

Understanding and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 disruption on trainee and early career teachers in secondary schools

Key Finding

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the two cohorts who trained in years 2019 – 2021. Trainees, even within the same cohort, have experienced their training in different ways, largely dependent on their school placements, subject and personal circumstances.

Findings and recommendations

Findings	Recommendations to ensure teacher quality and enable retention
ECTs have reported some positive impacts of training during the pandemic, such as the use of IT to support teaching and learning and a heightened sense of professional community. Going forward, these positive impacts should be embraced and developed.	Schools should continue to embrace the unique skills and experiences of ECTs in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. This can help develop teacher agency, a sense of self-efficacy and will strengthen the professional identity of ECTs.
For ECTs, there is a tension between the need for personalised support in response to their varied training experience and the prescribed content of induction programmes.	Bespoke professional development for ECTs is needed to address the highly variable impact of COVID-19 on teacher training and induction. Opportunities for subject specific CPD are also vital for teacher self-efficacy and, potentially, for teacher retention.
The wellbeing of ECTs is impacted by the pressures of the ECF, exacerbated by varied training experiences.	Nurturing and supporting ECT wellbeing in the workplace needs to be central to their professional development experience.
Schools have experienced time and resource limitations in providing mentoring for trainees and ECT induction simultaneously.	ECT and mentor workload should be closely monitored by schools in order to provide adequate time and space for ECT professional development and reflection. This information should be considered by policy makers.
The growth and retention of ECTs benefits from the provision of formal and informal support, including through collaboration with other professionals and/or ECTs and in different learning and/or social spaces.	Support and collaboration in different learning and/or social spaces should be sought for ECTs. This could potentially foster professional growth and may encourage retention.
Opportunities for reflection, which are not linked to assessment, have a positive impact on ECTS' identity formation, professional experiences and growth.	ECTs should be offered regular, supported reflection, that is not linked to assessment. Where possible, this should include ongoing engagement with training providers for ECTs and their mentors.

<p>The teacher training experience during the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in reduced opportunities for pastoral practice, limited parental engagement and a reduced involvement with extracurricular activities.</p>	<p>ECTs should be given opportunities to engage in a range of pastoral activities both in and beyond the school to further develop pastoral skills.</p> <p>ECTs should be encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life and structured support should be provided for interactions with parents and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Experience and skills gained from previous careers outside of teaching proved beneficial for ECTs in the context of pandemic-related uncertainty and in their ongoing professional development.</p>	<p>Greater recognition should be given to the role of transferable skills and experience acquired before teacher training in developing new teachers' professional practice.</p>
<p>ECTs have found engagement with research empowering but have been frustrated by induction material that is repetitive of their training experience.</p>	<p>ECTs should be encouraged to engage critically with education research and have opportunities to discuss their reading and the impact of theory on practice.</p>
<p>The experience of training during the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced opportunities for ECTs to work with a diverse range of students.</p>	<p>ECTs should be provided with experience of working in ethnically, educationally and socially diverse contexts where they can further develop skills of teaching for inclusion.</p>
<p>The experience of training during the Covid-19 pandemic has served to broaden perspectives and has led to innovative practice from ECTs (e.g. including addressing global issues) in their teaching.</p>	<p>Schools should continue to embrace the unique skills and experiences of ECTs in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. This can help develop teacher agency, a sense of self-efficacy and will strengthen the professional identity of ECTs. Schools should continue to build on the innovative practices adopted by ECTs during the pandemic, further developing self-efficacy and teacher identity.</p>