



Department  
for Education

# **Evaluation of the national roll-out of the early career framework induction programmes**

**Annual summary (Year 3)**

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Government  
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## Glossary

Acronym	Full wording
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
ECF	Early Career Framework
ECT	Early Career Teacher
ERO	Early Roll-Out
IT	Induction tutor
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NIoT	National Institute of Teaching
NPQ	National Professional Qualification
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NRO	National Roll-Out
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility
TSH	Teaching School Hubs
UCL	University College, London

## Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned a process evaluation of the implementation<sup>1</sup> of the Early Career Framework (ECF)-based induction for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). This followed participants (induction tutors, mentors and ECTs) in the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort over the 2 years of their induction programme. This report summarises the key findings from the 3<sup>rd</sup> (and final) year of this evaluation.

The vast majority of ECTs in the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort (Cohort 1) (almost 27,000 individuals, accounting for 95% of all ECTs) were in schools that chose to follow a provider-led induction programme with training directed by one of 6 lead providers and delivered by one of 146 local delivery partners. These were supported by approximately 25,000 mentors who were training alongside their mentees. Three years into the implementation of the ECF-based induction, many of those in cohort 1 had completed their induction and were taking on a full teaching load and thinking about their next career step, however some were still completing their induction or had left teaching. Additionally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cohorts had started their induction programmes meaning that schools, delivery partners, lead providers and appropriate bodies were supporting a large number and diversity of participants. The key findings for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the evaluation include:

## Context

- Since the national roll-out in 2021, the ECF-based induction programme has been subject to continuous improvement and has evolved over time. The 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of ECTs (tracked throughout the evaluation) therefore will have experienced a different programme to ECTs who started in later years. Over time, lead providers and DfE have introduced greater contextualisation, increased flexibility, more in-person delivery, better information and communication, more support for those starting later in the year, and additional support for mentors.
- Managing the ECF-based induction programme and process has become more complex over time as stakeholders manage multiple cohorts and those on different pathways through their induction. ECTs and mentors can move in and out of induction and move schools during their induction, and (less commonly) schools can switch their approach to induction or change their lead provider. This can mean schools are managing different programmes at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup> This was known previously as the national roll-out (NRO), and was the terminology used in previous reports from the evaluation.

## Mentoring

- Mentoring is central to the ECF-based induction programme and the close non-judgemental support that mentors provide helps to personalise training to meet ECT needs, guide ECTs through materials, and leads to greater satisfaction. ECTs value their mentor support and their mentors' experience and expertise.
- Getting the right people in mentoring roles is key, and good mentors are those who have some coaching experience, strong teaching skills and pedagogical understanding (developed through teaching experience), and have time to be able to dedicate to the role. Mentoring was most effective when mentors were well matched to their ECT (often by subject or department). It was also most effective when part of a wider positive culture of mentoring and coaching in the school. In addition to mentor support, ECTs also valued wider support across their school, trust or local area, where this was possible.
- Recruiting to mentor roles appears to be becoming more challenging and schools indicated they may need to be more flexible in their approaches, be more flexible with matching and consider widening their pool of potential mentors. Mentors themselves suggested that providing information about the commitment required, protecting the time mentors have for their training and mentoring activities, and considering allocating more time and potentially additional teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payments would help increase understanding and attractiveness of the role.

The changes to the mentor training being introduced from September 2025 may help as it will reduce the training from 2 years to 1 and introduce more flexibilities for mentors.

- Mentors described how mentoring and mentor training could be challenging. They noted it requires that mentors contextualise materials for their ECTs, involves large amounts of reading, and does not take account of previous mentor experience or allow for mentors to explore topics in greater depth. Most commonly mentors felt they did not have enough time to cover everything required by the role alongside their other responsibilities. These challenges could impact on mentor engagement in training and mentor wellbeing. The upcoming changes to mentor training and support could help to address these concerns but ultimately mentors want more protected time and to be able to use it flexibly, and to be recognised for their role in supporting the next generation of teachers.

The changes to the programme from September 2025 to provide mentors with materials to use in their sessions with their ECTs may help, as it will reduce the amount of preparation time they will need for these mentoring sessions.

## Successes

- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the evaluation and implementation of the ECF-based induction programme, the programme has become more embedded into schools and their wider continuing professional development (CPD) activity, and the support systems and stakeholder relationships are maturing. With this, key perceived areas of success included: increasing positivity and ability to identify what is and is not working; positive and strengthening relationships between and across all stakeholder groups; growing confidence, understanding and familiarity with the ECF and the ECF-based induction programme and process; and improved confidence among ECTs in their skills, abilities and teaching practice.
- Lead providers see the increasing positivity and acceptance of ECF-based induction training as a culture shift towards recognising the importance of evidence-informed CPD. Lead providers found that schools, ECTs and wider staff have engaged well with the programme and satisfaction scores are growing, after overcoming an initial 'overwhelming' roll-out, and ECTs have more realistic expectations and opinions based on real experience. Delivery partners have increased in maturity, confidence and autonomy, and become more innovative and responsive in creating solutions to operational problems and to offer a better experience for participants.
- Induction tutors believed that the ECF-based induction programme provides a better-quality experience than what had previously been available. Participants felt the aspect working particularly well with the new approach was the mentoring process; ECTs found this by far the most useful element of their induction. Another key aspect was the training materials and focus on pedagogy underpinned by a strong evidence base. This helped new teachers to focus on things they need to know and can find particularly difficult. Other aspects participants identified as helpful included networking opportunities for ECTs, and importantly, the time off-timetable to allow for the continuing professional development of ECTs.
- Conditions for success suggested by ECTs, induction tutors and mentors were similar to what works and include: choice in approach (school-led, provider-led or school designed-and delivered); close mentoring relationships and coaching support; observations to identify and share good practice; networking to create collaborative spaces for peer learning; quality resources; protected time; flexibility to reduce or extend the training and induction period if needed and eligible; and having a supportive school culture.

## Challenges

- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of implementation, there continued to be reports of difficulty and areas where the ECF-based induction programme is working less well for some. Improvements are being made in many of these areas and further changes are planned.

Changes from September 2025 will include removing barriers from schools to deliver their own training if they want to, providing targeted support and further real-life examples for ECTs in special schools, and reducing the burden on schools by exploring options for a 'tell us once' process to remove duplicative steps from registration. Additional changes to delivery include reducing mentor workload by shortening the training requirement from 2 years to 1, introducing mentor session materials to help mentors with planning, and introducing diagnostic tools to focus on areas ECTs most need to develop. Lead providers will also provide further contextualisation for subject and phase with enhanced subject-specific materials and resources.

Participants may not yet be aware of the changes and improvements already made and the changes planned for the next academic year. This lack of awareness is likely to be reflected in their feedback (below), as most of the issues raised are being addressed.

- Areas of frustration include registration. This can be challenging for lead providers due to the short lead-in time attributed to when the DfE portal opens each year. Lead providers suggested that earlier opening of the portal could allow more time for preparing participants and helping them to get to know the online systems and programme, give them early access to eLearning materials, and support onboarding activities.
- Digital systems – eLearning platforms and data management systems – also created challenges and there was a desire for better, more streamlined digital systems. eLearning platforms had many features that participants welcomed but could also be 'clunky' and hard to navigate. Induction tutors were frustrated with having to work with several digital systems to manage their ECTs. This could be multiplied where schools changed lead provider or with incoming ECTs following different programmes. The latter could also affect mentors, meaning they had to work with different learning platforms to support their mentees. Lead providers also found it hard to assess the progress or the appropriate start point of participants when they had already started with a different lead provider.
- Maintaining engagement from ECTs and mentors was an ongoing challenge reported by the lead providers. As more flexibility is introduced, lead providers report it has become harder to automate the monitoring of engagement. ECT engagement can fluctuate between high engagement at the start of the

programme and can then dip over the school year and during exam periods. Lead providers are developing strategies and activities aimed at improving engagement, including adapting the timing, duration and location of live training sessions, providing access to all materials upfront, putting on catch-up events, and providing information so participants can track their progress.

- Participants report that engagement is particularly affected by general teaching pressures and teacher wellbeing. ECTs and mentors can find it hard to prioritise their training, to find the time and space needed, in the context of wider demands on their time. Schools can find it hard to provide time off-timetable for ECTs and mentors (separately and together). Arguably these are beyond the scope of the ECF-based induction programme, however ECTs felt that the pressures on work/life balance and mental health and wellbeing could be more explicitly supported through the ECF-based induction programme.
- There continued to be feedback that the ECF-based induction training was too inflexible. Mentors and induction tutors wanted greater flexibility in sequencing of topics, depth of coverage and pace so they could tailor the training to better meet the needs of ECTs and to what happens in schools. Frustrations included a perception that there is repetition of content from initial teacher training (ITT) (and for mentors, repetition of content from national professional qualifications (NPQs)), particularly in year 1. ECTs and mentors also felt that prior experience was not taken into account in training delivery. Further criticisms were a perceived lack of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) content and a limited focus on teacher wellbeing.
- Stakeholders (lead providers, induction tutors, mentors and ECTs) had suggestions for improvement, these included:
  - Platforms – auditing the different platforms for ease of use/accessibility, allowing year-round access to materials, and better tracking of participants' progress through the material.
  - Delivery – different timings for training sessions, increased flexibility to tailor topics, modules and amount of reading required, and additional content on mental health and wellbeing.
  - Communication – continuing to provide information about the different ECF-based induction approaches and to raise the profile of ECF-based induction and highlighting the role of induction tutors to provide additional support. Plus, support for peer-to-peer communication at all levels through continued options for networking and developing forums for lead providers to work together to solve problems.

## Outcomes

- Impact evaluation was not within the remit of this research, but the research did capture thoughts and perspectives on early outcomes for ECF-based induction.
- Lead provider feedback during year 3 highlights how identifying and measuring objective impact is particularly challenging for the ECF-based induction. There are challenges in measuring concepts such as teacher quality (as there is no single measure or accepted definition of teacher quality), there are no true counterfactual groups with the implementation of a national programme covering all teachers, and impacts can take many years to be detected. Additionally, impacts can be hampered or facilitated by wider contextual factors such as school leadership and culture, general teaching workload and teacher wellbeing.
- Those involved in ECF-based induction (as ECTs, mentors, induction tutors coordinating the programme in schools, or lead providers designing and directing delivery) feel it is having an impact and that this tends to be positive.
- Lead providers feel the programme improves confidence, self-efficacy, habits and behaviours (that are embedded into practice), professional identity and voice, and knowledge (improving knowledge in understanding pupils' learning, creating a learning environment, and abilities to improve behaviour). Those coming through the ECF-based induction programme value collaborative learning, are evidence-informed and ambitious.
- Induction tutors feel the ECF-based induction has a positive impact on ECT performance and confidence in teaching. They feel the programme gives ECTs time to work on their practice and for reflection, exposes and supports them to develop pedagogical skills, processes and understanding, and encourages an interest in professional development.
- Retention is not a key ambition for induction tutors at this early stage in the implementation of ECF-based induction. They are more likely to be focused on improving teacher confidence and skills and support, although these could result in better retention. However, some induction tutors and mentors do feel the induction is having a positive impact on ECT retention.
- The vast majority of ECTs in the survey intended to stay in teaching. Feedback from ECTs indicated they would like to progress after completing their induction which could mean changing schools to access the opportunities they sought. Induction tutors described how their former ECTs had progressed well and were recognised as strong practitioners who could progress further. ECTs may have increased expectations for professional development and progression which mean they need further development opportunities to keep them 'hooked in'.

- Wider impacts from ECF-based induction were noted including ECF-based induction techniques used for professional development across schools (beyond ECTs and mentors) and spreading learning of ECTs to their wider networks.

## Introduction

This research briefing presents key findings from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the process evaluation of the 2-year Early Career Framework (ECF)-based induction programme. It draws from the experiences of the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and mentors and their induction tutors – those starting in the 2021 to 2022 school year – as they move on from the ECF induction. It also includes the experience of those supporting subsequent cohorts, those who started their inductions in the 2022 to 2023 school year (cohort 2) and the 2023 to 2024 school year (cohort 3). It differs from the previous briefings as it broadens the focus to gather feedback ‘on’ and ‘from’ more recent participants, and is largely based on qualitative feedback collected through:

- Case study interviews in 6 schools<sup>2</sup> taking place between March and July 2024.
- Interviews with senior leaders and induction tutors in a further 12 schools,<sup>3</sup> conducted between September and October 2024.
- Discussions with 6 lead providers supporting the ECF-based induction programme, undertaken between February and May 2024 and again in October 2024.
- Two virtual workshops with mentors, in October 2023 and October 2024.

Over 60 participants and stakeholders provided their views. This is a relatively small number compared to the total number of teachers involved in the ECF-based induction. However, by design the evidence collected in this 3<sup>rd</sup> year is qualitative; those providing feedback cover a wide range of backgrounds and school settings. They include ECTs, mentors, induction tutors, senior leaders, delivery partners and appropriate bodies, and lead providers. This provides breadth and depth of insight for evaluation in this 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year.

This report builds on and provides comparisons to earlier findings published in May 2022, March 2023 and February 2024.<sup>4</sup> It focuses on how the ECF-based induction continued to evolve in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of its implementation, different cohorts’ experiences of and engagement with the programme, and reflections across the 3 years of implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> 5 of the 6 schools had been involved in previous rounds of case studies so provided a longitudinal perspective. All of the 6 case study schools were following a provider-led approach to ECF-based induction, and 5 of the 6 lead providers were represented. The schools included 1 primary, 1 special school and 4 secondary schools. Across the 6 case studies, 20 people were interviewed including induction tutors, mentors, ECTs from cohorts 1, 2 and 3, and representatives from delivery partners and appropriate bodies.

<sup>3</sup> 11 of these schools were involved in previous rounds of school interviews so provided a longitudinal perspective. The sample of 12 schools represented a spread of geographies, phases, and school types. They also included a mix of approaches: 9 were using the provider-led approach and 3 a school-led approach.

<sup>4</sup> Evaluation of the national roll-out of the early career framework induction programme: year one interim report; Evaluation of the national roll-out of the early career framework induction programmes: year one report; Evaluation of the national roll-out of the early career framework induction programmes: annual summary (year 2). All 3 reports can be accessed from [Early career framework induction evaluation](#).

In contrast to previous reports, the findings for provider-led ECF-based induction and school-led induction are brought together but where there are differences these are noted.

The research aims to help DfE understand how well the ECF-based induction programme is working and where it is working well, the challenges encountered and how these have been overcome, and how and where the ECF-based induction programme can be improved. The Department continues to make use of the research findings to make changes to the guidance and support for delivery teams, schools, and individual participants.

Before outlining key findings for this 3<sup>rd</sup> year of research, this report will outline how aspects of the programme have changed over the early years of the implementation: in terms of the volume and nature of those involved in ECF-based induction, how the programme has evolved and continuously improved in response to feedback, and how the system has become more complex.

## Exploring participation

Schools can choose how they want to deliver ECF-based induction:

- Schools can use a provider-led approach whereby a DfE-funded training provider and, usually, a delivery partner provide ECF-based training directly to ECTs and train mentors on how to support ECTs. These schools can decide which provider-led programme they want to follow.
- Schools can use freely available DfE-accredited materials to deliver their own ECF-based induction programme (school-led approach).<sup>5</sup> These schools decide which of the 4 available sets of training materials to use.<sup>6</sup>
- Schools can design and deliver their own induction programme based on the ECF (design and delivery approach).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The definition 'school-led' is consistent with the Year 1 report but differs slightly from the definitions used in the DfE statistical release: [Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs](#). The release groups schools who deliver materials designed by lead providers with those who design and deliver their own programme. In this research, these are separated and thus given different labels. This research does not include schools who design and deliver their own programme.

<sup>6</sup> The materials have been developed by: Ambition Institute, Education Development Trust, Teach First, and UCL Early Career Teacher Consortium.

<sup>7</sup> Schools and individuals following this approach are not required to register with the DfE Teacher CPD digital service, so data on this group have not been captured or reported in this briefing.

## ECTs

DfE's published statistics<sup>8</sup> show that most participants were in schools that had chosen to take the provider-led approach to ECF-based induction, between 94% and 95% of all ECTs. In the school year 2021 to 2022 26,766 ECTs started a provider-led ECF-based induction (cohort 1), accounting for 94.7% of ECT starters. There were 25,922 starters in the 2022 to 2023 school year (cohort 2) accounting for 94.0%, and 23,194 in 2023 to 2024 (cohort 3) representing 94.2% of ECTs who started their induction in that year.<sup>9</sup>

The profile<sup>10</sup> of cohort 3 ECTs on a provider-led programme was similar to that found for cohorts 1 and 2. Most ECTs were: less than 30 years old (43% were under 25, this was 41% for both cohorts 1 and 2; and 29% were between 25 and 29, this was 31% for both cohorts 1 and 2), working full-time (95% for both cohorts 1 and 2), female (76%, 75% for both cohorts 1 and 2) and white (83%, this was 85% for cohort 1 and 84% for cohort 2).<sup>11</sup>

Most ECTs on a provider-led ECF-based induction programme were in an Academy (60%, 61% for both cohorts 1 and 2) or a Local Authority maintained school (31%, the same as for both cohorts 1 and 2), and there was a fairly even split in terms of settings with 49% in primary settings and 45% in secondary settings<sup>12</sup> (44% in cohort 1 and 47% in cohort 2 were in primary settings, 51% in cohort 1 and 47% in cohort 2 were in secondary settings). The proportion of ECTs participating in a provider-led programme was marginally higher in primary schools (at 96%) than in secondary schools (92%).

## Mentors

Over these 3 years 25,053 mentors were trained in 2021 to 2022, 23,505 in 2022 to 2023, and 18,152 in 2023 to 2024.<sup>13</sup> This represents a decrease in mentor numbers being trained and reflects that the number of new mentors requiring training in the ECF-based induction programme is expected to decrease gradually over time as the overall trained mentor pool increases. It also reflects expectations that schools will start to redeploy pre-trained mentors (from the mentor pool) to make the most of their experience and expertise.

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<sup>8</sup> See [Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs, Academic year 2023/24](#), published in July 2024.

<sup>9</sup> This is a revised figure from the provisional figures published in 2023 and reported in the Year 2 annual report.

<sup>10</sup> Proportions are calculated for those where the information was known i.e., when calculating age this is based on the total number of ECTs where age is known.

<sup>11</sup> The percentages have been calculated using know data only, unknowns have been removed from the base before calculation of the proportion in each group.

<sup>12</sup> With a further 6% in other settings.

<sup>13</sup> See [Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs, Academic year 2023/24](#), published in July 2024.

## Understanding programme evolution

The new statutory induction programme for ECTs underpinned by the ECF was rolled out nationally from September 2021, following an early roll-out (ERO) pilot in three English regions across two academic years (2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022).<sup>14</sup> The national roll-out has since continued, with all new teachers expected to take part.

Feedback from this research plus other sources, including comprehensive monitoring undertaken by delivery partners and lead providers and by DfE (via its User Group research activities), have influenced the ongoing development and implementation of the programme. Lead providers described how they have continuously improved their programme and delivery and strive to constantly move forward. Lead providers and DfE have worked closely together, and over time lead providers have been trusted to make changes to their programmes within pre-defined parameters.

“...it is an ever-evolving programme as we learn more about the needs and wants of ECTs”. - Lead provider

Lead providers regarded cohort 1 as trailblazers. They feel they learned a lot from the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of ECTs and mentors, particularly about the content and adapting the content (the importance of subject and setting specificity), bringing participants onboard and supporting them via delivery partners, opportunities to network and a focus on wellbeing (as discussed in the ‘successes’ chapter).

Since the initial cohort, lead providers have made many improvements whilst maintaining fidelity to the framework. This means that the current lead provider offer and experience of the programme is likely to be different to that experienced by cohort 1 ECTs and mentors (and captured by the evaluation surveys). Essentially the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort experienced the 1<sup>st</sup> iteration of the ECF-based training and induction programme. This will have implications for the interpretation of the evaluation survey results which tracked cohort 1 over their programme.

Lead providers also noted that the context in which the programme was rolled-out and the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of ECTs experienced was particularly challenging, i.e., set against industrial action and the COVID-19 pandemic. This ‘broke the rhythm of attendance and engagement which was challenging’. There was little in-person delivery in year 1 for the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort due to COVID-19 restrictions, with most sessions delivered online. There were also pressures on teacher supply with peaks of teacher absence impacting on schools’ abilities to release ECTs or mentors for training.

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<sup>14</sup> Evaluation findings from the ECF ERO pilot can be found at: [Evaluation of the early roll-out of the Early Career Framework](#).

The 6 lead providers<sup>15</sup> responsible for developing and leading delivery of the ECF-based induction training (one element of the new statutory entitlement to induction) noted how they encountered some initial negativity from a minority in the sector, those who were opposed to the lengthening of induction and the work required from ECTs. Lead providers also described how they found developing and launching such a large and complex programme hard work, and that they were still ‘ironing out’ issues during the early stages of the national roll-out and anticipated that the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort might experience a ‘bumpy ride’. However, over time the negative voices were fewer and the initial teething problems had been overcome.

Feedback and insights from the lead providers in 2024 highlight key changes they have made over time and how the ECF-based training has evolved for those delivering and experiencing the training:

- **Greater contextualisation:** Delivery partners are important in providing contextualisation as they deliver centrally developed strategy and add in the local context. Lead providers have been expanding their delivery partner networks and developing experts in the regions to support contextualisation. Lead providers have also been developing their materials to provide greater contextualisation. DfE has supported lead providers to develop expansions and a greater variety of exemplifications (which still have fidelity to the ECF). This helps the programme to feel more ‘tailored’.

DfE has required providers to introduce diagnostic tools from September 2025 which will further increase the opportunities for tailoring ECT training, which will consider participants’ previous experience and context.

The process for developing materials is now much quicker, and lead providers offer materials and examples to reflect different contexts, subjects and phases. This includes developing materials for those working in special schools and post-16 settings. The latter can be challenging, given the wider range of subjects in post-16 education including non-national curriculum subjects and the different pedagogical approach needed for older pupils. Additionally, DfE has required lead providers to develop stretch content for ECTs who choose to go into more depth and beyond the required minimum content.

- **Flexible entry points:** Lead providers have added flexibilities into their processes to better support multiple start points (offering 3 intakes of ECTs per year into the training to accommodate those starting at their schools later in the year) and

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<sup>15</sup> The 6 lead providers during 1st and 2nd year of the implementation of the ECF reforms were: Ambition Institute, Best Practice Network, Capita, Education Development Trust, Teach First, and UCL Institute of Education. During the third year of implementation the newly formed National Institute of Teaching (NlOT) also became a lead provider.

provide year-long access to their learning platforms and portals. They have also developed accessible content, such as videos, that can be accessed any time.

- **More in-person delivery:** In-person delivery is preferred by DfE and by ECTs, and, as COVID-19 restrictions eased, lead providers have been able to offer more face-to-face delivery. This is led by delivery partners in the regions and by lead providers themselves for more dispersed schools or groups of ECTs, so that ECTs would not have to travel more than an hour to any location. Lead providers have also tried to ensure that these in-person sessions are longer but less frequent to minimise the frequency of needing time away from school.
- **Better information and communication:** Lead providers have improved access to programme information for all types of stakeholders. Examples include a participant dashboard for participants that acts as a location for communication, schedules, reminders, and recordings; an improved school dashboard allowing induction tutors to follow the induction of participants; and an improved delivery partner dashboard allowing them to see engagement of participants (who is on programme and any movements) and better manage the programme. Lead providers also described having improved their communication mechanisms including virtual classrooms, podcasts and termly publications. These aim to help ECTs to understand what they are learning at each stage, and why.
- **Additional support for mentors:** Lead providers have worked to improve the mentor experience. Changes include making the coaching process simpler, offering more options (so mentors can choose what is most appropriate for them and fits with their availability) and open access to all materials. They also offer catch-up events and asynchronous delivery formats such as recordings for those unable to attend specific live sessions, and flexibilities for new mentors stepping in to replace mentors to join the programme at any place and start from scratch (if needed). Adaptations have in part been driven by changes in the profile of mentors. Lead providers noted how the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of mentors to receive the ECF-based training were very experienced teachers and mentors. This meant some felt the training was too basic and repetitive of training they had already undertaken. However, more recent mentors coming onto the programme have less experience of mentoring and therefore may need more support. The move to include fresh teachers to be trained as mentors was regarded by some lead providers as positive, and an indication that schools see the value in mentoring.

## Further planned changes to delivery

Further changes will be made as the programme continues to evolve and embed, and as lead providers continue with their own data gathering and evaluation to drive and support continuous improvements. This may also be driven by combining and updating the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF) and the ECF, which form the basis of the content

covered in the training and induction periods at the start of a teacher's career.<sup>16</sup> The combined ITTECF will be used from September 2025. Changes to the framework include updates and enhancements in areas including SEND, oral literacy, early cognitive development and evidence literacy; and more content and focus on adaptive teaching.

In addition to the updated content framework, further national changes to the delivery model are planned to take effect from September 2025. These aim to address feedback from the first 4 years of delivery. These changes include addressing the pitch and tone of materials to recognise familiarity ECTs will have with the content from their ITT; introducing diagnostic tools (as mentioned above) for mentors to use with ECTs to identify areas for further development; and requiring more exemplification materials for different phases, settings and subjects. Wider changes include tackling issues of mentor workload by streamlining mentor training from 2 years to 1 (as discussed in the 'planned changes to reduce mentor workload' section in 'the central role of mentoring' chapter) and introducing a new lead provider community to ensure continued development of best practice.

Further commitments for school-led programmes that DfE has made following manifesto pledges and alongside the 2027 review include: removing barriers and simplifying the process for schools to deliver their own training, through introducing freely available mentor training materials. Also strengthening the guidance on appropriate body charges for fidelity checking (quality assurance checks) to ensure charges are proportionate and transparent for all schools.

## Recognising complexity and movement

The previous reports highlight that the ECF-based induction programme has become more complex over its first few years of operation, and this continued into its 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The interviews, case studies and workshops identified several areas of complexity that lead providers and their delivery partners, schools, and specifically induction tutors and mentors were managing: operational complexity such as multiple cohorts and different pathways emerging from flexibilities; staff movement and churn as individuals do not necessarily remain in one school or follow a linear career journey; and schools making changes in approach to induction and changes to provider.

Lead providers in particular noted how the increasing complexity was a key challenge in delivering the programme, and one which will continue to draw on their time. It has meant that delivery partners are spending time managing complex scenarios alongside delivering the programme. Lead providers have found that complexity is increasing over time, not reducing.

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<sup>16</sup> More information is available at: [Initial teacher training and early career framework - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/initial-teacher-training-and-early-career-framework).

## Operational complexity

Ostensibly there will be 2 cohorts of ECTs within a school at any one time, as the length of induction ECTs are required to serve is the full-time equivalent of 2 school years (usually consisting of 6 school terms).<sup>17</sup> This is sometimes not as clearcut for schools and delivery partners to manage, as ECTs may be on different timelines and have accessed different flexibilities.

In some cases, ECTs must serve an extension to their induction. This could be an automatic extension due to staff absence after the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year of induction, or an extension that the ECT chooses to serve following maternity leave. It can also be an extension required by the appropriate body following a formal assessment at the end of the induction period, where in certain circumstances an ECT is granted further time to demonstrate they meet the required standards. Lead providers highlighted the operational challenges with delivery partners and appropriate bodies needing to act in good time to grant extensions. Lead providers described that the volume of these requests had been larger than expected. One lead provider described how they are now developing more support for deferring ECTs, and this will be provided to mentors and induction tutors to help them navigate material at different speeds. Another noted that they were working on developing a non-standard participant policy but had to keep revising it, due to the complexity: ‘the different ways through the programme are staggering’.

ECTs can also start later in the year (January and April), which lead providers described as challenging and more complex than they anticipated. This meant that during the initial roll-out their policies for non-standard starts were less well developed and the experience of this group was not as good as lead providers would have liked. It also meant that going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of implementation there were still ECTs from cohort 1 that were yet to finish.

A further complication is that schools may also be managing ECTs alongside teacher trainees on ITT and continuing to provide formal or informal support to those ECTs who have successfully completed their induction period.

## Changes to approach and provider

The survey results reported in the previous reports indicated that the vast majority of schools in the first 2 years of the national roll-out stayed with the same approach and lead provider and intended to do so moving forwards.

Some schools, however, opted to change their approach to the ECF-based induction. In the school interviews there were 2 or 3 examples of schools moving from a provider-led

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<sup>17</sup> See section 2 of the [Induction for early career teachers \(England\) Statutory guidance](#).

to a school-led approach. They felt they could make use of the publicly available DfE-accredited good-quality materials and adapt these, adding more content to support their local context, and they developed stronger relationships with other local schools. One of the schools is now considering moving to a school-led design and deliver approach, considering it the natural next step for them as they continue to develop their programme.

Among those adopting the provider-led approach, there were also some schools in the interviews and case studies that had made changes to the organisations they worked with during the first 3 years of implementation. There were examples of changes to lead providers, delivery partners and appropriate bodies (the latter driven in many cases by changes to regulations around who can provide appropriate body services).<sup>18</sup> The decision to change lead provider or delivery partner may be driven by unsatisfactory experiences but also by wider contextual factors. For example, one induction tutor noted how the school, which had recently merged with a trust, was considering changing lead provider to align with the provider the trust uses. Where schools had changed lead provider this allowed them insights into how the programmes differ and their pros and cons. However, this did lead to additional complexity with cohorts of ECTs on different programmes. Here mentors noted how this could cause confusion, particularly whether mentors or ECTs needed to repeat any training if the change was made mid-year.

## Staff movement and churn

Additional complexity was experienced with changes in mentor staffing and movement of ECTs and mentors between schools during inductions. This change and churn appeared to have increased over time. Lead providers reflected how there was little movement of ECTs and little change in mentoring arrangements in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of implementation. This could have reflected the wider labour market where there was limited movement due to COVID-19. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> year, staff movement has become more frequent.

- **ECT moves:** it was noted that movement of ECTs between schools could mean a change in lead provider and therefore programme followed for the ECT (to align with their new school). Alternatively, ECTs moving schools could continue with their original programme and this would result in the new school following different programmes simultaneously. The latter also means that mentors and ECTs could be supported and trained by different lead providers and the ECT could follow a different programme to their mentor. The lead provider for the ECT has no direct engagement or responsibility for the mentor but, to ensure effective support for the

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<sup>18</sup> See the consultation on the appropriate body reforms: [Appropriate body reform and induction assessment - GOV.UK, May 2022](#).

ECT, will need to provide their mentor with materials and support relating to the ECT's programme.<sup>19</sup>

Once a mentor completes the training they become 'invisible' to the lead provider as there is no further requirement for mentors to engage with them, delivery partners or materials. However, with continuous improvement the ECF-based induction programme will continue to evolve. As mentors take on new cohorts of ECTs, fully trained mentors still need to be supported and given access to the materials their new ECTs are using. DfE has introduced changes to ensure that lead providers give mentors access to materials to provide ongoing support for their ECTs in this way.

- **Mentor changes:** lead providers noted how mentor movement was complex (far more complex than ECT movement) and created particular challenges. Where mentors change role or school the ECT-mentor relationship can become decoupled, and regardless of the ECT journey, mentors have their own journey and training. Lead providers need to provide additional support to mentors who are not following their ECT's journey. Lead providers have seen an increase over time in 'replacement mentors' who come in part way through the ECT's programme, and lead providers have to consider what mentor training they may have missed. One lead provider described how they now start all mentors from scratch, regardless of when they join, to ensure mentors get the best support and can, in turn, give the best support to their ECTs. The increase in replacement mentors could be due to challenges in retaining mentors and in recruiting individuals to the role, as noted by induction tutors and mentors (further discussed in the 'mentor recruitment and selection' section in 'the central role of mentoring' chapter).

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<sup>19</sup> Note that DfE provides an access fee to the lead provider for giving mentors (who are supporting an ECT on another lead provider's programme) access to the appropriate learning platform and materials.

## The central role of mentoring

Mentors are central to the ECF-based induction. They are entitled to time off-timetable to mentor and support their assigned ECTs in their teaching practice. In schools taking the provider-led approach, mentors are provided with training on mentoring and the ECF,<sup>20</sup> and information and support on the training their ECT's will be receiving. Mentors hold 1-hour 1-to-1 sessions with ECTs<sup>21</sup> who are often carefully matched to the mentor, and they conduct observations and act as a critical friend. They have coaching conversations as well as holding challenging conversations when there are gaps in knowledge.

The importance of the mentor role was reflected in the interviews, case studies and workshops as well as the earlier surveys. ECTs' feedback captured in the surveys highlighted how time with mentors and their role in delivering the ECF-based induction programme were seen to be key to the process. ECTs in interviews also identified that the close formal and informal support that mentors provide, working on a 1-to-1 basis, helps to personalise training and enable pastoral and moral support. Induction tutors also considered mentors as critical to the success of the ECF-based induction programme. They felt mentors acted to guide ECTs through the material, helping them see the value of what they are doing and how it builds on their teacher training, and were non-judgemental, collaborative, positive and reassuring. This was echoed by the lead providers who find that strong mentor relationships lead to greater satisfaction with ECF-based induction training.

“To be able to bring things up for discussion without putting your way on it, without judgement and without ‘this is the right way’ and drawing out of the mentee things that they know that they need to work on and pulling together how are we going to do that, so it doesn't feel like a judgmental process... its more of a collaborative thing.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

“It's all been really positive, their mentors have had a huge impact on that, popping into lessons, checking in on them and talking to them about their practice.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

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<sup>20</sup> Schools using the provider-led approach have mentor training funded by DfE and from 2021 to 2024 received backfill payments to cover 36 hours of mentor time off timetable for training across the 2-year period.

<sup>21</sup> These are weekly in year 1 and then fortnightly in year 2.

## Specific benefits of mentoring

The ongoing relationship between the ECT and mentor means that the ECT can benefit from tailored support that meets their needs. As one induction tutor described:

“The key thing for me about the programme that really makes a difference is that they have a mentor who is setting them their small steps on a weekly or fortnightly basis...because that makes it much more targeted in terms of the support. It’s less general than the old NQT [newly qualified teachers] programme was, where you would go in and observe a whole lesson, and when you observe a whole lesson there can be quite a few things that people need to work on and that’s whether you are experienced or not. The positive part of the ECT programme is that you go in and you really target small measurable specific things that they can work on quite quickly and that really supports them in developing their practice.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

In interviews, ECTs reported how they valued the mentoring, finding the experience and expertise of their mentors ensured positive contributions to their joint discussions. Overall, ECT interactions with mentors served as a key enabler for ECT engagement with the programme. Mentors were someone they could trust, be open with (saying when they did not know something) and rely on to discuss topics directly related to what they were experiencing as a teacher. Mentors understood what they were going through, and in some cases, they were described as a ‘lifeline’.

“Your mentor becomes your trusted person; you discuss things...if you’re working in a context with quite challenging behaviour or whatever, the things you’re learning you think ‘I can’t do that’. When you go to your mentor, you discuss these issues and discover it’s not just you facing these issues.” - Music ECT2, Provider-led, Secondary

In some examples, this relationship also continued after the formal mentor period had finished, with mentors keeping in touch with their former mentees to provide ad-hoc support. However, this could add to the mentor workload.

Across the interviews, case studies and workshops, participants described where successful ECT mentoring reflected a wider positive culture of mentoring and coaching in their schools. This enabled ECTs to have access to wider support networks than just their own allocated mentor: there were members of the SLT, their induction tutors and other staff that made themselves available for questions and support. In some examples, induction tutors centrally organised the mentor programme, which included meetings and newsletters to regularly share their experiences. A secondary school mentor described this type of approach as enabling mentors to learn from others and another described how it helps to ensure consistency within a school. Networking was also discussed as a

positive aspect of the mentor training (also discussed in the 'reflections on mentor training and the mentor role' section).

## Mentor recruitment and selection

### What makes a good mentor

Different schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs) took different approaches to selecting and recruiting mentors, but it was clear that induction tutors felt strongly that getting the right people in place was key to the success of the programme. There were several qualities that were considered when recruiting mentors or that were felt to be important in an effective mentor:

- **Mentoring or coaching experience:** There was a range from very experienced mentors and coaches taking on the ECF mentor role to others with limited experience of mentoring (prior to undertaking the mentor training). There were mentors with many years of teaching and mentoring experience, who had mentored ITTs and NQTs and had been involved in the early roll-out (ERO) pilot of the ECF-based induction. Some induction tutors (from primary and secondary schools) believed that mentors would ideally have coaching experience as mentoring requires very different skills to being a teacher. For instance, mentors need to be able to pick up on issues the ECT does not notice, to have an awareness of where the ECT might be struggling and to be able to critically evaluate another's teaching.
- **Strong teaching skills:** Induction tutors felt that a mentor needed to have a foundation of good teaching so they could model different approaches for ECTs and be able to give good advice. They also needed to have good listening skills. One induction tutor described their mentors as the best teachers in the school, and another that the mentors 'know what good looks like'. One induction tutor in a secondary school reported that it was important to have a good knowledge of pedagogical learning (more so than lengthy experience) given the pedagogical focus of the framework. Another noted how good pedagogical understanding enabled mentors to:

“push them [ECTs] to think outside of their realm of understanding and take risks in the classroom.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary
- **Some teaching experience:** Reflecting on the first years of the ECF-based induction, induction tutors felt that length of service was not necessarily a barrier to becoming a mentor. However, there appeared to be a consensus that those who had recently completed their ECF-based induction would not be ready to mentor. There were indications that those going through the ECF-based induction

may want to become mentors because they had a good induction experience and want to 'give something back' (suggesting a good future supply for the mentor pool). There were a small number of examples from the case studies where former ECTs (those who had completed their induction) had indeed become mentors. These were exceptional cases as these new mentors tended to be older and have had previous professional experience. Most of the induction tutors interviewed reported that their ECF-based induction programme 'graduates' had not yet become mentors and felt that 3 years was not enough experience to bring to support new teachers. Instead, induction tutors reported that ECTs from the early cohorts were keen to provide support to the programme and so would make themselves available for any questions that new ECTs may have, thus providing more informal support.

- **Reduced teaching load or few(er) additional responsibilities:** There was an example in a primary school where mentors were selected from staff who did not have a teaching load to allow them to respond more quickly to the needs of ECTs (such as being able to meet directly after an observation). This approach was believed to be integral to the success of the programme in the school. Whereas an induction tutor coordinating a school-led programme across their trust believed it was better for mentors to be classroom teachers rather than those with additional responsibilities: 'a head of department or line manager can't always be supportive'.

## Matching to ECTs

Schools often carefully matched the mentor and ECT. In some cases, this was within the same department and in other cases not. Each approach was rationalised by those leading the matching process, but consensus emerged that it was important that the match was carefully considered.

"I think the role of the mentor is absolutely crucial. The fact that you have got to pair it, that you've got to get it right. The pairings really work." -  
Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

For those that selected from within the same department, subject knowledge as well as tacit knowledge about how their department operated were important when matching mentees with mentors. For smaller secondary schools and primary schools, matching within the same department was not always practically possible, and some induction tutors deemed it was not necessary. There were some examples of schools also taking a different approach to mentor matching in year 1 and 2 of the induction programme, as the focus of the topics changed.

## Challenges recruiting to the mentor role

Feedback from the interviews, case studies and workshops highlighted how mentors were passionate about the role and committed to it, and many wanted to continue in a mentoring role or in a coaching role. However, the feedback also indicated some challenges, particularly more recently, in recruiting mentors. Induction tutors were concerned that recruiting mentors would become even more challenging.

It was hoped that staff would want to take on the mentor role and that schools could build a good team and trusted pool of mentors using a sound strategy for recruitment. However, as one induction tutor noted, schools were facing constraints and needed to be more flexible in their approach. Mentors themselves had seen a lack of volunteers putting themselves forward for the role, meaning that leaders were more often stepping into the role.

Induction tutors felt that mentors in the initial cohorts had not fully appreciated the time commitment required. Some mentors reported that potential new mentors had been put-off by the workload involved. The role had come to be seen as an extra chore ('not as joyful as it once was') rather than a progression opportunity (one where their input and experience would be recognised and act as a stepping stone to other roles).

“At the beginning mentors didn't realise how much time it was going to take up, giving up an hour a fortnight for year twos and an hour a week for year ones. But they are doing a lot more than that, drop ins, conversations about what they've seen, conversations about what they were going to do... The time allocated does not account for real world application especially when you run into problems or challenges.” -  
Induction Tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

The workload was largely talked about in terms of the amount of reading and planning required. It was noted how the amount of reading was extensive and could be quite repetitive and that mentors were required to do lesson planning for the mentor sessions, both of which mentors felt had not been needed when supporting NQTs. This was time consuming but was also considered as a positive change as it holds people to account and ensures consistency.

One mentor was more positive about mentor recruitment. They had been able to talk to potential new mentors, giving them a realistic account of what it involves, being honest and giving an insight into the role, and had been able to motivate them to volunteer. Another described the approach taken in their school, which was to provide mentors across subjects rather than matching to subject to allow for more flexibility in recruiting mentors. This had some challenges, in that mentors may not be able to give specific

subject examples, but they were encouraging a community of mentors across the trust to help.

Mentors felt that schools and the sector could do more to show that they value mentoring and mentors; that they value their expertise, experience, energy and time, and in recognition of the important role that mentors play in supporting the next generation of teachers and helping them to stay on in teaching. Suggestions from mentors were that schools could make sure that the time mentors spend on the programme is safeguarded, and, at a national level, the mentoring role could attract teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payments.

## Mentor experiences

### Reflections on mentor training and the mentor role

The previous report, which drew on findings from the surveys, reported that mentors in schools with provider-led ECF-based induction were largely satisfied with their training. The interviews, case studies and workshops in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year reflect this by suggesting that the mentor training has a number of positives. One induction tutor reported, from her own experience of mentoring ECTs and undergoing the mentor training, that the programme had developed her mentoring skills beyond her previous coaching experience. This meant they had become more collaborative and less prescriptive as a result. Another felt that the knowledge mentors gained through the induction programme was useful and new:

“we’ve never had anything like that before. All we had was teaching standards... before this programme 2 ½ years ago you pretty much mentored the way you were mentored.” - Mentor, Provider-led, Primary

However, the mentor training was also perceived to be challenging in some respects. Often when discussing difficulties, mentors were considering the mentor role and the ECF-based induction process more broadly rather than specifically the training element. The pros and cons discussed included the following:

- **Materials:** Induction tutors considered the mentor training materials ‘excellent’ and felt they provided a structure or pathway for mentors to follow. Mentors also generally appreciated the materials. One mentor felt that the handbook provided for them was detailed. Another appreciated the case studies provided as they helped them to discuss with their ECT how best to approach different challenging situations.

Mentors also had some criticisms. They noted how it could be challenging working out how to contextualise materials such as training videos to their school’s setting.

One mentor felt the training did not provide them with information around how to cater to different ECTs' needs. The main criticisms, however, were coping with the amount of reading required and the pitch of materials. The volume of material and the time needed for reading was a frequent cause for concern. The reading was considered extensive and onerous and mentors described completing the reading in their own time. For some the challenge was the requirement to complete the reading within the confines of the online platform, which could take extra time. For those that were less technologically proficient this requirement could add extra administrative time. For others, the challenge was repetition or the pitch of the materials. Here mentors described how they were reading the same materials as covered in their NPQ in Leading Teaching or found the materials 'condescending' and the requirements 'onerous'.

- **Format:** Some mentors appreciated the online aspects to the training as it provided some flexibility. However, they also valued in-person sessions but realised these were more difficult to manage with travel time and being off-site and could be trickier to attend for those with part-time working patterns. Mentors also commented on aspects of the training they personally found challenging or discomforting including role-playing and deliberative practice.
- **Structure:** Mentors in case studies and workshops described how delivery of the training and ECF-based induction programme followed the outline structure very rigidly. Some mentors felt the structure and generic 'one size fits all' nature of the training was helpful, and ensured they and their ECTs covered all the necessary areas. However, others felt this led to the delivery of less useful elements and thus perceived it as a box-ticking exercise. Additionally, the perceived prescriptive nature of the training did not consider prior knowledge or experience. This also meant that mentors could not explore topics in depth as they were not equipped to do so or given the option to choose different seminars.

"My expectations were met but they weren't high. Would have liked a much tighter focus and deep dive into styles of mentoring, or practice types of discussion where we could be quite bespoke. Something that is short, but really specific and practicable/manageable." - Mentor, Provider-led, Secondary

- **Networking:** Opportunities to network (where available) were appreciated. They were useful for understanding how other schools operate, including comparing similarities and differences, and using the opportunity to be able to learn from other schools and contexts. Networking was felt to help foster a sense of a shared experience, particularly when teaching, and considering that mentoring can be an isolated role. Networking was valued, both with other mentors taking part in the training across the country but also for opportunities to connect with local teachers or colleagues within the same school. One mentor noted that due to their part-time

working pattern networking was more challenging to engage with as they often were not at the same stage of progress when working with ECTs (i.e., not in the same place in their ECT's journey) as other mentors they could network with.

- **Engagement:** Lead providers reported challenges in maintaining engagement from mentors over the duration of their 2-year training, and that it was also difficult to track ongoing 'active' mentor engagement with the programme (suggesting measuring retention at 'gateways' or completing assignments would be more straightforward). Their metrics show that engagement tends to reduce in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year where ECTs are perceived to need less mentor support. One lead provider noted how low or falling mentor engagement did not appear to be driven by not getting the time off-timetable for training but was due to a mismatch between what mentors spend their time doing and what the lead provider needs for their metrics.

"...schools are giving mentors the time, they are getting the time, but it is how they are spending their time, they are not doing the activity to hit the engagement targets." - Lead provider

Lead providers also felt that the lack of recognition of mentors' prior knowledge or attainment acted as a barrier to engagement at the start of the mentor training. Ideas to improve mentor engagement included reframing mentor training as a programme to support mentor practice, providing time for reflection on the role, and getting peer support.

- **Principles:** Some of the lead providers had concerns around the consistency across the programmes and delivery partners about what 'good mentoring' looks like. They felt a sector-wide framework for mentoring was needed which would set out the underpinning research and cover key learning, knowledge and skills required. This would help mentors who move schools (and providers) and for those taking on different roles where mentor training is required such as ITT mentors. Learning and development could then be endorsed with a mentor passport or an Ofqual recognised mentoring qualification.

## Concerns about time and workload

Many of the issues and challenges that were reported for mentoring centred around time needed for undertaking training and particularly the associated reading, for delivering mentoring activities in mentoring sessions, and the associated administrative tasks. Mentors reported that they struggled to manage the workload of the training alongside the mentoring and their main teaching roles. Indeed, some mentors felt the time commitment required was not compatible with their other responsibilities. One mentor noted how there was not enough time to cover everything required by the role, with mentor drop-ins most impacted by limited availability. This was a particular challenge for some mentors working part-time. One mentor described how their ability to act as an

effective mentor was hindered by their part-time hours following their return from maternity leave. One induction tutor in a pupil referral unit (PRU) that had selected middle and senior leaders to be mentors to provide ECTs with 'the best quality advice and guidance' noted how this increased the workload of already pressured staff.

Mentors expressed concern about a lack of time to cover all the work needed and all the support they needed to provide to their ECTs. Mentors felt they needed more time across the year and time they could use flexibly at their own discretion: time to cover the programme and ensure sufficient support for the practical aspects, but also to help ECTs with their wider responsibilities, and help deal with 'ECF overwhelm and setbacks'. Mentors noted how it can be hard to find the time for mentor tasks that sit outside the 1-hour meeting and the tasks on the learning platforms, such as additional support with marking, report writing or responding to ad-hoc questions. Mentors felt more flexibility for time spent outside of the prescribed agenda and that topics in the online platforms could help with this. There were concerns that lack of sufficient time and lack of flexibility to use the time, alongside the time pressures generally faced in education, could negatively impact the engagement and wellbeing of mentors and their ECTs.

Induction leads also felt mentors needed more time. They reflected how the 1-hour sessions between mentors and ECTs worked best when there was sufficient planning time ahead of the session and time to follow up afterwards. To preserve mentoring as much as possible, some schools gave mentors – including those in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year – more planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and less cover time, and gave mentors extra time above the back-fill allowance. This was in recognition of the importance of observations, and time needed for planning and administration, and for peer support from other mentors.

"Mentors often go above the 1 hour a week, you can't do it in just an hour. On top of that you've got the drop-in, which is 10-15 minutes, the walk there, doing it, writing up the notes – [it's a] minimum of 2 hours a week. That is a best fit approach to how long it takes and our remuneration reflects an hourly rate for their time." - Induction tutor, School-led, Secondary

There were, however, a couple of examples in primary schools where induction tutors (one with provider-led approach and one with a school-led approach) felt the mentor time required was not a challenge. In these examples, mentoring in their schools was described as less formal, with meetings taking less than 1 hour and forming part of existing support.

## **Planned changes to reduce mentor workload**

To tackle issues of heavy mentor workload and potential lack of engagement, changes are planned from September 2025. The mentor training will be streamlined for new mentors, reducing from 2 years to 1 year. The changes will also allow for more flexibility in how the training is delivered. Previous mentor training (e.g. from ITT programmes) will be recognised and allow for further reductions in training hours for new ECF mentors. This is intended to reduce unnecessary repetition.

In addition, to support both new and previously ECF-trained mentors, lead providers will be required to develop and provide more detailed resources for mentors to use in sessions to support their ECTs. These will include content on how to support ECTs who need extra help to master a topic, and how to effectively contextualise learning for their ECT.

## Successes

The previous reports, drawing on the surveys of ECTs, mentors and induction tutors in cohort 1, indicated several successes for the programme and where things were working well. Feedback from participants in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the evaluation also highlighted areas of particular success for the ECF-based induction programme over time. In addition, what has worked particularly well, as the programme continues to embed and as more schools and individuals become involved.

### Increasing positivity and ability to see what is working

The lead providers coordinating the provider-led approach to ECF-based induction encountered some initial negativity (from a minority in the school sector) when the ECF-based induction was first launched and found that getting such a large and complex programme 'off the ground' was hard work. However, as the programme has become embedded and 'taken hold' and as they enter their 4<sup>th</sup> year of delivery, they are receiving fewer complaints and no longer receive such negative feedback. They feel the sector (schools, wider staff and ECTs) is positive about the programme and the system has matured. Schools are seeing significant numbers of ECTs engaging well with the programme and are seeing satisfaction growing. Lead providers themselves have seen satisfaction scores from the monitoring they undertake increase from cohort to cohort. They feel ECTs now have more realistic expectations for their induction and that opinions are based on actual experiences. Also, that schools are embedding the programme into the wider work of the school.

Lead providers see the increasing positivity as a culture shift in the profession where the importance of evidence-informed professional development is recognised. Lead providers reported how some schools are managing to create successful learning cultures and noted the vital role the induction tutor has in leading and developing a professional development culture. However, one lead provider felt that the sector needed to be reminded that the framework and the induction programme is world-leading in terms of professional development.

The interviews and case studies also indicated that participants themselves are broadly positive about the ECF-based induction and the provider-led approach.

"I'm quite a fan of it, I've known teachers in the past with no support at all in their [induction] year. I think it's well designed in the areas they're taking them through. The website was a little bit clunky but the two years I think, are important. In the second year they start to become teachers who don't need quite so much support anymore and it's nice to see." - Mentor, Provider-led, Secondary

Induction tutors were particularly positive and tended to feel the ECF-based induction programme provided a better-quality experience than what was previously in place. The key elements highlighted by induction tutors as working particularly well and appreciated by participants are:

- The mentoring process, providing ECTs with close and targeted support. This was echoed in ECT feedback from the case studies, where ECTs found working with their mentors particularly beneficial and appreciated the experience and expertise of their mentors. Mentors served as the key enabler for ECT engagement with induction. The importance of mentor support was also recognised by the lead providers, and their own research shows correlations between close relationships with mentors and ECTs, and higher satisfaction scores (as discussed in ‘the central role of mentoring’ chapter).
- The opportunities for ECTs to network with teachers outside their home school (particularly around their subject). This was also recognised by lead providers, who found training delivery was most effective where strong teaching and learning communities were formed. Their feedback suggested this was facilitated by face-to-face training sessions with groups of around 20 participants.
- The training materials, which are considered excellent and provide a structure or pathway for ECTs and their mentors to follow.
- The focus on pedagogy underpinned by a strong evidence base, with the academic focus giving it ‘more weight’.

“[we were] Sceptical at first because the one we had was targeted and we were proud of it, but we missed the high level of research. Previously we were only able to draw on whoever was facilitating, on their knowledge and experience of research.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

- The additional time (the extra year) for ECTs to develop, continue to learn and work on their practice, especially when ECTs were given their full entitlement to time off-timetable to dedicate to their induction activities. ECTs emphasised the need for support as they move from ITT, sometimes from other careers, and build up towards taking on a full teaching role. This is particularly important for inexperienced ECTs. However, for some more experienced ECTs the training and induction period can feel overly long (as discussed in the ‘repetition’ section in the ‘challenges’ chapter).

“The fact that they still get release time in year two makes a difference, so they have longer to develop and learn. They appreciate that extra time to work on their practice. That it is focused on improving their practice in a positive way and for the children (rather than combative) is good for their wellbeing, they don’t feel attacked, they are focusing on one small thing and seeing that impact.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

- The feedback and information provided through the learning platforms, such as progress reviews and prompts (although some platforms were considered ‘clunky’).
- The more robust approach to assessing the quality of teaching running alongside the induction system drawing on the ECF.<sup>22</sup>

## Positive relationships strengthening over time

Relationships appear to be strong and improving over time. The lead providers report positive relationships with DfE and appreciate the way DfE works, listens and adapts, enabling a partnership of openness and trust. Lead providers also report strong positive relationships with their delivery partners. These relationships have been sustained over time even with market changes.<sup>23</sup>

Lead providers feel that delivery partners are very positive about the programme, feel real ownership and act as champions. They have increased in maturity and confidence in delivering the framework and in working with schools and feel more empowered as the programme embeds. This has enabled innovation in delivery, with delivery partners able to create solutions to operational problems encountered and to offer a better experience for participants, particularly those with a non-standard induction journey. This has also been facilitated by changes to the programme quality assurance process instigated by DfE. Delivery partners now have greater autonomy over timing and method of delivery and thus can be more responsive to the needs of participants and their local schools. This appears to have been recognised by schools. Induction tutors generally reported good relationships with their delivery partners and that their delivery partners were responsive in their communications (especially further into the school year). Induction tutors felt supported by their delivery partners throughout the academic year.

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<sup>22</sup> ECF-based training is separate from the formal assessment of an ECT’s performance against the [teachers’ standards](#). Formal assessment determines whether an ECT passes or fails their statutory induction. ECTs are only assessed against the teachers’ standards. They are not assessed against the ECF, and activities and tasks completed as part of the ECF-based induction training are not assessed.

<sup>23</sup> This includes changes in lead providers, who will be recruiting and working with new delivery partners. This in turn is leading to some reorganisation of which delivery partners work with which lead providers.

Relationships with appropriate bodies also tended to be positive, for both those following the provider-led approach and the school-led approach. Induction tutors valued the responsiveness and personal approach of their appropriate bodies. With appropriate bodies being available for ad-hoc support over the phone, responding to email queries, running workshops to cover more common issues and supporting cases to extend or reduce the induction period of ECTs (where appropriate). The length of time that the schools and appropriate bodies had worked together contributed to the positive working relationship, as well as greater understanding developed over time of the processes and requirements of the ECF-based induction programme. Some induction tutors however felt their appropriate bodies could be more responsive and supportive, particularly when ECTs were struggling and when they needed a timely response.

ECTs also reported positive relationships with their mentors. Mentors tended to be regarded by ECTs as the most useful aspect to induction; they were a source of expertise and support, someone who understood what ECTs were going through, and someone ECTs could trust and rely on to discuss topics and experiences openly, including indicating when they lacked confidence (as discussed in ‘the specific benefits of mentoring’ section of ‘the central role of mentoring’ chapter). These relationships sometimes continued beyond the formal induction period or formal mentoring responsibilities, with ECTs noting how they could still talk to their mentors if needed.

## **Growing confidence and familiarity**

Those involved in the ECF-based induction programme appeared to be growing in confidence. Lead providers reported that schools are now familiar with the process, are less confused about the framework and the programme, and know what is expected of them.

Induction tutors who were co-ordinating the provider-led programme within their schools, described a challenging or ‘overwhelming’ period at the start of the national roll-out (when they were getting to know the programme, systems and content). This contrasted with their current situation where they described the programme as being embedded within their schools. As the lead person for the induction programme, induction tutors felt able to steer the implementation within their school or across their MAT. Confidence in, and knowledge about, the programme has grown over time.

“In 2021 it was a bit overwhelming... Now that we’re 3 years down the line, I’m a lot more confident, a lot more settled with the structure, workload is easier because I know what I’m doing. A nice cycle has set in.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Special School

Induction tutors in schools with a school-led programme reported a similar experience of growing in confidence and understanding. They were able to reflect on what was working well and what was working less well to be able to 'tweak' their programmes.

The induction tutors across the school-led and provider-led programmes reported that their ECTs generally had positive experiences of the ECF-based induction programme. Particularly for those new to teaching it gave them an opportunity to have additional, extended formal support over the duration of the programme, which made a difference to how they settled into their school and teaching role. ECTs' reflections on their experiences were also generally positive and they tended to find the workload involved in induction was manageable (as discussed in the 'workload and time commitment' section in the 'challenges' chapter). The small number of ECTs in the case studies felt they had grown in confidence as teachers and in their ability to teach and had progressed in a range of areas as they moved through their induction programme. Specific aspects of growth noted included questioning techniques, behaviour management (also noted as a ECT growth area by mentors), and techniques for formative assessment. ECTs also felt the programme had increased their attachment to their school and helped them to develop strong relationships with other teachers. One ECT in year 1 of their induction programme noted how it had been "better" than their PGCE as there was not as much pressure to complete coursework and assignments.

Mentors in the case studies felt ECTs grew in confidence over their induction, and that the ECF-based induction allowed for confidence to be developed over time within a supportive environment. Delivery partners also captured positive feedback from ECTs and saw progression in ECTs' confidence and improvement in their overall enjoyment of the induction process, particularly as ECTs moved into year 2 of their programme (as discussed in the 'confidence, performance and quality' section of the 'outcomes and early signs of impact' chapter).

## **Access to peers, learning alongside others and networking**

The provider-led ECF-based induction programme was praised for the opportunities provided for ECTs to form networks, meet other ECTs in their school, their Trust (if appropriate) and in other local schools. ECTs in the case studies described a range of opportunities for them to network with their peers. These included regular weekly lunchtime meetings with other ECTs in the school to share experiences; meeting other ECTs during in-person training sessions facilitated by external delivery partners (this could involve specific time set aside for networking); and opportunities to have meetings with ECTs in other schools. For some this also included developing social media support groups (e.g. Facebook group) initially for all ECTs, but they were considering extending invitations to recently qualified teachers and those who had completed their induction.

One ECT also appreciated opportunities to work with specialist teachers that were arranged by their delivery partner, which was viewed as another opportunity to network.

While ECTs on provider-led programmes in the case studies talked about the networking they accessed, there was a desire for more networking opportunities. They would particularly appreciate chances to visit and observe practice at other schools, and to have dedicated time set aside for networking. They hoped this dedicated time would allow for discussion, sharing experiences and building relationships, rather than these activities being relegated to breaks between set training sessions. Mentors also felt networking was important for ECTs and that opportunities could be unevenly distributed. Networking opportunities may represent an area for further development for the ECF-based induction programme. Additionally, ECTs were interested in forming and sustaining networks beyond their induction period, so they could continue to access and provide peer support.

Schools using the school-led approach had mixed experiences of networking. One induction tutor in a secondary school described being able to collaborate with local schools, share practice and buddy ECTs across different schools (linked by subject). Whereas another induction tutor in a primary school felt there were no opportunities to network. This left them feeling they did not know whether what they were doing was on a par with other schools, despite receiving reassurances from their appropriate body. They would have liked more networking opportunities within the local authority or their trust.

## Quality content and structure

The case studies and interviews highlighted how induction tutors hoped that the ECF would provide a structured approach to induction (which some felt had been lacking) and that induction tutors and mentors felt it delivered on this. For example, one mentor appreciated how the ECF-based induction elaborated and narrowed down elements of the teaching standards<sup>24</sup> into 'minute details' and focused on elements that new teachers need to know and find particularly difficult. Another mentor appreciated the further reading sections under each heading that ECTs could work through. Mentors felt they also gained from their involvement in supporting ECTs, with one noting how the ECF-based induction provided new content for ECTs and mentors.

Induction tutors following the provider-led approach also appreciated that the content had been designed by experts, and so did not need to be developed by the school and that it would be updated (as and when needed). Whereas induction tutors using a school-led approach valued how they could build upon the nationally available materials to add

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<sup>24</sup> Further information on these is available at: [Teachers' standards - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/teachers-standards).

contextual content to address their schools' specific needs, or the needs of ECTs to address perceived weaknesses in their teaching practice.

## Conditions for success

Feedback and reflections gathered during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the evaluation from induction tutors, mentors and ECTs suggested several conditions for success or features that facilitated positive outcomes for ECTs and schools.

- **Choice:** having the options of different approaches to choose from (provider-led, school-led and school designed-and delivered) to best suit the school and MAT's needs.
- **Mentoring:** close mentoring relationships that can identify issues quickly and consistency in the support from mentors. Some felt that the focus on coaching in the training for mentors was key and allowed for bespoke support for ECTs.
- **Observations:** using observations to identify areas for support and sharing good practice.
- **Networking with other teachers and schools:** creating a collaborative space to talk about teaching practice.
- **Resources:** having access to good quality materials and robust assessment criteria.
- **Protected time:** reducing ECTs' teaching timetables (in year 1 and year 2) to provide dedicated time for induction and protecting this, particularly so that mentoring can take place during school hours and in a timely fashion (i.e. soon after observations or issues are raised). The reduced timetable also signals the importance of CPD.

"I think they do appreciate that they get additional time out of class above and beyond other teachers as it really supports them to stay on track when they are trying to spin all these plates." - Induction tutor Provider-led, Primary

- **Potential to reduce length of training:** for inexperienced mentors and ECTs the current ECF-based induction training programme works well. However, for more experienced mentors and ECTs, and ECTs that have been supported well in their ITT, the training requirements can feel onerous. More experienced ECTs can

agree a reduced induction with their appropriate body in certain circumstances.<sup>25</sup> ECTs and induction tutors may not be aware of this option.

- **School culture:** having a supportive school culture and support from the SLT was particularly key. Lead providers emphasised that where ECF-based training was successful it was because the school culture enables it, that there is a culture of investing in development and a recognition of the importance of mentoring. Conversely school culture can act as a barrier. A positive culture and senior support could be signalled by rewarding mentors and working to ensure mentors are well-matched, providing additional time off-timetable (beyond the statutory entitlement) and assigning lead roles to support mentors and ECTs. The SLT taking an active interest and being involved in mentoring could also signal a positive culture. For example, taking on induction tutor roles or supporting delivery of induction training, which would also provide them with a greater understanding of the programme and the commitment required from participants.

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<sup>25</sup> See section 3 of the statutory guidance - [Induction for early career teachers \(England\) Statutory guidance](#).

## Challenges

The previous reports, which drew primarily on survey findings, indicated areas of challenge or frustrations experienced by the initial cohort of participants and aspects of the ECF-based induction that was working less well at the start. Research undertaken during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of implementation of the ECF-based induction programme highlighted where challenges had been overcome. It also identified areas of difficulty that continued for participants and schools and those delivering the programme, and where for some the programme was working less well.

## Onboarding, introduction and initial experiences

The lead providers noted how registration of the initial cohort (cohort 1) was particularly challenging due to technical difficulties with their own (and with DfE) data management systems. Some of the initial teething problems with the digital platforms have been overcome but lead providers felt that onboarding and registration of participants was still a challenge and could be improved with earlier registration. This could allow for the summer term to be used to on-board and prepare participants, setting them up on lead provider systems, giving them access to eLearning platforms and giving them time to get to know the programme. This does however depend on ECTs being able to register early and see the benefits of doing this.

Lead providers felt it was important to get the on-boarding to the ECF-based induction programme right, to support engagement of participants right from the start and to manage expectations. Work here has included supporting delivery partners to deliver induction conferences to encourage participants to start working closely with delivery partners and helping delivery partners to group participants before the start of their programme. The timing of the first substantive event is important, in order to be as inclusive as possible and allow all participants to attend (including later starters). One lead provider holds these induction events after the first half-term, whereas another has developed a 'snappy induction' for later starters which is reduced and flexible.

## Technological support, registration and data management

Feedback from induction tutors highlighted a few challenges with the learning platforms used by each lead provider. Learning platforms provided some features that induction tutors appreciated but some were found to be 'clunky' and frustrating to use. One induction tutor noted how they had switched lead provider for their provider-led ECF-based induction due to complaints about the platform they used.

Induction tutors reported frustrations with having to work with different digital systems (for the delivery partner, appropriate body and DfE) to manage their ECTs. This made

registering new ECTs challenging. They described having to enter the same or similar information across multiple systems and waiting for different bodies to approve or respond. This sometimes led to a delay in assigning mentors and getting the programme up and running. There was strong desire for the registration process to be streamlined.

Lead providers also noted challenges with data management particularly to track movement of participants over time and across schools. They recognise that teachers and mentors move schools, pick up new mentors or new ECTs, take a break from their training and come back at a later stage. They would like DfE systems to track movements of ECTs and mentors, assess how far through the programme they are, capture data such as working pattern and subject and ITT route; then for DfE to pass this information to lead providers so they and their delivery partners could better support participants.

DfE is exploring options for a 'tell us once' process to remove duplicative steps from registration, negating the need for schools to register ECTs separately with their appropriate body.

## **Maintaining engagement**

Lead providers reported challenges in measuring and maintaining engagement with the ECF-based induction programme (over the 2 years). They noted how with increasing flexibility (which they strongly support) it becomes harder to monitor engagement as monitoring cannot be automated. Lead providers described how ECTs had a statutory entitlement to induction but there was no requirement for them to engage fully or even participate in an induction programme. ECTs are not compelled to undertake the training, and schools receive funding whether ECTs engage or not. However, the work required by lead providers and delivery partners to facilitate and deliver training sessions and events is the same regardless of whether ECTs or mentors truly engage.

## **Impact of teacher workload**

Lead providers tended to find that ECT engagement starts high and drops off as the school year continues and also around peak times for schools (such as exam periods). They therefore questioned expectations that engagement should be linear. Lead providers recognised that there are multiple factors that can negatively affect how induction is received and the engagement of ECTs and mentors, most of which are beyond the control of lead providers. They believe the main challenge is general teacher workload. Lead providers noted how the extraordinary pressures of working in schools including accountability, parent demands, and challenging pupil behaviour, can all hamper engagement. Schools can be challenging places to work, with competing demands and priorities. ECTs need time and space away from the classroom for training

and reflection, and that 'hopping from one conceptual task to another, such as marking 30 year 10 English books and then going straight into reflective learning' can be difficult. This was also reflected in feedback from the case studies. Mentors and ECTs themselves noted that the challenges faced by ECTs were the typical stressors encountered in classrooms including time management and overall workload.

"...being a new teacher is difficult, very tiring and exhausting. It is mentally, emotionally and physically draining, so mid-November when you are hanging off your shoe leather and you have a session at 6pm on webcam for 1.5 hours can be really difficult." - Lead provider

One former ECT (in the case studies) described how she had struggled during her induction period as she found teaching in general overwhelming. However, she received support from her department and colleagues around keeping a healthy work/life balance, and she continued to have support from her induction mentor (beyond the formal mentoring period) and now felt better equipped to deal with her workload.

Another former ECT felt the ECF-based induction needed to address teacher mental health and wellbeing more explicitly, particularly in relation to its impact on retention:

"If [the] ECF programme needs to develop, it needs to be focused on day-to-day stress of being a teacher. What practical things actually help alleviate stress?" - ECT, completed induction, Provider-led, Secondary

These pressures can make it challenging for individuals to prioritise their own development and to feel able to take their entitlement to time off-timetable. Other challenges noted by lead providers and induction tutors included difficulties faced by schools in providing time off-timetable for mentors and ECTs. This requires them to find sufficient and suitable cover for classes. This can be logistically challenging in terms of timetabling to arrange for ECTs and mentors to have the same time off together (particularly when ECTs and mentors are at different points in their own training).<sup>26</sup> This meant mentors found it difficult to secure time to observe ECTs. Another practical issue noted by a mentor was that ECF-based sessions were 60 minutes long; however, their secondary school used a timetable based on 50-minute sessions, which created additional logistical challenges.

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<sup>26</sup> For example, one induction tutor noted how they struggled to arrange mentor-ECT pairings in their ideal format as some of their ECTs were in year 2 of their induction but have mentors in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of their mentor training programme.

## Strategies to increase engagement

Lead providers' own feedback suggests high levels of engagement, but they are working to continue to increase engagement where possible through:

- considering the timing of training sessions (preferably during school hours), the frequency and length of sessions (with moves to consolidate to fewer longer sessions), and the location of sessions (e.g., out of the school environment)  
“Some delivery partners try to tackle engagement by lengthening face to face training sessions which seems counter-intuitive. This is because some participants feel they want to make the most of time, to avoid the feeling that by the time they have arrived it is almost over so ‘what’s the point?’” - Lead provider
- providing access to all materials at the start of the programme and providing catch-up events and opportunities for those that miss live sessions (‘not just one bite of the cherry’)
- providing information so that participants can see where they are and track their progress
- working with induction tutors to get their support and improve their understanding (recognising the importance of having well informed induction tutors who understand the language, roles and responsibilities, and importance of support from schools).

They also advocate for more time to be made available for mentors to support their engagement in the induction programme. This is in recognition that their input involves mentor training, following the training for ECTs and providing support for their mentees, and preparing for mentoring sessions. Lead providers also advocate for formal recognition of mentor input.

## Inflexibility

There continued to be feedback that, although the content was of good quality, the provider-led ECF-based induction programme was too generic, prescriptive, and rigid. Stakeholders felt that greater flexibility was needed in administering and supporting the programme. There were calls for greater flexibility in sequencing of topics, depth of coverage and pace. It is noted that improvements have been made and continue to be made in these areas, and further changes are planned from September 2025. However, information about the changes made or the effects of these may not yet have filtered through to schools, induction tutors, mentors and ECTs. This would mean that some of the feedback is out of date or will lessen over time.

## Rigid sequencing

Some mentors and induction tutors felt the ECF-based induction training programme was prescriptive and rigidly sequenced and could have little to do with what was actually going on in the school. This meant it was difficult for mentors to respond to ECTs' needs and the school context within the confines of the modules of the ECF. Mentors wanted to be able to move units around depending on what was needed at the time. One mentor highlighted the experience of a neurodivergent ECT who struggled with switching between topics they needed to focus on as an immediate development need and the topics required by the sequencing of the programme.

Lead providers noted how they have a defined sequence to their training programmes, and a preferred model for how ECTs engage with it. However, they allow for flexibility so that mentors and schools can skip ahead and/or align the modules to when they are most relevant. This can be particularly helpful for those who start their induction programme later in the school year, as they can join at the same point as their existing colleagues. It can also be helpful for schools to manage larger ECT cohorts and for delivery partners. This flexibility is facilitated by providing all materials upfront (which initially was not permitted within the guidelines for the training). Lead providers tend to find that despite the flexibility, most schools do follow the defined sequence.

“...the original plan was that you would have to follow a schematic set – go through room 1 to get to room 2, and room 2 was locked until you had done all the bits in room 1 – and this caused lots of frustration and resentment. The module on parents' evenings came after Christmas, which is fine in secondary schools but not in primary schools (when parents' evening takes place in October). Learners were finding it frustrating, they were used to learning at university where there was more flexibility.” - Lead provider

## Inflexible

Mentors and induction tutors wanted the flexibility to adjust the depth to which topics were covered, to spend less time on topics ECTs were comfortable with and spend longer on topics ECTs needed more support with. They also wanted to be able to adjust the pace of learning, to allow some ECTs to move ahead of the prescribed programme if appropriate or alternatively to slow-down or pause. Some induction tutors following the provider-led approach found the ECF-based induction training was moving too fast in places and not enabling ECTs to really hone a skill before moving on (particularly if they were struggling). The quick pace also meant ECTs were not able to develop skills in areas they were particularly interested in, or to allow time for reflection. Induction tutors also felt the pacing did not take account of wider pressures faced during the school year. Some induction tutors believed mentors needed more flexibility to decide on the speed

(and length) and direction of the programme to reflect the learning needs of individual ECTs.

“Materials to look through is great, [the] issue is having time in-between sessions to hone-in on that. Time for [the] mentor to ask what do you want to focus on? Stuff isn’t irrelevant but focus and time in school can sometimes be skewed away from what’s in the ECF... you’re doing a colleague a disservice if they have you for an hour and you don’t talk about what they’d like you to come to the classroom to observe.” - Mentor, Provider-led, Secondary

“If you’ve got someone whose behaviour management in the classroom really, really needs work, there’s no point in moving onto assessments if they haven’t nailed that behaviour management and it would be nice if that would be acknowledged.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

Mentors and induction tutors called for more freedom and flexibility to chart a course that works best for mentors and ECTs and to be able to adapt to the needs of the school. Some noted how they had made some flexibilities to the programme, using their professional judgement to decide how much focus to give to each module depending on the needs of the ECT.

“We just looked at it together and we’d say, ‘we don’t think we need to do that bit, we definitely need to do that bit, let’s spend a bit longer on that bit’ and we started to just unpick. I would look at it first, then she would look at it, then we’d discuss which bits we were going to do together and which bits we were going to do in meetings and which bits we were going to leave.” - Induction tutor and mentor, Provider-led, Primary

“In theory we just deliver as is. However, ... what we’ve tended to do is if somebody has either been struggling or maybe has had other things in their life that have meant that actually they just need to take a step back, we’ve literally taken a step back from it even if it’s only for a couple of weeks. We’ve taken it and we’ve manipulated it to our needs. So, they’ve still done it, but maybe at a slightly different pace in order to adapt to the individual.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

DfE has required lead providers to develop ‘stretch content’ for ECTs who choose to go into more depth and beyond the required minimum content. From September 2025, lead providers will introduce diagnostic tools which aim to provide more opportunities for tailoring of content for ECTs to their experience and expertise, utilised in conjunction with their mentor. In addition, mentor training for new mentors will be shortened to 1 year (from 2). It will bring together all the training elements mentors said they found the most

valuable, with the aim of removing any unnecessary workload and allowing more flexibility in how training is delivered.

## Repetition

A further common criticism noted in the case studies and school interviews was that the content of the ECF-based induction programme repeated content from ITT. This was particularly heard in year 1 of the programme and principally in terms of teaching theory, which could make the training feel laborious. The perception of repetition was reported by ECTs from cohort 1, but also by ECTs in the subsequent cohorts. This is despite changes made to the provider-led training by lead providers with guidance from DfE, and in response to feedback (within boundaries set for the programme). One induction tutor described how they helped their ECTs to understand the ECF-based induction as continuing professional development and building on their ITT, to explain the potential repetition. Similarly, one former ECT, reflecting on their experience of provider-led ECF-based induction, felt the main lesson they had learned was the importance of CPD and revisiting material, especially in terms of how you teach and learn.

For mentors, their ECF-based mentor training was perceived to overlap with content from NPQs (particularly the NPQ in leading teacher development).

A related criticism of the provider-led ECF-based induction training was that it took no account of participants' previous experiences and assumed that ECTs and mentors start their respective training with the same (basic) level of knowledge and understanding. This can cause frustration and issues for engagement. One induction tutor noted the issue was exacerbated by inconsistency in the initial training or education of teachers, which meant teachers come to the induction with different skillsets and backgrounds. Mentors felt that for some ECTs a fast-track might be more appropriate whereas conversely one induction tutor felt that the potential to extend the length of induction would be helpful for ECTs who are struggling and need a bit longer to get through.

Some ECTs in the case studies therefore found the programme restrictive, rigid and admin-heavy, and described it as formulaic and lengthy, particularly those with some prior teaching experience:

“I did have quite a bit of experience of teaching before doing my ITT. With ECF, I was told at the start I could actually go straight to year 2 but I would have to prove [why]. There didn't seem to be a lot of flexibility, they didn't really want to entertain that and just said 'oh do your 2 years and you get an extra PPA'. It's very much one size fits all.” - Music ECT2, Secondary

“We have found that when we have able teachers, it can be off-putting, the old programme could be adapted because we knew the teachers and could pitch it at a higher level, that’s the one downside compared to what we used to have – no sense of building on what has gone before. It relies on the mentor to make the ECT see how what they are doing builds on rather than repeats.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

The length of an ECT induction period is the full-time equivalent to 2 school years (generally 6 school terms). There is no time limit for starting or completing induction and it is currently possible for ECTs ‘in exceptional circumstances’ to serve a reduced induction period (and not cover the full depth of the ECF). To do so they must meet specific criteria, and this is agreed with the appropriate body. An induction period may be extended automatically to take account of absence, or an extension may be agreed by the appropriate body to take account of personal difficulties, illness, disability and issues around support received, to allow additional time to meet the teachers’ standards.

From September 2025, the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content will be combined with the ECF to create the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF). This will address areas of perceived repetition by updating the pitch and tone of the materials to recognise the familiarity ECTs will have with the content from their ITT. This will also be supported by the new diagnostic tools to allow ECTs to focus on areas where they most need to develop.

For mentors, changes will be made to the mentor training. For new mentors from September 2025 the training will be shortened from 2 years to 1 year. It will bring together all the training elements mentors said they found the most valuable with the aim of removing any unnecessary workload and allowing more flexibility in how training is delivered. It will also be possible to reduce training hours for mentors, in recognition of previous mentor training from ITT programmes. These changes are aimed at reducing unnecessary repetition and workload.

## Content

There were some additional criticisms about the content of the training programmes. The feedback indicated some frustration about the lack of SEND content and limited focus on work/life balance within the ECF-based induction training. There were also concerns that the evidence-base underpinning the training may become dated, and that new research and evidence needs to be addressed particularly with changing contexts.

The ITTECF (published in January 2024 and delivered from September 2025) includes several changes and additions to framework statements in response to feedback from the sector and experts, evaluation data and lessons learned from the first years of implementation. This includes new statements on how teachers should support pupils

with SEND, as well as expanded existing statements on supporting younger pupils and references to high quality oral language being made more explicit.

There is also an increased requirement on lead providers to provide contextualisation to subject and phase, including creating SEND exemplification materials. In addition, DfE will be partnering with expert organisations to provide targeted support and further real-life examples for ECTs in special schools.

To ensure the framework provides the best possible support for ECTs based on the most up to date evidence, DfE has committed to a full review of the content framework in 2027.

## Workload and time commitment

The workload and time commitment required in supporting the ECF-based induction programme was another challenge reported in the case studies and interviews and by mentors in the workshops.

The ECTs in the case studies tended to report that their provider-led ECF-based induction programme had not created too much of a workload for them, and they felt it was manageable, particularly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. However, it was noted that for those with extensive travel time for off-site meetings, the ECF-based induction could create additional pressures. Instead, it was the general demands of teaching that could be challenging; mentors and induction tutors were concerned that the ECF-based induction programme could overload some ECTs as they also get to grips with the demands of teaching. One mentor felt that ECTs can be overwhelmed when their ECF-based induction was combined with other school CPD and training.

“...everything is new for them. A lot of them find everything overwhelming so it's hard to weed out whether it's the programme or not. When it gets to this point in the [summer term] year, they're starting to settle into everything else more than the programme but in year 2 they don't find it an enormous amount of work... We've had quite a lot of ECTs who are 'wobbly', anxious, overwhelmed with workload... When they start teaching it's massive because it's not like what they did on their ITT training. There's a lot of things at play here rather than just the ECF programme.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

The programme workload for mentors and induction tutors appeared problematic. Indeed, one induction tutor in a small primary school who was also the mentor noted how the amount of time it had taken them to take an ECT through their induction could deter them from recruiting ECTs in the future. For induction tutors the workload involved in the oversight and planning of the ECF-based induction programme was challenging due to managing multiple cohorts of ECTs. This was exacerbated by ongoing difficulties due to

working with different digital systems to manage their ECTs. This could worsen, at least in the short-term, with the introduction of the new model in 2025<sup>27</sup> which will mean that induction tutors will be coordinating two versions of ECF-based induction at the same time.

Some felt the time commitment required by mentors was high (as discussed in the ‘concerns about time and workload’ in ‘the central role of mentoring’ chapter). Mentors (often the ‘best teachers’) tended to be time poor which meant the mentor demands could impact upon their own teaching. The time allocated to mentors was not always considered sufficient. Mentors felt they needed more time off-timetable to fulfil their duties, but this could or would be challenging for schools to be able to find.

## Participants’ suggestions for improvement

There were several suggestions for improvements or to drive improvements that were made in the case studies, school interviews and mentor workshops, and gathered from the lead providers:

- Continuing to provide information about the ECF-based induction programme and the provider-led option, including how to manage the programme in small schools (as some schools may not yet have taken on an ECT). Continue to raise the profile of ECF-based induction and its role in teacher CPD.

DfE is updating its guidance for schools to reflect the changes that are being implemented from September 2025. This will include clarification of roles and responsibilities. DfE will continue to work with lead providers and other partners on supporting the delivery of the programme with effective guidance.

- Providing a forum for lead providers to work together, share experiences and ideas and solve problems.

From September 2025, a Lead Provider Community will be established to provide a forum where lead providers can collaborate and foster continuous improvement and innovation for the benefit of the programme.

- Auditing of lead provider learning platforms for ease of use/accessibility.
- Streamlining the administration aspect for managing ECTs, perhaps with a single point of registration.

DfE is exploring options for a ‘tell us once’ process to remove duplicative steps from registration, negating the need for schools to register ECTs separately with their appropriate body.

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<sup>27</sup> Further information is available at: [Initial teacher training and early career framework - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/initial-teacher-training-and-early-career-framework).

- Promoting the benefits of revisiting and reflecting on material on how to teach and learn in different contexts within the ECF-based induction training. This is particularly useful as teachers tend to be mobile, moving from school to school. They will find that approaches to teaching are not homogeneous and so revisiting within different contexts will help prepare them for new situations. Helping individuals to appreciate that it can be easy to overestimate their own skills and abilities and that developing expertise requires re-exposure.
- Increased flexibility in year 1 to allow for greater tailoring/personalisation to individual and school needs, focusing on specific, relevant skillsets.

From September 2025, new diagnostic tools will be introduced for mentors to work with their ECTs to focus on the areas they most need to develop. Additionally, mentors will be provided with more detailed resources to use in their sessions to support their ECTs. This will include content on how to support ECTs who need extra help to master a topic, as well as how to effectively contextualise learning for their ECT.

- Less required reading for mentors and ECTs. Lead providers noted how they were looking at different delivery methods and modes of engagement including podcasts and recordings, which could help to reduce reading time.

Additionally, from September 2025 training for new mentors will be reduced from 2 years to 1 year.

- A stronger focus on ECTs' mental health and wellbeing. One former ECT described how their school became more supportive of new teachers' wellbeing as the programme embedded, and they implemented more small-group working and drop-ins. One lead provider felt strongly that the ECF had a place to play in developing and supporting teacher resilience and that wellbeing should be a formal part of the framework. They were considering ways to support ECT wellbeing. This included thinking about how best to start ECTs on their induction and give them space to get settled, starting all training sessions with a wellbeing check-in, and piloting a wellbeing app. The app enables ECTs to monitor and track their workload and stress levels, provides suggestions and signposts to further support, and prompts conversations between ECTs and mentors. An induction tutor also felt that delaying the start of the training would give ECTs time to 'get their bearings with a new school, new systems and new children'.

Following feedback the ITTECF contains updated content on how to manage workload and wellbeing by being aware of support available to support good mental wellbeing.

- More networking and collaboration opportunities for ECTs and to continue these beyond the induction period. There were concerns that networking opportunities were patchy. Networking could be supported by national action such as subject

matching, particularly for ECTs who lacked a local subject expert to link with and for small schools and those in rural locations. This could also be facilitated by face-to-face meetings and with dedicated time to network and share experiences in a 'safe' space (outside of their own schools) so ECTs could connect with peers.

"It is the networking and that face-to-face contact with other [ECTs] that is probably missing. I don't think [the Trust] organised anything. I know our academy did, but it was only one and I don't think that's enough." - Mentor, Provider-led, Secondary

- Encouraging schools to reflect on ECTs' development and to have conversations about progression after induction.
- Guidance for mentors and about mentoring, and mentors would appreciate clear(er) guidelines for their role and appreciation of the effort required.

From September 2025, mentors will be provided with more detailed resources for use in preparing for and delivering 1-to-1 sessions with their ECTs (e.g., how to support ECTs who need extra help to master a topic, and how to effectively contextualise learning for ECTs). These resources will be available to new mentors and mentors that have been through training. Existing mentors will continue to have full access to the mentor training resources as well.

For mentors on the school-led programme, DfE will be introducing freely available mentor training materials as part of the DfE-accredited materials, based on the ITTECF. Schools can then choose to use these materials to deliver their own training programme. A date for roll-out has not yet been confirmed.

Some suggestions were aimed specifically at supporting mentor engagement and improving the mentor experience (also discussed in 'the central role of mentoring' chapter):

- Ensuring the time mentors spend on the programme is safeguarded.
- Recognising and valuing the input from mentors, potentially with teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payments.

## Outcomes and early signs of impact

The main aim of the research was to evaluate the early implementation of the ECF-based induction programme to understand how well it was working, where it was working well, the challenges encountered and how it could be improved. It was not intended to identify and measure impact. However, feedback and insights were gathered on the outcomes of participants, and on perceptions and early indications of impact.

## Challenges identifying impacts

The lead providers involved in designing and delivering the ECF-based induction training believe that supporting teachers at the beginning of their careers is critical and that the training and the programme overall has an impact. Specifically, feedback suggests that it is improving the knowledge, quality, self-efficacy, confidence, habits and behaviours of ECTs. ECTs are developing a professional identity and a professional voice to be able to articulate what it means to be a teacher, and the confidence to voice opinions and share practitioner enquiry with others. It is producing a generation of teachers who value collaborative learning, are evidence-informed, used to online learning and are aspirational and ambitious. Also, that the training and programme is having a positive impact on retention and progression of ECTs, and on teaching overall and the public perceptions of teaching. As indicated in the previous reports, teachers in the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort showed increases in confidence over time, and the majority had plans to stay on in teaching beyond their induction period and for at least 5 years.

Lead providers reflected that there are challenges in identifying and measuring impact, specifically in measuring concepts such as quality, and that potential impacts such as quality and retention are interlinked. There are no true counterfactual groups<sup>28</sup> with the national roll-out to allow for comparison, as all ECTs undergo ECF-based induction. There are challenges particularly in identifying impacts at this early stage of implementation. Additionally, impact can be hampered or facilitated by wider contextual factors, notably school leadership and culture, general teaching workload and teacher wellbeing. One lead provider reported that their monitoring finds that programme outcomes are driven by school leadership, and satisfaction is greatest where schools have spent time looking at how the programme aligns with their wider school activities.

Lead providers felt strongly that the impact of the significant investment in the ECF-based induction programme would take time to emerge and a longer-term perspective is needed in assessing the value of the new approach to induction. They felt that the

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<sup>28</sup> Counterfactual groups or control groups are key to some impact evaluation techniques as these groups do not receive the intervention (in this case the ECF-based induction) and allow assessment of what would have happened without it.

programme would lead to better trained teachers and the longer-term impacts would be teacher retention and better grades from pupils.

Lead providers also noted how there were likely to be softer outcomes from the ECF-based induction such as shared language and understanding, and changing cultures to recognise the importance of professional development. These softer outcomes would be harder to find suitable metrics to capture:

“...the quality of conversations teachers have, the languages they share with each other and with pupils, that teachers are more well equipped.” - Lead provider

“...for a long period, teaching has been seen as a very difficult job, so it is about changing this perception more broadly...whether teaching is a healthy, worthwhile profession, and that teachers feel invested in.” - Lead provider

The impact evaluation<sup>29</sup> of the ECF ERO pilot<sup>30</sup> also highlighted the challenges in measuring impact specifically in terms of retention, and the externalities that influenced outcomes. The authors noted how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way the programme was delivered at the time; much of the planned face-to-face delivery and support shifted to online, and additional support provided by DfE to schools meant comparison groups were given access to materials – which affected the ability to detect impact. The research team at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) also noted how a longer-evaluation period is needed to more fully explore retention.

## Confidence, performance and quality

Participants and lead providers were positive about the impact ECF-based induction has had on ECTs as the programme has embedded, and often talked about improvements in quality:

“...frontline, in schools, they are blown away by the quality of ECTs.” - Lead provider

“...they [lead providers and delivery partners] provide us with high-quality, happy, well-trained, and well-inducted teachers.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

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<sup>29</sup> [Early Career Framework Early Roll-out - trial | EEF](#) published in October 2024.

<sup>30</sup> This took place in the North East, Greater Manchester, Bradford and Doncaster areas, and followed the programmes of four providers (Ambition Institute, Education Development Trust, Teach First and University College London).

When talking about quality, lead providers tended to mean improvements in confidence (which can start high, but may also increase over time), self-efficacy, and improvements in specific areas (monitored by their own feedback mechanisms such as quizzes and module outcomes). These areas of improvement include understanding pupils' learning, creating a learning environment to maintain behaviour, and ability to improve behaviour. Lead providers also noted that improvements in confidence and knowledge impact positively on habits and ECTs embed these into their practice:

“...we can see this as it is tracked over each module. Beyond the set up etc, the programme is helping ECTs to develop effective habits.” - Lead provider

There is no single objective measure of quality in teaching or therefore of quality of ECTs. The surveys of ECTs, mentors and induction tutors in cohort 1 captured potential proxy measures for quality (findings are included in the previous reports). These tended to align with themes discussed in the case studies and interviews.

## **Induction tutors' and mentors' views**

The case studies and interviews found that induction tutors were broadly positive about the impact the ECF-based induction programme had on teachers' confidence, skills, knowledge and therefore the quality of their teaching practice (aligning with the survey findings). Some noted that the quality of teaching coming through the ECF-based induction was particularly strong. They described how the programme gave ECTs time to work on their practice. It exposed and supported teachers (with scaffolding) to develop a range of different pedagogical skills and processes. In addition, to develop a greater understanding of pedagogical practices and the learning process, such as cognitive work around short-term and long-term memory and how to use this in planning. They felt the 2-year period for induction provided extended training and support, allowed time for improvement and reflection, and encouraged an interest in professional development. Some noted that the impact on confidence and practice was particularly noticed in year 2 when ECTs could focus on areas of particular interest to them:

“...it [ECF-based induction programme] definitely improved her [the ECT's] practice, definitely honed her skills and I think it made our conversations more structured than they would have been previously...I think the framework gave us a real pathway through things to look at together and discuss, so it definitely improved her areas that were less strong such as some elements of her behaviour management. It definitely helped her to work on her cognitive overload and how children retain their learning, and she's almost become our lead on that now, other staff come to her.” - Induction tutor and mentor, Provider-led, Primary

Induction tutors also noted how by the end of their induction period ECTs were keen to move on and progress further.

“I think they always feel much more secure in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year and that is the right amount of support for them. You do feel they’re fully fledged, that some of them are experts at that point, not all of them but some of them definitely experts. A couple of them in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year now that are really teaching and learning oriented and probably some of the best practitioners in the school because of their acute attention to detail and how they’ve approached their induction.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

Induction tutors did, however, also raise some caveats in that it is hard to disentangle the impact on teaching quality from the quality of ECTs recruited in the first place. It was also noted that how the programme is managed in different schools (for example how mentor time was managed) or how much ECTs engage with the programme might also mediate the impact of the programme on teaching quality.

Mentors in the case studies reflected that induction was a personal journey for ECTs but one that allowed for confidence to be developed over time (hopefully) within a supportive environment to help teachers to be better prepared. Although one mentor in a primary school felt that nothing could really prepare ECTs for doing the job of teaching and that stepping into a classroom comes as a shock.

## Retention

The research surveyed and tracked the experiences of the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of ECTs through their ECF-based induction. However, the nature of surveys, being response driven and open to attrition, means they cannot be used as an exact measure of retention. Those who fail to respond to surveys may have left their school or the profession, but it is more likely that they are still in their school (or in teaching) but decide not to participate further in the research. The research also gained feedback from ECTs in the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort (and those in later cohorts) and from induction tutors and mentors who supported them. These insights provide a rich picture of experiences but were not designed to determine retention rates.

DfE’s published statistics<sup>31</sup> provide the best measure of retention. These show that of the 21,008 ECTs<sup>32</sup> who started their ECF-based induction in the 2021 to 2022 school year (cohort 1) including provider-led and school-led approaches: 87.7% were retained in

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<sup>31</sup> See [Teacher and Leader development: ECF and NPQs, Academic year 2023/24](#), published in July 2024.

<sup>32</sup> These were ECTs who participated in an ECF-based induction programme and also appeared in the School Workforce Census in 2021.

state schools the following year (what would have been year 2 of their induction programme) and 79.3% were retained in the 2023 to 2024 school year (after most would have completed their induction programme). Retention rates were found to be slightly higher for provider-led programmes than for school-led programmes.<sup>33</sup> The statistics also indicate the overall retention rates increased for cohort 2 after 1 year compared to cohort 1, and that the higher retention rate found for those following a provider-led programme was sustained.

## Induction tutors' and mentors' views

The feedback from the case studies and interviews indicated that some induction tutors (from secondary and primary schools) believed the ECF-based induction programme was having a positive impact on retention and they made the connection between improved confidence, satisfaction and retention.

“...if you are a better teacher and you are happy in your job because you know you are good at your job, that might have some impact on keeping people for longer.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Primary

Some gave examples of where the mentor support, the structured approach of the programme, and the time and space to develop acted as a support to ECTs who were struggling and potentially retained them.

However, there were also some induction tutors who did not see any change in retention, or at least no more impact on retention than found for the previous NQT induction. Induction tutors pointed out that the key challenge with retention related to general teacher workload (and attractiveness of teaching) and that this became more of an issue in the long term. There were also some induction tutors who were concerned that the workload associated with the ECF-based induction itself (the meetings and paperwork) could potentially undermine the aim to increase new teacher retention, noting that the time allotted for programme activities was not sufficient.

“I’ve got a really, really good ECT who I’m going in to see and I can see them floundering now and I appreciate that we are into an 8-week term and it’s really hard but it’s the sheer amount they have to do that they are a bit shell shocked with.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

Mentors in the case studies provided their views on the impact of the ECF-based induction programme on teacher retention. Some felt the programme was an improvement on the previous approach. They noted how, in the past, NQTs had to be

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<sup>33</sup> 87.7% after one year and 79.5% after two years for provider-led programmes; and 87.1% after one year and 76.1% after two years for school-led programmes.

'perfect out of the gate' which often resulted in retention challenges, whereas the ECF-based induction programme gives ECTs more time to develop as teachers.

"I think it's a really great programme. If the ECT has engaged in the way they should have then it doesn't feel like a big leap to start a full timetable on your own. Evidenced by the fact that none of the ECTs have come back and needed support other than what they have within their department as a natural support system. I think it's brilliant, much better than one NQT year." - Mentor, Provider-led, Secondary

## ECTs' ambitions

The ECTs in the case studies discussed their futures and all indicated they would like to continue teaching. They described how they would like to progress (to specialist roles, middle management and ultimately leadership positions) but that could mean changing schools. There were some criticisms of the induction, feeling that it had not helped their progression ambitions. One secondary ECT in year 2 of their induction reported that the induction programme restricted them by referring to them and their peers as new teachers. Another ECT felt the programme did not have enough focus on how they have developed as a teacher, feeling the focus had been on simply completing online content. ECTs appeared to have strong progression ambitions which need to be discussed and supported to ensure continued engagement and retention.

Induction tutors in the school interviews described how their former ECTs had progressed well and how some had gained promotions since taking part in their ECF-based induction programmes. Promotions included to assistant heads of year, head of house, subject or departmental leads, or second in departments or heads of other areas (Head of Pupil Premium, Head of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE)). In some cases, although those who completed their induction had not yet moved up, they were recognised as strong practitioners and were building up to and not far off middle management. Some also noted how ECTs were planning to take NPQs to continue their development and support progression. One induction tutor noted that when ECTs finish their induction programme, the mentor becomes their performance manager. This provides their ECTs with a consistent presence and support from someone who knows their skills and areas to develop. One school following the school-led approach felt progression was particularly important to their approach. The induction tutor described how they run a bespoke programme to train their ECTs up to be the "very best that they can be", to be part of the school and to be part of the succession plan in the school.

Lead providers also believed that ECF-based induction helps ECTs with moving into mid-career roles, and then longer-term into leadership roles. The induction programme was helping ECTs to be aware of the future steps they need to be taking. It was also making them better suited to move on to more responsible roles within schools by equipping

them with the conceptual knowledge around key aspects such as safeguarding, SEND and phonics:

“...[the induction] helps them to be self-reflective practitioners who are aware of their skills set, of what they need to learn and aware of the framework within which they work.” - Lead provider

One lead provider noted how the ECF-based induction may have increased expectations for professional development and progression in the sector, meaning ECTs may need something else beyond their formal induction period to ‘hook them in’ and keep them feeling they are developing, otherwise they may be in danger of leaving. Meanwhile, they felt that those who were not involved in ECF-based induction may feel left behind or not invested in, which could also impact negatively on their retention.

## **Examples from the case studies and interviews**

The induction tutor interviews and case studies with a wider group of stakeholders provided insights into the experiences and outcomes of their former ECTs including those who followed standard programmes and those with non-standard pathways. The latter included ECTs with reduced inductions, starting later in the year or working a small number of part-time hours, and ECTs moving to their school mid-way through their induction programme. Most ECTs were described as having successfully completed their induction period and ECF-based induction programme. Many were retained in their school (particularly schools with small numbers of ECTs) and some had progressed within the school to gain new roles or additional responsibilities including becoming ECF mentors. Some former ECTs had moved on to other schools after their induction. This movement was driven by a range of reasons including coming to the end of a temporary contract, moving abroad (as COVID-19 restrictions lifted), moving location (to schools in areas with a lower cost of living or to be closer to home), changing to a different type of school (specialist or mainstream), or to schools where there were better promotion opportunities.

There were also examples of ECTs who had been or were struggling with various aspects of teaching, the induction programme, or the workload. Induction tutors reported how they had worked hard to support those who were struggling with formal and informal support. For example, an induction tutor in a primary school described how one ECT on a temporary contract was struggling; they were teaching maths but were a non-maths specialist and found it difficult to cope with the differentiation needed when explaining concepts to children. It was noted how the ECF-based induction programme in some cases helped to identify that the ECT was struggling and not coping well but in other cases could be a contributing factor. For example, one induction tutor felt the programme itself caused difficulties due to its inflexibility which meant when their ECT struggled they could not ‘try again’. It was noted how some ECTs struggled during their induction period,

but this did not preclude success in completion and beyond. One induction tutor in a primary school relayed that despite how overwhelming one ECT had found their induction period at the time, they had gone on to be an excellent teacher and subject lead.

Some of those who struggled had moved on to complete their induction in another school. Others left teaching altogether or stayed in the sector but to work in a different (non-teaching) role. Leaving could be driven by a variety of reasons including personal or health reasons. There were also examples of ECTs who completed their induction but then left teaching or were planning to.

“We’ve got an ECT that was going to leave teaching but she’s going to stay on and finish the year and qualify, and then I think she’s going to leave teaching... I’ve got another ECT that left teaching after two years ... at the end of the induction. We’ve had a couple that have left at the end of the induction period.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

A secondary school with multiple ECTs following the provider-led approach described how they retained one of their initial cohort 1 ECTs, but two left the school and their induction early: one left teaching altogether and another moved schools:

“She was failing so we suggested to her that her best chance was to move school. We put in a huge amount of support before they moved, I went to 5 of her lessons over a 3-week period and we had 3 people supporting her.” - Induction tutor, Provider-led, Secondary

Another secondary school with multiple ECTs described how they created the role of induction coordinator, which was separate from the induction tutor role, to build and support the programme, support ECTs and encourage retention. The induction coordinator is the ‘go to’ for worries and concerns, helps with observations and triangulates where ECTs are in their induction journey. The induction coordinator also helps to determine what support to provide in years 3 and 4 to support transitions from induction and the ECT role.

## Wider impacts

Insights from the interviews, case studies and discussions with lead providers also indicated wider perceived impacts from the ECF-based induction programme.

- Changing public perceptions of teaching - one lead provider felt that public perceptions of teaching are changing, with the public seeing teaching as having scientific grounding, and linked this to the ECF-based induction.

“...every single ECT has a grounding in cognitive science, how to teach in an expert way. It is lifting everyone... it has made a massive difference, not just for ECTs but has lifted the profession, other teachers around them are lifted too.” - Lead provider

- Wider professional development – one lead provider felt that techniques used in the provider-led ECF-based induction programme, specifically the instructional coaching approach, were gaining greater traction in schools and the sector and were being used in many schools and for all teachers in some way. They described how initially this had been new to many in the sector and that they had to ‘hand hold’ everyone through it. This was also reflected by an induction tutor who felt the instructional coaching approach had influenced performance management across the school. Another induction tutor felt that the ECF-based induction programme had led to an increased focus on observations, with all staff benefiting from seeing each other’s teaching practice. An induction tutor in a special school noted how they were using materials from the ECF-based induction programme to support an experienced teacher, who moved to their school from a mainstream secondary school.
- Spreading learning – lead providers described how work that ECTs are doing is of interest to others in their department or year group or to the wider school. Learning materials and learning from projects undertaken in year 2 (e.g. practitioner enquiry or action learning projects putting in place an improvement and measuring impact) are shared and can be used as part of whole-school CPD.



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