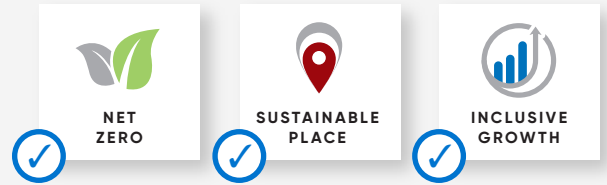




SFT CORPORATE PRIORITIES



SFT Outcomes

Demonstrating progress with impact

PRIMARY OUTCOME

05



**PROGRAMME AND PROJECT
PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY
IS EFFECTIVE**

SECONDARY OUTCOMES

01

08

Rephrasing of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



In 2015, Scottish Government committed to almost double the funded entitlement to early learning and childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1,140 hours from August 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds.

Since 2016, SFT has been working with Scottish Government and all 32 local authorities to support the development of local ELC expansion plans and the infrastructure needed to support the programme.

Such is the size of the ELC programme that it comprises around 900 capital projects valued at over £500m. Around 160 new facilities, worth an estimated £270m, need to be built along with hundreds of refurbishment and extension projects, maximising existing assets.

In March 2020, the programme was on track to deliver the required capacity by August 2020 in line with the new statutory obligation coming into place. In April 2020, all non-



SFT CORPORATE PRIORITIES



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essential construction activity was suspended in response to COVID-19. This had a major impact on the programme and the obligation on local authorities to offer the expanded service from August 2020 had to be revoked.

Using a robust infrastructure programme management approach and building on the well-established relationships with local authorities and their delivery partners, SFT's Learning Estate Infrastructure team was able to assess the impact of construction being suspended and support re-phasing of local delivery plans.

Bringing together partners and sharing information through a series of collaborative workshops helped to work through infrastructure issues relating to time and cost as well as sharing learning and approaches to minimising the affordability impact of this delay without compromising service quality.

This infrastructure programme overview was invaluable in informing the ELC Joint Delivery Board as it considered an appropriate date to re-set the statutory entitlement. Risks and opportunities for a range of scenarios were identified to provide an informed assessment of the cost and affordability impacts of construction being suspended.

Scottish Ministers and COSLA Leaders endorsed the ELC Joint Delivery Board recommendation to reintroduce the statutory duty to offer 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare from August 2021.

As of April 2021, around 70% of projects were complete and 72% of children were able to access their full expanded hours entitlement four months ahead of the revised statutory entitlement date.

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Sommerville, said:

"SFT has been driving forward significant investment in and design development across Scotland's learning estate for more than a decade. The support, challenge and expertise offered to the Scottish Government, across the public sector, and importantly involving our private sector delivery partners, has been invaluable and has enabled meaningful transformation across the learning estate. This all contributes to improving outcomes for Scotland's children and young people. We strongly support the ongoing engagement of SFT as we continue to invest in our learning estate and in our current and future learners."