



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

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NASBTT survey reveals doubts over mentoring capacity to meet demands of Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework

A survey of over 100 School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and School Direct Lead School (SDLS) providers has highlighted major concerns around the quality of mentors they can recruit and the lack of capacity within the system.

The current plans for mentoring detailed in the Core Content Framework (CCF), the Early Career Framework (ECF) and the proposed Initial Teacher Education inspection framework place huge emphasis on ITT providers to deliver.

However, NASBTT research published today has found that 92% of providers have concerns over the quality of mentors they are able to recruit in at least some instances. And 90% of SCITTs and SDLSs believe there is not currently enough mentoring capacity within the system to meet the demands of the CCF and ECF. A further 62% do not believe there is enough time or resource to build the capacity that will be needed.

Of the 38% of respondents – 106 in total over a four-week period – who do think there is time to build the appropriate capacity and are confident that demand will be met, more than two thirds (68%) report they are doing this under their own steam.

When asked who should be responsible for building mentoring capacity, schools/MATs and the Department for Education (DfE)/government came top of the list with 81% and 78% of respondents respectively saying they should take whole or joint responsibility. ITT providers were also seen as having an important role to play with just over half of respondents (54%) stating they should be partly or wholly responsible. And a further 32% could see a role for Teaching Schools in this picture and a quarter felt Appropriate Bodies also have a role to play.

When asked to identify the biggest barriers to developing high-quality mentoring in schools, the overwhelming response related to capacity within schools, with 75% of respondents citing a lack of time in schools for mentors to carry out their role effectively and a further 30% pointing to schools' inability to release mentors for training opportunities.

Three other key themes emerged in the survey:

- Funding – one in three respondents felt that to meet the demands that will be placed on the system, emergency funding should be made available to schools to provide the capacity that mentors sorely need. It is absolutely vital that this funding is ringfenced and protected for the sole use of the mentor and it should be fairly distributed between providing capacity to the school for release time and an uplift in mentors' salaries in recognition of the important role they are undertaking.
- Recognition – 19% of respondents suggested formal recognition for mentors either through a nationally agreed title within the school management structure to aspire to (as

we have with SENDCO or Safeguarding Lead) or through the provision of funded training programmes for mentors. The DfE should consider what training and development mentors ought to be entitled to and how this training could be funded fairly without stretching school budgets beyond their capacity.

- General support – 17% highlighted this as an issue – with suggestions for support that should be given including release time, recognition of the importance of the role and supportive senior leaders. The survey has identified that the key issue impacting high-quality mentoring is a lack of time available to carry out the role effectively. Government should consider whether recommending minimum additional release for mentors could be built into future systems, potentially linked to additional funding for schools who observe these recommendations.

Other themes were the need for additional support for ITT providers (and other providers of mentor training) to strengthen their offer and their capacity; support for school leaders to change cultures in schools; the need for additional ‘levers’ through Ofsted or DfE mandated expectation for schools to train quality mentors; and the need to maintain a focus on the possible workload implications for mentors, schools and providers that these changes will ultimately bring about.

“What is particularly worrying about these findings is they are based on research undertaken in February – weeks before the current unprecedented pressures facing schools – which even then highlighted that the mentoring capacity in schools was unlikely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the ECF, the implementation of the CCF, and the ability to stand up to scrutiny of an ITT inspection,” said Executive Director Emma Hollis.

“Looking at things now, there is going to be a significant capacity issue in schools when, or if, they go back in the next academic year. This will have an enormous effect on the mentoring support that is available and which is so vital for the success of ITT. Organising school placements for trainees beginning their programmes in September 2020 is likely to be increasingly complex as schools attempt to rebuild their communities. Add to that the fact that all the NQTs will have had significantly less time in school than would normally be the case, as will NQTs entering their second year of teaching. Staff capacity is likely to be reduced, even after a few months have passed, as the virus may still be having an impact and may mean teachers are having to isolate, are bereaved or are having to care for children or dependent adults who are unwell. A reduced workforce does not bode well at a time where increased support will be needed for early-career teachers. Schools will be dealing with a number of very complex issues among their cohorts of children which will limit their capacity even further. Anecdotally, we are hearing of many teachers and school leaders who are planning to leave the profession once this crisis is over. This will impact even more on capacity that is available.

“Whilst we do not necessarily advocate for policy directives to be delayed, it may be necessary to extend measures put in place for trainee teachers this year into next, allowing for more flexibility with placements and programme requirements which will allow ITT providers to work with their communities of schools as they re-build, without adding additional pressure. We might also consider funding NQTs to be released from schools for a day a week to attend training and wellbeing support provided by accredited ITT providers and possibly Teaching Schools. This will have a significant resourcing implication but may help to plug the gap in terms of knowledge and understanding but, perhaps more crucially, offer the pastoral support that schools may not have the capacity to provide. Clearly there is a tension here, though, between releasing staff from school and dealing with the reduced capacity issue.

“Another solution (possibly as well as rather than instead of) this option might be to follow the model being used in the NHS and encourage recently retired teachers, or those that have left the profession for other reasons, to return in a part-time capacity on the staff of accredited ITT providers and potentially local authorities and Teaching Schools, who could train and deploy

them to their networks of schools to offer support and mentoring as external colleagues. This will, again, have major resourcing implications but could offer the support that is so desperately needed without calling on the limited capacity of schools. It might even have the added benefit of tempting some colleagues back into the profession.”

-ENDS-

NASBTT is a registered charity committed to promoting high-quality schools-led programmes of training, education and professional development of teachers.

NASBTT represents the interests of schools-led teacher training provision in relation to the development and implementation of national policy developments. Our members include SCITT providers, School Direct Lead Schools, Teaching Schools, HEIs as well as a range of other organisations involved in the education and professional development of teachers. We have over 200 members representing more than 10,000 individual trainees.

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