



Reengineering Services for Children and Families in London

In September 2012, Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres will open in four City of London neighbourhoods.



For three years the London community has been on a journey towards this goal. With leadership provided by the City of London and other key stakeholders, the community has evolved from the initial Best Start planning group into a comprehensive, cohesive multi-sector Child and Youth Network.

The Child and Youth Network is currently completing a comprehensive reengineering implementation plan that will create a detailed framework under which services for children and families will be delivered at a neighbourhood level across the City for years to come – a service delivery system that makes sense for children and families.

This is the story of how these Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres came to be.



REENGINEERING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LONDON

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THE BEGINNING...

January 2007 - In the period leading up to January 2007 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers in Ontario were required by the Province of Ontario to establish “Best Start Networks”. This resulted in a wide assortment of planning groups being developed across the Province, each working independently to implement their own Best Start vision.

London’s experience was similar to that of other communities. A Best Start Network was established, but community leaders quickly identified that a better result would be achieved if the entire service delivery system was represented, and that this broader network would be more effective at proactively planning for a systematic approach to integration of services and how to improve outcomes for children and families.

Conversations with School Boards, Mental Health professionals, Public Health officials and others had identified significant concerns – concerns that were well documented by EDI scores and other community health measurements. Despite London’s reputation as a caring city and a place where most children and youth have the opportunity to grow up healthy and happy, too many were being left behind:

- 1 of every 5 children born in London lived in poverty;
- 1 of 4 children were overweight;
- More than 1 of 4 children were not ready for Grade 1;
- 1 of every 10 babies born had a low birth weight;
- Aboriginal children and youth were especially at risk;
- Between 2001 and 2006, newcomers to Canada accounted for 78% of the City’s population growth – many of these newcomers did not speak either of the official languages and often struggled to connect to education and children’s services

Even though 20 to 25% of children were known to be at risk, there was no integrated, comprehensive approach to finding a solution.

THE CHILD AND YOUTH NETWORK

April 2007 - Under the leadership of Ross Fair and Lynne Livingstone, the City of London's Neighbourhood and Community Services Division launched a series of community consultations. Over the next six months, the City brought people and organizations together to "*talk about children*". As the conversations continued over the summer, participants began to coalesce into one forum – the Child and Youth Network for Best Start Planning. By September 2007 approximately 125 service delivery organizations had come together, united in an effort to answer the question:

"How do we improve outcomes for children in London?"

Beginning in the fall of 2007 and continuing through to February 2008, the Child and Youth Network researched, discussed and debated strategies to answer this fundamental question. By February 2008, the Child and Youth Network had agreed on four priorities for action:

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

With support and leadership provided by the City of London, the Child and Youth Network established four task groups, each taking on the challenge of developing strategies, work plans, timelines and expected outcomes for one of the four priorities. The task groups worked diligently over the summer of 2008. In September 2008, the Child and Youth Network published the ***Child and Youth Agenda*** – a comprehensive community plan to address each of the initial four priorities. Every member of the Child and Youth Network was asked for, and supplied, a letter of commitment to the Agenda. With this overwhelming community endorsement, the Child and Youth Agenda was formally accepted by London's City Council. Resources to support the Agenda's implementation soon followed.

The Child and Youth Network has made incredible progress on each of the four initial priority areas since 2008. However, since this story is about the Child and Youth Network's plan to restructure the service delivery system in London, the balance of the story will focus on the "**Create a Family-Centred Service System**" strategic priority.

CREATING A FAMILY-CENTRED SYSTEM

Goal: 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.

Child and Youth Agenda – September 2008

The Starting Point - Recognizing that access to service can be a problem

London is fortunate to have a large number of organizations that provide services for children, youth and families, including school boards, child care and early learning programs, recreation, public health, libraries and many others. London also has many other services that are not child, youth and family specific but that provide services to families, such as the police and justice system, shelter and housing programs and food banks.

Yet when we spoke to parents, we learned that despite this wealth of resources, families can still struggle to connect to services – they may not know what is available, or where to find information about them or how to access them. Do they have to be referred? Can they contact the service directly? Even when they do know about programs, parents can still experience barriers accessing them, such as cost, transportation, stigma and fear. Once connected to services, children, youth and families may deal with several different providers or agencies who do not work together to integrate their services - service providers acknowledge that they are not always aware of what services other agencies provide in the community.

Families told us that when the service system is not easy to use, they may not receive the services and supports they need early enough; that small problems can become overwhelming and have larger, more negative effects. When families do not know about the full range of services available, they cannot access the appropriate mix of services to raise happy, healthy children, and they may find it time-consuming and frustrating to navigate the system.

Next – Establish Objectives on how to Improve Access to Services

The Child and Youth Network acknowledged these challenges, and set out to improve the family’s access to and experience with services. The Child and Youth Agenda set out the following objectives as starting points to improve access to services:

- To make individuals, families, service providers, neighbourhoods and policy makers more aware of services in the community;
- To engage the community – children, youth, families, service providers, neighbourhoods and other partners – in creating a more family-centred system
- To build capacity to provide more and more accessible services
- To help organizations move along the continuum of integrating services
- To implement hubs or “gathering places” where children, youth and families can connect with services

In order to build momentum for the large community initiative, the Child and Youth Network undertook a number of small but important initial activities. These included the relatively simple tasks of creating Service Referral Maps, improving web sites and developing a plan for Community Hubs. These initial activities also included more complex undertakings, such as committing to a Community Engagement and Development process, and developing our own Integration Assessment Tool to measure London’s progress towards the goal of integrated services.

These initial steps were very important, even if they could be classified as “low hanging fruit”. While they did not result in any fundamental system change in how services were being delivered, these activities did lay the groundwork for the development of the System Reengineering philosophy.

Then - Transition to Thinking about “System Reengineering”

During 2009 and 2010, a number of events took place that propelled London’s vision for a Family-Centred service delivery system forward. The implementation of Full Day Kindergarten brought more children into the education system at an earlier age, causing child care and early learning programs to re-think their services and their business models. The Child and Youth Network’s work on the other three strategic priorities reinforced the importance of a

neighbourhood approach to service delivery. Dr. Pascal's on-going work in the area of integrated service delivery highlighted the need to reengineer the way that services for children and families are provided in the community.

The message was loud and clear:

“It is time to move beyond efforts to coordinate services offered at different agencies at different sites and to integrate services in a way that makes sense for children and families.”

In October 2010, the Child and Youth Network published a strategic outline for the development of a network of Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres (NCFCs). As the starting point for the intensive community planning process that was to follow, this strategic outline is built around a clear ***Vision Statement*** and a common understanding of the ***Guiding Principles*** on which every NCFC will be based (overleaf). Equally important, the plan considers the rankings of neighbourhood need and neighbourhood readiness as mechanisms to target the first NCFCs into neighbourhoods where the potential benefit will be greatest. Finally, the plan recognizes the need to consider each community's assets including the availability of space in schools and the presence of existing community hubs.

The Child and Youth Network's Vision for an integrated network of Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres

"In every London neighbourhood, residents will open a single door to multiple opportunities that support children and families in achieving their full potential. These opportunities will be identified by the neighbourhood and implemented according to evidence-informed best practices using an integrative, inclusive and holistic approach."

Guiding Principles

All Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres will be based on the same guiding principles.

Where?

- Centres will be neighbourhood-based and in every neighbourhood.
- Neighbourhood Centres will be located in schools whenever possible. Other locations, such as child care centres, will be considered based on neighbourhood priority and the accessibility of space.

What?

- Centres will start with a focus on services for children prenatal to 12 years and their families. Intentionally, the next phase will be making services more accessible for older age groups and their families.
- Centres will provide the core and support services for children (0-12 years old) and families.
- The mix of services provided in each Centre will depend on the unique cultural, geographic and socioeconomic make-up of each community.

How?

- Centres will be governed and administered by a lead organization that is responsible for delivering some core functions and partnering with other organizations to deliver all other services.

Who?

- Centres are open to all families in the neighbourhood.
- Families will contact their Neighbourhood Centre for information, support and services.

When?

- Centres will operate 12 months a year.
- The number of Centres established each year will depend on available funding and resources.

SYSTEM WIDE STRATEGY: NEIGHBOURHOOD SPECIFIC DELIVERY

London’s strategic approach to NCFCs combines both a system-wide and a neighbourhood-specific approach to the development of the Centres. The system goal is the establishment of a network of easily identifiable Centres across the City. Governance of the network will be the domain of the Child and Youth Network, the community based partnership of agencies and individuals for whom children and families are the driving force. The Child and Youth Network will be responsible for planning the network, ensuring that all the NCFCs align with the Vision and connect with each other, and for measuring and evaluating outcomes for children and families.

At the neighbourhood level, each NCFC will be operated by a Lead Agency that will be expected to offer the full spectrum of Core Functions tailored to the unique needs of the community. The Lead Agency may provide some of the Core Functions itself, and will coordinate the delivery of the Core Functions for which other services providers are responsible.

Regardless of the neighbourhood in which a Centre is located, children and families should expect to easily access these Core Functions, and to be connected through the Centre to other services available in the Community or across the City. This is an important concept in the NCFC strategy. Each NCFC will not only be an easily accessible location at which families can participate in service delivery. It will also be the door – both physically and virtually – through which families can connect to additional specialized services and supports available in their neighbourhood and throughout the City – a gateway that requires the entire system to be responsive to the needs of every family.

A comprehensive, holistic approach

London’s goal is not to simply establish one or two Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres exclusively in high need neighbourhoods. Our vision is to establish a city-wide network of service access points that will provide every child and family in the City with common access and common connection points to services for children. But even more than simply having the same list of Core Functions available at every NCFC in the City, our vision requires that the experience every family has whenever or wherever they access services is the same, and that it is the best possible.

London's goal is not simply to house multiple children's service agencies in one building. Our vision is to integrate the service offerings that exist in agencies, in neighbourhoods and across the City in a way that makes it easy for all families to access and be connected to them.

London's goal is not to consolidate all service providers under one service provider organization. Our vision is to embrace and leverage the uniqueness and expertise of each organization by fostering a culture that encourages "professionals" to openly share their knowledge and experience with other professionals in support of each child and family.

London's goal is not to plan for one to two years. Our vision is to establish a self sustaining network of Centres that will remain viable for many years to come.

DEVELOPING AN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SYSTEM REENGINEERING STRATEGY

Having adopted the strategic plan outlining how NCFCs should be established, the Child and Youth Network's System Reengineering Implementation Committee turned its focus to the development and implementation of the detailed implementation framework that will guide restructuring the way children's services are delivered in London's neighbourhoods.

As previously noted, London's Vision goes beyond creating one or two Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres. Our goal is to change the way children and parents throughout the City access and benefit from services – ***to restructure the entire service delivery system in a way that makes sense and works for families.***

Of course, it must be remembered that there is an existing service delivery system in place, even as we work to improve it. The Child and Youth network is not starting from scratch; it is taking many existing programs and services, including two established community hubs, and evolving them toward the system strategy. This process has been likened to

"...building a bridge while walking across it".

Identify the key elements of success

The System Reengineering Implementation Committee has identified seven key elements (each of which is described in the section that follows) that have to be considered for the successful creation of the NCFC network. By itself, each element is a key lever that can be used to foster system change, and each contributes to the successful establishment and operation of the NCFC. But none of these elements can stand alone – each interacts with and is influenced by the others. In order to create the fundamental change and to achieve our vision of an integrated and responsive service delivery system, all of the elements must be integrated with the others as part of a holistic, comprehensive strategy.,

The System Reengineering Implementation Committee's objective is to research and develop the details of each element; to establish how each element relates to the others; and to publish them by December 31, 2011 in an integrated Implementation Framework that will guide the

development, creation and operation of a network of Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres. Ultimately, the NCFC Framework will become the Master Document supporting the Service Plan Agreement between the Child and Youth Network (as the Governance Authority for NCFCs), the City of London (as the CMSM Administrative Authority for NCFCs), and each Lead Agency selected to operate the NCFC in each neighbourhood.

The seven key elements that have been identified as critical to the successful establishment of the NCFCs are:

- **Common Experiences**
- **Neighbourhood Engagement and Development**
- **Inter-Professional Community of Practice**
- **Funding and Sustainability**
- **Policies and Protocols**
- **Communication and Marketing**
- **Measurement and Evaluation**



Common Experiences

Common Experiences refers to the core functions that families will be able to access at every NCFC and across the rest of the system.

One of the greatest challenges in establishing a network of NCFCs is the potential for differences between locations in the programs and services that are offered. The community's experience with the Ontario Early Years Centres demonstrates this challenge, where the programs offered in one are often significantly different in scope and frequency than the programs offered in others.

London's System Reengineering process recognizes this challenge. Our vision is that every child and family should be able to access the same full spectrum of programs and services, regardless of the neighbourhood in which they live; the particular "Lead Agency" that hosts the NCFC; or the particular organization that runs the program. Much as a consumer knows what to expect of any McDonald's restaurant or Home Depot store regardless of where it is located, parents and children should always know what to expect from every NCFC in the community.

The Common Experiences approach is to define, in advance, the Core Functions and Services that will be available at every NCFC. This definition not only includes the "what" and the "when" for each function, but also the way each function relates to broader City and Provincial programs and initiatives such as Healthy Communities and Full Day Learning. Moreover, going beyond these common definitions, Common Experiences is also visioning how children and families will interface with the programs and services.

In essence, Common Experiences will pre-define not only the program elements and resources required in a NCFC, but also the "experience" each parent will have when interacting with these services. By being prescriptive, the Common Experiences element of the Implementation Framework will put the focus on the Core Functions, not the organizations that provide them, and will support consistency in the services parents and children experience across the network.

InterProfessional Community of Practice

InterProfessional Community of Practice is the framework and tools that supports and facilitates communication, interprofessional collaborative practices and the pro-active sharing of professional resources and expertise within the NCFC and throughout the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres are not simply about co-locating professional services in one building. They are about establishing an operating culture where the needs of the family, regardless of what they are, come first and; a culture where professionals understand each other's strengths and skills, and proactively work together to meet the family's or the child's needs.

An InterProfessional Community of Practice involves the continuous effort of two or more professions or disciplines to learn from and about each other and interact to improve collaboration and the quality of service to improve outcomes. The IPCP subcommittee will develop an integrated InterProfessional Community of Practice framework and implementation plan to underpin InterProfessional collaborative practice. The framework will explain the values and environment necessary to foster an InterProfessional Community of Practice as well as detail everything that is needed to create an effective InterProfessional Community of Practice (i.e. tools, facilitation, coaching, physical infrastructure, technology, etc.). The implementation Framework will be a guide on how to go about setting up an InterProfessional Community of Practice within the Neighbourhood Child and Family Centre model including the linkages required to connect it to the broader community.

Neighbourhood Engagement and Development

Neighbourhood Engagement and Development refers to the process that defines how the unique needs of each neighbourhood are identified, and the strategies by which programs, services and functions are delivered at the neighbourhood level.

System Reengineering recognizes that each neighbourhood in our City is unique, and that while the vision is to have consistency in the Core Functions available in each NCFC across the network, the Implementation Framework will reflect that these may have to be tailored to those unique needs.

The purpose of Neighbourhood Engagement and Development is to define the process that will engage neighbourhoods and their leaders in the planning and implementation of their NCFC. The process will guide each community in ways to identify the Lead Agency that will manage the Centre; identify the best location for the Centre; develop an Organizational Structure; identify how programs and services are tailored and delivered; and how other priority support services are developed and connected to the NCFC. The objective is for a true neighbourhood engagement process, involving not the service providers but the actual people who live in the neighbourhood and who will access the services.

Funding and Sustainability

Funding and Sustainability is the funding model and sustainability strategies that maintain each NCFC and the overall NCFC network.

System Reengineering recognizes that while there are costs associated with establishing, maintaining and operating NCFCs, there is also a significant amount of resources supporting the existing service delivery system. Funding and Sustainability is about using these existing resources in better ways, and about getting “more bang for the buck”.

In order to be successful in the long term, a “business case” has to be made that supports the NCFC strategy. The Funding and Sustainability Group will develop the funding model and sustainability strategies that maintain the network. This will include evaluating how to make the best use of existing investments in children’s services (prenatal to 12 years) in London; examining available resources and potential funding opportunities; identifying how to reduce

unnecessary duplication of services while making services more efficient; examining best practices and; planning for adequate financial, physical and human resourcing across the sector.

Policies and Protocols

Policies and Protocols refers to the Partnership Framework, Agreements and Policies that establish the roles and expectations for each NCFC Partner.

In order for a NCFC to operate successfully, there must be a clear understanding of roles and expectations. At both the system level and the Centre level, partners must know what is expected of them, and they need a set of policies and protocols that define these expectations in a consistent, uniform manner.

The Policy and Protocol group's primary task will be to develop the partnership frameworks and agreements for the NCFC's and for gathering and enshrining the recommendations and practices of all of the other subcommittees into policy. This group will develop the model for the Consolidated Municipal Service Management administrative body (oversight); develop the framework for interrelations between lead agencies and partner organizations (partnership agreements); and develop the framework of policies, protocols and procedures that support day-to-day operation, chain of command and responsibilities within the NCFC at an operational level (operational policies).

Communication and Marketing

Communication and Marketing refers to the communication, marketing and advocacy strategies that promote and communicate the NCFC's place in the neighbourhood.

NCFCs will dramatically change how the service system is structured and how services are organized and delivered. The change will affect both families and service providers. Everyone will need clear, timely information about the Centres, what they are and how they work.

The Communications and Marketing group will develop communication, marketing and advocacy strategies for the NCFCs, including creating a strong visual identity or brand for NCFC's; promoting services in the community in locations where people gather (i.e. schools, community

centres, cultural centres, libraries, recreation facilities and faith-based organizations); engaging neighbourhoods, agencies and other stakeholders in the communication and marketing process; and advocating with other levels of government for funding and policies that support the System Reengineering strategy.

Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement and Evaluation is the set of measures that are focused on the outcomes and experiences of families who access the system - measures that clearly show how the family experience has changed as a result of system reengineering and where additional focus needs to be directed to continuously improve the family experience.

The most important objective for System Reengineering is to improve the way that services are provided to children and families in London. Therefore, it is critical that we measure the success of individual NCFs and the network as whole in accomplishing this goal of improving the family's experience.

Building on the work of each of the other groups, and in particular the Common Experiences and the InterProfessional Community of Practice committees, the Measurement and Evaluation group will be responsible for developing the measurement tools that will ***clearly show how the family experience has changed*** as a result of system reengineering and where additional focus needs to be directed to continuously improve the family experience. This Committee will focus on developing appropriate Outcome Measurements at the Family, Community, System and Professional levels, and it will develop the monitoring and reporting accountability framework for these outcomes. This committee will also be responsible for developing a measurement and evaluation system to track the overall progress towards the Child and Youth Network's Vision as envisioned in the System Reengineering plan.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The System Reengineering Implementation Process is underway. There are over 150 professionals representing the full spectrum of programs and services available to children and families actively participating in one or more of the committees described above. Conversations are happening every day, and every day we move closer to our shared Vision.

Our goal is to complete the Implementation Framework document by December 2011. In the meantime, the Child and Youth Network continues to plan for the steps that will follow, as we move from developing the overarching framework to actually building and opening the first four Neighbourhood Child and Family Centres. We are meeting with School Boards, and we are working in the target neighbourhoods to identify potential sites for the two new NCFCs. We are working alongside the two existing community hubs and our OEYC partners, helping them evolve to the NCFC model of service delivery. We are starting to identify and obtain the resources needed to bring the Vision into Reality. And we are doing this all with an eye to ensuring that our work is consistent with, and perhaps useful to, the evolving Provincial vision for the system integration of education, children's services and human services across Ontario.



LESSONS LEARNED

London has come a long way in just three years. Along the way, we have learned many lessons and discovered a few keys to success.

Leadership – Change management, especially system-wide change, takes leadership, resources and commitment. The Child and Youth Network has been fortunate to have all three from City Council, Senior Municipal Administration, and the CEOs and Executive Directors of School Boards, Health Units, Child Care organizations, and countless other service providers.

Vision – In the beginning, the Child and Youth Network articulated a community vision for children and families. The Vision has guided us through each step of the process.

Movement with Purpose and with Pace – The London community has moved as quickly as it could through each stage of the process, while also allowing enough time for conversations to happen, for knowledge to be acquired and for attitudes to evolve. We never allowed too much time so that momentum was lost. Keeping the Vision before us and the resources supporting us helped keep all of the working groups moving and on track.

Targets and Deliverables at Every Stage – Knowing that it would likely take many years to achieve the Child and Youth Network’s Vision for children and families, the process was deliberately split into distinct stages. At every stage in the process, the Child and Youth Network set expected outcomes and deliverables as well as target dates for completion. Doing so kept all of the community partners engaged – everyone could always see an “end product” and they could measure their progress toward the goal.

A Commitment Process – At the end of every stage, the Child and Youth Network asked community partners for their written commitment to the strategy. Doing so meant that key stakeholders had to acknowledge and agree to the strategies. The letters of commitment also served as a valuable tool to demonstrate to politicians and funders that the community was fully supportive of the plan.

Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood – The Child and Youth Agenda set four broad community and system-wide priorities for action, yet the work plans, strategies and activities are being implemented on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis. This approach allows each of the strategies to be developed, tried and evaluated to see what works and what does not before being rolled out to the broader community.

