



Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report

June 2023



Scottish Government
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Contents

Key Messages	3
Background and Context	4
Objectives, Methodology and Assumptions	5
Data Analysis	6
Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary	16
Conclusions	17

Key Messages



- This data collection provides an update on the status of ELC delivery in April 2023.
- Data returned by local authorities indicates that approximately 119,108 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of April 2023.
- Of these, 116,625 children (98%) were accessing more than 600 hours, and 100,506 children (84%) were accessing 1,140 hours funded ELC.
- There has been a decrease in numbers of 2- to 5-year-old children reported to be accessing funded ELC (2% decrease) compared to April 2022.
- Amongst eligible 2-year-olds, there are continued year-on-year increase in the number of children accessing funded ELC.
- Amongst 5-year-olds (deferrals), there has been a year-on-year increase of 23%.
- The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 9,170 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 630 FTE since September 2022.
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 31% of all funded provision.
- Variability at the local level remains a key feature of the expansion.

Background and Context

The duty on local authorities to secure 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) for all eligible children has been in effect since 1st 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 delivery funded ELC across local authorities.

The objective of this data collection is to understand the status of the ELC sector across the country regarding uptake, workforce and capacity as of the last week in April 2023.

This report aims to summarise the status of the sector at the end of April 2023 as reported by local authorities, comparing this to their reported position from the previous academic year.

Objectives, Methodology and Assumptions

To collect the data, all 32 Scottish local authorities were issued with an online form and guidance containing instructions for completion and detailed definitions for each of the key readiness indicators to be measured. One local authority was unable to provide data in this collection time frame, so the most recent figures we have for this academic year have been used in place (September 2022 data). **All figures noted are an estimation due to this.**

Each collection requests the status of delivery in a reference week. For this collection, the reference week was that commencing on 24th April 2023.

SFT collect ELC infrastructure data on a quarterly basis from local authorities. An extract of the executive summary from SFT's Infrastructure Progress Report of June 2023 is included here.

Although the IS and SFT 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 IS or SFT.

Data Analysis

Uptake

Total uptake (2- to 5-year-old)

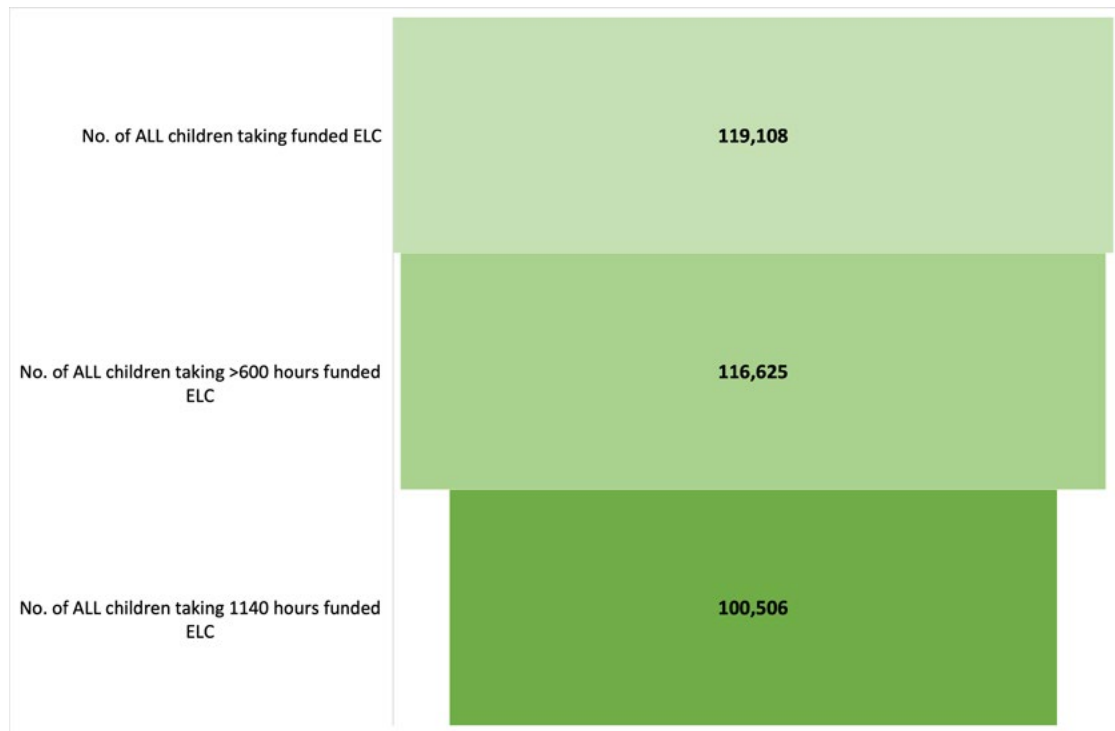


Figure 1: Number of children (2-5-years-old) accessing levels of funded ELC

The number of children reported to be receiving funded ELC in April 2023 was 119,108. Of these, 98% (116,625 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 85% (100,506 children) were reported to be accessing 1,140 funded hours (Figure 1).

The number of children eligible for funded ELC increases throughout the academic year as more children turn 3-years-old. As such, the number of children accessing funded ELC is necessarily higher in this session (April 2023) than was noted in the last Delivery Progress Report (September 2022).

For a comparison point, we instead look back to the collection that took place in April 2022 and April 2021. In doing so, the year-on-year change in the numbers of 2- to 5-year-old children reported to be accessing funded ELC can be seen at a national level – see Table 1.

Table 1: Change in number of 2–5-year-old children in receipt of funded ELC in April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	Number of 2-5-year-old children accessing funded ELC	Year on year change
April 2021	118,068	N/A
April 2022	121,101	+3%
April 2023	119,108	-2%

There has been an increase in the proportion of children receiving more than 600 hours (98%, compared to 97% in September 2022), and a decrease in the proportion of children accessing 1,140 hours (84%, compared to 87% in September 2022).

It should be noted that this measurement reflects the number of children accessing different levels of provision, which does not directly reflect the hours that are available. In August 2021 all local authorities confirmed by correspondence that they were able to offer a place to all eligible children who applied for funded ELC up to 1,140 hours. 100% uptake of the full 1,140 hours was not expected at any point through the expansion.

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 1,140 hours, while others report lower uptake of the full offer.

3- to 4-year-old uptake of funded ELC



Figure 2: Number of children (3-4-years-old) accessing levels of funded ELC

The number of 3 to 4-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in April 2023 was 105,054 children. Of these, 98% (103,063 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 85% (89,910 children) were reported to be accessing 1,140 funded hours (Figure 2).

The year-on-year change in the numbers of 3- to 4-year-old children accessing funded ELC is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Change in number of 5-year-olds in receipt of funded ELC in April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	Number of 3-4-year-old children accessing funded ELC	Year on year change
April 2021	106,661	N/A
April 2022	108,587	+2%
April 2023	103,063	-3%

Variability continues to be seen at a local level, with some local authorities noting uptake of the expanded hours in a greater proportion of their 3- to 4-year-old children in funded ELC than others.

5-year-old (deferral) uptake of funded ELC



Figure 3: Number of children (5-years-olds, deferral) accessing levels of funded ELC

The number of 5-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in April 2023 was 6,570 children. Of these, 99% (6,480 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 87% (5,660 children) were reported to be accessing 1,140 funded hours (Figure 3).

The year-on-year change in the numbers of 5-year-old children accessing funded ELC is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Change in number of 5-year-olds in receipt of funded ELC, April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	Number of 5-year-old children accessing funded ELC	Year on year change
April 2021	5,203	N/A
April 2022	5,357	+2%
April 2023	6,570	+23%

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

2-year-old uptake of funded ELC



Figure 4: Number of children (2-year-olds) accessing levels of funded ELC

The number of 2-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in April 2023 was 7,484 children. Of these, 95% (7,082 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 79% (5,936 children) were reported to be accessing 1,140 funded hours (Figure 3).

Proportions of those children accessing funded ELC who are accessing expanded hours (both categories of over 600 hours and 1,140 hours) remain lower for the 2-year-old population than they are for the 3- to 5-year-old population. However, these proportions have increased through this academic year, and a continued year on year increase has been observed since the statutory duty came into effect, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Change in proportion of 2-year-olds in receipt of funded ELC who are accessing expanded hours in April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023
Proportion of funded 2-year-olds accessing more than 600 funded hours	90%	93%	95%
Proportion of funded 2-year-olds accessing 1,140 funded hours	72%	80%	79%

There has also been a year-on-year increase in the number of 2-year-old children accessing funded ELC, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Change in number of 2-year-olds in receipt of funded ELC April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	Number of 2-year-old children accessing funded ELC	Year on year change
April 2021	6,204	N/A
April 2022	7,157	+15%
April 2023	7,484	+5%

Variability continues to be seen at a local level, with some local authorities noting uptake of the expanded hours in a greater proportion of their 2-year-old children in funded ELC than others.

Provision in Local Authority, Private Partner and Childminder Settings

The graph below, Figure 5, shows the reported proportion of uptake split by provider types in April 2023.

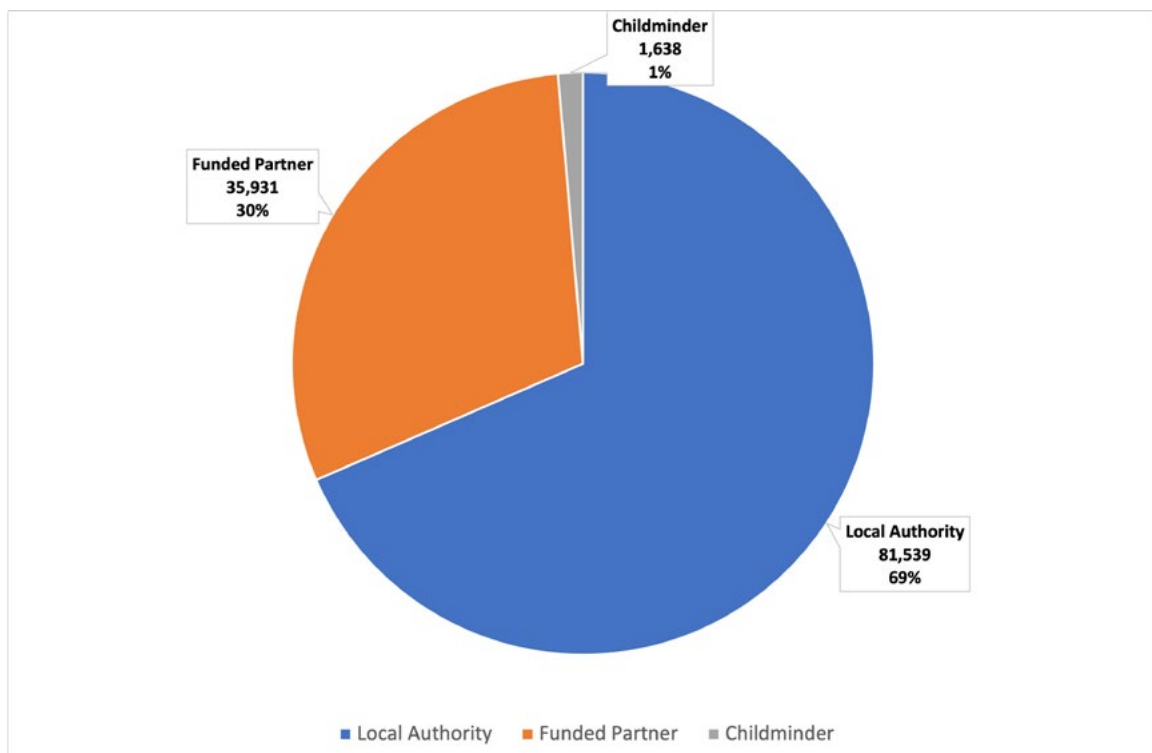


Figure 5: Uptake of funded ELC split by provider type

Figure 5 shows that for April 2023, 30% of provision was being accessed in private settings, compared to 69% in local authority settings, with the remainder being accessed with childminders. These proportions have remained relatively static since August 2021.

Of all children who are accessing the majority of their hours with funded providers, 82% are accessing 1,140 hours, compared with 86% in local authority settings.

Local authorities reported that, as of April 2023, 1,044 childminders were in partnership to deliver funded hours. This is a decrease of 107 childminders (9%) from the figures reported in September 2022, and a year-on-year decrease of 10% from April 2022. 1,638 children were reported to be accessing some level of provision with childminders, an increase of 326 children (25%) since September 2022, although it is a decrease of 15% from April 2022.

Table 6: Change in number of childminders in partnership, and number of children accessing funded ELC through childminders; in April 2021, April 2022, and April 2023

	Number of childminders in partnership	Year on year change	Number of children accessing provision with childminders	Year on year change
April 2021	1,233	N/A	2,013	N/A
April 2022	1,166	-5%	1,917	-5%
April 2023	1,044	-10%	1,638	-15%

Local Authority ELC Workforce

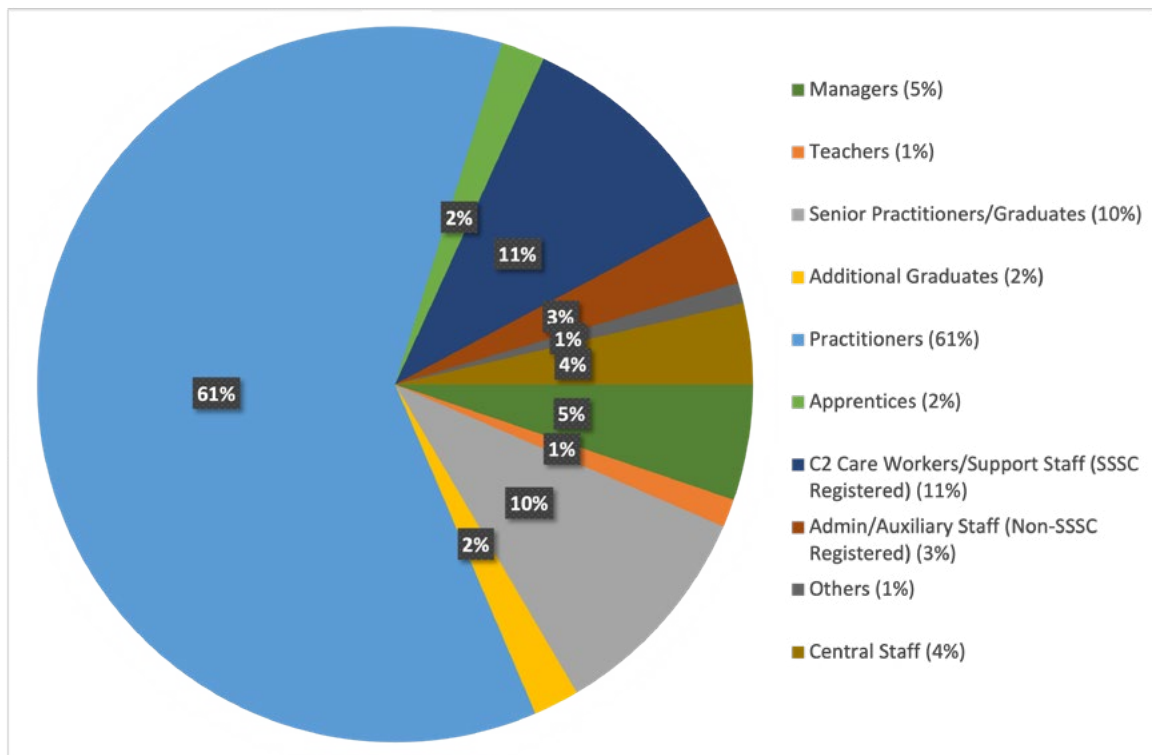


Figure 6: Local authority ELC workforce split by job type

Local authorities reported that as of April 2023 the ELC workforce in local authorities comprised of 18,746 FTE across Scotland. Figure 5 shows the split of job types in ELC nationally as of April 2023. By far the largest section of the ELC workforce are Practitioners, comprising of 11,482 FTE (61%).

When compared to the total local authority ELC workforce in academic year 2016/17, there has been an increase of 9,170 FTE. This is an increase of 96% from 9,576 FTE in academic year 2016/17.

Since September 2022, there has been an increase of 630 FTE. By far the biggest increase since September 2022 has been seen amongst Practitioners (+528 FTE).

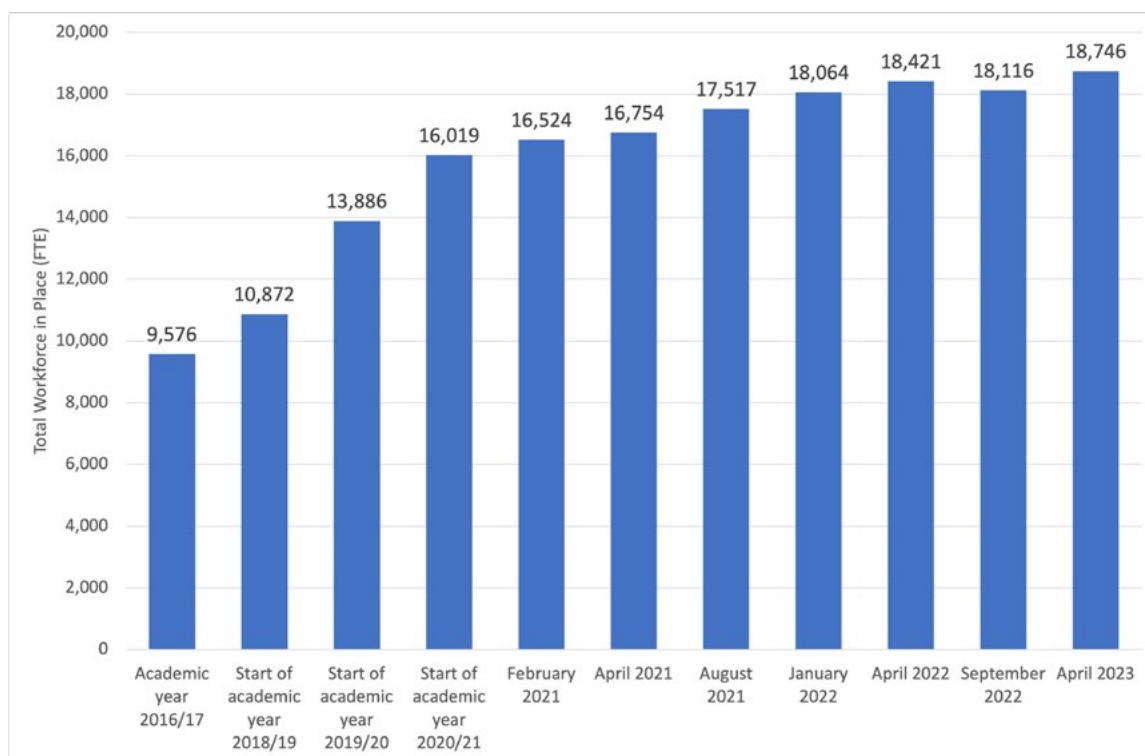


Figure 7: Total local authority workforce (FTE) in place since beginning of expansion

Figure 7 shows the profile of the local authority workforce over time since the beginning of expansion activities in academic year 2016/17. Since publication of the previous report in September 2022, workforce figures reported in April 2022 and September 2022 have been reviewed with local authorities in detail. This review has indicated there were discrepancies in the way roles are recorded and reported in a small number of authorities. While it is not reasonable to try and retrospectively record workforce data for these periods, it is believed that while there was a reduction in the total local authority workforce between April and September 2022, the scale of the reduction is lower than indicated.

Figure 8 shows the overall trend.

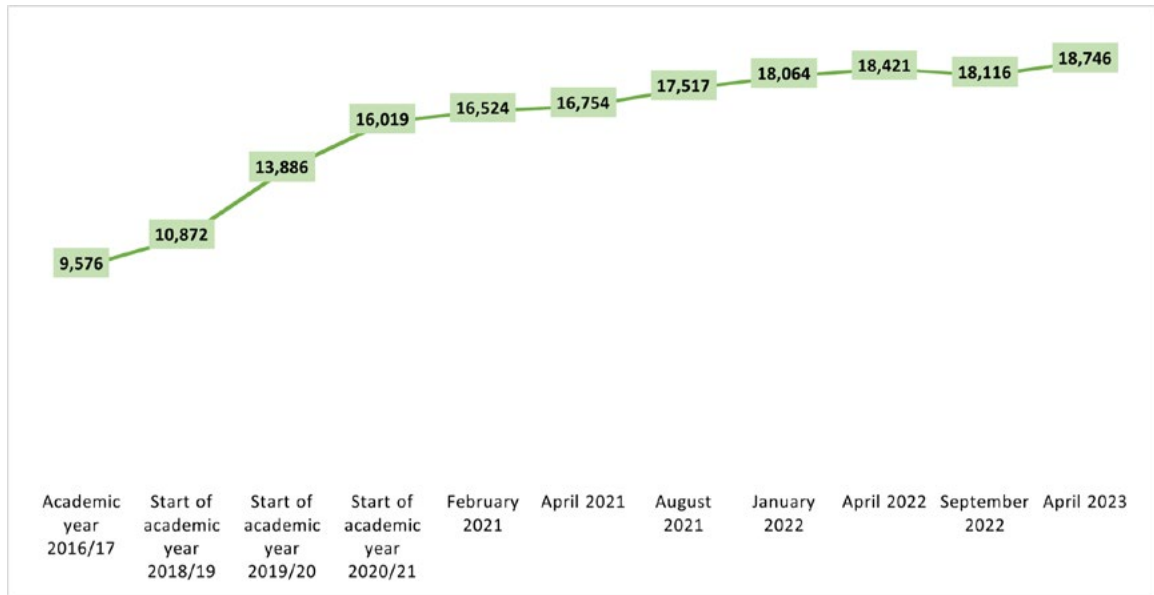


Figure 8: Total local authority workforce (FTE) in place since beginning of expansion, in linear format

Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary

As of the May 2023, Local Authority data returns stated that the total number of projects in the capital programme was 896, which when all are complete will have delivered c.22,000 additional ELC spaces.

94% of these capital projects are now complete, delivering 88% of the total planned additional space. 2% of projects are currently in construction and 4% of projects are still in development.

Figure 9 illustrates the status of the overall capital programme as of May 2023.

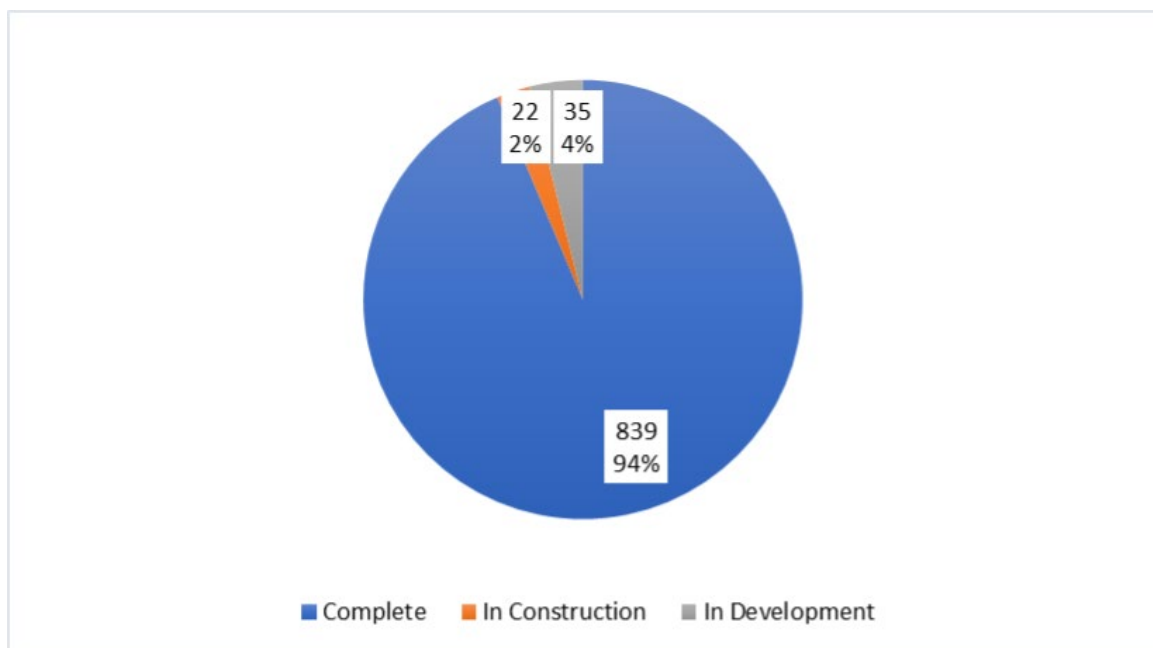


Figure 9: Current Status of Programme Split by Project Status

It is important to note that, even though not all capital projects are operational, 1,140 hours has been delivered by all Local Authorities since the statutory deadline of August 2021. This is partly being delivered through robust contingency plans or transitional arrangements which have been put in place to ensure continued service delivery until the remaining projects are complete.

The remaining projects in construction/development will also provide increased flexibility and accessibility in line with the original vision of the expansion. They also accommodate forecasted growth and longer-term learning estate development.

SFT will continue to monitor the progress of the remaining projects in the programme.

Conclusions

Local authorities successfully delivered the expansion of funded ELC in August 2021 to secure 1,140 hours of funded ELC for all eligible children.

Across the key indicator measurements and incorporating returned narrative, the national picture shows continued high uptake of the expanded offer, and success in resourcing the requisite capacity and workforce to support this.

As in previous delivery progress reports, there is variability at a local level with some local authorities reporting higher uptake of the expanded funded hours than others.

One local authority was unable to provide data in this collection time frame, so the most recent figures we have for this academic year have been used in place (September 2022 data). **All figures noted are an estimation due to this.**

Data returned by local authorities indicates that 119,108 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of April 2023, with 116,625 children (98%) accessing more than 600 hours, and 100,506 children (84%) accessing 1,140 hours funded ELC.

Comparing this uptake to that seen in April 2022, at a national level, there has been a year-on-year decrease in numbers of 2- to 5-year-old children reported to be accessing funded ELC (2% decrease).

Amongst eligible 2-year-olds, there are continued year-on-year increases both in the number of children accessing funded ELC, and in the proportion of children accessing the full 1,140 hours.

The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 9,170 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 630 FTE since September 2022.

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