



# Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report

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# Key Messages



- This data collection provides an update on the status of ELC delivery in April 2021
- Data returned by local authorities indicates that 118,068 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of April 2021
- Of these, 102,410 children (87%) were accessing more than the statutory entitlement of 600 hours, and 84,606 children (72%) were accessing 1140 hours funded ELC
- The numbers of children accessing an expanded offer has increased since February 2021, with an additional 10,510 children now reported to be accessing 1140 hours funded ELC
- The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 7,178 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 230 FTE since February 2021
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 31% of all funded provision
- 73% of children who access most of their hours with funded providers are accessing 1140 hours, while in local authority settings this figure is 72%
- 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 April 2021, there were 918 projects in the capital programme, 69% of which are now complete
- It is forecast that of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August 90% will be complete by August 2021
- For the 60 (10%) of projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, 58 (97%) 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The duty on local authorities to secure 1140 hours funded ELC, originally intended to come into effect in August 2020, was revoked in April both to give local authorities the flexibility to focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and because the closure of colleges and construction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.

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 April 2021.

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 April 2021 as reported by local authorities, comparing this to their reported position throughout this academic year.

# 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 26th April.

Based on feedback received in the last collection, local authorities were offered the opportunity to update their figures for expected uptake in August 2021 based on applications and allocations. This was intended to be a refinement of the forecasts that were returned in the last data collection, the results of which were published on 8th April 2021. However, it has not been possible to gain a reliably accurate figure for the number of children allocated due to the differing ways in which allocations are made (centrally, by panels, by setting etc.) and differing timelines (many local authorities informing us that allocations will not be complete until late May/early June, some timelines have been delayed to schedule panels or allow for more late applications following lower than expected applications). This report therefore does not consider forecast uptake for the next academic year. The Improvement Service will continue to engage with local authorities on this point, to gain a clear picture of number of children expected to attend in the next academic year.

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 April 2021 was 118,068 children. Of these, 87% (102,410 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 72% (84,606 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 1).

This represents an increase of 3,846 children accessing funded ELC, and 10,510 more children accessing 1140 hours funded ELC since February 2021. 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 February 2021 in the proportion of children receiving both expanded hours (from 86% to 87%) and the proportion of children accessing 1140 hours (from 65% to 72%). This indicates that expansion activities have continued since February 2021, with the 1140 offer being extended to more families over and above those who have recently become eligible.

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**

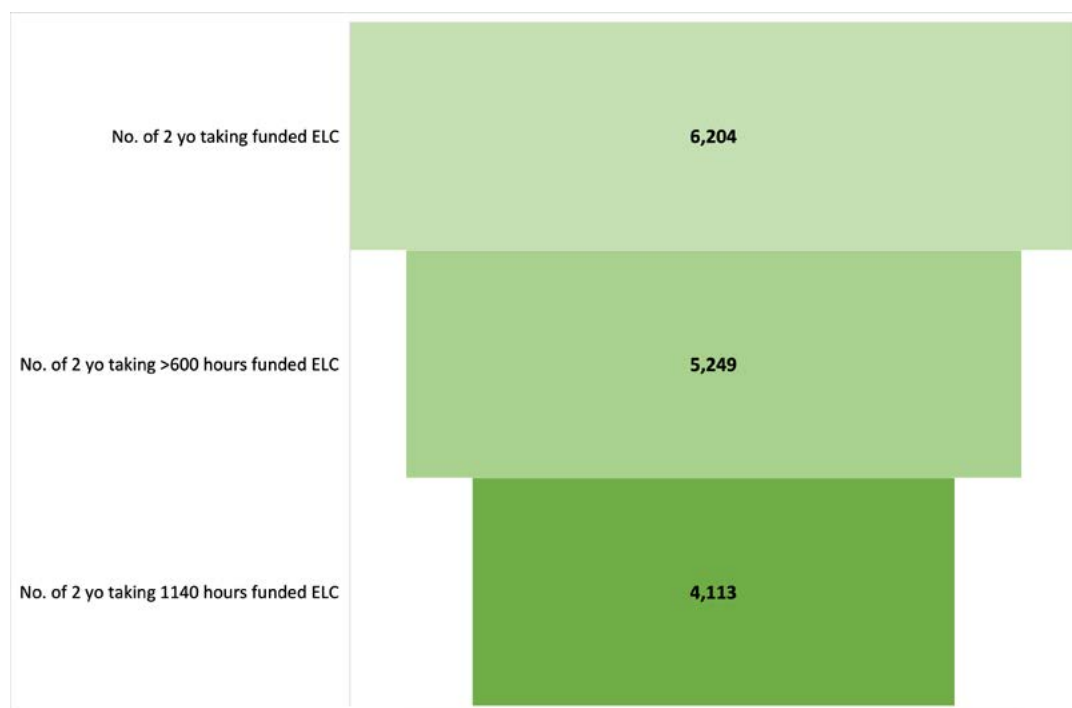


The number of 3 to 5-year-olds reported to be receiving funded ELC in April 2021 was 111,864 children. Of these, 87% (97,161 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 72% (80,493 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 2).

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 72%).

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 April 2021 was 6,204 children. Of these, 85% (5,249 children) were reported to be accessing more than the statutory 600 funded hours, and 66% (4,113 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 April 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**

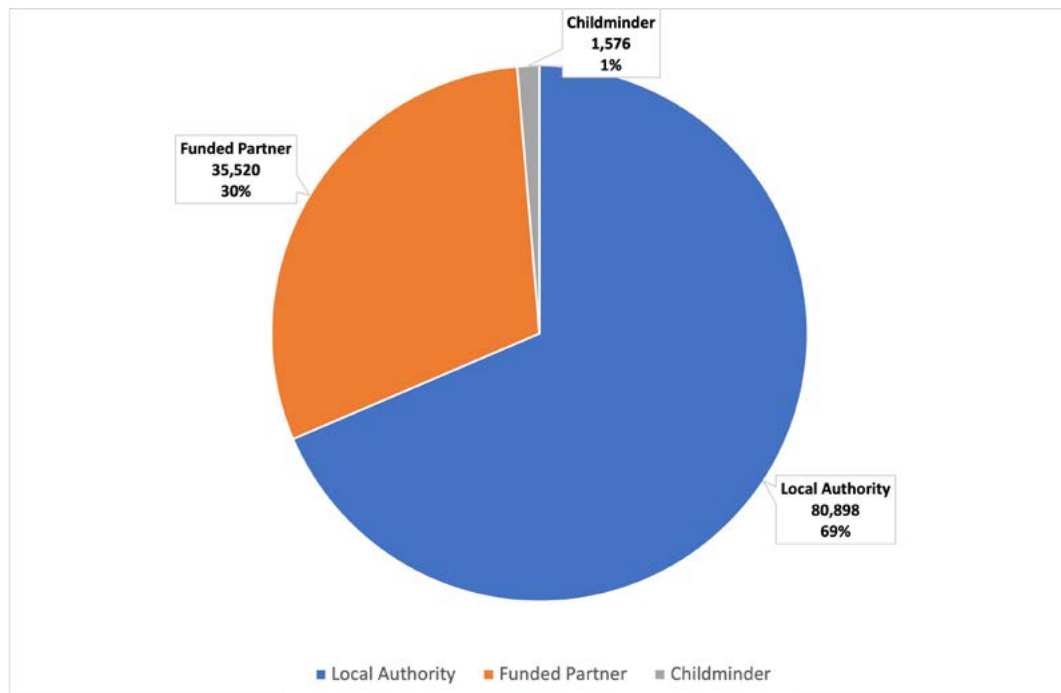


Figure 4 shows that for February 2021, 30% of provision was being accessed in private settings, compared to 69% in local authority settings, with the remainder being accessed with childminders. This is largely in line with the historic split of provision, with a shift towards uptake with funded partners (increased from 27% in August 2020). This represents an increase of 10,425 children in funded partners and an increase of 14,002 in local authority settings since August 2020.

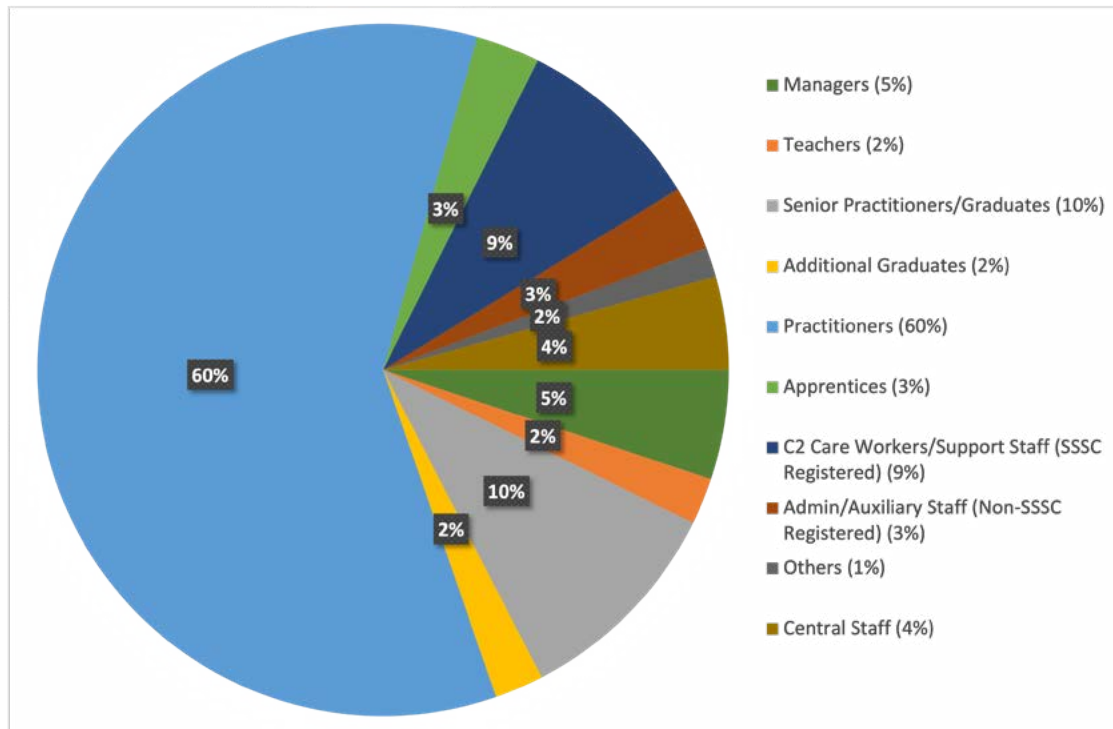
Of all children who are accessing the majority of their hours with funded providers, 73% are accessing 1140 hours, compared with 72% in local authority settings.

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 April 2021, 1,233 childminders were in partnership to deliver funded hours. This is an increase of 59 since August 2020. 2,013 children were reported to be accessing some level of provision with childminders, an increase of 658 since August 2020.

## Local Authority ELC Workforce

**Figure 6: Local authority ELC workforce split by job type**



Local authorities reported that as of April 2021 the ELC workforce in local authorities comprised of 16,754 FTE across Scotland. Figure 6 shows the split of job types in ELC nationally as of April 2021. By far the largest section of the ELC workforce are Practitioners, comprising of 10,004 FTE (60%).

When compared to the total local authority ELC workforce in academic year 2016/17, there has been an increase of 7,178 FTE. This is an increase of 75% from 9,576 FTE in academic year 2016/17.

Since February 2021, there has been an increase of 230 FTE. The biggest increase since August 2020 has been seen amongst the SSSC Registered care workers/support staff (+297 FTE), with the next biggest increase in practitioners (+289 FTE).

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

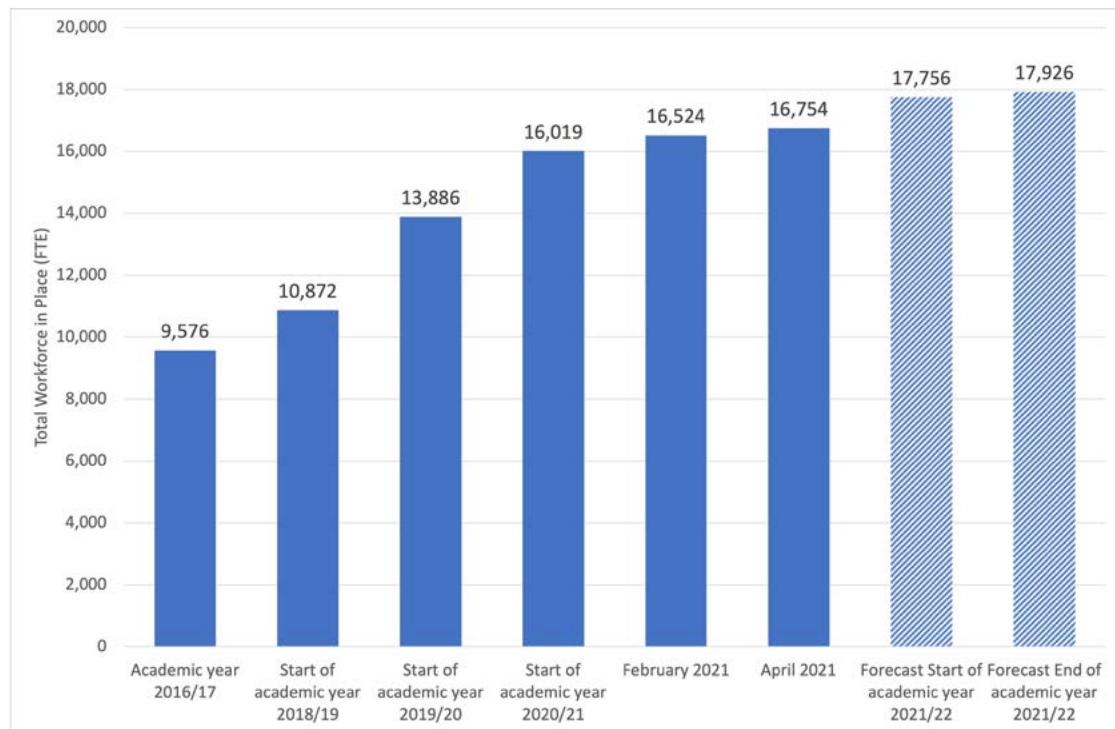


Figure 7 show the profile of the workforce expansion over time, since the beginning of expansion activities in academic year 2016/17.

At a national level, over 94% 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 1,002 FTE will be in place August 2021 compared to April 2021. Little expansion is then expected between the start and end of the academic year, with only an additional 170 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 31 FTE between April and August 2021.

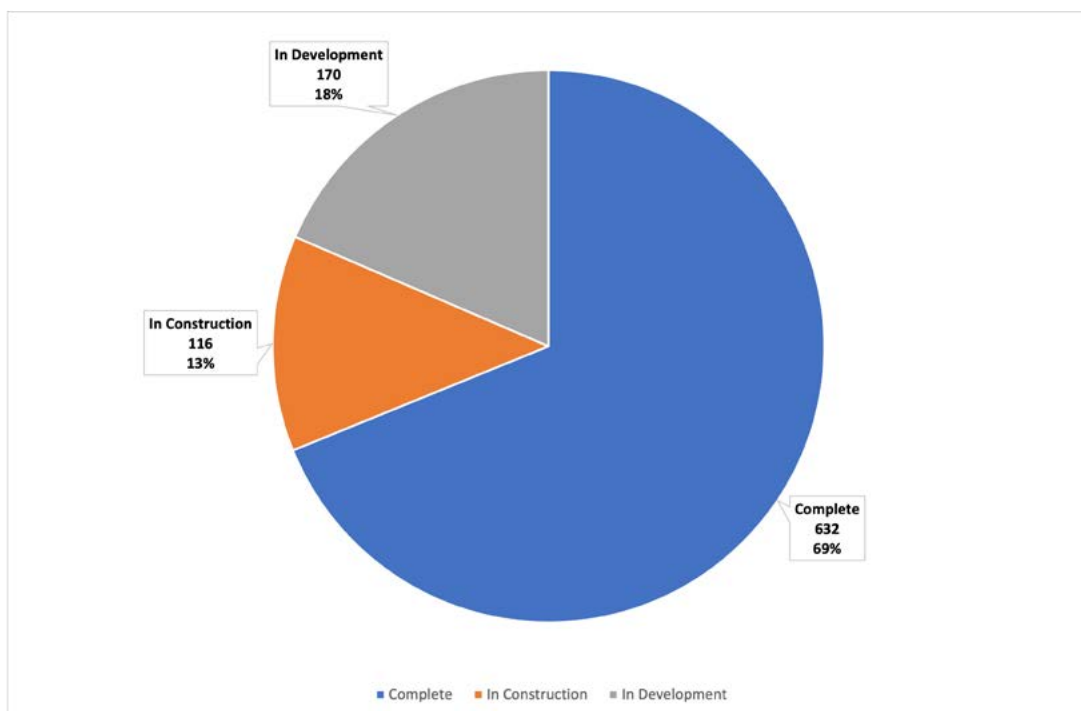
A number of the local authorities who indicate that they expect additional workforce to be in place in August 2021 are already offering 1140 to all children. This indicates that the increase in workforce between now and August is not necessarily a requirement for delivery of the statutory duty.

Local authorities note in their free text narrative that much of the outstanding recruitment is either to backfill vacant posts from natural turnover, to staff yet unopened infrastructure projects or to provide additional flexibility. Narrative continues to indicate confidence in filling these posts.

# Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary

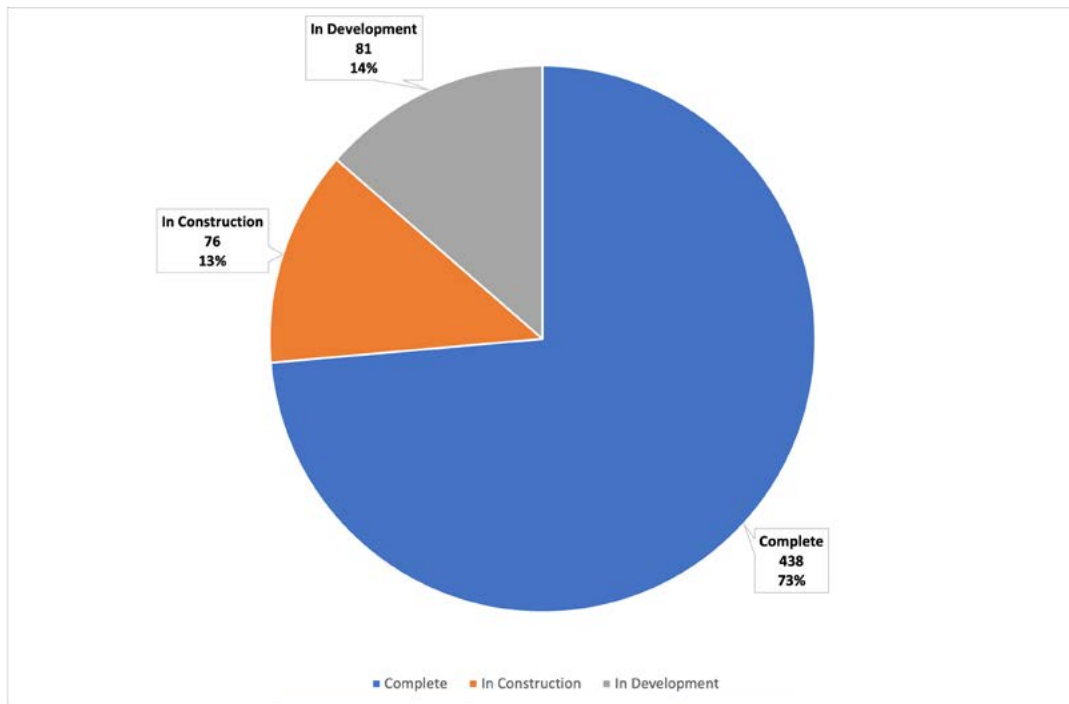
As of April 2021, there were 918 projects in the capital programme which will deliver c.22,000 additional spaces. 69% of all capital projects are now complete, delivering 60% of the total planned additional space. Figure 8 illustrates the status of the overall capital programme as of April 2021.

**Figure 8: Total number of projects**



Not all capital projects are required to deliver 1140 hours from August. 595 of the 918 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 April 2021.

Figure 9: Number of Projects Required for August 2021



Based on local authorities' infrastructure updates in April 2021, of the 595 projects required for August, it is forecast that 90% will be complete by August 2021.

For the 60 (10%) projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, 58 (97%) 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 April 2021.

Across the key indicator measurements and incorporating returned narrative, the national picture shows that phasing of the expansion has continued since April 2021, 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 119,563 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of April 2021, with 103,695 children (87%) accessing more than the statutory entitlement of 600 hours, and 86,053 children (72%) 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, and on to 72% in April 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 7,178 FTE since academic year 2016/17, with an increase of 742 FTE since August 2020, including 230 FTE since February 2021.

As of January 2021, there were 918 projects in the capital programme, 69% of which are now complete. It is forecast that of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August, 90% will be complete by August 2021. For the 60 (10%) of projects that are providing additional space required for August, but which will be completed after August, 58 (97%) have a stated contingency plan to ensure that there is sufficient additional capacity to meet forecast demand for 1140 from August 2021.

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