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| To: | Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council |
| Committee Date: | June 13, 2019 |
| Subject / Report No: | SSR-CW-07-19 |
| Title: | Children's Services Five-Year Plan |
| Prepared by: | Ashley Barfoot and Tara Cockerill |
| Reviewed by: | Barbara Arbuckle and Barb Fedy |
| Lower Tier(s) Affected: | County-wide initiative |
| Status: | Recommendation adopted by Committee of the Whole as presented as per Resolution <i>CW135-19</i> ; Endorsed by Council on June 27, 2019 as per Resolution <i>CC47-19</i> . |

Recommendation

1. **That Report SSR-CW-07-19 pertaining to Grey County Children's Services Five-Year Service Plan be received; and**
2. **That the Grey County Children's Services Five-Year Service Plan be endorsed and forwarded to the Ministry of Education as required by Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.**

Executive Summary

Under the Child Care and Early Years Act, each Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) is required to have a multiyear service plan in place for its community that aligns with the current government's philosophies and is approved by Council. The Ministry of Education made this formal request for a Five-Year Service System Plan on August 22, 2017 through Memo titled "*Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plans*". This Five-Year Service System Plan is due to the Ministry of Education by June 30, 2019.

Grey County Children's Services continues to wait for the release of the revised child care guidelines (2019), the revised EarlyON guidelines (2019) and the 2019 funding agreement. The guidelines provide the operational details required to support our local child care and early years community; while, the funding agreement advises how much money is available within each funding category. As a result, this is a high-level "plan to plan" which answers the minimum questions asked by the Ministry

The Service System Plan is based on extensive consultation with stakeholders. The feedback received forms the basis of the nine key priorities provided in the plan for Grey County Children's Services to address over the next five years. These can be summarized as providing greater administrative efficiency, enhancing access to the registered staff that childcare providers need and improving affordability and cost containment for families and service providers.

Background and Discussion

The County of Grey, as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), is responsible for establishing a child care and early years programs and services plan (service system plan) for Grey County. This Service System Plan is a tool that will be used to analyze the impacts of programs and services, identify progress and service gaps as well as provide information to the Ministry of Education. This Service System Plan will be updated at least every five years.

Grey County's Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (2019-2024) summarizes stakeholders' feedback obtained through surveys completed between February to April 2019. The key stakeholders that were involved in the consultation of the plan included:

- Parents/Caregivers;
- Child Care Operators;
- Service Providers for Special Needs Resourcing; and,
- EarlyON Child and Family Centre Services.

When choosing child care services, the top three most important factors identified by parents / caregivers were:

1. Quality of Care,
2. Hours of Operation; and,
3. Location.

Child Care Operators providing licensed child care services throughout Grey County identified three challenges:

1. Finding Quality Staff
2. Administrative Burden
3. Funding Uncertainty

Child Care Operators most suggested priorities for Grey County Children's Services to support their work in providing quality child care were:

1. Access to funding and wage equity
2. Cooperation and communication between Operators and CMSM

3. Retaining qualified staff
4. Improved waitlist management

While collating all of the stakeholders' feedback, nine key priorities were identified. These nine priorities are in the Executive Summary of this report. These priorities align with:

- *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*; and,
- *Ontario's Child Care Service Management and Funding Guidelines (2018)*; and,
- *Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (2018) Business Practices and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers*; and,
- The County of Grey's Strategic Plan.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

The Service System Plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by June 30, 2019. This Service System Plan will be updated at least every five years, as required by Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

Financial and Resource Implications

The 2019 Service System Plan and Grey County's priorities for the next five years were created prior to the release of the 2019 Child Care and Early Years Funding Allocations Memo and the updated Funding Guidelines. The Service System Plan Priorities are subject to change once the Funding Guidelines and revised Transfer Payment Agreement are received and the impacts to services based on funding changes are fully understood. Initial indications are that there will be a decrease in funding for Children's Services programs and this plan will be revised to reflect changes.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
 - Social Services
 - Finance
 - Planning and Development

- External (list)
 - Child Care Operators
 - Parents/Caregivers
 - Service Providers for Special Needs Resourcing
 - EarlyON Child and Family Centres

- Bruce Grey Early Years Planning Committee

Appendices and Attachments

[Children's Services Five Year Service Plan](#)

[Memorandum - Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plans](#)

[Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Resource](#)