

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 1, 2020
FROM:	KEVIN DICKINS ACTING MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	2019 ONTARIO WORKS PARTICIPANT AND SERVICE DELIVERY PROFILE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Acting Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, the following report on the 2019 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

- 2018 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC May 28, 2019)
- 2016 Participant Profile Report-City of London Social Services/Ontario Works Program Delivery (CPSC July 18, 2017)
- Purchase of Service Agreements-Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (CPSC December 10, 2018)
- Ontario Works Employment Innovations Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles Evaluation #2 (CPSC November 13, 2008)

STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES 2019-2023

Strengthening Our Community

- Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.
- Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city.
- Decrease the number of London residents experiencing poverty
- Increase the number who feel welcomed and included.

Growing Our Economy

- Increase access employers have to the talent they require
- London creates a supportive environment where entrepreneurs, businesses, and talent can thrive.

Leading in Public Service

- Londoners experience exceptional and valued customer service.
- The City of London is a leader in public service as an employer, a steward of public funds, and an innovator of service.

BACKGROUND

City of London Social Services administers the Ontario Works program on behalf of the Province as a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM). Ontario Works is an employment assistance and financial support program focused on helping individuals and families gain and maintain sustainable employment through training, education, skill development and individualized supports. Aligning with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) priority to achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants, City of London Social Services applies a local perspective when seeking ways to increase sustainable employment and assist clients in achieving financial independence. Ultimately, Social Services has the responsibility to provide service and supports that respond to the needs of Ontario Works participants residing in the London community in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders.

City of London Social Services remains committed to prioritizing provincial Social Assistance Reform plans, and continues to value a strong working partnership with MCCSS. Amongst fiscal

and legislative changes experienced in 2019, City of London Social Services continued to focus on employment innovation and service excellence. The following 2019 MCCSS Service Plan priorities capture areas of focus that were reflective of both provincial mandates and local service delivery approach:

Improving Employment Outcomes

- Site specific understanding of caseload demographics and trends to assist with aligning employment supports and community partners with community needs, as well as potential barriers to sustainable employment.
- Capitalize on community expertise and existing relationships with local employers to achieve employment outcomes through the service delivery framework.
- Particular attention placed on addressing time on assistance, supports for persons with disabilities and employment for ODSP recipients.
- Training curriculum that includes an intentional focus and clear expectations regarding use of Provincial reports, making appropriate employment referrals, and addressing multi-barrier long term clients.

Leveraging Local Economic Development

- A strong systems approach designed to address the needs of Londoners in order to achieve positive Ontario Works employment outcomes, lowered caseloads and to support a vibrant economy.
- Continues to work with economic development partners such as London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) to further connections between employers and job seekers as well as identify and address skills gaps.
- Seek opportunities through Social Assistance Modernization and integration efforts to streamline access to employment information and incorporate existing community platforms, channels and networks.

Develop & Maintain Local Service Partnerships

- Continually seek opportunities to streamline and coordinate services through partnerships.
- Purchase of Service providers offer specialized services specific to social assistance recipients and specific to London labour market needs.
- Purchase of Service providers utilize a common assessment process and provide flexibility and innovation in programming to key demographics such as Youth, Newcomers and persons with disabilities.
- Expand training partnerships and opportunities as part of professional development and onboarding strategies

Strengthen Program Accountability

- Focused efforts regarding eligibility determination processing time.
- Collective responsibility to ensure that employment targets are achieved.
- Ensure implemented initiatives and strategies are monitored and evaluated.
- Dedicated resources and leads for key areas of performance monitoring and measurement.
- Seek effective and efficient ways of delivering service incorporating stakeholder feedback, key performance indicators, local context, LEAN approaches, use of technology, modernization strategies and collaboration with community.

Aligning with leading in public service, specifically under the strategy of reporting on corporate performance, the attached report is intended to provide an overview of 2019 Social Services participant demographic information and highlight key aspects of service delivery approach as well as performance indicators. The delay in reporting on 2019 Ontario Works participant and service delivery figures is due to COVID related service disruptions experienced in early 2020.

Information contained in this report is inclusive of six Social Services offices that provided client service in 2019. Data and information provided in the report is extracted from Ministry of Children, Community & Social Assistance (MCCSS) Performance Reports, the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS), Social Services Client Management System (CMS) and City of London Financial Business Supports monitoring reports. Any data referenced from MCCSS or SAMS (aside from total caseload numbers) is reflective of the City of London CMSM, which

includes Middlesex County who held a caseload in 2019 averaging 367 benefit units. Attached as "Schedule 1" City of London Ontario Works Participant & Service Delivery Profile.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

2019 Caseload and Expenditures

		2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2019 Surplus/(Deficit)
Average Monthly Caseload		11,900	11,170	730
Total Expenditures	Gross ¹	\$115,953,600	\$105,974,035	\$9,979,565
	Net (0%)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Average Case Cost	Gross ¹	\$812	\$791	\$21
	Net (0%)	\$0	\$0	\$0

¹ Note: Net share reduced to 0%, which reflects the ninth year of the Provincial upload of OW benefit costs. Expenditures and Average Case cost exclude Discretionary Benefits, Repayments and Reimbursements, and Transition Child Benefit.

CONCLUSION

MCCSS Social Assistance Reform efforts will continue to be monitored. Client demographic information along with local service delivery data will help inform future models and approaches as policy, and system framework changes are downloaded. Throughout 2019, City of London Social Services remained committed to executing MCCSS mandates while providing localized service delivery to ensure the most vulnerable received supports required.

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Ontario Works Participant & Service Delivery Profile

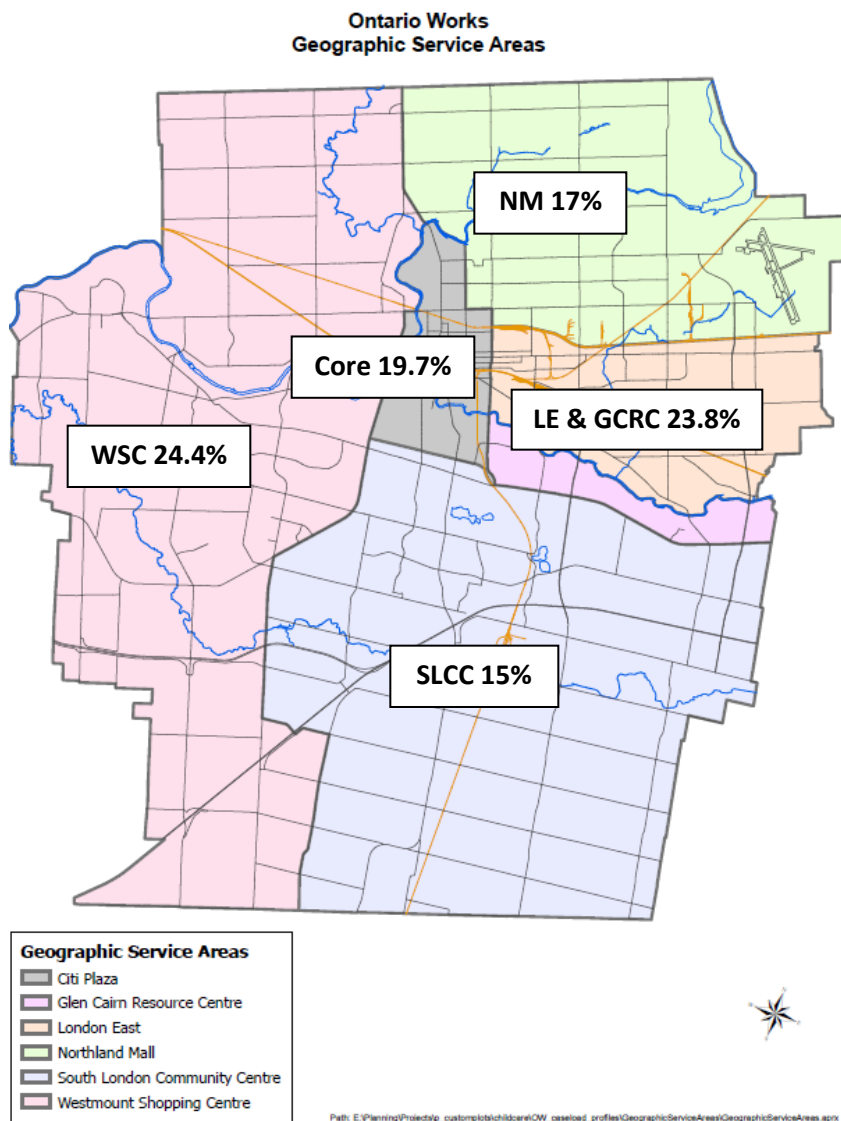
City of London Social Services delivers the Ontario Works program through a decentralized service delivery model. Five community based offices and one satellite office are situated across the city providing access to employment services and financial supports. Service delivery design and resourcing decisions are informed by data, local context and community needs. Continual evaluation and review ensures service delivery planning, design and implementation best support the City of London’s most vulnerable, as well as effectively equip frontline staff delivering the services. Working within a community based service delivery model also affords the opportunity to notice unique trends across the city such as caseload composition and benefit unit size, and the ability to connect with local community partners and work collaboratively to provide supports. The following factors and considerations were part of the site selection process and continue to assist in monitoring the Geographic Service Areas (GSA) boundaries that are reflected in Figure 1 below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density of catchment area • Service delivery for rural areas within City of London boundaries • Access to public transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to where clients live • Proximity to related and existing community resources and services • Opportunity to co-locate with other agencies or municipal services
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The service delivery model accommodates both walk-in front counter services as well as scheduled appointments with Caseworkers. Intake screening is completed via phone, an online Provincial portal or in person (as required). All main office locations are resourced with Customer Service Representatives who facilitate first point of contact for Ontario Works services. In 2019, the MyBenefits platform was launched as part of the MCCSS priority to modernize service delivery and access to supports. MyBenefits is an online service for Ontario Works and ODSP clients. It provides individuals more choice and flexibility in how they receive, manage, and report information to local OW offices, without replacing existing service channels (e.g. in office, over the phone). By using MyBenefits recipients can view payment information, including a breakdown of each payment and overpayment details, view letters, view profile information (e.g. phone number, email, household members), report address and phone number changes as well as reporting earned income and shelter expenses. New features and improvements will be added in 2020 and into 2021 as part of expanding electronic document management (EDM) capabilities.

Collaboration with external partners continued to be a key priority in 2019 in order to actively participate in addressing community specific needs. Careful planning and strategic partnerships help ensure the City of London Social Services remains responsive to the client demographic trends and local opportunities for success. Figure 1 below, illustrates the Geographic Service Areas (GSAs) for each Social Services office, as well as the associated percentage of total caseload for 2019. Geographic Service Areas vary considerably in size, however percentage of total Ontario Works caseload remains proportional to required local service demands and location capacity; both of which determine parameters for staffing allocations and partnership opportunities.

Figure 1
 Ontario Works Caseload Distribution by Geographic Service Area ¹



Over the course of 2019, 6,915 intake appointments were conducted in order to complete Ontario Works applications. Compared to 2018, this reflects a 2.6% decrease in completed intake appointments, which aligns with an overall 2.4% decrease in caseload size throughout 2019 (Table 2 below). Of note, percentage of applications processed within four days was averaged at 76% for 2019, 6% above the target identified in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. This metric is part of the strategy to streamline customer intake and follow-up across the corporation, which aims to improve responsiveness and ensure eligible clients receive benefits in a timely manner.

When completing any type of appointment, interpreter services may be required to best support clients in completing an application or updating file information. Table 1 below illustrates the top five languages requiring interpreter services from 2015-2019. Additionally, City of London Social Services maintained compliance with the provincial French Language Services Directives by providing bilingual services through the customer service representative and Caseworker roles (1 bilingual complement for each position).

Table 1: Top Five Requested Interpreter Languages

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Arabic	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
Spanish	Nepal	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Nepal	Spanish	Nepal	Nepal	Nepal
Vietnamese	Vietnamese	French	Kurdish	Kurdish
Persian	Persian	Assyrian	Assyrian	Urdu

Caseload

¹ City of London Planning –Smart City Office 2020

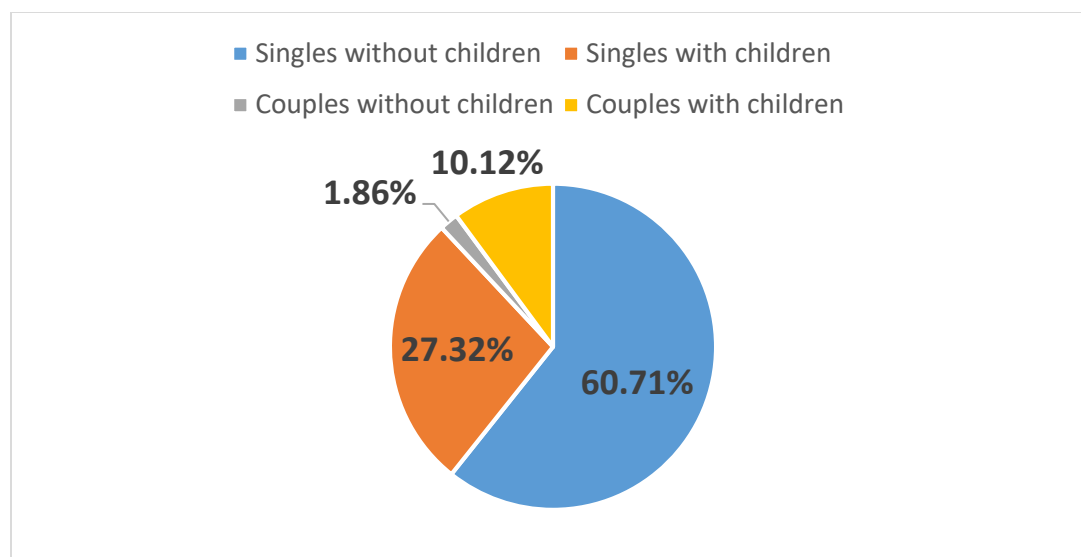
The City of London's Ontario Works year over year average caseload size has not changed significantly from 2015 -2019 as seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Average Caseload by Year

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
11,528	11,885	11,952	11,699	11,418

Figure 2 below provides an overall summary of benefit unit types when combining all Social Services locations. The 2019 caseload composition continued to reflect a greater proportion of singles on the City of London's caseload.

Figure 2
Overall Caseload Composition²



Looking more specifically at the caseload composition, Table 3 below provides an overview of benefit unit types as percentages by location in order to illustrate case composition within each GSA. Understanding case composition is an important service delivery consideration, as it may impact team structure, areas of focus and resource allocation, as well as what community partnerships are established to best support clients.

Table 3³
Caseload Composition Percentages by Location

Core	Office Percentage	Northland Mall	Office Percentage
Couple	2.5%	Couple	2.5%
Couple with Dependents	4.9%	Couple with Dependents	11.2%
Single	75.8%	Single	56.2%
Sole Support	16.8%	Sole Support	30.1%
London East *		South London Community Centre	
Couple	1.9%	Couple	1.8%
Couple with Dependents	5.9%	Couple with Dependents	18%
Single	59.4%	Single	47.5%
Sole Support	32.8%	Sole Support	32.7%
Westmount Shopping Centre		*Glen Cairn Resource Centre location is included in London East benefit unit type data as it is a satellite location for the London East office	
Couple	3.5%		
Couple with Dependents	19.5%		
Single	52.4%		
Sole Support	24.6%		

Variation in benefit unit composition (Table 3) and size (Figure 3) across all Social Services locations supports the need for a community based service delivery approach in order to tailor

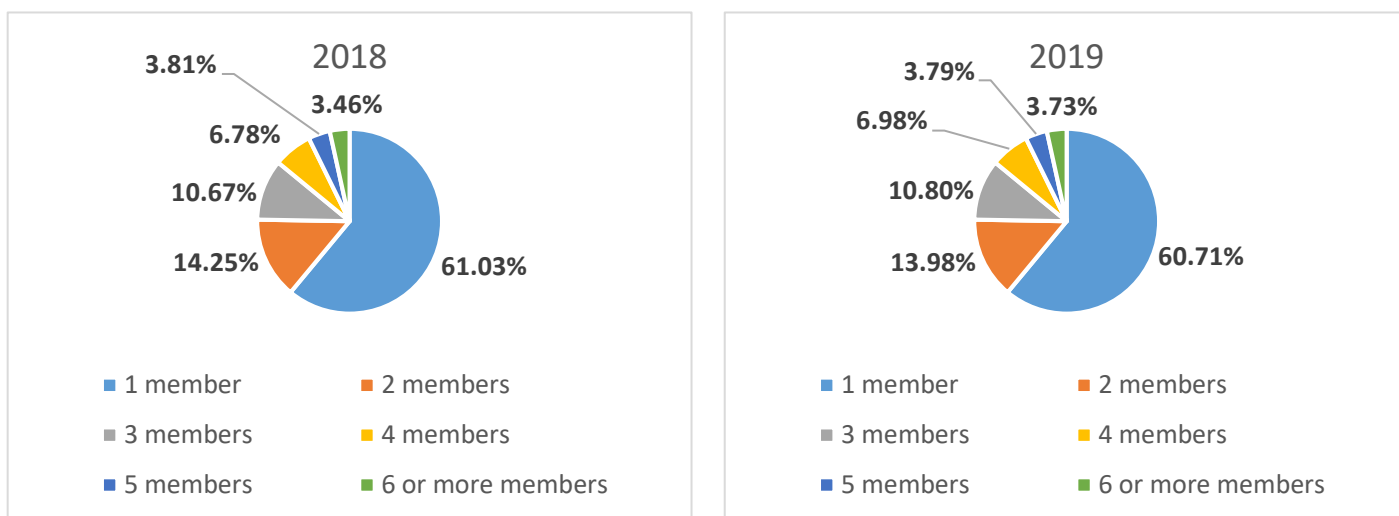
² Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services (MCCSS) Performance Report December 2019

³ MCCSS CRS 100 Integrated Case Summary Report December 2019

supports and services as required. Looking at benefit unit size and caseload composition in particular, the following considerations are important to note:

- The number of benefit units with children of any kind in 2017 represented 34.03% of the OW caseload, increasing to 36.9% in 2018 and 37.44% in 2019.
- Family benefit units of 5 or more people have increased by 2.93% between 2017 and 2019.
- The percentage growth of benefit units of 4 or more (4.21%) has outpaced the percentage increase of family cases in general (2.85%) between 2017-2019, meaning with the addition of new families to the caseload, the family sizes are becoming larger.
- All five GSAs experienced increases in sole support benefit units in 2019 and all but one location experience caseload composition increases for couples with dependents.

Figure 3
Benefit Unit Size by Caseload Percentage Summary⁴



Time on Assistance

The Provincial vision for the Ontario Works program is “to achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing individual employability with the goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.” Delivery partners are expected to base programming and supports on Provincial priorities and develop service delivery models that address local need and context. Part of understanding the local context is understanding what barriers to employment exist in order to develop appropriate strategies and approaches that factor in labour market trends as well as the community supports that are available. For many clients, significant barriers exist along the employment continuum and may, impact the ability to acquire skills and training, successfully gain employment or sustain and maintain employment. Length of time on assistance is one of many indicators utilized to determine how best to support clients facing multiple and complex barriers to employment. Figure 4 below provides a summary of time on assistance by percentage of the yearly average caseload from 2015-2019. Also provided in Table 4 below, is a summary of the average time on assistance by years from 2015-2019, which illustrates the overall percentage of caseload on assistance for greater than 12 and 24 months.

Figure 4
Time on Assistance by Percentage of Caseload⁵

⁴ MCCSS Performance Report December 2019 & Caseload at a Glance Report 2019

⁵ MCCSS Caseload at a Glance Report 2015-2019

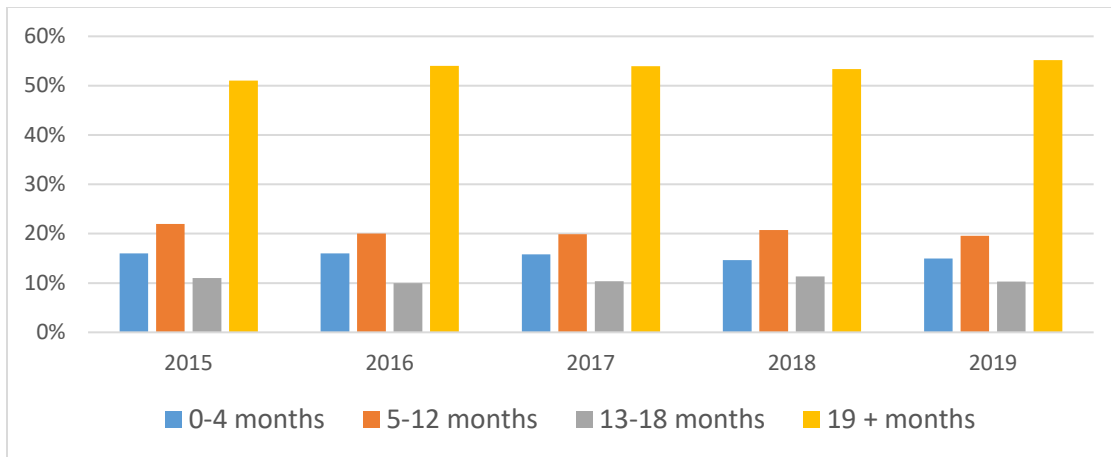


Table 4
Length of Time Assistance⁶

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
More than 12 months (% of caseload)	62%	64%	64.3%	64.7%	65.5%
More than 24 months (% of caseload)	43%	45%	45.2%	44.8%	46.6%
Average time on Assistance (years)	2.6	2.88	2.88	3.02	3.13

As evident in Figure 4 above, a number of clients have been on assistance for greater than 19 months with little fluctuation or decrease since 2015. In 2019, the 0-4 months on assistance remained similar to 2018 figures at 14.95% of the total caseload. Throughout 2019, maximizing opportunities for rapid re-entry into the workforce and ensuring clients received early interventions and supports within the first year of participating in the Ontario Works program, were key priorities. Overall between 2015-2019, average time on assistance (Table 4) has increased by just over 6 months.

In an effort to address the increasing number of clients on Ontario Works for beyond 24 months, the Intensive Case Management (ICM) Team worked with an average of 382 caseloads to support and assist participants to remove the obstacles effecting life stabilization. The focus of the ICM team in 2019 was to respond to length of time on assistance beginning with clients who have remained on assistance for a significant amount of time (4 continuous years or greater). Much of the support provided by the ICM team worked to address factors contributing to time on assistance utilizing the following strategies:

- Wrap around supports for clients who have been medically deferred including assistance in moving toward ODSP supports.
- Intensive supports for clients who have been on assistance longer than 4 continuous years and struggle with motivation, self-efficacy and personal challenges including mental health and wellness.

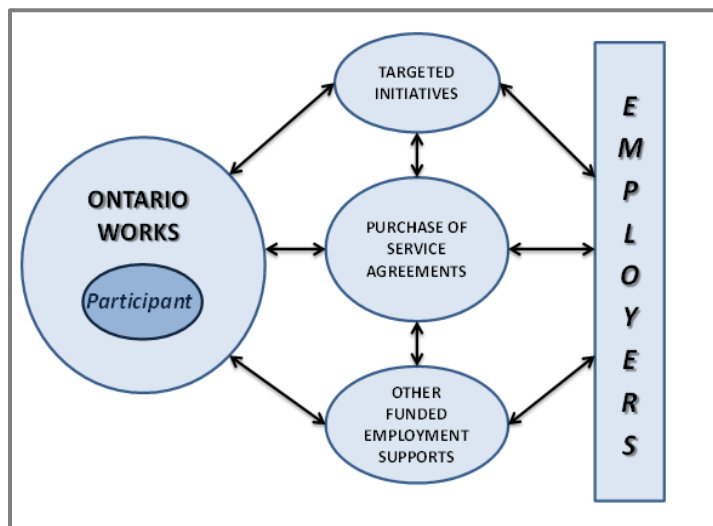
Employment Supports & Outcomes

The City of London Social Services uses an integrated case management approach in the delivery of employment services as illustrated in the framework below (Figure 5). This approach uses a combination of internal and external individualized services and supports, and leverages these supports with services funded by other Ministries and Departments (including the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Service Canada) and contracts for specified employment assistance services with local service providers to achieve employment outcomes.

⁶ MCCSS Caseload at a Glance Report 2015-2019

Figure 5
City of London Social Services Delivery Framework

During 2019, City of London Social Services worked in partnership with over 20 community agencies who specifically provide Ontario Works clients with employment and training services. Of the 20 agencies, 9 have contractual agreements with the City of London to provide specific employment and related supports (Purchase of Service-POS) providers. Throughout 2019, 12,178 referrals were made to external service providers, an increase of 8.9% over the previous year. Of the 12,178 referrals that were made, the following include but are not limited to:



- 1,670 clients were referred to employment placement supports including 148 client who were looking for self-employment supports.
- 798 clients were referred to specific skills training and development programs thereby increasing employability through updated skills, abilities and certifications that directly relate to local labour market needs.

Education and literacy are critical elements for gaining entry to the workforce as well as maintaining sustainable employment. Table 5 below, outlines level of education comparisons as a percentage of all adults on the City of London Ontario Works caseload. The figures associated with grade 1-8 and post-secondary education levels have remained steady since 2015. Grade 12-13 level completion increased by 3%, which accounts for the decrease in grade 9-11 level of education over the same time period.

Table 5: Level of Education Completed for Adult Caseload ⁷

Level of Education	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Grade 1-8	6 %	6 %	7 %	7 %	7 %
Grade 9-11	38 %	37 %	35 %	34 %	33 %
Grade 12-13	32 %	34 %	34 %	35 %	35 %
Post-Secondary	24 %	23 %	24 %	24 %	24 %

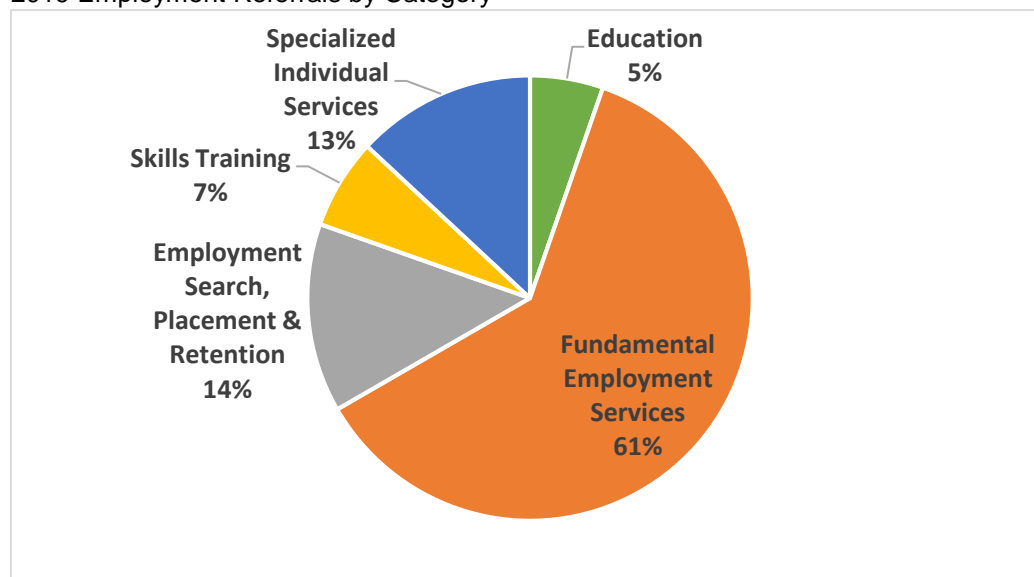
A number of approaches have been taken to address the gap for participants in Ontario Works in successfully completing a secondary school program. Over the course of 2019, 647 referrals were made to education programs (Literacy, GED, ACE and high school credit). Agencies that provided these supports included Centre for Life Long Learning, College Boreal, Fanshawe College, G.A. Wheable, Hutton House and NoKee Kwe. Additionally, in order to support young parents (age 18-25) who have not yet completed Grade 12 education, 55 internal referrals to the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program were made. LEAP helps young parents develop an action plan tailored to individual needs and goals with a focus of growing parenting skills, and developing employability and life skills. In 2019, an average of 140 participants were enrolled in the LEAP program and 41 participants graduated with a Grade 12 or equivalency.

In terms of overall employment referrals, Figure 6 below provides a summary of 2019 external agency referrals by category. Fundamental employment services accounted for greatest percentage of overall referrals (61%), which included services from Goodwill, Hutton House, Leads, March of Dimes, Pathways, WIL Employment Connections and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. All of the skills training referrals were made to the London Skills Training Centre and specialized individual service providers included ATN (learning disability assessment), Daya Counselling Centre, Family Services Thames Valley, Goodwill, Literacy Link South Central and March of Dimes.

Figure 6

⁷ MCCSS Performance Report December 2019

2019 Employment Referrals by Category⁸



Under the City of London’s strategic area of focus to grow the economy, two employment specific metrics are identified as outlined in Table 6 below. Both metrics developed to support increased client participation in employment activities, exceeded target set for 2019.

Table 6
Strategic Plan Employment Metrics⁹

Strategy	Metric	2019 Actual	2019 Target
Strategy Increase Ontario Works client participation within employment activities.	Metric % of Ontario Works cases terminated as a result of participants exiting to employment (HSSDH)	28.37%	20%
	% of eligible clients that have an active outcome plan (HSSDH)	91.5%	80%

In addition to the employment related metrics identified in the Strategic Plan, the following are performance averages for 2019 that were monitored on a quarterly basis¹⁰:

- Average monthly employment earnings per case: \$871.48
- Percentage of caseload with employment earnings: 14.17%
- Percentage of caseload exiting to employment: 1.53%

Bridges Out of Poverty / Circles

London’s Bridges Out of Poverty/Circles initiative is a key contributor to the City of London’s response to poverty. Foundational to the Circles initiative is the importance of relationships and sense of community accountability. In 2019, 71 individuals and families living in poverty formed natural connections with one another and Allies as well as Coaches who, provided encouragement, support, and guidance through the program. 250 volunteers were active in Circles as Allies, Meal Providers, Child Minders or other volunteer roles. Participants (Leaders) with support from Allies, have been able to achieve a variety of successes, which include but are not limited to:

- Participants are finding work, and returning to college to pursue careers
- Leaders who are early in their Circles journey are rediscovering that they deserve happiness, getting motivated, and planning the steps needed to accomplish their goals
- Children are enjoying a weekly meal routine with their Circles family
- Young people are celebrating high school graduation

Figure 7 below provides a summary of participant outcomes through the Circles initiative. Most notably, 47.6% of participants have gained sustainable employment as well as 14.3% employed and receiving Ontario Works top up to assist with supporting long term financial stability and the

⁸ Social Service EA Referral Summary Report 2019

⁹ 2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London: 2019 Performance Report Appendix A

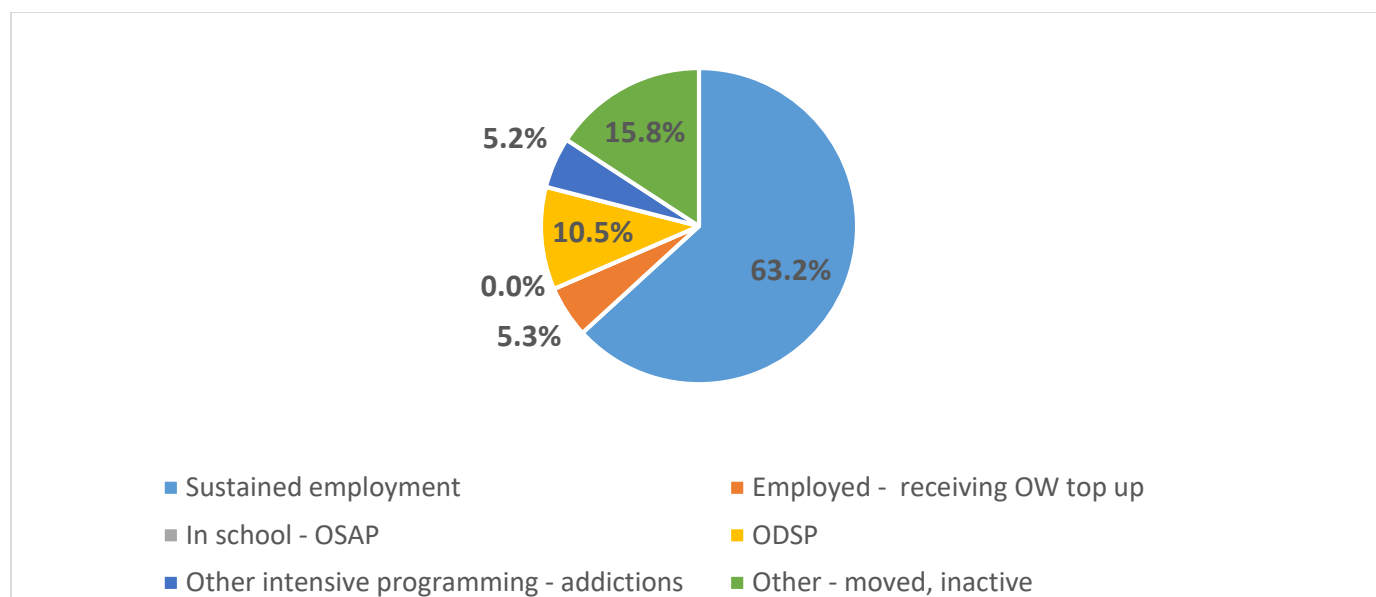
¹⁰ MCCSS Performance Report December 2019

goal of exiting Ontario Works. Yearly outcomes have been consistent with results from other Circles programs across Ontario, which indicates that Circles participants significantly increase their earnings through work and increase their earning potential by returning to school to secure more stable, long-term employment and remain off of Ontario Works.

In 2019, 19 individuals left Circles with the following results, as noted by percentage in Figure 7 below.

- Sustained employment
- Employed-receiving OW top up
- ODSP
- Intensive programming-addictions
- Other-moved, inactive

Figure 7
2019 Circles Initiative Participant Outcomes¹¹



Conclusion

Throughout 2019, City of London Social Services continued to prioritize customer service as well as monitoring service delivery demographics and trends in order to provide supports that are inclusive of the local perspective. A decentralized service delivery approach aims to provide community based access to services in a responsive manner, as well as leverage community specific supports to assist with improving employment outcomes. Site specific understanding of caseload demographics furthers the understanding of potential barriers for clients that prevent or hinder life stabilization and sustainable employment. Length of time on assistance is one of many indicators utilized to determine how best to support clients facing multiple and complex barriers in everyday life.

In 2019, family and sole support caseloads continued to increase as well as the size of families receiving Ontario Works supports. It continues to be important to work with both internal and external stakeholders on how best to support families in the London community to achieve financial independence and have basic needs met in sustainable way.

Program accountability at both the provincial and local levels remained a priority in 2019, including focus on eligibility determination, customer service responsiveness and employment outcomes. Intentionally aligning provincial and local accountabilities ensures that community perspective, client experience and local data are part of provincial service planning and future policy development.

¹¹ City of London Circles Evaluation 2019