

2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT



linck

Child, Youth & Family Supports

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2024-25



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Message from the Board Chair & Executive Director

Reflecting on the past year of service in Chatham Kent, Linck continues to fulfill our Mission-building strong connections for a better future. We do this work with children, youth and families, with community partners and key informants, locally and across the province and we do it with each other, as a strong and interdependent team.

This past year has called on us to be resilient and creative, proactive and responsive in addressing the challenges brought before us. It has offered us the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to excellence, collaboration and strong partnerships.

Last year, Linck faced notable financial challenges in our child welfare budget. This led us to make difficult organizational changes. Several rounds of layoffs resulted in the loss of programs and staff. We lost the Child and Family Wellbeing team, along with multiple other positions. It required us to focus on mandated services and move away from upstream work in prevention and early help.

These were difficult times, and we know that continued attention and diligence is needed to ensure our sustainability while maintaining a focus on service excellence. With thoughtful planning and community minded decision making, we continue to focus on our Mission and long-term sustainability.

At Linck, we remain committed to building strong, meaningful connections with children, youth and families, with our community and each other. We are building strong partnerships across communities and sectors, exploring new ways of collaborating and reaffirming our multiservice mandate as the Lead Agency for Child and Youth Mental Health, Inclusion connector in Developmental Services and Child Welfare provider across Chatham Kent.

As we look ahead, we feel renewed and inspired by the growth and positive outcomes that we see happening for children and youth. In their potential, we recommit to excellence and dreaming big dreams. Our priorities remain clear- to create safe and caring environments for children and youth, to empower families and support our community where every child can thrive.

Together with the support of our Board, staff, foster and kin caregivers, volunteers and community partners, we are building those networks that create a better future. Linck is more than a service, it is a commitment to connection, caring and continuous growth. We thank everyone who walks alongside us on this journey. It isn't an easy path, but it is always worth it.



Jennifer Morrow
Board Chair



Teri Thomas-Vanos
Executive Director

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Strategic Priorities



Our work is rooted in the belief that every child, youth and family deserves support that is timely, equitable and grounded in the community. Our impact reflects our commitment to the four strategic priorities that guide our organization and our role within the broader system of care.

Timely Access to the Right Supports- we continue to enhance the way families and young people connect with the services they need, when they need them. By streamlining service pathways, moving to measurement based care for CYMH and partnering with community providers, we are reducing wait times and increasing access to holistic supports. Our focus remains on ensuring the right service, at the right time, in the right way, so no one falls through the cracks.

Linck as a Learning Organization- we are committed to continuous improvement, reflection and innovation. Through staff development, knowledge sharing and feedback, Linck is building a culture of learning that fuels growth and adaptability. Whether it is incorporating evidence informed practices or raising up lived experiences, we embed learning and lessons learned, into everything that we do.

Truth and Reconciliation, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion- we are engaged in reconciliation and anti-racism, anti-oppressive practices across the organization. We acknowledge the historical and current harms experienced by certain groups and are confronting systemic barriers. This looks like ongoing learning, consultation, inclusive hiring practices and creating safer spaces that reflect the identities of those we serve and our community.

Linck in the Community- as a community based organization, we know that our strength is in collaboration. Linck is working to build and deepen relationships with community partners- schools, health care, FNIM and cultural communities to increase the network of care around children, youth and families. Through system management, collaboration and advocacy, we are increasing our presence and creating more connected, responsive services.

These four priorities inform the decisions we make and guide us towards being a part of a better tomorrow for Chatham-Kent.

Our Vision

At Linck, our vision reflects a steadfast commitment to creating a future where every child, youth and family in Chatham-Kent can thrive.

We strive to continuously enhance the quality, accessibility, and impact of our service—ensuring that well-being and safety and not just goals but lived realities for the communities we serve.



Our Mission

Our mission, “Strong connections for a better future,” reflects our commitment to building resilient families and communities through collaboration, compassion, and care. We work closely with community partners to provide responsive, inclusive, and culturally appropriate services that meet the unique needs of every family we serve.

At Linck, we live our values every day. Together with our community, we **CREATES:**

- **C**ollaboration
- **R**espect
- **E**quity
- **A**ccountability
- **T**rust
- **E**mpowerment of families
- **S**upport

Through these guiding principles, Linck continues to be a leader in child and youth mental health and family support services, fostering environments where children and families can thrive.

Financial Information

	2024-25	2023-24
Revenue		
Province of Ontario	\$ 22,393,595	\$ 22,872,826
Municipality of Chatham-Kent	2,396,865	2,113,054
Chatham-Kent Health Alliance	200,000	200,000
Other	217,057	295,232
Expenditure Recoveries, Rebates, Interest	<u>1,515,047</u>	<u>1,147,243</u>
	<u>26,722,564</u>	<u>26,628,355</u>
Expenses by Program		
Child Welfare	21,318,369	19,685,860
SCS - Infant Development and Other; Special Needs Resourcing	3,039,102	2,918,173
Child & Family Intervention, Children's Mental Health 0-6 and Youth Criminal Justice Act	3,998,540	3,903,860
Other Programs	<u>390,647</u>	<u>295,233</u>
	<u>28,746,658</u>	<u>26,803,126</u>
Operating Surplus (Deficit) for the Year	<u>\$ (2,024,094)</u>	<u>\$ (174,770)</u>

Service Summary



Developmental Services

Over the past year we supported 49 childcare classrooms throughout special needs resourcing program, supported by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

Additionally, we provided support to 102 families through our Infant and Child Development program.

Mental Health

This year the Mental Health Department focused on reducing the waiting list for counselling and therapy, implementing a new assessment approach called Measurement-Based Care and improving access pathways.



Intake & Family Services

While the transition away from the Child and Family Wellbeing Team presented some challenges, these teams responded with creativity and determination - partnering with community supports to continue meeting families' needs. During this time, there was a rise in the number of children brought to a Place of Safety. Nevertheless, Linck's unwavering goal is to help children return to a safe and supportive home environment as soon as possible, whether through legal or voluntary pathways.

Program Highlights

> CK Youth Social

The CK Youth Social program recorded a total of 1,101 youth visits throughout the year, demonstrating its strong presence and consistent engagement with local youth across all seasons.

The program saw its highest monthly attendance in October (160 youth) and a significant spike in June (130 youth), suggesting that seasonal events or targeted programming during these months were particularly effective in attracting youth participation.

> Developmental Support

Working closely with the inclusion committee of childcare supervisors, we improved our processes to request support for children attending day cares

> Supervised Access

The Supervised Access Program facilitated a total of 3,556 visits, ensuring consistent and structured engagement for participating families.

Over the reporting period, 137 families accessed our services, reflecting strong community reliance and trust in the program.

In total, 386 individuals benefited from the support provided, underscoring the program's broad reach and impact.

> Supported Living

Received grant from Community Foundation to support developmental trauma training for Supported Living staff who work with youth with intensive service needs.

> Community Links

Screeners arranged 168 community links to families requiring support during May 2024 - May 2025. Families were connected with Humana Community Service, Rain & Shine, Family Services Kent, CK Public Health and CK Women's Centre to name a few.

> System Management

As Lead Agency for child & youth mental health in Chatham-Kent, we have been working with St. Clair Child and Youth and local school boards to improve system navigation and referral pathways between school/hospital and community services.

Core service partners in Chatham-Kent have developed new and improved parenting support programs based on feedback from families.

A responsive Intensive Outreach program was launched at Linck, supporting children with serious mental health needs and their caregivers.

Program Highlights



> Volunteer Drives

Between April 2024 and March 2025, our volunteer drivers collectively traveled 686,493 kilometers in service of the community.

From April 2024 to March 2025, a dedicated team of 27 volunteers demonstrated their vital role in supporting community mobility and access.



> Foster Caregivers

Engagement with community resources to begin discussions around sharing foster information through the local school boards

Community billboards around Chatham-Kent has increased interest in fostering.

Virtual information sessions during afternoons and evenings to prospective Foster Families make it easier to learn more about fostering.

Children in Care

Highlights

The Children's Services & Adoption Team provides care and support to children and youth who are in care, placed for adoption or transitioning to adulthood.

The team has been working hard to keep kids placed in the local community and to ensure every child has lasting and enduring connections to family and culture, through repatriation, re-integration, adoption or preparing for adulthood.

The team has been advocating for mental health and educational support and programming for youth with intensive service needs.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has implemented several legislation changes this year. The results of the 2025 Extended Care Ministry audit were very favourable.



CHILDREN ADMITTED TO CARE

67



COMPLETED ADOPTIONS

10



CHILDREN DISCHARGED FROM CARE

83



FOSTER HOMES

40



CHILDREN IN CARE AND END OF YEAR

149



KINSHIP SERVICE HOMES

55



DAYS CARE PROVIDED

51117



ADOPTION DISCLOSURES COMPLETED

13



CHILDREN SERVED IN CARE

232

Intake & Family Services

Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2024



1848 Total Reports Recieved

Investigations



726

Total new
Investigations

570

Investigations
Not Required

145

Cases
Opened

217

Cases Open at
End of Year



Highlights & Achievements

0.16%

Increase in total
reports received

6.9%

Decrease in total new
investigations

35.6%

Decrease in cases
opened

In Intake and Family Services, we support families facing increasingly complex situations, often involving challenges such as family violence, addiction and homelessness.

Our dedicated staff have wholeheartedly embraced the Signs of Safety framework, working diligently to engage families, children and their support networks.

Their focus remains on minimizing disruption for children while prioritizing their safety and wellbeing.

Child & Youth Mental Health

The below highlight offers a detailed summary of the service volume for child and youth mental health.



646

Intake Referrals

157

Brief Services and
Walk-In



454

Counselling and
Therapy Services

Psychological
Assessment

56

Age

5-18 Years

Youth Justice

9

This year, our mental health department has strived to bring to life our clinical vision. This vision is for a service where children and their caregivers are involved and empowered in their care, where we use best practices and collaborate well with community partners. We have implemented Measurement-based care, to ensure children, youth and their caregivers can be involved on an ongoing basis in the therapeutic process.

We have worked with community partners to be more responsive and help families better navigate the system. We unfortunately had to close a successful hospital crisis assessment program, due to insufficient funding, but have worked well with partners to support a transition plan.

Finally, we have prepared for a change in client record systems, which should support better community referral pathways, and fewer disruptions to care.

Glory Stories

Sharing a few of our good news highlights ...



A family recently moved to Chatham-Kent from East India. They had a newborn baby and had not learned about the Ontario/Canadian requirements of ensuring appropriate seating within a car for newborns/children. The worker and family had a very good conversation about the cultural shift within Canada. The family ensured that they had all of the equipment that they needed and asked for advice on installation. The worker provided further education around safe sleep practices and local supports.

The family connected with CK Public Health and now has an in-home nurse that supports them regularly. The parents were very excited about their new child and were proud to show him off.

The worker believes with the support provided; they felt more confident and comfortable in their new roles as parents.

A youth in the Supported Living Program was really struggling with their mental health and emotional regulation which was leading to aggressive and violent behaviours towards themselves and their caregivers/supports.

This young person was consistently being asked to leave school early and there was involvement with the youth justice system as a result of some of the behaviours. The Supported Living team has been working with the youth to build new coping/regulation skills over the last several weeks and staff have witnessed such a positive shift in the youth.

There has been a significant decrease in the aggressive, violent behaviours that were previously seen and the youth has not been asked to leave school early in nearly a month.

This young person has had to deal with multiple difficult situations/conversations recently and the difference in how they have been able to listen, process and utilize their tools when needed has our team beaming with pride!

Glory Stories

An expectant mother was residing in a women's home with her infant son, however, she was evicted from the facility based on aggressive behaviour and she relocated back to Chatham-Kent.

The mother came up with a family plan to place her son (and newborn) with her previous Linck foster parents. This mother continues to receive regular support from numerous community partners to assist her in living independently in the community. This mother recognizes that she will need a strong support system in place prior to independently parenting her children.

The mother has ongoing support from her former foster parents, who continue to be the primary caregivers to her two children. The foster parents are a strong support to her and ensure that she has safe and frequent access. The home has welcomed her to visit and spend time with her children. It is a respectful and loving engagement that is modeled for the children.

The mother speaks highly of the plans that she has put into place for her children and acknowledges that she would like to continue this plan for her children to receive the best care she can provide them. She may not be able to provide ongoing direct unsupported care, but she will be their mom, known to them and have attachment to them that she might not have had if she had not made this plan for their care.

An intake report was received and as a result, one child was placed with their father and one child was brought to a place of safety (foster care). While no kinship options were successful, the child remained in one placement for the duration of their time of care.



The mother addressed the child protection concerns and continued to work cooperatively with Linck staff and community partners. Both the mother and children received supports.

Approx. 10 months later, the child was placed back in the care of the mother and things are working well. The child remains in contact with the foster family and attends for overnights and special occasions.

The other child remains with their father and continues to have access with the mother and sibling. The mother has since become engaged and become a stepparent. The family continues to use community supports and work with the Agency.

The picture is a drawing by the child, who resides with the mother. She drew the worker, hearts and rainbow cat which is one of her recent interests.

Glory Stories

The Mental Health Family Intervention Team proudly launched its first Parenting Education Series, running from April through June. To ensure the program met the needs of families, a survey was conducted with those on our waitlist to gather insights on preferred content and delivery format. Based on this valuable feedback, the team offered a five-session, drop-in style series covering a range of parenting topics. Delivered in a hybrid format—both in-person and online—the series was met with an overwhelmingly positive response.

A total of 32 parents attended in person, while 31 participated virtually, reflecting strong community interest and engagement. The impact of the sessions was evident in the feedback received.

One parent shared with their child's counselor:

"I love, love, loved it and learned so much. I've already started applying my new knowledge and skills at home."

Other parents echoed similar sentiments:

"I learned that I am not alone—other parents are dealing with similar situations."

"It pays to give attention to why our children are upset, angry, or frustrated before responding."

Feedback was gathered after each session and will play a key role in shaping future offerings. The team looks forward to building on this success and continuing to support parents with practical tools, shared experiences, and meaningful connection.

A mother, who was a child in care herself, was in need of resources and support for her family. Her child had challenges; criminal involvement and a victim of sexual assault. The mother was facing substance misuse on a daily basis.

The mother was able to wrap family supports and community resources around her family. The Agency focused on rapport building, understanding the family history, and was able to get to the root of the issue; generational trauma of sexual abuse.

The family began counselling at Sexual Assault Clinic where they were able to identify triggers and concerns. The mother successfully graduated from a necessary program. She made a safety plan for the children during her absence which allowed the children to remain with family. The youth has resumed education in a way that suits their academic needs. Mom continues to attend AA, counselling and completed their high school diploma.

The family has reunified and continues to make consistent progress to reach their goals.



**To all our Staff,
Board Members,
Foster & Kin
Caregivers and
Volunteers!**



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