



Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report

September 2021



Scottish Government
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Key Messages



- This data collection provides an update on the status of ELC delivery in August 2021.
- In early 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, indicating successful delivery of the expansion to 1140 hours funded ELC.
- Data returned by local authorities indicates that 90,890 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of August 2021.
- Of these, 88,122 children (97%) were accessing more than 600 hours, and 79,262 children (87%) were accessing 1140 hours funded ELC.
- The year-on-on change in total numbers of children accessing funded ELC is small, with 5 councils reporting a reduction in the total number of children accessing funded ELC by more than 10%, and 6 councils reporting an increase in of more than 10%. 14 councils show a year-on-year change of less than 5%.
- There is reported to have been a year-on-year increase of 26% in the numbers of eligible 2-year-olds accessing funded ELC, up from 4,711 in August 2020 to 5,954 in August 2021.
- The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 7,942 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 757 FTE since April 2021.
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 32% of all funded provision.
- As of August 2021, there were 912 projects in the capital programme, 81% of which are now complete.
- Of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August, 87% are complete and robust contingency plans or transitional arrangements have been put in place for the remaining projects to ensure continued service delivery.
- Variability at the local level remains a key feature of the expansion.

Background and Context

The duty on local authorities to secure 1140 hours funded 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 progress of the delivery of the expansion programmes across local authorities. 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 regarding uptake, workforce and capacity as of the last week in August 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 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 August 2021 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 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 23rd August 2021.

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.

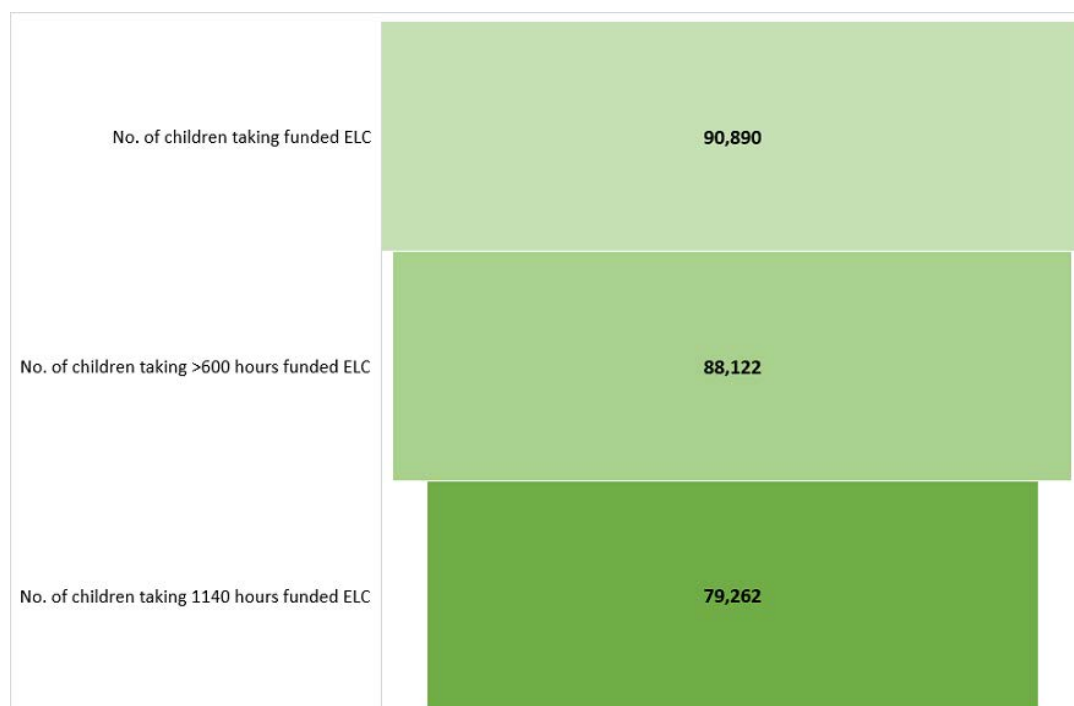
During quality assurance of the data returns, errors in reported uptake figures from the collection in August 2020 were identified in three local authority areas. Errors were mainly down to double-counting children accessing funded ELC in this return. For these local authorities, the August 2020 figures have been retrospectively corrected so that August 2020 can be used as a comparison point in this report.

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 August 2021 was 90,890 children. Of these, 97% (88,122 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 87% (79,262 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 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 lower in this session (August 2021) than was noted in the last Delivery Progress Report (April 2021).

For a comparison point, we instead look back to the collection that took place in August 2020. In doing so, it can be seen that at a national level, the year-on-on change in numbers of 2- to 5-year-old children reported to be accessing funded ELC is small (<1% difference).

There is of course variability within this, with 5 councils reporting a reduction in total uptake of more than 10%, and 6 councils reporting an increase in total uptake of more than 10%. 14 councils showed year-on-year change of less than 5%.

As expected, with the introduction of the statutory duty, there has been an increase since April 2021 in the proportion of children receiving more than 600 hours (from 87% to 97%) and the proportion of children accessing 1140 hours (from 72% to 87%).

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 early 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 1140 hours. 100% uptake of the full 1140 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 1140 hours, while others report lower uptake of the full offer.

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 August 2021 was 84,936 children. Of these, 97% (82,748 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 88% (74,962 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 2).

There has been a year-on-year decrease in the numbers of 3- to 5-year-old children accessing funded ELC by 1% (down from 86,109 in August 2020).

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 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 August 2021 was 5,954 children. Of these, 90% (5,374 children) were reported to be accessing more than 600 funded hours, and 72% (4,300 children) were reported to be accessing 1140 funded hours (Figure 3). It can be noted that the proportions of children accessing expanded hours (both categories of over 600 and the full 1140) are lower for the 2-year-old population than they are for the 3- to 5-year-old population.

There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of 2-year-old children accessing funded ELC by 26% (up from 4,711 in August 2020).

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 shows the reported proportion of uptake split by provider types in August 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

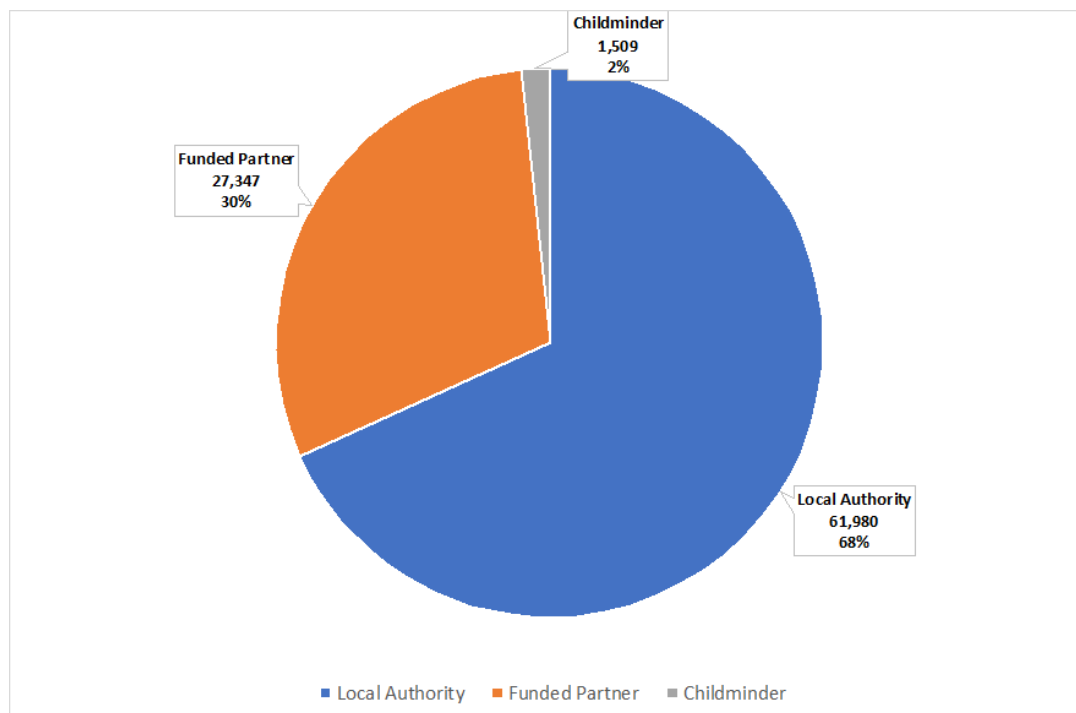


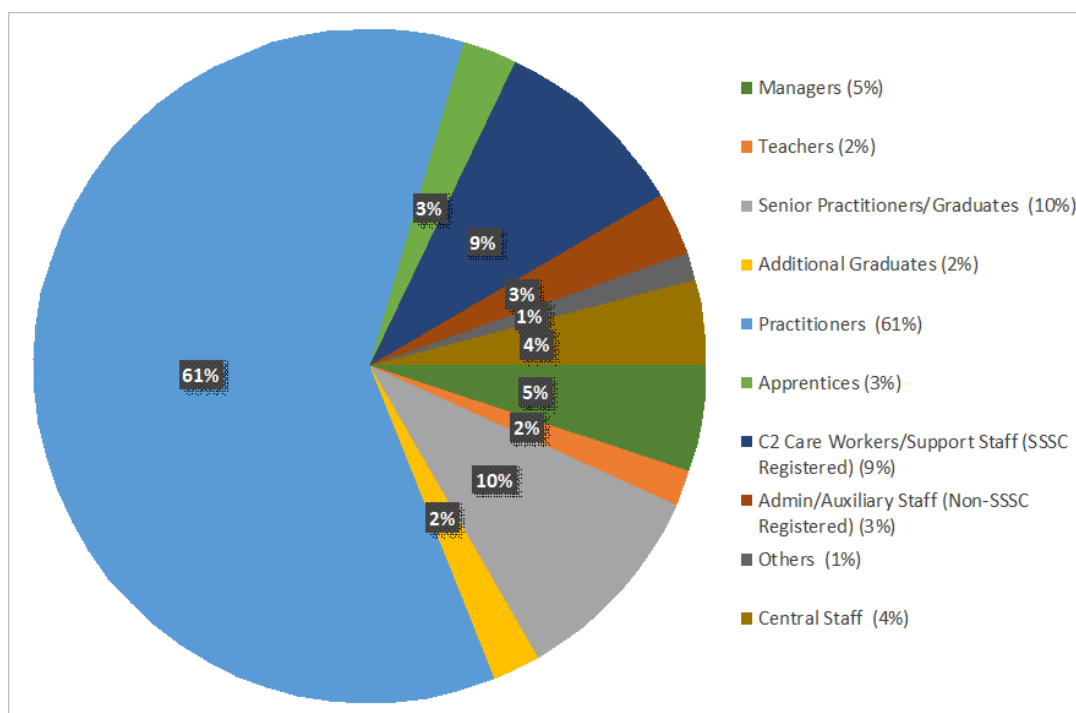
Figure 4 shows that for August 2021, 30% of provision was being accessed in private settings, compared to 68% in local authority settings, with the remainder being accessed with childminders. This shows a continued shift towards uptake with funded partners (increased from 27% in August 2020).

Of all children who are accessing the majority of their hours with funded providers, 83% are accessing 1140 hours, compared with 89% in local authority settings.

Local authorities reported that, as of August 2021, 1,249 childminders were in partnership to deliver funded hours. This is an increase of 16 since April 2021. 1,716 children were reported to be accessing some level of provision with childminders, an increase of 361 since August 2020.

Local Authority ELC Workforce

Figure 5: Local authority ELC workforce split by job type



Local authorities reported that as of August 2021 the ELC workforce in local authorities comprised of 17,516 FTE across Scotland. Figure 5 shows the split of job types in ELC nationally as of August 2021. By far the largest section of the ELC workforce are Practitioners, comprising of 10,597 FTE (61%).

When compared to the total local authority ELC workforce in academic year 2016/17, there has been an increase of 7,942 FTE. This is an increase of 83% from 9,576 FTE in academic year 2016/17.

Since April 2021, there has been an increase of 757 FTE. By far the biggest increase since April 2021 has been seen amongst the practitioners (+593 FTE).

Figure 6: Total local authority workforce (FTE) in place since beginning of expansion

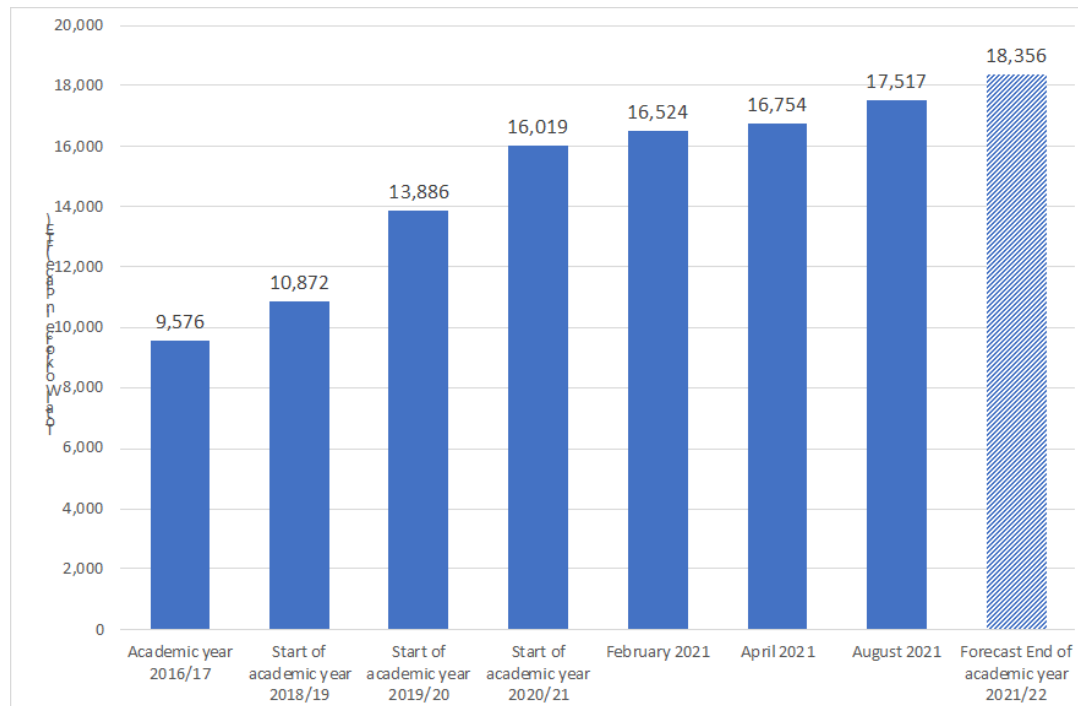


Figure 6 shows the profile of the workforce expansion over time, since the beginning of expansion activities in academic year 2016/17.

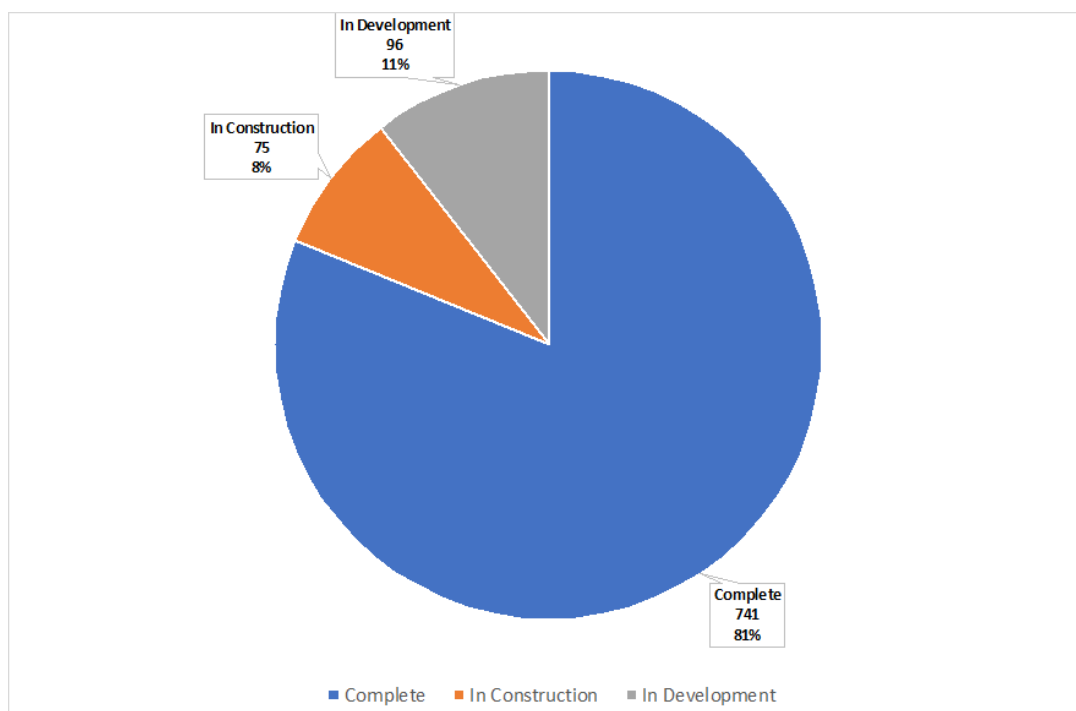
While local authorities note that they have the staff in place to deliver the requisite capacity in August 2021, most local authorities are expecting to continue to take additional staff over the course of this academic year. Local authorities report that they expect an additional 839 FTE to be in place by the end of the academic year. This increase throughout the year is in line with the increasing numbers of eligible children.

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 26 FTE between August 2021 and April 2022.

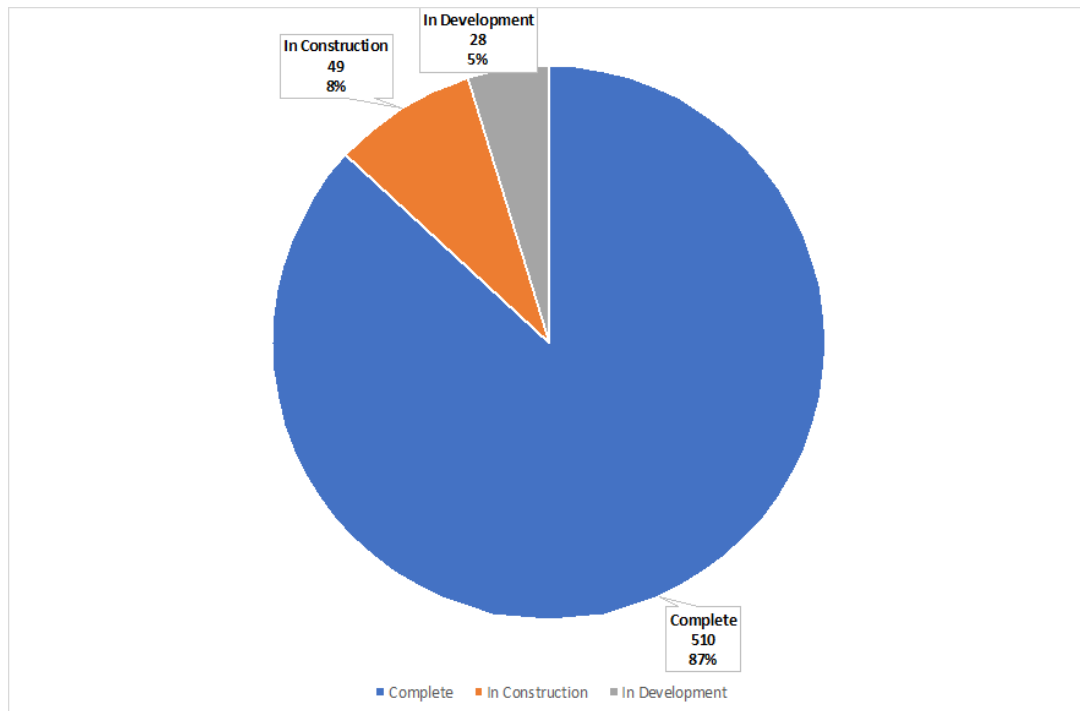
Scottish Futures Trust – Infrastructure Commentary

As of August 2021, there were 912 projects in the capital programme which will deliver c.22,000 additional spaces. 81% of all capital projects are now complete, delivering 73% of the total planned additional space. Figure 7 illustrates the status of the overall capital programme as of August 2021.

Figure 7: Total Number of Projects



Not all capital projects were required to deliver 1140 hours from August. 587 of the 912 capital projects were identified by local authorities as being required for August; the remaining projects being linked to increased flexibility, forecast growth and longer-term learning estate development projects. Figure 8 illustrates the status of the projects that were required for August.

Figure 8: Number of Projects Required for August 2021

Based on local authorities' infrastructure updates in August 2021, of the 587 projects required for August, 510 projects are now complete (87%) and robust contingency plans or transitional arrangements have been put in place for the remaining projects to ensure continued service delivery.

SFT will continue to monitor progress and work with local authorities to support the remaining projects on the programme.

Conclusions

Local authorities successfully delivered the expansion of funded ELC in August 2021 to secure 1140 hours funded ELC for all eligible children.

Across the key indicator measurements and incorporating returned narrative, the national picture shows 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.

Data returned by local authorities indicates that 90,890 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of August 2021, with 88,122 children (97%) accessing more than 600 hours, and 79,262 children (87%) accessing 1140 hours funded ELC.

Comparing this uptake to that seen in August 2020, at a national level, the year-on-year change in numbers of 2- to 5-year-old children reported to be accessing funded ELC is small (<1% difference). Within this overall picture, there has been an increase in the numbers of 2-year-olds accessing funded ELC, and a small reduction in the total number of 3- to 5-year-olds accessing funded ELC.

The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 7,942 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 757 FTE since April 2021.

As of August 2021, there were 912 projects in the capital programme, 81% of which are now complete. Of the capital projects required to support the delivery of 1140 from August, 87% are complete and robust contingency plans or transitional arrangements have been put in place for the remaining projects to ensure continued service delivery.

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



