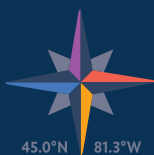


BRUCE COUNTY

Child Care & Early Years

SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN: 2019-2024

WAYPOINT
2023



45.0°N 81.3°W

BRUCE
county

Introduction

Bruce County Children’s Services, a division of the Human Services Department, is pleased to share our Waypoint on the goals and priorities established in our 2019-2024 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan.

Integral to the development of the five-year Service System Plan was a comprehensive community consultation and engagement process. Based on feedback received from parent surveys, key informant interviews, and community provider and partner consultations, our strategic direction for 2019-2024 was summarized into four key themes:



We invite you to explore our ‘Waypoint’ document that reflects the actions taken and key performance indicators achieved together with our community in 2023.

Contents

- 04 Inclusion Accomplishments
- 07 Quality Accomplishments
- 12 Accessibility Accomplishments
- 17 Affordability Accomplishments
- 18 Action Plan

“ Our priority is ensuring the local delivery of early years and child care services is safe, collaborative, effective, efficient, and accountable.





Inclusion Accomplishments

Journey Through the Ages and Stages (ASQ)

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

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

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

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



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

Do you have concerns about your child's development?

Please reach out to your child care professional or contact Bruce County Children's Services Special Needs Resource Team at [1-800-265-3005](tel:1-800-265-3005) or childcare@brucecounty.on.ca

For resources and learning activities related to the ASQ, please visit:
[Resource Library - Ages and Stages](#)

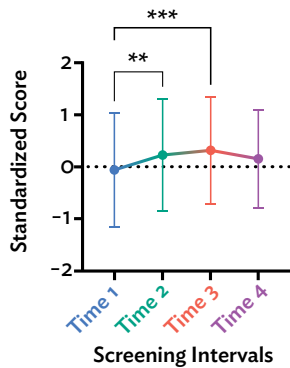
2023 Findings



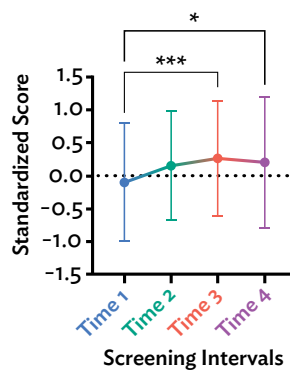
Girls scored significantly higher than boys in Communication, Fine Motor, Problem-Solving, and Personal-Social.

In both the Spring and Fall Scan of 2023, the ASQ-3 domain of **Communication had the highest number of children with identified risk for delay.**

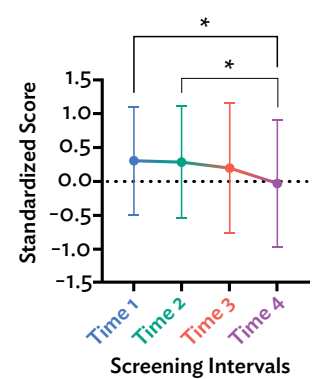
Communication



Personal Social



Fine Motor

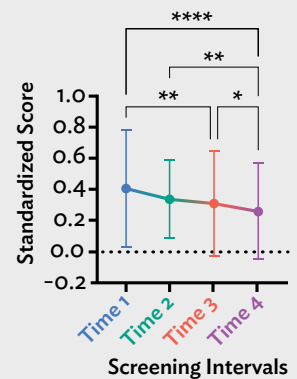


Girls were found to score significantly lower than boys in Social-Emotional.

Scores for the ASQ:SE-2 in 2023 were **significantly lower** than the scores collected in 2022 and 2021.

Note: a lower score indicates they are more likely to be in the 'typically developing' zone, as the scoring for the ASQ:SE-2 is inverted from the ASQ-3.

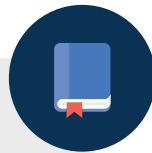
Social-Emotional



In the spring of 2023

467

children participated in the Journey Through the Ages and Stages. A second scan was completed in the Fall of 2023; 444 children participated.



Resource consultants made referrals and connections with 209 unique children.

Special Needs Resource Program

163

average monthly number of children supported through the Special Needs Resource Program.

SNR funding in 2023

\$1,666,087



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



Quality Accomplishments

Recruitment

Early Childhood Education Awards available for Students

In 2023 Bruce County continued its partnership with Fanshawe College and Georgian College to provide Bruce County Early Childhood Education Awards to eligible students.

Students who met the identified criteria were able to apply to encourage students to enter the field of Early Childhood Education at either institution. Eligible students were able to receive a maximum of \$4,000 in total awards, covering approximately half of their tuition costs over the two-year Early Childhood Education diploma program.

In 2023, **29 students** received the Bruce County Early Childhood Education Award.

Bruce County has partnered with Fanshawe College and local funders to develop and implement an innovative ECE program partially funded by awards, with timing and location created around student needs.

Building Relationships with Students

The encounters you have with students now, shape where they want to be and who they aspire to become as educators. it all starts with connection, belonging and relationship.

Bruce County has had the privilege to connect with students at local colleges ([Georgian College](#) and [Fanshawe College](#)) and high schools ([Bluewater District School Board](#) and [Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board](#)) through presentations, experience sharing, invitations to professional learning events and as contacts for any questions they may have while entering the career of Early Childhood Education.

In 2023 Bruce County connected with **54 College students** in **2 classes**.

And **131 high school students** in **8 classes**.

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



Retention

275 child care educators appreciated during Child Care Appreciation Day



Mentorship Program Launched in 2023

The provincial government's investment in the child care and early years workforce has led to the creation of the Bruce County Mentorship Program. **The goals of the program are to:**

Improve quality by providing tools, resources, and guidance to educators, enabling them to create enriching environments for children.

Enhance skills while receiving support, feedback, and professional development opportunities.

Increase workplace satisfaction by fostering a supportive mentor-mentee relationship. Educators feel valued and motivated, leading to a positive impact on their well-being and performance.

Reducing workplace stress by providing a network of support. Educators can share challenges, seek advice, and collaborate with their mentors, creating a healthier work environment.

Support child development. When educators receive effective guidance, children benefit from enriched learning experiences and nurturing care.

16 educators participated in the mentorship program in 2023.

The mentorship program offered the Curiosity Approach which has 6 elements to support the environment as the 3rd teacher. Elements include Glow, Cozy, Real, Outside, Invite and Treasure. This program provides educators with numerous benefits that include giving back to the profession, learning from others, and creating meaningful and productive professional relationships.

Workforce Compensation

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

In 2023, funding was provided to bring RECE program staff wages to the wage floor of \$19/hour and RECE supervisor wages to the wage floor of \$21/hour. In addition to the wage floor increase, staff whose hourly wage was below the 2023 wage cap of \$25/hour were eligible for an additional \$1/hour annual wage increase.

Professional Development

297

Early Years and Child Care professionals access resources and trainings offered on the [Community Learning Library](#) (233 in 2022)



4 training sessions offered to the child care community.
175 participants total.

5 Community of Practices offered.
116 participants total.

31 Quality Scans were completed in licensed child care centres.

\$36,546 flowed directly to operators in 2023 to support capacity building/quality in their child care centres.

An additional **\$76,500** supported training in the areas of mental health, Indigenous and cultural awareness, board governance, programming, and diversity and inclusion.

Full Day Professional Learning Event


The “You’re Extraordinary” full day professional learning event was a transformational day that inspired educators working in the early years sector on the concepts of well-being, cultural diversity and inclusion, and the natural world.




224


Educators from Bruce County attended.


GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDED:


 **Opening keynote Sarah McVanel**
“Unleash Your Inner Extraordinary.”

BREAKOUT SESSIONS BY:

 **Sarah McVanel**
Subject: You Are Truly Extraordinary

 **Trish Meekins**
Subject: Anishinaabe Parenting

 **Natalie Royer**
Subject: Leaning Into the Discomfort of Race

 **Jill Bienenstock**
Subject: Renovating Your Sand Area

Participants highlights or big ideas of the day which made them think deeper or shift their thoughts were:

“Ensuring that I am truly inclusive in my practices with children and families to check-in with myself and actually ask the families what more can be done.”

“Think about how trauma impacts people’s growth and development.”

“A good reminder that everyone has a story, and everyone matters.”

“A classroom can be diverse as soon as two people walk into a room. It has really made re-evaluate how we can add more diversity into our classrooms.”

Participants are still curious about....

“Outdoor play and risky play”

“Challenging behaviours, loose parts, documentation, emergent curriculum, emotional/social programming”

“More about Teachings and building relationships with Indigenous people.”

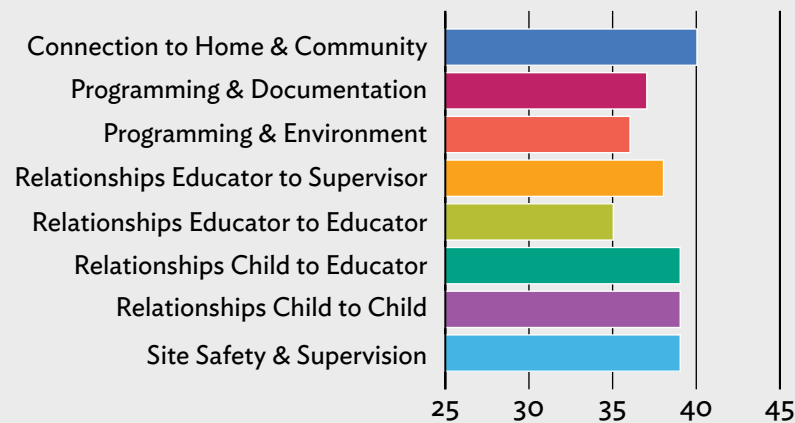
Quality Scan Tool (QST)

To facilitate inquiry, enable educators to critically reflect, and exchange ideas to support their quality journey, the Early Learning Coordinator, in collaboration with the child care supervisor, completes a Quality Scan Tool (QST). The QST fosters conversations based on observations. The degree of assistance given to meet the special requirements of the program is determined by the QST findings.

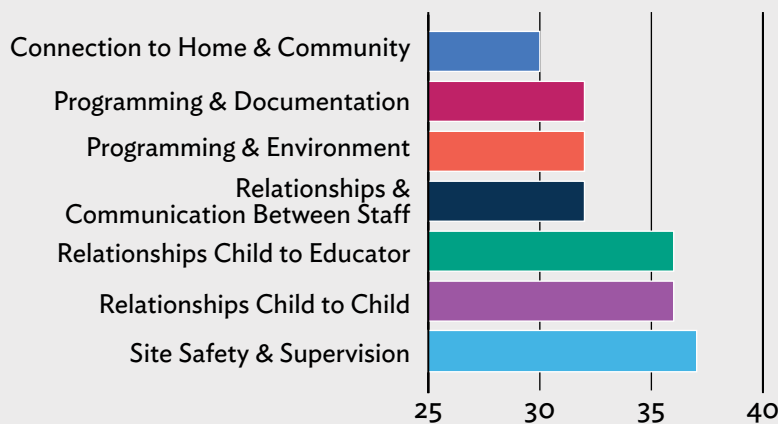


2023 QST Summary

QST Results – Licensed Child Care Programs



QST Results - School Aged Programs



2023 average overall quality for Child Care programs = **37.66**

2023 average overall quality for School Age programs = **33.68**

31 programs scanned

20 child care programs (Infant, toddler, and preschool). Average overall quality **37.66 out of 45**. The area which requires additional support is Relationship to Educator to Educator.

11 school age programs (JK, SK, Grades 1-3) Average overall quality is **33.68 out of 40**. The area which requires additional support is Connection to Home and Community.



Challenges Impacting Quality

According to “Knowing Our Numbers”: A Provincial Study with a Local Lens on the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Ontario (Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., Schurter, M. Varmuza, P., Akbari, S., Mudie, S. (2024)), ongoing challenges impacting quality are:

- Wages and benefits
- Stability
- Stress
- Overall job satisfaction
- Professional Learning

There were **65** respondents to this survey who work in Bruce and Grey Counties. **76.9%** were Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and **23.1%** were non-RECE.

17.2% of workforce respondents report having additional employment to supplement their primary wage. Fewer than half reported having a pension or RRSP contributions.

Over 34.8% plan to leave the field. Non- RECEs are more likely to leave the sector.

72% of directors/supervisor reported having to send children with disability home due to staff shortages. 43% reported de-enlisting at least one child with disability from their program and 80% reporting they refuse to admit children with disability due to staff shortages.

Professional Learning Requests:

49.2% critical trauma-informed practice

46.2% children with disabilities

44.6% supporting 2LSGBTQIA+ children and families

43.1% cultural diversity and supporting vulnerable families

41.1% Indigenous ways of knowing and being and decolonization.

Overall Job Satisfaction was reported at **2.93 out of 5**. 1 being low, 5 being high.

For more information on professional learning in Bruce County visit:
brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/early-learning-coordination



Accessibility Accomplishments

Bruce County's Directed Growth Plan



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

Ontario has
committed to create
86,000
new licensed child
care spaces in
underserved communities
by December 2026.

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

The allocation model is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities and capacity for growth. Through the Access and Inclusion Framework, **645 new spaces between 2023-2026** have been allocated for Bruce County.

**Bruce County
Children's Services will
work with interested
operators** to ensure
spaces are opened in
communities where there
is a low access rate of
licensed child care.

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

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

Baseline Access Rates

Municipality	Pre-Expansion Infant Toddler Preschool CWELCC Licensed Spaces	2021 0-4 Population	CWELCC Access Rate Pre-Expansion
Arran-Elderslie	72	460	16%
Brockton	174	565	31%
Huron-Kinloss	67	525	13%
Kincardine	239	720	33%
Northern Bruce Peninsula	65	105	62%
Saugeen Shores	430	865	50%
South Bruce	10	410	2%
South Bruce Peninsula	127	290	44%
Total	1184	3940	30%

Note this is based on licensed capacity. On average Bruce County child care centres are operating at 70%

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



- 3 Maintain or improve the proportion** of not-for profit licensed child care spaces at **70% or higher**.

Baseline auspice ratio: 72% non-profit, 28% for-profit.

2023 Access and Inclusion Achievements

Year	School Based Target	Community Based Target	Total Annual Target	Growth
2023	29	83	112	136
2024	0	209	209	-
2025	0	201	201	-
2026	0	123	123	-
Total	29	616	645	136

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

Over
\$679,000

in start-up grant funding was allocated in 2023 to support expansion in the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie, the Town of Saugeen Shores and the Township of Huron-Kinloss.



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

Successfully recruited

3 new Home Child Care Providers in 2023 for a total of **20** home child care providers across the County.

Municipality	Number of Providers
Arran Elderslie	9
Brockton	4
Kincardine	2
Saugeen Shores	2
South Bruce	2
South Bruce Peninsula	1
Northern Bruce Peninsula	0

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

2018:
1698 Licensed Child Care Centre Spaces

2023:
2125 Licensed Child Care Centre Spaces

Child care centre operating **capacity increased by 6%** (70% in 2023, 64% in 2022) as compared to year end 2022.

OneList

OneList Bruce County

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



In 2023 there were **1500** Total Active OneList Participants, or Unique Parents utilizing the wait list application.

In 2022, the total number of active OneList participants was **1300**.

Year	New Child Applications
2019	278
2020	261
2021	447
2022	574
2023	1098

In 2023, there were a total of **1243** new OneList applicants not placed in child care. In the table below, listed by municipality are the total unique children on the waitlist placed in a program, but still on the waitlist for another program, and those not placed in any program.

Applicant's Municipality	Total Active Applications in 2023
Arran-Elderslie	153
Brockton	204
Huron-Kinloss	106
Kincardine	330
North Bruce Peninsula	45
Saugeen Shores	427
South Bruce	73
South Bruce Peninsula	66
Grey County	71
Huron County	23
Wellington County	1
Other	27
Total	1526

Explore your child care option here: <https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/onelist-bruce-county>

EarlyON



Did you know

To better service all Municipalities, Bruce County has six main EarlyON sites and 55+ innovative EarlyON Mobile sites! The schedule can be found on the [Bruce County EarlyON webpage!](#)

EarlyON Child and Family Centre

Program Stats 2023	Total Number
Programs	1312
Unique Adults	973
Adult Visits	6691
Unique Children	1104
Child Visits	8548
Indigenous Led Programs	76
Adult Visits	597
Child Visits	825
French Language Programs	9
Adult Visits	29
Child Visits	32

EarlyON has **over**

3,200

Facebook followers

In 2023, we shared **312** promotional posts, with a total reach of **34,200** an increase of 88% from 2022.

Join us at [@EarlyONBruceCounty](#)

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



Affordability Accomplishments

Fee Subsidy

On a monthly average **180 children we served** by Fee Subsidy.

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

No fee subsidy waitlist in 2023.

For more information on child care fee subsidy visit:
[brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/
child-care-fee-subsidy](https://brucecounty.on.ca/services/human-services/child-care-fee-subsidy)

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

In March 2022, the Federal and Provincial governments signed the Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement (CWELCC), which aims to make child care more affordable for families. This agreement is part of the Federal Government's commitment to deliver \$10 per day child care by the end of 2026.

In 2023, families of children aged 6 or younger who attend a licensed CWELCC enrolled program received up to a **52.75% reduction** on their fee compared to the fees as of March 2022.



18 out of 20

or 90% of licensed child care operators in Bruce County opted into CWELCC making child care more affordable for families.

Action Plan

Quality
Inclusivity
Accessibility
Affordability

2019
2020
2021
2022
2023

County Priorities	Priorities	Actions	Timeline
Support the quality of child care programs through ongoing quality scans and training opportunities	●	Continue to provide collaborative quality scans and professional development initiatives for licensed child care programs	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Utilize data to drive programming and inform funding decisions	●	Continue to increase knowledge across the local early learning and child care sector regarding How Does Learning Happen?	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Continue the implementation of Journey Through the Ages and Stages (ASQ) to assist caregivers in understanding the strengths and needs of the children in their care	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Define a method with our community partners on how we gather and share aggregate data about the needs of families	● ●
Collaborate with community partners to attract and retain Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)	●	Develop a working group with colleges and community partners to attract and retain ECEs in Bruce County	● ✓ ✓
		Support community strategies that address cost and time barriers for those interested in the ECE program	● ● ✓
Enhance the capacity of child care and early years' service providers to support the unique needs of all children	●	Complete a review of our resource program and implement changes based on needs assessment	✓ ✓ ✓
		Collaborate with our community to expand French language programming opportunities	✓ ✓ ✓
Work together with Indigenous partners to support the needs of First Nation, Inuit and Metis families	●	Work together with First Nation, Inuit and Metis partners to expand culturally relevant, Indigenous led, child care and early years programs and services	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Continue to build meaningful and lasting relationships between the Bruce County and the Indigenous community	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Collaborate with community partners to support the child care and early years needs of Newcomers to Bruce County	●	Provide educational supports for child care and early years staff to support the cultural and unique needs of children and families	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Increase child care spaces and options across the county, especially in high need areas	●	Define a clear process and guidelines to support child care start-ups and expansions	● ● ● ● ✓
		Develop a working group with the school boards to expand spaces within the schools	● ● ● ● ●
		Initiate a review and develop a sustainable business model to support and expand the Bruce County Home Child Care Program	● ● ✓ ✓ ✓
		Together with community partners, develop a strategy to increase the types of Authorized Recreation Programs for children	● ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Provide child care and early learning programs and services at times that support working caregivers	●	Better understand the needs of caregivers who work alternate hours	● ● ✓
		Continue to monitor and assess times and locations for EarlyON programming across Bruce County to reflect community need	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Ensure all child care applications are processed through the centralized, on-line registry	●	Work together with OneList and child care providers to enhance features and increase usage	✓ ✓ ✓
Ensure licensed child care and authorized recreation program costs are affordable for families	●	Review our model and process of providing financial support for licensed non-profit and profit child care operators to keep rates affordable for all families	✓ ✓
		Continue to assess and make incremental enhancements to the fee-subsidy program to support families in need	✓ ✓



For more information, please contact:

Human Services

Angela Hopkins

Children's Services Manager

30 Park Street, Walkerton, ON N0G 2V0

Toll free: 1-800-265-3022

childcare@brucecountv.on.ca

For more information on Bruce County Children's Services visit

brucecounty.on.ca/childrens-services