

# The Best for Our Children, Youth and Families

The First Three Years  
of London's Child and Youth Agenda to 2015  
Executive Summary



## The Child and Youth Network

September 2008

### Executive Summary

London's vision for our children and youth is "Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow." As a community, we want our children and youth to be safe, to have supportive relationships and to reach their potential in school and in life. Yet, in 2008, almost one out of every four children and youth in London is being left behind – because of poverty, problems in school, health problems and social stresses.

We can and must do more for all our children, youth and families. London's Child and Youth Network – a network of agencies and organizations that provide services for children, youth and families – is committed to a Child and Youth Agenda to 2015: an ambitious, long-term plan designed to help London achieve its vision for children and youth.

*The Best for Our Children, Youth and Families* sets out the priorities, goals and strategies for the first three years of the Child and Youth Agenda. Over the next 36 months, the Child and Youth Network – in partnership with families, other organizations, governments and the private sector – will tackle the critical economic, education and health issues that are casting shadows on our children's future. The Network will also change the way services are organized and delivered to make it easier for children, youth and families to access the mix of services, address mental health needs and enjoy a safer community.

### Priorities

1. End Poverty
2. Make Literacy a Way of Life
3. Lead the Nation in Increasing Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity
4. Create a Family-Centred Service System

### Goals

- To reduce the proportion of London families who are living in poverty by 25% in five years and by 50% in 10 years.
- To be a provincial leader in child, youth and family literacy by 2015.

- To create environments, neighbourhoods and opportunities that promote and support daily physical activity and healthy eating for all our children, youth and families.
- To make it easier for London's children, youth and families to participate fully in their neighbourhoods and communities, and to find and receive the services they need.

## Strategies

London's overall approach to creating a more family-centred community is to:

- build on existing programs and partnerships
- use strategies that have been proven effective
- take a life cycle approach, supporting children, youth and families in all age groups and at key stages in their lives
- address the mental health and safety issues facing children, youth and families

The Child and Youth Agenda is community-driven: the needs were identified by the community and the solutions will come from the community – families, agencies, governments and the private sector – working together.

Because each neighbourhood in London is unique and has different needs, the Child and Youth Network will use a neighbourhood approach: developing and testing its strategies to reduce poverty, improve literacy and promote healthy eating and healthy physical activity in demonstration neighbourhoods, evaluating them to see what works – and what doesn't – and then adapting the strategies and using them in other neighbourhoods across the city.

Raising awareness and engaging the community are key strategies in all four priorities – poverty, literacy, healthy eating/healthy physical activity and a family-centred system. The more people understand about how poverty, lack of literacy and physical inactivity affect children's health and well-being, the more likely they are to help solve these problems. The more they know about the services available in our community, the more likely they are to use them.

### 1. End Poverty

**To reduce poverty**, the Child and Youth Network will take a comprehensive, long-term approach that addresses all the factors – individual, cultural/geographic, structural and cyclical – that trap families in poverty. London will become part of the province-wide 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction (reduce poverty 25% in five years, 50% in 10 years) that is working to eliminate poverty. London will use a three-part strategy to reduce poverty:

- **Increase awareness and engage the community.** We will involve the whole community – low income families, service providers, government, the voluntary sector and the private sector – in learning about the impact poverty has on the children, youth and families in our community, and in finding creative ways to end poverty.
- **Reduce the impact of poverty and make day-to-day life better.** A Basic Needs Coalition will be formed to develop and enhance programs for families with low incomes, including food and clothing programs, dental care and other health services, transportation programs, addiction services and programs to address domestic violence. Neighbourhood hubs will provide and be access points for a wide range of consistent services, such as child and family supports, that will make day-to-day life better for families.
- **Break the cycle and stop the next generation from living in poverty.** The community will develop long-term solutions that will help families move permanently out of poverty, such as: policies that will provide income security and a living wage; child care and other

neighbourhood programs that help working families; employment and training programs; financial literacy programs that will help families manage their money; safe affordable housing in mixed-income neighbourhoods; and targeted programs to meet the needs of groups at high risk of poverty, such as women, recent immigrants, and Aboriginal people.

## 2. Make Literacy a Way of Life

London's strategy to improve literacy is based on collaboration among home, school, and community. The four-part strategy will:

- **Promote literacy to the whole community.** The Network will actively promote literacy as a way of life and the benefits of literacy for children, youth and families.
- **Take a neighbourhood approach to literacy.** One neighbourhood in London will help develop and implement its own literacy strategy, which will be evaluated and expanded to other neighbourhoods.
- **Promote literacy from birth.** Physicians, nurses, parents and others will receive information, DVDs, books and training materials that will encourage new parents to talk and read to their infants.
- **Improve family literacy.** The Network will develop programs and resources – such as a family literacy web site, training programs, a family literacy conference and a Family Literacy Resource Centre – that will improve parents' literacy and help them be role models for their children.

## 3. Lead the Nation in Increasing Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity

**To promote healthy eating and healthy physical activity,** London will address all the factors that lead to physical inactivity and obesity. The goal is to create physical and social environments that promote safe, healthy, active living and that make the healthy choice the easy choice. The four-part strategy will:

- **Raise awareness and engage the community.** The Child and Youth Network will work with all the community partners already promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity to develop a common city-wide “brand” and social marketing program. Shopping tools, toolkits for professionals and tools for workplaces will help get more people actively involved in promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity.
- **Create healthy, active neighbourhoods.** One neighbourhood will become a demonstration site, and work with the Network to develop and implement a healthy eating/healthy physical activity strategy that targets children, youth and families – and includes changes to the built and social environment. The strategy will be evaluated and then adapted to other neighbourhoods in the city.
- **Give more children, youth and families access to healthy eating/healthy physical activity programs.** The organizations already involved in promoting healthy eating and healthy physical activity will come together, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, to find ways to make their programs more accessible to more families (e.g., changing their schedules or locations). They will also adjust programs and provide transportation to make it easier for children and youth with special needs to participate.
- **Measure and track body mass, physical activity and eating habits.** Right now, London doesn't have good enough information about our children's health and their lifestyles. The Network will work with researchers and health practitioners to establish a system to measure and track the body mass, physical activity and eating habits of London's children and youth. That information will be used to identify children at highest risk of overweight

and obesity, to assess the impact of our programs, and to develop initiatives that will help children and youth make healthier choices.

#### 4. Create a Family-Centred Service System

**To create a family-centre service system**, the Child and Youth Network will work closely together and with families to integrate services and make them available in key, easy-to-use sites in our community. The five-part strategy will:

- **Raise awareness of services.** The Network will do more to make families aware of available services – such as developing a web portal, a services referral map, service kiosks and a 211 phone line.
- **Engage community.** Families and communities will be involved in identifying barriers to using services (e.g., location, hours of services, cost, attitudes) and helping organizations provide more family-friendly programs.
- **Build capacity in the service system to address any unmet needs.** The Network will identify the services available in each neighbourhood, and work together to build their capacity to fill any gaps.
- **Move organizations along the integration continuum.** When planning new programs or services, all organizations will use a new tool – the Integration Assessment Tool – to identify opportunities to collaborate and coordinate their services and make the most effective use of people, skills and resources.
- **Implement community and neighbourhood hubs.** London will establish a series of neighbourhood hubs that will offer a wide range of services for children, youth and families, and make services more accessible.

#### Putting the Plan into Action

The Child and Youth Network will oversee the entire agenda. As part of their commitment to the Child and Youth Agenda to 2015, each member of the Child and Youth Network has written a letter endorsing our plan for the first three years. They have all agreed to participate in the plan, and to do their part to put our vision into action. The Implementation Steering committees and the Child and Youth Network will be supported by a Child and Youth Agenda Implementation Support team.

The three-year plan and the broader Child and Youth Agenda will evolve over time. Each year, the Child and Youth Network will review the progress, evaluate the impact of each initiative, refine or adjust the plan, and issue an annual progress report to keep the community informed.

Many of the plan's initiatives will benefit all children, youth and families; others are targeted to those most at risk and most in need. All will make a real, measurable difference in the lives of London's children, youth and families. By working together to put our plan into action – neighbourhood by neighbourhood – we will make London a great place to live and raise a family.

**Happy, healthy children and youth today;  
caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow**



*Contact:*

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## Child and Youth Network Members

We would like to thank all the organizations and individuals who are members of Child and Youth Network and others who helped develop the Child and Youth Agenda, and the plan for its first three years.

Addiction Services Thames Valley	Linda Sibley	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority Working Group Legend</b></p> <p>A/P     Anti-Poverty            Lit     Literacy            HE/HPA     Healthy Eating/                              Healthy Physical                              Activity</p>
All Kids Belong Special Needs / Merrymount	JoAnn Dunn	
Anago Resources - London Administration Office	Mandy Bennett / Kelly Wright	
Arbour Glen Day Nursery, The Edu-Care Board Incorporated	Jamie Grenier	
Association of Early Childhood Educators London/Sarnia Branch	Janet Foster	
At^lohsa Native Family Healing Service	Darlene Ritchie / Chanda Kennedy	
Autism Ontario, London Chapter	Jane Brenneman	
Bethesda Centre / Salvation Army	Cherilyn Meunier	
Big Brothers of London	Glen Mitchell	
Big Sisters of London	Catherine Urquhart (A/P)	
Boys & Girls Club of London	Don Donner (HE/HPA)	
Canadian Mental Health Association	Mike Godin	
Centre Communautaire Regional De London	Dieufert Bellot	
Centre of Hope	Nancy Powers	
Chelsea Green Children's Centre Inc	Gerri Doerr (A/P)	
Child Care Advisory Committee	Andrea Brown / Shari Carter / Colette Chapman / Margaret Hoff / Carol Wagg	
Child Minding Monitoring Advisory Support (CMAS) LINC	Lily Johnson (Lit)	
Childreach	Susan Ryans / Huda Hussein	
Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex	Jane Fitzgerald / Regina Whelan / Martha Salguero / Laverne Foran (A/P) / Wendy Pol	
Children's Health Foundation	Debbie Comuzzi	
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Program Children's Hospital London Health Sciences Centre	Monique Presse, Karen Davies, Shawna Cunningham, Tracy Robinson	
Children's Hospital of Western Ontario Adolescent Mental Health Service	Margaret Steele	
Children's Museum	Tammy Adkin, Amanda Branton	
City of London	Ross Fair (A/P) / Lynne Livingstone (A/P), (Lit), (HE/HPA) Rosita Johnson (Lit) / Michele Reid (A/P), (HE/HPA) / Jennifer Foster (Lit) / Donna Baxter (HE/HPA) / Paul D'Hollander / Tony Kyle (HE/HPA) / Cheryl Smith (A/P) / Laurie Quinlan / Mo Jeng (A/P) / Cindy Howard (A/P) / Elisabeth White (A/P) / Louise Stevens (A/P) / Sean Galloway (HE/HPA) / Gerda Zonruiter (A/P) / Janice Walter / Jean Bacon	
CNIB - Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Sherry Malcho/ Jennifer Urosevic	
Community Living London	Sandy Jefferson (A/P)/ Jill McIntyre/ Michelle Palmer	
Community Services Coordination Network	Liz Prendergast	

Conseil Scolaire de district des ecoles Catholiques du Sud-Quest	Paul Levac
Conseil Scolaire de district du Centre-sud-Quest	Jean-Luc Bernard / Jennifer Lamarche Schmalz/ Sylvain Giroux
CPRI - Child and Parent Resource Centre	Peggy Sheppard / Mary Poole/ Deb Strachan
Craigwood Youth Services	Jon Deactis / Jody Lake
Craigwood / Community Ventures	Sandra Fieber
Crouch Resource Centre	Mary Starnaman (A/P)
County of Middlesex	Sally Bennett
East London Resource Centre	Sandra Neubauer (HE/HPA) / Catherine Watson
Easter Seals	Susan Smith/ Leah Ledgley
Family Networks	Laura Dunlop Dibbs (A/P) / Doris Rodriguez / Yassika Jarquin / Faduma Amin
Family Service Thames Valley	Warren Brooke / Peter Valiquet
Fanshawe College	Michael Goodmurphy / Jan Blaxall (A/P) / Pam Skinner /Nelson Melgar / Jeff Sadler (HE/HPA)
Food Security Issues	Derrick McBurney
Frontier College	Janine Wass (LIT)
Fanshawe College - First Nations Centre	Vicky Proulx
Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre	Barb Schust-Lawrence / Christine Li
Heart and Stroke Foundation	Christine Lyszczarz (HE/HPA)
Heartspace - Addiction Services of Thames Valley	Pamela Hill
Investing in Children	Anita Gilvesy (HE/HPA) / Wendy Richardson (Lit) / Samantha Kohn (A/P) / Lisa Baxter (LIT)
John Howard Society	Heather Fredin
Johns Hopkins University St. Thomas Family Physician	Omid Pour-ahmadi
Junior Achievement of London and District	Beverly Robinson
La Ribambelle Centre Prescolaire, Francophone De London	Nicole Blanchette / Eliane St-Hilaire / Anne Wilson / Abbey Gallagher (UWO student) (Lit)
Learning Disabilities Association of London-Middlesex	Tracy Fawdry (Lit)
Let's Talk Science	Bonnie Schmidt
LiT - Learning it Together	Linda Vi (HE/HPA)
Literacy Link South Central	Tamara Kaattari
London Abused Womens Centre	Megan Walker
London Arts Council	Andrea Halwa
London Bridge Child Care Services Inc.	Ian Gibb
London Children's Connection Inc.	Marion Dunleavy (HE/HPA) / Holly Gerrits (HE/HPA)
London Community Foundation	Catherine Joyes / Martha Powell
London District Catholic School Board	Wilma DeRond, Susan Ralyea (A/P) / Chris Quinn (Lit) Sue McMahon (HE/HPA)
London District Catholic School Council	Linda Steel (A/P)
London Employment Sector Council	Kim Bewsky (A/P)
London Family Court Clinic	Linda Baker



London Food Bank	Jane Roy / Donna Speller
London Health Science Centre	Tracy Robinson, Lori Hassall, Lisa Hawthornewaite, David Heaton
London Homeless Coalition	Shelley Yeo (A/P)
London In-Home Child Care Providers Network	Joyce Larsh
London InterCommunity Health Centre	Ann Doumkou / Michelle Hurtubise / Vindu Balani / Greg Nash / Sherri-Jo King (HE/HPA)
London Military Family Resource Centre	Sheila Lupson/ Deborah Smith
London Police Service - Family Consultant/ Victim Services Unit	Lisa Heslop / Melikie Joseph
London Police Service - Diversity Officer	Peter Testa
London Public Library	Susanna Hubbard Krimmer / Julie Brandl (Lit) / Brian Rhoden (Lit)
LUSO Community Services	Elisabete Rodrigues (A/P) / Jennifer Smith (Lit)
Madame Vanier Children's Services	Barrie Evans/ Lisa Ondejko / John MacKay / Susan Barnes
Merrymount Children's Centre	Ailene Wittstein (A/P) / Rose Nasswetter
Middlesex London Health Unit	Diane Bewick / Irene Buckland Foster (AP)/ Vera Henderson Mary Lou Albanese (HE/HPA) / Dorothy McCann (HE/HPA) / Meizi He (HE/HPA) / Ghezal Sabir (AP)/ Heather Thomas (HE/HPA) /
Ministry of Children & Youth Services	Helen Jewell / Maggie Kelly / Nathalie Vandelaar (all are ex-officio)
Ministry of Health Promotion, Sports and Recreation Branch	Jo-Ann Hutchison (ex-officio)
Mission Services	Jenny Sager (A/P)
N'Amerind (London) Friendship Centre	Maureen England (Lit) / Ursula Elijah (A/P) / Robin Miller (HE/HPA)
Neighbourhood Legal Services London & Middlesex	Michael Laliberte (A/P)
Neighbourhood Watch London	Donna Szpakowski (A/P)
Nokee Kwe Occupational Centre Incorporated	Adam Deleary (A/P)
Northwest London Resource Centre	Candas Whitlock
ODSP - Ontario Disability Support Program	Barb Brown (A/P)
OEYC DAC	Samantha Kohn (A/P)
OEYC, Literacy Specialist	Patti Prentice (Lit)
OEYC London Fanshawe / Merrymount	Deborah Gillis
OEYC London North Centre / Childreach	Susan Ryans / Anne McKay (A/P) / Nici Cole
OEYC London West / London Children's Connection	Eileen Smith
PEPP - Prevention & Early Intervention Program for Psychoses	Maureen Rego
Pillar Nonprofit Network	Michelle Baldwin
Rotholme Women's and Family Shelter	Leaurie Noordermeer (A/P)
Salvation Army Day Nursery	Shari Carter
Service Canada	Scott Bourdeaux
Simply Kids Incorporated	Garry Foster
Sisters of St. Josephs (Office of Social Justice)	Helene Diesbourg
Smart Start for Babies - MLHU	Elaine Pellarin

Southdale Chaplaincy	Laurie Bannerman Spence / Kate Ballagh-Steeper
South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Nancy Needham (Lit)
Southwest Local Health Integration Network	Tony Woolgar / Debbie Lee / Kelly Gillis
St. Josephs Health Care Centre	Elisabeth Harvey
St. Leonard's Community Services	Mark Gowing (HE/HPA) / Alice Lewis/ Peter Aharan
Street Connection	Dick Rastin/ Tifanie Serratore/ Doreen Hodgkinson
Thames Valley Midwives	Kathi Wilson
Thames Valley Children's Centre	John Laporta/ MaryAnn Tucker / Karen.Faragher (HE/HPA)
Thames Valley District School Board	Bill Tucker, Rosine Salazer (Lit) / Clare Jeng / Jackie Fitzsimmons (Lit)
Trillium Foundation	Sheila Simpson
Tyke Talk	Debbie Shugar (Lit)
United Way	Ruth Young (A/P) / Kelly McManus (A/P), (Lit) / Bob Adams (AP) / Stewart Leatherdale
University Laboratory School	Mary Lou Vernon (Lit)
University of Western Ontario - Dept of Geography	Jason Gilliland (HE/HPA), Tamara Stock (HE/HPA), Janet Loebach (HE/HPA)/ Melanie Stuckey (HE/HPA)/ Jennifer Irwin (HE/HPA)
University of Western Ontario - First Nations Centre	Vivian Peters
University of Western Ontario - Health Sciences	Patricia Tucker (HE/HPA)
University of Western Ontario - School of Communication Sciences and Disorders	Genese Warr-Leeper
WAYS - Western Area Youth Services	Brenda Hall / Dallas Jaremchuk
Wellington Preschool Centre Inc.	Mary Pabstel
Westminster Youth Council South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Michelle Barkley
Whitehills Childcare Association	Diane Gordon (A/P)
Women's Community House	Kate Wiggins / Shelley Yeo (A/P)
Women's Rural Resource Centre, Strathroy & Area	Kathryn Eggert
YMCA of London	Shaun Elliot/ Andrea Brown (Lit) / Geoff Vogt (HE/HPA) / Rebecca Webster , Anne Rae, Andrew Lockie (LIT)
YOU (Youth Opportunities Unlimited)	Steve Cordes / Kim Bowsky (AP)
Youth Action Centre	Trevor Johnson (HE/HPA)
Youth For Christ	Bob Black, Gil Clelland

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