



Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress



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Key Messages



- This is the first in a series of data releases which track the progress towards achieving the expansion of funded early learning and childcare hours to 1140 a year by August 2020.
- The data for the first period shows that we are broadly meeting our forecasts in respect of the key indicators for delivery progress.

Background and context

The Scottish Government and Local Government are committed to increasing funded Early Learning and Childcare entitlement to 1140 hours per year from August 2020 for all 3 and 4-year-olds and for eligible 2-year-olds. The expansion is a cornerstone in helping every child to fulfil their potential and to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

To provide assurance on implementation of this commitment, the ELC Joint Delivery Board is working with the Improvement Service (IS) and Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to collect data on the progress of the delivery of the expansion programmes across councils. The Joint Delivery Board is co-chaired by the Minister for Children and Young People and the COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People, and is responsible for reviewing progress towards implementation of the 1140 hours offer 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.

Objectives, approach and methodology

The purpose of this report is to provide data and analysis for the period 1 May 2018 to 30 September 2018. The IS has collected data from councils and presents it within this report. This is supplemented by data collected from councils by SFT on the delivery progress of infrastructure projects, collected in Autumn 2018. More information on each indicator can be found below.

Although the IS and SFT have liaised with individual councils 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 councils. The data submitted by councils is, therefore, presented in good faith without having been audited by the IS or SFT.

In terms of the data collected by the IS, all 32 Scottish councils were issued with a template and guidance document containing instructions for completing the template and detailed definitions for each indicator. Short descriptions for each indicator are attached as appendix 1.

Responses

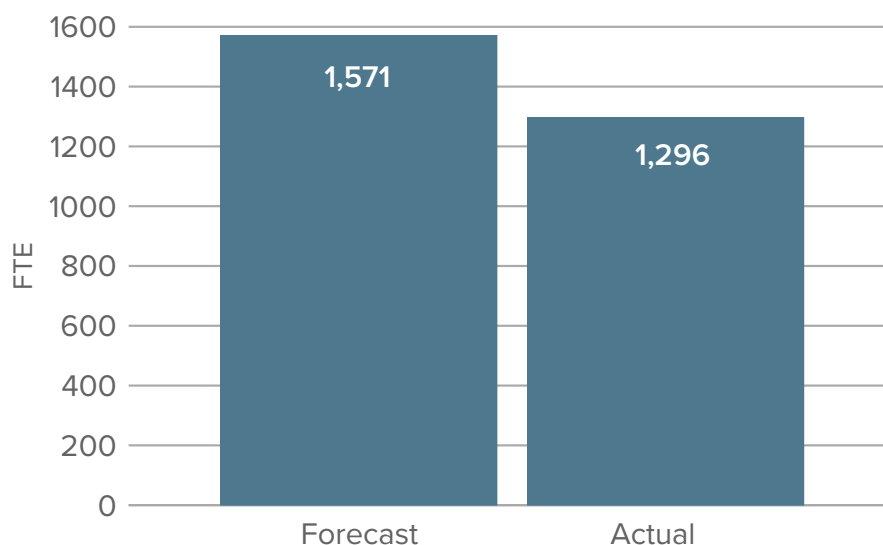
All 32 local authorities provided data for the period. In respect of the data collected by the IS, each local authority provided forecast and actual data for the period. The forecast data is the figure that has been forecast for the period for each indicator, which reflects the authorities' current ELC expansion programme plans. The actual data relates to the local authorities' actual position for the period in respect of each indicator.

In isolation, the data does not offer insight into why forecasts have or have not been met in each authority and it does not necessarily follow that those who have not met the forecast are behind in their project delivery. As such, local authorities were able provide a free text narrative along with the data. This allows us to better understand the data, including areas of good practice as well as challenges.

Analysis

Additional local authority staff in place

Additional local authority (FTE) staff in place (forecast/actual)

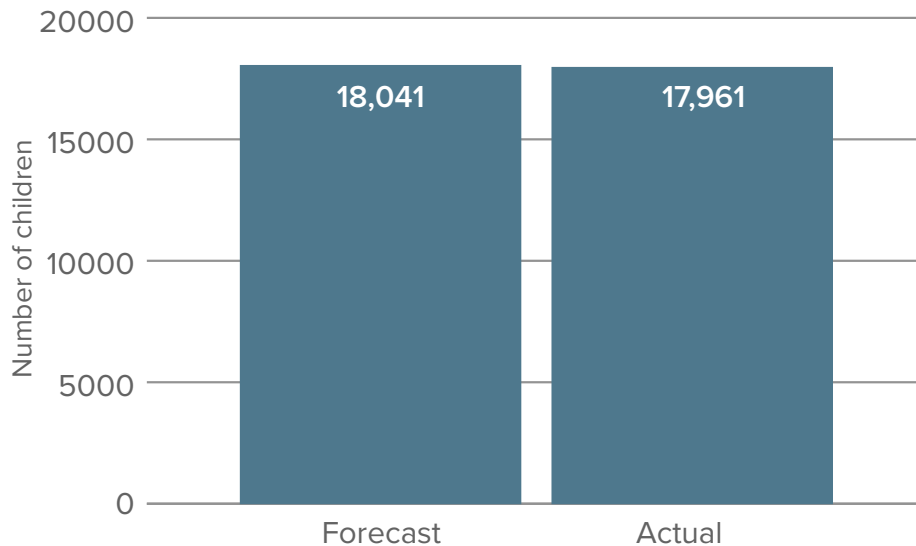


Recruitment was lower than forecast for the period. The forecast number of additional full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in place for the period was 1,571. The actual figure for the period was 18% less than forecast at 1,296 FTE. A number of factors are considered as having an impact on this figure. A proportion of the staff yet to be recruited are additional graduates. There has been further recruitment to the additional graduate roles since this data collection, with local authorities reporting to the Scottish Government that 325 full time equivalent additional graduates were in post at the end of November, an increase of around 100 FTE from the number in post in September.

Narrative provided by some authorities suggests that there can be challenges recruiting to some role types, and in a minority of cases, a low number of suitably qualified candidates applying for those posts. However, it is also the case for some authorities that the number of staff forecast to be recruited has not been required in the period for various reasons, resulting in a figure that is lower than forecast. Optimism bias may also be considered a factor, as authorities noted the length of time taken to recruit staff was greater than anticipated.

Capacity for 1140 hours in local authority settings

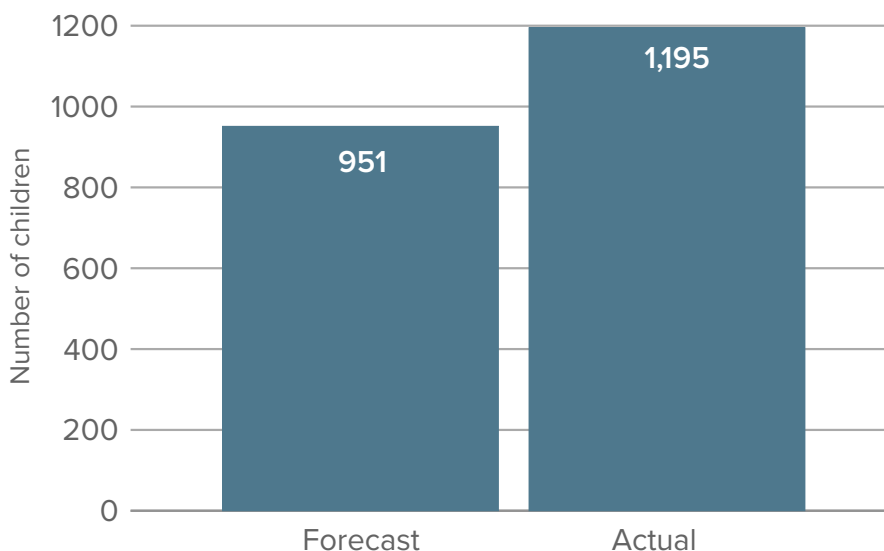
Total capacity for 1140 hours in LA settings



The actual capacity for 1140 hours in local authority settings was slightly below forecast. The forecast total capacity for 1140 hours funded ELC in a typical week in local authority settings was 18,041 children for the period. The actual figure was less than 0.5% below the forecast at 17,961 children. The lower-than-forecast staff numbers in place could have contributed to this marginal difference between forecast and actual capacity. However, it is clear from the uptake figures that this difference has not made an impact on children's ability to access funded ELC.

Number of 2-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC

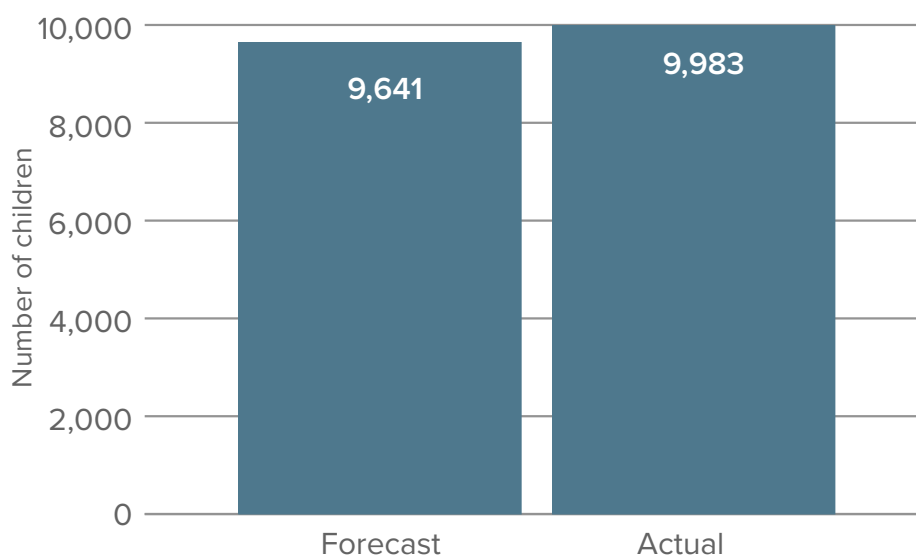
Number of 2-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC across all settings



Actual uptake for more than 600 hours funded ELC was higher than forecast for 2-year-olds. The forecast uptake for 2-year-olds for more than 600 hours funded ELC for the period was 951 children. The actual figure was 26% higher than forecast at 1,195 children. Some factors were identified that can be attributed to the higher-than-forecast figures. In some instances, expanded hours had been rolled out to settings with greater numbers of 2-year-olds earlier than originally forecast due to evolving plans, resulting in more 2-year-olds in receipt of increased funded hours than anticipated. This is in line with the expansion planning guidance that asked authorities to consider in their phasing the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to ensure that the families and communities who stand to benefit most from the expansion benefit first.¹ There was also a discrepancy in the way some councils forecasted the figures. Some did not include 2-year-olds receiving discretionary ELC in the forecast figures but did so in the actual figures. It's not clear how many councils counted in this way from the narratives provided alongside the data. This should be kept in mind in comparing forecast and actual figures for this indicator.

Number of 3 to 5-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC

Number of 3 to 5-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC across all settings



More 3 to 5-year-olds than anticipated were in receipt of increased funded hours in ELC over the period. The forecast uptake for 3 to 5-year olds for more than 600 hours funded ELC was 9,641 children for the period. The actual figure was 4% higher than forecast at 9,983 children. It can be seen from the data that the lower-than-forecast

¹ A blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC) in Scotland - ELC expansion planning guidance for local authorities, which can be accessed here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-etc-expansion-planning/>

workforce figures have not had an impact on the anticipated uptake figures for the period, giving further weight to the workforce analysis provided above.

Infrastructure

SFT concluded its initial engagement with local authorities following the confirmation of capital funding. The data collected from authorities indicates that 70 capital projects were completed as at Autumn 2018, delivering approximately 1,400 additional registered places. In addition, there are currently 28 in projects in construction. With a further 679 projects actively being developed by local authorities, significant ELC design and construction activity is forecast in the new year.

Conclusions and next steps

Data on the progress of the delivery of the ELC expansion will be collected bi-annually by the IS and reports will continue to be published tracking the progress towards the delivery of 1140 hours funded ELC. The next data collection is scheduled for June 2019.

The data collection will be subject to ongoing refinement with an understanding that a balance needs to be maintained between improvement and continuity and the ability to conduct an analysis across periods to show how the expansion is progressing.

The data collected now and going forward will inform discussions at the Joint Delivery Board for the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare Programme and influence actions taken at a Programme level.

Appendix 1 - The Indicators

Topic	Indicator	Definition	Source
Workforce	Additional local authority (FTE) staff in place	Local authorities were asked to provide the forecast and actual figures for the total number of additional full-time equivalent (FTE) local authority staff required to deliver more than 600 hours of funded ELC. It should be noted that local authorities were given the freedom to define FTE according to their own classification, and that this varied across authorities.	Provided to IS by each council.
Capacity	Total capacity for 1140 hours in local authority settings (no of children) (i.e. based on service delivery model)	Local authorities were asked to provide the forecast and actuals for the expected total capacity for 1140 hours funded ELC on a typical week in local authority settings. 'Capacity' is the total number of children that can be accommodated based on the service model used. As such, this figure may be different to the Care Inspectorate registered space depending on the service model deployed.	Provided to IS by each council.
2-year-old uptake	Number of 2-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC in local authority settings, partner provider settings and childminders	Local authorities were asked to provide the total number of 2-year-olds forecast to receive and actually receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC. This includes all eligible 2s and 2s 'in need'. Authorities were asked to provide figures for local authority settings, partner provider settings and childminder settings.	Provided to IS by each council.

Topic	Indicator	Definition	Source
3 to 5-year-old uptake	Number of 3, 4 and 5-year-olds receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC in local authority settings, partner provider settings and childminders	Local authorities were asked to provide the total number of 3 to 5-year-olds forecast to receive and actually receiving more than 600 hours funded ELC. Authorities were asked to provide figures for local authority settings, partner provider settings and childminder settings.	Provided to IS by each council.
Infrastructure	Number of capital projects completed, in construction and being developed by local authorities.	Local authorities were asked to provide the total number of capital projects completed, in construction and in development within their local authority.	Provided to SFT by each council.



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