



Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report

March 2021



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

is.
improvement **service**

Contents

Key Messages	3
Background and Context	4
Objectives, Approach, Methodology and Assumptions	5
Data Analysis	6
Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary	16
Conclusions	18

Key Messages



- This data collection provides an update on the status of ELC delivery in February 2021, comparing this to August 2020 and looking at forecasted positions for the next academic year
- Data returned by local authorities indicates that 114,222 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of February 2021
- Of these, 98,474 children (86%) were accessing more than the statutory entitlement of 600 hours, and 74,096 children (65%) were accessing 1140 hours funded ELC
- The numbers of children accessing an expanded offer has increased since August 2020, with an additional 17,399 children now accessing 1140 hours funded ELC
- The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 6,948 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 505 FTE since August 2020
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 31% of all funded provision
- 68% of children who access most of their hours with funded providers are accessing 1140 hours, while in local authority settings this figure is 64%
- This is an increase compared to August 2020, when 56% of children in local authority settings were accessing 1140 hours. This indicates that expansion activities during this period have been primarily advanced in local authority settings. Access to 1140 in funded provider settings remains at the consistent and high level previously reported
- As of January 2021, there were 917 projects in the capital programme, 64% of which are now complete
- It is forecast that of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August 94% will be complete by August 2021
- For the 6% of projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, 89% have a stated contingency plan to ensure that there is sufficient additional capacity to meet forecast demand for 1140 from August 2021
- Variability at the local level remains a key feature of the progress of expansion

Background and Context

The duty on local authorities to secure 1140 hours funded ELC, originally intended to come into effect in August 2020, was revoked in April both to give local authorities the flexibility to focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and because the closure of colleges and construction sites due to lockdown made it impossible to complete the building of nurseries and the recruitment of ELC staff in time for August 2020. As agreed with COSLA and Scottish Ministers, the duty has since been reinstated and will now come into effect in August 2021.

To provide information on the implementation of this commitment, the Improvement Service (IS) and Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) collect and analyse data on the progress of the delivery of the expansion programmes across local authorities. Following a revision to the Improvement Service data collection framework in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, data gathering is planned for the beginning of each academic term through to April 2022.

This collection was originally intended to take place in January 2021 but was postponed as ELC settings were operating only for key worker and vulnerable childcare due to COVID-19. The objective of this data collection is to understand the status of the ELC sector across the country with regard to uptake, workforce and capacity as of February 2021 when settings reopened to all children.

This report informs the Joint Delivery Board. Co-chaired by the Minister for Children and Young People and the COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People, the Joint Delivery Board is responsible for reviewing progress towards implementation of the 1140 hours expansion across all 32 local authorities and for agreeing actions to mitigate risk, respond to emerging issues or put support in place where that may be required.

This report aims to summarise the status of the sector at the end of February 2021 as reported by local authorities, comparing this to their reported position in August 2020 and will look to forecasted positions for the next academic year, beginning in August 2021 when the duty to provide 1140 funded hours comes into effect.

Objectives, Approach, Methodology and Assumptions

To collect the data, all 32 Scottish local authorities were issued with a template spreadsheet and guidance document containing instructions for completion and detailed definitions for each of the key readiness indicators to be measured.

Each collection requests the status of delivery in a reference week. For this collection, the reference week was that commencing on 22nd February. This was the first week that ELC was fully opened beyond provision for critical and key worker childcare following the January lockdown.

This collection also asked local authorities to forecast the number of children expected to access funded ELC, and to confirm forecasts of the workforce they will have in place over the next academic year (2021-22). These forecasts supersede any historical forecasts made, which are no longer applicable since they were made pre-COVID-19, and related to academic year 2020-21 (which was due to be the first year of implementation), not academic year 2021-22. No reference is therefore made to any pre-COVID-19 forecasts.

Scottish Futures Trust collect ELC infrastructure data on a quarterly basis from local authorities. An extract of the executive summary from Scottish Futures Trust's Infrastructure Progress Report is included here.

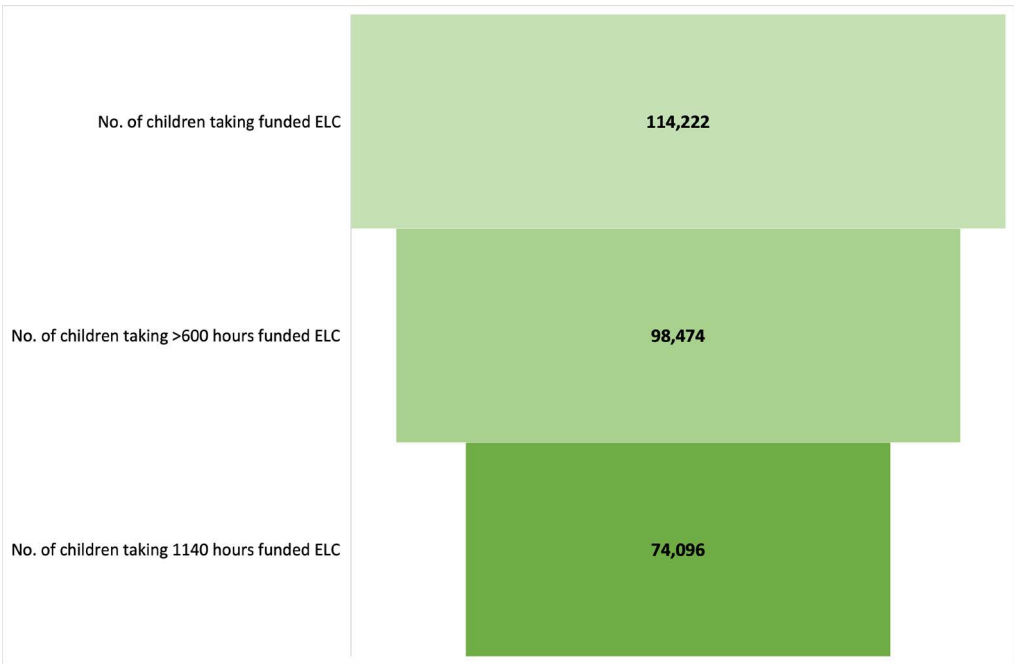
Although the Improvement Service and Scottish Futures Trust have liaised with individual local authorities in seeking to ensure consistency of data returns, they have not undertaken an audit of the data, systems and processes used to capture the data within the 32 local authorities. The data submitted by local authorities is, therefore, presented in good faith without having been audited by the Improvement Service or Scottish Futures Trust.

Data Analysis

Uptake

Total Uptake (2 to 5 year old)

Figure 1: Number of children (2-5-years-old) accessing levels of funded ELC



The number reported to be receiving funded ELC in February 2021 was 114,222 children. Of these, 86% (98,474 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 65% (74,096 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 1).

This represents an increase of 15,784 children accessing funded ELC, and 17,399 more children accessing 1140 hours funded ELC. An increase in the numbers of children accessing funded ELC is expected as we move through the academic year and more children have their third birthdays, making them eligible. However, there has also been an increase since August 2020 in the proportion of children receiving both expanded hours (from 80% to 86%) and the proportion of children accessing 1140 hours (from 61% to 65%). This indicates that expansion activities have continued since August 2020, with the 1140 offer being extended to more families over and above those who have become eligible since August 2020.

In narrative collected as part of this data collection, some local authorities indicated that uptake at this stage in the year was lower than in previous years, largely attributed to factors

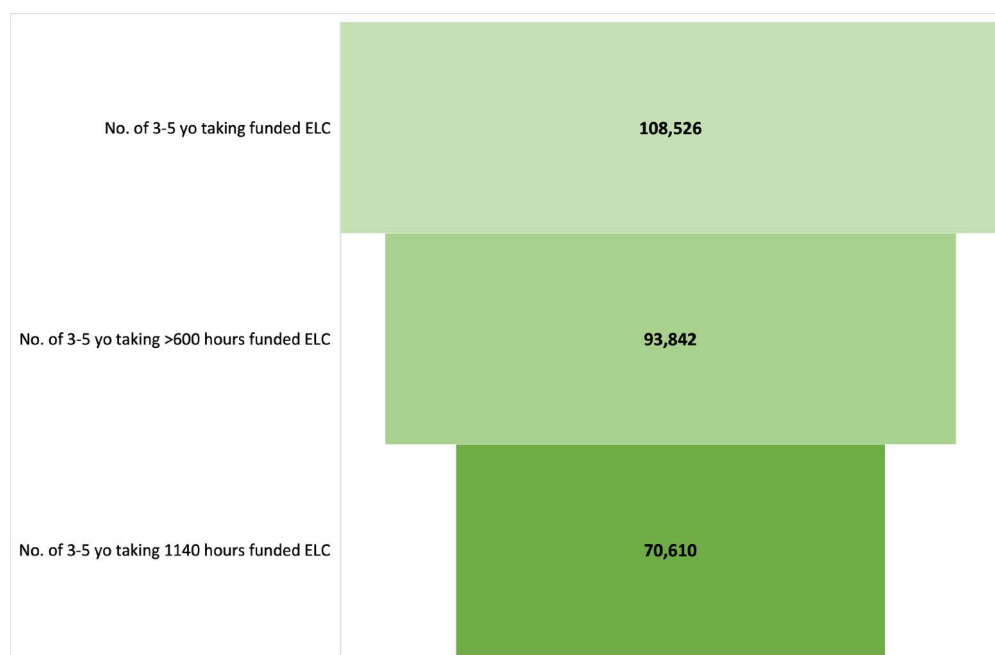
generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g. parental furlough, nervousness of parents or reduced time required for childcare caused by parents on reduced working hours. This impact is not expected to be long-term, and uptake is expected to increase following the reopening of schools and workplaces.

It should be noted that this measurement reflects the number of children accessing different levels of provision, which may not reflect the hours that are offered – e.g. a child could be offered 1140 hours, but their family may only choose to access 900 hours.

As in all previous delivery progress reports there is variability between local authorities. Some local authorities report that all children in receipt of funded ELC are accessing expanded hours, while others report that most children are accessing the current statutory entitlement of 600 hours, with only a minority accessing expanded hours. However, all local authorities report that some children are accessing expanded hours

3- to 5-year-old uptake of funded ELC

Figure 2: Number of children (3-5-years-old) accessing levels of funded ELC



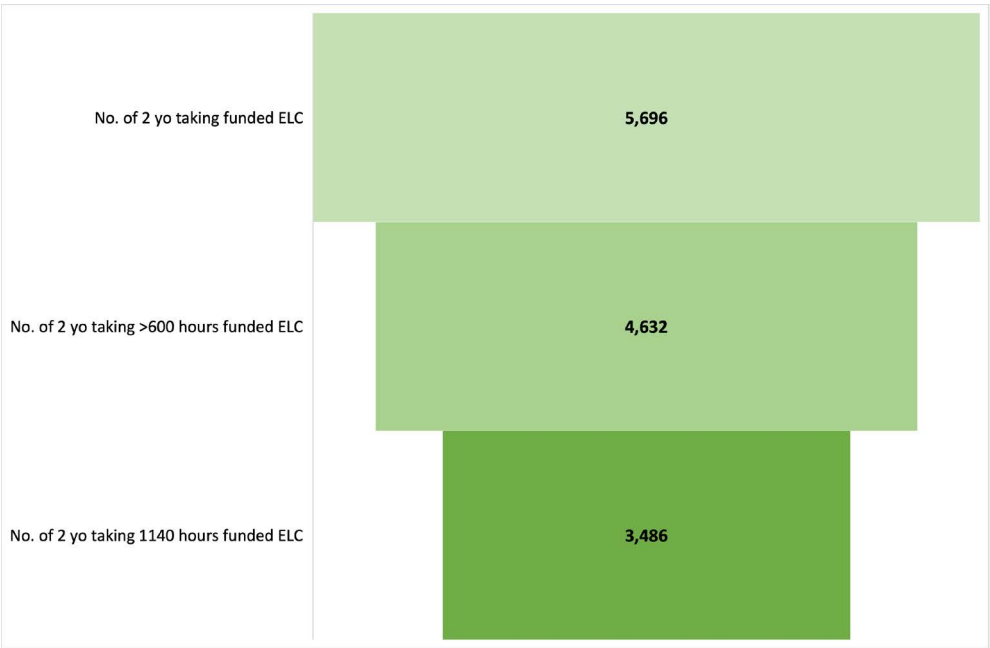
The number of 3 to 5-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in February 2021 was 108,526 children. Of these, 87% (93,842 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 65% (70,610 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 2).

There has been an increase since August 2020 in the proportion of 3- to 5-year-old children receiving both expanded hours (from 80% to 87%) and the proportion of 3- to 5-year-old children accessing 1140 hours (from 61% to 65%).

Variability continues to be seen at a local level, with some local authorities delivering expanded hours to a greater proportion of their 3- to 5-year-old children in funded ELC than others.

2-year-old uptake of funded ELC

Figure 3: Number of children (2-year-olds) accessing levels of funded ELC



The number of 2-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in February 2021 was 5,696 children. Of these, 81% (4,632 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 61% (3,486 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 3).

Variability continues to be seen at a local level, with some local authorities delivering expanded hours to a greater proportion of their children in funded ELC than others.

Provision in Local Authority, Private Partner and Childminder Settings

The graph below shows the reported proportion of uptake split by provider types in February 2021.

To ensure that the data collection is not too burdensome, local authorities report on how many children access most of their provision in each setting type (rather than the number of hours being accessed in each type). Consequently, the statistics quoted do not account for blended models.

Figure 4: Uptake of funded ELC split by provider type

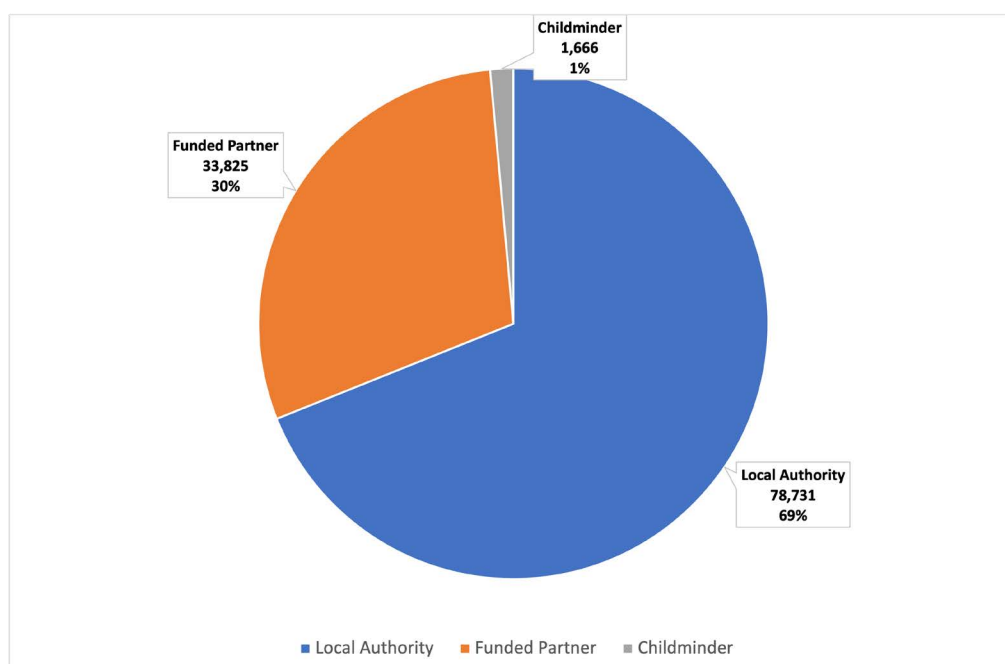


Figure 4 shows that for February 2021, 30% of provision was being accessed in private settings, compared to 69% in local authority settings, with the remainder being accessed with childminders. This is largely in line with the historic split of provision, with a small shift towards uptake with funded partners (increased from 27% in August 2020). This represents an increase of 8,730 children in funded partners and an increase of 11,835 in local authority settings.

Of all children who are accessing the majority of their hours with funded providers, 68% are accessing 1140 hours, compared with 64% in local authority settings.

For local authority settings, this is a significant increase from August 2020, when 56% of children accessing the majority of their hours in local authority settings were accessing 1140 hours. This is evidence that expansion activities are primarily being advanced in local authority settings, while the access to 1140 in funded provider settings remains at the consistent

and high level reported earlier in the expansion. Throughout the expansion phasing, local authorities have tended to make use of the capacity in funded provider settings while additional capacity in local authority settings was being generated. This data indicates that the expansion activities in local authority settings are now being completed and used for delivering expanded provision.

Local authorities reported that, as of February 2021, 1,185 childminders were in partnership to deliver funded hours. This is an increase of 11 since August 2020. 1,944 children were reported to be accessing some level of provision with childminders, an increase of 589 since August 2020. Narrative returns indicate that provision accessed with childminders is most often used as part of a blended model.

Forecasted Uptake in Academic Year 2021/22

As part of this data collection, local authorities were asked to forecast how many children would be accessing funded ELC, and how many would be accessing 1140 hours funded ELC in each term of the next academic year.

It should be noted that most local authorities are currently in the middle of their admissions process and many authorities indicated that they would be able to provide more detailed figures on expected uptake once their admissions process are completed. The figures presented here are therefore to be taken as estimations and should not be used as a comparison point against actual uptake figures that will be collected post-August 2021. Local authorities will be offered the opportunity to refine these estimations following the completion of their admissions processes as part of the next data collection.

Figure 5: Provisional Forecast Uptake for Academic Year 2021-22

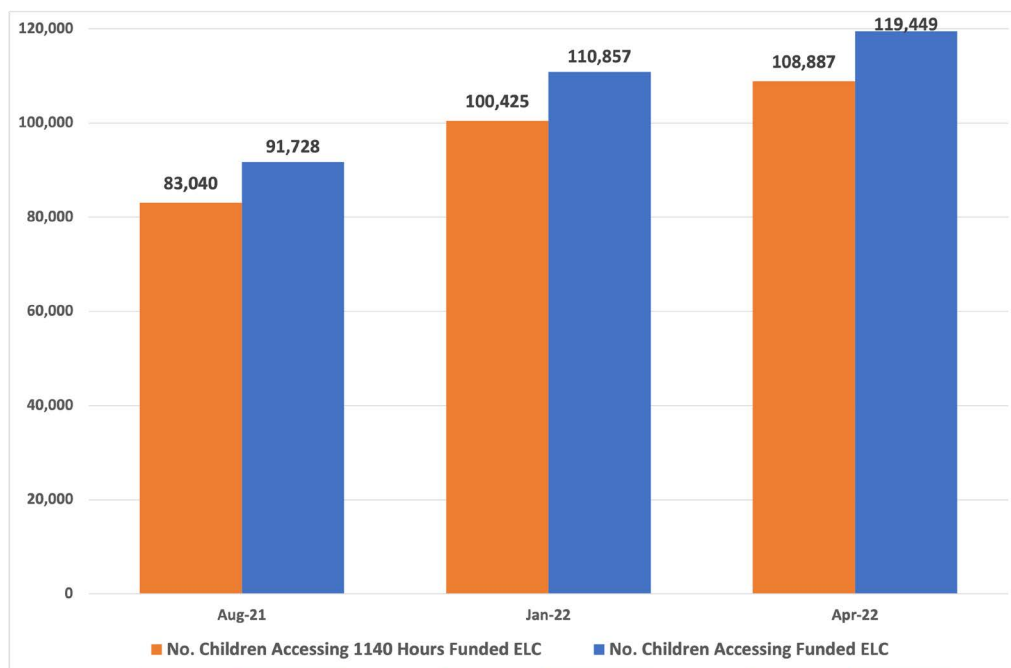


Figure 5 shows the provisional forecast uptake for academic year 2021-22. Eligibility and therefore uptake increase throughout the year as more children have their third birthdays and become eligible in the following term for funded ELC. This peaks in the final academic term, when 119,449 children are forecast to be taking funded ELC.

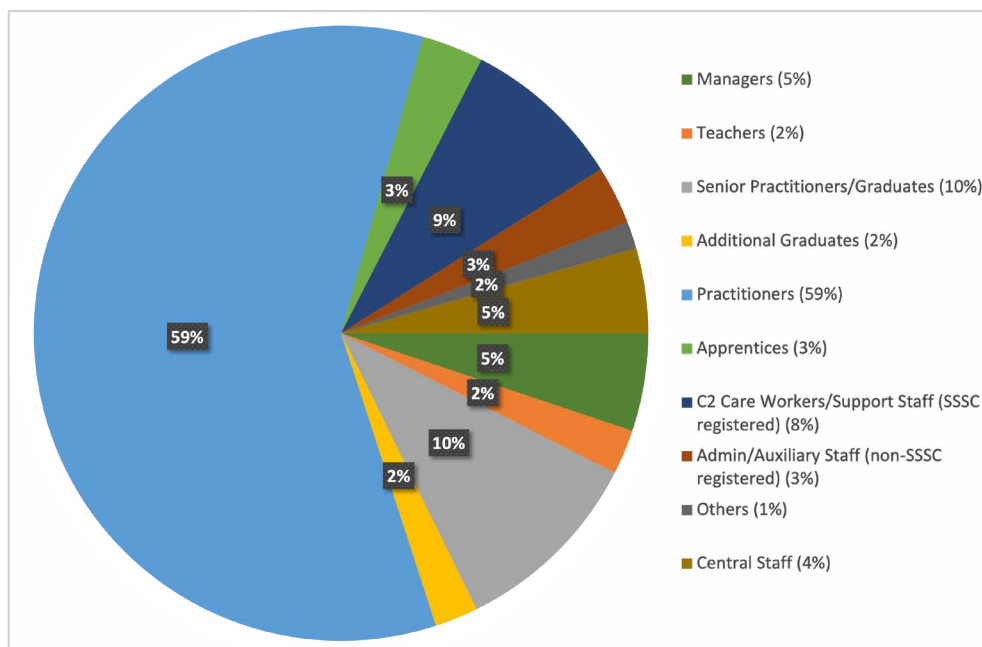
Throughout the year the proportion of children expected to access the full 1140 hours entitlement is relatively constant at around 91%. When the statutory duty comes into effect in August 2021, it is not assumed or expected that all children in funded ELC will access the full 1140 hours entitlement as family choice may mean that the number of hours accessed are fewer. However, from the data returned, initial indications are that local authorities expect

uptake of the full 1140 entitlement to be high.

Throughout the year, the proportion of provision taken in different provider types also remains constant, with local authority settings accounting for approximately 70% of provision, private, voluntary and third sector settings accounting for 28% and the remaining 2% being taken with childminders.

Local Authority ELC Workforce

Figure 6: Local authority ELC workforce split by job type



Local authorities reported that as of February 2021 the ELC workforce in local authorities comprised of 16,524 FTE across Scotland. Figure 6 shows the split of job types in ELC nationally as of February 2021. By far the largest section of the ELC workforce are Practitioners, comprising of 9,801 FTE (59%).

When compared to the total local authority ELC workforce in academic year 2016/17, there has been an increase of 6,948 FTE. This is an increase of 73% from 9,576 FTE in academic year 2016/17.

Since August 2020, there has been an increase of 505 FTE, with local authorities noting in their free text narrative that recruitment has been continuing through the lockdown in early 2021 via video conference interviews. By far the biggest increase since August 2020 has been seen amongst the SSSC Registered care workers/support staff (+214 FTE), with the next biggest increase in practitioners (+86 FTE).

A small number of authorities have reported a slightly decreased workforce complement since August 2020 as a result of no longer requiring temporary staff brought in to support Critical and Key Worker Childcare for COVID.

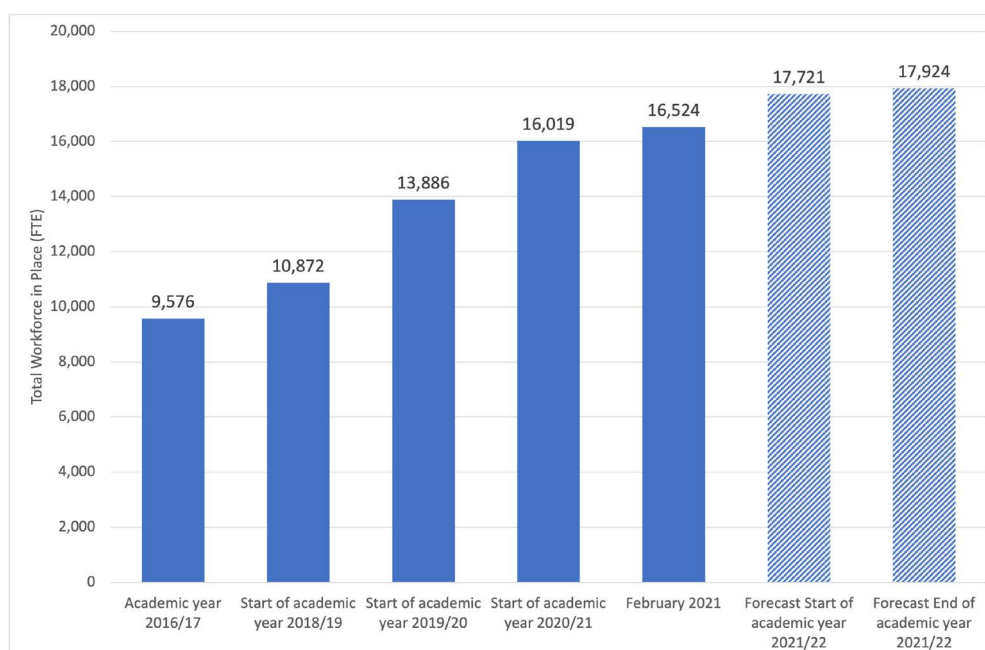
Figure 7: Total local authority workforce (FTE) in place since beginning of expansion

Figure 7 shows the profile of the workforce expansion over time, since the beginning of expansion activities in academic year 2016/17.

At a national level, over 93% of the workforce expected to be in place in August 2021 is reported to already be in place, an increase from 90% reported in August 2020. Collectively, local authorities reported that an additional 1,197 FTE will be in place August 2021 compared to February 2021. Little expansion is then expected between the start and end of the academic year, with only an additional 203 FTE being added to the national workforce over that period.

As on other indicators, there is variability at a local level, with some authorities noting that their recruitment is complete and others indicating that recruitment continues. On average, each local authority expects to increase their workforce by 37 FTE between February and August 2021.

A number of the local authorities who indicate that they expect additional workforce to be in place in August 2021 are already offering 1140 to all children. This indicates that the increase in workforce between now and August is not necessarily a requirement for delivery of the statutory duty.

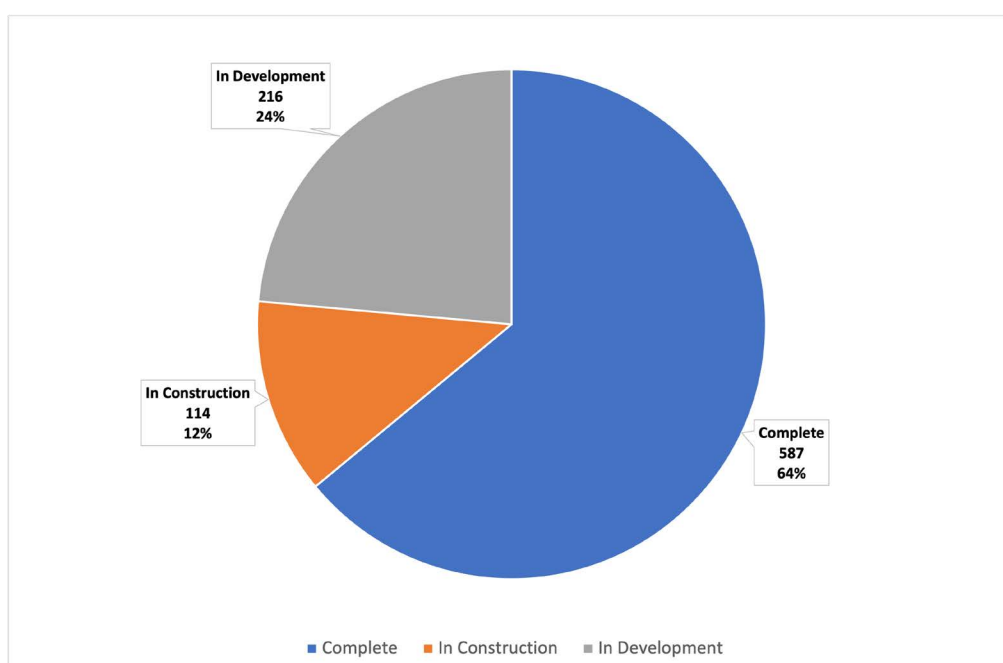
Some local authorities noted in their free text narrative that a number of the posts still to be filled are required to support outstanding infrastructure development. Additionality between February and August 2021 will also be used to support increased flexibility and choice in those areas already in receipt of the 1140 offer.

While the increase expected between February 2021 and August 2021 is higher than that seen between August 2020 and February 2021, narrative indicates confidence in filling these posts, and the timing of this workforce increase is being driven by the infrastructure programmes rather than lack of current supply.

Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary

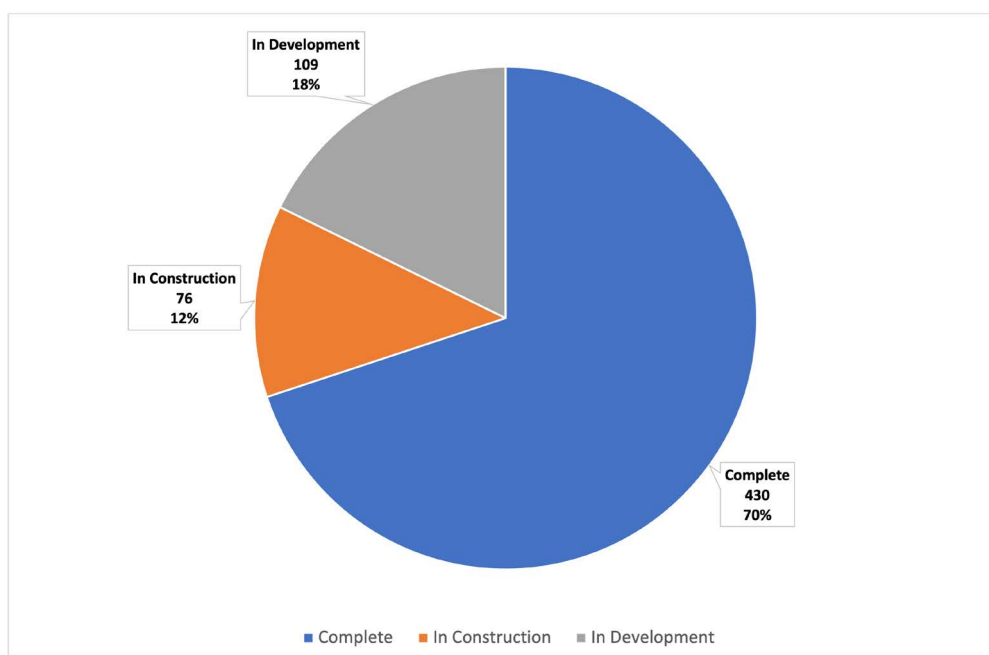
As of January 2021, there were 917 projects in the capital programme which will deliver c.22,000 additional spaces. 64% of all capital projects are now complete, delivering 54% of the total planned additional space. Figure 8 illustrates the status of the overall capital programme as of January 2021.

Figure 8: Total Number of Projects



Not all capital projects are required to deliver 1140 hours from August. 615 of the 917 capital projects are forecast to be required to deliver 1140 from August; the remaining projects being linked to increased flexibility, forecast growth and longer-term learning estate development projects. Figure 9 illustrates the status of the projects that are required for August as of as of January 2021.

Figure 9: Number of Projects Required for August 2021



Based on local authorities' infrastructure updates in January 2021, of the 615 projects required for August, it is forecast that 79% will be complete by April 2021, increasing to 94% by August 2021.

For the 36 (6%) projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, 32 (89%) have a stated contingency plan to ensure that there is sufficient additional capacity to meet forecast demand for 1140 from August 2021.

SFT will continue to monitor progress and work with local authorities to identify the remaining contingency plans along with the need for further contingency plans should any required project scheduled to complete in the summer be subject to delay.

Conclusions

The duty on local authorities to secure 1140 hours funded ELC, originally intended to come into effect in August 2020, was revoked in April 2020 both to give local authorities the flexibility to focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and because the closure of colleges and construction sites due to lockdown made it impossible to complete the building of nurseries and the recruitment of ELC staff in time for August 2020. As agreed with COSLA and Scottish Ministers, the duty has since been reinstated and will now come into effect in August 2021.

This data collection has provided an update on the status of ELC delivery in February 2021, comparing this to August 2020 and looking at forecasted positions for the next academic year.

Across the key indicator measurements and incorporating returned narrative, the national picture shows that phasing of the expansion has continued since August 2020, with increases in workforce and in the number of children accessing expanded hours.

As in previous delivery progress reports, there is variability at a local level with some local authorities delivering expanded funded hours to a greater proportion of children than others.

Data returned by local authorities indicates that 114,222 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of February 2021, with 98,474 children (86%) accessing more than the statutory entitlement of 600 hours, and 74,096 children (65%) accessing 1140 hours funded ELC.

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of children in local authority settings who are accessing 1140 hours (rising from 56% in August 2020 to 64% in February 2021), indicating that expansion activities during this period have been advanced in local authority settings. Access to 1140 in funded provider settings remains at the consistent and high level previously reported.

The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 6,948 FTE since academic year 2016/17, with an increase of 505 FTE since August 2020.

As of January 2021, there were 917 projects in the capital programme, 64% of which are now complete. It is forecast that of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August, 94% will be complete by August 2021. For the 6% of projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, local authorities are putting in place contingency plans to ensure that there is sufficient additional capacity to meet forecast demand for 1140 from August 2021. Most of the required

contingency plans have already been identified and some have already been implemented to support the delivery of 1140 in advance of August 2021.

In initial forecasts for uptake in academic year 2021/22, a high proportion of children in funded ELC are expected to access 1140 hours (91%). However, the figures returned are only estimations, and as such local authorities will be offered the opportunity to refine their forecasts of uptake in the next academic year following the completion of their admissions processes to ensure that expectations of the numbers of children to access provision are accurate.



Improvement Service
iHub
Quarrywood Court
Livingston EH54 6AX

T. 01506 282012
E. info@improvementservice.org.uk
W. www.improvementservice.org.uk



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

is.
improvement **service**