



Committee Report

CEYD-25-04

To: Chair and Members of the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee
From: Ashley Vanderlaan, Director of Children's Early Years
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2025
Subject: **Growing Great Generations Planning Table Update**

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the Growing Great Generations (GGG) Planning Table for children and youth, highlighting its current focus. This includes an overview of recent strategic planning efforts that are guiding its work to continue strengthening and building a coordinated system of services and supports for children, youth, and families in the Wellington-Guelph service delivery area.

Background:

In its role as the Service System Manager for the planning, coordinating, and administering licensed child care and early years programmes and services for the Wellington service delivery area, the Children's Early Years Division (CEYD) is mandated to develop and implement a comprehensive five-year service plan that ensures child care and early years programmes are high quality, accessible, affordable, and equitably available, while also addressing local needs through collaboration with community partners, school boards, and families.

Expanding on this collaborative role, CEYD also plays an important part in broader community planning efforts that support the well-being of children and youth from birth up to age 25. A pillar of this work is the GGG collaborative planning initiative, launched in 2013 which brings together partners from health, education, and social services to strengthen system integration and enhance service accessibility. Through this cross-sector collaboration, GGG aims to build a more connected, inclusive, and responsive system that enables children, youth, and families across the Wellington service delivery area to grow and thrive. A full list of members is attached as Appendix A.

CEYD plays a central leadership role in GGG. The Director of Children's Early Years co-leads the GGG Planning Table in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington (CMHA WW). The Planning Table functions as GGG's core leadership body, comprised of senior leaders from partner organizations. The GGG Planning Table provides strategic direction and leads key actions that advance GGG's goals. It also establishes standing committees and working groups, which may include individuals from across the partner organizations, to focus on long-term initiatives and specific objectives.

The work of GGG is coordinated by the Children's Services Planning Coordinator, a full-time position funded through the CEYD operating administration budget. All costs related to the County's

involvement in GGG are allocated within CEYD's existing annual operating budget. This includes materials to support meetings, website hosting and community collaboration events.

Update:

GGG has continued to evolve in response to changing community needs and system pressures. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, collaborative planning efforts were disrupted as CEYD, and its partners shifted their focus to emergency response and recovery. Recognizing the importance of re-establishing this work, the GGG Planning Table took deliberate steps in 2023 to rebuild and strengthen GGG's role as the central table for integrated planning for children, youth, and families in Wellington County and Guelph. This renewed effort was driven by a shared understanding that the challenges facing children, youth, and families, such as service fragmentation, access barriers, and rising complexity of needs, require coordinated, cross-sector solutions. CEYD continues to co-lead the GGG Planning Table alongside CMHA WW, recognizing that strong community planning is essential to achieving better outcomes for children and youth.

This renewed direction led to the development of the GGG Strategic Plan 2024–2026 (attached as Appendix B), which outlines five strategic priorities that guide the work of the GGG Planning Table, its standing committees and working groups:

1. **Relationships and Community Connections** - strengthening trust-based partnerships and building a cohesive support network for children and youth.
2. **Evidence-Informed Service Planning and Decision Making** - using data to guide collective action and measuring progress.
3. **Coordinated Service Planning and Response** - enabling proactive collaboration around emerging and ongoing needs.
4. **Building Protective Factors and Well-Being** - promoting and prioritizing prevention and resilience across the service system for children and youth.
5. **Coordinated Community Engagement** - ensuring that community voices shape and evaluate services.

It is important to highlight that these priorities are directly aligned with CEYD's Child Care and Early Years Service Plan (2023–2027), which prioritizes high-quality, equitably available, and accessible services for children and families, and emphasizes system integration and responsiveness.

GGG is now well into the implementation phase of the three-year Strategic Plan (2024–2026), actively working on its 13 actions and 37 activities. Recent achievements include:

- Hosting a Birth to Six Interprofessional Forum for 130 professionals to enhance cross-sector collaboration in agencies supporting early childhood development.
- Reviewing and updating the GGG terms of reference to strengthen governance and strategic alignment.
- Completing an environmental scan of local and provincial collaborative planning efforts for children and youth to inform future initiatives and the strategic plan update in 2027.

Looking ahead, GGG is prioritizing three key areas of work that build on past efforts and align with its current direction. While not formally outlined in the Strategic Plan as distinct actions, these areas

reflect and support a range of activities within it. Together, they represent just a portion of the broader work underway through implementation of the GGG Strategic Plan 2024–2026:

- **Service Navigation** – GGG is working to strengthen how families are connected to the right services at the right time. This includes surveying professionals to better understand current challenges, identifying key organizations involved in navigation and referral, and establishing a peer group of service navigators to share practices and collaborate. The goal is to improve access to services by enhancing coordination, building capacity among professionals, and ensuring families receive timely, informed support.
- **Website Modernization** – A refreshed GGG website is underway to improve how families and professionals access information about local services. The update is focused on enhancing usability for specific target audiences, ensuring the site is easy to navigate, and providing comprehensive, up-to-date information about community programmes and supports for children and youth. This work aims to make it easier for users to quickly find the resources they need, reducing barriers to access.
- **Indicators of Impact** – GGG is developing a shared framework to track community progress and measure the collective impact of its initiatives. This includes identifying relevant indicators, compiling data from across partner organizations, and exploring opportunities for collaborative data collection. The goal is to better understand and communicate how services are contributing to the well-being of children and youth in Wellington-Guelph, and to use this information to inform future planning and investment.

As implementation of the GGG Strategic Plan 2024–2026 progresses, GGG remains aligned with other planning efforts and community initiatives that support social, health, and well-being outcomes across Wellington-Guelph. This alignment helps reduce duplication, supports clearer roles among partners, and contributes to a more coordinated and responsive system of support by ensuring work is led by those best positioned to respond.

Conclusion

Through its co-leadership and coordination of the GGG collaborative planning, CEYD continues to support integrated community planning that spans the full age spectrum from early years to youth. While the GGG Strategic Plan 2024–2026 provides the current framework for action, this work builds on CEYD’s legislated role as Service System Manager and its long-standing commitment to working collaboratively across sectors to help ensure children, youth, and their families in Wellington County and Guelph reach their full potential.

Attachments:

Appendix A – List of Growing Great Generations Planning Table Members

Appendix B – Growing Great Generations Three-Year Strategic Plan (2024-2026)

Strategic Action Plan:

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

Doing what the County does best – Providing Critical Daily Services for your residents

Recommendation:

That the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee recommend to County Council that the report, Growing Great Generations Update, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ashley Vanderlaan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Ashley Vanderlaan, Director of Children's Early Years

Prepared with:

Mandy Keller, Children's Services Planning Coordinator

In consultation with/approved by:

Luisa Artuso, Social Services Administrator

Scott Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer