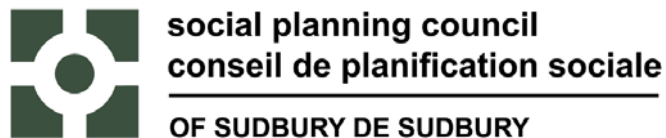


Children and Youth in the City of Greater Sudbury

Prepared for
United Way Centraide of Sudbury

Prepared by the
Social Planning Council of Sudbury

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Introduction

Concern for the well being of our community's young people has been a driving force behind the planning and development of community services for a very long time. As adults we want to provide for our children and create an environment where they will develop to their fullest potential. We know from research that ensuring children get off to a good start in life increases the chances that they will thrive and succeed into adulthood. We also know that providing less than ideal circumstances can have a devastating effect on children with consequences that can last a lifetime¹.

As a community we have created and adopted the Children's First Charter . This charter was designed to hold out the ideals that we believe are essential guide posts in creating the environment in which our children will thrive. The Charter has been adopted by over forty five community institutions and agencies including the City of Greater Sudbury, the four local school boards, the Sudbury and District Health Unit, several agencies providing services to children and their families, non-profit and charitable organizations and some local business. The Charter helps us to focus our attention in a way that will ensure the success of our efforts.(Appendix 1)²

The community has recognized over the years that through cooperation and collaboration the impact of individual efforts will be multiplied with far greater success than if any one part continues to work alone. To this end, a great deal of effort has been made to inform, partner, and even consolidate services when appropriate in order to create a system of supports and services that families will find seamless and inviting.

It is important to keep current on the issues that impact the community. We must know what our issues are and how best they can be addressed. We must plan as collaboratively as we can and ensure that our resources are used as wisely as possible. We must also strive to be as inclusive as possible so that everyone who has something to offer can find their place in our community planning for the well being of children and youth in Greater Sudbury. The Mayor and Council's Children First Round Table provides a political voice for children and youth ensuring that issues that affect young people are on the public agenda. The Best Start Network is a collaborative of community agencies and institutions that provide services for our community's youngest members and who are working to ensure that we provide for the earliest of opportunities and ongoing access to service and information as children grow through their developmental stages. The Youth Services Coalition is a loosely connected network of agencies and organizations that are providing services to area youth (depending upon who's definition you are referring this could be anyone from 12 to 29!).

This planning and integration is crucial to the future success of all efforts to address our most serious needs. A review of those needs and the current opportunities that exist form the bulk of this report. It is our hope that it will be used as a planning tool in order that we might continue to address various opportunities as they present themselves in a coordinated and successful fashion.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2001 census data (2006 data will start to become available in early 2007) about 26% of the population of our community consists of young people under the age of 20. Awaiting the 2006 census data there is an expectation that there will be growth in the Aboriginal population including many children.

City of Greater Sudbury Population by Age Cohort and Sex³, 2001 Census

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	% Total
0-4	4,185	3,945	8,130	5.24
5-9	5,055	4,855	9,910	6.38
10-14	5,170	5,165	10,335	6.66
15-19	5,485	5,380	10,865	7.00

Source: Statistics Canada; 1996, 2001 Census of Canada. 1996 data adjusted to represent the City of Greater Sudbury.

Family Structure

Family makeup is changing in Greater Sudbury as it is throughout the country⁵. The review of many indicators of children's developmental outcomes including academic achievement and social and emotional well-being provide evidence that children growing up in single parent families are more likely to possess poorer language skills, repeat grades and exhibit poorer health outcomes than children growing up in two parent families⁶.

In Greater Sudbury according to the 2001 census⁴:

- Average family size for married couple families is 3 persons – 2.8 for common law couple families and 2.5 for single parent families
- 16.5% of area families are lead by a single parent. 83% of those are lead by females. The provincial average of families lead by single parents is 15%.

Meeting Basic Needs

Access to financial resources is one of the most critical factors that determine both the quality of life that one enjoys and the health of both the individual and the overall population. The Public Health Agency of Canada states that health status improves at each step up the income and social hierarchy⁷. Children who have secure housing and adequate nutrition have better overall outcomes than children who do not. For children living in homes with little financial resources access to opportunities are limited.

Situational Analysis of Poverty in Greater Sudbury⁸

- 11% of all families live in the low income category*
- 62% of lone parent families live in poverty with 51.5% of female headed lone parent families living in poverty
- 14% of children under the age of 12 live in poverty
- 73% of youth (age 15+) living on their own live in poverty
- 7.4% of families with children used food banks in 2004
- 11.3% of families report being food insecure – the food they bought did not last long enough and they had no more money to buy more
- 12% of the absolute homeless population in Sudbury in 2003 were children under 12 and 20% were teenagers

** Low income category - low income cut off level (LICO) is a Stats Canada determination based on community size and income levels that is commonly used to describe those who are substantially worse off than the average*

Health Status

Health outcomes for the general population in our community continue to lag behind those of the major cities in Canada. Our rates of cancer, heart disease and obesity are higher than in other parts of the country⁹. There is a very serious need for us to pay attention to the health of our children in order to reverse those stats over the long term. The Canadian Medical Association President Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai stated this year “we found that parents seem to be looking at the health of their own children through rose-coloured glasses... I have a very real fear we are killing our children with kindness by setting them up for a lifetime of inactivity and poor health.”¹⁰

From the very start children born in our community are at a higher risk with more babies being born in the low birth weight category. While infant mortality rates in general in Canada are very low they are slightly higher in Greater Sudbury at 6.5 deaths per 1000 as compared to 5.2 per 1000 nationally. (Statistics Canada Vital Statistics, 1991 – 2001)

Children’s Mental Health Ontario is the association of mental health service providers who work with children in our province. They advocate and educate on behalf of their member agencies and indicate that while the numbers of young people exhibiting symptoms of mental illness are 1 in 5 under the age of 19, the resources available can only treat 1 in 3 of those exhibiting such symptoms¹¹. Locally there are between one and two hundred young people on the waiting list for mental health services at any given time with the most serious cases being seen first. Evidence exists that indicates that early diagnosis, intervention and treatment is key and that ensuring a child’s good mental health can lower healthcare costs and improve school performance, as well as reduce demand on the child welfare system, classroom disruption, bullying, substance abuse, homelessness, and youth justice costs.

Growing concern over high levels of obesity in both our adult and youth populations have led to an Obesity Prevention Coalition in Greater Sudbury.

Low Birth Weight Babies (LBW) among live births, to mothers residing in SDHU Area

Year	# of LBW Babies	# of Live Births	% LBW
1996	150	2192	6.8
1997	118	2104	5.6
1998	122	2002	6.1
1999	107	1838	5.8
2000	90	1739	5.2
2001	104	1733	6.0

Source: Provincial Health Planning Database, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Data retrieved August 9, 2005

In comparison, Ontario’s rate of low-birth-weight babies is 5.7 per cent. Low birth weight is an indicator of several physical, emotional and cognitive disabilities (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, March 19, 2004)

From the 2004 Children First Report Card we know¹²:

- There is a very high rate of vaccine coverage amongst area children
- Almost 20% of area children aged 12-19 have been diagnosed with asthma
- 23.8%E of children aged 12-19 have sustained an injury caused by normal activities and another 15.5%E have sought medical attention for such injuries
- Only 66.1% of children aged 5-17 in families surveyed always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle*
- In 2004 the Child and Family Centre provided mental health services to a total of 1,489 children and youth up to the age of 18
- Teen suicide rates in Greater Sudbury are higher than the national average and suicide continues to be the 2nd leading cause of death of young people between the ages of 10 and 19
- The 2004 Canadian Community Health survey reports that 27.5% of Ontario children ages 2-17 are overweight or obese

E = Data with a coefficient of variation from 16.6% to 33.3% are identified by an “E” and should be interpreted with caution.

** Interpret with caution, high variability*

Educational Attainment

Along with income, health status improves with levels of education. The Public Health Agency of Canada maintains that education is closely related to socioeconomic status and thus is a key contributor to health and prosperity of the individual and the community as a whole¹⁴.

The adult population of our community has generally achieved a lower overall level of education.

Since the release of the Early Years Study (Fraser/McCain 1999) much emphasis has been placed on ensuring that children in the 0-6 year age range get off to a good start. Initiatives have included a massive expansion of child care spaces, more subsidies for parents to access the spaces, a move towards Best Start neighbourhood hubs that will provide one stop services for families, universal newborn screening and ongoing screening including an 18 month well baby check up. The initiative has engaged all of the agencies that are involved with children in the early years including school boards, children service agencies, day cares, the health unit, parents and volunteers.

Educational Attainment of Adults in Greater Sudbury¹³

Education Level of Adult Population	% of Greater Sudbury population	% of Ontario population
Less than grade 9	11.2	8.7
High School <i>without</i> a diploma	18.9	16.9
High School <i>with</i> a diploma	13.9	14.2
Trades	13.5	10.2
College ¹	25.3	23.7
University <i>without</i> a degree	5.2	7.1
University <i>with</i> a degree	12.0	19.2

Source: Statistic Canada, Census 2001, 20% sample

¹ Includes non-degree-granting institutions such as community colleges, CEGEPs, private business colleges and technical institutes

- More than 950 new day care spaces have been created this year and \$700,000 additional subsidy dollars have been made available
- The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is used for all children entering grade 1 and measures how ready children are to begin school – overall in 2002 children in Greater Sudbury performed as well as children across the province and the country with about 25% of children exhibiting problems in at least one of the five areas measured and 13.7% having problems in at least two areas¹⁵

Over the last decade we have seen massive changes to the educational system with the elimination of grade 13, the initiation of provincial testing and changes to the curriculum and standards. A movement is afoot to ensure that post-secondary opportunities are expanded to ensure that they respond to the needs of the students as well as the needs of the marketplace. Apprenticeships and increased co-op education are deemed very important as the government moves towards a mandatory age of 18 for leaving school¹⁶.

Educational Attainment of Children in Greater Sudbury¹⁷

- On average students in grade 3 scored slightly lower than the provincial average in reading and writing while they scored higher in mathematics – improvements were noted in all 3 areas over the last 3 years (2002-03)
- On average in grade 6 students scored slightly lower than the provincial average in writing and at or above the average in reading and mathematics
- In grade 9 testing, on average, students were at or above the provincial level in mathematics with improvements being shown in the last 2 years
- The 2001 census indicates that 22% of 15 to 19 year olds in Sudbury do not attend high school (this may include many 19 year olds who have completed grade 12)
- We do not have available accurate data on the number of young people enrolling in post secondary education as yet

Issues Impacting Teenagers and Those in the Middle Years (7 –12 years)¹⁸

While considerable attention has been paid to the needs of our youngest community members (0-6), not as much attention has been paid to young people through the middle and teenage years. This trend is starting to reverse itself with the acknowledgment lately by agencies and organizations that we must continue to plan for young people and address their needs right through to adulthood. Keeping young people engaged with the community through school, volunteer opportunities, recreational activities and youth based services is essential if we are going support the next generation of community leaders.

Higher rates of youth crime and drug alcohol use provide a wake up call to the community to pay attention to this vulnerable group.

In 2003 changes were introduced to the Young Offenders Act that allowed for more discretion on the part of police officers at the time that charges are laid to use methods other than the court system to deal with the issues. Extra-judicial measures (EJM) are available as a means to hold the young person accountable for their act while at the same time keep them out of the court system. They are used as well as part of the sentencing system. This could include community service or other such measures and also involves Restorative Justice that is a process that involves both the victim and the perpetrator of the crime.

- According to the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS) in 2003 a significantly higher number of youth in Northern Ontario had consumed alcohol (72%) or smoked a cigarette (26%) at least once in the past 12 months with 35% participating in binge drinking (5 or more drinks on one occasion). As well 20% of youth were reported as daily smokers
- The Canadian Community Health Survey (2003) reports that 52% of Greater Sudbury teenagers (15 –19 years) have had sexual intercourse at least once with 53% of sexually active teens reporting that they had intercourse before the age of 18
- Teen pregnancy rates have dropped significantly between 1996 and 2000 from 49 to 36 per 1000 teens (slightly higher than provincial rates) Live births to teens have dropped from 241 to 122 per year
- Abortions to teens have increased in this time frame from 17 to 21 per 1000 teenagers (the reverse is true provincially – from 25 to 19 per thousand)
- The rate of youths charged with criminal offences in 2004 in Greater Sudbury was 5.4% while the provincial average was 3.4%
- In 2005/06 692 charges were laid and 291 EJM used down from 729 charges and 329 EJM in 2004/05
- While there is as yet no methodology developed to measure rates or incidences of bullying, anecdotal information from schools and police indicate that it is an increasing problem in schools and the community
- The unemployment rates for area youth aged 15 to 24 has ranged from 16 to 21% over the course of this year
- Poverty rates are very high for young people who become disconnected from their families –72% of the 1890 youth in the 2001 census who were identified as unattached individuals lived in poverty with a further 2695 living in poverty with their families (over 4000 youth)
- In the homelessness study conducted between July 2000 and January 2003 over 100 young people were found to be at risk of homelessness in each count and as many as 80 young people were found to be absolutely homeless at one time

From the Voices of Young People

A compilation of data from youth forums¹⁹ held over a period of ten years indicate that the issues for youth from their own perspective do not change much over time. Having no voice, experiencing discrimination, poverty and unemployment, transportation, and drug and alcohol abuse were identified in three different time frames by three different groups of young people. Services providers indicate that the issues don't change – just our apparent lack of ability to address them!

Two exciting opportunities in Sudbury have captured the voices of young people in terms of how included they feel in their schools and in the community in general. The Voices of Aboriginal Youth is a video that captures the content of a youth forum held over several months in 2005. The young Aboriginal leaders provided input to the education system, the police system, and the City in general in terms of what should be done in order to make the community more inclusive for young Aboriginal persons. The Social Inclusion project of the Social Planning Council of Sudbury recently concluded 3 years of consulting and engaging over 800 children and young people 8 to 18 years in dialogue about what it looks like and feels like to be included and valued. The groups included children and young people from diverse backgrounds, geographic areas, age groups, life experiences and cultures. The data collected is being used in a process to help create structural change through policy changes in area schools.

Young people in the social inclusion initiative expressed a desire to build bridges across all types of boundaries²⁰

- “Show us how to do it”
- "How come we can't get along"
- Older youth (14+) expressed a sincere willingness to understand the roots of hateful, discriminatory and aggressive behaviours

They speak about the debilitating effect of youth oppression including:

- not having a voice
- not being engaged as a valued partner
- “nobody listens...I can't talk about it...I can't do this or that...nobody cares...I am not stupid, I just can't do anything about it...”

In outlying communities of Greater Sudbury, (i.e.: Hanmer, Capreol, White Fish (both the village and the Reserve) young people complain about being completely bored, and admit to misbehaving because of it. The lack of transportation and financial resources to move around, or the existence of activities in their communities is a serious concern.

During the deliberations of the intersectoral planning tables that were facilitated earlier this year to identify policies and practices that could be adopted across the community and contribute to increased successful outcomes for area youth there was a great deal of discussion in regards to ensuring that young people felt more included in our community. That they had a voice that was listened to in the community decision making process and that we would ensure that there were caring individuals involved with every young person in our community.

Services & Opportunities

From the focus that was initiated on the early years stemming from the McCain Mustard report significant efforts have been made to enhance and support young children and their families in the early years. Resources from prenatal education, nutrition and health care to increased child care spaces and subsidies have been developed and/or enhanced in our community over the last several years. These programs are supported in a variety of ways but for the most part receive core funding from the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), and the Ministry of Education and Training (MET). The City of Greater Sudbury is mandated by the provincial government to cost share with MCYS in the delivery of childcare services, special needs programs and family resource programs. As well the City delivers children's programs through the library as well as a wide range of recreation and leisure opportunities. Boards of Education, the Sudbury & District Health Unit and the Centre de sante communautaire provide resources and support to various initiatives with resources from their respective funders.

At mysudbury.ca you can find:

- 144 organizations offering services to children under six years of age
- Over 600 programs are offered throughout the Sudbury district (the same program might be offered in several areas and is counted as a program)
- This inventory of data is used to help plan for services at the neighbourhood level by the Best Start Network

From the application of the Youth Services Coalition to be awarded Youth Friendly Status a long list of services and opportunities for youth can be found.

Service provision to children can become very complicated as the mandates cross ministries and agencies. To this end the Community Children's Network has been developed as an agency providing intake and referral. While this agency is relatively new in the community, it is a result of years of planning for more coordination between and amongst service providers.

While most services for children in our community are provided by agencies or organizations funded by various provincial government ministries there are a number of programs and services that are either offered by non-profit charitable organizations or are offered by the government funded agencies through fund raising efforts and community partnerships.

Examples of Community Based Services working to meet the needs of Sudbury children & youth²¹

- In Greater Sudbury 42 agencies are members of the Sudbury Food Bank with neighbourhood banks located throughout the community
- Breakfast and snack programs are supported in 49 area schools through dollars provided by MCYS and the Breakfast for Learning Foundation in partnership with local non-profit agencies including Better Beginnings Better Futures, the Human League, Childhood Enance and countless volunteers from the school communities
- Families with children who are homeless are housed in area motels as there is no shelter in the emergency shelter system that accommodates them
- Funds from a variety of sources provide resources so that children can access recreation or leisure activities in the community including the PLAY program - a project of the Human League who have supported over 1000 young people over the last 3 years
- Rideshare – a program that provided volunteer drivers for low income families with transportation difficulties to assist with accessing health and recreation programs for children was closed this year due to lack of funding even though over 10,000 rides had been provided

Services for Those in the Middle Years

As more emphasis is being placed on the middle years (7 -12) and the needs of our youth (13 - 19) work is being done to build a comprehensive inventory of services available. Recently the City of Greater Sudbury was included in a research project that involved three communities in Ontario. An inventory of social service and recreational opportunities for youth is being developed as a base line. As well the Ministry of Children and Youth services is involved with detailing the services available to older children (comparable to the inventory available for the early years). This work is being done in cooperation with the mysudbury.ca website that maintains a community portal with data on all social services available in this community.

Youth Services Coalition application for Youth Friendly City status indicates²²:

- 3 community group opportunities – not including school – for arts and culture participation
- Sudbury Secondary School operates a full dramatic arts program and is open to students across the community
- Over 30 leagues and associations dedicated to competitive sports
- 50 neighbourhood associations that provide opportunities for outdoor sports
- investment in 10 new skateboard parks located throughout the city
- leadership training opportunities provided by Young Leaders on Board, Social Planning Council, Voices of Aboriginal Youth, Sudbury & District Health Unit
- public support for youth events including Bell Park Youth Concert Series, free skating in area arenas and swimming in pools during holidays, youth summer camps etc.
- youth peer mentoring supported through programs dedicated to health, physical activity, leadership, employment

The Youth Services Coalition members indicate that stable, ongoing funding for youth centres is a critical need in our community

The Sudbury Action Centre for Youth provides support services to young people, many of whom find themselves disconnected from main stream institutions (i.e. out of school, not in receipt of social assistance, homeless etc). Other youth centres that are more community based in areas such as Coniston, Valley East and Walden have difficulty in securing funding to remain open. While the focus of these centres is often on creating social opportunities they also provide excellent sites for providing resources to youth. At this point a youth centre is open at least part of the time in Rayside Balfour, Walden, Levack/Onaping and Dowling. All of the centres have volunteer support and none have core funding for staff.

The Sudbury Action Centre for Youth is the only “full service” youth centre in the community. The centre is open daily Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. with the evening hours being an expansion implemented this past year

In the past year²³:

- 728 different youth accessed the drop-in centre for a total of 9,477 visits
- 61% were male and 39% were female
- 212 new youth were registered

Of the new youth:

- 61% had no income
- 21% were in receipt of social assistance
- 11% were working.
- Over half were homeless
- 114 (53.8%) of the new registrations reported not being in school

Responding to Health Needs

While health care for children and youth remains the purview of the health care system, the Sudbury & District Health Unit, the Centre de sante communautaire and many community partners work proactively through a number of programs to educate and inform young people and their families so that healthy choices will be made.

While health promotion and prevention is very important it is also important to be aware of the links between socio-economic indicators and the determinants of health.

Many health prevention and promotion programs operate throughout the area attempting to impact the health outcomes of young people.

Some of these include:

- The Obesity Prevention Strategy
- Focus Project – a collaborative approach to education and resources on the impact of using drugs and alcohol
- Sexual health clinics and nurse practitioner visits to schools
- Youth lead coalitions designing programs geared towards quitting smoking
- Active 2010 – a newly launched initiative set to increase the physical activity of citizens with a focus on youth
- The Safe Communities Coalition works to promote safety throughout the community with a focus on children's safety
- Respect Ed – a program of the Canadian Red Cross designed to educate young people about safe relationships and communities

Planning

It has been recognized that there is a crucial need for collaborative planning in the community to address any of our various needs. To this end there are frequent attempts to bring people together to plan strategically. This has been very true in terms of the children and youth agenda and in fact, this is one sector of the community, particularly around children in the earliest years of development, where there has been a great deal of success in joint planning.

Sudbury Region's Children Forum 2000

In June of 2000, many community members gathered for the Sudbury Region Children's Forum to address gaps, which existed in children's services, and to create a strategic Community Action Plan that would enhance the development of children throughout the critical early years of 0 to 6.

In preparation for the forum a planning document entitled Planning for Children's Needs was created to highlight current issues surrounding Healthy Child Development and to provide background information as basic principals to guide the forum and its subsequent actions.

The report gathered data from national, provincial and local research and initiatives and that included the Early Years Study – Fraser Mustard & Margaret McCain, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and several local reports including the District Health Council's "Toward a Healthier Community" a report of their community consultation conference in 1996 and the Sudbury Immigration Integration Group's "Building Community Wellness" Conference 1997.

The report identified challenges and gaps that were affecting our young children that included access to resources, coordination of services, funding opportunities, local research and information, advocacy and lack of education and awareness on the community's part.

The Forum resulted in an Action Plan for young children that included a call for a coordinated approach to services both from a management and a delivery perspective, a coordinated approach to funding children's services, a political voice for children, a plan to address the research needs and a communications strategy.

Social Action Planning Conference 2003

The Social Action Planning Conference (SAPC) held in 2003 as a joint venture of the United Way Centraide and the Social Planning Council of Sudbury brought together over 150 community members to dialogue about various social issues in the community and to propose action plans to address those issues. In *Convening for Change*²⁴, the report of the proceedings, there are suggested action plans for ten identified social issues.

On children, the participants reviewed the data and supported the plans as they were developed at that time by the Healthy Babies Healthy Children network (this network has since grown into the Best Start Network). The Plan at that time had identified access to service as the number one priority. In response to this, with pilot project funding, Rideshare was developed. Rideshare, a volunteer driver initiative that provided transportation to medical appointments and resource centres grew to the point where they were providing up to 10,000 rides per year. Unfortunately when the pilot project funding ended there was no sustainable funding in place and this operation has folded.

SAPC participants also supported integrating services between agencies and focusing on areas in the community where the need appeared to be the highest.

The group that dialogued about the action plan for youth included both service providers from youth agencies and young adult university students.

It was recognized that “youth” was a broad category and that input was important from a much more diverse perspective. Strikingly it was noted that service providers and adults focused on drug use and crime while young people wanted to focus on issues of inclusion, wanting creative outlets for self-expression, greater support geared to their age groups and respect from the community. They want to be taken seriously, have direct influence over areas that concern them and participate in meaningful civic discourse.

The goal set by the conference participants in terms of the action plan was to become a community that listens to the diverse voices of youth and has a process in place that makes it possible for young people to participate in a meaningful way in community life.

Objectives set for the plan included creating a community where young people are valued by ensuring that they all have access to basic needs like food, housing and transportation as well as social and emotional supports, community supports, education and training. As well, that we work to improve the image of the youth in the community by improving adult-youth relations and that we include young people in actively helping to determine the future of our communities.

Youth Services Coalition

Following up on the SAPC conference the Youth Services Coalition was formed. The coalition includes agencies and front line staff who work with area youth. The coalition adopted the action plan of the conference as their workplan. Currently they are working on a second stage application to have Greater Sudbury declared a Youth Friendly City. In preparing the application the coalition gathered data from the community to compile information in regards to the services and opportunities for youth in our area. This data along with the inventory of data being collected as part of the university research project will provide an excellent base of information in regards to services.

Best Start Network

The Best Start Network was created in 2005 when the provincial government announced elaborate plans to invest millions of dollars in expanded child care spaces and increased childcare subsidies. It was to include a move towards Best Start neighbourhood hubs that would provide one-stop services for families, universal newborn screening and ongoing screening including an 18-month well baby check up.

Unfortunately with the change of government at the Federal level most of the money that was anticipated coming to the province from the federal level has been cancelled.

Locally however the Best Start Network has continued to plan to ensure that we are making the best use of the resources that we currently have locally.

Many millions of dollars are spent locally from various ministries on children's services and there is a strong willingness to work to see that those dollars are spent wisely. The Boards of Education, the Health Unit, childcare agencies, the Ontario Early Years centres, special needs services, child welfare agencies, non-profit and charitable organizations, parents, aboriginal and francophone groups, the ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services and the City of Greater Sudbury have formed a network that meets regularly. A Best Start coordinator has been hired. The group is guided by terms of reference that ensure that they will work towards the development of the most effective strategies that will impact children in their earliest years. The concept of a neighbourhood hub, a central location where parents will have access to services and information is being pursued. The Network has done an extensive evaluation of the socio-economic data and the EDI scores of various neighbourhoods. They have mapped the existing service providers and are currently making decisions as to where the first hubs will be located. As their planning progresses they are aware that families with children older than six years will require information and resources as well and are expanding their protocols to ensure that the hub is as inclusive as possible.

Children First Round Table Intersectoral Planning

The research sub committee of the Mayor and Council's Children First Roundtable reviewed the data from all of the previous planning opportunities and the Children's First Report Cards developed in 2003 and 2005. They determined that the data spoke to opportunities to focus attention in four key areas to improve the outcomes for area children and youth. It was agreed that if we could act collectively as a community we could create strategies that would address Health Success, School Success, Success for Youth and Success for Families. An initiative was launched to bring together a cross-sectoral planning body to review the data and focus their planning on specific practices and policies that would lead to change. It is the intent of the initiative to have policies and practices that will affect the strategies be adopted broadly across the community. Early analysis of the data collected at the table indicates that there is support for the initiatives and a willingness to work together. A full report will be brought forward in January 07.

Highlights include:

Success for Youth

- Address issues of poverty and culture
- Support healthy lifestyles and healthy choices

Success for School

- Address Early School Leavers
- Connect Schools and Youth with the Community
- Create awareness of the effects of poverty and address them at the school level
- Focus on creating a healthy environment at school

Success for Health

- Promote physical health and well-being
- Promote good nutrition and healthy eating
- Promote good mental health

Success for Families

- Recognition of expanded definition of family
- Promote Work/life balance
- Create opportunities to become "community"
- Strive for accessibility and inclusion

Recommendations

The Children and Youth sector in the community is very broad with a wide range of issues and services being offered. There are multiple funders and many individuals and organizations involved. It can be a complicated roadmap to determine who is doing what and where the most need is.

Highlights:

- Young children from age 0 - 6 have received increased support and attention over the last several years as recognition of the developmental importance of the early years has risen to the top of the agenda.
- It is very important that we continue to create the environments that nurture and support children in these earliest years.
- Children and youth who live in families that are impacted by poverty are often the most vulnerable and the impact of such poverty can have life long implications that affect education, health, and social stability. – 14% of children under 12 live in poverty
- Ensuring that all children and youth in this community have access to safe housing, adequate and healthy nutrition, and supportive environments with adults who care is imperative for the future development of our children
- Ensuring that the infrastructures exists for children to be engaged in a variety of recreation, leisure, creative, cultural, and/or educational opportunities that meet their needs and that any barriers to participation, including financial, are eliminated will have ongoing positive benefits
- Transportation - both for families with young children and for area youth can present a barrier to participation in community life as well as for accessing available services
- Creating safe, supportive environments and removing the stressors of poverty and lack of access will contribute significantly to the mental health issues that children in our community face
- Our children are facing a health crisis in terms of inactivity and obesity and we must be engaged in a multi faceted plan to impact health
- The community, and especially parents and guardians, have a significant role to play in supporting the education of children and youth and efforts need to be made to ensure that school is a place where all children belong and want to be
- Attention must be paid to the middle years - the needs of seven to twelve year olds as well as to our community's teenagers

- Youth in these age groups must have opportunities to be engaged in a variety of ways in the community
- They will thrive in environments that support their growth and development and allow them input into the decision making process as well as the opportunity to have their voice heard
- Opportunities must be taken to impact the health and social risks of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use as well as sexual activity by our community's youth - engaging youth in this work is key to success
- Attention must be paid to the higher number of young people who find themselves involved with the criminal justice system. Many of the interventions in the early years should help but we must continue to provide opportunities for youth to be meaningfully engaged and to make amends when things go wrong

A great deal of effort has been made in this community to plan collaboratively for the needs of our children and youth. Efforts must continued to be made to ensure that decisions makers, funders, and service providers have access to each other and the broader community plan to ensure that we are using our resources to the best of our ability. We must make certain that our efforts are enhancing what others are doing and that we are leaving no young person behind. The Children's Charter should be adopted and displayed throughout our community as a reminder of the guideposts that we have set for ourselves. This Charter has received both national and international attention and has been used as a template by other communities. We should ensure that everyone working with children and youth in our own community is familiar with it. We want to build a network of supports and services that will be the web that catches any child who may fall through the cracks. We count on the support and structure of the institutional players - early learning and childcare, education, child welfare, special needs, health care, and justice - to provide for the health, education and well being of our children. As the non-profit sector we want to work in harmony with these players to enhance what is available and to fill any gaps as best we can.

Finally attention must be paid to monitoring and evaluating our progress. It is very difficult if not impossible to attempt to measure our success in terms of the well being of every child and young person in our community. At the same time it is key to ensuring that our resources are used wisely. Evaluation of programs and services is an issue that is being deliberated by the planning tables for children and youth. We are working to determine the best and easiest way to measure outcomes and success. We are not there yet. There is no easy answer or template to follow that provides us with all of the information we would like in terms of what the best course of action is. It is important that we continue to address this issue at our planning tables and through our various partnerships so that we can continue to move forward in providing the best we can for our community's young people.

End Notes

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- 14) Sudbury and Manitoulin Early Years Action Plan. *A Community-Based Planning Resource for Children and Parent Programs.* pp.1-75. March 2005.
- 15) Ontario Ministry of Education. *6 Ways: Transforming High School in Ontario.* Available from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/6ways/welcome.html> (last accessed on October 30th, 2006).
- 16) *2004 Children's First Report Card, 1-22.*
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- 21) Available from <http://www.mysudbury.ca/Communities> (last accessed on October 30th, 2006).
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- 23) *Playworks Youth Friendly Recognition Program: PHASE II Application, 1-16.*
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