# Social Services and Housing Committee Agenda

Thursday, May 4, 2017
Council Chambers
County Administration Centre, Walkerton

## 1. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

## 2. Information Item

**A.** Child Care Fee Subsidy Wait List (attached)

**B.** Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BG DISC Open Data) (attached)

**C.** Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres Needs Assessment and Initial Plan (OEYCFC) (attached)

## 3. Next Meeting

June 1, 2017

## 4. Adjournment

# Committee Report

**To:** Warden Mitch Twolan
Members of the Social Services and Housing Committee

**From:** Christine MacDonald
Director of Social Services and Housing

**Date:** May 4, 2017

**Re:** Child Care Fee Subsidy Wait List

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## Recommendation:

The Child Care Fee Subsidy Wait List Report is for information.

## Background:

There has been a significant increase in the uptake of child care fee subsidy for the months of January, February and March 2017 in comparison to 2016 for the same period. In the first quarter of 2017 there have been approximately $15,000 in additional fee subsidy expenditures. It is anticipated that the Ministry of Education will releasing shortly the 2017 funding allocation for the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs), including the County of Bruce. However, given that the allocation has not yet been confirmed staff are closing monitoring the expenditures to keep the year projections within the approved corporate budget which was reflective of the 2016 allocation.

This will require that households eligible for fee subsidy be held in a wait list until subsidy comes available, either through attrition (other households leaving the program) or should additional funds be allocated by the Ministry of Education with the release of the 2017 allocations. The policy outlining the priority for access to fee subsidies with regard to waitlist management is attached.

## Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

The flow of households in and out of eligibility will be monitored closely to ensure the fee subsidy expenditures are not overspent across the span of the 2017 Budget.

## Interdepartmental Consultation:

There has been no interdepartmental consultation with regard to this report.

## Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal # 5 –The Elimination of Red Tape
Element # E – Focus on the internal and external customer/client needs first through providing community based service

Written by: Brenda Wilton Manager of Children's Services

**Approved by:**

Kelley Coulter
Chief Administrative Officer

## County of Bruce Children's Services

| | |
|---|---|
| **SECTION:** Fee Subsidy | **POLICY #: 1.1.10** |
| **SUBSECTION**: Determining Eligibility | **EFFECTIVE DATE:** 2009 |
| **SUBJECT:** Access to Fee Subsidies – Wait List | **DATE REVISED:** January 2016 |

### POLICY

The following categories, in order of priority, provide the basis for the County of Bruce child care fee subsidy wait list:

1. Net family income totalling $0 to $20,000 per year
2. Net family income totalling $20,001 to $30,000 per year
3. Net family income totalling $30,001 to $40,000 per year
4. Net family income totalling $40,001 to $50,000 per year
5. Net family income in excess of $50,001 per year

### APPLICATION OF POLICY

When the County of Bruce identifies the need to establish a wait list for fee subsidy, families who have been approved for child care fee subsidy, including those with children enrolled in before and after school programs at Full Day Kindergarten sites, will be categorized based on family income. Within each respective income grouping, each applicant will be treated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Eligibility will be confined to supporting full or part-time employment, attendance in a school or training institution, and internal referrals from the County of Bruce Preschool Resource Program.

Where possible, Ontario Works participants will be prioritized within Category 1 particularly to ensure continuity of child care support when the participant is transitioning from social assistance to employment.

While in a wait list situation no external referrals will be accepted. These will include, but are not exclusive to, the Children's Aid Society, Public Health, and Speech and Language Services.

The Children's Services Manager may approve immediate child care subsidy to families facing exceptional circumstances such as victims of domestic violence, or identified seasonal needs.

### REFERENCE

Ontario Child Care and Family Support Program Service Management and Funding Guideline (2016), Section 3

# Committee Report

**To:** Warden Mitch Twolan
Members of the Social Services and Housing Committee

**From:** Christine MacDonald
Director of Social Services and Housing

**Date:** May 4, 2017

**Re:** Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BG DISC) Open Data

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## Recommendation:

The BG DISC Open Data report is for information.

## Background:

The "Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative" (BGDISC) is a collective of not-for-profit, social service, government, health and education organizations that seek to mobilize community decision-makers to share vital local rural data to better inform regional programming, policies, funding and social services to support prosperity, sustainability and the well-being of the community. Discussion on the initiative began in 2014 and a concerted effort grew in 2015 to include the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance, The Healthy Communities Partnership, The Four County Labour Board, Community Foundation Grey Bruce, as well as the Counties of Grey and Bruce. Staff from both Social Services & Housing as well as the Planning and Development Department have provided respective supports to the collaborative.

Alongside the objectives of BGDISC, "Open Government" is a growing worldwide trend which makes government more accessible to everyone and gives greater access to government data. In Canada, this began in 1983 with the enactment of the Access to Information Act, followed by the Federal Accountability Act in 2006. More recently the Federal Government of Canada joined the Open Government Partnership and in 2013 endorsed the G8 Charter on Open Data. "Open Data" is the concept that certain data should be freely available to everyone to use and republish as they wish, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control. The main premise is that restrictions to data are against the communal good and that these data should be made available without restriction or fee.

Since inception, BGDISC has been working to finalize Terms of Reference for partnerships, identifying additional partners; develop an IT platform based on Open Data Portal models; developing principles for sharing of information; developing communications plans; and developing a sustainable budget. In particular, as of March, 2016, BGDISC had developed the Open Data Site for data upload and sharing.

Both the collaborative and individual organizations such as the County of Bruce will need to confirm the process with which data uploads should occur, in particular with regard to what types of data or information are shared. Once a process has been established it is anticipated that the open data site will reduce red tape. For example, currently GIS data requests to the County of Bruce are made on an individual basis. If GIS, spatial data layers were to be added to the BGDISC site, these individual requests would be directed to access the "open data" readily available, thus streamlining workload and access.

## Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

The BGDISC Open Data site was developed largely with in-kind resources of Grey County IT department. No IT considerations are anticipated at this time for Bruce County. As the process for data uploading is confirmed, legal consideration will form part of the approval process. There are no staffing considerations with regard to this report.

## Interdepartmental Consultation:

To date, considerable interdepartmental consultation has occurred between Planning and Development, and Social Services and Housing.

## Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal #2 – Leverage Technology
Element #E – Create a "technology training room" for all staff to use and learn
Goal #3 – Find Creative New Ways to Engage our Public
Element #C – Make the County Fully Accessible to the People Through Access to Information
Goal #5 – Eliminate Our Own Red Tape
Element #E Focus on the Internal and External Customer / Client needs First
Goal #6 – Explore Alternate Options to Improve Efficiency, Service
Element #C – Look for Economy of Scale or Shared Services among our Departments and our Communities

**Approved by:**

Kelley Coulter
Chief Administrative Officer

# Committee Report

**To:** Warden Mitch Twolan
Members of the Social Services and Housing Committee

**From:** Christine MacDonald
Director of Social Services and Housing

**Date:** May 4, 2017

**Re:** Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFC) Needs Assessment and Initial Plan

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## Recommendation:

The OEYCFC Needs Assessment and Initial Plan is for information.

## Background:

On February 19, 2016, the Ministry of Education's (EDU) announced a provincial plan to integrate and transform all EDU-funded child and family programs into a system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their families known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs).

Beginning in 2018 CMSMs/DSSABs will be required to manage the delivery of the core OEYCFC services related to engaging parents and caregivers, supporting early learning and development, and making connections to other family services. The CMSMs/DSSABs may choose to directly deliver services or continue to deliver services through contracts with community organizations.

During the transformation phase the key responsibilities for CMSMs/DSSABs include conducting a local needs assessment and an inventory of existing child and family programs and services; engaging parents and caregivers to inform the planning and delivery of OEYCFC programs and services; facilitating meaningful engagement with early years partners (school boards, child and family program agencies, partners/caregivers, community partners and others to inform service system planning using new or existing tables; and integrating OEYCFCs into local service system plans for early years programs and services.

Originally EDU had set a deadline for the delivery of the initial OEYCFC plans of May 31, 2017, however on April 12, 2017 EDU provided an extension to September 29, 2017 recognizing the substantial work that is taking place in planning locally for communities.

Given the length and scope of the detail and data contained in the Needs Assessment and Initial Plan, staff are sharing the attached document for information at this time. Staff will

receive any comments or questions and return with a fulsome summary and recommendation for the June committee meeting.

## Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are financial and staffing considerations highlighted within the plan. Additional considerations will be brought forth through the implementation of key actions.

## Interdepartmental Consultation:

During the needs assessment and engagement process other Departments have been consulted, in particular, Library and Museum.

## Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal #5 - The Elimination of Red Tape.
Element # E – Focus on the internal and external customer/client needs first through providing community based services.
Goal # 6 – Explore alternate options to improve efficiency, service.
Element # D - Coordinate working with other agencies

**Approved by:**

Kelley Coulter
Chief Administrative Officer

2017

# Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND INITIAL PLAN (DRAFT)

County of Bruce

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BRUCE
county
Be an explorer.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre Needs Assessment and Initial Plan has benefited greatly from the contributions of many.

A special thank you is extended to administrative and elementary school staff of the Bluewater District School Board and the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board for taking the necessary actions so that the Parent and Caregiver Survey could be completed at the Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration sessions.

Thank you as well to all of the organizations and agencies who provided data and information, who participated in the Community Forums, and/or served as Key Informants.

Last and definitely not least, to the approximately 1,100 parents and caregivers who partially or fully completed the survey, thank you for so willingly sharing your experiences and thoughts.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Setting The Stage

In February 2016, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to transform Ministry-funded child and family programs into a system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their families and caregivers known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). The current Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) will be formally transformed into an OEYCFC in January 2018 when a new provincial funding model takes effect. In its role as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the County of Bruce will manage the delivery of the following core services – engaging parents and caregivers; supporting early learning and development; and making connections for families.

The County of Bruce was required to conduct a Needs Assessment and develop an Initial Plan for OEYCFC programs and services. A decision was made to partner with the County of Grey in the development of the Needs Assessment. The uniqueness of each County did however lead to the creation of separate Initial Plans.

A Steering Committee, comprised of senior staff from each County as well as a designate from each of the three local School Boards, was struck to oversee the Needs Assessment. A Working Group was also convened to perform much of the 'behind the scenes' work. The Let's Grow Committee made up of service providers from both Counties provided valuable support to both the Steering Committee and the Working Group.

Numerous research papers, statistical reports, surveys and service plans were reviewed in the development of the Needs Assessment. A variety of community planning and engagement processes were used – a Parent and Caregiver Survey (completed by 998 individuals), two Community Forums attended by 99 service providers, 18 Key Informant interviews with leadership staff from a variety of community agencies, meetings with the Let's Grow Committee and a Focus Group with the OEYC Service System Management Committee.

## Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment includes a brief history of the local OEYC. OEYCs were established across Ontario in 2002 and 2003 on the basis of provincial electoral ridings. At that time, a decision was made that the County of Bruce and the County of Grey would serve as co-leads for the OEYC in the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound riding. A 'hub' model of service delivery was put in place with larger sites in large towns being linked to outreach sites in smaller centres. The resultant network of main sites, satellites and outreach sites means that all families in Bruce County can access early years services within a 20 minute drive from home. The County of Bruce directly delivers OEYC programs and services in Walkerton and Kincardine and at their respective outreach sites. In Port Elgin and Wiarton and at their respective outreach sites, OEYC programs

and services are provided by Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services under the terms of a Purchase of Service Agreement.

A demographic profile also forms part of the Needs Assessment. Unfortunately most of the data in the profile was derived from secondary sources that relied on the 2006 and/or 2011 Census. Indicators such as population, the cost of a nutritious food basket, child poverty, unemployment rates, educational attainment, and cultural diversity have been included. Several indicators of social risk are also presented such as fertility and birth rates, children served by the preschool speech and language program, and child protection cases. Lastly, several statistics pertaining to the availability of licensed child care, the screening component of Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration and the Early Development Instrument (EDI) are contained in the Needs Assessment.

Key Informants, the Let's Grow Committee and the OEYC Service System Management Committee identified several strengths with respect to the existing system of early years services:

- the OEYC's success in operating as hubs in their respective communities
- the degree of collaboration that is evident amongst service providers
- the variety of programs and services that are available for children and their parents
- the rural 'outreach' model of delivering services that has been adopted by several community agencies.

Service gaps were identified by Community Forum participants and the Let's Grow Committee, including:

- those related to services for Amish and Mennonite residents
- the lack of culturally relevant programs for Indigenous residents
- the lack of programs and services available in French
- limited mental health services
- the limited number of licensed child care spaces for infants, the shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators, the cost of licensed child care
- the loss of toy and resource lending libraries and the lack of parenting programs

Several service challenges and barriers were identified by parents and service providers. One-third of the parents who completed the survey indicated that a busy family life was a barrier to their participation in early years programs. The largest barrier cited by caregivers was transportation, specifically the challenges of transporting multiple children under the age of six. The rural geography of the County, weather and the lack of public transportation were also raised as barriers to program participation particularly for families experiencing low income.

One of the largest barriers to bridging program and service gaps is provincial funding levels that have remained stagnant for several years and in some cases have decreased. For instance, provincial funding for the OEYCs has been unchanged since the program's inception in 2002. Many community agencies also spoke of the challenges that exist in engaging 'at risk' families in programs and services.

While technology can be both a challenge and an opportunity, it was felt to be more of an opportunity in light of the actions that are underway to significantly enhance Internet service in Bruce County. Accessible, affordable and reliable technology holds infinite possibilities for the future delivery of programs and services. Despite the benefits and opportunities that technology presents, service providers agree that it must not be seen as the panacea – literacy levels must be addressed, information must continue to be available in a variety of mediums, resources must be kept up-to-date, and personal contact must remain an option.

Opportunities were also seen to exist for offering 'targeted' outreach activities to 'groups' of individuals who may not prefer universal programs. Examples of such groups include teen parents, fathers, families experiencing low income, families of children with special needs, parents who home school their children, etc. Key Informants were asked to identify opportunities that existed for their organization or agency to partner with the OEYCFCs. While in some instances, their responses represented new opportunities, for the most part they represent continued or enhanced collaborative ventures such as sharing of infrastructure, professional learning, shared community planning and programming, and joint engagement.

## Initial Plan

The Needs Assessment as well as the Ministry of Education's *Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers* point to several actions that can be taken in the coming months (and beyond) to ensure that the transition from the OEYC to the OEYCFC is successful. As funding levels, outcome measures, and further provincial guidelines and expectations become know, these Initial Plan activities will be fine-tuned.

- Review of satellite and outreach locations, sites and hours to ensure locations are accessible to families all the while keeping in mind the Ministry of Education's schools first policy
- Changing community dynamics related to migration to the area – be this a result of newcomers to Canada settling in Bruce County or of residents of other Counties relocating to Bruce for future employment opportunities
- Monitoring of the accommodation review process underway at the Bluewater District School Board
- Consideration of the culturally diverse residents that make Bruce County their home
- Review of the OEYCFC service delivery model as it relates to the direct delivery and purchase of early years programs and services
- Changing management structure and data analysis services of the OEYC given that the County of Bruce and the County of Grey will each have service management responsibility for their own OEYCFC and its related data analysis services (as opposed to the co-lead relationship that currently exists)
- Consideration of topics such as provincial priorities, funding, demand on staff time, and changing demographics all of which may influence the nature of existing partnerships

## Next Steps

In the immediate future, several more focused activities will be undertaken to inform the many activities identified in the Initial Plan. These involve updating Census information as the 2016

Census data is released, conducting an analysis of administrative and service delivery costs once the OEYCFC funding approach becomes known, determining OEYCFC programming once the updated provincial program and business practice guidelines for child and family programs and the OEYCFC outcome framework are released, and a review of the current OEYC and future OEYCFC locations once the provincial funding allocation is known.

# SECTION 1: SETTING THE STAGE

## BACKGROUND[1]

In February 2016, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to transform Ministry-funded child and family programs[2] into an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their parents[3] and caregivers[4] known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs).

As stated by the Ministry, OEYCFCs will support all children, parents and caregivers in learning, growing and connecting – together. The OEYCFCs therefore contribute to the realization of Ontario's vision for the early years: Ontario's children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development today and a stronger future tomorrow.

To support this vision, the County of Bruce, school boards and local service providers will be guided by the following principles when developing, delivering and evaluating OEYCFC programs and services.

- **Child and family centred:** All programs and services are designed and delivered to meet the unique needs of parents, caregivers and young children to support their developmental health and general well-being.
- **Welcoming:** OEYCFCs provide a warm and welcoming environment based on the foundational conditions for supporting growth and long term success (belonging, well-being, engagement and expression).
- **High-quality:** Programs and services are designed to foster positive outcomes and support nurturing relationships for children, parents and caregivers based on the latest evidence and research.
- **Inclusive:** Programs and services are accessible and responsive to children, parents and caregivers with varying abilities and cultural, language, socio-economic, sexual orientation and religious backgrounds.
- **Integrated:** Programs and services are developed, coordinated and delivered in a cohesive manner in collaboration with broader community services, school boards, early years partners, primary care providers, parents and caregivers.

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1 This section of the Plan contains excerpts from the Ministry of Education's July 2016 document entitled *Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres – Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers.*

2 The four Ministry-funded child and family programs are Ontario Early Year Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings Better Futures programs.

3 The term 'parents' is used to describe both parents and legal guardians.

4 The term caregivers is broadly defined as all adults that care for young children including home child care providers, grandparents, informal caregivers and other family members.

- **Community led:** Communities, educators, parents and caregivers are engaged in designing OEYCFC programs and services that embrace and build on their strengths, address identified gaps and meet their unique needs.

In accordance with Ministry expectations, OEYCFC programs and services must be designed and delivered to achieve the following key goals and objectives:

- Parents and caregivers have access to high quality services that support them in their role as children's first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development.
- Children have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and experience positive developmental health and well-being.
- Parents and caregivers have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children.
- Francophone children and families have access to French language programs and gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition.
- Indigenous children and families have access to culturally responsive programming.
- Parents and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up to date information about community and specialized services.
- Local service providers collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way.

To accomplish these goals, the County of Bruce is required to manage the delivery of the following mandatory core services:

## Engaging Parents And Caregivers

- Discussions and information sharing about child development, parenting, nutrition, play and inquiry-based learning, and other topics that support their role.
- Prenatal and postnatal support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being and to support them in their role(s).
- Targeted outreach activities directed at parents and caregivers that could benefit from OEYCFC programs and services but are not currently accessing services for a variety of reasons.

## Supporting Early Learning And Development

- Drop-in programs and other programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children's exploration, play and inquiry, supported by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*.

## Making Connections For Families

- Responding to parent and caregiver concerns about their child's development through conversation and observation supported by validated tools and resources. In some cases, this may result in supporting parents and caregivers to seek additional support from primary care or other regulated health professionals.
- Information sharing about and facilitating connections with specialized community services, coordinated service planning, public health, education, child care and child welfare as appropriate.

- Information sharing about programs and services available for the whole family beyond the early years.

## LOCAL PLANNING STRUCTURE

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are responsible and accountable for managing local child care and early years programs and services. Beginning in 2018, municipal service managers will also be responsible for the local management of OEYCFCs. To achieve the intended outcomes for OEYCFCs, CMSMs are required to conduct a local Needs Assessment and develop an Initial Plan for OEYCFC programs and services.

Shortly after the release of the Ministry of Education's *Planning Guidelines*, the Director, Social Services & Housing for the County of Bruce and the Director of Social Services for the County of Grey agreed to partner in the development of the Needs Assessment to inform the implementation of OEYCFCs. This decision was arrived at for a variety of reasons:

- The County of Bruce and the County of Grey have a rich history of working collaboratively to meet the needs of families throughout the rural geographic area
- The County of Bruce and the County of Grey co-manage the local Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) as well as the Data Analysis Coordinator position
- The majority of service providers, including the three local school boards, have both Bruce County and Grey County in their catchment area
- Service providers from both Counties have historically come together to solve challenges, brainstorm new ideas and collaborate on innovative and unique programs to meet the identified needs within the community
- It is not uncommon for residents of one County to work, conduct business or spend leisure time in the other County

Despite these commonalities, it was agreed that the uniqueness of each County demanded that separate Initial Plans be created.

A Steering Committee consisting of the following individuals was struck to oversee the Needs Assessment – the Social Services Directors from each County, the Children's Services Managers from each County, the Data Analysis Coordinator, a Superintendent or his/her designate from the Bluewater District School Board and the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board[5], the Facilitator/Consultant, and administrative support.

A Working Group was also convened to perform much of the 'behind the scenes' work such as crafting the Parent and Caregiver Survey and associated posters, designing the format and content of the Community Forums, and developing the questions to be asked of the Key Informants. This

[5] A representative from the Conseil scolaire catholique Providence joined the Steering Committee in November 2016.

group consisted of the Children's Services Managers from each County, the Data Analysis Coordinator, the Facilitator/Consultant, and administrative support.

As a means of building on existing local processes, the Let's Grow Committee comprised of service providers from both Counties provided valuable support to both the Steering Committee and the Working Group by:

- Reviewing the status of previously identified service gaps, barriers and challenges;
- Providing data to inform the Needs Assessment;
- Encouraging the parents and caregivers they interact with to complete the Parent and Caregiver Survey;
- Participating in the Community Forums; and
- Assisting in the interpretation of qualitative and quantitative information and data.

## METHODOLOGY

Numerous research papers, statistical reports, surveys and service plans were reviewed in the development of the Needs Assessment. In particular, the *Poverty Report* commissioned by Bruce Grey Child & Family Services in 2015 was found to contain an abundance of information related, to among other things, population and demographic trends, poverty, education and employment in Bruce County. Several other local reports produced by the Community Foundation Grey Bruce, Bruce County Economic Development and the Grey Bruce Health Unit, among others, also served as valuable sources of secondary data.

Service statistics garnered from quarterly and annual reports submitted to the Ministry of Education and its predecessor, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services have also been used to inform the Needs Assessment.

Historical service plans produced by the County of Bruce, such as the Best Start Community Plan, Best Start Update, and Integrated Report Back templates, were also reviewed and incorporated into the Needs Assessment and Initial Plan.

## ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

A variety of community planning and engagement processes were used – a Parent and Caregiver Survey, Community Forums for service providers, Key Informant interviews, meetings with the Let's Grow Committee and a Focus Group with the OEYC Service System Management Committee. All of these activities provided an abundance of valuable information.

### Parent and Caregiver Survey

An on-line survey was created for parents and caregivers of children under the age of thirteen. In collaboration with the Bluewater District School Board and the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, the survey was made available during the Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration sessions from October 12 until November 18, 2016. Using laptops made available by the respective school board, Ontario Early Years Centre staff invited parents to complete the on-line survey while attending the Let's Learn sessions.

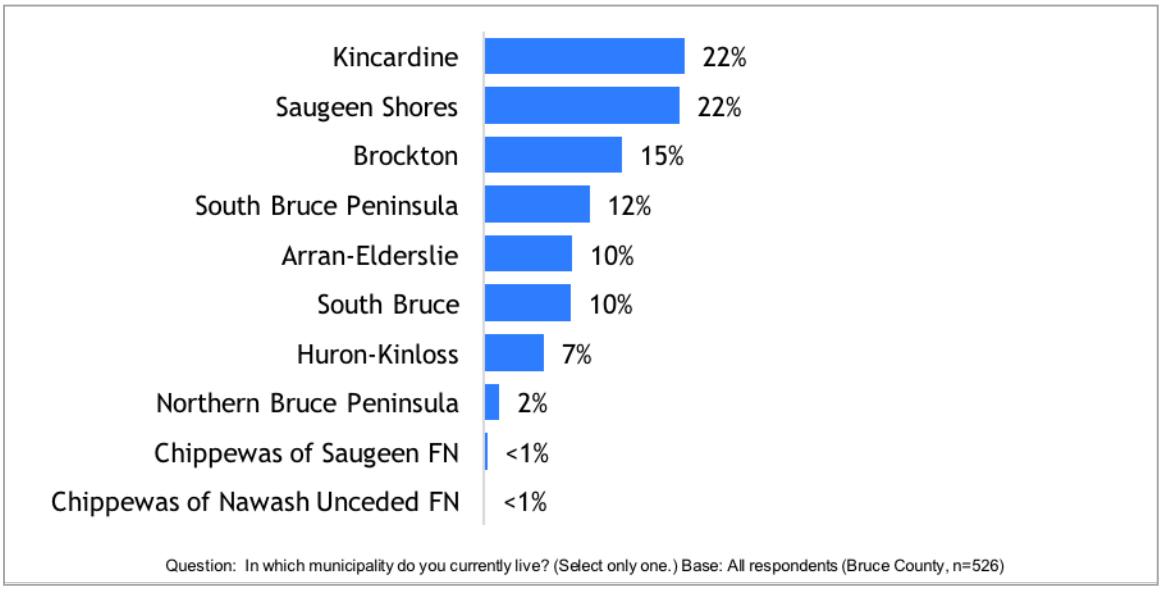
Community partners and staff of the Social Services & Housing Department were also asked to promote the survey in various ways – by displaying a poster in areas frequented by parents and caregivers, by placing the survey hyperlink on 'public' desktops, by including an advertisement in their newsletters, by posting a link on their website, and/or by providing the poster (and hyperlink) to parents and caregivers so they could complete the survey at a time and location convenient to them. Each school board, for example, advertised the survey in their school newsletters and on their respective website. A link to the survey was also placed on the County of Bruce website and staff from all County of Bruce departments were invited to complete the survey.

Children's Services staff also periodically posted information on the OEYC Facebook pages throughout the time the survey was 'live'. In addition, parents and caregivers who had frequented the OEYCs were sent an e-mail inviting them to complete the survey. An advertisement was also placed in the November 2016 OEYC calendars. Parents who had accessed either OneList Bruce County or OneList Grey County – the on-line child care application system – were also sent an invitation to complete a survey. Home child care providers under contract with either the Bruce County Home Child Care Program or the Grey County Home Child Care Program also received a personal invitation to complete the survey.

By adopting these various methods of inviting participation in the survey, it was hoped that not only those parents and caregivers who were 'engaged' in programs and services would share their experiences, but the voice of parents and caregivers who were less engaged would also be heard. As a way to entice participation, those who completed the survey were invited to enter a draw to win one of ten $50 grocery gift cards.

In total 998 surveys[6] were completed by parents and 71 surveys were completed by caregivers almost evenly distributed between Bruce County and Grey County. The distribution of respondents by municipality was proportionately consistent with the overall population distribution of municipalities within Bruce County and Grey County.

**Figure 1: Municipality of Residence**



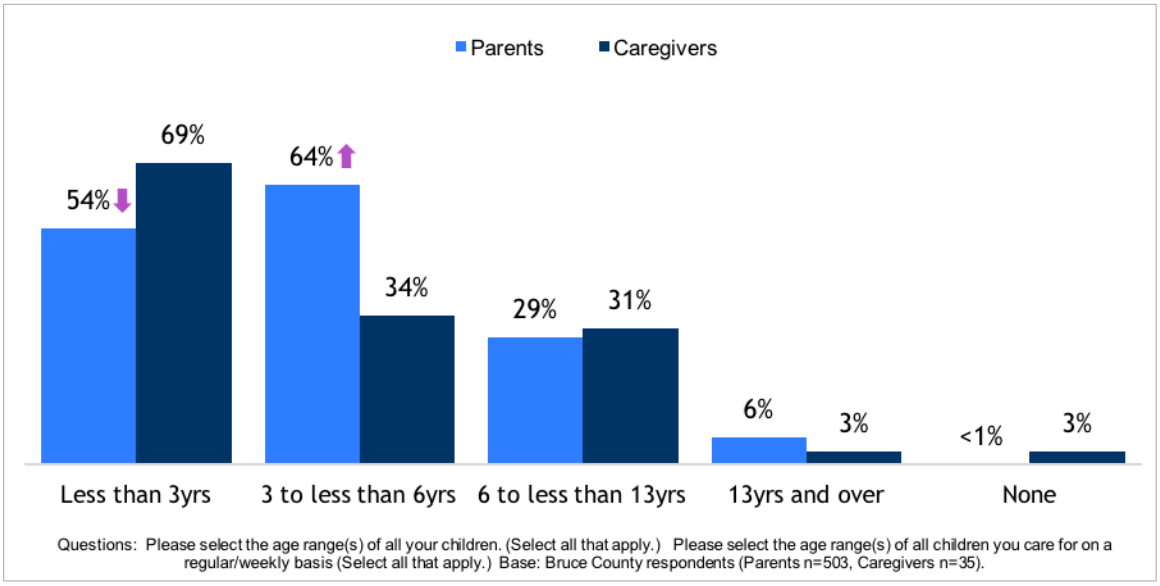

Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

Approximately two percent of respondents identified themselves as First Nations, Inuit or Metis. One percent of respondents identified as Francophone with the highest proportion indicating they resided in Northern Bruce Peninsula. This is noteworthy as service providers often indicate that the largest Francophone community they work with reside along the lakeshore and in Owen Sound. Lastly, three percent of Bruce County respondents self-identified as a newcomer to Canada.

The Figure below illustrates the age ranges of the parents' children and of the children cared for by the caregivers. Although the Figure does not show it, no significant differences in age ranges were apparent across municipalities.

[6] For reporting purposes, only, the following respondents were included in the analysis: those who identified themselves as a parent, guardian or caregiver; those who selected an age range for their children or the children they cared for; those who resided in Bruce County or Grey County; and those who completed all the 'required' questions.

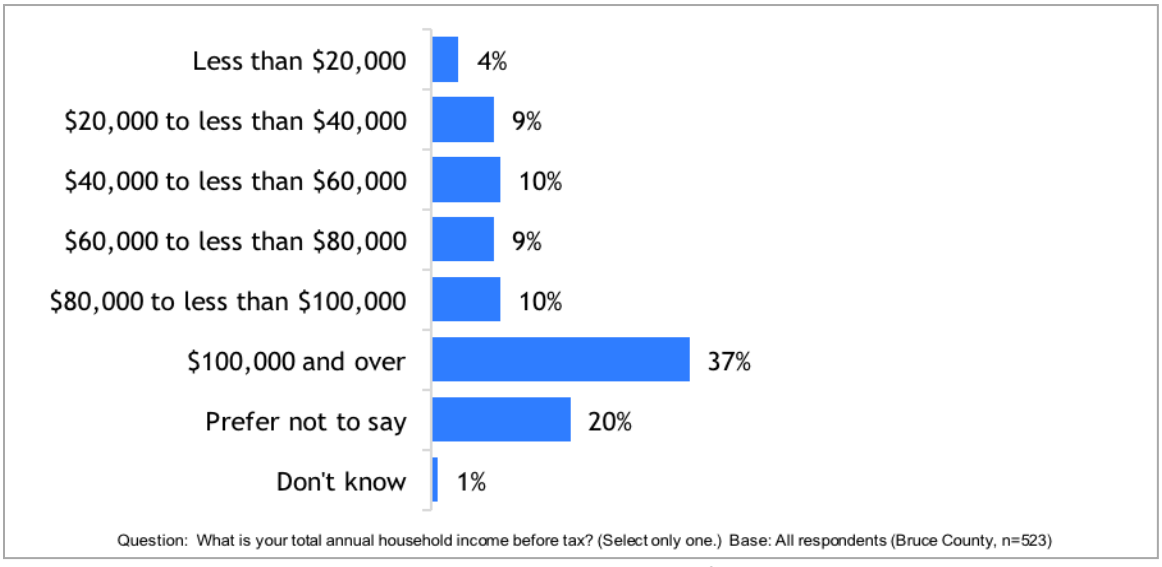
**Figure 2: Age of Children**




Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

The before tax annual household income of respondents is depicted in the Figure that follows. What is not evident in the Figure is that respondents living in Kincardine and Saugeen Shores were significantly more likely to report a household income of $100,000 and over than those respondents who resided in other municipalities.

**Figure 3: Income Distribution of Respondents**




Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

## Community Forums

Two Community Forums were held to gather the input of local service providers. Fifty-seven individuals attended the Forum held in Owen Sound on November 23, 2016 while 42 individuals participated in the December 8, 2016 Forum held in Walkerton. The list of agencies and organizations represented is contained in Appendix A. Unfortunately, weather conditions prevented many registrants, particularly child care programs based in Bruce County, from attending the Walkerton Forum.

Following a presentation highlighting the Ministry of Education's *Planning Guidelines for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres*, an overview of the local planning process was provided. Forum participants were randomly assigned to small groups where they engaged in a facilitated conversation on several questions designed to gather information pertaining to the operation of the OEYCFCs. Appendix B contains the questions that were discussed.

## Key Informant Interviews

During November 2016 telephone interviews were conducted with leaders from a variety of organizations and agencies serving Bruce County and Grey County (see Appendix C for a list of the Key Informants). Prior to their interview, each Key Informant received correspondence inviting their participation, a brief overview of the local planning process, an OEYCFC Backgrounder, and a list of topics for discussion. As can be seen from the following list, the interview with the Key Informants was more strategic or system-based than was the conversation at the Community Forums.

- Does your organizational vision align with the Ministry of Education's vision for the OEYCFCs, and if so how?
- Do you see opportunities to partner with the OEYCFCs? If yes, what opportunities exist e.g., programs, infrastructure, professional learning?
- Do you have any challenges or concerns in partnering with the OEYCFCs? If so, what are they?
- Are there any internal or external influences that may impact any future relationship you may have with OEYCFCs?
- Are there any additional comments you would like to share?

## Other Engagement Activities

A structured Focus Group was held on November 14, 2016 with members of the OEYC Service System Management Committee. This group consists of Children's Services staff from the County of Bruce and the County of Grey as well as staff from the agencies from whom each of the Counties purchases OEYC services – Beaver Valley Outreach, Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services, Kids & Us Community Childcare and Family Education Centres, M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre, and Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library.

Members of the Steering Committee and Working Group also made formal and less formal presentations about the OEYCFCs to various other planning, information sharing and networking

bodies such as the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance, the Healthy Communities Partnership and the Quality Early Learning Committee.

# SECTION 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section of the Plan will provide a brief history of the Ontario Early Years Centre in Bruce County. As the only Ministry-funded child and family program in the County, it is important to have an understanding of the history of the OEYC as well as its location, utilization and program offerings.

A demographic profile of the County will also be presented that will, in part, assist in the identification of service strengths, gaps, challenges, and barriers. The knowledge gained from the engagement of parents, caregivers, service providers and Key Informants will also be included.

## BRUCE COUNTY ONTARIO EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Ontario Early Years Centres were established across Ontario in 2002 and 2003 on the basis of provincial electoral ridings. The Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound riding and the Huron-Bruce riding were both part of the first phase of implementation. One of the first OEYC planning activities that the County of Bruce undertook was the development of a strategy, in collaboration with its neighbouring CMSMs, to equalize the distribution of funding on a per-capita basis.

A decision was made locally that the County of Bruce and the County of Grey would serve as co-leads for the OEYC in the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound riding. In so doing, resources could be applied to the delivery of programs rather than to administration costs. A 'hub model' of service delivery was put in place with larger sites in large towns being linked to outreach sites in smaller centres. The resultant network of main sites, satellites and outreach sites meant that all families in Bruce County and Grey County could access early years services within a twenty minute drive from home. Appendix D contains a map illustrating the location of the current network of OEYC sites in Bruce County.

From a service delivery perspective, the County of Bruce directly delivers the core early years services[7] at the Walkerton hub site and in Kincardine while the County of Grey directly delivers core services at the Hanover hub site. In keeping with the principle of partnering, the early years network was built on the services that were previously available through four existing provincial-municipal child care resource centres. The County of Bruce has established a formal relationship with Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services while the County of Grey has established a formal relationship with Beaver Valley Outreach, Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services, Kids & Us Community Childcare and Family Education Centre, and M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre to operate satellite and/or outreach sites. Representatives from these agencies and organizations, the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library[8] and the two co-leads have

[7] The core early years services available through OEYCs, as previously defined by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, are early learning activities, parent and caregiver education, early years community information, volunteer recruitment and coordination, public education and awareness, and a Speaker's Bureau.

[8] The Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library is host to the Early Literacy Specialist serving Grey County and as such, is a member of the OEYC Service System Management Committee.

come together as the OEYC Service System Management Committee to ensure that the services reflect community needs and to provide advice to the co-leads.

Each electoral riding (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Huron-Bruce) received $500,000 in operating and $150,000 in one-time capital costs from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. As a result of the equalization of funds on a per capital basis rather than on a per riding basis, the County of Bruce was provided with $321,183 in OEYC operating funding – an amount that has not increased since the OEYC was established in 2002. The County of Bruce has funded the inflationary increases in the cost of operating the OEYC program and was able to use reserve funds to offset some of this cost. The use of the applicable reserve is not a long term sustainable solution. There was deliberation during the review of the 2017 Business Plan and budget with regard to the program. It was discussed that the work involved with the family support transformation during 2017 will involve a review of the new funding allocation against this Needs Assessment. In 2017, the County of Bruce is contributing approximately $130,000 to support this program. This is a reduction of approximately $110,000 from the previous budget year (2016). Depending on the funding allocation, priority setting will be necessary in order to build a balanced program budget for the 2018 budget year, based on provincial revenues received.

The Table that follows contains recent service statistics for the Bruce County OEYC. As can be seen from the Table, the magnitude of children and parents/caregivers served and the number of associated visits has stayed fairly consistent in the past three years.

**Table 1: Bruce County OEYC Service Statistics**

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| # of unique children served | 1,088 | 1,126 | 1,102 |
| # of child visits | 11,113 | 11,295 | 11, 456 |
| # of unique parents/caregivers served | 841 | 843 | 808 |
| # of parent/caregiver visits | 7,889 | 7,572 | 7,776 |
| # of parents/caregivers in workshops | 1,346 | 1,186 | 1,484 |
| # of professionals in workshops | 24 | 27 | 101 |
| # of partnerships/linkages | 70 | 82 | 103 |
| # of referrals | 168 | 160 | 220 |

Source: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Ontario Early Years Centre Data Base

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Much of the data contained in this demographic profile has been derived from secondary sources produced by or for Bruce Grey Child and Family Services, the County of Bruce, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, among others, that relied on available Census information. As the release of the 2016 Census information will not begin until February 2017, the most recent Census information available comes from 2011 – a year when the Long-Form Census was not in use. Instead, Statistics Canada replaced the mandatory Long-Form Census with the voluntary National Household Survey. For this reason, the data presented must be interpreted with a degree of caution.

### Total Population

The 2016 Census cites the population of the County as being 68,147 – an increase of 3.1% from 2011.[9] As reported by the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the communities of greatest growth between 2006 and 2011 were Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (12.9% growth) and Saugeen Shores (8.0% growth). In contrast, South Bruce experienced a population decrease of 4.3% and Saugeen First Nation saw a loss of 4.2% during the same period.

Based on an examination of total future residential growth, the 2015 *Poverty Report* projected that Kincardine and Saugeen Shores will grow at greater rates than other areas of Bruce County.

The January 2017 document entitled *A Peer Review of the Long Term Accommodation Strategy (Watson & Associates, 2014 and Update Report, 2016) prepared for Bluewater District School Board*, indicates that recent projections from Bruce Power state that its demand for skilled workers will average about 1,000 each year from 2016 to 2020 then increase to almost 2,000 by 2021 and to about 2,300 by 2023. Based on this more than doubling of skilled workers by 2020, the *Peer Review* projects that the population of the area will likely increase significantly.

Bruce Power has also reported that 40% of its current work force will retire in the next ten years. Recent in-migration and population growth has included a significantly large and younger demographic (20-29) that suggests replacement workers for those retiring from all jobs, may already be underway.[10]

[9] Population and dwelling counts were the first 2016 Census topics to be released. Appendix E contains the complete 2016 Census Program release schedule.

[10] January 9, 2017 correspondence from Kelley Coulter, Chief Administrative Officer for the County of Bruce to Rob Cummings, Superintendent of Education for the Bluewater District School Board.

## Child Population

The *Poverty Report* indicated that between 2001 and 2006 the Bruce County population of children less than 18 years of age decreased by 10% or more than 1,500 children. The decline continued between 2006 and 2011 although it was less severe at 6.7%. In contrast, the Table that follows shows that the number of children aged 0-14 is projected to increase in the coming years.

**Table 2: Bruce County Child Population**

| Age Range | 2011 Actual | 2015 Projection | 2020 Projection | 2025 Projection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-4 years | 3,465 | 3,609 | 3,581 | 3,572 |
| 5-9 years | 3,135 | 3,565 | 3,824 | 3,836 |
| 10-14 years | 3,365 | 3,217 | 3,693 | 3,946 |
| Total 0-14 | 9,965 | 10,783 | 11,098 | 11,354 |

Source: The 2011 actual figures are derived from the 2011 Census while the 2015, 2020 and 2025 projections come from Ministry of Finance population projections made in Spring 2016 based on the 2011Census.

As cited in the *Poverty Report*, 2001 Census data reveals that, at that time, the highest number of children were residing in Kincardine, Saugeen Shores and Brockton with more than 2,000 each followed by South Bruce, Huron-Kinloss, Arran-Elderslie and South Bruce Peninsula with more than 1,000 children each. Northern Bruce Peninsula, Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation each had less than 1,000 children residing within their boundaries.

## Families Experiencing Poverty

In 2011, 8% of all Bruce County families were living in poverty – a decrease of approximately 1% from 2006.

The *Poverty Report* states that the median income for two parent families in Bruce County is $73,220 as compared to the median income for lone parent families which sat at $37,580[11]. For families considered to be experiencing low income, there is less discrepancy between two parent and one parent families in terms of median income. In Bruce, low income couple families have a median income of approximately $19,230 versus low income, lone parent families who had a median income of $16,770. The prevalence of lone parent families living in poverty is not only on the rise in Bruce County, the gap in median income for lone parent families compared to couple families is relatively high compared to provincial trends.

[11] The *Poverty Report* does not state which year this information is for.

The Table that follows provides an illustration of the dollars available in 2016 to a Bruce County family of four in receipt of Ontario Works to buy healthy food, pay rent and to address other basic monthly expenses.

**Table 3: Dollars Available to a Family of Four in Receipt of Ontario Works**

| **Cost of Nutritious Food Basket for one month**[12] | **$869.16** |
|---|---|
| Average monthly rent | $906.00 |
| Ontario Works total monthly income[13] | $2,227.00 |
| Income required to buy healthy food | 39% |
| Income required to pay rent | 41% |
| Amount remaining to cover other basic monthly expenses | $452.00 |

Source: Grey Bruce Health Unit

Another indicator of poverty is food bank usage. According to the 2016 *Vital Signs* report 26,000 individuals and families from Bruce County and Grey County accessed a food bank in 2015, up 92% from 2013. The report also indicated that not only are there 21 food banks in Bruce County and Grey County but there are also numerous food cupboards, community gardens, soup kitchens and other agencies that provide food to people who need it and cannot access a food bank.

As stated in the *Poverty Report*, the prevalence of poverty can hinder the ability of families and their children to access the resources and services needed for healthy physical and mental development. For that reason, families and their children living in poverty are at greater risk for poor physical and mental health. Using data from the *Canadian Community Health Survey*, the *Poverty Report* explored the prevalence of physical or mental health conditions as well as substance use disorders. The authors of the report concluded that approximately ten percent of respondents from Bruce County and Grey County reported having a mood disorder (i.e., depression, bipolar disorder, etc.) – a figure which is 2% higher than Ontario. Further, more than 26% of respondents from Bruce County and Grey County were identified as consuming higher amounts of alcohol as compared to 17% of provincial respondents.

## Lone Parent Families Experiencing Poverty

The *Poverty Report* states that the severity of the increase in lone parent, low income families varies geographically. Using the percentage change between 2006 and 2011 as an indicator, Port Elgin experienced the largest increase (9%) in lone parent, low income families with Walkerton experiencing the second largest increase. In contrast, Mildmay, Hepworth, Lucknow and Lion's

[12] The Nutritious Food Basket estimates the cost of one month's worth of groceries for a hypothetical family of four consisting of a child, teenager, mother and father. The foods included in the calculation do not include pre-packaged foods.

[13] Also includes HST Rebate and child and family benefits available through the Canada Revenue Agency.

Head all experienced the largest declines (7% to 9%). The other Bruce County municipalities either remained stable or decreased their prevalence of lone parents living below the poverty line.

## Child Poverty

It is commonly understood that children who grow up in poverty tend to be less likely to achieve educational and employment goals and are potentially subject to increased health risks now and in the future.

The *Poverty Report* states that proportional to the total child population, Bruce County has decreased its prevalence of child poverty from 17.2% of the population age 0 to 17 living below the LIM-AT[14] in 2006 to less than 15% in 2011. The *Report* went on to state that 34% of Ontario's Indigenous children are living in poverty compared to 15% of non-Indigenous children.

While the majority of communities experienced a decline in child poverty there were some that increased their prevalence between 2006 and 2011 such as Wiarton, Southampton and Teeswater. These increases were relatively small and ranged from 0.4% to 0.6%. Of the remaining areas that experienced a decline in child poverty prevalence rates, Paisley, Hepworth, Tobermory and Chesley had the largest declines that ranged anywhere from 4.2% to 8.1%.

It should be noted that the majority of these communities decreased the number of children living in poverty in terms of absolute numbers for this same period of time. While this may in part be related to the overall declining number of children present in these communities as a whole, for many communities, the change in the child population between 2006 and 2011 was not necessarily equal to the change in child poverty rate for the same period of time.

Two other indicators of child poverty are offered. In September 2016, there were approximately 209 children aged 0-6 years residing in Bruce County whose parents or guardians were in receipt of Ontario Works. Further, in February 2017 there were 41 children under the age of six years living in social housing in Bruce County.

## Labour Force

The *Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2017-2021* reports that in 2016 just over half of the jobs in Bruce County fell into the following five sectors:

- Utilities – 15.6% of total jobs
- Retail – 11.1% of total jobs
- Tourism – 11% of total jobs
- Construction – 8.5% of total jobs
- Agriculture – 7.8% of total jobs

Other indicators contained in the *Strategic Plan* show that the labour force participation rate increased in 2016 to 63.1% from a rate of 62% in 2011; the unemployment rate dropped slightly in

[14] The LIM-AT is defined as the after-tax low income measure provided by Statistics Canada in its T1 Family File.

2016 to 5.5% from 6.5% in 2011; and the employment rate increased by 0.45% during the same period – from 57.9% in 2011 to 58.35% in 2016.

## Educational Attainment

The *Poverty Report* states that the educational attainment of Bruce County residents is lower than corresponding provincial figures[15] as evidenced in Table 4.

**Table 4: Educational Attainment**

| Geography | No Diploma/ Degree | High School Diploma | Trades/ College | University Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bruce County | 18% | 26% | 39% | 16% |
| Ontario | 14% | 25% | 31% | 31% |

Source: The Poverty Report

Data provided by Bruce County Economic Development shows that in 2016 the above figures have changed slightly whereby 16% of the Bruce County workforce did not possess a certificate, 25% had received a high school diploma, 12% completed an apprenticeship, 26% attained a college degree or diploma, and 21% have graduated from university.

## Cultural Diversity

The population of Bruce County is relatively homogeneous with English being reported as the first language of 95% of the population as compared to 78% of Ontario's population. The most common ethnic origins in the County are English, German and Scottish.

The 2011 National Household Survey states that there were 5,000 residents (7.7% of the total population) who identified themselves as an immigrant. Of this figure 2,575 arrived in Canada before 1971 and 340 came to Canada between 2006 and 2011. Of the latter group, 135 arrived from Europe, 100 from Asia and 95 from the Americas.

The *Vital Signs* report indicates that 75 refugees have been welcomed into Bruce County and Grey County in the past year. Information gleaned from the website of the Grey Bruce Newcomer Network[16] reveals that the country of origin of these individuals is varied and includes Syria, Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Sudan and Eretria.

Bruce County is home to many Amish and Mennonite communities that are situated near Kinloss, Lucknow, Holyrood, Kinlough, Chesley, Whitechurch, Tiverton, and Glammis. While the

[15] No date was provided for the information contained in the Table.

[16] The Network is a community support initiative for groups engaged in the refugee resettlement process. Begun in September 2015, the Network currently has fifteen sponsoring groups.

approximate population of one or two of the communities can be estimated, for the most part, the number of families and the total population is unknown.

Both the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation are located in the northwestern part of Bruce County. Although the combined total population for both First Nations is less than 1,500, the child population accounts for approximately 30% or one-third of their total population. There is also an urban Indigenous presence in some of the surrounding municipalities including Owen Sound and Saugeen Shores in which 3% of their population identifies as Indigenous. In addition, Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula and Southgate each have approximately two percent of their population identifying as Aboriginal. Overall, the Indigenous population (2.9%) has increased since 2001 when it represented approximately 1.9% of the total population of Bruce County and Grey County.

## Indicators of Social Risk

### Healthy Babies Healthy Children

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program supports vulnerable families through home visits and working in partnership with allied agencies to help children achieve their full potential. According to the 2015 *Healthy Babies Healthy Children Report*, 1,386 babies were born in Bruce County and Grey County in 2015. The report goes on to say that 62% of the pregnant women screened scored for risk factors linked with low birth weight and parenting concerns. Additionally, 60% of families screened in the post-partum period were identified for one or more issues such as isolation, low income, low education, etc.

### Fertility and Birth Weight

The *Grey Bruce Community Picture – 2014 Supplement*, states that the teen fertility rate (women aged 15-19 years) in Bruce County and Grey County has decreased since 2001. In 2011, the local teen fertility rate was 14.5 live births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years – a rate that approximates the Ontario rate. High fertility rates in adolescents are associated with low birth weight, pre-term birth, and increased infant morbidity and mortality.

A birth weight is considered to be ‘low’ when the newborn weighs less than 2,500 grams. Low birth weight is a main determinant of infant morbidity and mortality and the negative effects of low birth weight may be life long. According to the Health Unit, low birth weights in Bruce County and Grey County have remained relatively stable over the past decade at around 6.5%.

### Preschool Speech and Language

Another indicator of potential risk is the number of children served by the Preschool Speech and Language Program. Early intervention is known to, among other things, improve a child’s readiness for school, improve a child’s self-esteem and confidence, and reduce behaviour problems.

The Table that follows illustrates the number of children served – the cumulative total of the number of children served per month up to and including senior kindergarten – as well as the number of new children served.

**Table 5: Preschool Speech and Language 2014 and 2015**

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|
| # of children served | 1,777 | 1,990 |
| # of new children served | 999 | 1,148 |

Source: Grey Bruce Health Unit.

In July 2016, management and service delivery responsibility for the Preschool Speech and Language program was transferred from the Grey Bruce Health Unit to Thames Valley Children's Centre. Thames Valley Children's Centre utilizes the GoldCare information system which is somewhat different than the Integrated Services for Children Information System (ISCIS) that was used by the Grey Bruce Health Unit. For that reason, the service statistics for July to December 2016 have been presented separately.

In Table 6, the 'number of children served' includes a range of client services such as assessment, individual and group treatment, client planning and preparation, and client documentation in both Bruce County and Grey County. The 'number of new children served' per month up to and including senior kindergarten includes the number of new assessments only in both Bruce County and Grey County.

**Table 6: Preschool Speech and Language July to December 2016**

| | July | August | September | October | November | December |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # of children served | 128 | 179 | 169 | 177 | 219 | 218 |
| # of new children served | N/A | 6 | 31 | 31 | 63 | 35 |

Source: Thames Valley Children's Centre

## Child Protection

The child protection caseload is also an indicator of social risk. The *Poverty Report* states that the service trends of the caseload of Bruce Grey Child and Family Services vary across the County. Not surprisingly, the highest number of cases is typically related to areas that have the highest concentration of children or a proportionally high number of children relative to the total population.

The authors of the *Poverty Report* developed an indicator rating system by municipality which is contained in Appendix F. The rating system consists of the following indicators, several of which have been discussed earlier in this Needs Assessment.

- Child population aged 0-18
- Percentage of the child population to total population
- Prevalence of low income families
- Prevalence of lone parent families
- Number of child protection cases
- Percentage of child protection cases
- Percentage of child protection cases per child population

The rating system chart highlights the top five municipalities in any given category. The municipalities are then ranked by those having the most categories in the top five. As stated in the *Poverty Report*, according to this rating system:

- Owen Sound has six of the seven categories in the top five.
- Hanover, Saugeen Shores (including Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation) and Brockton have five of the seven categories in the top five.
- South Bruce Peninsula and Arran-Elderslie have four of the seven categories in the top five.
- The Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation has three of the seven categories in the top five but it should be noted that data was not available for low income families. It is also important to note that the First Nation had the highest incidence of lone parent families at 29%, one of the highest ratios of children to adult populations at 28.2% and the second highest number of child protection cases per child population at three percent.
- The remaining municipalities had two or fewer categories in the top five.
- Meaford, Huron-Kinloss and The Blue Mountains had no categories in the top five.

### Special Needs Resourcing

Special needs resourcing services are provided by the Preschool Resource Teacher Program managed and delivered by the County of Bruce Social Services & Housing. Table 7 provides service data for 2014 and 2015.

**Table 7: Children Served by the Preschool Resource Teacher Program**

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly average number of children served | 179 | 147 | 138 |
| Total number of individual children served in the year | 272 | 214 | 226 |

Source: Bruce County Children's Services

### Licensed Child Care Indicators

The number of licensed centre-based spaces in Bruce County has increased from a total of 1,043 spaces in 2014 to 1,522 spaces[17] in 2017. Much of the growth in this period can be attributed to the expansion of the Brockton Child Care Centre and the opening of two new child care programs – Bright Beginnings Child Care and Little Beginnings Daycare and Learning Centres.

In addition to licensed centre-based spaces, families in Bruce County also have access to 'licensed' home based care available through the County of Bruce's Home Child Care Program. The program is licensed by the Ministry of Education for 50 providers. At the present time, there are approximately 35 providers who care for approximately three children each.

Bruce County Children's Services reports that in 2016, the number of available licensed child care spaces per 1,000[18] was approximately 180, a figure that was expected to remain fairly constant in 2017 and 2018.

[17] Appendix G shows the number of licensed centre-based spaces in 2017 by age category and by program.

[18] Number of available regulated child care spaces per 1,000 is defined as the number of licensed spaces in child care centres, nursery schools and the Bruce County Home Child Care Program divided by the 0-12 population in Bruce County.

Table 8 shows the average monthly number of children on whose behalf a child care fee subsidy was paid.

**Table 8: Average Monthly Number of Children Served, Fee Subsidy**

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Infant | 23 | 26 | 27 |
| Toddler | 43 | 48 | 54 |
| Preschool | 104 | 106 | 104 |
| JK/SK | 73 | 67 | 70 |
| School Age | 88 | 107 | 108 |
| School Age - Recreation | 6 | 8 | 7 |
| **TOTAL** | **337** | **362** | **370** |

Source: Bruce County Children's Services

As one would expect, a child care fee subsidy is not paid on behalf of the same children each month during the year. For example, children may enter the licensed child care system as a parent returns to the workforce or when an age-appropriate space becomes available. Children may also exit the child care system when a child starts kindergarten or if the child's parent is no longer employed or attending school. For this reason, it is also prudent to illustrate the total number of individual children served in a year as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Total Number of Individual Children Served, Fee Subsidy**

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fee Subsidy – Child Care | 675 | 672 | 675 |
| Fee Subsidy – Recreation Program | 67 | 51 | 50 |

Source: Bruce County Children's Services

As can be seen from the map contained in Appendix H, in keeping with the provincial 'Schools First' policy, many of the licensed child care programs and OEYC outreach sites are located in elementary schools.

## Other Indicators

### Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration

Each October and November, service providers from Bruce County and Grey County collaborate with the Bluewater District School Board and Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board to hold Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration sessions. Attendance at the sessions (expressed as a percentage of school enrolment) is calculated based on the number of children registered in junior kindergarten as of October 31st in the year following their participation in Let's Learn. Table 10 shows the attendance and registration numbers for the past six years.

**Table 10: Participation in Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration**

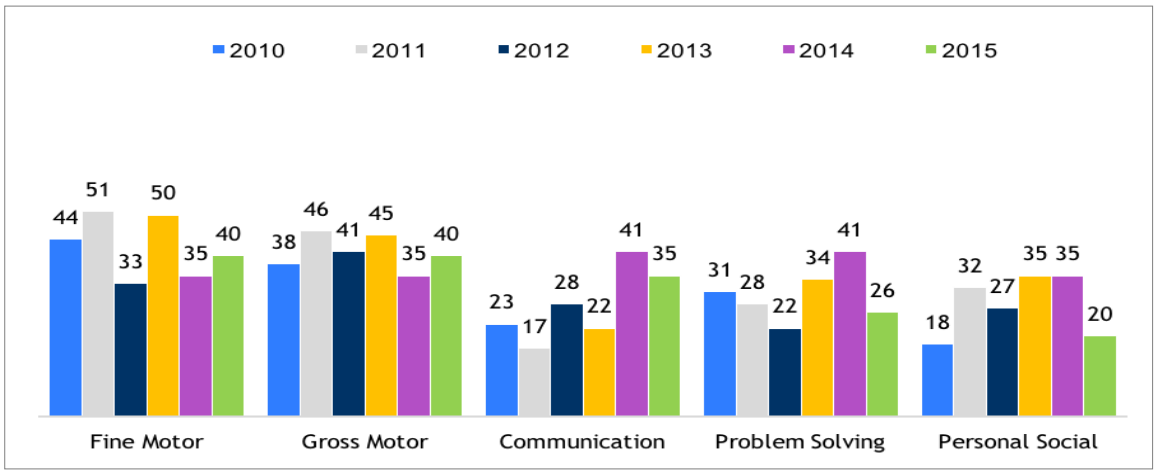
| Let's Learn Year | # of Children Attended | # of Children Registered in JK the Next Year | Attendance Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 900 | 1,340 | 67% |
| 2011 | 917 | 1,351 | 68% |
| 2012 | 862 | 1,299 | 66% |
| 2013 | 992 | 1,355 | 73% |
| 2014 | 918 | 1,350 | 68% |
| 2015 | 934 | 1,374 | 69% |

Source: 2016 Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration Newsletter

In addition to registering for kindergarten, families have the option of participating in a 'parent completed, age appropriate' developmental screening process using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, 3rd Edition. Of all the children who were screened in 2015, 113 were already involved in one or more early intervention program or service. The majority of referrals that resulted were made to the Preschool Speech and Language Program (25 referrals) and to the appropriate special needs resourcing program (21 referrals). An additional eight referrals were recommended but were declined by parents.

The screening process also identified a number of children whose results were in the 'monitoring zone' in one or more developmental area – fine motor, gross motor, communication, problem solving and personal social. As Figure 4 illustrates, the number of children who should be monitored for problem solving and personal social decreased significantly from 2014 to 2015. The number of children who should be monitored for fine motor or gross motor increased slightly while the number of children monitored for communication remained steady from the previous year.

**Figure 4: Number of Children in "Monitoring Zone" for Five Areas of Development**




Source: 2016 Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration Newsletter

## Early Development Instrument (EDI)

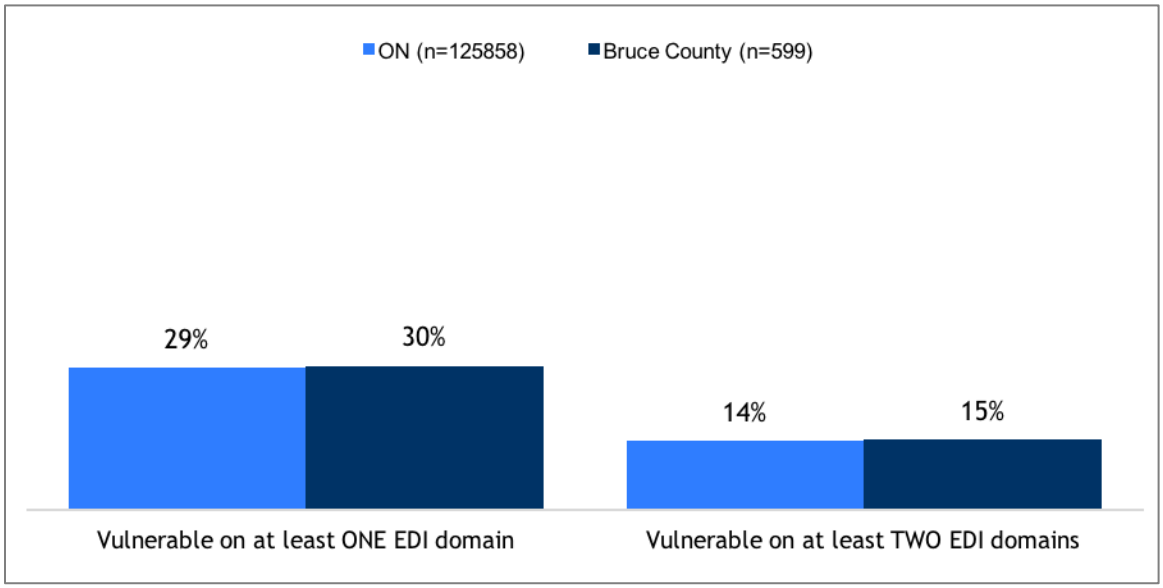
The Early Development Instrument was developed to measure children's ability to meet age-appropriate expectations at school entry and developmental health. The EDI is comprised of five developmental domains that represent the critical components of child development – physical health & well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language & cognitive development[19], and communication & general knowledge[20]. Senior kindergarten teachers complete the survey after several months of classroom interaction and base their answers on their knowledge and observation of the children.

The EDI is completed for individual children and is not meant to be used as an individual diagnostic tool. Results are interpreted at the group level and are a measure of a community's ability to support early child development not a measure of a school's performance.

[19] While Figure 6 does indicate that children in Bruce County tend to be doing very well when it comes to language & cognitive development, it is important that programs focused on early literacy and family literacy continue particularly in those lower tier municipalities where a higher proportion of children are 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'.

[20] Appendix I describes each of the five EDI domains.

**Figure 5: Vulnerable on One Domain & Vulnerable on At Least Two Domains (Cycle 4)**




Each of the five domains is scored on a scale of 1 to 10 with higher scores indicating greater developmental skills. Rates of vulnerability are also determined with 'vulnerability' describing children who score below the 10th percentile cut-off of the Ontario baseline population on any of the five domains. Higher vulnerability indicates that a greater percentage of children are struggling in comparison to the Ontario data.

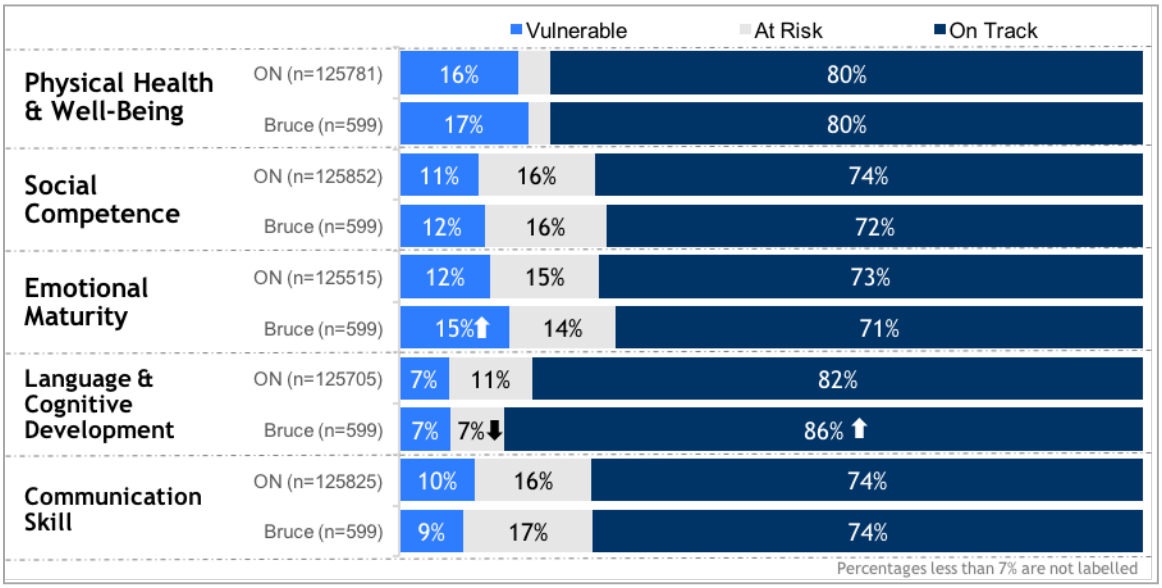
Source: EDI Cycle 4 – Offord Centre for Child Studies & Data Analysis Coordinator

As indicated in Figure 5, the proportion of children in Bruce County considered vulnerable on at least one or at least two domains was on par with Ontario for Cycle 4 (2015).

Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of Bruce County children who are considered 'vulnerable', 'at risk' and 'on track' for each domain.

- 'Vulnerable' describes children who have an overall score below the 10th percentile cut-off of the Ontario baseline population, for that domain.
- 'At risk' describes children who score between the 10th and 25th percentile for that domain.
- 'On track' describes children who score above the 25th percentile for that domain.

**Figure 6: Cycle 4 EDI Overview**




Source: EDI Cycle 4 – Offord Centre & Data Analysis Coordinator

### Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

As cited in the *EDI Summary Report* "EDI research across Canada shows vulnerability at school entry is associated with poorer scores on provincial standardized tests in Grades 3 and 4. Research also shows an association between vulnerability and the likelihood of having some form of special needs status by Grade 9." It is for this reason that EQAO results are also presented.

The EQAO assesses how well Ontario's public education system is developing students' reading, writing and math skills. EQAO provides reliable and useful information that is used to help improve student achievement and ensure the accountability of school boards. The primary division (Grade 3) assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills that students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May/June each year.

The 2015-16 EQAO results indicate that the Bluewater District School Board continued its upward trend in primary reading with an increase to 62 percent of students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard. A steady increase in primary writing was also experienced by the Bluewater Board. With respect to primary mathematics, the Board's results resembled the province-wide decline that has become evident in recent years.[21]

[21] These results are contained in the September 21, 2016 Media Release issued by the Bluewater District School Board.

The September 26, 2016 Board of Trustee Meeting Highlights available on the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board's website state that although the province has witnessed a decrease in math results, primary students at the Bruce-Grey Catholic Board have maintained their levels of achievement. An increase in primary reading results occurred locally while a decrease occurred with respect to primary writing results.

## SERVICE STRENGTHS

The *Planning Guidelines* encourage CMSMs to "build on any existing processes that may already be in place…" To that end, Community Forum participants were asked to identify the strengths of the local early learning system for children, their families and caregivers. Key Informants, the Let's Grow Committee and the OEYC Service System Management Committee also made mention of various strengths and best practices that should be built upon. Their collective responses can be grouped under the headings of Ontario Early Years Centre, collaboration, programs and services for children and their parents, and community outreach.

### Ontario Early Years Centre

The OEYC main sites and satellite sites have been successful in operating as hubs in their respective communities. Put another way, "the OEYC has done a noteworthy job of integrating and coordinating its programs with other early years and community services." An example of this include the OEYC sites in Kincardine and Walkerton where several service providers such as Thames Valley Children's Centre and Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services make regular use of the facilities. The OEYC sites in Wiarton and Port Elgin are also home to the Parent Mutual Aid program operated by Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services. This site also serves to exemplify the fact that the presence of a service provider who the parent is familiar with can often make parents feel more comfortable in attending OEYC programs, particularly for the first time. Community Forum participants also noted that the sharing of space also allows service providers to maximize the use of limited funds.

The variety of programming that is offered by the OEYC was another strength highlighted by Community Forum participants. Several service providers indicated that OEYC programs are welcoming of all cultures and have been successful in gaining the participation of some grandparents and fathers[22]. It was also noted that the OEYC has been able to provide more support to home child care providers in recent years. Having programs on Saturdays was also seen as an effective way of engaging working parents. The delivery of OEYC programs and services by qualified staff at no cost to the parent or caregiver was also identified as a strength.

The fact that those attending the OEYC are able to "come and go" at any time was also seen as an advantage. Community Forum participants also mentioned that the "consistency of the programs"

[22] The Let's Grow Committee is of the belief however that little has changed over the past several years in the level of programming available to support fathers.

(a program being offered at a consistent time, day and week) was of importance to parents and caregivers. The participation of guest speakers was also viewed as a positive aspect of programming. One Community Forum participant also noted that families are taking ownership of programming. As a result, parents are learning skills and being supported to be leaders, "system navigators" and "parent champions". This result speaks to the goal of helping families build connections within their community be they with other families or with other services.

The OEYC has also been recognized as a valuable source of information about early years programs and services, specialized services for children with special needs, and community services in general. The OEYC has enhanced the public's awareness of available programs and services through its use of on-line calendars, websites, Facebook and e-mail. In essence, the OEYC is viewed as an excellent example of the "no wrong door" approach not only in its provision of information but in the willingness of staff to make referrals to other service providers as appropriate.

Lastly, the municipal management of the OEYC was raised as a strength during the Community Forums.

## Collaboration

Community Forum participants, Key Informants and the Let's Grow Committee all spoke highly of the degree of collaboration that exists between service providers. The rural nature of the population and the relatively low population density has meant that service providers are usually well acquainted with one another and frequently work together to coordinate services for families and young children. This action not only strengthens services for families but also allows service providers to "share the load". Other phrases that were used to describe the collaboration and effective partnerships were "fluid and effective" and "a spirit of good will".

One of the many strategies that has been successful in the last decade in enhancing collaboration is the establishment of interagency networks under the mandate of the Let's Grow Committee. These networks in Bruce County and Grey County – Meaford/Owen Sound, Hanover/Walkerton, South East Grey, Kincardine, Shoreline and Peninsula – serve a variety of purposes. Among other things, the network members meet to discuss service coordination efforts, identify common in-service needs and learn about new community resources.

Another example of collaboration that was cited is the Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration. A number of community partners contribute to the continued success of the program including but not limited to Bluewater District School Board, Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, Bruce County Social Services & Housing, Grey County Social Services, Community Living Owen Sound & District, Ontario Early Years Centre Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services.

Community Forum participants did offer the following suggestions on how collaboration could be made even more effective.

- More networking between service providers so there are similar programs and approaches taken.
- Hold more "Lunch and Learn" type opportunities where service providers can come together to network and share information.
- Schedule and participate in more case conferences so families with multiple service providers feel less overwhelmed.

## Programs and Services for Children and their Parents

Community Forum participants praised the variety of programs and services that are available in Bruce County. In particular, participants mentioned how the availability of fee subsidy provides lower income families with access to centre-based or home-based licensed child care.

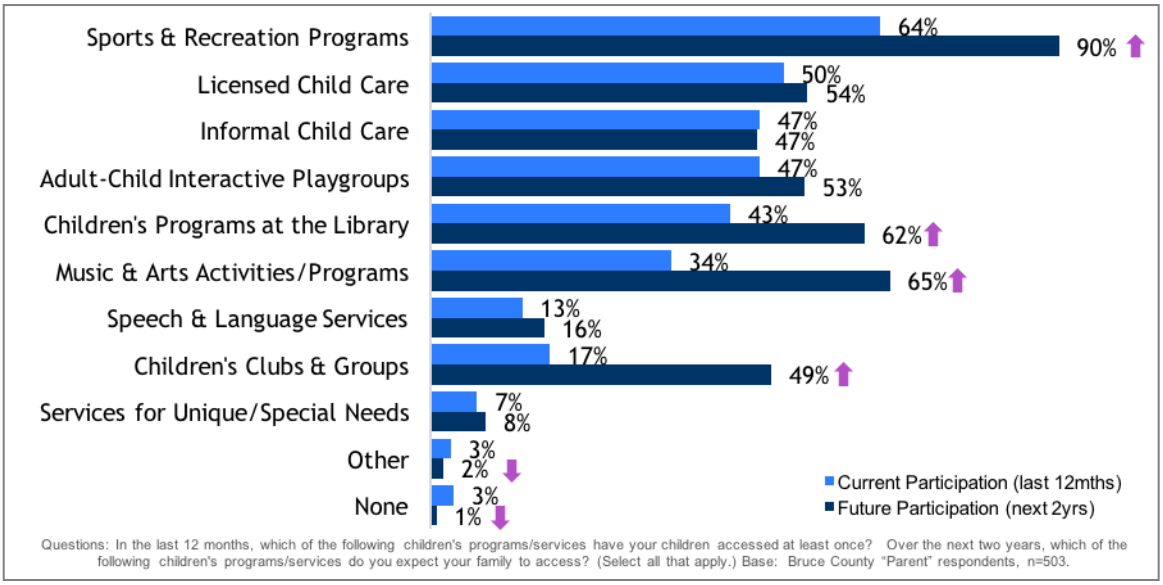
The transition to school process that has been put in place in recent years was also cited as an example of an invaluable program for many. The Let's Grow Committee in fact was almost unanimous in identifying this as a process that has changed for the better in the past decade. The Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration program was also highlighted for being a safety net to identify concerns almost a year before a child starts kindergarten. The many before and after school programs that are now in place for children and youth aged 3.8 to 12 years was also identified as a positive occurrence as well as an example of collaboration between school boards and licensed child care providers.

Several Community Forum participants and Key Informants also made mention of the increased programming for young children that is being offered by local libraries and museums. Parents must also be aware of this programming as survey respondents indicated that they anticipated participating in more children's programs at the library over the coming two years.

Figure 7 shows parents' responses to their children's recent and future participation in various programs and services[23]. Most parents reported that they expect their family to participate in more children's programs and services over the next two years as compared to the previous twelve months. As can be seen, current participation was greatest for sports & recreation programs, licensed child care, informal child care, adult-child interactive playgroups (programs at the OEYC), and children's programs at the library. There are statistically significant increases expected in the future, compared to current participation levels, with respect to participation in sports & recreation programs, children's programs at the library, music & art activities/programs and children's clubs & groups. There was no significant difference in recent or anticipated participation in adult-child interactive playgroups when the results were analyzed by municipality.

[23] The reader is reminded that parents of children under the age of 12 completed the survey.

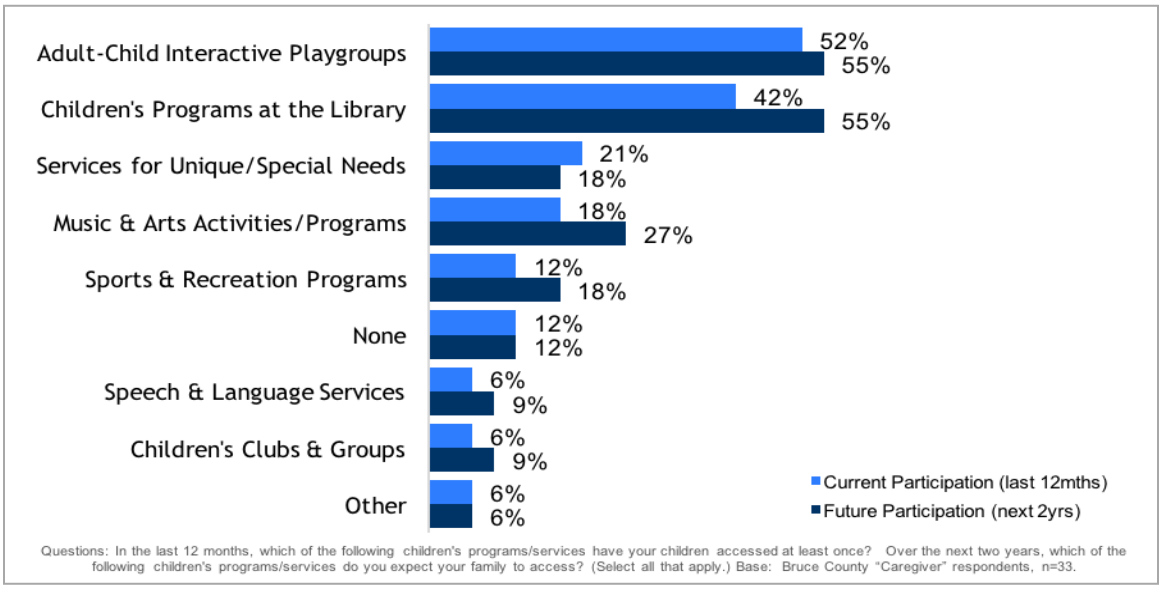
**Figure 7: Participation in Children's Programs & Services Reported by Parents**



Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

About half of the caregiver respondents living in Bruce County indicated that they had participated in adult-child interactive playgroups and children's programs at the library in the past twelve months. A slightly higher proportion reported they planned to access those same services in the coming two years. Due to the limited number of caregiver respondents, significance testing could not be completed to compare responses by municipality.

Figure 8: Participation in Children's Programs & Services Reported by Caregivers




Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

## Community Outreach

The OEYC service delivery model adopted by Bruce County and Grey County of main centres, satellite sites and outreach sites has repeatedly been highlighted by Community Forum participants and Key Informants as an effective strategy in increasing access to programs, services and resources. The uniqueness of the sites in response to the needs of each community was also mentioned be they in schools, churches or some other venue.

In addition to the outreach provided by the OEYC, several other service providers also take their programs and services to children and families including Infant Development, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, the Preschool Resource Teacher Program, and the Preschool Speech and Language program. This approach is seen as a very effective 'rural strategy' as it allows residents to access services either in their own home or in their own community thus addressing any transportation barriers that may exist.

## SERVICE GAPS

Several service gaps were identified by Community Forum participants and the Let's Grow Committee – those related to the lack of culturally relevant programs for indigenous residents, services for Amish and Mennonite residents, services for Francophone residents, the lack of programs and services available in French, limited mental health services, licensed child care, and programs for young children and their families. For the most part, these service gaps are not new

– in some instances the gap has widened in recent years and in other situations the gap has remained virtually unchanged.

## Lack of Culturally Relevant Programs for Indigenous Residents

At the present time, there is no Indigenous provider of off-reserve child care or early years services in Bruce County. Through the Province's Journey Together initiative an opportunity exists to enhance access to culturally relevant, Indigenous-led early years programs and services off-reserve. Facilitated collaborative discussions began in March 2017 and will continue in the months to come to identify what's working well on-reserve and off-reserve, the specific service needs of Indigenous families and children with respect to early years and child care programs, gaps in service, and the challenges in delivering services. The goal of the conversations will be to develop a plan for culturally relevant child care and early years programs for off-reserve Indigenous families.

## Services for Amish and Mennonite Residents

Some families have in the past or are currently accessing one or more service from the Grey Bruce Health Unit (e.g., immunization, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, dental programs, infant hearing), the Preschool Resource Teacher Program, Community Living Kincardine, the Kincardine OEYC, and Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services. Local nurse practitioners and midwives have also provided services to the Amish and Mennonite communities upon request. While children typically attend one of the many parochial schools located throughout the County, some do attend public elementary schools.

Not only do cultural barriers exist when it comes to providing 'mainstream' services for some communities, but language barriers are also prevalent as many of the Amish and Mennonite speak Plautdietsch (Low German) or Pennsylvania German (also known as Pennsylvania Dutch). Distance and weather can also be a challenge for those who rely on horse and buggy for transportation.

It is difficult to gauge the true demand for services. Regardless, 'mainstream' service providers indicated that due diligence must occur on their part if ways are to be found to connect with families and offer them programs and services in a manner that respects their unique culture. Despite the efforts that have been made, the Let's Grow Committee is of the opinion that there has been little progress made in providing services and supports in a way that respects the culture of Bruce County's Amish and Mennonite communities.

## Services for Francophone Residents

A lack of programs and services available in French has been identified for well over a decade. Without such programs and services Francophone and Anglophone families wishing to expose their children to the French language and culture are unable to do so.

The *Bruce County 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan* made mention of the fact that two Best Start consultations occurred with the Francophone community in 2005 and in 2007. At the 2005 consultation it was noted that there had been an Ontario Early Years Centre program at École Saint Dominque-Savio that was made possible through provincial Challenge Fund dollars. The elimination of these funds in March 2006 resulted in the closure of the program. It was also noted at the time that it was difficult to recruit French speaking Early Childhood Educators to facilitate the program.

In 2007 several suggestions were put forward to further the development of an integrated system of support and care for Francophone families. These suggestions included the procurement of French language resources for families and caregivers, the translation of local newsletters and other information resources, Francophone membership on existing local information sharing and networking bodies, the establishment of linkages with Francophone child care and early years programs in other communities, etc. For a variety of reasons, including the withdrawal of federal funding, much remains to be done.

When asked whether linkages between Francophone programs and Ontario Early Years Centres had improved, worsened or had not changed since that time, the majority of the Let's Grow Committee members indicated that they did not know, one third said the situation was unchanged and one member felt the linkage had weakened.

## Limited Mental Health Services

The limited amount of mental health services and resources for children, youth and adults has been identified as a high priority by local service providers for more than ten years. For instance, the Let's Grow Committee felt that few strides have been made over the past decade when it comes to the attachment and bonding that must occur if children and youth are to be resilient in later years. It has been suggested by some that attachment issues have been on the rise due to an increase in adult mental health concerns. The lack of adequate treatment and support programs for adults experiencing mental health and/or addiction has therefore been identified as a service gap by many. The lack of support groups for post-partum mothers aged 30–40 was mentioned as an example of a specific intervention that was thought to be lacking.

Service providers have also seen a rise in children's mental health issues in recent years. School boards for instance have seen an increasing need for more supports. This is not surprising given the fact that the Ministry of Education has estimated that one in five Ontario children and youth has a mental health problem.[24] As the Ministry goes on to state, mental health problems can seriously impair children's ability to be successful at school and in their relationships with their peers. It is little wonder therefore that service providers also identified the need for increased access to child

[24] Ministry of Education (2013). *Supporting Minds – An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-Being*. Queens Printer: Toronto.

psychiatry and the need to reduce wait times for other specialized services as two possible means of reducing the service gap.

## Licensed Child Care

In April 2016 the County of Bruce (and the County of Grey) established OneList Bruce County (and OneList Grey County), an on-line centralized application for centre-based and home-based licensed child care. While there are many advantages to the application both from a parent, service provider and CMSM perspective, there are some challenges as well. For instance, those parents who do not have ready access to a computer, who do not have reliable Internet access, or who do not have an e-mail address will find it difficult to use the application. To overcome this difficulty, Children's Services staff, OEYC staff and staff from licensed child care programs can assist parents in completing the on-line application.

Should a family not qualify for a fee subsidy and is unable to pay the full cost of care, their access to the licensed child care system may be lost. As far back as 2001 and beyond, the lack of licensed care for infants has been identified as a service gap – a gap that remains to this day. While the gap in licensed spaces for school aged children has been substantially reduced in the past several years, a gap is reported to remain for school aged care during school breaks e.g., professional development days, March break and summer break. It was also reported that a gap exists when it comes to providing "drop-in care" for those times when a parent needs to attend an appointment. Similarly, service providers were of the opinion that the local licensed child care system was not flexible enough to meet the needs of families who are employed part time, work shifts or who require overnight care.

Community Forum participants also noted that the distribution of licensed care varies throughout the County.

A few comments were also raised about the level of support available for children with special needs. In particular, some service providers expressed concern that on occasion children with special needs have been asked to leave a child care program presumably as "extra support" (enhanced program staff) was not available to them. On a similar note, concern was raised about kindergarten aged children and children aged 6-12 with special needs not having the support they require to fully participate in before and after school programs and programs offered during school breaks.

Gaps related to child care staffing were also identified. Of note, the lack of Registered Early Childhood Educators has meant that some programs have not been able to operate at their licensed capacity or have been unable to increase their licensed capacity despite the fact that there is a proven demand for care. While the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant has increased staff wages, Community Forum participants agree that further action must be taken to increase the compensation of child care staff if staff turnover is to be reduced. This situation reportedly becomes magnified when trying to recruit and retain staff to work in programs for school aged children. Not only are staff faced with low wages but they also typically work a 'split shift' which results in increased travel time and costs.

## Programs for Young Children and Their Families

In addition to those gaps already mentioned, those who provided input into the Needs Assessment identified a number of other service gaps – some longstanding and some more recent.

### Loss of Lending Libraries

Several of the Community Forum participants mentioned the loss of toy lending libraries as a gap in service. Ideally, they would like to see a 'mobile' service created for the lending of books, toys and other resources. As a strategy to address this service gap, the concept of a multi-agency collaborative bookmobile service was mentioned.

### Lack of Parenting Programs

The OEYC Service System Management Committee was of the opinion that there is a lack of parenting programs in Bruce County. It was suggested by some that child minding should be made available so that parents are more readily able to participate in parenting programs and other educational opportunities. It was also felt that parenting programs should be offered during the evening (as well as during the day) so that 'working' parents have an opportunity to attend.

### Looking Beyond Age Six

Like the OEYC, programs and services offered by the OEYCFC will be focused on children up to age six and their parents and caregivers. Despite this fact, both Community Forum participants and Key Informants encouraged the OEYCFCs to "look beyond age six" to create a "more inclusive approach." In particular, it was suggested that some programs should focus on older siblings as well as younger ones and that "bigger events" should be held once in a while so all family members can attend. Regardless of whether or not these suggestions are put into practise, it was recommended that some "more fulsome" programs be instituted to address the challenge some parents and caregivers face of "what to do with the toddler during an infant group."

Other gaps identified by Community Forum participants included:

- The ending of the WRAP program in Bruce County – an interagency approach that surrounds families with supports by not only building on a family's strengths but by leveraging the involvement of community agencies and informal supports
- The lack of progression from one program to another e.g., once a child turns six months of age they must leave the Healthy Beginnings program with no other program to turn to
- The limited amount of respite care available for children with special needs
- The lack of sufficient Preschool Speech and Language services
- The limited availability of the Summer Learning Program offered by the Bluewater District School Board
- A perceived limited amount of opportunities for parent and family engagement in elementary schools
- Limited access to music therapy and play therapy for families experiencing low income
- Lack of "no cost or low cost activities and events" on PD days and during March break

Those attending the Community Forums made several 'general' comments about programs and services for young children and their families. While these comments are not necessarily gaps, they could become gaps should they be ignored.

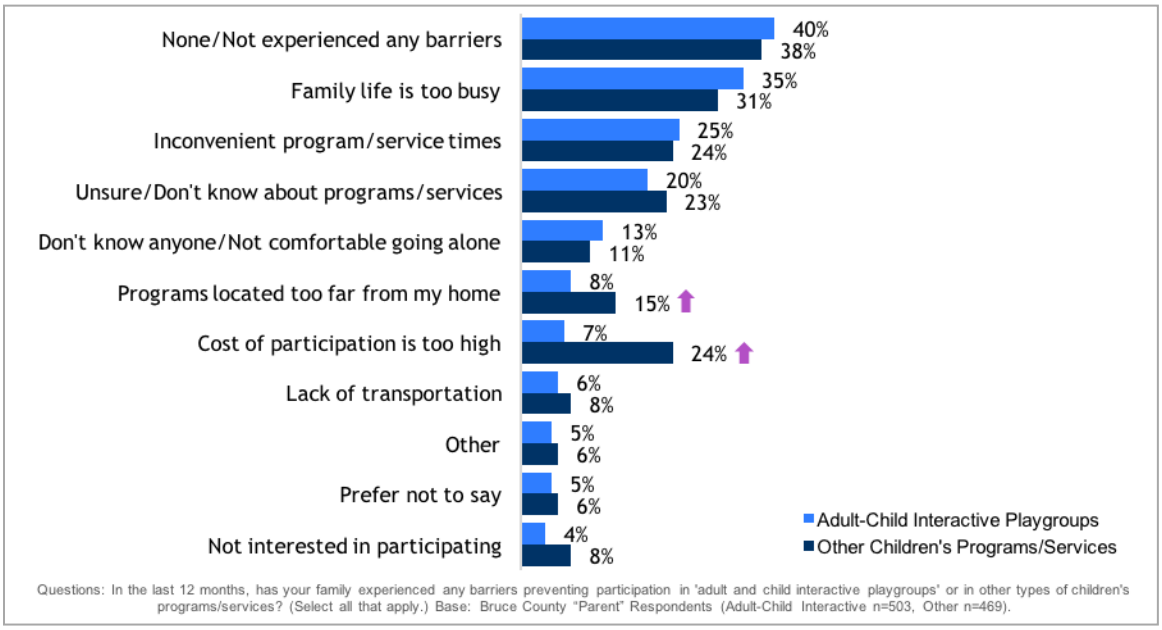
- The importance and use of outdoor space
- The value of field trips to various locations within the community
- Bring programs and services to families
- Ensure the space meets the demand of the program
- Make use of 'hub' space so families are not "running around"
- Build relationships with Family Health Teams
- Strengthen the relationship between the OEYC and schools
- Incorporate the preparation and/or sharing of food into programming
- Provide access to fax machine, photocopier, die press, laminator, etc.
- Offer "blended" professional learning opportunities for OEYC staff and kindergarten teachers

As a final comment, several Community Forum participants raised caution when it came to the use of outcome measures. For example, it was stated that "too much emphasis on outcomes can compromise teachable moments" and "too much focus on outcomes versus experience can disempower a parent's perspective of worth."

## SERVICE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Figure 9 depicts the barriers that parents face when accessing adult-child interactive playgroups as well as other children's programs and services. As can be seen, one in four parents reported they did not experience barriers to participation, one-third said family life was too busy and one-quarter said program and service times were inconvenient. Overall, one in ten parents said adult-child interactive playgroups were located too far from their home. Parents were significantly more likely to report program location and cost as a barrier to 'other' children's programs compared to adult-child interactive playgroups.

**Figure 9: Barriers to Participation Reported by Parents in Children's Programs & Services**

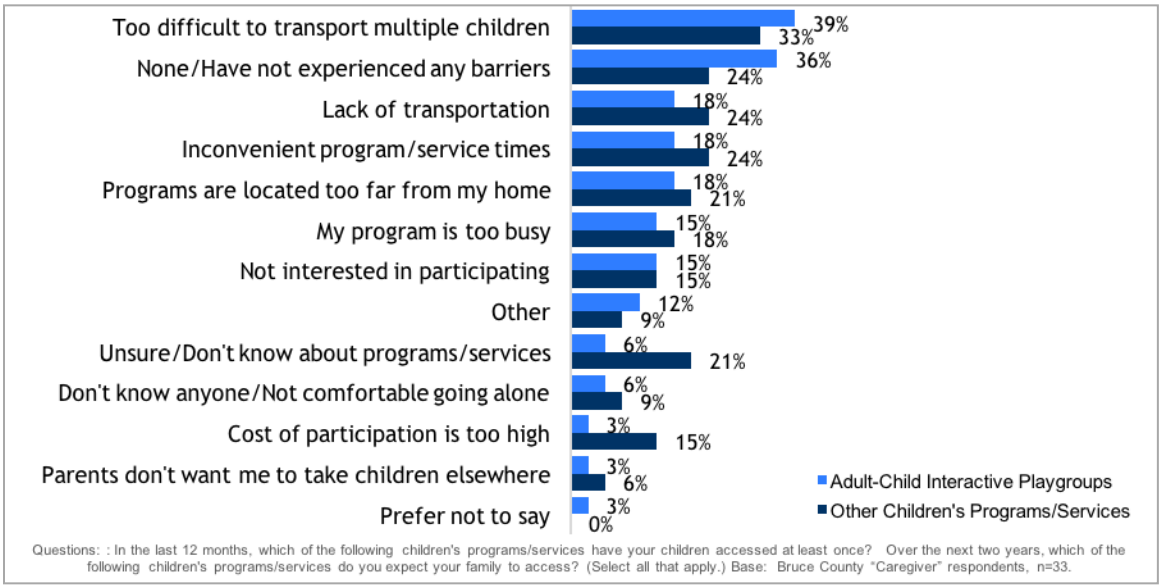



Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

The majority (71%) of Northern Bruce Peninsula parents who completed the survey cited programs being located too far from their home as a barrier to participation in adult-child interactive playgroups. This proportion is significantly higher than any other municipality in Bruce County.

Caregivers in Bruce County said the largest barrier to participation in adult-child interactive playgroups is that it is too difficult to transport multiple children. As Figure 10 shows, almost the same percentage of caregivers reported no barriers to participation. Due to the limited number of caregivers who responded to the survey, significance testing could not be completed to compare responses by municipality.

**Figure 10: Barriers to Participation Reported by Caregivers in Children's Programs & Services**




Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

## Transportation

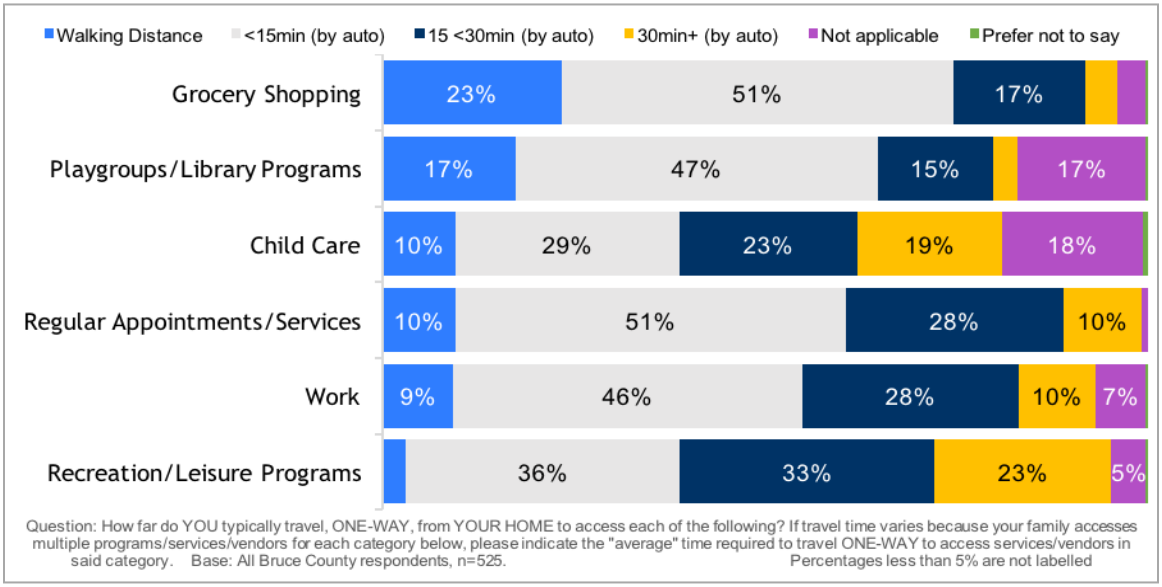
The challenge that the rural geography of Bruce County places on accessing services is nothing new. Coupled with the lack of public transportation, families and service providers acknowledge that access to a private vehicle is a necessity if families are to be engaged in their community. Even then, weather can add to the challenge. For example, the *Vital Signs* report states that Highway 21 in Bruce County is one of the highways most often closed in Ontario due to winter driving conditions.

Perhaps surprisingly, very few of the parents who completed the survey reported transportation as a barrier to participation. Those reporting an annual household income of less than $80,000 were more apt to report lack of transportation as a barrier to participation in 'other' children's programs as compared to respondents who reported an annual household income of $100,000 and over.

Having said this, anecdotal evidence put forward by the Let's Grow Committee does speak to the challenges that lack of transportation brings to families experiencing low income. For instance, while a family may have a vehicle, one of the parents may not have access to transportation for those hours when the other parent requires the vehicle to get to work or school. The Let's Grow Committee also spoke of parents who may have a vehicle but lack the financial resources for gas, insurance or snow tires. And lastly, for a family who does not have access to a vehicle, it may not be realistic to expect them to walk to a program on the other side of town particularly in inclement weather.

Figure 11 illustrates the typical one-way travel time to various programs, services and vendors as reported by Bruce County respondents while Appendix J speaks to the variation that exists by municipality.

**Figure 11: One-Way Travel Time to Various Programs, Services & Vendors**




Source: 2016 OEYCFC Community Survey

Providing transportation to program participants was one option put forward by Community Forum participants to lessening the barrier whether this occur through volunteer drivers or through the issuance of gas or taxi vouchers. Community Forum participants also wondered about the use of school buses during those hours when they are not required for student transport. Others wondered about the feasibility of parents travelling on the school buses with their children to access programs and services. Still others spoke of possible liability issues associated with transporting young children and of stipulations associated with providing child car seats or booster seats.

## Flat-lined or Decreased Provincial Funding

One of the largest barriers to bridging program and service gaps is provincial funding levels that have remained stagnant for several years and in some instances, have decreased. This funding situation has resulted in wait lists for services and deterioration in the level of services that are available, both of which are a detriment to local children and their families. Community Forum participants and Key Informants provided numerous examples of the impact of such funding restraint.

Provincial funding for the OEYCs has been unchanged since the program's inception in 2002. As a result, the expansion of space and staff has not occurred in response to the demand for

programs and services. As stated in an earlier service plan "current demand exceeds the staffing and program resources." As a result waitlists for some programs have had to be put in place which has negatively impacted the number of children, parents and caregivers who benefit from the OEYCS and the number of times they participate in programs. As the County has also said, in many instances it would be difficult "to use OEYC sites for [Best Start] hub activities with limited space, limited staffing and no new funding."

Community Forum participants and Key Informants also noted that as a result of a change in its provincial mandate, the Grey Bruce Health Unit's public health nurses are no longer able to be directly involved in delivering programs at the OEYC.

## Duplication of Programs and Services

Community Forum participants were asked if they were aware of any program or service duplication within the County. As one participant so aptly stated in answering this question, one must ask whether it is "…duplication or is it providing options?"

From the comments received, it does not appear that the duplication of programs and services is a significant concern. Having said that, more than one group of Community Forum participants mentioned that better coordination and communication should exist between the OEYC, libraries and museums when it comes to the content and scheduling of programs aimed at young children and families.

It was also mentioned by some that the OEYC would be wise to establish relationships and coordinate with 'private' service providers. The rationale for this suggestion stems from the fact that some families access 'private paid services' while they are on a wait list for services provided by a non-profit organization. Some service providers report that, on occasion, parents in these situations have received differing opinions and advice which has led to some confusion and frustration.

All in all, as a means of avoiding unnecessary duplication, it has been suggested that service providers make it a priority to remain knowledgeable about the programs and services available in their service community. In so doing, programs can learn from each other and can be better positioned to 'wrap' services around children and families who require this level of support.

## Engagement of 'At Risk' Families

Community Forum participants, Key Informants, the OEYC Service System Management Committee and several local service plans have all identified the challenges that exist in engaging 'at risk' families in programs and services.

Some reported that many families experiencing low income "feel disconnected" and "not comfortable" in OEYC environments. Anxiety can also result when parents have been encouraged to attend the OEYC by service providers as participation then feels "less voluntary." Anecdotal comments spoke of parents experiencing low income feeling they didn't fit in when other parents

were discussing where to go on their winter vacation or the birthday party they were planning for their child, for example.

Parents of children with special needs also have mentioned to service providers that they "didn't fit in" during some of their visits to the OEYC.

Many Community Forum participants cited the Parent Mutual Aid program operated by Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services as an example of a service delivery model that has been successful in engaging 'at risk' families. One of the benefits of this model is that it allows parents who are dealing with similar challenges to support each other in facilitated and non-facilitated activities. The program also focuses on "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" and provides "self-care" opportunities for parents.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Technology

While technology can be both a challenge and an opportunity, it has been included here as an opportunity as actions are underway to significantly enhance Internet service in Bruce County.

Community Forum participants and Key Informants made mention of the fact that the lack of reliable high speed Internet throughout the County negatively impacts the ability of residents of all ages to routinely access on-line resources and services. As one Key Informant stated "kids are going to Tim Horton's to do their homework." The lack of reliable Internet service also makes it difficult for service providers to inform and communicate with parents and caregivers about available programs, services and resources.

Over the past several years, service providers have become more reliant on technology. For example, the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has become a more acceptable and routine method to engage parents. As a case in point, the OEYC Facebook was widely used to invite parents and caregivers to complete the survey to inform this Needs Assessment and Initial Plan. Tablets are now in more common use permitting service providers to document their visits and update service plans as they happen. As stated previously, computers provided by the school boards were used by parents at the Let's Learn Kindergarten Registration sessions to complete the survey. The use of cellular phones has also improved the safety and security of service providers when they are away from their home office.

Service providers concur that accessible, affordable and reliable technology holds infinite possibilities in the delivery of programs and services. Suggestions on how the OEYCFCs may use technology in the future include virtual programming where parents in one part of the County may participate in a virtual play group with parents in another part of the County. The on-line delivery of parent information and education sessions is also a very real possibility. For instance, the OEYC Service System Management Committee put forward the notion of creating 'TED Talks' for parents on a variety of topics. A Community Forum participant also suggested that the existence of an on-line parent support group would allow parents to access support at a time convenient to them.

As the *Vital Signs* report states, "a fast, reliable Internet connection has become an essential utility that enables rural communities to stay connected. The provincial and federal governments have announced $180 million will be injected into the ultra-high speed internet SWIFT project in Southwestern Ontario." Despite the benefits and opportunities that technology presents, providers are of the opinion that it must not be seen as the panacea – literacy levels must be addressed, information must continue to be available in a variety of mediums, resources must be kept up-to-date, and personal contact must remain an option.

## Targeted Outreach Activities

Community Forum participants were asked what targeted outreach activities should be directed at parents and caregivers who may or may not be currently accessing services. The following suggestions were made with respect to the 'groups' who may benefit. Generally speaking it was felt that by having both 'open' and 'closed' groups, parents will have a choice in how they want to participate.

### Teen Parents

It was suggested that OEYCFC programs be offered in secondary schools as a means of encouraging participation. Making presentations to secondary school parenting classes was also seen as a way of engaging teen parents.

### Fathers

As far back at 2001, it was identified that more support was needed for fathers and for those who were fathering, as many men feel excluded from the reproductive health and parenting programs offered by health and social service professionals. As mentioned in an earlier section of the Needs Assessment, while fathers have been welcomed at the OEYC, more programming would be beneficial for both the children and their fathers.

### Families Experiencing Low Income

Several Key Informants suggested that, in partnership with Ontario Works and/or Social Housing staff, OEYCFC staff could offer one or more programs that focus on various aspects of well-being for the whole family. The lessons learned from Keystone's Parent Mutual Aid program are apt to prove beneficial in this regard.

### Families with Multiples

As one Community Forum participant put it "families with multiples have different needs than singleton families". As it stands now, groups are not always available in every community for these families to access.

### Families of Children with Special Needs

As one Key Informant stated, for inclusion and a sense of belonging to occur, "we need to be very intentional in our planning to make sure that families with special needs truly belong." A similar

approach also needs to be taken when designing programs for adults with developmental challenges who are raising children who may benefit from participation in OEYCFC programs.

### Single Parents

Single parents also face challenges that are unique to their situation so it was suggested that they too may benefit from a program or group designed to respond to their needs.

### New Parents or Parents New to the Community

A buddy system or mentorship program was suggested as a means of engaging new parents or parents who are new to the community. It was felt that primary care practitioners may be helpful in engaging these parents if they are knowledgeable about OEYCFC locations and programming.

### Parents who Home School

While the approximate number of home schoolers in Bruce County is not known, it was suggested that this may be a group of individuals who would be interested in partnering with the OEYCFC to develop a program that met their needs and the needs of their children.

Some of the more generic comments raised with respect to targeted outreach activities included the following:

- Incorporate more gross motor time to address childhood obesity
- Offer more intergenerational programs perhaps held at “centres for seniors”
- Hold programs in common rooms at housing complexes
- Offer participation “incentives”
- Incorporate food and food programming
- Utilize “community champions” to engage various groups

## Miscellaneous Other Opportunities

The Key Informants were asked to identify the opportunities that existed for their organization or agency to partner with the OEYCFCs. While in some instances these were ‘new’ opportunities, for the most part they represented continued or enhanced collaborative ventures.

### Sharing of Infrastructure

The majority of Key Informants saw mutual benefits in sharing space and physical resources with the OEYCFC. The use of common space in housing complexes for seniors was given as one example while a second example was the use of space in the County museum. When exploring these opportunities further, it must be recognized that cost-recovery may need to be considered while at the same time some organizations may lack sufficient dollars in their operating budget to consider sharing space if it were to come at a price.

### Professional Learning

To quote one Key Informant “… [there are] synergies in learning together.” Numerous examples of combined or shared professional learning opportunities were provided on topics such as outdoor

learning, poverty reduction, and mental health. Several Key Informants also mentioned that their staff are often asked to speak to certain "specialized topics" of interest to other service providers. Regardless of the professional learning that is available, it is important that the opportunity is broadly promoted throughout the service system.

### Shared Community Planning and Programming

As one Key Informant so aptly stated "… [The community] has enhanced service because of planning together." There are several networking, information sharing and planning tables that serve Bruce County and Grey County. Through participation in these tables, it was felt that service providers can continue to develop innovative ways to deliver services for young children and their families. For instance, the joint design and delivery of parenting programs, the development of more programs for young children, the possibility of coming together in "service hubs", the use of EDI data, and transition to school planning were cited as examples of current and future shared planning and programming.

### Joint Engagement

Service providers and Key Informants also spoke of opportunities that exist to jointly engage parents. For example, more than one agency made mention of their ability to accompany parents to a program as a means of bridging new relationships with program staff and other parents. The Getting Ahead Program which teaches individuals experiencing low income "how to navigate financial pressures and challenges society has thrown their way" was also put forward as an example of an approach to parent engagement that could be adapted for use by the early years programs and services. Many graduates of this program have become members of Community Voices – a quasi-advisory group to the local Poverty Task Force.

# SECTION 3: INITIAL PLAN

The Needs Assessment as well as the *Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers* point to several actions that can be taken in the coming months (and beyond) to ensure that the transition from the OEYC to the OEYCFC is successful. As funding levels, outcome measures, and further provincial guidelines and expectations become known these Initial Plan activities will be fine-tuned.

In addition to focusing on the service gaps and opportunities that have been identified, there are several other activities that will become the focus of attention in the coming months. These are described below.

## REVIEW OF SATELLITE AND OUTREACH LOCATIONS, SITES AND HOURS

Over the coming year, conversations will continue with respect to both the communities where satellite and outreach are located and the physical sites that house the programs. The Needs Assessment undertaken to inform the Initial Plan will unquestionably assist in identifying possible communities to be home to OEYCFC satellite and outreach locations. Having said that, it is acknowledged that much of the statistical data contained in the Needs Assessment is from the 2006 and 2011 Census. With the release of the 2016 Census data, starting in February 2017 and continuing until November 2017[25], much more current data will be available with which to plan.

While the County of Bruce and those who provide programs, services and resources to families with young children are supportive of the Ministry's 'Schools First' policy, in some instances this is not possible nor is it desirable. For example, the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board has indicated that, at this point in time, there is no available space within its schools. The same holds true for the Conseil scolaire catholique Providence when it comes to École Saint-Dominique-Savio. While local school boards have and will continue to take advantage of any capital funding opportunities that may become available, the outcome is uncertain. Not surprisingly, senior staff of the school boards have identified several challenges that may impact the OEYCFCs use of school space – cost recovery for shared space, future accommodation review processes which might impact on designated space, and fluctuations in school enrolment which may impact on shared space.

Service providers who currently utilize school space have raised two concerns with respect to the use of schools. The first is that the cost to rent school space is not always competitive when compared to the cost of space in other venues such as churches, community centres or seniors' complexes. As one service provider explained, "funding models have gotten in the way of sharing space in schools." In addition, access to schools during school breaks (e.g., March break, summer break, etc.) and in the evenings and on weekends remains limited.

[25] The 2016 Census Program Release Schedule is contained in Appendix E.

In situations where school space is not available and/or appropriate, service providers have suggested a number of factors that should be taken into consideration in the selection process. One of the conversations at a Community Forum went so far as recommending the development of a 'checklist' that could be used to guide decision making. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Central locations
- Barrier free site access
- Indoor and outdoor space that can accommodate strollers and the mobility aids of children with special needs e.g., walkers, wheelchairs
- Quiet space for parents to meet with service providers
- Space that allows families to feel they belong and are comfortable when accessing a variety of services
- Space shared with other service providers
- Space that can be adapted for use by infants, preschoolers, school age children and youth
- How the space would be experienced by a child with special needs such as augmentative communication or sensory challenges

Community Forum participants also mentioned that possible OEYCFC locations might include social housing complexes, museums, libraries or 'community hubs'. Several Key Informants also expressed an interest in exploring opportunities to come together in shared space including that which might become available in schools.

Regardless of whether the OEYCFC satellite and outreach sites are located in school space or community space, as stated in the *2007-08 Best Start Community Plan*, there can be "difficulty finding appropriate, affordable space in smaller communities that meet agreed upon standards for universality and a safe and secure environment".

Should decisions be made to cease providing OEYCFC programs and services in one or more of the existing communities or relocate services within a community, members of the OEYC Service System Management Committee (OEYC SSMC) have cautioned that consideration must be paid to any existing lease arrangements that are in place. In addition, the OEYC SSMC highlighted the fact that altering the communities in which service is provided may have an impact on an agency's ability to retain and/or attract OEYCFC staff and may also result in an increase in travel time and/or costs.

It was suggested that over the course of 2017, the hours of operation of each site be reviewed particularly with respect to evening and weekend hours. While some have encouraged evening and weekend hours, as noted in the *2007-08 Best Start Community Plan* "participation in evening and weekend programs is variable with low uptake in afternoon and evening programs; weekends are variable depending on sites and programs offered." Should it be evident that this trend has continued, it may be determined that being open during these hours is not the best use of resources.

As a final comment, decisions made with respect to satellite and outreach locations, sites and hours, among other things, will need to balance the provincial requirements as stated in the OEYCFC guidelines against the effective use of time and resources.

## CHANGING COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

Anecdotal comments from Key Informants and Community Forum participants spoke of future growth areas within Bruce County. For example, with the expansion of the Bruce Power nuclear facility, families are relocating to communities away from the lakeshore to avoid the higher costs of real estate.

It will be important in the coming months and years to be mindful of migration to the area – be this as a result of newcomers to Canada settling in Bruce County or of residents of other Counties (and provinces) relocating to Bruce County for future employment opportunities. Both factors will shape the County and the communities within it as the needs of 'new' residents become known.

## MONITORING THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW PROCESS

Using actual enrolment statistics and other demographic data and trends, the Bluewater District School Board's Trustees continue to make decisions on the closure, amalgamation or building of elementary and secondary schools within its catchment area. As the process continues, the Bluewater District School Board will avail itself of any capital funding opportunities that may arise.

The results of the accommodation reviews have the potential to have both positive and negative impacts on both the future location and sites of OEYCFC programs. As schools are closed, consolidated or built, opportunities for new program space may come to light at the same time as existing programs are forced to relocate. Settlement patterns may also be impacted by the resultant changes to school boundaries as families chose to live near to the school their children attend.

## CONSIDERING DIVERSITY

### Services for Amish and Mennonite Residents

As stated previously 'mainstream' service providers must continue to build and foster relationships with members of the Amish and Mennonite communities as a means of understanding how OEYCFC programs and services can be provided in a manner that is respectful of their culture.

### Francophone Engagement

The Conseil scolaire catholique Providence opened École Saint-Dominique-Savio in Owen Sound in 2004. The school's recent primary grade enrolment is contained in Table 11 which follows.

**Table 11: École Saint-Dominique-Savio Primary Grade Enrollment**

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maternelle | 18 | 14 | 21 | 18 |
| Jardin | 15 | 21 | 13 | 20 |
| 1re année | 15 | 19 | 21 | 12 |
| 2e année | 18 | 14 | 17 | 17 |
| 3e année | 25 | 20 | 12 | 13 |

Source: Conseil scolaire catholique Providence

Despite its Owen Sound location, the school draws children from several communities in Bruce County and Grey County. It is interesting to note that the majority of parents whose children attend École Saint-Dominique-Savio are Anglophones who are looking for a French language educational opportunity for their children.

The school is also host to the French language child care centre Le Jardin des Déscouvertes which is currently licensed for 10 infant, 15 toddler, 24 preschool, 13 kindergarten and 47 primary/junior school age spaces. As indicated in the Needs Assessment an OEYC program was located at the school but was closed when the provincial Early Years Challenge Fund ceased in March 2006.

The Conseil scolaire catholique Providence has indicated its desire to enhance existing partnerships and networking opportunities. Unfortunately the size of the Board's catchment area often makes this prohibitive, particularly in instances where a face to face conversation would be beneficial.

For a variety of reasons, including the limited timeframe for the completion of this Needs Assessment and Initial Plan, a comprehensive engagement of French-speaking families with young children and service providers did not occur. For that reason, a more comprehensive engagement is planned for the coming year. One such activity that will be undertaken, as recommended by CSC Providence, is to ask all parents the following question – "If there were early years programs and services (e.g., drop-in centre, family fun nights and other activities) aimed at exposing your children to French and open to ALL families in Bruce County and Grey County, would you be interested in attending such programs and/or services?"

Contact will also be made with the numerous local chapters of Canadian Parents for French to engage them in a conversation about their perceived service gaps, challenges and opportunities.

## Services for the Indigenous Community

Key Informants from the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation have confirmed the fact that it is not uncommon for Band members to move off-reserve for periods of time. In particular, Southampton, Port Elgin, Wiarton and Hepworth tend

to be home to Indigenous families who live off-reserve. Programs and services for the Indigenous community must therefore take into account both those offered off-reserve and, to a lesser extent, those available on-reserve.

The M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre in Owen Sound is the only Indigenous provider of off-reserve services in Grey County, including OEYC programs and services. The Centre also used to offer a child care program licensed for 16 preschool children but it ceased operation approximately ten years ago. Should sufficient dollars become available, M'Wikwedong would be agreeable to provide early years programs and services for Indigenous families living off-reserve in Bruce County as well.

As part of the Best Start Transition Plan submitted in 2006, a child care centre and OEYC site with a focus on Indigenous culturally responsive services were to be located in Southampton at G.C. Huston Elementary School if dollars were to become available. This program was to be a joint venture between the Bluewater District School Board, the Saugeen First Nation, and a non-profit child care operator. The withdrawal of federal funding and the resultant reduction of Bruce County's Best Start allocation meant that the project was unable to proceed.

The Province's Journey Together initiative provides an opportunity to enhance access to culturally relevant, Indigenous-led early years programs and services off-reserve, including child care and child and family programs. The Ministry of Education recognizes that joint planning will require time and investment from all partners to build relationships and develop recommendations. In 2017, one-time capacity funding is available to support Indigenous organizations and CMSMs/DSSABs to engage in meaningful collaborative discussions with one another. This funding may also be used to support the development of recommendations for expanded Indigenous-led early years programs and services at the local level. The County of Bruce and the County of Grey have been approved for a joint application for funding under the Journey Together initiative as a first step in identifying and responding to the needs of Indigenous families locally. The funding will also support Ontario's vision as stated in the *Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy* – First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children and youth are healthy, happy, resilient, grounded in their cultures and languages and thriving as individuals and as members of their families and Nations or communities.

## Services for Newcomers

As indicated in the Needs Assessment, the 'profile' of the County is expected to change in the coming months and years as newcomers to Canada continue to settle in the area. If recent settlement patterns continue, newcomers will bring diverse cultural backgrounds, languages and experiences to Bruce County. The Grey Bruce Newcomer Network would also attest to the fact that the majority of recent newcomers are persons of colour and as such are more 'visible' than are newcomers who have historically settled in the area from various European countries. For all of these reasons, service providers will have to make time to learn from those who settle in Bruce County and adapt their programs and services so that all Bruce County residents can benefit.

Given the employment forecast for the County, it is also expected that many families will relocate to Bruce County for employment purposes. OEYCFC programs and services have the opportunity to reach out to these young families to make them comfortable and involved in their new surroundings.

## Review of Service Delivery Model for OEYCFCs

As indicated previously, the County of Bruce both directly delivers and purchases OEYC programs and services from Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services. This purchase of service relationship has been in place since the inception of the OEYC in 2002. Since that time, a comprehensive review of the relationship has not taken place primarily as there were no new dollars to support a change in the relationship.

Over the course of the next six months, the County of Bruce will conduct a review of the relationship taking into consideration a number of factors, of course with particular emphasis on the cost of service delivery. The OEYC SSMC will be tasked with providing recommendations on the OEYCFC operations and County of Bruce staff will provide additional comment with recommended action to the County of Bruce elected officials. The final decision to maintain or alter the status quo will be informed by the information presented in the Initial Plan as well as the specific review.

If a decision is made to alter the status quo, one must remain cognizant of the fact that Keystone is bound by the terms of its collective agreement. Further, the OEYC SSMC has indicated that six to twelve months lead time would be required if downsizing were to occur.

## Data Analysis Services

Since the inception of the OEYC, the County of Grey has purchased the services of the Data Analysis Coordinator from the County of Bruce. This action came about as a result of the limited amount of dollars available to each CMSM for data analysis services. Among other things, the Data Analysis Coordinator has maintained a shared OEYC database, has provided design and technical support to surveys and other similar methods of evaluation, and has supported the implementation and analysis of the EDI.

During the transformation planning, the Data Analysis Coordinator continues to provide service to the County of Grey. It is expected that by July 2017, the County of Bruce Data Analysis Coordinator will no longer provide service to Grey County.

## Influences on Partnerships

When asked what internal or external influences may impact the nature of their agency's partnership with the OEYCFC, the Key Informants provided several items to be considered, in no particular order.

### Provincial Priorities

Several provincial priorities, policy directions and new initiatives were mentioned that could have an impact, one way or the other, on the partnerships that are in place with the OEYCFC. More than one Key Informant mentioned the provincial Special Needs Strategy for example. The tiered model of the delivery of integrated rehabilitation services (speech language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), the introduction of coordinated service planning and the new developmental screening process for preschool children all have the potential of altering service delivery methods thus impacting on the nature of relationships. The introduction of the Ontario Autism Program and the implementation of the Moving on Mental Health Strategy must also be taken into consideration.

Other examples of senior government directions that were perceived to have a bearing on the nature of partnerships, as reported by the Key Informants, are as follows:

- The exemption of child support as a source of income for those in receipt of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program
- The Ministry of Housing is moving away from a solely "bricks and mortar" approach to a direction that includes the desire for more supports to maintain housing
- The Ministry of Community and Social Services continues to promote the "integration" of municipal social services such as children's services, Ontario Works and social housing
- The Ontario Public Health Standards are currently under review
- The Premier's office established the Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group to guide the province's work on community hubs

### Funding

Announcements on the new funding model for OEYCFCs are expected in early 2017. There can be no doubt that these announcements will have a direct impact on the number of OEYCFC locations and sites, the hours of operation, the number and scope of programs to be offered, and the number and qualifications of staff available to support children, parents and caregivers. Those service providers who are bound by collective agreements may also face additional pressures if funding does not keep pace.

### Demands on Staff Time

When faced with limited budgets, and even when not, there can be competing demands on staff time. For obvious reasons, the mandated activities must take precedence, whether it be delivering Ontario Works or providing library services. While the vast majority of Key Informants see the positive benefits of partnering with the OEYCFC, growing and sustaining such partnerships do take time, time that is not always available. Similarly, there is not always time for staff to partner in the co-facilitation of programs, to participate in joint professional learning, or to make space available outside of regular program hours.

### Changing Demographics

Fluctuations in population and thus changing demographics have an impact on service statistics for many agencies and organizations such as local School Boards. Families are also making 'life style' decisions that affect where they live, how far they are willing to commute, the number of children they have, and the way they spend their money. When considering partnerships, one Key Informant made mention of the fact that "partnerships must survive changes in relationships" such as the retirement of a leader. This too speaks to the changing demographics of the population as retirements become more prevalent.

# SECTION 4: NEXT STEPS

Several more focused activities will be undertaken to inform the many activities identified in the Initial Plan. These can best be described as statistical updates, analysis of financial need, the determination of new programming, a review of current locations, and the review of the service delivery model.

## STATISTICAL UPDATES

The Census information used in the Needs Assessment is very dated and as such does not reflect current realities. For instance, the last 'mandatory' Census was conducted in 2006 and as such is ten years out of date. While data from the 2011 Census has some value, it was completed on a 'voluntary' basis and as such may not be reliable.

As indicated previously, the 2016 Census will be released over the course of 2017 beginning with the release of population and dwelling counts in February 2017. As the data become available, it will be mapped with the EDI results to paint a comprehensive picture of the County and each lower tier municipality.

## ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL NEED

The provincial funding of the OEYC has not increased since its inception in 2002. With the transformation of the four Ministry-funded child and family programs into the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres will come a new funding approach effective 2018. The Ministry has indicated that CMSMs will be advised of the funding approach and their respective allocation in early 2017. With this information, the County of Bruce will be better positioned to analyze its administrative and service delivery costs.

## DETERMINATION OF NEW PROGRAMMING

Not only will the provincial funding allocation have an impact on programming but so will the updated provincial program and business practice guideline for child and family programs. The Ministry has also stated its intention to develop a comprehensive outcome framework to support the implementation of OEYCFCs. The framework will identify key indicators and output and outcome measures related to the core services. Both the updated guideline and the outcome framework will be released by the Ministry in 2017.

## REVIEW OF CURRENT LOCATIONS

As statistical updates are released, as the County of Bruce's funding allocation becomes known, and as the updated Ministry guideline and outcome framework are made available, the County of

Bruce and its community partners will be much better positioned to review the current locations of the OEYC main, satellite and outreach sites with a view to the future.

## REVIEW OF SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

Once the provincial funding allocation, updated guidelines and outcome framework are released by the Ministry, a review of the service delivery model will also be undertaken. As stated in the July 2016 *Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers*, while a physical program site is mandatory a variety of other optional service delivery methods such as mobile services, virtual services and resources, and local phone lines may also be considered.

The County of Bruce will also conduct a review of the relationship that exists with Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services taking into consideration a number of factors, of course with particular emphasis on the cost of service delivery. The OEYC SSMC will be tasked with providing recommendations on the OEYCFC operations and County of Bruce staff will provide additional comment with recommended action to the County of Bruce elected officials. The final decision to maintain or alter the status quo will be informed by the information presented in the Initial Plan as well as the specific review.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED AT COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Beaver Valley Outreach
- Bluewater District School Board
- Bruce Grey Child & Family Services
- Community Living Kincardine & District
- Community Living Owen Sounds & District
- Community Living Walkerton & District
- Conseil scolaire catholique Providence
- County of Bruce Social Services & Housing
- County of Grey Social Services
- Durham Nursery School
- Grey Bruce Health Unit
- Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services
- Kids & Us Community Childcare
- Municipality of Grey Highlands
- Municipality of South Bruce
- Municipality of West Grey
- Ontario Early Years
- Owen Sound & North Grey Union Library
- Thames Valley Children's Centre
- Unity House Nursery School
- Viola Jean's Garden Daycare
- YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce

## APPENDIX B – COMMUNITY FORUM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the strengths of the local system of early years services for children, their families and caregivers?

2. What program, service and resource gaps exist for children, families and caregivers?
   - Children prenatal to newborn
   - Children 12 months to 3.8 years
   - Children 3.8 years to 6 years

3. What programs, services and resources are parents looking for that they are unable to access e.g., what barriers do they face?

4. Are there any program or service duplications that exist?

5. If you could do three things to improve programs, services and resources for children, their families and caregivers, what would they be?

6. What targeted outreach activities should be directed at parents and caregivers who may or may not be currently accessing services (e.g., newcomers, teen parents, families experiencing low income)?

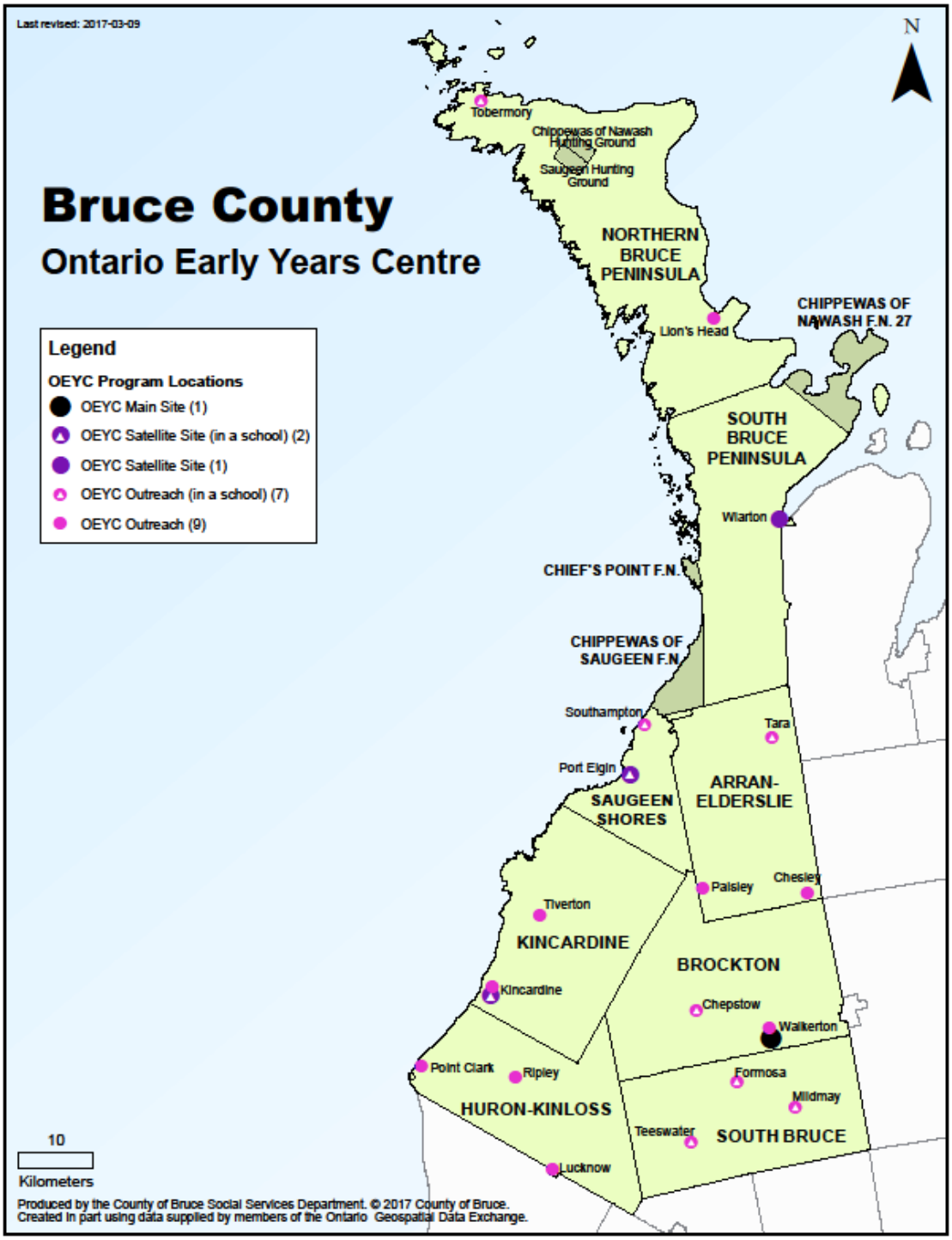
7. How can we strengthen the way services and organizations work together to provide more integrated services for families?

## APPENDIX C – KEY INFORMANTS

| Name | Position | Organization |
|---|---|---|
| Renee Abrams | Interim Executive Director | M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre |
| Kelley Coulter | Chief Administrative Officer | County of Bruce |
| Tania Dickson | Housing Manager | County of Bruce |
| Phil Dodd | Executive Director | Keystone Child Youth & Family Services |
| Paul Hambleton | Learning Services Administrator | Bluewater District School Board |
| Rick Hill | Executive Director | Community Living Owen Sound |
| Dr. Christine Kennedy | Medical Officer of Health | Grey Bruce Public Health |
| Melissa Legacy | Director | Bruce Library |
| Cathy McGirr | Director/Curator | Bruce Museum |
| Rachelle Morissette | Early Years Coordinator | Conseil scolaire catholique Providence |
| Tim Nicholls-Harrison | Library CEO & Chief Librarian | Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library |
| Debbie Pegelo | Ontario Works Manager | County of Grey |
| Francine Pilon | Superintendent of Education | Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board |
| Nancy Reinhart | Income Maintenance Manager | County of Bruce |
| Ann Marie Shaw | Director of Housing | County of Grey |
| Andy Swan | Executive Director | Community Living Kincardine |
| Michelle Truppe | Director | Thames Valley Children's Centre |
| Kim Wingrove | Chief Administrative Officer | County of Grey |

# Appendices

## APPENDIX D – ONTARIO EARLY YEARS CENTRE LOCATIONS



## APPENDIX E – 2016 CENSUS PROGRAM RELEASE SCHEDULE

| | |
|---|---|
| February 8, 2017 | Population and dwelling counts |
| May 3, 2017 | Age and sex<br>Type of dwelling |
| May 10, 2017 | Census of Agriculture |
| August 2, 2017 | Families, households and marital status<br>Language |
| September 13, 2017 | Income |
| October 25, 2017 | Immigration and ethnocultural diversity<br>Housing<br>Aboriginal peoples |
| November 29, 2017 | Education<br>Labour<br>Journey of work<br>Mobility and migration |

## APPENDIX F – BRUCE GREY CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES INDICATOR RATING SYSTEM BY MUNICIPALITY

| Municipality | Child Population (0-18) | % of Child Population to Total Population | Prevalence of Low Income Families[1] | Prevalence of Lone Parent Families[2] | # of Cases (March 31, 2014) | % pf Cases (March 31, 2014) | % of Cases per Child Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Owen Sound | 4,745 | 21.8% | 6.8% | 19.3% | 116 | 22.4% | 2.4% |
| Hanover | 1,495 | 20.9% | 5.9% | 14.3% | 49 | 9.4% | 3.3% |
| Saugeen Shores and Saugeen First Nation | 2,485 | 19.9% | 2.7% | 10.9% | 51 | 9.8% | 2.1% |
| Brockton | 2,295 | 23.8% | 6.0% | 10.8% | 44 | 8.5% | 1.9% |
| South Bruce Peninsula | 1,545 | 18.4% | 5.0% | 10.8% | 31 | 6.0% | 2.0% |
| Arran-Elderslie | 1,675 | 24.9% | 6.1% | 10.2% | 31 | 6.0% | 1.9% |
| Neyaashiinigmiing | 165 | 28.2% | Not Available | 29.0% | 5 | 1.0% | 3.0% |
| Kincardine | 2,285 | 20.4% | 2.4% | 9.4% | 30 | 5.8% | 1.3% |
| Chatsworth | 1,585 | 24.8% | 3.6% | 10.8% | 19 | 3.7% | 1.2% |
| West Grey | 2,790 | 22.9% | 5.8% | 9.6% | 22 | 4.2% | 0.8% |
| Huron-Kinloss | 1,540 | 23.7% | 5.1% | 7.5% | 16 | 3.1% | 1.0% |
| Southgate | 2,075 | 29.0% | 3.7% | 9.8% | 27 | 5.2% | 1.3% |
| Grey Highlands | 2,225 | 23.5% | 4.0% | 11.6% | 28 | 5.4% | 1.3% |
| South Bruce | 1,645 | 27.7% | 4.2% | 7.8% | 9 | 1.7% | 0.5% |
| Georgian Bluffs | 2,260 | 21.5% | 2.7% | 5.6% | 6 | 1.2% | 0.3% |
| Northern Bruce Peninsula | 610 | 15.8% | 4.9% | 4.2% | 9 | 1.7% | 1.5% |
| Meaford | 2,190 | 20.0% | 4.7% | 10.4% | 24 | 4.6% | 1.1% |
| Blue Mountains | 1,210 | 17.7% | 4.6% | 7.7% | 2 | 0.4% | 0.2% |

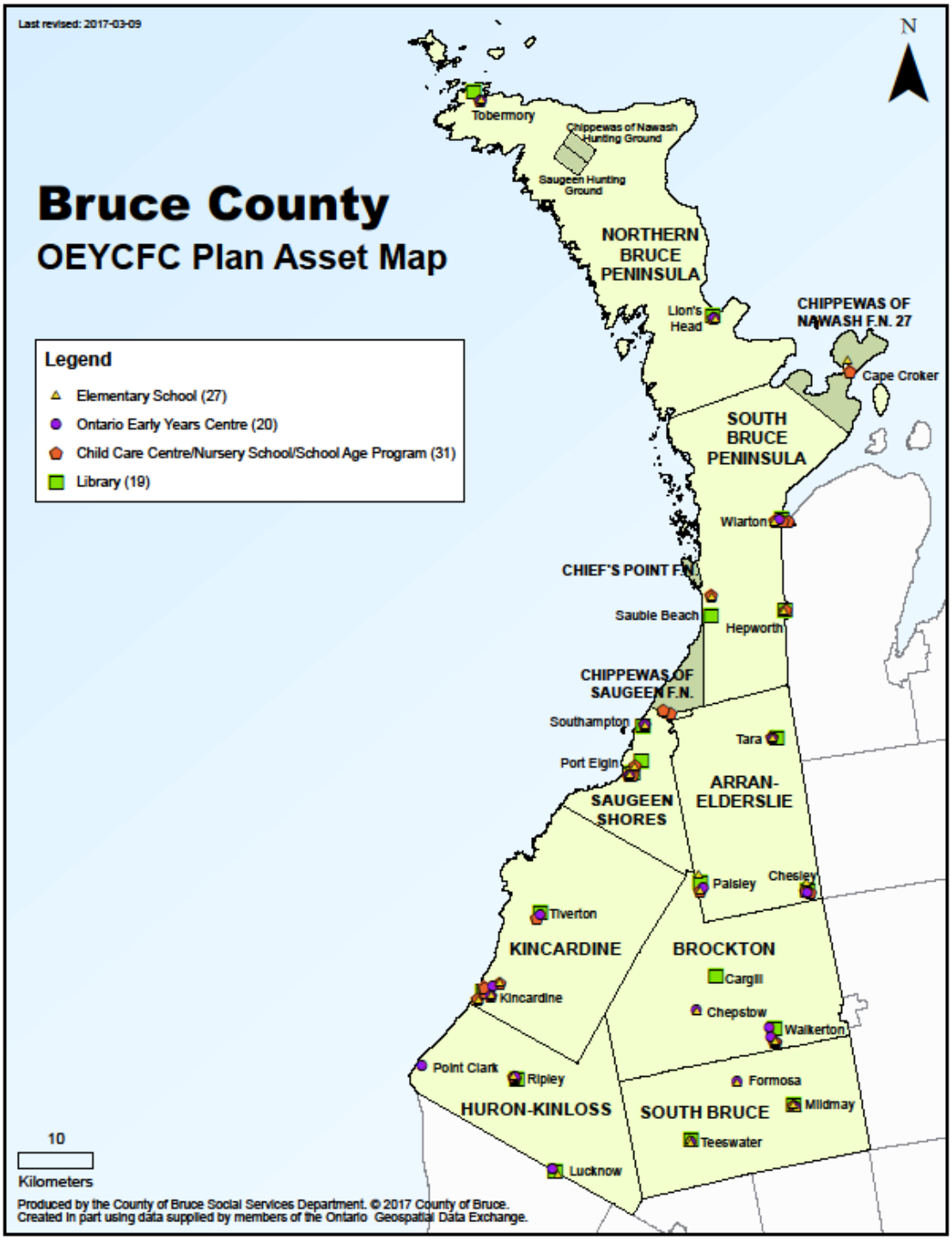
[1]The low income (LIM-AT) measure from T1FF is not available for all municipalities so for the purpose of this comparison table, the low income (LICO) measure from the 2006 Census was used.

[2] The prevalence of lone parent families from T1FF is not available for all municipalities so for the purpose of this comparison table, the lone parent family ratio was derived from the 2006 Census.

## APPENDIX G – 2017 LICENSED CENTRE-BASED SPACES BY AGE CATEGORY AND PROGRAM

| Name | Infant | Toddler | Preschool | Kindergarten | Primary/Junior School Age | Total Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Amabel Sauble** | | | | | | |
| Amabel Sauble Child Care Centre | 10 | 15 | 16 | | 30 | 71 |
| G.C. Huston Kids Club | | | | | 30 | 30 |
| **Bright Beginnings Child Care** | | 15 | 16 | | | 31 |
| **Bruce Peninsula Family Centres** | 3 | 10 | 22 | | 15 | 50 |
| **Municipality of Brockton** | | | | | | |
| Brockton Child Care Centre | | 30 | 48 | | 40 | 118 |
| Walkerton District School Age Program | | | | 20 | 30 | 50 |
| **Chesley Nursery School** | | | 16 | | | 16 |
| **Kids & Us** | | | | | | |
| Kids & Us Paisley | | 10 | 16 | | 30 | 56 |
| Chesley Kids Club | | | | | 42 | 42 |
| Sacred Heart Mildmay Kids Club | | | | | 49 | 49 |
| **Kids Street Nursery School** | | 10 | 20 | | | 30 |
| **Kin-Huron Co-op Nursery School** | | | 16 | | | 16 |
| **Little Beginnings Daycare and Learning Centre** | 6 | 20 | 16 | | | 42 |
| **Tobermory Primary Place** | | 15 | 15 | | 25 | 55 |
| **Wiarton & District Co-op Nursery School** | | | 16 | | | 16 |
| **Wiarton Kids Den** | | | | | | |
| Wiarton Kids Den Day Care Centre | 6 | 10 | 16 | | | 32 |
| Wiarton Kids Club | | | | 20 | 25 | 45 |
| Junior Wiarton Kids Club | | | | 26 | | 26 |
| Kids Club Summer Day Camp | | | | | 30 | 30 |
| **YMCA** | | | | | | |
| Port Elgin YMCA Child Care | | 15 | 72 | | | 87 |
| Kincardine YMCA Child Care | | 10 | 40 | 10 | | 60 |
| Ripley YMCA Child Care | | 10 | 16 | | | 26 |
| Arran Tara YMCA B/A School | | | | | 60 | 60 |
| Elgin Market YMCA B/A School | | | | 26 | 30 | 56 |
| Hepworth YMCA B/A School | | | | | 30 | 30 |
| KTTPS YMCA B/A School | | | | 26 | 44 | 70 |
| Northport YMCA B/A School | | | | 52 | 45 | 97 |
| Ripley YMCA B/A School | | | | | 60 | 60 |
| St. Anthony's YMCA B/A School | | | | 26 | 59 | 85 |
| St. Josephs YMCA B/A School | | | | | 30 | 30 |
| Saugeen Central YMCA B/A School | | | | 26 | 30 | 56 |
| **Total** | **25** | **170** | **361** | **232** | **734** | **1,522** |

## APPENDIX H – BRUCE COUNTY OEYCFC ASSET MAP



# APPENDIX I – EDI DOMAINS

## Physical Health & Well-Being

Teachers are asked to complete 13 questions for this domain. Questions relate to the child's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence, and gross motor and fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil, running on the playground, motor coordination, and adequate energy levels for classroom activities).

### Social Competence

Teachers are asked to complete 26 questions for this domain. Questions relate to the child's curiosity about the world, eagerness to try new experiences, knowledge of standards of acceptable behaviour in a public place, ability to control own behaviour, cooperation with others, following rules and the ability to play and work with other children.

### Emotional Maturity

Teachers are asked to complete 30 questions for this domain. Questions relate to the child's ability to reflect before acting, a balance between too fearful and too impulsive, the ability to deal with feelings at an age-appropriate level, and empathetic response to other people's feelings.

### Language & Cognitive Development

Teachers are asked to complete 26 questions for this domain. Questions relate to the child's reading awareness, age-appropriate reading, writing and numeracy skills, board games, and the ability to understand similarities and differences, and to recite back specific pieces of information from memory.

### Communication Skills & General Knowledge

Teachers are asked to complete 8 questions for this domain. Questions relate to the child's ability to communicate needs and wants in socially appropriate ways, symbiotic use of language, story-telling, and age-appropriate knowledge about life and the world around.

# APPENDIX J – TRAVEL PATTERNS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY MUNICIPALITY

## Arran-Elderslie

At least one half of respondents living in Arran-Elderslie reported having to drive at least 15 minutes one-way to access most programs, services and vendors. Similar to those living in South Bruce, residents of Arran-Elderslie reported having to drive further than those in many other municipalities to access regular appointments/services, work and to do grocery shopping.

### Brockton

More than half of respondents living in Brockton say they drive less than 15 minutes one-way or are within walking distance to access all programs, services and vendors. Almost one-quarter said they travel within walking distance and almost half drive less than 15 minutes one-way to playgroups/library programs. Another one-quarter said 'not applicable' when asked about travel time to playgroups/library programs.

### Huron-Kinloss

At least two-thirds of respondents living in Huron-Kinloss say they drive from 15 to less than 30 minutes one-way to access programs, services and vendors. While only significantly more so than Kincardine and Saugeen Shores, residents in Huron-Kinloss report driving further to access playgroups/library programs than other municipalities.

### Kincardine

More so than some other municipalities, two-thirds or more of respondent living in Kincardine are likely to say they drive less than fifteen minutes or are within walking distance (one-way) to access programs, services and vendors.

### Northern Bruce Peninsula

Compared to other municipalities, respondents living in Northern Bruce Peninsula are more likely to say they drive 30 minutes or more one-way to access recreation/leisure programs and to go to work. One-way travel time to programs, services and vendors were consistent with most other municipalities and at least half said they typically drive less than 15 minutes one-way or are within walking distance of child care, regular appointments/services, playgroups/library programs and grocery shopping. The distance to work is noteworthy when consideration is given to program planning and locations as residents are likely to get home from work later than others as their travel time to and from work is further than that of many other Bruce County residents.

### Saugeen Shores

More so than respondents in many other municipalities, half or more of respondents say they are within walking distance or drive less than fifteen minutes one-way to access regular appointments/ services, recreation/leisure programs and work. Most respondents indicated they are within walking distance or they drive less than fifteen minutes one-way to playgroups/library programs.

### South Bruce Peninsula

Respondents residing in South Bruce Peninsula varied quite a bit for their one-way travel time to access programs, services and vendors. Respondents living in South Bruce Peninsula were more likely than those living in many other municipalities to say they drive 30 minutes or more one-way to work or to attend regular appointments/services. The distance to work is noteworthy when consideration is given to program planning and locations as residents are likely to get home from work later as their travel time to and from work is further than many other Bruce County residents.

### South Bruce

Respondents living in South Bruce reported a very similar travel pattern to those residing in Arran-Elderslie and other more slightly rural municipalities. South Bruce respondents were significantly more likely than residents of Brockton, Kincardine and Saugeen Shores to report they drive fifteen to less than 30 minutes one-way to access regular appointments/services, recreation/leisure programs and to go to work. One-quarter of survey respondents said ‘not applicable’ when asked about their travel time to playgroups/library programs.

### Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation & Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation

Due to the limited number of respondents from both First Nations, significant testing and a detailed breakdown of access to services could not be completed.