07.

1. The Best Start Network has approved the development of a network of 12 Best Start Hubs to serve the needs of the diverse communities and geography of Greater Sudbury.
2. The Child Care Expansion continued in 2006/07, with the creation of 1187 net new licensed child care spaces between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007. Of these, 574 were Best Start child care spaces and 613 were for children aged 6-12. On March 31, 2007 there were a total of 4597 licensed child care spaces, a 26% increase from March 31, 2006. The number and proportion of francophone child care spaces has increased. On March 31, 2007, 32% of all spaces were offered in French, meeting the needs of the 28% of the population who list French as their mother tongue.
3. Child Care utilization is increasing in response to the expanded child care system. In 2006 there was a 10 % increase in the number of families receiving child care subsidy- from 1975 families in 2005 to 2169 families in 2006. From November 2005 to November 2006 there was a 41% increase in total children using licensed child care (full fee and subsidized).
4. The Best Start Network has developed and started implementing a communication plan and communication materials containing shared key messages.
5. The Best Start Network revised and approved a new set of Terms of Reference and a reorganization of committees and membership to better reflect the vision of Best Start, to improve representation of sectors and to define the functions of Best Start.
6. The Best Start Network has further developed its effectiveness as an organization and has cultivated the level of trust necessary to plan for the community as a whole.
7. The Best Start Network has had excellent representation at the French Language Service Network with 4 members having cross representation on both Networks. Sudbury has made the expansion of Francophone services an integral part of its Best Start plan.
8. The Best Start Network has an active Aboriginal Advisory Sub-committee with representation on the Best Start Network. Sudbury has made the enhancement of Aboriginal services an integral part of its Best Start plan.
9. The link between the Best Start Network and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) planning table (the Local Service System Management Table, or

LSSMT) has been formalized through the Best Start Network Terms of Reference and is functioning well.

10. Child Care Resources, with the support of the Child Care Supervisor's Network continues to organize a joint training schedule for all child care agencies which has been very successful at ensuring access to training for staff in all child care centres. This initiative can provide a foundation for further expansion of joint training initiatives.

Strategies to Move Forward with the Community Vision for Best Start

The following will be the key activities of the Best Start Network in 2007/8:

Hub Development: The Network will oversee the piloting of at least 4 of the 12 Hubs, including an evaluation of the process of developing and implementing Hubs that will help to inform the development of future Hubs. Hubs planned for September 2007 will be located at Pius XII School in Minnow Lake and Copper Cliff Public School in Copper Cliff (English Hubs), Ecole Jeanne Sauve in downtown Sudbury and Ecole Alliance St. Joseph in Chelmsford (Francophone Hubs) and the Better Beginnings Better Futures Community Centre in the Flour Mill (Aboriginal Hub). The City will make transitional funding available to support the transition to Hubs.

Joint Training: The Network will develop and implement a comprehensive joint training plan to offer all partners in Best Start training opportunities related to integration and increasing competencies throughout the system.

Parent Engagement: The Network will approve and oversee the implementation of a parent engagement strategy to ensure parent participation at all levels of Best Start.

Planning and Evaluation: An evaluation committee will meet to develop and implement an Evaluation Plan to monitor progress of Best Start, assess outcomes for families and provide recommendations for continuous improvement.

Integration: In order to move forward with system integration Best Start Network Partners will:

- develop an operational model of access to specialized services in the Hubs;
- develop a centralized application and managed waitlist for all licensed child care programs;
- support a review of existing Early Identification and Screening activities and develop a strategy to coordinate and expand these to reach all children
- review existing supports for women experiencing, or at risk of, Post Partum Depression and develop strategies to ensure that Best Start Hubs are able to best serve these mothers.

Expanding and Stabilizing Child Care: With the support of the Child Care sector and the Best Start Network, the Children Services Section will:

- pilot and evaluate a base funded model of child care in one or more Hub sites.
- undertake a review of the amounts paid for subsidized child care to ensure that they are reflective of the current realities of providing child care in our community.
- support the development of new infant and toddler child care spaces.

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- develop a plan to use existing child care capacity to pilot a universal preschool program for 2 ½-5 year olds as outlined in the Provincial Best Start Vision
 - enhance wage subsidy and special needs integration funding for child care centres.

Leadership in the North: With enhanced support from MCYS, the Greater Sudbury Best Start Network will strive to be a leader in the North for Best Start.

Strategies for System Integration

The Best Start Network has allowed the Children's Services sector to continue to build on cooperative efforts such as the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Network and has helped to promote cooperation and collaboration among partners.

The Best Start Network's next task of developing Best Start Hubs and using Best Start Hubs as the venue for the integration of services will help to continuing move integration forward in Greater Sudbury.

All Best Start partners are committed to the goal of integration and have participated in internal and inter-agency planning exercises to determine how their planning and service delivery can be better integrated. The Best Start Community Plan includes individual submissions that outline partners' plans, as well as any challenges they have identified to moving forward with integration.

2. Child Care Plan- Summary

The Best Start Community Plan includes descriptions of child care initiatives as they relate to the Best Start vision. The Child Care Plan is an internal plan which provides more detail about the child care system and how the projects identified in the Best Start Plan will be implemented, including proposed time-lines and allocations. The table below describes the significant initiatives that will be funded out of the Best Start allocation, either undertaken directly by the Children Services Section or by Best Start Network partners, with time-lines and proposed amounts to be allocated.

Best Start Funding Allocation 2007/08

The total funding allocated for Best Start in 2007/08 is \$5,734,178.00. This funding is provided at 100% from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The allocation is based on the success of the expansion of licensed child care in Greater Sudbury and is intended to meet the needs of the expanded child care system and to assist with the implementation of the Best Start vision. A large proportion of this allocation will be required to pay for the increase in utilization of the child care subsidy program. However, the steady growth in the number of families accessing child care subsidy is not yet at the level where this full allocation will be required. The Children Services Section foresees some flexibility within the Best Start allocation to support special initiatives related to Child Care and Best Start.

In allocating Best Start funding for special initiatives, the intent has been first to support initiatives that will stabilize and strengthen the licensed child care system, then to make funding available to assist the Best Start Network and its partners to move forward with the full Best Start vision. Since funding is not guaranteed in future years and may not always be available for special initiatives, projects planned need to build and strengthen the system and have an impact for the years to come.

In addition to the initiatives listed below, a one-time allocation brought forward from the 2006/07 Best Start allocation will provide one time funding of up to \$72,000 per Best Start Hub to assist with start-up and transition expenses related to the opening of all 12 Hubs.

Allocation and time-lines for Child Care and Best Start Special Initiatives

Initiative	Timeline	Allocation
Provide additional funding to further increase wage subsidy rates for Best Start programs.	September 2007	Up to \$400,000
Support the development of new infant and toddler child care spaces (renovation, capital costs and start-up costs)	Spaces to be opened by December '07	Up to \$250,000
Consult with Child Care partners to allocate wage enhancement funding	September 2007	Up to \$127,500
Partner with Greater Sudbury Library on initiatives to enhance literacy initiatives in hubs and child care centres, including the "Read to Grow" program.	Plan in place by September 2007	Up to \$100,000
A centralized application and managed waitlist for all licensed child care programs to be operated by the Children Services Section	To be operating January 2008	Up to \$65,000
Work with the Contact Centre industry- surveying needs of employees in this sector and where possible-supporting the development of programs to meet these needs.	Survey July 2007, start-up if appropriate, by December '07	Up to \$50,000
Work with child care partners to develop and implement a follow up campaign to promote licensed child care and child care subsidy.	Ongoing	Up to \$50,000
Develop promotional materials, including a website, to inform families about Best Start Hubs.	Starting September '07	Up to \$50,000
Provide matching funding for joint training initiatives and support for front line child care staff to participate in Best Start training initiatives.	Ongoing	Up to \$30,000
Support the expansion of a new Family Home Child Care agency.	Operating by December '07	Up to \$25,000
Support the Best Start Network to coordinate Early Identification and Screening initiatives and expand these to reach more children.	Plan in place for 2008	Up to \$20,000

Pilot a universal preschool program for 2 ½-5 year olds as outlined in the Provincial Best Start Vision.	Starting September '07	Up to \$20,000 for program development and support
Program quality initiatives (training and development of Quality Indicators tools for Hubs)	Ongoing	Up to \$10,000
Pilot an alternate funding model for child care in one or more sites to try to determine the cost and benefits of providing stable base funding for child care.	Model developed by December '07	Costs to be determined based on model developed.
Provide additional funding to the Child Care Integration program for children with special needs, based the number of new child care spaces created.	Funding amount based on number of spaces in September '07	Costs to be determined based on actual number of spaces.
Start accepting child care subsidy application in Hubs on a pilot basis.	Starting September '07	No cost foreseen.
Central phone access to Best Start Hubs through the City's 3-1-1 phone system.	Starting September '07	No cost foreseen.
Total allocations for special initiatives		\$1,197,000.00

The City's Child Care partners have been involved in the development of these plans through consultation with the Child Care Supervisors Network of Greater Sudbury. The activities in the Child Care Plan are reflective of the Children's Services Section's Business Plan and fit within the scope of the Children's Services Section's responsibility as the Service System Manager for Child Care and related services.

Council Approval

After approval by City Council, the two documents- the City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Community Plan and the City of Greater Sudbury Child Care Plan- will be submitted to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. When approval has been received from MCYS, the Children Services Section and the Best Start Network will move forward to continue to implement the Best Start Vision for Greater Sudbury, as outlined in the two plans.