



# IMPACT

**HOW THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM APPROACH  
IS IMPACTING FAMILIES IN LONDON**

**AUGUST 2015**





# INTRODUCTION

*Organizations in London are committed to working together to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. The Family-Centred Service System strategy is fundamentally about strengthening children and families - about working together to build a more integrated, responsive, and effective service system that helps families and their children access the supports they need to be successful in all aspects of their lives.*

The Family-Centred Service System (FCSS) objective is to improve outcomes for families by creating change through culture shift using a “collective impact” framework. The approach emphasizes collaboration between community partners and residents, interprofessional practice among service providers and the integration of services for families as mechanisms to improve access to services and supports.

At the core of the Family-Centred Service System strategy is the belief that change has to happen at **both** the neighbourhood and the system level if it is to have real impact on families. Service delivery organizations have been working together to establish a more family-centred service system since 2009. The evolution began with the development of a reengineered system approach to service delivery. In the past three years four neighbourhood Family Centres have been established in key neighbourhoods.

In 2014, the Child and Youth Network undertook a formal independent assessment of the progress that has been made in developing a family-centred service system over the first five years. *How the Family-Centred Service System Approach is Impacting Families in London*<sup>1</sup> is a summary of the key findings from the evaluator’s report. The document includes a discussion of the methodology used in the assessment, which is then followed by a summary of the key findings of impact at both the neighbourhood level and the system level.

1. This discussion document is the second in a series of three that includes:

1. The Family-Centred Service System Approach and the Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change
2. How the Family-Centred Service System Approach is Impacting Families in London
3. Developing a Shared Measurement and Assessment Framework for the Family-Centred Service System

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In the spring of 2014, using financial supports received through the Provincial Community Integration Leaders initiative, the Child and Youth Network engaged an independent external evaluator to assess the impact the Family-Centred Service System approach has had in the community.

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change states that in order to achieve the outcomes families want, change must happen at both the system and the neighbourhood level. Consequently, the assessment was designed to measure the impact of the FCSS approach at the family level, the neighbourhood level and the system level.

The external Evaluators conducted an extensive, multi-level assessment of the Family-Centred Service System's impact at each of the three levels. The approach used at each level is discussed below, but overall the methodology:

- Was robust
- Used mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative)
- Was statistically significant
- Was multi-level
- Was inclusive and participatory
- Used multiple lines of evidence
- Was a point-in-time study

## FAMILY LEVEL IMPACT ASSESSMENT DATA SOURCES

### Family Level Data Sources (families who visit Family Centres)

- **Surveys:** A mixed-mode survey (paper and online) was completed with families who have visited Family Centres (Carling-Thames and Westmount) in London.
- **Key informant interviews and focus groups:** Interviews and focus groups with families who have visited Family Centres were completed at three neutral locations in London. Families who

participated were from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds.

### Neighbourhood Level Data Sources (families who do not visit Family Centres)

- **Survey:** A general-population survey was completed with families in London who have not visited a Family Centre. Telephone numbers were randomly selected in four target neighbourhoods across London, including two Family Centre neighbourhoods (Carling-Thames and Westmount) and two non-Family Centre neighbourhoods, Glen Cairn (peer neighbourhood for Carling-Thames) and Medway (peer neighbourhood for Westmount). Respondents also had the option of completing the survey online.

### Data Analysis

To fully explore key impacts of the FCSS for families, survey findings were analyzed at the aggregate level, as well as by the following variables:

- Length of time families have been coming to the Family Centre
- Age of children
- Type of services accessed
- Whether families lived in a neighbourhood with a Family Centre or not
- Where/how services were accessed

### Data Limitations:

- As a sample of convenience was used, the survey data may be affected by self-selection bias.
- Opinions of families who do not visit Family Centres frequently may not be captured in data.
- It is a point in time study and the surveys were conducted at two centres, so the views of participants who visited other Family Centres were not captured.
- The types of services accessed by families who have not visited a Family Centre were different than the services most commonly accessed by families at the Family Centre.
- Families who have not visited a Family Centre were more likely than families who have visited a Family Centre to have older children in their household.



## SYSTEM LEVEL IMPACT ASSESSMENT DATA SOURCES

### System Level Data Sources

- **Survey:** An online survey was completed with Family-Centred Service System organizations who have signed the FCSS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The survey was not intended for front-line staff, the intention was for one individual in a leadership role to complete the survey.

- **Key informant telephone interviews:** The City of London provided the evaluators with a list of FCSS organizations to contact with the intent of providing a diversity of viewpoints. These organizations represented a mix of FCSS members, including both lead agencies and service providers, across various sectors.

### Data Limitations

As a sample of convenience was used, the survey may be affected by selection bias. Also, due to the small sample size, survey data was only analyzed at the total level.

# IMPACT AT THE FAMILY LEVEL

The Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change is based on the belief that change has to happen at both the system and the neighbourhood level if it is to have real impact on families. The following section examines the impact London's approach has had on **families**; the next section looks at the impact the approach has had on the **system** itself. Both sections are organized by sub-section:

- What has been the overall impact?
- What did the data say?
- What comments did the Evaluators make?
- What did families and system participants have to say themselves?

## OVERALL, WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM APPROACH ON FAMILIES?

The impact has been very positive! The impact assessment demonstrates:

1. Families who have visited a Family Centre are more aware of the services available
2. Families are more comfortable accessing services
3. Families find it easier to access services
4. Families have a better and more consistent experience when accessing services
5. Families are more empowered, knowledgeable, and better able to make informed decisions
6. Families may experience improved wait times at Family Centres
7. Families are more comfortable with the number of times they are telling their stories
8. There is a sense of involvement in the community that builds over time as a result of visiting Family Centre

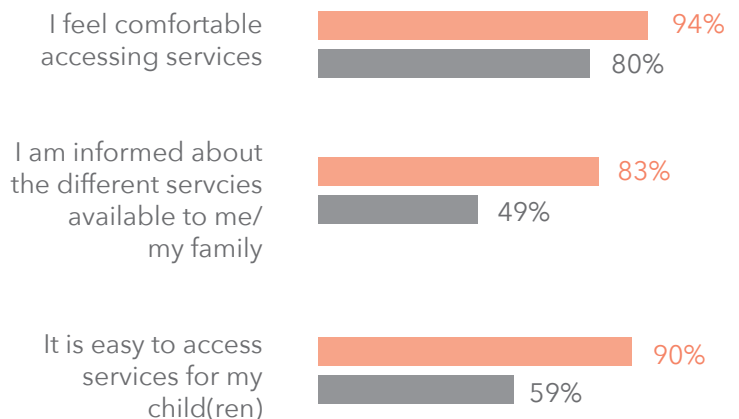
## WHAT THE DATA SAID...

### Families have a better experience when accessing services at the Family Centre!

The chart below summarizes some of the key findings from the assessment.

Regardless of whether they do so at a Family Centre or in some other way, families in London are generally very comfortable accessing the services they need.

However, there is a significant difference in how informed parents are and how easy they find it to access services between families that are involved with a Family Centre and those that are not. On these two measurements, which are known to be critical indicators of the family's ability to get the supports they need, there is very strong data to show that the Family-Centred Service System and Family Centres themselves are having a significant positive impact.



*Families who visit Family Centres (n=297)*

*Families who do not visit Family Centres (n=364)*



## OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES HAVE IMPROVED

The Family-Centred Service System strategy identifies five key outcomes for families:

1. Families are connected and engaged in their neighbourhood
2. Families experience reduced storytelling
3. Families have a better and more consistent experience when accessing services
4. Families can easily access a full range of services
5. Families experience shorter wait times

If the family-centred approach impacted these outcomes, there would be a compelling argument that the approach is working.

The Evaluators found **strong** evidence the Family-Centred Service System approach has contributed to two

of the outcomes (better and more consistent experience and easier access to a full range of services). Equally important, the assessment found there is some evidence to support that the approach is impacting the other three outcomes of reduced storytelling, shorter wait times and engagement in the neighbourhood.

**In other words, the Family-Centred Service System is having a positive impact on all five of the key outcomes for families.**

It was noted by the Evaluators that the evidence of impact on family outcomes was found even though development of the family-centred approach and system is still at the very early stages. The system governance model has only been in place for a few years, and the establishment of Family Centres is a relatively new feature of the approach. It is strongly believed that the degree of impact will only increase as the system continues to evolve and mature into the full vision.

### Impact Summary

**Strong** evidence to support that the FCSS has contributed to the following impacts:

Families have a better and more consistent experience when accessing services

Families can easily access a full range of services

**Some** evidence to support that the FCSS has contributed to the following impacts:

Families experience reduced storytelling

Families experience shorter wait times

Families are connected and engaged in their neighbourhood

## WHAT THE EVALUATORS SAID

In summary, findings from the assessment suggest a difference in the service access experience between families who have visited a Family Centre and those who haven't visited a Family Centre. Families who have visited a Family Centre were more likely to indicate that they feel comfortable accessing services, that it was easy to access services and that they are informed of the different services available.

Family Centres as a single neighbourhood destination contributes to an improved service access experience for families, namely: the Community Connector role; providing access to a wide range of services, intentional connectivity, and a knowledgeable main point of contact that connects families to information and services.

Families who have not visited a Family Centre were less satisfied with their service experience regardless of where they accessed services. There is some evidence of reduced wait times at Family Centres and that families are comfortable with the number of times they are telling their stories when compared to families who accessed services outside of the Family Centre. Further, there is a sense of involvement in the community that builds overtime as a result of visiting Family Centres.

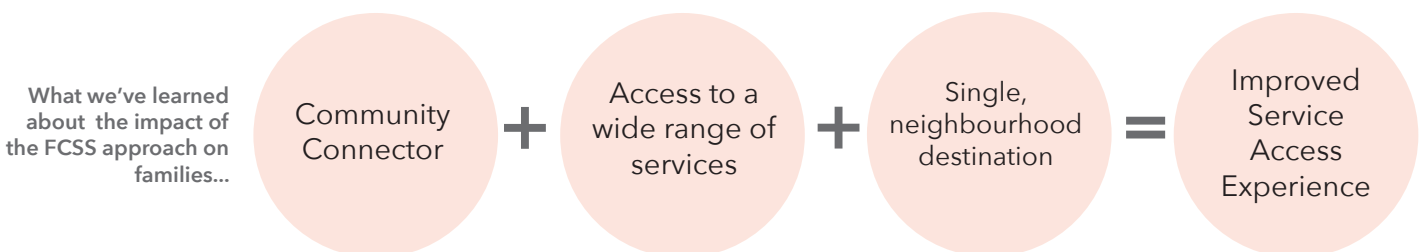
Families noted that it is challenging to find programs to interest and challenge their older children, specifically children over the age of twelve.

## A FAMILY'S TESTIMONY

I was originally reluctant to visit the Family Centre because I don't like asking for help when it comes to me and my family. However, my family and I were going through a very hard time in our lives and as a single mother with a 15-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son I had no choice but to look for assistance. As soon as I walked into the Family Centre I immediately felt comfortable, the staff at the Family Centre were so warm and welcoming, that I was not ashamed to be honest with them about our family's situation.

At this time, I was in a very hard time financially and it affected my son - his behaviour, school and just about every other aspect of his life. My daughter was not impacted as much as my son, but there was a lot of arguing taking place in our home. What happened was, I went to the Family Centre because I didn't have a phone or a computer. The Family Centre staff were welcoming and allowed me to access these services from the Centre. As the staff were so welcoming, I was able to open up to them about our situation. They then referred me to several programs and services that would help my son. Specifically, they referred me to a local service provider that helps at-risk youth and their families. My son and I visited this organization on a weekly basis and they were able to provide our family with an in-home support worker. Now that my son is in respite, he visits this organization on a weekly basis which allows me to have a break. He participates in several games and activities there (i.e., foosball, paintball, they watch movies and they feed him dinner). My daughter and I still visit the Family Centre together and access a lot of classes, mainly cooking classes.

The Family Centre has had a very positive impact on the lives of my son, daughter, and I. If it wasn't for the Family Centre, I would not have been connected to this organization for my son. Behaviourally and at school my son is doing a lot better, and I am so thankful. Staff at the Family Centre were there for me when things in our lives were particularly hard. When I needed simple things like to use a phone or a computer, I could do that there. When I just needed someone to talk to and seek advice from, the staff were there.





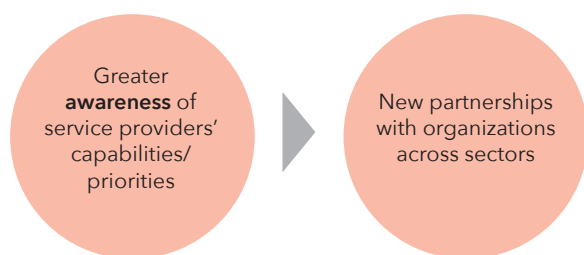
# IMPACT AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL

The Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change is based on the belief that change has to happen at both the system and the neighbourhood level if it is to have real impact on families. In the previous section, the impact the FCSS approach has had on families was discussed. The following section discusses the impact the FCSS approach has had on the organizations that make up the family-centred service system.

## OVERALL, WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM APPROACH ON ORGANIZATIONS?

Service delivery organizations were surveyed to determine the impact the Family-Centred Service System approach had on their organizations, either in how they provide their services or how they relate to other organizations. As with the family impact survey, this analysis generated huge amounts of data. The key impacts are:

1. Cultural shift among Family-Centred Service System organizations
2. Increased awareness and sharing of information about different service providers and their capabilities, services, and priorities among organizations
3. Improved system capacity through strengthened relationships and partnerships between FCSS organizations
4. Improved collaboration between service providers and the delivery of integrated and localized services for families.
5. Increase in the number and appropriateness of referrals made on behalf of families



## WHAT THE DATA SAID...

**The Family-Centred Service System approach has resulted in improved collaboration between service providers and the delivery of integrated and localized services for families.**

The improved collaboration amongst service providers has delivered real value for service providers and for the families they serve.

As organizations work more collaboratively, there is greater information sharing between them. This greater awareness of each organization's scope of practice, capabilities and capacity improves the accuracy and timeliness of referrals for families, which benefits both the family and the organization.

### Benefits of increased information sharing...

- Improved sharing of information/knowledge related to services and capabilities
- Greater awareness of the capabilities of other organizations improves accuracy of referrals
- Increased referrals to organizations that service providers haven't referred families in the past
- Increase the number of referrals made to the Family Centres

Additionally, Family Centre organizations are experiencing efficiencies in how they deliver services. As resources from multiple organizations are pooled, duplicative services and programs are identified and greater focus can be brought to each organization's service delivery strategy. This allows organizations to re-invest these savings to either serve more clients or serve existing clients more fully.

### Benefits of improved collaboration...

- Organizations benefit from the experience and the expertise of the staff they are collaborating with
- By combining resources from the different organizations there are benefits in terms of program reach
- Less duplication, as organizations are not providing the same services in isolation
- The provision of more comprehensive/wrap-around services for families

## WHAT THE EVALUATORS SAID

In summary, findings from the system level assessment indicate that there is a cultural shift observed through the commitment to neighbourhood-focused service planning and delivery among FCSS organizations, and a greater openness and opportunity to working together to improve services for families (compared to before the FCSS initiative).

The FCSS approach has strengthened relationships between FCSS organizations and has led to the establishment of new partnerships across multiple sectors. The greater awareness of who provides which services and the resulting increase in collaboration, integration and partnerships between FCSS organizations has allowed organizations to benefit from each other's experience and expertise and focus on their area of expertise to offer families a broader range of services.

Due to the improved integration of services, collaboration and partnerships, there is evidence of less duplication of services and timelier referral process at Family Centres. The referral process moves beyond simply providing families with information to actually making contact with other service providers on behalf of families and following up with the families.

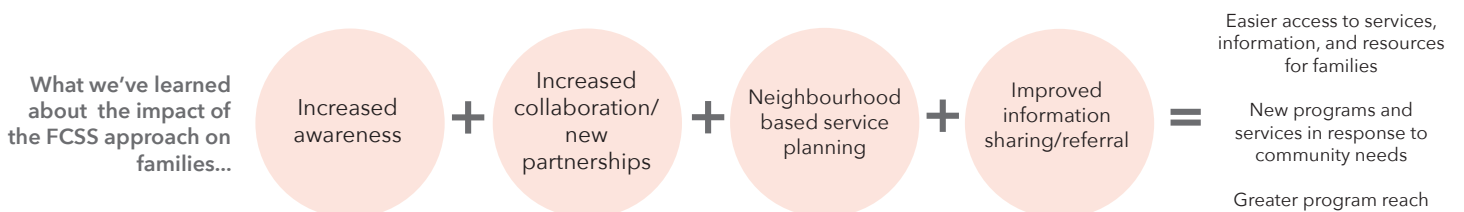
Information sharing between service providers can be challenging due to the tendency for some organizations to be protective of their existing programs/services and its link to the security of funding. Although organizations at this time are sharing information related to programs and services, they are less likely to share client specific information.

## A SAMPLE OF WHAT ORGANIZATIONS SAID

As a result of the FCSS, two organizations were able to identify an opportunity to improve their service offerings to families. The organizations entered into a partnership, using their individual expertise to provide an enhanced, integrated program that would better meet the needs of families.

The two organizations were able to provide this enhanced program by complementing each other's expertise. The first organization provides a range of services to newcomers, centred around settlement services and supports. The second organization is focused on early years programming and also had a staff member that was from the same ethnic group as the families the first organization was working with.

With the first organization providing their expertise in settlement services, and the second organization providing expertise working with younger children (through their ECE staff), they were able to enhance a long running parent circle program. With the involvement of the second organization, the program is now more comprehensive and addresses a wider range of needs for families new to the London area. As a result, families now receive more holistic support through the parent circle than they would have prior to the FCSS initiative.



# SUMMARY

*The Family-Centred Service System Assessment indicates that the FCSS approach and the Family Centres have had positive impacts to date for both families and service providers.*

*These impacts are likely to continue as the FCSS approach expands into new neighbourhoods. These impacts should be monitored moving forward in order to assess how the experience of families has changed as a result of the FCSS, and where additional focus needs to be directed to continuously improve families' experiences accessing services in London.*

*Evaluator feedback*

The independent Family-Centred Service System Impact Assessment investigated the impact the strategy has had at the family, neighbourhood and service system levels. The assessment has generated a large and robust data set that partners are using to deepen the impact of the work. Despite limitations related to the short period of time that the family-centred approach has been operational, the overall summary of the data leads to these compelling findings:

- The Family-Centred Service System provides families with a better, easier and more consistent experience accessing services and allows them to access a full range of services.
- The Family-Centred Service System may be leading to reduced storytelling for families, shorter wait times and the extent to which families feel connected and engaged in their neighbourhood.
- There has been a cultural shift among FCSS organizations in which the commitment to neighbourhood-focused service planning and delivery has strengthened relationships and created new partnerships that improve families' experience accessing services, leading to higher quality, more efficient referrals, reduced program and service duplication and increased opportunity for focused service expansion.

**In summary, the Family-Centred Service System strategy is working!**

