



# Moving forward with the Transformation of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres in the Region of Durham

Children's Services Division, Social Services Department  
The Regional Municipality of Durham

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If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-387-0642.

# Executive Summary

A comprehensive consultation process resulted in four key strategies, of which The Regional Municipality of Durham and its community partners will address, in order to transform the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres in Durham Region. This report describes:

- The needs of the Durham community.
- The consultation process: gathering information from OEYC program users and community partners.
- What the data tell us.
- Moving towards a transformed system; the next steps.

## Key findings:

- OEYC service users are deeply committed to the OEYC programs that they attend.
- Families travel significant distances to attend multiple OEYC programs in different local municipalities.
- Continuing growth in the population of Durham Region has increased demand for OEYC programs and services.
- Services offered are not considered equitable or consistent between municipalities.
- OEYC leads are committed to meet the needs of each community, but face budgetary constraints that prevent the system from meeting the full demand.
- Families want more variety of programming, requesting more regular programming on evenings, weekends and in the summer months.
- While the transformation process continues during 2018, the two existing OEYC leads (the YMCA and the YWCA) will remain.
- Throughout the remainder of 2017, and the first six months of 2018, continued consultation will take place to determine how to maximize the use of all available resources to support young children and their families.

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**“OEYCs are GREAT.”**

**“Le centre offre de très bon services.”**



# Introduction

In February 2016, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to transform the existing family support programs into Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). The four programs to be amalgamated include: Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings, Better Futures.

Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), both main sites and satellites, are located across Durham Region, providing a range of programs and services that reflect the needs of the communities for which they are located (Figure 1). Durham Region does not offer the remaining three services.

Two agencies lead OEYC programs in Durham Region: The YMCA of Greater Toronto and the YWCA Durham. In addition to directly operating OEYC programs, the YMCA contracts with Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources to provide OEYC programs in the north-east of the region.

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), The Regional Municipality of Durham, Children's Services Division (CSD) has been given the lead responsibility for planning, managing, and funding the early learning and child care system in Durham Region. The Ministry has appointed the CMSM to manage the OEYCFCs beginning in January 2018.

From January to May 2017, CSD consulted parents, caregivers, OEYC providers, and community agencies to explore how best to move forward with the transformation of OEYC services in the region.

This report describes the outcomes of the consultation process and how, as the service system manager, the CSD will ensure that the resources available for child and family services programs are allocated effectively and efficiently, in order to maximize the quality and the quantity of programming available to families across the eight Durham Region municipalities.

In 2016,  
**24,398** Parents/caregivers and children visited  
one of  
**61** Durham Region OEYCs  
**139,772** times.

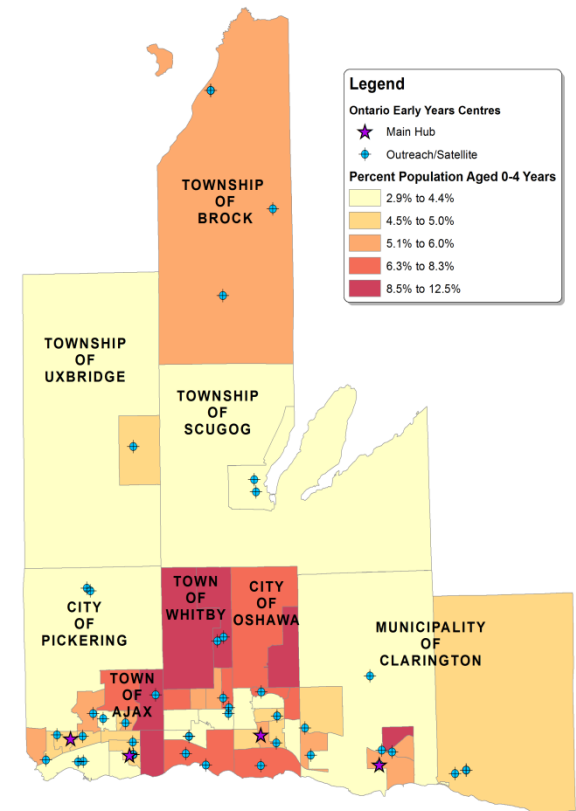


Figure 1: Density of children 0-4 years and location of OEYCs



# Durham Region

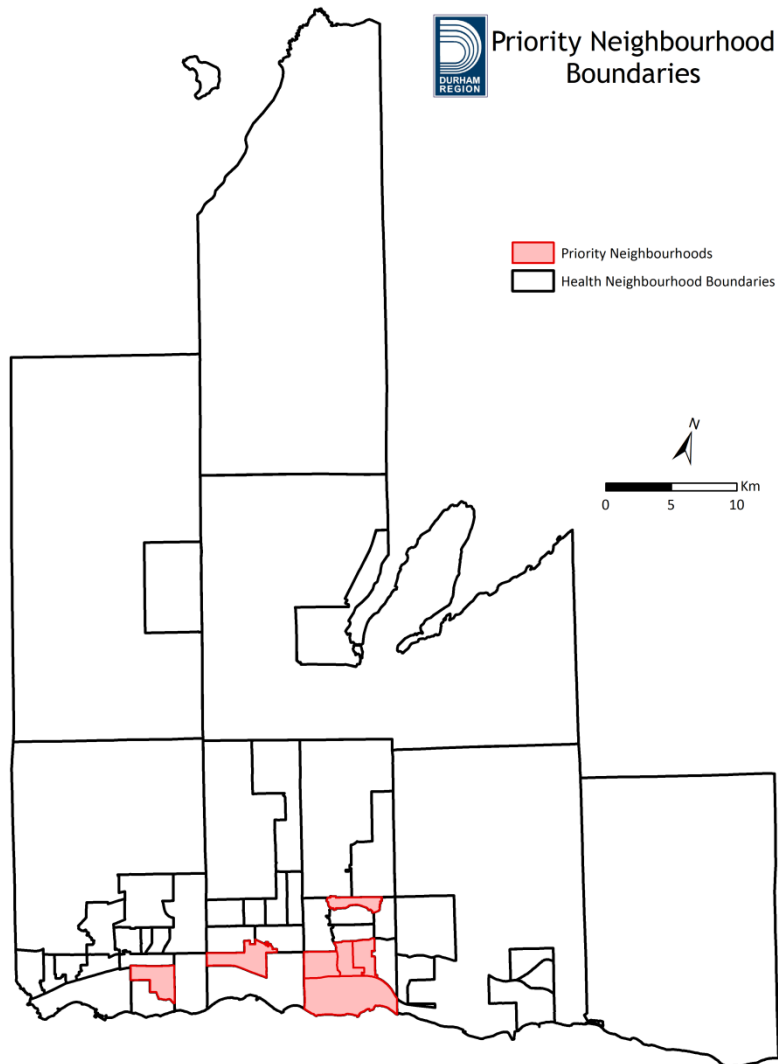


Figure 2: Outline of Durham Health Neighbourhoods; Priority Neighbourhoods shaded in red

Durham Region is comprised of eight area municipalities: the Cities of Oshawa and Pickering, the towns of Ajax and Whitby, the Municipality of Clarington, and the townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. Each municipality is unique, as land use is made up of a mix of suburban sprawl, rural farming, and cityscapes.

The population of Durham Region has grown rapidly during the past few years, and continues to increase. Between 2006 and 2011, the population growth rate ranged from -4.8 per cent in Downtown Whitby to +256.4 per cent in Ajax Northeast. As such, Durham Region has had an influx of newcomers to Canada, especially in Ajax and Pickering.

The Durham Health Department has subdivided the region into 50 Health Neighbourhoods, which allows for close monitoring of health and population indicators at a neighbourhood level. There are seven Priority Health Neighbourhoods, requiring special focus to strengthen health and well-being (Figure 2). OEYCs play an integral role in delivering supports for families in each Health Neighbourhood.

## Quick facts

- As of 2016, there were 51,746 children 0 to 6 years in Durham.
- 3.6 per cent of Durham Region population is made up of recent immigrants.
- 1.5 per cent of the Durham Region population is made up of Aboriginal persons.
- Besides English and French, the most common languages in Durham Region include: Spanish, Urdu, Tamil, Tagalog, Persian, Cantonese, Arabic, Italian, Polish and Chinese.

# OEYCFC transformation

The Government of Ontario’s vision for Early Years and Child Care states: **“All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child and family-centred and contribute to children’s learning, development and well-being.”**

This vision was reinforced and expanded upon in Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (June 2017): **“A young child’s brain is enormously complex...Child development experts recommend that we support children in this critical period by providing them with inclusive, caring environments and meaningful interactions”** (page 10).

The CSD’s goal is to ensure the Provincial vision is achieved. The key goals as articulated by the Ministry of Education and modified to reflect the needs in Durham Region:

- All expecting parents, parents, caregivers, and home child care providers have access to high-quality services that support them in their role.
- All children have access to inclusive, play, and inquiry-based learning opportunities to improve their developmental health and well-being.
- All parents, caregivers, and home child care providers are provided with timely, relevant, and up to date information related to their child’s early learning and development that is easy to locate, access, understand, and is delivered in a judgement-free manner.
- Local service providers collaborate in an integrated way to meet the needs of children and families in an efficient and accessible way
- 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.

The transformation is built upon the guiding principles listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Transformation guiding principles**

<b>Child and family centred</b>	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.
<b>Welcoming</b>	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). These are the four foundational conditions outlined in How Does Learning Happen?
<b>High quality</b>	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.
<b>Inclusive</b>	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.
<b>Integrated</b>	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.
<b>Community led</b>	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.



The three mandatory core services (Table 2) will be developed and delivered in a manner that reflects the child population size and the unique needs of each community.

Although programming may be diverse between Durham Region municipalities, consistent program elements will ensure children and their parents/caregivers receive the same quality programming, regardless of where they attend an OEYCFC.

Building on the foundations described in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*, this report is structured as follows:

1. Belonging
2. Well-being
3. Engagement
4. Expression
5. Reflective Practice

As the transformation process moves forward, the CSD is committed to a continued inclusive and responsive process. Regularly scheduled meetings and open communication will provide ample opportunities for both program users and those planning and delivering services to collaborate to ensure programs are responsive to the dynamic and diverse needs of the municipalities.

**Table 2: Mandatory core services for OEYCFCs**

Mandatory core services
<p><b>Engaging parents and caregivers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions and information sharing about child development, parenting, nutrition, play, and inquiry-based learning, and other topics that support their role.</li> <li>• Pre- and post-natal support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being and to support them in their role(s).</li> <li>• 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 (e.g. newcomers to Ontario, teen parents, low-income families, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting early learning and development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in programs and others 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making connections for families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to a parent/caregiver concern about their child's development through conversation and observation supported by validated tools and resources (e.g. developmental surveillance, Nipissing District Developmental Screen). In some cases, this may result in supporting parents/caregivers to seek additional support from primary care or other regulated health professionals.</li> <li>• Information sharing about, and facilitating connections with, specialized community services (such as children's rehabilitation services), co-ordinated service planning, public health, education, child care and child welfare, as appropriate.</li> <li>• Information sharing about programs and services available for the whole family beyond the early years.</li> </ul>

# Belonging: Our process

Our process involved collecting data and insight from service providers (Transformation Planning Network) and service users (parents and caregivers from across Durham Region).

## Establishing the OEYCFC Transformation Planning Network

As the Service System Manager, the CSD sought input from a wide range of community partners, school boards, service providers, and community agencies that offer various programs and services to children birth to six years and their families across Durham Region (Figure 3).

The OEYCFC Transformation Planning Network has three primary functions: Information sharing, Information gathering, and Consultation.

### Information sharing

The diverse membership allows for a comprehensive exchange of information about programs and services for children under six years and their families. Network members reported an increased knowledge of the range of early learning services available and valued the opportunity to contribute to planning an equitable early years experience.

### Information gathering

Network members participated in a local needs assessment that provided a comprehensive overview of programs and services provided, and helped identify gaps in service provision throughout the eight municipalities.

The needs assessment was subdivided into two phases: identifying services needs and identifying population needs.

“Belonging refers to a sense of connectedness to others, an individual’s experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, the natural world.”

(How Does Learning Happen?, Page 7)



Figure 3: Representation within the Durham Region OEYCFC Transformation Planning Network



## Identifying service needs

The objectives of this process were to identify:

- Existing child and family programs serving children ages birth to six years, parents and caregivers, including information on program offerings, location and utilization.
- Available or potential program space within local schools or community buildings.

Network members were asked to complete an operator survey and program scan as part of a Regional Gap Analysis.

The operator survey included 13 questions related to:

- Potential space to host future OEYCFC programming.
- Use of play- and inquiry-based learning.
- Current offerings of French language, culturally responsive, mobile services, phone lines, pre-natal and post-natal programs.
- Current strategies used to collect feedback from parents/caregivers.
- Current strategies used to market programs to parents/caregivers.

Each organization/agency was asked to complete a program scan, detailing the information for each program offered to children from birth to six years and their parents/caregivers. Members were asked to provide data reflective of January to December 2016.

Data were then collated, and programs (inclusive of OEYC and community partners) were divided by municipality and Health Neighbourhood.

## Identifying population needs

As per the transformation guidelines, the objectives of this process were to identify:

- Location, number and language (English, French or non-official) of families with children ages birth to six years.
- Existing child and family programs serving children ages birth to six years, parents and caregivers, including information on program offerings, locations and utilization.
- Children and/or families with identified social or developmental vulnerabilities and their approximate location.
- Number and location of children and/or families that self-identify as Indigenous.

The Data Analysis Coordinator compiled this data by Health Neighbourhood from a variety of sources retrieved from [durham.ca/neighbourhoods](http://durham.ca/neighbourhoods). Network members were asked to assist in identifying Health Neighbourhoods with limited access to programs and services, as well as areas of social and developmental vulnerabilities.

## Consultation

Members engaged in a series of consultation activities at each of the three network meetings. This included: developing a family engagement strategy; setting priorities and recommendations for transformation based upon findings of the local needs assessment and parent/caregiver feedback; and providing feedback on the plan to create a transformed OEYCFC system in 2018.

**“Planning network was great. Helps keep us linked together. Share information, make additional connections - keeps us connected and working collaboratively.”**

**– Durham Region OEYCFC Transformation Network Member**

## Engaging children, parents and caregivers: Survey

Parents and caregivers were engaged directly through surveys and focus groups.

The Parent/Caregiver survey questions were developed to reflect those asked through the consultative survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, with input from the Transformation Planning Network. The survey responses also helped contribute to the local needs assessment in gathering feedback about preferred OEYCFC service locations, hours of operation and program offerings. The survey was pre-tested by a small group of parents in Durham Region to identify issues with survey function, suitability of questions, and ease of completion.

There was widespread endorsement of the survey by OEYCs and community agencies. The survey, which was available online and in print, in both English and French, was promoted through several avenues (Figure 4).

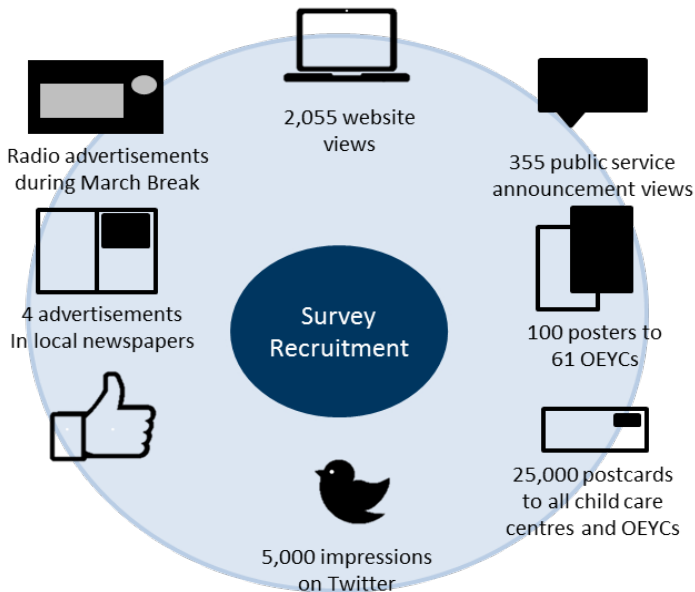


Figure 4: Recruitment efforts for parent/caregiver survey

## Help improve early learning and child care in Durham Region

### What is this survey about?

The Regional Municipality of Durham, Children's Services Division is collecting feedback from parents and caregivers. We want to know how to improve early learning programs and child care in your neighbourhood.

### Who can participate?

- Parents and caregivers of children 0 to 12 years.
- Residents of Durham Region.

### How can I participate?

- Fill out a paper survey and use the pre-paid envelope to return by mail.
- OR
- Complete the survey online at [durham.ca/ELCC](http://durham.ca/ELCC).

Upon completing the survey by **April 3**, your name can be entered into a draw to win one of 10 \$50 gift cards to the grocery store of your choice.

### How will this information be used?

Your privacy is important to us. Survey responses will be grouped together and summarized in a report to ensure no individuals are identified. The opinions you provide will help shape the future of early learning programs and child care in Durham Region.

### How can I learn more?

For more information, contact Taryn Eickmeier, Data Analysis Coordinator, Children's Services Division at 905-668-7711 or 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3109.



If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-387-0642.

## Engaging Children, Parents and Caregivers: Focus Groups

Service user focus groups provided an opportunity to speak directly with parents and caregivers who are active participants in existing OEYC programs and services.

Nine sessions were held throughout Durham Region in rural, suburban, and urban communities (Table 3). The focus groups were conducted at OEYC sites during scheduled drop-in and/or registered program hours. To facilitate free and open discussion, OEYC staff and volunteers were asked not to sit-in on the sessions, and the focus groups were facilitated by a third party.

**Table 3: Characteristics of participants in the English focus groups**

Location	Number of participants	Represented age groups			Percentage of municipal population children (0-6 years) <sup>1</sup>		
		Infants	Toddlers	Preschool	0-1 years	2-3 years	4-6 years
Ajax	13	X			13%	15%	23%
Brock	8	X	X		13%	13%	22%
Clarington	7			X	12%	15%	23%
Oshawa	12 + 6 children	X	X	X	14%	16%	23%
Pickering	16	X	X	X	11%	13%	22%
Scugog	13	X	X	X	11%	13%	22%
Uxbridge	11	X	X	X	11%	13%	22%
Whitby	8 + 8 infants	X			12%	15%	24%

<sup>1</sup>Data retrieved from 2016 Census

## Francophone families

Engaging Francophone families was also a part of the information gathering process.

Throughout the consultation process, efforts were made to bring together Francophone parents in focus group sessions. Connections were made with local Francophone service providers to arrange for focus groups with parents. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient interest from the parents. A number of Francophone parents, however, participated in the service user focus groups. As the Transformation process continues, efforts to engage directly with Francophone families will continue.

## Indigenous families

A parallel consultation process, the “Journey Together,” was led by Indigenous researchers in partnership with Durham’s Aboriginal community. The aim of this project was to develop a proposal for the design and implementation of Indigenous early learning and child care programs across the region. Four key recommendations were identified:

1. Construct a centrally located land-based Indigenous Child Care and Early Years Centre of Excellence.
2. Enhance four existing child care centres and/or OEYCs to be a designated as Indigenous Culture-based Centres.
3. Implement a system to support Indigenous early years program coordination.
4. Train new and existing early years staff in cultural competencies.

The CSD will continue to consult with the Bawaajigewin Aboriginal Community Circle regarding the recommendations from this report.

# Well-being: The needs of our community

“A robust early years system benefits not only children and their immediate families but the community as a whole” (Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Framework, page 11).

“Well-being addresses the importance of physical and mental health and wellness . It incorporates capacities such as self-care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills.”  
(How Does Learning Happen?, Page 7)

Participation in the local needs assessment and collation of regional data identified the needs of the Durham Region community. Durham Region has a higher population growth rate compared to that of the province (8.6 per cent versus 5.7 per cent). As of 2016, there were 51,746 children ages birth to six years in the region. The infographic below provides a snapshot of the profile of Durham Region’s child population.

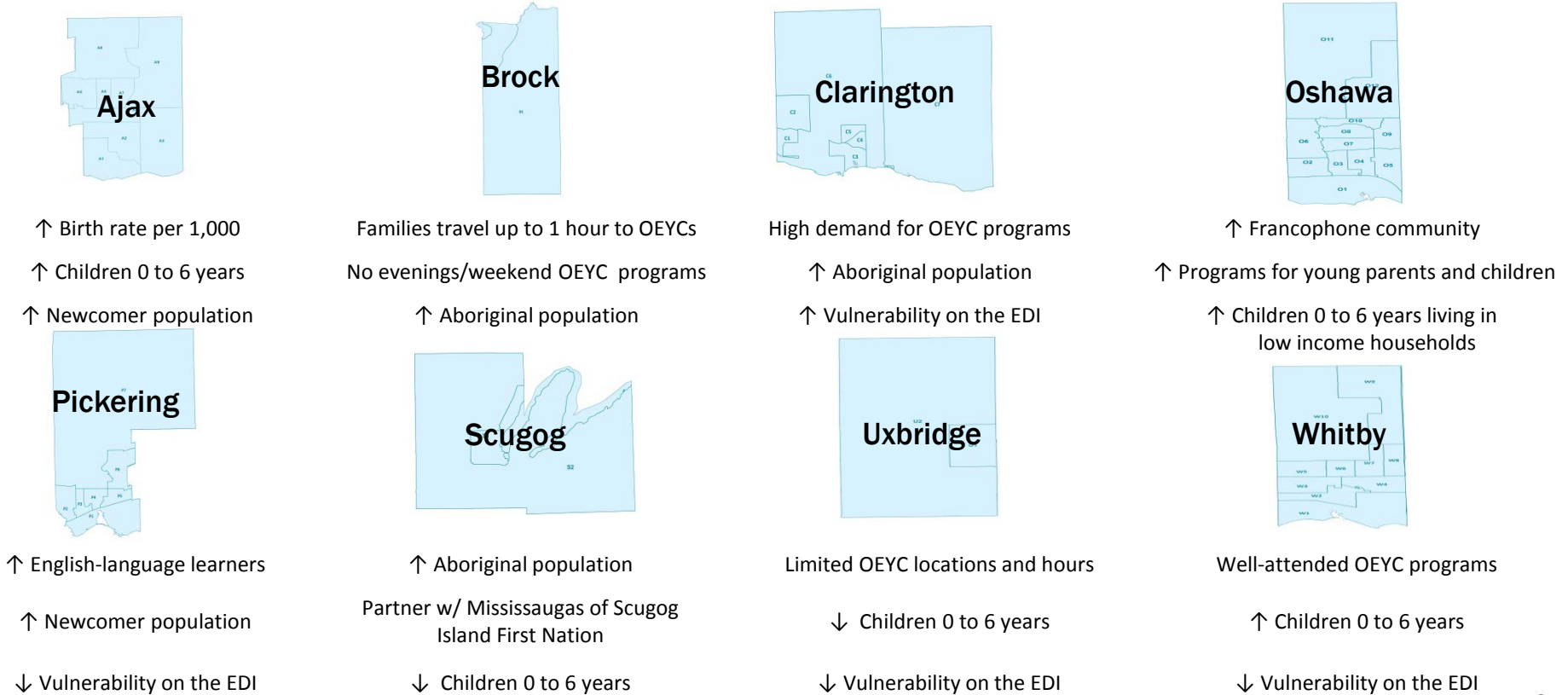


Figure 5: Key characteristics of Durham Region municipalities

# Engagement: The OEYC community

1,700 parents/caregivers participated in the survey and 80 parents/caregivers participated in a focus group.

A goal to reach  
**1,040**  
surveys.



We received  
**1,700**  
completed surveys.

The consultation process made it clear how important OEYC programs and services are to children and families throughout the diversity of Durham Region; north, south, east and west, rural, urban and suburban. It also became immediately apparent that parents were extremely pleased to have the opportunity to provide input into the transformation process. Without exception, families were clear: Their OEYC matters to them and to their children!

These findings were replicated in the consultation process conducted by the Ministry of Education: **“Everywhere we visited people came out to say they wanted more: more opportunities to access high-quality early years programs in their communities, more responsive hours of care..., more child and family programs to help families learn, grow and connect together”** (Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, page 16).

Key themes were identified from conversations with parents (Table 4). To illustrate these themes, the following pages showcase direct quotes from participants in the focus groups held throughout the region.

“Engagement suggests a state of being involved and focused. When children are able to explore the world around them with their natural curiosity and exuberance, they are fully engaged. Through this type of play and inquiry, they develop skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, and innovating, which are essential for learning and success in school and beyond.”

(How Does Learning Happen?, Page 7)

Table 4: Key themes from parents/caregivers


Question	Key themes
Why do you come to OEYCs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It’s a neutral place to meet.</li> <li>It’s a place to meet new people.</li> <li>The programs are free.</li> <li>There’s an opportunity to learn.</li> </ul>
What do you like about the OEYCs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It’s a part of our day.</li> <li>The staff are amazing.</li> <li>Socializing and gaining support.</li> </ul>
What could make the OEYC better?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having more programs, at different times, including summer programming.</li> <li>Improved marketing /communication.</li> </ul>





“As a home care provider the cost of a lot of educational toys are very expensive. The access to early years centres provides my daycare children the opportunity to play with new and different learning tools. They broaden their social experiences by meeting new people and following direction from the facilitators in the program. The world to them becomes so much larger. For myself it provides me support and a sense of community.”



A photograph of two women walking in a park. The woman on the left is wearing a tan trench coat and a blue and white patterned scarf. The woman on the right is wearing a white floral patterned cardigan and a teal scarf. They are both smiling and looking at each other. In the foreground, a baby is sitting in a grey stroller, wearing a yellow hat and a white blanket. The background shows a grassy field and trees with white blossoms.

**“I wanted my kids to socialize. It turns out it was the best thing I did for all of us. I met other mothers (some with more experience in parenthood) that were a great support and source of information.”**





“The program was within walking distance from my home, which says a great deal when living in a rural community. I was new to the area and realized I really needed to meet other parents. Originally I went for me, later I realized it was also good for my children.”

# Expression: The data tell the story

## Current programs and services

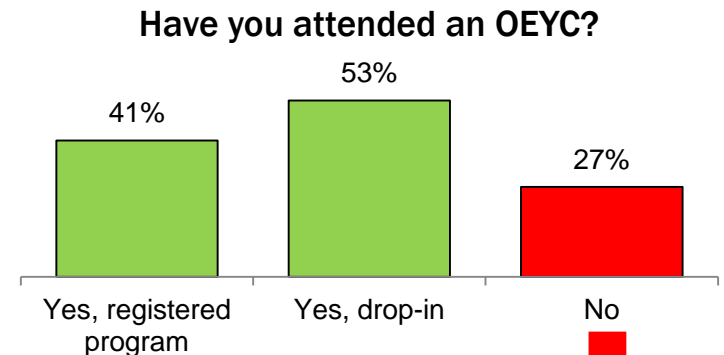
The current OEYC programs are delivering most of the mandatory core services; examples provided in Table 5. For a more comprehensive overview of core services offered, see Table 6 (page 19).

Table 5: Examples of programs meeting 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.	<b>Focus on Infants:</b> This interactive infant program enhances and promotes healthy child development by providing age-specific activities focusing on social, intellectual, physical, and emotional skills.
Pre- and post-natal support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being and to support them in their role(s).	<b>Mindful Mamas:</b> This program will offer knowledge of resources and services available within the community, as well as networking opportunities with other moms and professionals.
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.	<b>Grandparents club:</b> A place for grandparents to come together, share new ideas, and participate in a variety of creative, and developmentally appropriate activities.

“Expression of communication (to be heard, as well as to listen) may take many forms. Through their bodies, words, and use of materials, children develop capacities for increasingly complex communication. Opportunities to explore materials support creativity, problem solving, and mathematical behaviours. Language-rich environments support growing communication skills, which are foundational for literacy.”

(How Does Learning Happen?, Page 7)



**54 per cent of participants** who have not attended an OEYC did not attend because **they did not know about OEYCs.**

Figure 6: Number of survey respondents not attending OEYCs

## 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

**Play to Learn:** Parents and children participate in unstructured early learning activities and enjoy the use of the play materials and resources kept on site. This program is designed to encourage quality adult and child interactions in an age-appropriate, child-focused environment that enhances and promotes healthy child development. This program is open to children from birth to six years of age and requires no registration. Hours will vary from day to day.

Drop-in OEYC programs are offered in more than **20 locations** across Durham Region.

## Making connections for families

Responding to a parent/caregiver concern about their child’s development through conversation and observation supported by validated tools and resources (e.g., developmental surveillance). In some cases, this may result in supporting parents/caregivers to seek additional support from primary care or other regulated health professionals.

**Connections with special needs resourcing:** OEYC staff offer information (pamphlets, posted information, websites, phone numbers) to parents/caregivers who have concerns about their child’s growth and development. This includes connections to Grandview Kids, Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth Durham, Durham Behaviour Management, and the Durham Health Department.

Information sharing about and facilitating connections with specialized community services (such as children’s rehabilitation services), co-ordinated service planning, public health, education, child care, and child welfare, as appropriate.

**Ready, Set, Grow Clinics:** A free drop-in time for parents to bring their children ages birth to six years. This is an opportunity for parents to ask questions about their child’s learning, development and behaviour. Professionals from various agencies in Durham Region are present.

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

**Speciality programs and services:** In response to requests and/or identified needs of the community, OEYCs have offered specialty programs to parents/caregivers and their family. Examples include Family Literacy Day, Speech Day with a speech language pathologist, and promoting family physical activity through the YMCA Kids Challenge.



## Delivery of core services

Table 6: The presence or absence of core services by municipality

	Engage parents and caregivers				Support learning and development		Make connections for families			Delivery of Core Services			
	Discuss and provide information on child development	Pre-natal support programs	Post-natal support programs*	Target outreach activities	Drop-in programs	Programs supported by How Does Learning Happen?	Respond to concerns about child's developmental needs	Facilitate connection to specialized community services	Provide information on programs and services for the whole family	Five days a week	Weekday (full-day)	Saturday or Sunday	Summer
<b>Ajax</b>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Brock</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
<b>Clarington</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Oshawa</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Pickering</b>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Scugog</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X
<b>Uxbridge</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X				
<b>Whitby</b>	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

\*Child minding services for parents attending post-natal programs on site will be offered.

## What's working? Where are the gaps?

Data sources (local needs assessment, survey, focus groups, Network consultation) were triangulated and the areas of strength, and those requiring improvement, were identified (Table 7).

**Table 7: Strengths and gaps in OEYC's service provision**

What's working?	What's not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing low, or zero cost, leasing for OEYC sites.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong connections between OEYC providers and community agencies.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Application of play- and inquiry-based learning.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programs are led by Registered Early Childhood Educators.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programs are free.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There is a great variety of programming for children birth to six years.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning of programs is responsive to the needs of the community, including immigrant and Indigenous families.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There is little duplication of effort; more of a complimentary system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited number of locations during daily operating hours in the northern municipalities (Brock, Scugog, Uxbridge).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lack of virtual services and resources – the website is difficult to navigate.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More French-language programming is requested in target neighbourhoods (Oshawa).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There is a need for mobile services to reach isolated families throughout the region.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Due to the limited number of birthing units in Durham (Ajax/Pickering, Oshawa, Scugog only), there are limited prenatal classes offered by OEYC's and community partners.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culturally responsive programs are not offered consistently, although there is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between Indigenous partners and OEYC's.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More programs that include multiple age brackets (not segmented by age group).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More programs offered in evenings and weekends. Summer programming not available due to budget constraints.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Validated measurement tool to assess success of OEYC's.</li> </ul>

# Reflective practice: From what we know, what comes next?

## Key action items initiated by the Children's Services Division:

1. Determine service provider leads
2. Determine how to meet the demand for high-quality programming throughout all of Durham Region
3. Expand services to align with Ministry requirements across all municipalities
4. Build capacity
5. Branding and promotion of OEYCFC services

### Determine service provider leads

The consultation process thoroughly reinforced the intent of the CSD to maintain existing service agreements for the duration of 2018 while reviewing and evaluating what, if any, changes would further strengthen the capacity of the OEYCFC system to continue to meet the diverse needs of young children and families throughout Durham Region.

The decision to maintain the status quo for the duration of 2018 reflects the very positive feedback received by parents who are currently attending the wide range of programs and services being delivered by the existing lead agencies (YMCA, YWCA), and by a service agreement with Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources.

Throughout 2018, the CSD will work closely with OEYC leads, families, the Transformation Planning Network, and the Durham Best Start Network to explore expansion options. The process must result in a system of Early Years Child and Family Centres where families will have access to ***"a single suite of services to better serve children and families"*** (Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, page 22). This is a key component of this work, and will involve the use of recently released 2016 Census data to explore population growth increases and decreases. Plans for site expansion and relocation will build on this information.

## Determine how to meet the demand for high quality programming throughout all of Durham Region:

The most significant gap identified through the consultation process relates to a demand for more programming, an increased number of locations, additional hours of programming and programs delivered throughout the year, particularly in the summer months.

The Focus Group process, together with the results of the Service User Survey made very clear that there is a close to infinite demand for additional programs and services. The existing service leads are fully cognizant of the demand and are continually exploring strategies to expand the services that they offer within the constraints of budgets that have not increased since 2003. It is remarkable the level of programming that has been sustained given that costs have risen significantly in this time period. This is particularly true of staffing and occupancy costs which are the two key cost drivers of OEYCFC service provision.

It is important to note that the broader early learning and care sector in Durham Region is challenged by a shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators and the shortage may have an impact on the continued ability of OEYCFC Leads to maintain the necessary complement of RECE staff. Financial constraints only increase this challenge.

The Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework identifies the need to establish an **“early years workforce strategy”** (page 25) **“Early childhood educators and other early years professionals are integral to our vision of a high quality early years and child care system”** (page 26). The workforce strategy will address such challenges as **“compensation, hiring, retention and professional development...”** (page 27).

As the Region decided, in consultation with the community, to maintain the existing lead agency service contracts for 2018, there are no immediate budgetary implications. Parents, service providers, and the CSD, as Service System Manager, are pleased that the recently announced funding increases for the OEYFCs will enable them to better meet the increasing needs of children and families in Durham.

The census data from 2016 demonstrates the increase in population in Durham Region (Table 8). When combined with no budget increases, the expanding population has made it difficult for the service leads and satellite programs to effectively provide the diversity of programming required.

**Table 8: Child population growth 2011 to 2016**

	2011	2016	Growth rate
<b>Ajax</b>	19,462	20,039	2.88%
<b>Brock</b>	1,567	1,614	2.91%
<b>Clarington</b>	13,677	14,065	2.76%
<b>Oshawa</b>	21,573	22,224	2.93%
<b>Pickering</b>	12,661	13,016	2.73%
<b>Scugog</b>	2,821	2,897	2.62%
<b>Uxbridge</b>	2,930	3,010	2.66%
<b>Whitby</b>	21,915	22,562	2.87%

## Expand services to align with Ministry requirements across all municipalities

All municipalities must develop and/or partner with community agencies to deliver pre-natal support programs and extend target outreach activities. To meet the delivery of all core services, the follow key priority areas have been identified for each municipality.

**Table 9: Priorities for each municipality, in order to meet core services**

Municipality	Priority areas
Ajax	Expand services on a Saturday/Sunday each week
Brock	Expand services, full-day, Monday through Friday and a Saturday/Sunday each week, year-round
Clarington	Expand services on a Saturday/Sunday each week
Oshawa	Expand services on a Saturday/Sunday each week
Pickering	Expand services on a Saturday/Sunday each week
Scugog	Expand services, full-day, Monday through Friday and a Saturday/Sunday each week
Uxbridge	Expand services, full-day, Monday through Friday and a Saturday/Sunday each week, year-round
Whitby	Expand services on a Saturday/Sunday each week



## Build capacity:

Every OEYC in the current system has a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) on their staff teams. In alignment with the increased funding and Ministry issued guidelines, CSD will continue to promote the Early Childhood Education Qualification Upgrade Program to existing OEYC staff, so they are eligible to register with the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The CSD will also continue to offer continuous professional learning opportunities, so that core services are maintained. This may include the introduction of workshops covering healthy child development, pre- and post-natal care, diversity and inclusion, and cultural competency training. Service providers in Durham Region have a history of working collaboratively to provide training and continuous professional learning opportunities. The CSD plays a key role in this process. To date, there has been an emphasis on providing training about How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, specifically related to how the Foundations, Goals for Children and Expectations for Programs are applicable to all programs and services for young children, including OEYCFCs.

For the remainder of 2017, and throughout 2018, there will be continued opportunities for training and professional development.

In its role as the CMSM, the CSD will continue to collaborate with the broader early learning and care community, as well as with families, to integrate child care sector planning and the transformation of the OEYC programs into the OEYCFC system.

**Table 10: Examples of continuous professional learning opportunities provided by the Children's Services Division**

Example of opportunities	Description
Network Sessions (Promoting knowledge sharing)	An opportunity for professionals to meet and discuss relevant topics in early learning and child care.
Zero to sixty series: Why is this kid so angry? (Responding to community needs for special needs resourcing/support/training)	Three-part series to teach the importance of identifying the triggers to angry/aggressive behaviours, proactive strategies to de-escalate situations and leave with individual behaviour continuum guide.
Out and About (Highlighting specialty topics that keep professionals engaged and creative)	Outdoor play is important in child development from infants to school age. You will be provided with multitude of authentic play experiences that promote health, creativity, and imagination within the natural environment.
Rollout of new Before and After Durham Region's Operating Criteria (DROC) (Increasing awareness and compliance to quality)	Sharing the refined Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI) with child care professionals.

## Branding and promotion of OEYCFC services:

Strengthening and expanding the programs and services provided by and through Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres is step one. Increasing the communities knowledge about what is available and where it is located is equally important. **“A big part of access is awareness. We know that providing parents and families with information about Ontario’s early years system is an important first step in helping them to make well-informed decisions that best meet the needs of their families”** (Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, 2017, page 36).

There are a range of different mechanisms in place to support ongoing communication with the early learning and care sector as well as the broader community. The agencies and organizations providing programs and services for young children are connected through the Best Start Network. One key feature of each Best Start Network agenda is the opportunity for all sectors represented to update their colleagues about their services.

The Region of Durham website will provide information about OEYCFC transformation activities. Material will be shared with all member organizations so they can then post onto their sites. The information will also be shared with new partners, identified through the transformation process, including hospitals/birthing units and health departments. Following the release by MEDU of their marketing and rebranding strategy for OEYCFCs, a social media promotional blitz will further publicize the range of programs and services provided at and through OEYCFCs . This strategy will be aligned with provincial branding and visual identify led by the MEDU.

As the Transformation Plan is more fully developed throughout 2018, the OEYCFC Transformation Planning Network has agreed to meet as needed to review directions and strategies, provide feedback and input to the process, and identify customized community connections. Figure 8 below provides a snapshot of the many other networks within the Durham Region early years and child care community that meet on a regular basis. There is an opportunity to share the OEYCFC updates with these groups, as well.

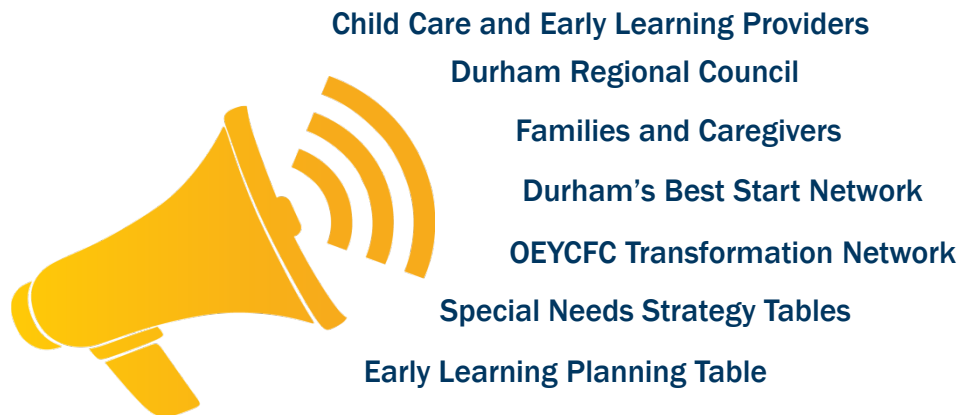


Figure 7: Existing networks within Durham Region who will receive OEYCFC information

# Financial overview

OEYCs have always been provided with 100 per cent provincial funding to operate the required services. However, there have not been any increases in funding levels since the OEYC programs first began operating in 2003. Despite this, the current OEYC lead agencies have been very creative and effective in maximizing the limited funding available to serve as many children and families as possible. Given the ever increasing numbers of young children in Durham Region, this has been a particular change.

For 2017, Durham's total allocation of funding to support OEYCs is \$2,956,115.

## Funding to plan the transformation

The Region of Durham received one-time funding in the amount of \$131,579 in 2017 to support the costs related to transformation planning.

On June 16, CMSMs were advised of the 2018 OEYCFC funding allocation.

The province is investing additional federal funding to support the OEYCFCs operations. There is a new funding approach, which includes: a base allocation for CMSMs; funding that is distributed based on data elements; and there is also a commitment for a minimum increase of approximately 10 per cent to lead agencies.

**Durham Region's total allocation for 2018 is \$4,316,625.** This funding is to support the Best Start Network, the Data Analysis Coordinator position, planning, Indigenous planning expenses, as well as OEYCFC operations.

This is excellent news for young children and their families throughout Durham Region. The additional funding will support the establishment of the core services for OEYCFCs, and address local service system pressures identified within this transition plan.

The 2018 Service agreements with the OEYCFC agencies will provide for additional targeted funding and service priority improvements to meet the core services requirements for each municipality.

**Durham Region's  
allocation for 2018 is  
\$4,316,625.**



# Conclusion

Following an engagement strategy that was collaborative, transparent and shared broadly, the importance of the Ontario Early Years Centres programs and services to the well-being of children and their families in Durham Region has been clearly established.

The Children's Services Division worked closely with service users, service providers and the broader early years community to begin the transformation process. Throughout the remainder of 2017 and the early part of 2018, additional consultation and discussion will allow for further decision making about how best to use all available resources, including the additional OEYCFC funding to be allocated as a result of the Federal Provincial Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework signed on June 16, 2017.

In the interim, the broader community has endorsed the first stages of the transformation process as outlined in the proceeding document. The Transformation Planning Network has committed to continue to work collaboratively to move the process forward during the next six to ten months.

## Next steps

Review existing service provision against the requirements outlined in the 2018 Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Business Practices and Funding Guidelines. This will include , but not be limited to:

- Ensuring that any expansion of OEYCFC sites reflects the “Schools First” strategy, as appropriate.
- Ensuring that children and families throughout Durham Region have access to OEYCFC programs and services in each municipality a minimum of five days per week, including a Saturday or Sunday, 52 weeks per year.
- Continuing to strengthen the existing collaborative approach to program planning and delivery to help facilitate co-ordination with other service providing organizations and agencies , in order to enhance the range of programs and services available while reducing any potential duplication in service delivery.
- Collaborative effectively to use Professional Learning and Capacity Building funding in a manner that maximizes community access to training and professional development , as related to strengthening understanding of *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*.
- Continue to develop strategies to increase the number of qualified Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in Durham Region as a means of supporting OEYCFC lead agencies, to be able to attract and retain a minimum of one (1) RECE at each site to support the delivery of core services.

## Next steps continued...

- Engage with the lead agencies to develop effective policies and procedures, including, but not limited to:
  - Vulnerable sector screening
  - First aid
  - Emergency plans
  - Sanitation and maintenance
  - Complaint and complaint resolution processes
  - Workplace health and safety (for staff and volunteers)
  - Serious occurrence reporting to the CMSM, and processes for determining appropriate response requirements
- Using 2016 Census data to identify gaps in service location relative to changes in population.
- Determining how to effectively allocate additional OEYCFC funding to meet increasing demand, and to begin the process of filling identified gaps in service provision within the guidelines set out in the 2018 Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Business Practices and Funding Guidelines (July 14, 2017).
- Determining the process for identifying the OEYCFC lead(s), if it is decided that the current model should be changed.
- Work together with the Indigenous community to support the implementation of the goals and objectives identified through the “Journey Together” planning process.
- Consulting further with the Francophone community to ensure that Francophone children and their families have access to quality OEYCFC programs and services.
- Exploring how best to facilitate access to special needs services for families in early years programs who need them.
- Continuing a collaborative process to further integrate child care sector planning and early years sector planning to create a seamless system of programs and services for children and their families.



# Transformation timeline

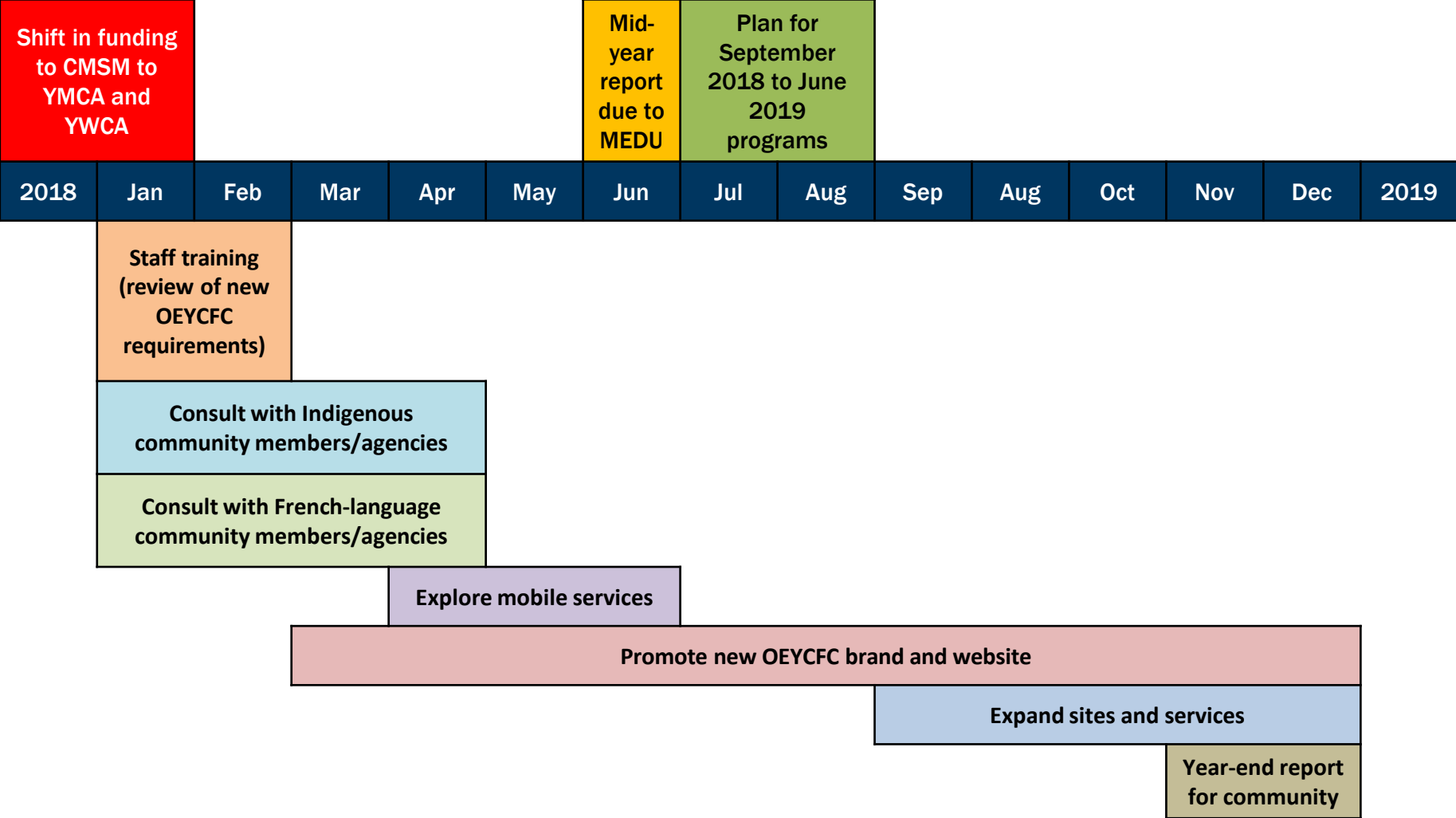


Figure 8: Predicted timeline for the OEYCFC Transformation