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14 December 2020

Dear Colleagues,

## **UPDATE ON EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE EXPANSION**

We would like to once again thank you and your teams for the extraordinary effort you have all put in for local communities across Scotland in responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Not only have you continued to work tirelessly to respond to the pandemic you have continued to ensure Scotland's children and families are receiving high quality early learning and childcare (ELC).

Back in March we took the difficult decision to pause the rollout of the ELC Expansion and removed the statutory duty on Local Authorities to deliver the expansion from August 2020. This decision not only recognised that much expansion activity simply couldn't continue but was necessary to allow Local Authorities and childcare providers to respond to the pandemic and provide critical childcare to key worker families and vulnerable children.

This didn't mean work stopped, since the duty was revoked a significant proportion of the programme has continued to be delivered. In November 2020, all authorities are offering 1140 hours to some or most children and many in a position to provide the offer to all children. This high level of delivery has been achieved only through extensive effort and commitment from you and your delivery partners. Thank you.

The ELC Joint Delivery Board commissioned an assessment of readiness to deliver the 1140 hours expansion, taking account of capital, workforce, capacity and other risks. This was supplemented by an independent health check of the expansion programme. Having carefully reviewed all the evidence the ELC Joint Delivery Board recommended that the statutory duty to deliver 1140 hours of funded ELC should be reinstated with effect from August 2021. This recommendation has now been agreed by Scottish Ministers and COSLA

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Leaders. The Scottish Government will bring forward the associated legislation before the end of this Parliament.

It has also been agreed by COSLA Leaders and Scottish Ministers that where there is potential to deliver expanded hours ahead of that August 2021, this will be offered to children and families.

Through the Delivery Steering Group, which includes representatives from the Scottish Government, COSLA, ADES and SOLACE, we will work together in the months ahead to identify and progress specific actions at a national level, and to offer support where required by local authorities.

Today we have issued a Joint Statement which you can find [here](#) and you can find in Annex A.

Thank you once again to you and your teams. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we all work toward making Scotland the best place to grow and seeing through our ambition to deliver the transformational ELC expansion.



**MAREE TODD**



**COUNCILLOR STEPHEN McCABE**

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**Joint statement from Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, and COSLA spokesperson for Children and Young People, Councillor Stephen McCabe:**

*“At the end of March we took the difficult decision to pause the 1,140 hours expansion programme to allow local authorities to focus on our immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*“Nevertheless, throughout the pandemic, local authorities and ELC providers have continued to work extremely hard to progress the expansion and ensure as many families as possible can benefit ahead of statutory implementation.*

*“Work has continued to secure the required workforce and to re-phase capital programmes as construction activity resumed after lockdown. More than 80% of children in funded ELC are receiving more than 600 hours and 61% of children – more than 56,000 – are already receiving 1,140 hours.*

*“Councils and ELC providers have shown tremendous commitment to deliver the expanded entitlement to so many more families since March.*

*“The ELC Joint Delivery Board has monitored progress of the ELC Expansion and worked with Councils to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of the expansion. This work has been supported by an independent review. Taking account of capital, workforce, capacity and other risks, the Board has recommended that the statutory duty to deliver 1140 hours should be reinstated with effect from August 2021.*

*“Scottish Ministers and COSLA Leaders have endorsed the ELC Joint Delivery Board recommendation of a delivery date of August 2021. The Government will take forward legislation in this Parliament to reintroduce the statutory duty on Local Authorities to deliver from August 2021.*

*“We are pleased that we will again be able to offer certainty to families on when every eligible child will receive 1,140 hours. As we look ahead to 2021, and with a new implementation date in place, we will continue our focus on realising the transformational benefits of the expansion, including improved educational and developmental outcomes for children, enhanced family wellbeing, and greater employment and training opportunities for parents and carers.”*

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