The County of Simcoe Social and Community Services Division encompasses Children and Community Services, Ontario Works and Social Housing Departments. Essential social services are provided to the region through an integrated model of service delivery. Some non-mandated initiatives provide support to local networks and organizations that aim to alleviate poverty in Simcoe County.

Children and Community Services

The Children and Community Services Department delivers programs and services to support child care and the community. Children and Community Services is committed to providing and promoting child care services that enhance opportunities for early childhood development while providing families with informed, affordable access to programs. Another focus is to address poverty and homelessness issues in Simcoe County. Through community partnerships and service provider contracts, the County of Simcoe achieves a more seamless and integrated service for individuals, youth and families being impacted by poverty and homelessness.

Child Care Wage Subsidy

Wage subsidy funding is provided to child care programs to enhance the salaries of staff working within a licensed program. Historically, low salaries and lack of benefits have resulted in a decrease of Early Childhood Educators both entering and remaining in the child care sector. This wage enhancement recognizes the important role that Early Childhood Educators play in early child development and learning, and is used to support salary increases to attract and retain early childhood professionals. The Children & Community Services Department determines the eligible amounts that each child care program is entitled to receive on an annual basis and monitors the distribution of this funding. All qualifying childcare programs receive an equalized portion of the available wage subsidy funds.

Child Care System Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Full-Time Equivalent Staff</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Contracted Child Care Programs</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in Receipt of Fee Subsidy</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>2036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Families in Receipt of Fee Subsidy</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>1410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(as of December 31, 2011)

Child Care Fee Subsidy

The Children and Community Services Department provides Fee Assistance to eligible families within Simcoe County. In order to qualify, parents/guardians must be working, attending school, be in need of developmental programming for a child with Special Needs, or have a therapeutic referral based on a parent/guardian’s need. County staff work closely with child care service providers holding “Purchase of Service” agreements with the County of Simcoe allowing families in receipt of child care subsidy to access these licensed spaces. A standardized income test, based on an applicant’s Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency, is used to determine the eligibility of those applying for subsidized child care. Child Care Representatives educate parents about child care programs and also complete quality assurance inspections to ensure Municipal requirements are being met.
Early Learning Initiative – Full Day Kindergarten and Extended Day Program

In its system management role for child care, the County of Simcoe works closely with community partners and service providers including the provincial ministries and local school boards for the planning and implementation of the full day kindergarten and extended day program within the context of child care system stabilization. Fee Subsidies for eligible families with children attending the before and after school programs at full day kindergarten sites are available for these Extended Day programs.

The County of Simcoe administers child care transition funding for eligible Child Care Service Providers during the implementation of the phased in full day kindergarten program to assist child care operators with reconfiguring licensed child care spaces to suit a younger age group of children as 4 and 5 year olds leave the child care system and enter into the Full Day Kindergarten Program. The County is also working with its community partners, the province and local colleges to address challenges related to the Registered Early Childhood Educators shortage and recruitment to the field of Early Learning and Child Care.

Family Home Child Care

The County of Simcoe Children and Community Services Department operates a licensed Family Home Child Care Program. Quality child care is provided throughout Simcoe County in agency approved homes with contracted home child care providers. Each family home child care is limited to five children from infant to 12 years of age per home. Care is provided on a flexible basis in accordance with the parents'/guardians’ needs. Approximately 35 County of Simcoe agency-approved homes are in operation.

Special Needs Resource Services

Special Needs Resource Services provide young children with special needs and their families with a wide range of services and supports to help them develop to their fullest potential. Children and Community Services administers funding and manages contracts with seven transfer payment agencies that provide early intervention resource services throughout Simcoe County for children aged 0-6 years. This includes supports from Resource Teacher Programs, Preschool Speech and Language Services, Blind/ Low Vision Program and Occupational and Physiotherapy Services.

Services support children in Simcoe County identified with special needs and those who may be at risk of experiencing barriers to development. Special Needs Resource Funding also provides enhanced funding for childcare centres to support quality inclusion of children with special needs. Approximately 2,300 children were served during 2011 through Special Needs Resource Services.

Raising the Bar on Quality Child Care

Raising the Bar is a program designed to help families ensure their children are receiving high quality early learning and child care services. The intent is to raise standards in early learning and childcare programs. Participating programs work towards the achievement of Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of recognition for quality childcare. The County of Simcoe works in partnership with the licensed child care system in leading this initiative.

Domiciliary Care Services

The Domiciliary Care program provides permanent housing for vulnerable individuals who are economically disadvantaged and have significant health problems that require support for activities of daily living. There are 10 contracted domiciliary care service providers located throughout Simcoe County. In 2011 the program assisted 202 clients.

Housing Retention Program

The Housing Retention Program consists of the Rent Bank and the Emergency Energy Assistance Fund. Partnerships have been developed between the County of Simcoe and five housing resource centres located in Alliston, Barrie, Collingwood, Midland and Orillia.

Low income households at risk of losing their rental housing or having power disconnected can apply for emergency assistance. Housing resource centres will complete applications and provide case management, information and referrals to individuals facing rent arrears or energy related emergencies.

Emergency Shelters

The County of Simcoe provides per diem funding for emergency homeless shelter beds including access to basic needs. Emergency homeless shelters provide lodging and personal needs to homeless people on a short term basis and are used by individuals in crisis, needing temporary housing and support. Residents of an emergency shelter may or may not be recipients of social assistance and may be eligible to receive such benefits as a personal needs allowance, drug card and other support services while residing in the shelter. There are five emergency shelters in Simcoe County.

There is also a community based Emergency Shelter System in place for areas of the County that do not have a homeless shelter. Contract agreements with Service Provider Agencies for per diem funding and case management for a motel voucher system exist for individuals and families in need in these communities.

Social and Community Investment Funding

The County of Simcoe provides Social and Community Investment Funding to help local organizations develop community-based initiatives that address poverty and homelessness. The SCIF was created using the historical funding streams of Social Assistance Restructuring Reinvestment Fund, Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, and Homelessness Partnership Fund.

It is recognized that a continuum of supports is an ideal approach for a combination of crisis intervention and preventative measures when addressing poverty and homelessness. The amount of funding available may change from year to year. A community-based allocations committee is used to help review and make project funding recommendations for County Council consideration.
Emergency Social Services

The activation of Emergency Social Services (ESS) is imperative to meet urgent human needs in the event of a large scale disaster. The Social and Community Services Division has designed and tested an emergency services response structure that supports and assists local human services emergency services. Five emergency social services are considered:

- Registration & Inquiry Services
- Emergency Food Services
- Personal Needs Services
- Lodging Services
- Emergency Clothing Services

Local Immigration Partnership

The County of Simcoe Local Immigration Partnership is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This initiative is designed to support better planning and coordination of community services across multiple sectors.

Ontario Works

The Ontario Works program provides temporary financial assistance and support to community members in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed by increasing their employability and skills to obtain sustainable employment.

Ontario Works Case Management

The Ontario Works program provides temporary financial assistance and support to community members in need to become and stay employed by increasing their employability and skills to obtain sustainable employment. Caseworkers are also designated to provide emergency assistance such as food vouchers, drug cards, utility/rental arrears and finding temporary shelter. The Learning, Earning and Parenting program is available to support Ontario Works clients aged 16 to 25 who are parenting or pregnant and who are building employability and parenting skills while completing their high school education.

Integrated Services Unit (ISU)

The ISU is the first point of contact for individuals applying for social assistance or childcare fee subsidy. Employees in the ISU also provide general information about community resources and programs for residents within their local area who may not be eligible for social assistance, but who could access services such as funding through the energy bank, rent bank and community services related to health care, community legal and other intervention type services.

Clerical

Clerical staff support the caseworkers and specialized units by providing customer service, directing callers, completing intake screening and scheduling appointments for Ontario Works and Child Care fee subsidy. Clerical staff process assignments, prepare mail correspondence and cheques and organize client files.

Improved planning and service delivery that reflects the qualities of a welcoming community will support outcomes for newcomers including labour market access and social inclusion. A Partnership Council and numerous sub councils are considering ideas to improve the community experience of newcomers. The research phase of the project will inform a settlement strategy for the community planned to be publicly released in October 2012. The implementation of the settlement strategy will follow.

Community Data Program

The Community Data Program (CDP) is a national initiative that facilitates cost-effective access to Statistics Canada and other sources of data products at the local community level, allowing service delivery agencies to understand local social and economic trends, and to better understand the needs of the community. The CDP builds local consortia in communities across Canada, providing a forum for member agencies to discuss and collaborate on local community trends and issues. The County of Simcoe is the lead for the local consortium and the Children and Community Services Department facilitates the project locally in Simcoe County.

Quality Assurance

The quality assurance staff ensures the continued quality of services and decisions within the Ontario Works department adhere to Ministry guidelines and local policy and procedure. The team reviews decisions made within Ontario Works, acts on behalf of the County of Simcoe at quasi legal proceedings and provides training services for staff and community agencies. Quality assurance staff also works with clients to review.

Employment Services Unit

Employment Services staff assists Ontario Works clients build their employment skills. Every employable applicant or participant must be involved in employment assistance activities such as:

- Employment Supports
- Basic Education and Training
- Community Placement
- Employment and Self Employment Placement
- Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP)
- Addiction Services

Employment Services staff act as a resource for other Ontario Works staff.
Social Housing

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the County of Simcoe is responsible for administration and planning of the County’s social housing system. The social housing department is comprised of two business functions which encompass administration of the social housing programs and the direct delivery of social housing.

1 Administration

Social Housing administers a diverse range of affordable housing programs designed to provide affordable, safe and secure housing for the residents of Simcoe County.

Non-profit, Co-operative, Federal Urban Native Housing programs

The County of Simcoe is responsible for funding, administration and ensuring legislative compliance for local non-profit, co-operative, federal and urban native housing programs including the Simcoe County Housing Corporation. There are currently 4,112 social housing units that receive ongoing operating funding. Non-profit housing is owned and managed by local non-profit housing groups. Co-operative housing is owned and managed directly by its members. Typically, 60 percent of non-profit and co-operative residents pay rent based on income and 40 percent pay market rents.

The federal housing units in Simcoe County are administered through transferred operating agreements and the County is responsible for ensuring compliance. This includes non-profit housing and urban native housing programs. Urban Native Housing Programs are housing units specifically for individuals with Aboriginal Status.

Centralized Rent Geared To Income Waitlist

The County is responsible for the administration of the centralized waitlist for all rent-geared-to-income units in the County. There are approximately 3,000 rent-geared-to-income units County-wide. First priority is given to applicants approved for special priority status where a member of a household has experienced abuse from someone they are currently living with. Other rankings are in accordance with eligibility approval date in chronological order.

As of December 31, 2011 there were 2,482 households on the waitlist.

New Initiatives:

The County continues to take advantage of funding opportunities to enhance our programs and address local needs across the housing continuum.

The Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (AHP)

Provided funding for three specific programs as follows:

1. The Rental and Supportive Program has created 413 new affordable rental units since 2004. The County received approximately $31M in capital funding for this program. Developers are required to ensure these units remain affordable for 20 years and the rents are capped between 80-100% of the average Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation annual rents.

2. The Housing Allowance Program provided $1.65 M in funding to assist 110 eligible households with a rent assistance of up to $250 per month. This program will end in 2012.

3. The Homeownership Program provided down payment assistance to 254 households to realize their dream of homeownership. The County is committed to delivering this Program for a minimum of 15 years and has set up a ‘Revolving Loan Fund’ for loans repaid to the County. The County received approximately $3M in funding from the Province and $300K has been paid back into this Revolving Loan Fund. As funds are returned to the County other eligible households will be selected from the waiting list to receive down payment assistance.

Other Provincial and County Initiatives

1. Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program is funded through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and administered by the County. This program provides a monthly rent subsidy to bridge the gap between full market rent and the amount of rent geared to income assistance a household would pay. Approximately 100 households receive assistance through this program.

2. Participation in the Short Term Rent Support Program funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide up to 130 households with a $200 monthly rent supplement.

3. The County funded the creation of 25 new affordable rental units for seniors attached to the County’s social housing building in Bradford.

4. An annual budget of $100K is established to provide forgivable loan and grants to offset development charges for developer of affordable housing.

2 Direct Delivery

Simcoe County Housing Corporation

The County of Simcoe is the direct owner and manager of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC), which provides affordable housing to seniors, families and individuals. Units are rent-geared-to-income and therefore tenants pay rent at approximately 30 percent of their gross household income. Management of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation includes office administration, applicant and tenant co-ordination, property management, rent supplement agreements, daily and preventative maintenance and capital asset management. Simcoe County Housing Corporation currently owns 1235 rent geared to income units, 25 affordable housing units and funds approximately 130 rent supplement units with private and not for profit landlords.