BRUCE COUNTY

Child Care & Early Years

SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN: 2024-2028

WAYPOINT
2025



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Introduction

Bruce County Children's Services, part of the Human Services department, is pleased to highlight our Waypoint for the goals and priorities identified in the 2024-2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan.

A robust community consultation and engagement process was central to the creation of the five-year Service System Plan. Input from families, community partners, and early childhood educators helped shape our strategic direction for 2024–2028, summarized through five key themes:



We invite you to explore our Waypoint that reflects the actions taken and key performance indicators achieved together with our community in 2025.

Contents

04 Inclusion Accomplishments

06 Workforce Accomplishments

10 Accessibility Accomplishments

16 Affordability Accomplishments

17 Action Plan

> **Through service system planning, we gain deeper insight into community needs, evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services, identify progress and unmet needs, and establish strategic directions to guide our collective efforts.**
>
> – Gillian Andrews, Children's Services Manager



Inclusion Accomplishments



Journey Through the Ages and Stages (ASQ)

Bruce County's Journey Through the Ages and Stages uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ™) to help parents and caregivers understand and guide child development and is currently available to all families attending Bruce County child care and early years programs. This proactive approach allows the child care system to be responsive to children's learning, development, and well-being.

The ASQ helps parents and caregivers celebrate milestones and provides information on what to look for next. Further, it provides important information for children who may require links to community support, have additional needs for developmental well-being, and may require enhancement support.

Data gathered from the ASQ is also valuable in understanding and prioritizing services and programs that meet the needs of children in Bruce County.

Bruce County has partnered with Queen's University to mutually promote family-centered early intervention in infant mental health and early child development. Queen's University supports this initiative through the creation of a secure online database for the ASQ information, provides data analysis support and interpretation, and funds research expenses related to data acquisition.

To learn more about Journey Through the Ages and Stages, access the **Parents & Guardians Information Package**

Do you have concerns about your child's development?

Please reach out to your child care professional or contact Bruce County Children's Services Special Needs Resource team at 1-800-265-3022 or childcare@brucecounty.on.ca

For resources and learning activities related to the ASQ, please visit:
Resource Library - Ages and Stages

A total of

1,072

children participated in the Journey Through the Ages and Stages assessments in 2025, with **551 children participating in the spring and 521 in the fall**. The results from the 2025 assessments will be uploaded to the national database and reported in the 2026 Waypoint.

Resource Consultants made referrals and connections with **222** unique children. The top three types of referrals were to **Resource Program, Speech and Language Services,** and **Occupational Therapy.**



On average in 2025,

121

children in licensed child care programs were supported by the Resource Consultants.

$367,965 in Special Needs Resource funding was spent to support inclusion in licensed child care.

For more information on supports offered by the Special Needs Resource Program visit:
brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/resource-program

Workforce Accomplishments

Recruitment

Early Childhood Education Awards available for Students

In 2025, Bruce County continued its partnership with Fanshawe College and Georgian College to provide Bruce County Early Childhood Education Awards to eligible students.

Students who met the eligibility criteria were invited to apply for funding designed to encourage entry into the Early Childhood Education field at either institution. Eligible students could receive up to $4,000 in total awards, covering approximately half of their tuition costs for the two-year Early Childhood Education diploma program.

In 2025, 46 students received the Bruce County Early Childhood Education Award.

Building Relationships with Students

Every meaningful encounter with a student has the power to influence their future. These moments ignite a sense of purpose, shape aspirations, and inspire students to imagine who they could become. In partnership with the Bluewater District School Board and the Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board, Bruce County Children Services participated in local high school **career fairs**. These events created valuable opportunities to build connections with students as they engaged with passionate, experienced Registered Early Childhood Educators. Through authentic conversations and real stories from the field, each interaction planted a seed of possibility. In 2025, more than **450 students attended** these career fairs. Together, we are nurturing the next generation of educators by showing students that there is a career in Early Childhood Education. The encounters you have with students now shape where they want to be and who they aspire to become as educators... it all starts with connection, belonging and relationships.

Bruce County has had the privilege to connect with students at local colleges (Georgian College and Fanshawe College) and high schools (Bluewater District School Board and Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board) through:

- Presentations
- Experience sharing
- Invitations to professional learning events
- As contacts for any questions they may have while entering the career of Early Childhood Education

For more information on being an Early Childhood Educator in Bruce County visit: brucecounty.on.ca/be-early-childhood-educator-bruce-county

Retention

338

child care educators recognized during **Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day.**



Workforce Compensation

The Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system (CWELCC) provides funding for workforce compensation to support recruitment and retention of Ontario's child care workforce through improved compensation for lower-wage earners. It includes compensation enhancements for Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) staff in the form of a wage floor and annual wage increase.

In 2025, funding was provided to bring RECE program staff wages to the wage floor mandated by the Ministry of Education. In addition, educators were eligible for a $1/hour annual wage increase.

Professional Development

393
early years and child care professionals accessed resources and trainings offered on the Community Learning Library.

Operators Meetings

4 quarterly operators meetings – 2 virtual, 2 in person.

Operators meetings offer child care centre leaders the opportunity to connect and learn about HR best practices, develop leadership and team-building skills, and discuss strategies for recruiting and retaining staff.

2025 SPEAKERS & TOPICS

Debbie Sluys: Dare to Declare
Cultivating a Caring Culture Through Consideration

Bobbi-Jo Gramigna: Inspector
Child Care Branch/Early Years Division, Ministry of Education

Anna Micka: HR 101
Clear, Practical, and Consistent Guidance for Every Employee

338
educators from Bruce County attended.

Full Day Professional Learning Event

2025's professional learning event, titled "Together We Grow: Inspire, Energize & Connect" took place on October 3rd at the Unifor Family Education Centre in Port Elgin. The day provided an opportunity for child care educators to attend three inspiring keynote presentations, participate in one of six breakout sessions, engage in an interactive activity, and connect with other educators.

Event feedback demonstrated strong positive outcomes, with **90% of respondents reporting that the breakout sessions provided strategies to support the children in their care**. Additionally, **95% indicated they gained ideas that will improve their daily work life.**

GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDED:

Keynote speakers:

Malissa Bryan, Rainbow Diversity Institute
Principles of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Jackie Ralph, CMHA Grey Bruce
Wellness Chat with Chatty Jackie

Mike Masse, Mindfulness Consultant Finding Your Way

Breakout sessions:

Kathryn Forsythe, Registered Dietitian
"Menu Makeover: Transform Your Centre's Menu with Expert Guidance"

Sarah Milne, Health Promoter and Physical Activity Lead with Grey Bruce Public Health "Energizing Early Childhood: Practical Physical Activity & Physical Literacy"

Jackie Ralph, CMHA Grey Bruce
"Empathic Strain – The Cost of Caring"

Mike Masse, Mindfulness Consultant
"Planting Seeds: The Art of Teaching Mindfulness to Children"

Kim Hooey & Rachel Koller, Resource Consultants with Bruce County Human Services "Introduction to Making Sense of Preschoolers"

Angela Hazlewood & Kim Burrows, Early Years Educators with Bruce County Human Services "The Benefits of Nature-Based Learning"

The day ended with **Val Shah, DROM Beyond Drumming**

Our professional development journey will continue with...

- Mental health awareness
- Behaviour management
- School age programing
- More opportunities for sharing and learning from others



Positive Early Childhood Education Program (PECE)

As part of Bruce County's commitment to increasing capacity, accessibility, and quality across the child care system, the Children's Services Division implemented the Positive Early Childhood Education (PECE) Professional Learning Program. This program is carefully designed to enhance educators' skills, confidence, and self-efficacy in supporting children's development, social competence, and self-regulation.

The aim of the PECE Program is to:

Provide responsive learning opportunities to promote children's social and emotional skills as well as interest in learning.

Manage common behaviours, emotional difficulties, and support developmental concerns.

Improve educators' communication with co-workers and parents about behaviour and other related concerns.

Reduce stress associated with child care responsibilities.

Boost educators' knowledge, skills and confidence.

Educators

89 educators in the licensed child care community have been enrolled in the PECE program.

Coaches

To date there are **37 accredited PECE coaches** within the Children's Services Division and the licensed child care community.

The PECE initiative will continue in 2026 completing the training in our child care operator community, and expanding into licensed home child care and EarlyON.

Accessibility Accomplishments

Bruce County's Directed Growth Plan



Supported by the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System:

Ontario has committed to create

86,000

new licensed child care spaces in underserved communities by December 2026.

Under the Access and Inclusion Framework, the Ministry has developed a model to allocate funding for new spaces for children age 0-5, with a focus on improving equity of access by **working toward a common provincial access ratio of 37%**. This includes providing funding for start-up grants to support the creation of new, affordable child care spaces for children under age six in targeted locations and for populations most in need.

The allocation model is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities and capacity for growth.

Bruce County Children's Services worked with interested operators to ensure spaces were opened in communities where there was a low access rate of licensed child care.

In alignment with Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework, Bruce County's Early Learning and Child Care Directed Growth Plan will prioritize child care expansion to:

1 **Increase access equity** by supporting child care expansion in municipalities with an access rate lower than the provincial average of 37%.

Baseline Access Rates

Municipality	CWELCC Access Rate Pre-Expansion (2023)	CWELCC Access Rate (2025)
Arran-Elderslie	16%	28%
Brockton	31%	31%
Huron-Kinloss	13%	26%
Kincardine	33%	39%
Northern Bruce Peninsula	62%	62%
Saugeen Shores	50%	67%
South Bruce	2%	10%
South Bruce Peninsula	44%	51%
Combined Access Rate	**30%**	**39%**

Note this is based on licensed capacity.



2 **Support child care access** for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, francophone, and Indigenous children.

3 **Maintain or improve the proportion** of non-profit licensed child care spaces.

2025 Access and Inclusion Achievements

The municipalities of Kincardine, Saugeen Shores, South Bruce Peninsula, and North Bruce Peninsula have all met the Bruce County directed growth plan targeted **CWELCC access rate** and are anticipated to retain the number of spaces.

Municipalities **below the 37% access rate** remain a priority for further expansion.

Start-up grants are available to support the creation of new spaces in locations and for populations most in need.



Over $681,423

in start-up grant funding was approved in 2025 to support child care expansion in Bruce County.

For more information on child care expansion and applicable financial supports, please visit brucecounty.on.ca/human-services/early-learning-and-child-care-expansion-toolkit

Home Child Care

As a licensed home child care agency, Bruce County can support up to 25 providers, with each provider offering up to six child care spaces. The addition of one new provider in 2025 **increased the county-wide total to 21 home child care providers**.

Municipality	Number of Providers
Arran-Elderslie	10
Brockton	3
Kincardine	2
Saugeen Shores	2
South Bruce	2
South Bruce Peninsula	2
Northern Bruce Peninsula	0

If you are interested in becoming a home child care provider visit: brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/bruce-county-home-child-care-program

Child Care Locations and Spaces

*These numbers do not include the Home Child Care program

Year	Head offices	Number of licensed spaces	Operating capacity
2021	20	2,096	51%
2022	20	2,120	63%
2023	20	2,125	70%
2024	21	2,296	67%
2025	21	2,357	70%

OneList



OneList Bruce County

is an online waitlist tool to help simplify the process of finding and applying for child care in Bruce County.

In 2025 there were 1427 total active OneList applications or unique children on the waitlist.

Applicant's Municipality	Children **placed** from waitlist in Q4 2024	Children **placed** from waitlist in Q4 2025	Child Care **applications** at the end of Q4 2024	Child Care **applications** at the end of Q4 2025
Arran-Elderslie	66	30	168	147
Brockton	36	55	244	216
Huron-Kinloss	31	29	115	108
Kincardine	88	71	295	257
North Bruce Peninsula	17	27	56	32
Saugeen Shores	207	125	465	336
South Bruce	16	16	100	93
South Bruce Peninsula	31	38	81	75
Other Counties	27	26	174	163
Total	**519**	**417**	**1,698**	**1,427**

Explore your child care options here: brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/onelist-bruce-county

Access to Qualified Staff

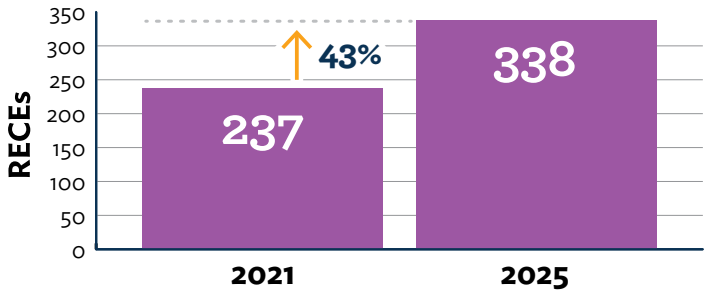


Child care centres in Bruce County have identified the limited access to qualified staff - particularly Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)- as a key barrier to operating at full capacity.. RECEs play a central role in delivering a high-quality early years and child care system.

Membership data from the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) show that the number of RECEs in Bruce County **increased each year from 2021 to 2025, rising from 237 to 338 (43%).** This rate of growth was higher than the College's overall increase of 12% over the same period.

From 2021 to 2025, the operating capacity of child care programs also increased, from **51% in 2021 to 70% in 2025** across licensed child care spaces in Bruce County. Operating capacity refers to the proportion of licensed spaces that are open and staffed.

CECE Membership data



The Grey-Bruce Early Learning Educator Recruitment and Retention Working Group is a cross-sector partnership of local organizations that work collaboratively to develop strategies to sustain, strengthen, and grow the qualified workforce, with the goal of improving access to early years and child care for families.

CECE Number of Members in Good Standing

As of June 30, each year.

Year	Bruce County	College Overall	Percentage
2021	237	58,867	0.4%
2022	258	59,547	0.4%
2023	283	61,171	0.5%
2024	310	63,148	0.5%
2025	338	65,973	0.5%

EarlyON



Did you know:

- ✓ 18 jointly facilitated Little Counters and Storytime Adventures programs were offered with Bruce County Branch Librarians
- ✓ 16 **Strong Start Early Literacy Baby Connections** programs were implemented
- ✓ 27 Grandfriends programs were offered at **Long Term Care Homes** with an average of 22 residents joining each time
- ✓ 68 jointly facilitated programs and guest speaker visits were offered with **Bruce County Child Care Caseworkers**
- ✓ EarlyON Port Elgin expanded its existing partnership with Thames Valley Children's Centre (TVCC) by offering an **Autism, Social Play, and Social Communication program**
- ✓ 32 jointly facilitated programs and guest speaker visits were offered with **Bruce County Resource Consultants**
- ✓ EarlyON delivered approximately 3,100 hours of scheduled programing across 18 communities in Bruce County
- ✓ 30 unique learning programs were offered for children and families
- ✓ EarlyON collaborated with **Bruce County Library and Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre** to map existing early learning and child development programs
- ✓ EarlyON partners with a wide variety of community partners provide specialized programs throughout the year: **Public Health, TVCC, St John Ambulance, Family Health Teams, School Boards, Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada, Municipal Recreation Departments**, and more!

EarlyON Child and Family Centre

Program Stats 2025	Total Number
Programs	1244
Unique Adults	907
Adult Visits	5885
Unique Children	1128
Child Visits	8723
Indigenous Led Programs (Sept-Dec 2025)	12
Adult Visits	77
Child Visits	112

EarlyON has **over**
3,800
Facebook followers

In 2025, we published 400 Facebook posts, generating a total of 542,782 views.

Join us at @EarlyONBruceCounty

For more information on Bruce County's EarlyON and Child and Family Centres including a schedule of programs near you, visit: brucecounty.on.ca/human-services/earlyon

Affordability Accomplishments

Fee Subsidy

On a monthly average, **166 children were served** by fee subsidy in 2025.

The number of children supported through fee subsidy continues to decrease as child care becomes more affordable through the CWELCC system.

No fee subsidy waitlist in 2025.

For more information on child care fee subsidy visit: brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/child-care-fee-subsidy



Increased affordability through the Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)

In March 2022, the Federal and Provincial governments signed the CWELCC agreement, which aims to make child care more affordable for families. This agreement is part of the Federal Government's commitment to deliver $10 per day child care by the end of 2026.

During 2025, eligible families with children enrolled in CWELCC-participating child care centres benefited from reduced child care fees. Depending on the centre's established parent fees, families received either a reduction of up to **52.75% or paid a maximum of $22 per day.** These fee reductions were supported through provincial and federal CWELCC funding provided to participating operators, helping to make licensed child care more affordable and accessible for families.

20 out of 21

licensed child care operators in Bruce County opted in to CWELCC in 2025, making child care more affordable for families.

Action Plan

Bruce County Strategic Goals	Bruce County Children's Services Goals	Priorities					Actions	Timeline				
		Quality	Inclusivity	Accessibility	Affordability	Workforce Support		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1. Build a strong and inclusive community	Collaborate with community partners to support the child care and early years needs of newcomers to Bruce County	●	●			●	Build capacity within the child care and early years system to support the cultural and diverse needs of children and families	●	●	●	●	●
	Increase awareness of Bruce County Children's Services supports and programs		●	●			Promote programs and services to priority populations in Bruce County, including newcomers, using preferred channels	●	●	●	●	●
2. Enhance and grow partnerships	Work together with Indigenous partners to support the needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) families	●	●	●			Work together with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) partners to expand programming	●	●	●	●	●
	Support and enhance the capacity of child care programs	●	●			●	Continue to provide collaborative coaching and mentoring	●	●	●	●	●
							Offer ongoing professional development initiatives for licensed child care programs	●	●	●	●	●
							Continue to increase knowledge across the local early learning and child care sector regarding "How Does Learning Happen?"	●	●	●	●	●
	Collaborate with community partners to attract and retain Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)	●		●	●	●	Continue to collaborate with colleges, high schools, and community partners to implement actions to attract and retain ECEs in Bruce County	●	●	●	●	●
							Continue to offer the innovative Early Childhood Educator (ECE) program with Fanshawe College. Continue to explore and support community strategies that address cost and time barriers for those interested in the ECE program	●	●	●	●	●
	Build partnerships with agencies offering the ASQ to families	●	●	●			Collaborate with community partners and agencies to make the Journey Through the Ages and Stages accessible to all families in Bruce County			●	●	●
3. Strengthen County's use of technology and innovative initiatives	Utilize data to drive programming	●	●	●	●	●	Continue the implementation of Journey Through the Ages and Stages (ASQ) to assist caregivers in understanding the strengths and needs of their children	●	●	●	●	●
							Provide relevant data about child care and early years with operators and community partners (ex. BGDISC)	●	●	●	●	●
	Ensure all child care applications are processed through a centralized, on-line registry			●			Explore options to enhance child care registration and wait lists		●	●		

Action Plan

Bruce County Strategic Goals	Bruce County Children's Services Goals	Priorities					Actions	Timeline				
		Quality	Inclusivity	Accessibility	Affordability	Workforce Support		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
4. Promote responsible growth	Provide child care and early learning programs and services at times that support families		●	●	●		Explore partnership opportunities to meet the needs of parents/guardians who require alternative hours of care	●	●	●	●	●
							Continue to monitor, assess, and respond to community needs regarding EarlyON programing times across Bruce County in accordance with ministry guidelines	●	●			●
	Increase child care and early years access and options across the County, especially in high need areas	●	●	●	●	●	Initiate a review and develop a sustainable business model to support and expand the Bruce County Home Child Care Program	●	●	●		
							Promote expansion of licensed child care providers in high need areas as per the Access and Inclusion framework	●	●	●		
							Work with authorized camps, children's recreation, and skill building programs to ensure they meet the needs of our community	●	●	●	●	●
							Continue to monitor, assess, and respond to community needs regarding EarlyON programing locations across Bruce County	●	●			●
	Explore cost-saving opportunities				●	●	Explore cost effective rental agreements for EarlyON programming	●	●			●
							Explore group cost share opportunities for licensed child care providers and employees		●	●		
5. Ensure a positive, inclusive, and accountable work culture	Implement strategies to increase child care workforce satisfaction to attract and retain Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)	●	●	●	●	●	Explore and implement strategies to improve ECE workforce satisfaction	●	●	●	●	●
							Explore opportunities to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace	●	●	●	●	●

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For more information, please contact:

Human Services
Gillian Andrews
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30 Park Street, Walkerton, ON N0G 2V0
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For more information on Bruce County Children's Services visit
brucecounty.on.ca/childrens-services

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