

A YEAR OF STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVANCING EQUITY



2025-2026
ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The 2025–2026 year was marked by meaningful progress in advancing our shared commitment to children, youth, and families across Guelph and Wellington County. Guided by our purpose and values, the organization continued to respond to increasingly complex needs through strong partnerships, innovative approaches, and a focus on equitable, culturally responsive service.

This year, we deepened collaboration both within the organization and across the community, recognizing that lasting outcomes are built through collective effort. Significant strides were made in embedding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion into practice and culture, alongside continued reflection and action to address systemic inequities, including the overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children.

Key strategic initiatives advanced service excellence, including the implementation of the complex needs strategy, enhanced responses to human trafficking and continued strengthening of trauma and equity informed practice, and expanded youth programming. Our continued emphasis on kinship care strengthened permanency and connection for children, while efforts to recruit and support diverse caregivers remained a priority.

Our dedicated staff, caregivers, donors, board, volunteers, and partners remain at the heart of this work. Investments in staff development and wellbeing supported a resilient workforce committed to continuous learning and accountability. Financial stewardship and advocacy were key priorities to ensure resources were aligned with strategic priorities and sustainable service delivery.

We are proud of the progress achieved this year and grateful for the collective efforts that made it possible. As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening partnerships, advancing equity, and evolving our services to ensure every child, youth, and family is supported by a network that listens, responds, and walks alongside them.

With gratitude,

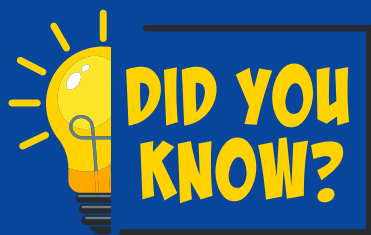
Animesh Vadaparti
Chair, Board of Directors

Daria Allan-Ebron, RSW, MSW
Executive Director

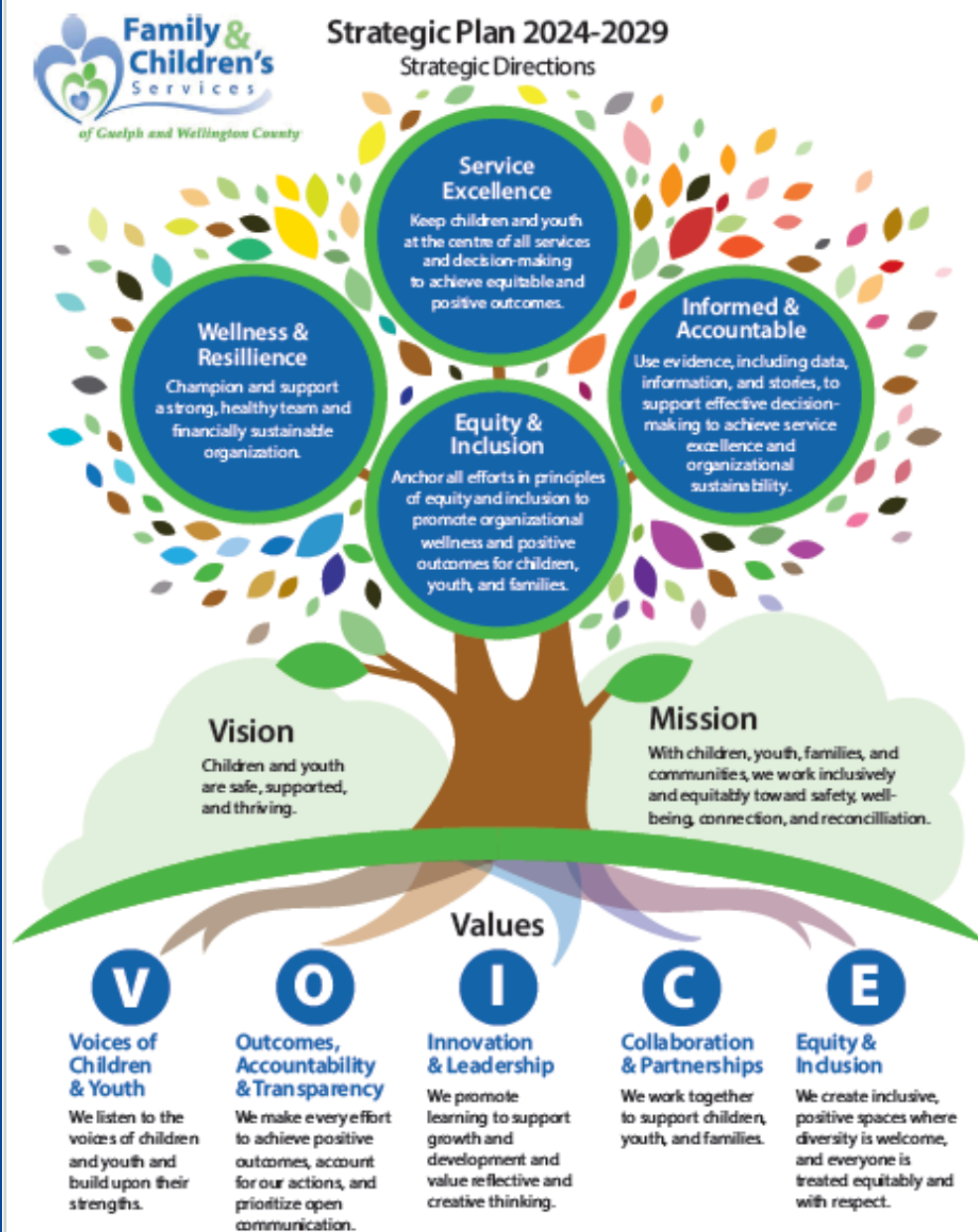
STRATEGIC PLANNING

Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County (FCSGW) launched its 2024-2029 Strategic Plan to guide its mission of supporting children, youth, and families in the region.

The plan outlines a renewed vision and strategic directions that reflect the evolving needs of the community and the organization's commitment to equity, inclusion, and collaboration.



You can explore the full details of the interactive Strategic Plan on their official website here: [Strategic Plan 2024-2029 – FCSGW](#)



2026 AWARD OF MERIT RECIPIENT

Helping Hand without Borders (HHWB) is the recipient of the 2026 Award of Merit, recognition of their ongoing partnership, collaboration, and commitment to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families in Guelph and Wellington County.

The award reflects HHWB's alignment with the Board's values of community partnership, inclusion, and collective action. The Award of Merit will be formally presented at the Annual Meeting on June 24, 2026, to Rajan Chhatkuli, founding leader and president of HHWBC. Mr. Chhatkuli has played an instrumental role in building the organization's reputation, strengthening community partnerships, and advancing its vision and impact. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to supporting the Agencies second annual Voice of Community Event.



"This award is a meaningful acknowledgment of our organization's commitment to supporting individuals, families, and communities through compassion, service, and inclusion. We are deeply grateful for this recognition and are proud to be among the recipients of this prestigious honour. This distinction inspires us to continue our mission of serving the community and fostering positive, lasting social change. Thank you once again to FCSGW, Executive Director Daria Allan-Ebron, and the Board of Directors for this tremendous honour."

***Sincerely,
Helping Hands Without Borders Canada (HHWBC)
Board of Directors, Volunteers, and Team Members***

ADVANCING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Equity & Inclusion

This year, we continued to deepen our commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as a core component of how we serve children, youth, and families. We recognize that achieving equitable outcomes requires ongoing learning, reflection, and deliberate action.

A key focus has been strengthening staff capacity through ongoing learning. This included organization-wide SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression) training, supporting staff to better understand and affirm the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth. In parallel, we advanced our understanding of disproportionality within child welfare, particularly the overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children. This work challenges us to reflect on systemic factors and decision-making processes, and to provide support that is fair, culturally responsive, and just.

Our learning continues to evolve through participation in Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS)-led Kujali training, which focuses on addressing anti-Black racism in child welfare. This work is strengthening both our awareness and our practice, helping to embed more equitable approaches across the organization.

We also recognize that meaningful change requires strong and trusting relationships with the communities we serve. In October, we hosted a Community Feast in partnership with Wendy Stewart (Tall Tree Consulting), bringing members of the Indigenous community together in a shared space of connection, culture, and dialogue. This gathering marked an important step in strengthening relationships and reimagining how we work alongside Indigenous families and communities.

We acknowledge the history and ongoing impact of child welfare involvement with Indigenous children and families, and the responsibility this places on us to move forward with humility, accountability, and sustained action. As part of this commitment, we will continue to support Community Feasts and to include community voices to meaningfully guide our work. Our EDI journey is ongoing. As we look ahead, we remain committed to listening, learning, and taking meaningful steps toward more equitable, culturally responsive, and community-informed practice.

BUILDING THE VILLAGE: LEARNING, LISTENING

**Service
Excellence**

Over the past several years, our organization has participated in the Village Finding initiative—an effort grounded in the belief that every child, youth, and family benefits from a strong network of support.

This work focused on strengthening natural community connections to reduce family stress, enhance belonging, and improve outcomes for children and youth.

Through this initiative, we observed that the concept of a “village” resonates deeply across families, partners, and community members. Even within early stages of implementation, meaningful relationships emerged, providing not only practical supports but also fostering safety, connection, and hope.



The evaluation highlighted that building a village requires time, trust, and intentional engagement. Sustainable impact is best achieved through community-led, grassroots approaches that honour local strengths, cultures, and relationships.

This learning is particularly significant in our work with Indigenous communities, where culturally grounded practices—such as gatherings and shared meals—play a vital role in building trust and connection. These efforts represent an ongoing commitment to respectful, relationship-based approaches that will continue to guide our work moving forward.

BUILDING THE VILLAGE: LOOKING AHEAD

Equity
&
Inclusion

Looking ahead, we remain deeply committed to the vision of Village Finding. We believe in its potential—not as a single program, but as a way of working and a philosophy of care. Our focus moving forward is to continue investing in community, supporting those who are already doing this work, and exploring new opportunities to build and sustain villages across Guelph and Wellington County.

This includes:

- Investing in grassroots initiatives that are already supporting children and families
- Strengthening partnerships with Indigenous and diverse communities
- Continuing to promote early intervention and prevention as a shared community responsibility
- Seeking new funding and opportunities to grow this work in thoughtful and sustainable ways

We also recognize that this work is part of a broader shift. It challenges us to think differently—not just about services, but about relationships, trust, and the role we all play in supporting children and families.

The Village Finding project has shown us what is possible. While the journey has included both successes and challenges, our commitment remains clear: We will continue to learn, to listen, and to invest in building a village—because every child deserves one.



2025-2026 FAMILY SERVICES



New Referrals

3,420

↓ -1%



New Non-Protection Services

2,148

→ 0%

New Investigations

1,272

↓ -4%

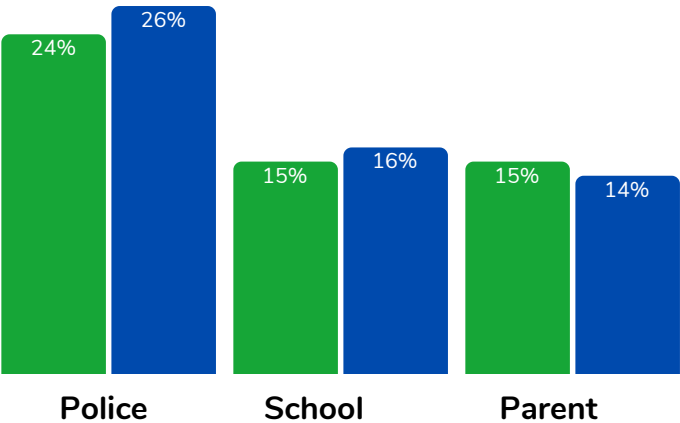
New Ongoing Services

152

↓ -17%

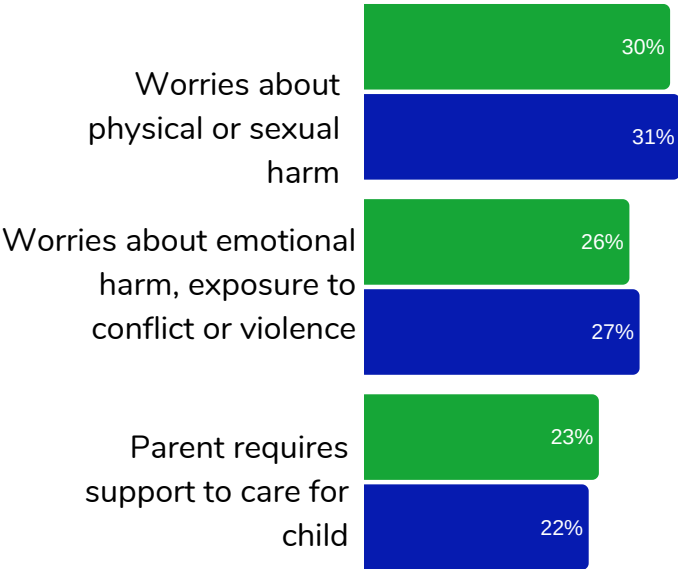
Top 3 Referral Sources

● Mar 31, 2025 ● Mar 31, 2026



Top 3 Reasons for Investigations

● Mar 31, 2025
● Mar 31, 2026



Total Protection Cases Receiving Services

Already open at start of year
New cases during year

Total cases served in year

Investigations

2024-25 2025-26

272 215

1,325 1,272

1,597 1,487

Ongoing Services

2024-25 2025-26

217 210

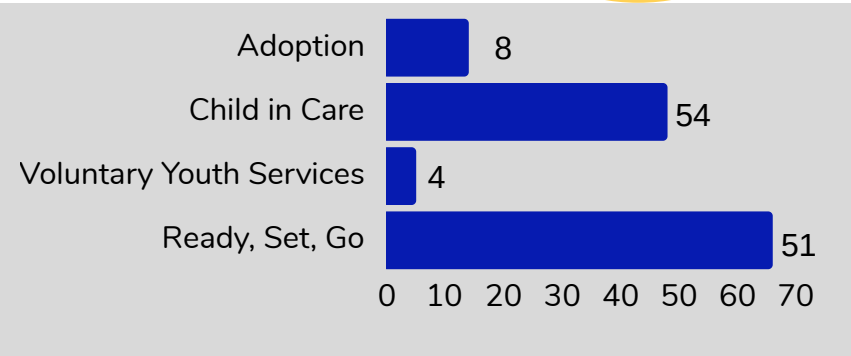
184 152

401 362

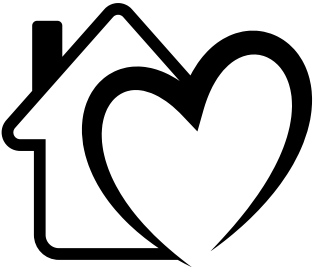
CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUT OF HOME CARE



Children and Youth in Out of Home Care on
March 31, 2026 (N= 117)



Top 3 Reasons Out of Home Services Ended



	2024-25	2025-26
Adoption Completed	30%	
RSG Agreement Ended	26%	30%
Child/Youth returned home	17%	19%
Moved to Kinship Service		18%

	Foster		Adoption	
	2024-25	2025-26	2024-25	2025-26
Number of Agency Approved Homes Active in Year	33	32	30	24
Number Home Studies Completed in Year	4	3	5	10
Number of Unique Children Served in Year	35	41	26	17
Number of Adoptions Completed in Year			14	9

FOSTER CAREGIVER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Service
Excellence

November 2025 marked one full year since the establishment of the Foster Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Committee. Over this time, our work has remained focused on strengthening both the recruitment and retention of foster caregivers, with an emphasis on building a connected and supported caregiver community. To support retention, we facilitated a range of engagement opportunities, including informal coffee gatherings and playgroups.

These initiatives created space for relationship-building, peer support, and shared experiences, contributing to a stronger sense of belonging among foster caregivers. Our recruitment efforts continued to be intentional and equity-focused, prioritizing families who can meet the diverse identity needs of children and youth in care.

This included outreach to underrepresented communities, such as attending local mosque services to share information about fostering, as well as partnering with Out on the Shelf to host information sessions aimed at engaging 2SLGBTQ+ prospective caregivers. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to ensuring that children and youth in care are supported by caregivers who affirm and reflect their identities, while strengthening a diverse, inclusive, and resilient foster care community.





Way to go, Guelph-Wellington! This year, we proudly celebrate the continued advancement of a Kin-First service delivery approach across the agency. Kinship placements remain a clear priority for Guelph-Wellington Family and Children’s Services, and this work is strongly supported by service teams at every level. Our collective commitment has made meaningful progress possible. Data continues to demonstrate a steady rise in agency-supported kin placements, alongside an overall decline in the number of children in traditional care. We are now supporting over 100 children and youth in kinship arrangements, an important milestone that reflects both intentional practice and strong collaboration across teams.

We know that children and youth thrive when they can remain connected to their families and communities. When reunification is not possible, well-supported and safe kin placements provide stability, continuity, and a sense of belonging. As reflected in our outcomes: 96% of children and youth either remained with kin or were successfully reunified with their primary caregivers. The Irvine Fund, continues to grow and plays a critical role in supporting kin caregivers with the resources they need to provide stable and nurturing homes. At the same time, we recognize the ongoing need for advocacy to strengthen financial, and service supports available to kinship families.



	Kinship Care	Kinship Service
	Kinship care is when a child or youth with "in care" status is placed with a family member or someone known to them or their family.	Kinship service is when a child or youth who does not have "in care" status is placed with a family member or someone known to them or their family.
Families providing kin placements	2024-25 102025-26 8↓ 20%	2024-25 922025-26 101↑ 10%
Children/Youth in kin placements	2024-25 122025-26 25↑ 108%	2024-25 1112025-26 138↑ 24%

INDIGENOUS PRACTICE AND CUSTOMARY CARE

Service
Excellence

This year, efforts focused on supporting Indigenous children and youth through culturally responsive approaches that prioritize prevention of care admission. This included engagement in Indigenous ADR processes, intentional use of Jordan's Principle funding, and early planning with families and communities.

Progress was made in strengthening customary care knowledge through support from the legal team and collaboration with the FNIM Consultant to guide culturally grounded decision-making. There were key learning regarding :

- Jordan's Principle funding
- Community-informed planning and kinship placement.
- Reunification with family.

Looking ahead, the organization continues to prioritize family-based, community-driven approaches that support children remaining within their extended families and cultural communities. Efforts are focused on strengthening customary care arrangements and exploring additional opportunities to support children in transitioning from care into stable, kinship-based environments.

These approaches reflect an ongoing commitment to Indigenous-led practices that promote stability, cultural connection, and the prevention of formal care placements.

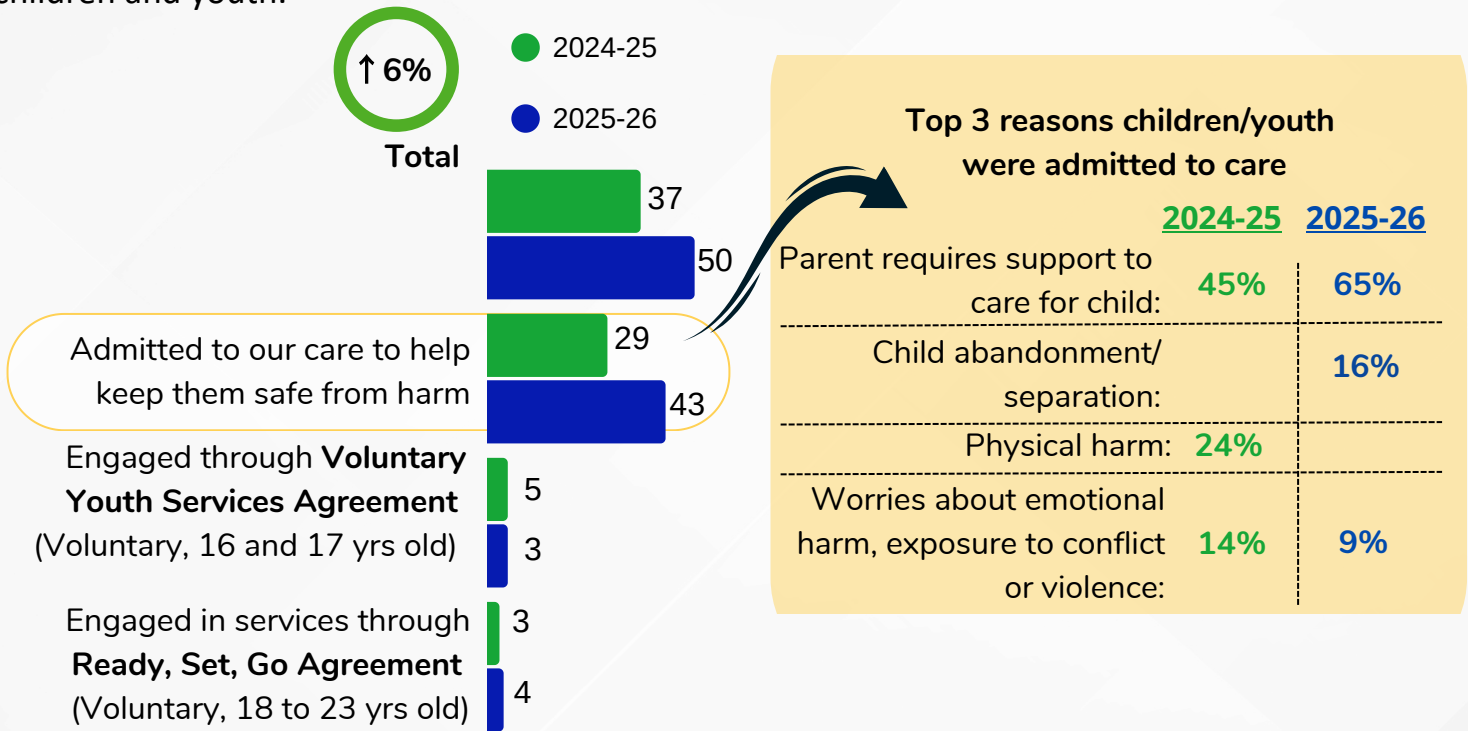


STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONS OF CARE: COMPLEX NEEDS STRATEGY



This year, FCSGW launched its Complex Needs Strategy to strengthen how we support children and families experiencing increasingly complex challenges.

The strategy focuses on improving access to services through enhanced advocacy and system navigation, advancing timely and effective permanency planning, strengthening kinship and family-based care, and building both internal and community partnerships to expand available supports. By aligning practice, partnerships, and resources, the strategy aims to keep children safely with their families whenever possible, reduce reliance on high-cost and unstable placements, and create a more coordinated, equitable, and sustainable system of care for children and youth.



Anchor Positive Behaviour Support Program

We were the proud recipients of an Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Seed Grant, enabling the launch of a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Pilot Program in partnership with Anchor Rehabilitation Support Services.

This 12-month initiative strengthens supports for neurodiverse children and youth with complex behavioural needs by providing evidence-based coaching for caregivers, specialized training for staff, and a locally adapted PBS framework aimed at reducing crisis-driven interventions and improving family stability.



ADVANCING SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Service
Excellence

This year, the Practice Development and Clinical Support Team strengthened Service Excellence by fostering a culture of consistent, reflective practice across the organization. Grounded in the belief that Service Excellence is a shared, everyday commitment, the team focused on continuous learning, growth, and improving outcomes for children, youth, and families.



Learning and development remained a key focus this year, guided by ongoing conversation to ensure it stayed closely connected to practice. Communities of Practice and learning forums offered meaningful opportunities for reflection, collaboration, and growth across the organization.

The Learning and Practice Integration Committee (LPIC) played a key role in advancing this culture, guiding organizational learning from both successes and challenges to enhance decision-making and practice. This work aligns closely with the next phase of Early Help and Prevention, with a focus on translating learning into clear models, tools, and approaches that embed early, community-based supports into everyday practice.

Looking ahead, the organization remains committed to strengthening a culture of learning, reflection, and shared accountability in pursuit of Service Excellence.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Service
Excellence

The agency continued to strengthen its commitment to raising awareness and preventing human trafficking among children and youth through partnerships, staff development, and community engagement. In collaboration with Women in Crisis, the agency hosted two events—one for caregivers and staff to build knowledge and connect with community supports, and another for youth focused on learning, dialogue, and empowerment.

An annual training series was also launched with Women in Crisis to enhance staff capacity in prevention, identification, and intervention, alongside ongoing participation in conferences to stay current on emerging trends and best practices.

The agency further expanded its efforts by joining a provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Community of Practice, bringing together sector partners and individuals with lived experience to share knowledge, identify service gaps, and strengthen coordinated responses.

Locally, the agency led the creation of the Guelph-Wellington Anti-Human Trafficking Table, a collaborative network of over 13 partners focused on coordinating responses, identifying trends, and improving supports for children and youth at risk or impacted by human trafficking. This work aims to ensure seamless, barrier-free access to services and clearer referral pathways across the community.



GENDER BASED VIOLENCE STRATEGY

**Service
Excellence**

Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington continued to strengthen its response to intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV) through leadership development, staff training, and enhanced community partnerships.

Key accomplishments included strengthening collaboration with Women in Crisis (WIC) and contributing to the finalization of a community GBV protocol through the Guelph-Wellington Action Committee (GWAC).

This work reflects FCSGW's commitment to a more coordinated, prevention-focused, and survivor-centered approach to supporting children, youth, and families impacted by gender-based violence.

Looking ahead, FCSGW is planning additional initiatives to further strengthen service response and staff capacity, including agency-wide training related to gender-based violence and launching our strategy to enhance interventions and support for children, youth, and families impacted by violence.



YOUTH SUCCESS: LEVEL UP PROGRAMMING

Service
Excellence

Level UP programming continued to support youth in developing practical skills for independent living through a range of workshops and activities.

These included cooking on a budget, digital literacy, employment readiness (resume and interview skills), and sessions focused on sexual health, mental health, and human trafficking awareness.

In addition to skill-building, youth participated in creative and community initiatives such as art groups and fundraising activities for the Children's First Fund, fostering both engagement and a sense of contribution.



Feedback from participants reflected meaningful learning experiences and high satisfaction, with 84% reporting the program exceeded expectations. Beyond skills development, the program strengthened peer relationships and built a strong sense of community, with youth actively shaping future programming based on their interests.

With consistent attendance throughout the year, Level UP continues to play a key role in helping youth build confidence, knowledge, and connections to support successful transitions to adulthood.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & STAFF

Equity & Inclusion

Throughout the year, the agency acknowledged and celebrated key equity and inclusion observances, including Black Heritage Month, Pride, MMIWG2S+, and Orange Shirt Day. Agency EDI committees coordinated and planned staff engagement activities, including flag raisings, facilitated learning and resource sessions, guest presenters, and hosted video screenings.

These initiatives were intentionally designed to encourage learning, dialogue, and reflection, while deepening understanding of the histories, experiences, and ongoing impacts of inequity faced by Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

These activities created opportunities for staff to strengthen cultural humility, increase awareness of systemic barriers and inequities, and build knowledge that supports more responsive and inclusive service delivery. The goal of these learning opportunities was to support the integration of equity-informed practices into daily work with Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families. These efforts also reinforced the agency's commitment to fostering a workplace culture rooted in respect, belonging, and reconciliation.



VOLUNTEER SERVICES IMPACT



Service
Excellence

FCSGW volunteers demonstrate Service Excellence every day. By consistently showing up and building trusting relationships, they provide emotional support and advocacy in ways that complement the work of Service Workers. Their commitment helps children, youth, and caregivers feel supported, connected, and empowered.

Volunteer Mentors, Youth Mentors, Homework Helpers, and Parent Aids provide one-on-one support that builds trusted relationships, strengthens community connections, and develops skills, supporting our vision that children and youth are safe, supported, and thriving.

- This year, 52 volunteers made over 530 meaningful connections with 58 children, youth, and caregivers, an increase of 161 connections from last year.
- Through these relationships, participants accessed new opportunities and experiences that fostered growth, confidence, and well-being.
- Volunteers supported a range of activities, including homework help, reading support, and skill-building such as navigating transit, managing money, and trying new hobbies. They also encouraged connection and recreation through visits to community spaces, creative activities, and shared experiences. Volunteer Drivers further enhance this impact by reducing transportation barriers and strengthening connections to family, community, and services.

We also strengthened our volunteer program through annual recruitment, training, and engagement initiatives. This included three pre-service training sessions, participation in community fairs, learning opportunities including a session on EDI and the Science of Play. Volunteer matches connected through events such as the holiday cookie kits, a game and craft night, and agency youth-led thank-you cards in recognition of National Volunteer Week.

Through compassion, professionalism, and reliability, volunteers play an essential role in creating positive experiences and strengthening our community.

The Volunteer Mentor provided my child with the kind of confidence only consistent positive one on one attention can instill. They operated as a friend and were very respectful when my child was nervous about saying what he did or didn't want to do. I believe these interactions have helped my child to be confident in the validity of his own needs and wants. I believe the independence this relationship has fostered will be invaluable for my child going forward.

Family
Feedback

I learned a lot about my mentee and about myself. I think it was an awesome opportunity. It allowed me to open up and see the world through a different perspective and encouraged my mentee to build healthier relationships. – Volunteer Mentor

HUMAN RESOURCES – PEOPLE, DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Wellness
&
Resilience

Human Resources maintained a strong focus on advancing a resilient, engaged, and inclusive workforce aligned with the organization's strategic priorities.

Key accomplishments included the completion of the Staff Census Survey, providing critical insights to inform equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging strategies and broader organizational planning. Employee engagement efforts were further strengthened through the introduction of pulse surveys, enhanced wellness and mental health supports, and expanded mechanisms for staff voice.

The organization continued to demonstrate workforce stability, supported by low turnover, opportunities for internal advancement, and recognition initiatives that reinforced a culture of appreciation. A significant investment in learning and development resulted in 4,369 hours of training, encompassing leadership development, EDI-focused learning, and specialized areas of practice.

Succession planning remained a key priority, with targeted strategies to build internal leadership capacity and mitigate organizational risk, complemented by participation in provincial HR initiatives. In addition, a revised performance appraisal approach was successfully implemented, with completion rates exceeding 88%, reflecting strong engagement with a more meaningful, strengths-based process.

Collectively, these efforts reinforce a high-performing organizational culture and position the organization to meet both current and future workforce needs.



WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Wellness
&
Resilience



WORKFORCE STABILITY

Low Staff Turnover

Demonstrated stability through consistently strong retention rates



PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

88%

Performance Appraisal Completion

88%

New optional template introduced for meaningful conversations



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Modernizing Engagement

- ✓ Engagement survey reimagining underway
- ✓ Pulse check model introduced
- ✓ More feedback channels



LEADERSHIP & SUCCESSION

Building Future Leaders

- ✓ Succession plan updated & shared
- ✓ Internal talent identified through succession planning efforts



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Investing in Our People

- Leadership workshops
- Equity & Inclusion training
- Conference participation



EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Second Staff Census Completed

Strengthening data-informed EDI priorities & workforce planning

How We Support Our Workforce



LISTEN



ENGAGE



DEVELOP



RETAIN



Strong. Engaged. Growing. Together, we're building healthy workplace and a future ready organization.

Annual Impact Report



Children First Fund

*Family & Children's Services
of Guelph and Wellington County*

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The Children First Fund is dedicated to empowering over 300 children, youth, and their families involved with Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County (FCSGW). By providing essential services, funding opportunities, and equitable resources beyond government and community support, we aim to address critical gaps.

PILLARS

Building Opportunities for Youth Success

DETAILS

Focuses on education and personal development

OUTCOMES

Greater attainment in educational achievement, life skills development, and self advocacy

Meeting Urgent Needs

Addresses immediate needs

Enhanced access to new car seats, household items, and basic necessities

Enriching Lives

Supports cultural and enrichment experiences

Improved positive family relationships and sense of identity and belonging

7

Events sponsored

35

Educational bursaries awarded

13

LevelUP Youth Programs funded

IMPACT

To learn more about the transformative impact of the Children First Fund in 2025-2026, visit www.fcsgw.org/childrenfirstfund.

FUNDING SUMMARY

\$288, 267

Revenue

\$10,000

Gifts In-kind

\$152, 732

Expenses

With sincere appreciation, I extend my gratitude to our Board of Directors, donors, partners, and staff. Your unwavering dedication has been the cornerstone of our achievements. As we look ahead to 2026-2027, I am excited to deepen our engagement and collaboration, driving even greater impact together. - Patricia Brady

519-824-2410 | patricia.brady@fcsgw.org

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Board of Directors 2025-2026 (As of March 31, 2026)

Chair:

Animesh Vadaparti

Vice-Chair:

Shikha Jain

Secretary Treasurer:

Conor Russell

Directors:

Al Potma
Chase Collver
Eric Ouellette
Heather Broddy
Janet Shuh
Michelle Fach
Nicole Kucherenko
Sharon Mayne
Tracy McLennan



REVENUE	
Child Welfare funding	\$22,326,171
Other revenue	<u>801,961</u>
REVENUE TOTAL	
\$23,128,132	
EXPENDITURES	
Staffing	\$15,214,661
Boarding	5,645,381
Infrastructure & administration	2,394,759
Client support	1,304,915
Adoption support	745,856
Travel	<u>369,626</u>
EXPENDITURES TOTAL	
\$25,675,198	
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	
\$ (2,547,066)	

Audited Financial Statements available upon request