



City of Greater Sudbury
**Child Care and Early Years
Service System Plan 2026-2027**



Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we would like to acknowledge the Anishnaabe people (the original people) of these lands.

The City of Greater Sudbury has a rich history that began with the Anishnaabe people. We are grateful to live, work, and play on the lands they have cared for since time immemorial, and we are thankful to them for sharing these lands and resources that have supported the prosperity of this city and its residents.

Our municipality is on the traditional lands of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiatae First Nation, signatories to the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. We are honoured to work with them in partnership and friendship toward a future that is successful for the next seven generations.

We thank them for their contributions to the vibrancy of our communities and to the guardianship of the lands in which we share. We also recognize the contributions of the Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous people in shaping and strengthening our community.

It is our collective responsibility to learn the history on which our city was built and to ensure that the mistakes made by our predecessors are overcome by our willingness to learn and grow. For Greater Sudbury and the Anishnaabe to flourish together, we must recognize and respect each other's sovereign rights and title. With mutual understanding and collaboration, we will continue to grow together in the spirit of reconciliation.

As part of our work in Children Services, we are committed to fostering inclusive, culturally responsive environments for children, families, and staff. We recognize the importance of learning from Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and we strive to build respectful relationships rooted in partnership, understanding, and friendship.

This commitment guides our efforts to support reconciliation and uphold Indigenous rights—for today and for generations to come.

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Letter from the Director and Manager of Children Services

Greater Sudbury's Early Years and Child Care sector has a proud history of providing high-quality programs and support for children and families. As we transition under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system, our priorities, program requirements, and the needs of families in our community continue to evolve.

From 2023 to 2025, Children Services led a sector-wide consultation to complete a comprehensive program review in our role as the designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager. This collaborative process engaged service providers, families, and key partners to co-create the Conditions of Quality framework, an approach that guides our community in advancing accessibility, program quality, inclusion, diversity, equity, belonging, workforce development, and responsiveness to community needs.

The Early Years and Child Care sector plays a vital role in shaping a welcoming, inclusive community. Our ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is embedded in our planning, programs, and partnerships. Children Services is deeply grateful to our Early Years partners who continue to champion this important work, and to the dedicated staff who strive every day to create high-quality, inclusive environments where all children and families feel valued and supported.

Greater Sudbury's Early Learning and Child Care sector is built on two key pillars of support for children and families: EarlyON Child and Family Centres and licensed child care services.

- EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free drop-in and registered programs for families with children from birth to age six. These centres are welcoming spaces where families can play, connect with others in their community, and access high-quality programs that support well-being and early childhood development.
- Licensed child care services refer to government-regulated programs that meet specific provincial standards for health, safety, nutrition, and programming. In Greater Sudbury, this includes licensed child care centres (both community-based and school-based) and home child care agencies that oversee home-based providers. All licensed programs are subject to regular inspections by the Ministry of Education to ensure compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.¹

Our commitment is to ensure that all EarlyON and Child Care programs reflect the diversity of families across Greater Sudbury—where every child and caregiver can see themselves in the programming, feel a sense of belonging, and access meaningful learning opportunities. The strategic priorities outlined in this document aim to strengthen programs and supports to better reflect our community's diversity and foster inclusive, welcoming environments.

The *Conditions of Quality* in our sector are designed not only to reflect our values but also to support the enhancement of inclusive and equitable practices across the entire Early Years and Child Care sector.

As Greater Sudbury's demographics continue to shift, our sector must respond with intention and care. We recognize the importance of broadening our approaches to reflect the diverse identities, cultures, and lived experiences of both children and staff. We will strengthen cultural responsiveness, embed inclusive practices in daily programming, and support our workforce in delivering equitable care.

Children Services is proud to present our Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan for 2026–2027, which outlines our strategic priorities, implementation and evaluation plans, and initiatives aimed at supporting all families in Greater Sudbury.

We also recognize that our work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) must include a commitment to the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island. While some challenges may overlap, the experiences of Indigenous communities are distinct and must be acknowledged as such. Our efforts begin with the understanding that racism, bias, and oppression are real and present in early learning and child care settings.

Our learning journey starts with this acknowledgment and continues with a commitment to unlearning harmful practices, recognizing our roles in perpetuating inequities, and working together to build a more just and equitable system. Healing begins with truth. Meaningful change requires reflection, partnership, and action.

Paulette Larocque – Manager, Children Services

Miranda Mackie – Director, Children and Social Services

System accomplishments from 2026 and 2027



Investment grew

Investment in early education and child care in Greater Sudbury grew to **more than \$30.5 million** between 2023 and 2025.



CWELCC savings

Through CWELCC, full-day child care fees for children 0 to 5 decreased from **\$49.03/day in 2022** to **\$21.79/day in 2025**.



Children benefited

More than **5,500 children** benefited from reduced child care fees in 2024 and 2025.



More licensed spaces

Operating child care spaces increased by more than **1,666**, a **40 per cent increase**.



New centre spaces

Federal and provincial investments supported three centre expansions and one shared EarlyON space, creating **234 new licensed spaces** since 2023.



RECE wages increased

The median hourly wage for RECEs working as educators reached **\$27.00/hour** in 2025, up **3.3 per cent** from 2023.



On-site sector support

Since January 2025, Community Program Consultants provided **1,320 hours** of on-site support through **639 visits** to child care and EarlyON locations.



Professional learning

In 2024 and 2025, the sector delivered **22 courses** and **193.5 hours** of professional learning to **1,656 participants**.

Section 1: Service System Planning

Planning for Children and Families

Across Ontario, the Ministry of Education designates Service System Managers (SSMs) to lead the planning and delivery of early learning and child care services within their respective municipalities and districts. Under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), 2014, municipal governments are required by legislation to serve as SSMs, while the province retains authority over system-wide standards, including licensing, health and safety inspections, class sizes, wages, and training requirements.

At the provincial level, the Ministry of Education provides overarching policy direction and funding to support the child care and early years system. Recognizing that communities across Ontario have diverse needs, strengths, and priorities, the Ministry has empowered municipalities to lead local planning efforts that reflect the needs of children and families in their regions.

Within the City of Greater Sudbury, the Children Services section fulfills this role by developing and implementing a responsive system plan that addresses local priorities. As the designated SSM, the municipality is responsible for:

- Drafting service plans and setting local priorities
- Administering provincial funding and financial subsidies to licensed service providers.
- Partnering with early learning and child care providers to collect and analyze service data to identify gaps and opportunities
- Reporting on program outcomes and funding allocations to the Ministry.



Funding and Expenditures

The Children Services section’s operating budget is funded through two primary sources: the Ministry of Education and the City of Greater Sudbury. This shared funding model reflects the provincial-municipal partnership in delivering child care and early years services.

Children Services Section 2025 Budget

Funding Source	Amount
Child Care Operating (Ministry of Education)	\$11,506,464
Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC) (Provincial/Federal)	1,653,952
Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)	\$60,635,354
EarlyON Child and Family Centres	\$3,799,053
Cultural Outreach Program	\$117,260
Municipal Contribution	\$2,047,989
Total 2025 Budget	\$79,760,072

The provincial and municipal governments jointly provide funding for child care in Ontario. Funding is distributed using a formula, last revised in the 2025 fiscal year, that considers demographic trends, cost-of-living indicators, existing service levels, and planned expansions. This collaborative funding model supports the development of a system that is equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the evolving needs of children and families.



In 2025, the Ministry of Education contributed 97 percent of the total Children Services budget, amounting to \$77.7 million. These funds supported a wide range of services for children and families across Greater Sudbury. Most provincial funding, 86 per cent, was earmarked for specific programs and special purposes, including:

- The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, which aims to reduce child care fees and increase access to high-quality care.
- Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) programs.
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres, which provide free drop-in programs for children and caregivers.
- Cultural outreach initiatives.
- Wage enhancement grants to support the retention of qualified staff.

The remaining 14 per cent was provided as Child Care Operating Funding, which the municipality has discretion to allocate based on local priorities and emerging needs. This flexible funding enables the municipality to respond to community-specific challenges and support system sustainability.

In addition to provincial funding, the City of Greater Sudbury contributed \$2.05 million in 2025, representing the required municipal cost share outlined in Ministry guidelines. This contribution was funded through annual levy revenues and interest income, reinforcing the City’s commitment to supporting children and families through locally driven investments.



Expenditures

Flexible Allocations Based on Community Need	
Program	Amount
Fee Subsidy	\$3.9 million
Child Care Base Funding – General Operating Grant (GOP)	\$1.7 million
Administration	\$3.0 million
Program Development and Support	\$1.6 million
Capacity Building/Professional Development	\$924 thousand
Health and Safety	\$230 thousand
Total	\$11.4 million

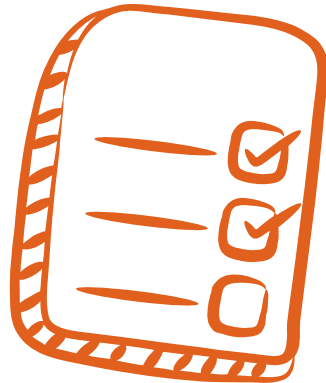
Fixed allocations prescribed by the Ministry of Education	
Program	Amount
Provincial Wage Enhancements	\$343 thousand
EarlyON Child and Family Centres	\$3.8 million
Cultural Outreach	\$117 thousand
CWELCC	\$60.6 million
Pay Equity	\$1.7 million
Total	\$66.56 million

CWELCC Funding Formula Update

On January 1, 2025, the Ministry of Education implemented a new cost-based funding formula for child care operators participating in CWELCC. This replaced the previous revenue replacement model used from 2022 to 2024. The updated formula was designed to:

- Reflect actual operating costs of licensed child care programs
- Support the long-term sustainability of the \$10-a-day child care commitment
- Simplify administration and improve consistency across jurisdictions
- Ensure transparency and equity in funding allocations.

The Children Services Section worked closely with local providers to support the transition, ensure accurate data reporting, and align local planning with the new provincial funding framework.



System Planning and Engagement

System planning in Greater Sudbury is built on collaboration, evidence-based decisions, and a shared commitment to children and families. For over two decades, Children Services has collaborated with community partners to continue to evolve the early years system to meet local needs and align with provincial priorities.

Key planning bodies include:

- **Early Years Planning Network (EYPN)** – The community planning table for early years programs.
 - In 2025, EYPN included 55 individual members representing 23 organizations, with strong engagement shown through 75 per cent or more organizational participation at each of the three annual meetings.
- **Executive Leadership Team (ELT)** – Provides strategic leadership across the sector through collaboration among child care agency executives.

In 2025, significant structural changes were implemented to enhance community influence and ensure more effective use of committee time. Following these changes, EYPN guides community tasks and projects, while program and service functions report directly to organizational and system management. This realignment preserves accountability of service providers for mandated programs and allows EYPN to focus on collaborative planning and oversight of community-based work.

Committee Updates:

- **Workforce Development and Professional Learning Committee:** To strengthen the early years workforce through coordinated recruitment, retention and professional learning strategies.
 - **Development of a Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy** – Under development, a professional awareness campaign, highlighting educators in the field, will use both in-person and online formats to attract new educators and recognize those in the sector.
 - **Professional Learning and Mentorship Framework** – The development of a framework to improve communication and resource sharing, and to support ECE students and their mentors, to foster confidence, professional growth, and long-term retention.
- **DEI Advisory:** To advance equity, belonging, and culturally responsive practice across the early years sector.
 - **Professional Learning Framework** – To strengthen inclusion and belonging across programs.
 - **Data Review** – Gathering demographic data from diverse data sources to guide planning and engagement.
 - **Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action** – Reviewing the 49 Calls to Action to create actionable community initiatives.
- **Francophone Advisory:** To advance Francophone inclusion across the sector.
 - **Francophone Representation and Coordination** – The Francophone Advisory Committee will gather input from working groups to identify their proposed actions and support needs, supporting alignment and integration. The Committee will serve as the Francophone voice across all working groups, bringing forward collective perspectives and supporting Francophone inclusion throughout all initiatives.
- **Evaluation and Data Advisory:** To support evidence-informed decision-making by guiding the development of performance measures, data collection tools, and evaluation processes.
 - **Data Inventory** – An inventory of early years data and reports has been developed to increase data accessibility for partners.
 - **EYPN Evaluation Framework** – An Evaluation Framework has been developed to guide the evaluation of the EYPN strategic plan.
 - **Data Collection/Survey Development** – The Advisory Group supports the development of surveys across EYPN committees to support best practices in data and evaluation.



Service System and Early Years Planning Network

Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Vision

Children and families within the City of Greater Sudbury have access to affordable, inclusive and accessible quality early learning and family supports.

Mission Statement

Through a collaborative, integrated system approach, we plan, lead and implement strategies to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.

Guiding Principles

- Child and family-centered approach
- Community responsiveness and collaboration
- Excellence, accountability and data-driven decision-making
- Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Bilingual services and cultural sensitivity
- Respect, trust, integrity and collaboration
- Innovation and system-wide thinking

Access and Adaptability

Parent navigation

Every child has a place / reduced waitlist

Organizational culture streamline processes

Communications

Collaboration

Integrated services

Targeted supports and outreach

Seamless transitions and services

Co-locations and partner engagement

Responsiveness

Parent and system feedback

Data and evaluation

Excellence, accountability and data

Explore new methods to connect (tech/media)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Diversity in service provision

Cultural and linguistic appropriate programs

Reduce barriers for low income and complex family situations

Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

Quality

Standards and conditions of quality

Professional learning

Workforce development and leadership

Talent sourcing, attraction and retention

Section 2: Child Care and Early Years in Greater Sudbury – Where We Are Now

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of early years services in Greater Sudbury, including emerging trends, service gaps, and the range of programs delivered directly by or in collaboration with the Children Services Section. The analysis is organized around four foundational pillars of a strong early years system: accessibility, equity and responsiveness, affordability, and quality and inclusion. These components reflect both provincial priorities and local commitments to building a system that supports child development and meets the diverse needs of families across the community.

Priority 1: Access

Accessibility is a cornerstone of Greater Sudbury's early years system, ensuring that all families, regardless of income, geography, language, or ability, can access high-quality child care and early learning services. Guided by Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework and the Directed Growth strategy under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, the Children Services Section is committed to expanding program access that is equitable, inclusive, and aligned with community needs.²

Ontario has committed to creating 86,000 net new licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026, with a target access ratio of 37 spaces per 100 children aged 0 to 5. These spaces are prioritized for communities with the greatest need, including low-income families, children with special needs, Indigenous and Francophone populations, and families requiring flexible care options.

The Children Services Section is aligning local planning with provincial targets through data-informed strategies and community engagement. Key actions include mapping underserved areas to identify priority neighbourhoods for space creation, supporting infrastructure development through capital and start-up grants, and engaging families and providers to understand barriers to access and co-develop solutions.



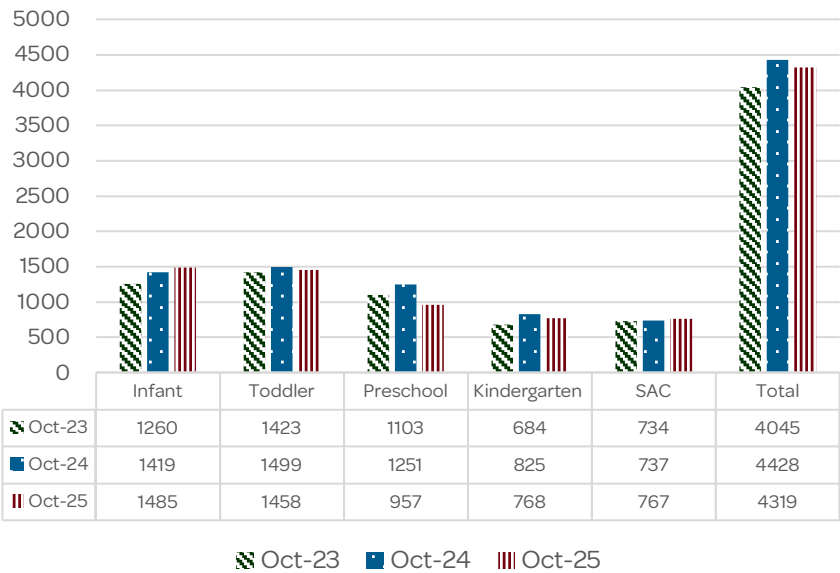
Child Care

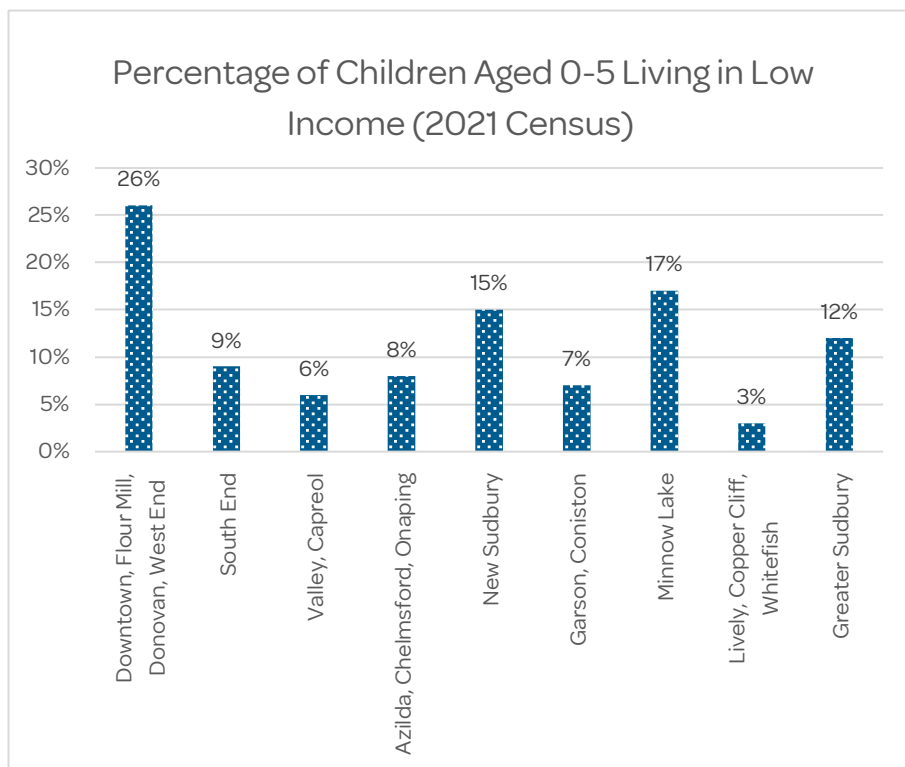
Greater Sudbury’s early years system is expanding; however, demand continues to outpace supply. As of October 31, 2025, there are 74 licensed child care centres in Greater Sudbury and 35 home child care providers, offering a total of 6,706 licensed spaces—including 4,195 spaces for children aged 0 to 5 and 2,466 spaces for school-age children. Of these, 5,809 spaces are currently operating (86 per cent), representing a 40 per cent increase since June 2023.

Despite this growth, demand for child care remains high. As of October 2025, 4,319 children were on the waitlist, with 2,643 requiring care immediately and 2,106 seeking future care, a 7 per cent increase from last year. Access varies across the city, with 45 per cent of spaces in central Sudbury and 55 per cent in outlying communities.

Children on Waitlists for Licensed Child Care
2023 to 2025

(Note- children may be waiting for care on lists in more than one age group)





2021 Census data demonstrate significant variation in the proportion of young children living in low income across Greater Sudbury's neighbourhoods. The highest rate is observed in the Downtown, Flour Mill, Donovan, and West End area, where 26 per cent of children aged 0 to 5 live in low-income households, more than double the city-wide average of 12 per cent.^{7,8}

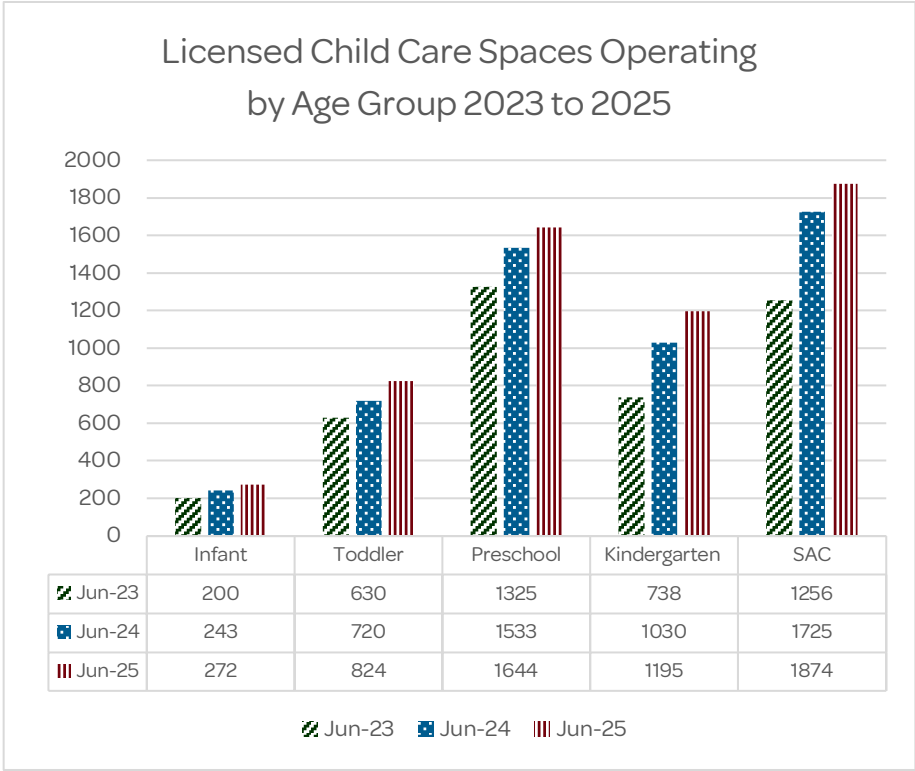
Child Care Expansion:

Child care expansion in Greater Sudbury in 2024 and 2025 has been driven by concerted efforts among child care agencies to reopen licensed spaces that had closed during the pandemic, along with the addition of new spaces supported through provincial funding. These spaces were strategically allocated to priority neighbourhoods based on existing capacity, available physical space, and demonstrated community need, including family vulnerabilities and cultural and language considerations.

In 2024 and 2025, 234 net new spaces were created in four newly constructed child care centres.

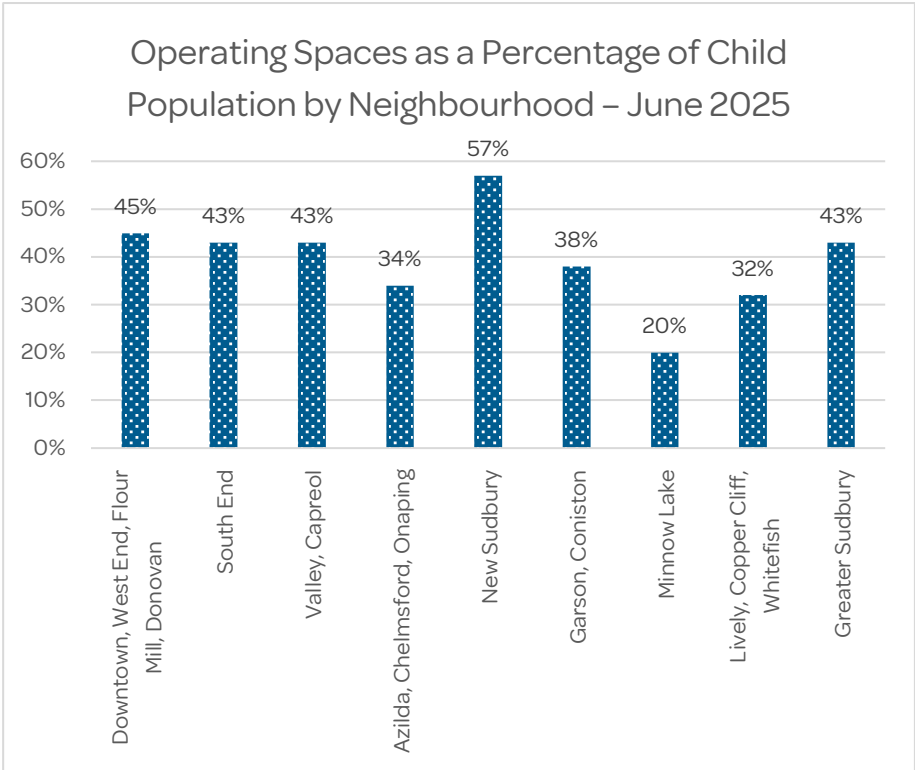
Child Care Spaces – 2024/2025 Expansion						
	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	Kindergarten	School Age	Total
New Sudbury	20	25	30	26	30	131
South End	0	0	24	13	0	37
Valley Capreol		-10	8	28	10	36
In Home						30
Total	20	15	62	67	40	234

As of November 2025, 95 per cent of child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 were operating, compared to 74 per cent in 2023.



Access Rate

In 2022, the Ministry of Education set a target of 37 spaces per 100 children aged 0 to 5. As of November 2025, there were 43 spaces per 100 children aged 0 to 5 in Greater Sudbury, exceeding the provincial target.



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide free, high-quality programs for children from birth to age six and their caregivers, guided by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*.⁴ This framework emphasizes belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression, ensuring families have access to inclusive, culturally responsive services that foster early learning and community connection.

In 2025, EarlyON Child and Family Centres continued to be a cornerstone of family support across Greater Sudbury. The system is delivered through five not-for-profit agencies operating 20 main sites and six outreach locations. Of the primary sites, 15 offer programming in English, four are dedicated Francophone centres, and one provides Indigenous programming.

Beyond weekly programming, EarlyON agencies collaborated to host a wide range of community events that brought families together and strengthened local networks. These included car seat clinics, holiday celebrations, and summer family festivals, as well as specialized offerings such as Science North visits, community beach days, infant massage clinics, and Service Canada support sessions. These activities not only created opportunities for play and learning but also helped families access essential resources and build meaningful relationships within their communities.

In 2025, 1,937 adults and 2,125 children visited an EarlyON Centre. Between January and September, programs welcomed an average of 4,592 visits per month, reflecting strong community engagement and continued demand for early years programming.



4,592 visits per month

Professional Learning and Collaboration in EarlyON

EarlyON practitioners engaged in meaningful professional development throughout 2025, reinforcing their commitment to high-quality service delivery. From January to May, the Infant and Early Years Mental Health Series featured five sessions based on *Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans*, a resource developed by Dr. Jean Clinton. The series explored interconnected themes, such as care, attachment, emotions, and self-regulation, emphasizing how nurturing relationships and responsive environments support healthy brain development and lifelong well-being.

The series was well-received, with 40 participants from six agencies and strong feedback highlighting its impact. Over 75 per cent of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the content, and nearly 85 per cent agreed they could apply what they learned in practice. Key takeaways included the importance of intentional reflection and observation, strategies for emotional regulation and support, and the value of sharing knowledge and collaborating with colleagues and families.

Building on this momentum, the EarlyON Creating Connections Series ran from October to May, offering eight sessions focused on understanding and applying Ministry of Education guidelines through a reflective lens. These sessions reinforced the principles of *How Does Learning Happen?* and supported practitioners in aligning their work with provincial standards for EarlyON Centres.

Human Services Integration – Pilot Project

From May to August 2025, the Children Services Section piloted a Human Services Integration (HSI) initiative that positioned Children Services Representatives (CSRs) in five EarlyON Centres across Greater Sudbury. This innovative approach aimed to simplify access to child care and family supports by providing direct assistance with fee subsidies, child care navigation, and resources in a community setting.

During the pilot, CSRs engaged 457 families and delivered 34 direct services, most related to the child care registry, fee subsidies, and referrals. Feedback from EarlyON staff and child care providers was overwhelmingly positive, citing improved collaboration, greater visibility of Children Services, and enhanced trust among families.

Building on this success, Phase Two launched in January 2026, expanding to five additional EarlyON sites and incorporating new community partnerships. This next phase will deepen integrated service delivery, ensuring families experience timely, coordinated support that strengthens individual outcomes and the overall resilience of our community.

ACCESS Recreation Committee

The ACCESS Recreation Committee was formed in January 2025 in response to evolving strategic priorities of the Early Years Planning Network. Previously known as the Middle Childhood Partnership Committee, this committee evolved into the ACCESS Recreation Committee, expanding its mandate to support equitable access to affordable, inclusive, and accessible recreational programming, including before/after school programs and seasonal camps (summer, winter, spring breaks).



Priority 2: Equity and Responsiveness

The early years system in Greater Sudbury is built on the principle that every child and family deserves access to services that reflect their unique needs, identities, and circumstances. Equity and responsiveness are central to system planning, ensuring that programs are inclusive, culturally relevant, and adaptable to changing community dynamics. The Children Services Section works to embed equity and responsiveness across all aspects of service delivery by:

- **Prioritizing underserved populations**, including low-income families, Indigenous and Francophone communities, newcomers, children with disabilities, and families living in rural or remote areas.³
- **Supporting culturally responsive programming**, including Indigenous-led and Francophone child care and EarlyON services.
- **Ensuring language access**, through bilingual services and interpretation supports where needed.
- **Promoting inclusive environments**, where children of all abilities and backgrounds feel safe, welcomed, and supported.
- **Community engagement and consultation**, through the Early Years Planning Network (EYPN), Executive Leadership Team (ELT), and direct feedback from families.
- **Data-informed planning**, using administrative data, waitlist trends, and service utilization metrics to identify gaps and opportunities.
- **Flexible service models**, such as mobile outreach, non-standard hours of care, and integrated supports across sectors (for example, health, education, social services).

Access in rural and remote areas remains a priority for Children Services. In October 2025, 2,626 children attended licensed child care in outlying communities, representing nearly half (49 per cent) of overall attendance. EarlyON Centres also play a vital role in these communities, with 11,627 visits recorded in outlying areas between Q1 and Q3 of 2025, accounting for 34 per cent of all visits. These figures underscore the importance of maintaining strong service delivery across Greater Sudbury's diverse geography.



Priority 3: Affordability

Affordability is a key pillar of Greater Sudbury’s early years system, ensuring families can access child care without financial hardship. The Children Services Section is committed to reducing cost barriers through provincial and municipal investments, targeted subsidies, and participation in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system.

CWELCC System Implementation

Launched in 2022, the CWELCC system aims to gradually reduce average child care fees to \$10 per day by 2026.⁵ In Greater Sudbury, licensed child care providers enrolled in CWELCC have already implemented significant fee reductions, increasing the affordability of child care for families with children under six.

As of 2025, 74 licensed child care centres and up to 36 licensed home child care providers are enrolled in CWELCC, ensuring widespread access to reduced fees. Before CWELCC, families faced average daily fees of \$49.03, a cost that has significantly decreased under the program to \$21.79 per day, easing financial pressure for thousands of households. In 2024, 4,300 families benefited from CWELCC fee reductions, expanding to 4,485 families between January and October 2025, demonstrating the program’s critical role in improving affordability and supporting family well-being.



Fee Subsidy Program

In addition to CWELCC, the Children Services Section administers the Child Care Fee Subsidy Program, which supports eligible families based on income and need. This program ensures that affordability is maintained for families with children aged 0 to 12, including those not covered by CWELCC.

From January to October 2025, there were 1,357 children in Greater Sudbury receiving fee subsidies. Of these families, 76 per cent receive a full subsidy, and 24 per cent pay a portion of the child care fee. There are currently no families on the waitlist to receive child care subsidy.

Fee Subsidy	2023	2024	2025 (January-October)
Number of families receiving fee subsidy	1258	1184	1045
Number of children served by fee subsidy	1616	1544	1357
Number of active families receiving full subsidy	62%	76%	76%

Summer Programming

To address gaps in school-aged programming, accessible summer camps are available that support children’s social, physical, and emotional development.

- From 2023 to 2025, newcomer children accessing subsidized summer programs increased by 250 per cent.
- In 2025, the subsidy program totalled \$235,000, with 97 per cent covered by fee subsidy and only 3 per cent by parents.
- 78 per cent of participating children were fully subsidized, attending an average of 6 weeks of programming.



Process Improvements

Between September 2024 and August 2025, Children Services introduced a series of enhancements to improve the accessibility, efficiency, and responsiveness of child care programs to better meet the needs of families. Key enhancements include:

- **Online Applications:** A new digital application system was implemented to streamline the fee subsidy application process and increase accessibility.
- **Improved Communication:** A secure messaging system was introduced, enabling staff to communicate directly with families and resolve inquiries more efficiently.
- **Camp Application Updates:** A dedicated module was added to the child care management system to facilitate a more efficient and user-friendly application process for camp programs.
- **Simplified Referrals:** The referral process was streamlined to ensure families are connected to services in a timely manner.
- **Waitlist Navigation and OneHSN:** A Community of Practice Committee was established to strengthen sector-wide collaboration, support shared learning, and promote best practices in waitlist management and system navigation.



Priority 4: Quality and Inclusion

A strong early years system is defined not only by access and affordability, but by its commitment to high-quality programming and inclusive environments where all children can thrive. In Greater Sudbury, the Children Services Section works with licensed child care providers, EarlyON Centres, and community partners to promote excellence in early learning and ensure that services reflect the diverse needs of children and families.

Quality and Inclusion is supported through:

- **Professional learning and capacity building** for educators and staff, including training in pedagogical approaches, leadership, and inclusive practices.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of service delivery, using tools such as quality frameworks, site visits, and performance indicators.
- **Support for program development**, including mentorship, coaching, and access to resources that promote evidence-based practices.
- **Special needs resourcing**, including the Child Care Inclusion Support Program, Preschool Speech and Language, Infant and Child Development, and Children's Mental Health services.
- **Culturally responsive programming**, including Indigenous- and Francophone-led services.
- **Universal design principles**, ensuring physical accessibility and inclusive learning environments.
- **Family engagement**, to ensure programs reflect the values and needs of the communities they serve.

Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Profile

The early learning workforce is central to delivering safe and inclusive programs for children aged 0 to 12 across child care programs, EarlyON, schools, and community agencies. As of December 2025, the Greater Sudbury child care system employed 1,515 staff, with an average hourly wage of \$24.62. Labour market growth is expected to remain strong through 2026 as CWELCC continues to expand access to affordable care.

Despite this growth, workforce challenges persist. Regional employment levels remain below national averages, and employers report increasing demand for specialized skills such as inclusive practices, classroom management, bilingualism, and differentiated instruction. Recruitment and retention remain priorities, with professional development and structured mentorship identified as key strategies for strengthening workforce stability.

Workforce Data for 2025

FTEs (Full Time Equivalents) working in Licensed Child Care 609
(5.7 per cent increase from 576 in 2023)

RECE Program Staff working in Licensed Child Care..... (569)
(20 per cent increase from 473 in 2023)

Percent of Program Staff and Supervisors as an RECE (42 per cent)
(1 per cent increase from 41 per cent in 2023)

Educator/ECE – median hourly wage (\$27.00/hr)
(3 per cent increase from \$26.14/hr in 2023)

Total number of employees in licensed child care..... (1,545)
(17 per cent increase from 1,316 in 2023)

The wages of Registered Early Childhood Educators working in programs range considerably, from \$23 per hour to \$36.61 per hour, with an average wage of \$26.92 per hour.

Professional Learning and Capacity Building

High-quality programming begins with a skilled and confident workforce. To strengthen educator capacity, Greater Sudbury invests in professional learning opportunities that focus on pedagogy, leadership, and inclusive practices, supported by mentorship and coaching.

In 2024, the sector delivered 13 professional learning courses totalling 130 hours of training, engaging 1,239 participants. This commitment continued into 2025, with 9 courses and 63.5 hours of training offered between January and September, reaching 417 participants. Feedback underscores the impact of these initiatives:

- 88 per cent agreed the training would help in their role within the early learning sector
- 88 per cent reported they could incorporate their learning into daily practice

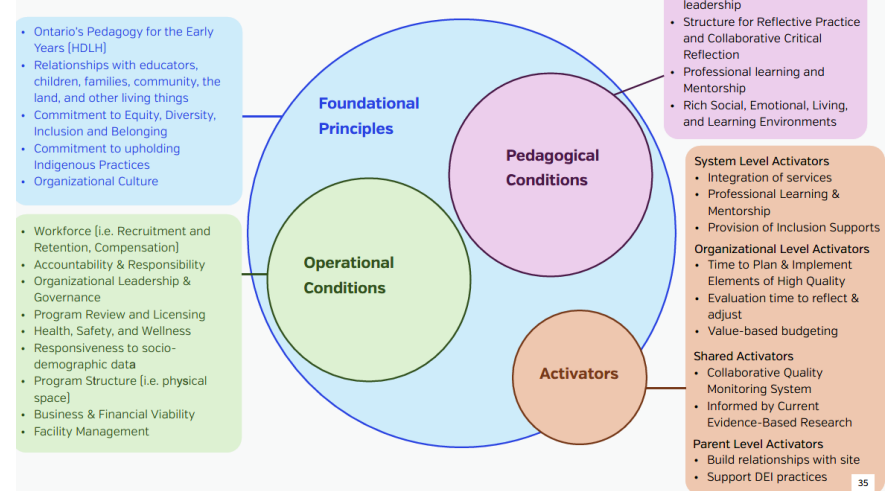
These results highlight the strong link between professional development and program quality, ensuring educators have the tools and confidence to create enriching, inclusive environments for children.

Early Years System Model – Quality and Inclusion

In 2024, Children Services partnered with Child & Community Resources (CCR) to launch the Early Years Sector System Model. This model represents a significant evolution in how Greater Sudbury approaches quality, inclusion, and professional learning, following an early years system review completed in 2023. Designed as a cohesive, collaborative framework, the model strengthens capacity across agencies and supports high-quality, inclusive early learning environments.

Diagram 1: Sudbury's Conditions of Quality for Early Years & Child Care

Resulting Conditions of Quality for Early Years & Child Care



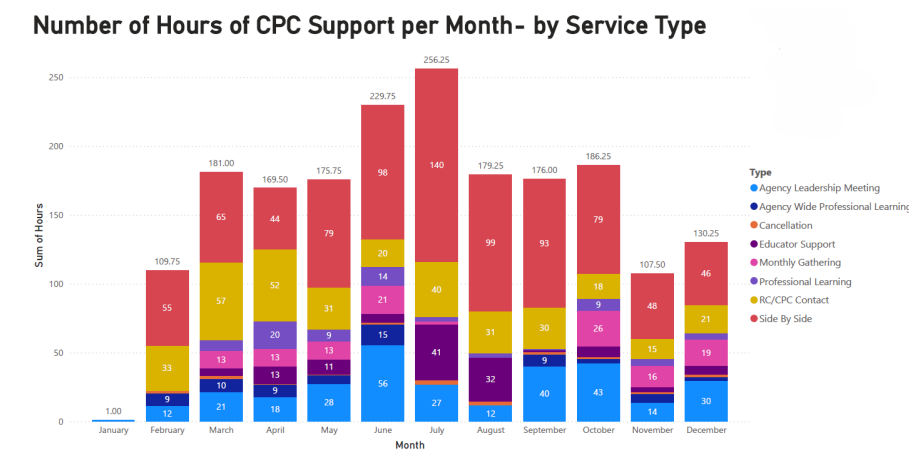
The model is anchored in three key frameworks:

- 1. Conditions of Quality** – Standards that define what high-quality early learning looks like, including strong relationships, inclusive environments, and intentional pedagogy.
- 2. How Does Learning Happen?** – Ontario's pedagogical framework emphasizing belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.
- 3. Four Key Orientations** – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Truth and Reconciliation, which guide all decision-making and practice.

The System Model introduces two complementary roles that work together to build capacity:

- **Community Pedagogy Consultants (CPCs)** – facilitate the integration of pedagogical principles and orientations into practice, professional learning, and leadership development.
- **Resource Consultants (RCs)** – support educators in creating inclusive environments through observation, coaching, and collaborative inquiry.

In 2025, four CPCs supported staff in 88 child care and EarlyON sites, with 1,503 hours of support over 798 visits.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The early years and child care sector is committed to building a welcoming, equitable, and inclusive system for all families in Greater Sudbury. This includes acknowledging the presence of racism, bias, and systemic barriers, and advancing meaningful change through reflection, learning, and action. A core part of this work is honouring Truth and Reconciliation and supporting Indigenous sovereignty, guided by the City of Greater Sudbury’s Indigenous Relations Strategy and through continued advocacy for Indigenous-led child care.

Over the past year, system-wide consultation and internal learning have strengthened the approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), reinforcing the need to embed equity principles across policy, planning, service delivery, and community engagement. In 2024, staff in the early learning and child care sector participated in a five-part series on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. Over 300 staff participated in the training across 20 agencies.

Children Services has also enhanced support for newcomer families through the Human Services Integration Pilot, immigration-focused training for staff, and regular reviews of policy and eligibility changes.

Specialized Services

In Greater Sudbury, services for children aged 0 to 12 with special needs who attend licensed child care and early learning programs are provided by Child & Community Resources (CCR), the designated lead agency. These services focus on supporting educators and early learning teams through the Early Years System Model to promote inclusive practices, build capacity and skills, and share resources that help ensure every child can fully participate in programming. CCR supports child care programs by developing inclusion plans to help meet the needs of children with special needs. In 2025, 350 support plans and 359 individual child inclusion plans were developed.

To support preschool aged children in licensed early learning and child care programs, the NEO Kids Children’s Treatment Centre at Health Sciences North provides consultation services for children with motor and communication challenges. In 2025, 136 children were supported through HSN’s SPOT team (Speech, Physiotherapy, and Occupational Therapy).

Early Years Program Evaluation Framework

In 2024, Children Services introduced a comprehensive Early Years Program Evaluation Framework to ensure programs meet the needs of children, families, and the community. This framework provides a consistent approach to evaluating services and using results to guide improvements across the sector.

To strengthen internal evaluation, Children Services streamlined its survey development process, improving how feedback is collected from families, providers, and partners. These enhancements will enable more effective use of data for planning, decision-making, and system improvements.

Section 3: Community Consultation – What We Heard

Quality and Inclusion System Review

In 2023, Children Services led a sector-wide consultation process to conduct a comprehensive review of quality and inclusion services across Greater Sudbury's early years system. The goal of the system review was to understand how programs could better reflect community needs and strengthen equity, accessibility, and program quality. The review engaged families, service providers, and partners in shaping a shared vision for the future of early learning.

The review aligned local service integration with the Ministry's Access and Inclusion Framework, focusing on children and families experiencing vulnerabilities or requiring specialized supports. It also emphasized inclusive practices and quality consultation services across the sector.

To capture diverse perspectives, consultations engaged school boards, specialized service providers, mental health leads, licensed child care operators, early learning programs, and families. An external consultant facilitated these sessions to ensure transparency and confidentiality, producing recommendations grounded in sector-wide input. The process included focus groups, site visits, and an online Child Care Quality Survey.

Child Care Quality Survey

As part of the system review, Children Services conducted an online Child Care Quality Survey, for families enrolled in Licensed Child Care programs. The survey, completed by 715 families, provided valuable insights into program quality and inclusion:

- 77 per cent of respondents rated child care as Excellent or Very Good
- 88 per cent agreed programs support developmental goals from How Does Learning Happen?, including exploration, expression, belonging and well-being.
- Only 60 per cent agreed toys and books reflected their child's identity
- Only 68 per cent noted staff diversity
- Some families also reported limited peer engagement and connection with other parents.

Based on these findings, recommendations include increasing culturally relevant materials and staff diversity, enhancing family engagement strategies, and increasing opportunities for children to contribute meaningfully to their learning environments.

Early Years System Model Feedback

Following the implementation of the Early Years System Model in 2025, surveys were conducted with leadership team members from 15 agencies to gather feedback on the model. Initial feedback has demonstrated that the model has improved collaboration, access to expertise, and reflective practice. Most found the model helpful, though clearer communication, more consistent processes, and increased resourcing can further improve the model.

EarlyON Family Survey

A survey was conducted in late 2025 with families accessing EarlyON since 2023. The survey gathered 297 responses from across all EarlyON sites and reflected the diversity of EarlyON users, including Francophone (27 per cent), Indigenous (7 per cent), newcomer (17 per cent), and families facing financial or social challenges.

Survey results demonstrated strong satisfaction with program accessibility, inclusiveness, and support for child development. Families valued opportunities to connect with other parents and for their children to play. Staff were frequently recognized for their kindness and support, while common barriers included limited hours, transportation challenges, and occasional program closures. Families suggested expanding evening and weekend hours, adding outdoor and active programming, and improving website usability.

Full results of the survey can be found [here](#).

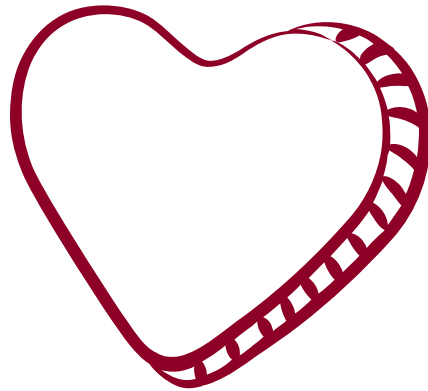
Student Mentorship Pilot Project – Consultations

From 2024 and 2025, 365 Early Childhood Education (ECE) placements were completed with Cambrian College and Collège Boréal, primarily in licensed child care settings. To identify ways to improve placement opportunities, consultations were completed with 109 participants, including ECE students, Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) mentors, and agency leadership members. Through the consultations, participants highlighted strong mentorship, welcoming environments, and improved student readiness, supported by agency commitment to inclusion and professional learning.

Respondents also identified opportunities for improvement, including financial and transportation barriers for students, staffing shortages that affect mentorship capacity, inconsistent expectations, and limited diversity in placement settings. Recommended improvements included:

- Improved placement matching to student needs and learning goals
- Recognition and protected time for mentors
- Stronger communication between colleges and agencies
- Local mentorship networks to support shared learning
- Enhanced orientation and flexible scheduling to improve student access

More information can be found on the [City's website](#).



Section 4: 2026-2027 Priorities – Where We’re Going

1. Accessibility

Child Care and Early Years IT Modernization Initiative

Ontario is transforming how families access child care and early years services through the Child Care and Early Years IT Modernization Initiative, led by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and SSMs. This initiative will create Ontario’s first province-wide digital platform, guided by principles of equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

This initiative aims to simplify the process of finding and applying for child care, reduce the administrative burden for providers and enhance data quality to support informed planning and decision-making. Families, operators, and service managers have shaped the design through surveys, interviews, and community consultations. The platform will allow parents to search for child care, apply for fee subsidies, and find EarlyON programs in one place, with features that support multilingual access, inclusive design, and strong privacy protections.

Users of Children Services Web-based Platforms	
Child Care Registry average active users per month (2024)	393
Child Care Registry average engaged sessions per month (2024)	512
Children Services website – average views per month (January to September 2025)	1,043
Children Services website – average active users per month (January to September 2025)	429
OCCMS EarlyON website adult users (January to September 2025 total)	1,404
Online child care subsidy applications (January 1 to November 24, 2025 total)	131

2. Equity and Responsiveness

Meeting the needs of equity-deserving families requires more than affordability—it demands systemic change. Indigenous, Black, and newcomer families continue to face disproportionate barriers, compounded by rising living costs and persistent poverty. Our goal is to ensure that all families, regardless of cultural background, language, ability, or socioeconomic status, can access high-quality early years programs that reflect their identities and meet their needs.

Enhancing Equity in Service Delivery

To advance this commitment, the system is focused on strengthening equity and responsiveness across program design, service delivery, workforce development, and system planning. This includes expanding Indigenous-led and Francophone-led programming, strengthening language access through interpretation and multilingual tools, and embedding increased cultural representation in programs.

The system continues to adapt to the needs of families whose work schedules fall outside of traditional hours by expanding evening and weekend programming. Efforts to improve digital equity ensure that families can navigate services with ease, combining accessible online tools with in-person support for those who may face connectivity or technology barriers.

Community Input for System Change

Engagement with equity-deserving communities remains central to system planning, with advisory groups and community engagement opportunities helping to ensure that lived experience shapes local priorities and decisions. Strengthening inclusive data practices also supports this work, as demographic information is collected and analyzed to establish equity targets and monitor progress.

In 2026, Children Services will implement a Lean Process Improvement Framework to advance service efficiency and quality. In preparation, six staff members received Lean methodology training in 2024, building internal capacity for future improvement initiatives. This work will further be supported through the Early Years Learning Management System (EYLMs) anticipated to launch in 2026, which will

include modules on evaluation, continuous quality improvement (CQI), and lean methodologies to strengthen sector-wide capacity and support a culture of ongoing improvement.

Children Services will also develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Strategy in 2026 that integrates multiple channels for client and partner feedback, including real-time tools such as QR codes, to ensure that community input shapes service enhancements.

3. Affordability

Despite recent affordability measures, high living costs and persistent poverty continue to place significant financial pressure on families, many of whom still require assistance to access child care. Rising inflation has increased the cost of essential goods and services, reducing disposable income and limiting families' ability to contribute toward child care expenses. These pressures disproportionately impact Indigenous, Black, and newcomer families, further widening existing inequities. Even with reduced fees, child care remains a significant expense for many families, and fee subsidies continue to be an important support.

The following initiatives will be undertaken to address barriers to accessing fee subsidy:

- **Broaden Income-Based Eligibility:** Remove non-financial requirements (such as "reason for care") to reduce barriers within the application process.
- **Strengthen Supports for Vulnerable Families:** Provide targeted financial assistance for low-income households, Indigenous communities, newcomers, and families with precarious immigration status.
- **Streamline access:** Develop multilingual, user-friendly application tools and provide navigation supports.
- **Protect privacy and promote inclusion:** Eliminate immigration or citizenship questions from applications.
- **Enhance service navigation:** Deliver culturally responsive outreach and guidance to help families connect with programs that meet their needs.

Ensuring that equity-deserving families can access affordable early learning programs will require system-level changes that strengthen accessibility and cultural responsiveness.

4. Quality and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Greater Sudbury's early years sector is committed to embedding DEI and Truth and Reconciliation as core pillars of quality and inclusion. The 2024 Knowing Our Numbers survey revealed that 36 per cent of early years staff in Northern Ontario experienced workplace discrimination, underscoring the need for coordinated system-level action.^{6,10} DEI efforts in 2026 and 2027 will focus on the development of a DEI Strategy for the early years sector, including the following priorities: Knowing Our Numbers

- **Organizational accountability** – Advance DEI action plans through the EYPN, align strategies with Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and review HR and policy frameworks.⁹
- **Culturally Appropriate Programming** – Identify best practices, assess strategies for local implementation, and embed strategies that strengthen belonging within the sector.¹¹
- **Barrier Reduction and System Structures** – Strengthen relationships with Indigenous and diverse partners, review EYPN membership to identify gaps, improve communication and information sharing, and develop inclusive policy recommendations.
- **Workforce Development** – Implement mandatory DEI training across the sector, increase participation in professional learning, and support educators to integrate new practices.
- **Accessibility and Inclusive Supports** – Strengthen Special Needs Resourcing and equip educators with strategies to support diverse needs.

Training and Professional Development Strategy

Under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, Ontario is investing \$18.5 million annually to strengthen workforce stability and quality through professional development days, expanded training in mental health, inclusion, and leadership, and programs such as the ECE Qualifications Upgrade. These investments recognize that professional learning is central to quality and retention.

Locally, Children Services delivered 23 courses (54 sessions, 130 hours) to 656 participants in 2024. To build on this momentum, a professional learning platform, the Early Years Learning Management System (EYLMs) will launch in 2026 as a centralized hub for training, mentorship, and collaboration. Fully provincially funded, it will offer bilingual resources, flexible formats, and integrated coaching, while tracking outcomes to drive improvement. The platform will offer professional learning on various topics including How Does Learning Happen?, mental health, DEI, Indigenous perspectives and leadership. A Professional Learning Advisory Panel will be established in 2026 to guide and sustain this work.



Outcomes Framework

The outcomes framework translates the vision and priorities of the 2026–2027 Early Years System Plan into clear, measurable actions. It aligns with provincial priorities under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, emphasizing affordability, equity, quality, and workforce development. By defining strategies, activities, and performance measures, this section ensures accountability and provides a roadmap for tracking progress across the early years sector. These outcomes reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and responsive service delivery for families and educators in Greater Sudbury.

1. Accessibility

Outcome	Strategy	Activities for 2026 and 2027	Performance Measures
Improved Access to Early Years Services	Expand non-standard hours	• Offer evening and weekend programming in priority neighbourhoods	• Number of programs operating outside of standard hours
	Strengthen service navigation	• Provide in-person navigation support for households with digital or language barriers	• Number of families assisted through navigation services
	Enhance digital equity	• Ensure IT modernization tools are accessible and provide multilingual options	• Percentage of families reporting improved access through annual survey
	Increase outreach to underserved communities	• Conduct targeted engagement with newcomer, Indigenous, and equity-deserving families	• Number of outreach events and participation rates

2. Equity and Responsiveness

Outcome	Strategy	Activities for 2026 and 2027	Performance Measures
All families have equitable access to high-quality early years programs	Expand culturally responsive programming	• Increase Indigenous-led and Francophone-led programs • Embed cultural representation in all early years environments	• Number of culturally specific programs offered • Number of early years sites with cultural representation • Family satisfaction survey results on cultural inclusivity
	Strengthen language access	• Provide interpretation services and multilingual resources • Ensure IT tools support multiple languages	• Number of interpretation requests fulfilled • Number of multilingual resources available • Number of families reporting improved language access
	Embed DEI in workforce development	• Mandate DEI and Truth and Reconciliation training	• Number of staff completing DEI training • Satisfaction with DEI training opportunities • Workforce diversity metrics
	Inclusive data practices	• Collect demographic data (race, language, income, etc.) • Use data to set measurable equity targets • Development of lean and CQI strategies	• Percentage of programs reporting demographic data • Equity targets developed and monitored • Continued integration of lean, evaluation and CQI to increase responsiveness

Outcome	Strategy	Activities for 2026 and 2027	Performance Measures
	Expand non-standard hours	• Offer evening and weekend programming for shift-working families	• Number of programs operating during non-standard hours • Participation rates in extended-hour programs
	Digital equity	• Ensure IT tools are accessible for families with limited connectivity • Provide in-person navigation support for digital barriers	• Number of families accessing digital tools successfully • Number of families supported through in-person navigation • Reduction in reported digital access barriers



3. Affordability

Outcome	Strategy	Activities for 2026 and 2027	Performance Measures
Families can access affordable child care without systemic barriers	Broaden income-based eligibility	- Remove non-financial requirements (for example, “reason for care”) from subsidy applications - Update policy to reflect income-only criteria	- Revised eligibility policy implemented - Percent increase in families qualifying for subsidy - Reduction in application denials due to non-financial criteria.
	Strengthen supports for vulnerable families	- Provide targeted financial assistance for Indigenous, newcomer, and low-income families - Develop flexible subsidy options for families with precarious immigration status	- Number of families receiving targeted support - Percentage of subsidy funds allocated to equity-deserving groups. - Family feedback on affordability improvements
	Streamline access	- Launch multilingual, user-friendly online application tools - Offer in-person navigation support for families	- Number of applications completed using new tools - Percentage of families reporting ease of application process. - Reduction in processing time for subsidy approvals.
	Protect privacy and promote inclusion	- Remove immigration/citizenship questions from applications - Update forms and IT systems to reflect inclusive practices.	- Updated application forms are implemented - Percentage of families reporting improved confidence in application process - Compliance with privacy standards
	Enhance service navigation	- Deliver culturally responsive outreach through community partners - Provide guidance sessions for families on available programs	- Number of outreach events held - Attendance at community events - Increase in program participation among equity-deserving groups

4. Quality and Inclusion

Outcome	Strategy	Activities for 2026 and 2027	Performance Measures
Early years programs and workplaces are safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive	Organizational accountability	- Develop and implement agency-level DEI action plans - Review HR policies to support diverse recruitment and retention - Align strategic planning with Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action	- Percentage of agencies with action plans - Percentage of HR policies updated - Number of calls to action with strategies implemented
	Workplace development and capacity building	- Deliver mandatory DEI and Truth and Reconciliation training - Allocate time for reflection and action planning - Launch mentorship programs	- Percentage of staff who have completed DEI training - Number of mentorship matches - Number of staff reporting confidence in inclusion practices
	Community engagement and belonging	- Expand outreach to underserved neighbourhoods - Build consultative relationships with Indigenous leaders and Elders - Host family engagement forums to promote belonging	- Number of outreach events - Attendance at outreach events - Family feedback on sense of belonging
	System leadership	- Require EarlyON agencies to implement DEI plans. - Enhance data collection through OneHSN platform. - Mandate system-wide DEI professional learning.	- Percentage of agencies reporting DEI compliance. - Data completeness on demographic indicators
	Professional learning platform	- Launch centralized hub for training and mentorship. - Offer bilingual, flexible learning formats. - Track participation and outcomes	- Number of courses delivered - Number of educators engaged - Retention rates of RECEs - Improvement in educator confidence scores

Conclusion

The 2026–2027 Early Years System Plan reflects Greater Sudbury’s commitment to building an early years and child care system that is affordable, equitable, high-quality, and inclusive. While affordability remains critical, our vision goes beyond financial supports to address systemic barriers that impact Indigenous, Black, newcomer, and equity-deserving families. By embedding cultural responsiveness, advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and investing in workforce development, we are laying the foundation for a system where every child and family feels valued and supported.

Through collaboration with community partners, continuous engagement, and data-driven decision-making, we will create environments that foster belonging, respect, and opportunity. Together, we will ensure that Greater Sudbury’s early years sector remains responsive to the diverse needs of families, strengthens educator capacity, and delivers programs that reflect the vibrancy of our community.



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