

THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM APPROACH AND THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM THEORY OF CHANGE

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 a real impact for 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 "system reengineering" approach to service delivery. In the past three years, four neighbourhood Family Centres have been established in key London neighbourhoods as the first step in creating a network of Family Centres across our community.

The Family-Centred Service System Approach and the Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change¹ provides background context on how "Creating a Family-Centred Service System" came to be one of four strategic priorities endorsed by our community and included in the Child and Youth Network's Child and Youth Agenda. The Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change is presented, laying out the key strategies and pathways being used to transform London's service system. Through the identification of levers of change and by mapping strategic pathways, goals and outcomes, the Theory of Change provides a high level overview of our approach to creating and implementing change. A brief overview of Family Centres, the neighbourhood locations that are the physical manifestations of the integrated service delivery system, is also provided. The discussion concludes with a summary of the Family-Centred Service System Impact Assessment that was conducted in 2014.

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

- 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
- Developing a Shared Measurement and Assessment Framework for the Family-Centred Service System

THE FCSS APPROACH

A COMPELLING CALL TO ACTION

Informed by the Province of Ontario's Best Start strategy, London's Child and Youth Network was established in 2007 when organizations from all sectors came together to talk about how to improve outcomes for children, youth and families in our community. Despite London's reputation as a caring city and a place where most children and youth have the opportunity to grow up healthy and happy, we were aware that too many children were being left behind. Over time, the conversations coalesced into the *Child and Youth Agenda*, a shared plan for collective action guided by the voices of London families to achieve the long-term vision of: "Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow."

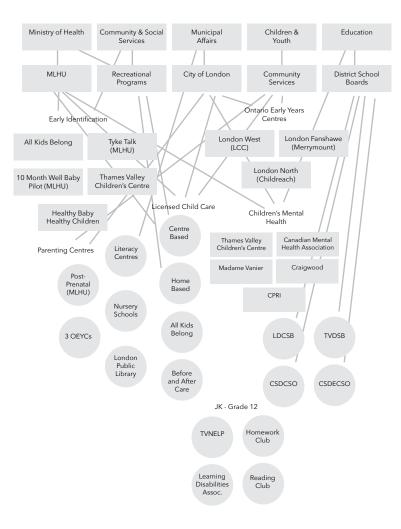
We learned from families that when they don't know about the full range of services available to them, or when they find the system hard to use, they may not access the services and supports they need. Some families struggle to find the right information about services. When they do get the information, they sometimes face additional barriers such as transportation and financial challenges, or having to repeat their stories to agencies that don't seem to know much about each other's work.

When we began, London's service delivery system was not seamless or easy to access. In fact, when asked about the service system, London families told us:

- The system was difficult to navigate
- Services were fragmented
- They didn't know where to start
- They were telling their story too many times
- They had to travel all over the city for service
- They had to wait too long to access the services they needed

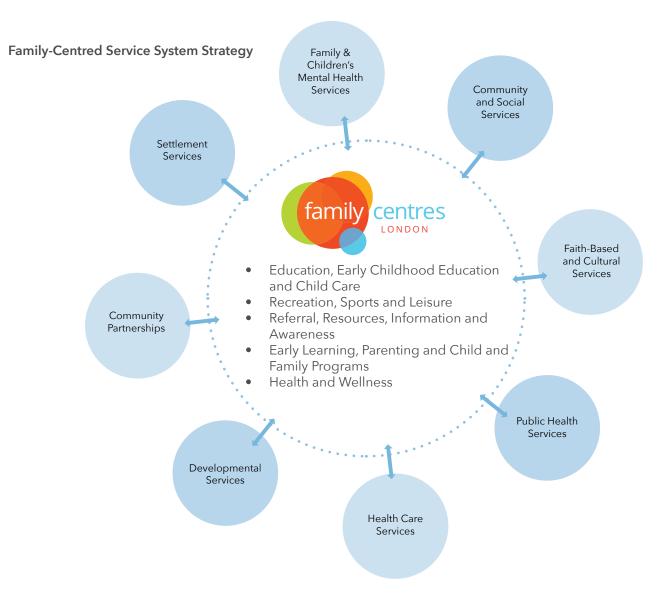
Supported by a collective desire to improve outcomes for children, youth and families, more than 50 service delivery organizations in London have actively collaborated to create a more family-centred service delivery system. Recognizing that change has to happen at both the system level and the neighbourhood level, this community of service providers began "reengineering" the service delivery system.

London's Initial State



In February 2012, the CYN released *Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood - Re-Imagining Services for London's Children, Youth and Families*, which offered the community a detailed guide to implementing change.

Not only does this plan set out the vision, the goal and the outcomes we want to achieve, it also lays out the roadmap and the "tool kits" that bring about the change.



THE VISION

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

THE STRATEGY

The goal of the Family-Centred Service System is to make it easier for London's children, youth and families to participate fully in their neighbourhoods and get the services they need. To achieve this goal, we are working to make the service system more responsive and seamless for families by:

- Moving beyond collaboration, coordination and co-location to an integrated, family-centred model of service delivery; and
- Developing a network of neighbourhood Family Centres

OUTCOME DRIVEN

The Family-Centred Service System identified five outcomes that are important to families. These are the outcomes by which success will be measured:

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

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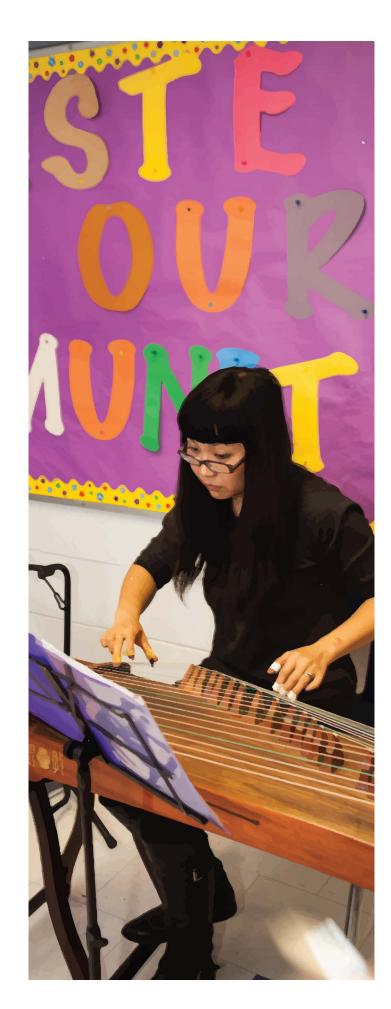
THREE CORE BELIEFS

Services improve outcomes for families - We believe the programs and services provided by Family-Centred Service System (FCSS) partners are relevant and valuable to families, and that they are effective in achieving the desired outcomes. The FCSS approach is not about changing these services themselves, but rather about improving the family's access to them. The FCSS strategy is focused on improved access to services, with the understanding it is the impact of the services themselves that creates change in the family's lives.

System change drives outcome change - We believe that in order for outcomes for families to be better, the "system" as a whole has to change how it works. In the FCSS strategy, there are four goals that organizations share:

- Child-centred, family-focused services
- Less fragmentation and duplication
- Client-centred, integrated service delivery
- Easier, improved and timely access to services

Transformative change requires thinking differently at all levels - We believe that in order to make real change in how families are supported, we need to think differently at all levels. Whether planning at the system level or the neighbourhood level; whether operating at a senior leadership level, the service delivery level or any and all levels in between, individuals and organizations must commit to a cultural change in thinking about how they approach their work. Our commitment to this change is evident through our shared principles and values.



THE FCSS THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change applies critical thinking to the design, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives envisioned to create social change. By identifying strategic pathways, the Theory of Change demonstrates the logical sequence of change, and identifies where "levers of change" can be manipulated to influence the speed and direction of the pathway.

The Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change is founded in the belief that in order to achieve the outcomes that families want, change must be made at both the system and the neighbourhood level.

At the system level, from senior leaders to those who work directly with families, service delivery organizations need to re-think their approaches and the way they collaborate with other organizations. Partners need to think differently about their roles in, and contribution to, the overall system of services. Funders need to reassess their criteria for funding and some of the restrictions the funding mandates impose on the funded organizations.

At the neighbourhood level, where families live, work, and go to school, we need to offer welcoming locations that are easy to access and staffed by knowledgeable professionals that understand and respect what each can do to support the family. Once through the door, families need to know that they can access all the core functions they need, either at the Family Centre or in the neighbourhood, and that moving from one service to another is as easy and seamless as possible.

The Family-Centred Service System strategy maps seven strategic pathways by which the service system is changed. Each of these pathways is influenced by manipulating nine independent but interconnected "levers of change".

Levers of Change

STRATEGIC PATHWAYS

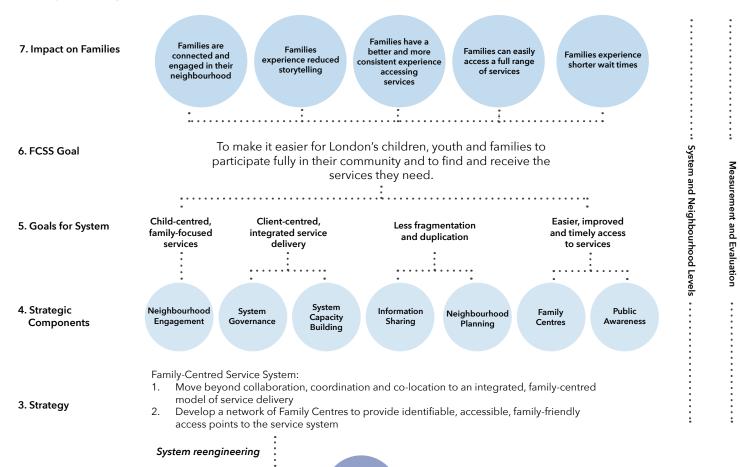
- Neighbourhood engagement residents make meaningful decisions about services that impact them
- 2. System governance service providers set a common system vision and strategy for integrated service delivery
- **3. System capacity building** service providers develop skills to work inter-professionally and build a culture of collaboration
- **4. Information sharing** service providers share information on programs and services
- **5. Neighbourhood planning** service providers and residents co-develop an operational plan for integrated service based on the system vision
- **6.** Family Centres physical spaces provide seamless, family-friendly access to a "single door to multiple opportunities" in every neighbourhood
- 7. Public Awareness integrated services within and beyond Family Centres are marketed to the public



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This diagram illustrates the FCSS approach to how change is taking place. Beginning with the Problems (1) that parents described, the Theory of Change first identified nine levers (2) or processes which could be manipulated to reengineer the system and facilitate change. Once the system reengineering work had begun, the Strategies (3) and the Strategic Components (4) were brought into play, resulting in achievement of system goals (5). As the system goals are realized, the FCSS goal (6) is achieved and this in turn leads to the desired impacts on the family (7).

Theory of Change Model



Areas of influence in the system

FCSS Vision:

and holistic approach.'

pathway" for each.

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multiple opportunities that support children and families in achieveing their full potential. These opportunities will be identified by the neighbourhood and implemented according to best practices using an integrative, inclusive

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2. Levers of Change

1. Problem Statement

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- Services were fragmented
- They were telling their stories too many times
- They didn't know where to start

Funding and

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FAMILY CENTRES



WARM, WELCOMING **NEIGHBOURHOOD LOCATIONS**

The establishment of neighbourhood Family Centres is one of the key strategic pathways identified in the Family-Centred Service System Theory of Change. Family Centres represent the integration of services in the neighbourhood; a place where service providers can support families in an integrated, holistic manner.

A Family Centre is an easily-identifiable neighbourhood hub or space in a school where families can access a range of services and supports. Instead of families having to go to multiple different agencies or organizations across the city to get services, Family Centres bring services to families in an integrated, accessible and family-friendly way.

The inclusion of Family Centres in schools is a deliberate strategy to connect all families in the neighbourhood to the education system long before the children are old enough to attend. It is well understood that when parents and children have positive experiences at school, the educational outcomes are better. By connecting with families at schools even before children are born, the positive Family Centre experience helps to ensure a smooth transition to and through the school years.

A community development approach is found at the core of every Family Centre, with a residentled neighbourhood engagement process guiding the ongoing operation of the Family Centre and its services. Facilitated by the Family Centre Lead Agency, residents and service providers discuss the unique strengths and assets of each neighbourhood. While there is consistency in the core functions that are available in locations across the network, each Family Centre also reflects the uniqueness and character of the neighbourhood in which it is located. Family buyin is very high; families are more aware of and feel more connected to the programs and services in their neighbourhood. Service providers learn how to adapt programming to better meet the community's need.





Family Centres aren't just about locating services from different service providers under the same roof. They are about providing a comfortable, seamless experience for families. Once inside the door of any neighbourhood Family Centre, families are greeted by a friendly, knowledgeable "Community Connector" who will assist them in accessing a range of core programs and services, including:

- Parenting and Early Learning Programs (e.g. parenting attachment programs, play groups, language development programs)
- Education, Early Childhood Education and Child Care (e.g. centre-based licensed child care, licensed non-traditional hours care)
- **Public Health and Wellness** (e.g. pre-natal support, post-natal or early screening and assessment)
- Recreation, Sports and Leisure (e.g. physical activity programming, arts/culture programming)
- Referral, Resources, Information and Awareness (e.g. child care fee subsidy access, family literacy, basic needs supports, children's mental health service referral)

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

The Community Connector's function is critical to successfully connect families to programs and services. The function brings the community development and neighbourhood engagement approach right into the lobby of the Family Centre. Community Connectors work alongside families to identify the programs and services that are of interest and importance to their lives.

Community Connectors are the warm and welcoming faces that families see when they first come into a Family Centre. A Community Connector is the trusted person who can provide initial answers and the knowledgeable professional who not only knows who to call, but is also prepared to make the call together with families. He or she can make the connection to a service on behalf of a family or simply explain the service and how it might support the family.



IMPACT

SO WHAT HAS THE FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICE SYSTEM ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?

In 2014, an independent Family-Centred Service System Impact Assessment investigated the impact the strategy has had so far at the family, neighbourhood, and service system levels. Despite limitations related to the short period of time that the family-centred approach has been operational, we are seeing substantial impacts²:

- 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 an increase in the family's sense of connection and engagement with 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 the family's experience accessing services, leading to higher quality, more efficient referrals, reduced program and service duplication and increased opportunity for focused service expansion.

The results from the Impact Assessment are very encouraging. Despite being a relatively new approach, we are beginning to see real change at both the system and the neighbourhood level.

Are we where we want to be? Not yet! But the evidence is clear that we are on the right path and that our system is well on its way to realizing the change families want to see.

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^{2.} For additional details about the Family-Centred Service System Impact Assessment, please read the second discussion in this series, entitled How the Family-Centred Service System Approach is Impacting Families in London